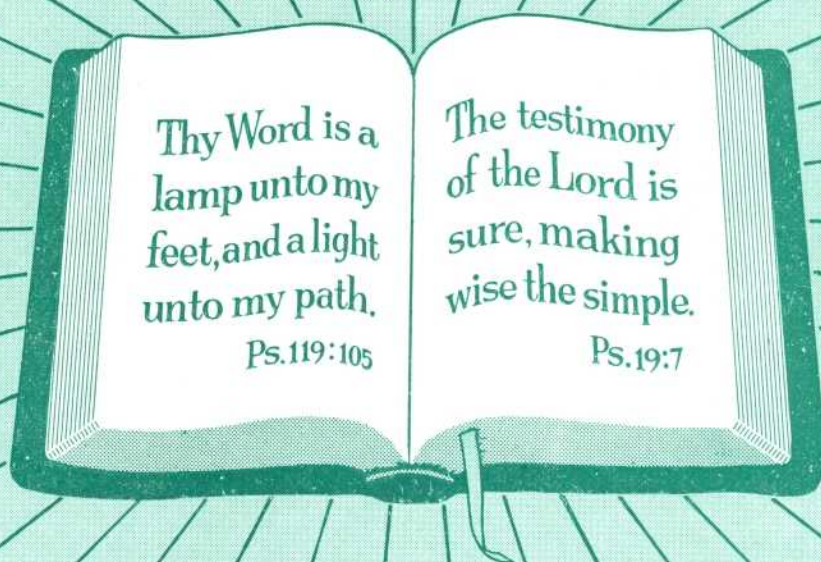


# Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



**The Living Creatures John Saw**

**The Lure of the Wilderness-Jeremiah**

**Misusing the Past**

**The Lift of the Far View**



# Megiddo Message

Vol. 60, No. 5

May, 1973

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF  
THE MEGIDDO MISSION CHURCH  
L. T. NICHOLS, *Founder*  
KENNETH E. FLOWERDAY, *Editor*

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

The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

- Strengthen your faith in the Bible
- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God
- Bring peace and stability to your life

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## Editorially Speaking . . .

### How About Your Spiritual Stockpile?

"STRANGE, isn't it, that you don't think much about religion until you need it—and when you need it you don't have it!" This observation by a college student should make all of us stop and think. What about *our* spiritual reserves?

The words of Jesus come to mind: "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." Note that this "wise" man did not wait until the storm struck to begin to build. He prepared *in advance*.

And that is the lesson Jesus is impressing. We cannot expect to build a shelter for ourselves after the storm breaks; it is too late then. Now is the time to be spiritually stockpiling, laying up a good store against the time that is sure to come, or we can never expect to lay hold on eternal life. How can we do this?

First, we need to learn to reaffirm constantly our belief in God and the reality of His purpose. We may confidently assume that we are believers, but is He at the center of everything we do? Does His will and His word influence our whole lives?

Second, we can build up our stockpile by giving more diligence to our devotions. Does life seem a monotonous routine? an endless process of going-through-the-motions formalities? Do our devotions seem dull and lifeless? There may be a reason, and that reason is right within us. For what we put into life is the measure of what we may expect from it. Whether the attitude is positive or negative; whether the mind is open or closed; whether the spirit is receptive or indifferent—in short, what you and I are—our attentiveness, our enthusiasm, our participation—is in a large measure the spirit of our lives. Discipline yourself to approach each day expectantly and perform its duties faithfully, and the day is sure to show an increase in spiritual reserves.

Third, we can mentally prepare ourselves against temptations that are sure to come. We must deepen our lives within, or we will just drift along without much direction.

There are bound to be times when we will need a great spiritual stockpile to strengthen us to maintain a straight course against the spineless impulse to just "go along."

Often in the Northern seas an iceberg shimmering white and immense in the vastness of the sea will move majestically through the surface ice in the opposite direction of the current and against the prevailing wind. Seasoned sailors know why this happens. The surface ice floats along with the current, but the iceberg, with nine-tenths of its mass hidden in the depths below, is directed by a deeper and far more powerful current below the surface.

As we move through life, let us not be surface chips of ice just floating along with the current; but let us be mammoth icebergs propelled by a power that originates down deep in the great undercurrents of divine truth. ●●

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# The Living Creatures

## John Saw

### PRAYER

Our heavenly Father, All-wise, righteous and just in all Thy ways, Thou mighty God: we thank Thee again this morning for Thy mercy and long-suffering extended to us.

We rejoice to know Thou art taking out those who are destined to be Thy living creatures, to be blessed with immortal life in that glorious coming Day. Thou art taking out a people to be worthy of ruling in that age to come, a glorious number, until, as the result of divine administration through Jesus and the saved ones, the earth is filled with Thy glory, and every knee shall bend to Thee and every tongue sing to Thy praise. As we see Thy creative plan in operation on this earth, we know it is according to Thy divine purpose which Thou hast employed in past ages, in the wonderful worlds on high, and shall some day be consummated upon this earth. Help us to comprehend the scope of Thy power, how great is Thy understanding. May it cause us to see and sense our own littleness; may it impel us no longer to walk as children of the flesh, to cease walking as humanity walks, in the vanity of their own mind. As we see the veil of darkness over the eyes of all about us, how hard it is to get Truth to shine in their darkened minds; grant, Father, that we may get our own eyes opened and see ourselves as Thou dost see us.

Help us, Lord, to put away all envy, all hatred, all vice, immorality, every evil that defiles. Help us to realize the need for haste. We see men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after the things that are coming upon the earth. We see the fulfillment of the things Thou hast foretold generations in the past, the condition Thou didst foretell this earth would be in just prior to our Master's second coming. May it cause us to bind closer the shield of faith, putting away all evil.

We pray Thy mercy on those striving to put away evil, on those trying to learn and live Thy glorious precepts. We implore Thy help in times of need. We pray for strength to continue steadfast to the end, knowing that Thou in Thy goodness will grant us the crown of life.

We ask all in Thy name. Amen.

### DISCOURSE

IN the fourth chapter of Revelation the noble exile of Patmos has attempted to portray in words the indescribable rapture and glory of the better world into which he has been permitted a glimpse. Transcending the bounds of human thought and human imagination, he writes of scenes to mortal eyes invisible and to mortal minds incomprehensible. The world he has seen in vision is a world pulsing with immortal life, radiant with immortal light, vivified with immortal glory. It is a world where Christ is supreme, His saints seated with Him on thrones of power, crowned with glory and vested with unlimited authority to administer the affairs of earth.

The picture his words create is sublime and majestic. In the center is a celestial throne, bathed in dazzling light and splendor. Seated upon the throne is One whose image is lost in the resplendent glory which exceeds that of the most precious stones—a fitting representation of Christ the King. Round about the throne are four and twenty seats upon which are seated four and twenty elders, clothed in white raiment, golden crowns upon their heads—they are the saints, co-rulers with Christ in the New Order.

The whole scene transcends the grandest mortal conception. Out of the throne proceed lightnings and thunderings—this throne has authority which can be seen and felt. "And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne" remind all that this is a throne established by the authority of the God of heaven—no human potentates approach here.

"And round about the throne, were four beasts [four living creatures] full of eyes before and behind." Would that we might share even a momentary glimpse into John's vision! His words seem to reflect the brightness of the world of tomorrow and illuminate the gloom of today. And here are four living creatures—which we will study as meaningful symbols of glorified mortals who have now achieved the full salvation for which they gave their lives.

## Living Creatures

The symbol emphasizes *life*. These are *living* beings. They have life within themselves; they have been glorified and exalted. They are creatures fully alive, and alive for evermore; they are the faithful attainers of the crown of immortality. Flourishing spiritual life was the theme of their mortal career, and now their goal of immortal life has been realized. They are *living* beings.

The definition of the original Greek word translated "living creatures" ("beasts" in our Common Version) emphasizes the vital, living aspect of these beings. The translation "beasts" is not the best rendering. They were beings, vitally and essentially *alive*. The Hebrew form of the term (used by Ezekiel in chapter 1) bears the same significance. In its verb form it means, "to live; to live again, to revive, to give life to someone (Job 33: 4); to call back to life, to restore life." As an adjective it describes "those who are alive," also, "the land of the living, . . . lively, vigorous, flourishing, prosperous." The word translated "creature" is used of "a being of sublime and celestial nature."

Many of the number who composed the "living creatures" of Revelation 4 will have died and been restored to life. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Daniel, and Paul and other faithful died "not having received the promises," and these must be restored to life before they can be judged and rewarded. But only when they have been crowned with immortality will they become a permanent part of the four living creatures. The Revelator is looking ahead to that time, when "this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:54). They will have become beings no longer bound by the limitations of temporal mortal life. They will have received radiant immortality.

## A God of Life

That undefinable phenomenon that separates existence from non-existence, the animate from the inanimate; that divides hope from failure and opportunity from impossibility is life. Life is God's most beneficent gift.

God is a God of life. He has life within Himself and recognizes no other condition. His is a throbbing, vibrant, abundant life. He loves life above all else. But to Him the life of a child of His is determined more by that person's fitness to ultimately merit immortal life than by whether or not the breath of life resides in the body of clay.

Jesus, discoursing on the resurrection of the dead, said: "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the

Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him" (Luke 20:37-38). Those men whose names were specifically mentioned had been sleeping in death for centuries, yet to God they were still alive. Their names engraven in His "book of remembrance," a short sleep in death was not counted a cessation of life any more than we would consider a friend dead because he sleeps soundly for three or four hours during the night.

These privileged individuals whose names are perpetuated in God's book of remembrance must have proven themselves to be more than physically animate during their lifetimes. They must each have been in a spiritual sense *living beings* during their mortal lives. Men may question the value of such "spiritual" life, but there is no argument for the Christian cause more persuasive than the living testimony of the man or woman who is morally and spiritually alive.

As aspirants to the same reward of immortality that is possessed by the living creatures of Revelation 4, we want to learn all we can about these beings and how they became so alive spiritually and physically. Let us analyze their life.

The first life which these individuals experienced was that which God bestows upon all His human creation—mortal life. Born as all creatures of the dust, they accepted God's invitation to invest their short mortal span in a future life which they could see only with the eye of faith; thus in God's sight they became alive, and their mortal life took on a new meaning as they became animated by the promise of the future and eternal realities.

Pursuing this new resolution, they embarked upon a new type of life—life on the highest level of which human beings are capable—a life "worthy of God" (I Thess. 2:12). To live a life worthy of God means developing in our own lives that flawless morality we think of when we think of Christ. He did always the things which pleased His heavenly Father. In Him is such beauty of character, such purity of heart, such holiness of thought and disposition that He is humanity's perfect articulation. He became "the Word . . . made flesh," so perfectly did He live according to its precepts. We see in Him the qualities we covet at our best—courage, gentleness, chivalry, purity, humility, faith, self-control, self-sacrifice. His life was worthy of His Father's recognition.

Jesus stands against the skyline as the noblest being of history: gentle, yet brave; confident, yet humble; who met life with calmness, trouble with fortitude, and crucifixion with faith. And He said, "Follow me" (Matt. 4:19). "You, therefore, must



be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48, RSV). Though it challenges every resource of spirit, brain and body, this is the quality of life to which we must aspire if we are to lead a life worthy of God. And the future, eternal recompense which God has promised—immortal life—is the only stimulus sufficient to impel us to exert the moral power necessary to transform our lives so completely as to make them worthy of God's recognition.

### Forward-Looking Life

The life worthy of God is a forward-looking life. An outstanding example of this type of life was during that dark and dreadful epoch when the great Roman power was practicing and prospering and wearing out the saints of the Most High. It is said that the faithful martyrs confined in dark prison cells refused to relinquish their radiant hope until their latest breath, and wrote on their confining walls, *Vita, Vita, Vita!* meaning *Life, Life, Life!* They refused to let themselves forget that beyond the vale of the present is a life that will recompense them exceeding abundantly above the sufferings and trials of this short, mortal sojourn.

Even in the dungeon those early Christians kept their faith strong and their hope radiant by not allowing the prize of life eternal to fade from their eyes. It was the joy set before them that enabled them to pass through the fiery trials which were their daily portion. Prison walls could not shut out their view of the Promised Land. Chains could bind the body but not the soul made animate by the truth of Almighty God. Though physically they were prisoners of a dark and cruel system, in heart and mind they were "prisoners of hope"—hope of that life that God will bestow upon all who endure patiently to the end.

Jesus prophesied of the tribulations that the early Christians were to suffer for His name: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil [evil men in authority] shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; . . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). A crown of life!—such was the impelling prospect which kept those four living, glorified beings of Revelation 4 energized and enduring through their turbulent mortal careers. We who now live far down in the cool shadows of the evening of the day of salvation need to make use of that same promise that its glorious prospects may stimulate us to action—for zealous action is no less necessary to resist the apathetic indifference of today than it was to withstand the fiery persecution of that age.

May, 1973

If we would attain to the life of those living beings and stand someday vivified with immortality in the Kingdom of God, we need to remember continually the hope that energized those early Christians—"Life, life, life!"—and write it upon all the walls that confine us. Does the power of sin seem so strong and the desire to do good seem so weak that we are tempted to falter? It is because we are forgetting those soul-quickenings words—"I will give thee a crown of life." Only when the hope of life for evermore fades and the present looms too large and real do we ever give in to the paralyzing powers of discouragement, defeat, and despair. With the *living* prospect of abundant *life* before us, there will be no lamenting. The work cannot be done. On the contrary, we will be eager and anxious to do all that we can. Every sacrifice will become a delight and every trial a light affliction.

A living hope quickened these living beings during their mortal careers. And now John in vision sees them crowned with the fruition of that hope—immortality.

### Four Creatures

Why are there said to be "*four* living creatures" in the symbolism of Revelation? The figure might suggest their origin. In Daniel's vision (Daniel 7) the kingdoms of men which should appear upon the world-stage were to be four in number, and they were designated as "beasts." The first world empire was that of Babylon; the second, Medo-Persia; the third, Greece; the fourth, the Roman Empire, including its broken fragments and the ecclesiastical empire that was to grow out of it. All the faithful who compose the "living creatures" of Revelation 4 were taken out of these four world empires; they are termed "*four* living creatures" because they were selected out of humanity.

### A Character-Description

How did these beings merit such a glorious exaltation? We want to know because as aspirants to a like reward we know we must follow a like course.

The Revelator knew we would need this information, and so he proceeds to discuss the nobility of character of these living creatures, using symbolic representations of the appearance of each.

But before we study the characteristics of each in detail, we should observe that the symbolism of Revelation 4 is very nearly parallel to that used by Ezekiel in chapter one. Ezekiel lists the four faces of the "living creatures" as the face of a man, of a lion, of an ox, and of an eagle. Revelation 4:7 lists them as a lion, a calf (or ox, as translated

in many of the newer translations), a man, and an eagle. The living creatures have the same qualities in each instance; the only difference is in the arrangement.

Revelation describes these four living creatures each having one face; Ezekiel pictures them as having four faces each, but the effect is the same, each face representing a quality indispensable to the living creature which God will save. All who become joint-heirs with Christ in the future arrangement of things when He sets up His Kingdom will be part of these four beings. They will be men and women who became moral giants during their earthly careers, and they will possess the outstanding qualities of character symbolized by the appearance of the four living creatures. Let us consider the significance of each.

### **The Face of a Lion**

A lion has courage, courage to hunt and boldly attack his prey. The Greek word for "lion" is used figuratively of "a brave and mighty hero." Every Christian must have the courage to become a brave and mighty hero in the conflict with his arch-enemy—his own lower nature. He needs courage to confront himself as he is, courage to examine his own ways and motives as they appear in the sight of God Almighty; and having seen himself, he needs courage to change himself. As expressed in the well-known words of Reinhold Niebuhr, it is "the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference."

The Christian needs the courage to lift his thinking and his ambitions above the low and groveling things of this world to the higher plane of the thoughts of God. For, says the Lord, "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways... For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8-9). He needs the courage that prevents his bowing in conformity to the world in behavior, in speech, in thought, in apparel.

The Christian needs the courage of a lion to be able to say "no" to temptation when every inclination of his being is shouting "yes." When the Lord has said, "Thou shalt," or "Thou shalt not," he needs the bravery to pronounce these commands boldly to himself until the sound of them deafens his natural impulses and he restrains his actions to what the Lord calls right and his thoughts to what is constructive. And he must have still more courage to face his wrongdoing when he has done wrong and turn squarely around and do right without the slightest desire to justify his wrong

or condemn the one who exposes his misdeeds.

### **The Endurance of an Ox**

The second living creature had the face of a calf, or an ox. The ox is noted for his physical endurance. Oxen were used by the pioneers crossing the plains because of their outstanding powers of endurance. Likewise, the Christian needs endurance to keep pressing on and on however long the journey may be, however steep the ascent, so that he will never grow weary in well doing.

Endurance is the key to obtaining the full reward. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13). The Church at Ephesus was commended for their endurance: "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou... hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted" (Rev. 2:2-3). Or as translated in the RSV, "I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary"—a high commendation from Jesus.

The Christian race for life, it has been said, is not a short sprint; it is not a fifty-yard dash; it is an endurance test meant to distinguish the man who has the power to keep all his spiritual reserves renewed and who keeps pressing on and on to the end of the race. Endurance means the highest development of every latent power within us.

Two great military leaders illustrate this ox-like quality. Napoleon was an aggressive soldier. His word was glory, and he carried his victories by rapid, concentrated movements. For a long time he swept everything before him. But there came another man with other tactics, Sir Arthur Wellesley, later the Duke of Wellington. His word was duty, and his tactics were to advance cautiously, take strong positions, and act on the defensive.

The Duke of Wellington gave the glory-minded Napoleon more than enough in the Peninsular campaign. It was hammer and anvil, and—true to form—the hammer got the worst of it. But the climax came at Waterloo, where glory met duty and fury measured its strength against endurance. Glory faded and fury rolled back like a wave of the sea. At the very climax of the battle, the British "Iron Duke" of Wellington rode into the thick of the fighting when Napoleon's Old Guards were bearing down on the British line, and with his hat waving over his head said, "My men, victory is for them who hold out the longest!"

Endurance!

To continue in well doing is what counts, says one who endured the loss of all things that he might

*(Continued on page 21)*

# Timely Topics

THE distraught father wrung his hands and wept openly as an officer placed a blanket over the lifeless form of his four-year-old daughter at the side of the busy highway. "I called to her to stop, but she paid no attention," he moaned. "She had such a mind of her own, she just wouldn't stop. We've told her again and again to stay away from the road."

The little girl, tagging behind an older brother had run into the road directly in front of an oncoming car. It could have been your town, or someone you knew—or even your youngster—for motor vehicles are the chief killer of children between the

## Obedience

## Means

## Safety

ages of one and nine years, the most deaths resulting from being run over or struck on highways, streets and in driveways. Some of the deaths may have been unavoidable, but many of them could have been avoided if the child had obeyed.

Probably all the victims of these accidents had been "told" to stay out of dangerous streets and highways, but they had not been "taught" to obey the command of a parent or guardian. There is a great difference between "telling" and "teaching" a child. The teacher "tells" a story, but she "teaches" a lesson. She does not simply tell the first grader that 2 plus 2 equals four, but she shows by example that two apples, or oranges, or eggs plus two more make four. And by associating the figures with familiar articles, the child learns.

A child is continually learning from the time of birth. Unfortunately many parents, thinking the child too young to understand, fail to teach their children the one thing that might someday save the child's life... obedience.

To teach or to train children properly is also a Scripture command: "Provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Children are likewise admonished to obey their parents: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honor thy father and mother..."; "Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord" (Eph. 6:1-2; Col. 3:20).

What is the "nurture and admonition of the Lord"? The Greek word translated "nurture" in our common translation means more than providing food to nourish the body. It carries the meaning of discipline, teaching or training the child, nourishing the child both in body and mind.

The *Revised Standard Version* renders the "nurture and admonition of the Lord" as "the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Phillips' Version reads: "Bring them up with Christian teaching in Christian discipline." The *New English* renders it "Give them the instruction, and the correction, which belong to a Christian upbringing." The *American Translation* is, "Bring them up with Christian training and instruction."

It is not sufficient merely to tell a child what to do and what not to do. The child must be trained to do it, with discipline if necessary. If you live on a busy street or highway, your child must be so thoroughly trained that it becomes a habit to *not* go into the street. The child's mind must be impressed with the danger that is involved; show him why he must obey your command. The child must understand at a tender age that when a parent speaks to him, he is to respond—and at the first command. To *not* respond might mean his life, like that of the little girl mentioned above.

Parents might well take a lesson from what is known as "Dog Obedience School." If dogs can be trained to obey at a single command, certainly children can be taught to obey their parents! The operator of such a school lists the rules used to teach the dogs. The first rule is to establish your authority—it must be what *you* want the dog to do. The owner makes the decisions; the dog is given no options. Next, the owner learns that he is to give the command *just once*, that it must be clearly spoken and be both firm and friendly. Then after the command is given, the dog is made to obey, physically if necessary. If he has been told to "sit", the owner must cause him to sit, to let him know that he is to do just *what* he is commanded to do—and *when* he is commanded. When the dog obeys, the owner must reward the animal with praise and a friendly caress.

The operator of the "Dog School" claims that dogs trained to obey are happier and more contented. If this is true of animals, it is doubly true of humans. Discipline is but an evidence of love for your child; no love is shown by failing to teach a child obedience. It is as we read in the Word: "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth" (Prov 3:11-12).●●



# THE LURE OF THE WILDERNESS--

## to Jeremiah

*"O that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men"*  
Jeremiah 9:2

ESCAPE!—it is a longing altogether human. Jeremiah is not the only man who ever wanted to throw down his task and get away. It was the dream of the Psalmist long ago: "Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest."

Why did Jeremiah wish to get away? The wilderness lured him because it offered a refuge from the tempestuous life of the city. God had called Jeremiah to be a prophet. Jeremiah had accepted the task bravely, but not eagerly. When Isaiah was called, he responded with enthusiasm: "Here am I, send me." He entered his conflicts with a noble zest. But not so Jeremiah. He protests and shrinks and begs to be excused. "Ah, Lord God! behold I cannot speak, for I am a child."

But in spite of his protests, the task is forced upon him. And now, this lover of peace and quiet is in the midst of turmoil and conflict. He is traveling the prophet's road, but his feet bleed at every step. "Alas, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of contention and strife to the whole world." It is only natural that he should want to leave his people and escape to the wilderness.

Jeremiah's task was the more difficult and distasteful because it was a ministry of denunciation and of doom for the people he addressed. He would have been delighted to say the complimentary thing. He would have been glad to be a preacher of hope and a prophet of optimism. But his unrepentant and sinful people made it impossible. Far too sincere was he to cry "Peace! peace!" when he knew there was no peace. Far too clearly he saw the future to escape the realization that punishment must inevitably follow sin. Unless they repented, he was forced to declare, they should be driven into exile.

This type of preaching did not tend to make Jeremiah popular. It did not win applause and appreciation from his people. On the contrary, it made him exceedingly unpopular. It brought him to bitter opposition and persecution. Sometimes he was neglected. "I sat alone because of thy hand."

Sometimes he was ridiculed, scorned, and passed by as a mere fanatic. When his book of prophecies was put into the hands of the king, this pathetic substitute for royalty showed no slightest appreciation. He made plain his contempt for the old prophet by taking his penknife and cutting the roll to pieces and burning it in the fire.

Sometimes persecution was sterner in form. One day the Prophet was stoned out of his native village as if he were a wild street dog. At other times we find him suffering the pain and shame of the stocks. On another he had to undergo the agony of being whipped publicly. He became thoroughly acquainted with the inside of prisons. One time he comes with hands and feet stained with stenchful mud, for he had been starving at the bottom of an old well. He had been rescued by a kind-hearted slave. We cannot blame the Prophet if again and again he wished to leave his people and flee into the wilderness.

No man ever wrote with greater depth of spiritual insight than is contained in his book of Lamentations; but his words were disregarded and forgotten. No man ever preached with more passionate earnestness than did Jeremiah. He warned men night and day with tears; but his warnings were unheeded. His report was not believed.

It is hard enough to keep climbing when you are approaching the summit; it is hard enough to keep fighting when victory is coming closer and closer; but to keep climbing when the summit seems to retreat, to keep fighting when everything seems to be against you—that takes faith.

Did Jeremiah flee?

No, he did not. He was eager to go, yet he stayed. But not because of any physical compulsion did he stay. He might have gone time and again, and his own people would have been glad to have him go. But in spite of the hatred of his people and his own shrinking from his task, he stood in his place and remained true for more than forty long years.

Why did Jeremiah stay?

He stayed because of his faithfulness to duty.

The same bonds held him that later held the valiant apostle Paul. "Behold, I go bound in spirit unto Jerusalem not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city that bonds and afflictions await me." Jeremiah stayed at his post because he knew he ought to stay. When he uttered this cry, he knew that leaving was an impossibility. "Oh that I might leave." But what is implied is, "I cannot. I must stay."

"I must." That is a word frequently found in the vocabulary of moral giants. "Oh that I might go," he said, "but I must stay. I must; it is part of my duty to God." Too easily do we in our modern age consult our feelings when facing work we know we ought to do instead of listening to the voice of duty. Jeremiah knew his duty. And he did it whether he felt like it or not.

Jeremiah was bound to his post by cords of a mighty conviction. He was absolutely sure of the truth of his message. The fact that men refused to give heed did not in any sense lead him to doubt the truth of his message. There were times when they made it hard for him to preach. There were times when he even resolved to keep silent. But this resolution was soon consumed because the Word of God was as a burning fire shut up in his bones. Silence was impossible—unendurable. He was like the apostles who later exclaimed, "We cannot possibly give up speaking the things we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20, NEB). Under the pressure of an irresistible conviction he felt compelled to speak.

There were many false prophets in Jeremiah's time, but these had not his God-sent message. They were prophets of an easy and sentimental optimism. They came with the popular cry of "Peace! peace!" on their lips. But Jeremiah saw a different vision. He was sure that as intensely as God loved His people when they obeyed Him, just so intensely did He hate them when they sinned. He saw with terrifying clearness that if they did not repent, if they did not turn from their idolatry and adultery, God would be compelled to fling them out of His sight. He was gripped by the conviction that there was no safety for the individual or for the nation without righteousness.

Jeremiah remained at his post through the power of God.

Jeremiah was not by nature a staunch and courageous man. He was sensitive and timid and retiring. But God promised in the very beginning that He would stand close to help. "Thou, therefore, gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee. Be not dismayed at their faces. . . . For, behold, I have made thee this

day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land. . . . And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee, for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."

What was the outcome?

So far as his own generation was concerned, Jeremiah lived and died almost an utter failure. When his nation was in ruins, the last handful of Jews that were left consulted him as to whether they should stay in their own land or flee into Egypt. He took the matter before the Lord and obtained an answer: they should remain in their own land. But in spite of the warning, they fled into Egypt and carried the Prophet with them. In Egypt he spent his last days denouncing the sin of his wayward people.

But we cannot judge Jeremiah's success by the people of his generation. He was a man who gave himself totally to the work of God, and God is his Judge and Sovereign. Jeremiah was a man of noble character, a man for the ages. His influence spans centuries, reaching even to us. And such a character God will not fail to reward.

Would that we might share his conviction and certainty as we hear him say to us: "in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly." ●●

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## Words to WALK By

*Belief which is never oxygenated by open confession can never nourish the soul into vigorous and exuberant health.*

A real friend is one who will tell you of your faults and follies in prosperity, and assist you with his hand and heart in adversity.

*Nothing is so strong as godly gentleness; nothing so gentle as godly strength.*

To be angry with a weak man is to prove that you yourself are weaker.

*Life is tragic to him who has plenty to live on and nothing to live for.*

It isn't your position but your disposition that makes you happy or unhappy.

*Some people try to bear three kinds of trouble at once: all they have had, all they now have, and all they expect to have. Don't do it.*

Do what you should, and you will have no time to do what you should not.

# On Paying Tithes

## SHOULD we pay tithes?

Malachi 3:8-10 reads: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

The Megiddo Church feels that some religious groups overwork the Biblical demand for the paying of tithes, and that to stimulate members to pay tithes they overdraw the picture of God's blessing to the tither. We should remember that by far the greater portion of God's blessing is future, not present, as Jesus answered Peter's query: "He shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, . . . and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:28-30).

Although the New Testament contains no direct command to give one tenth of one's increase as a tithe, the principle of giving according as one is able is stated repeatedly. Jesus denounced the hypocritical Pharisees for paying "tithes of mint and anise and cummin," and omitting "the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith," concluding his statement with the words: "*these ought ye to have done*, and not to leave the other undone." In other words, judgment, mercy and faith were of primary importance, but paying tithes should not be omitted.

For a time during the Apostolic Age the early Church had all things in common in order that they might the more ably carry on the work of spreading the gospel. We are not informed how long this plan lasted.

A casual survey of the New Testament Epistles provides a glimpse into how the problem of giving to the Lord was handled during Apostolic times.

The church at Corinth were advised to take up a collection for needy saints (I Cor. 16:1-2). Acts 11:29 records that the brethren of Antioch were determined to send relief to the brethren which dwelt in Judea. But this was for every one according

to his ability. No stipulated amount was binding on any one individual.

In II Corinthians 8:1-4, Paul tried to incite the members of the church at Corinth to greater liberality in giving by pointing out the liberality of the church at Macedonia, which liberality was of a deeper sort: they had first given "of themselves." God wants us to give of ourselves. He wants givers, not gifts. Verse 12 points out this acceptable giving, but no amount is specified: "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." Galatians 2:10 speaks of remembering the poor, but again the amount to be given was left to the judgment of the giver.

## To whom should I pay my tithe?

To the church which you are convinced is teaching true religion. You should tithe to the church which in accordance with Paul's statement to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good," proclaims only what can be amply supported by and harmonized with true Bible teaching.

**If I decide to give a tithe to the Megiddo Mission Church, what will my money be used for?**

The money received by this church in tithes is not used to support the minister, the choir, the organist, or any church officials. These services are all voluntary, in keeping with the principle stated by the apostle Paul, who labored with his own hands that he might be "chargeable to no man" (II Cor. 11:9; II Thess. 3:8). Nor does tithe money contribute to the upkeep of any rental or business property which the church may own. Tithe money is used exclusively for the spiritual work of the Church itself, that is, to support the printing and publishing department, all advertising and mailing of church literature, and all missionary activities of the church.

## How should I figure the amount of my tithe?

A tithe is generally understood to be a tenth part of one's increase, not of his gross income. The amount of your tithe should be based on your increase, that is, your net income, whether from wages, Social Security, or a business venture. ("Increase" excludes any expenses involved in obtaining that increase, such as auto expense or wages paid to business employees, etc.) (Continued on page 19)



# A Long-Term Promise

**I**N this lax world today, promises are made indiscriminately and quite frequently are broken. The promisor fails to weigh the import of his pledge and treats lightly his obligation to the promisee. It is too easy to promise and then lose all memory of the vow.

Such are human promises; but not so the divine.

When the heavenly Father makes a promise, He is faithful in performing. He will not deceive. His Word is true from the beginning, and every one of His righteous judgments endures forever (Ps. 119:60). In contrast to many an earthly promise, He will not forget. The Lord God is "a merciful God; he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them" (Deut. 4:31). He will not change. "For I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal. 3:6). Above all He has power to accomplish: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:11). For Him who has created the heaven and the earth, there is nothing too hard (Jer. 32:17, 19).

A priceless promise cherished by all lovers of God is found in Isaiah. It is the promise of the Prince of Peace who would come to take the throne of David and rule forever (Isa. 9:6-7). The disciples, thinking the prophecy would be fulfilled in their day, expected the Kingdom to immediately appear. Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, disabused them of the erroneous idea by telling them the parable of the man who went into a far country for a long time (Matt. 25:14-19). The promise, He said, was not less valid; its fulfillment was simply not for that time.

On the memorable night of the Last Supper, Jesus from the depths of His heart communed with the disciples, and many were the admonitions He gave. Full well He knew that a little while hence He would be taken by cruel conspirators. He revealed to them that He would be going to the Father and warned them of the resentment and the persecutions that awaited them in a world of which they were forbidden a part. To soothe the sorrow and alleviate the void His departure would make, He disclosed to them the knowledge of His return by the promise, "I will come again. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:1-3).

May, 1973

Later, at the Ascension, the angels confirmed the Master's words, saying, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? 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).

Paul gives the Ephesian brethren the assurance of seeing the Master at His second advent; and Titus, Paul's son-in-the-faith, exhorts us to look for the glorious appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ (Tit. 2:11-13). In the concluding verses of Revelation the promise is verified again: "He who testifies to all this says, 'It is true! I am coming very soon!' " (Goodspeed).

After enumerating many of God's shining heroes, Hebrews 11 says, "All these won a glowing testimony to their faith, but they did not then and there receive the fulfillment of the promise. God had something better planned for our day, and it was not his plan that they should reach perfection without us" (Phillips Translation). Throughout the pages of Holy Writ we are constantly reminded of this covenant and though as yet it is unfulfilled, it is still unbroken. The day and hour no man knows, but it *shall* be fulfilled.

The heirs of His promise in these closing days of Gentile times, days of tension, trial and uncertainty, are enduring in a lesser degree the same afflictions encountered by men and women of old. We need not think it strange, for Paul said that all who would live godly in Christ Jesus should suffer persecution. But we have the same hope that was theirs.

Whether Christ's coming be early or late, we need not grow weary if we are employing every remaining moment of time in getting ready. We need every moment, for the longsuffering of God will not always wait. The signs of the times bespeak that the hours of salvation's day are fast closing in. Therefore let us keep our lights burning and our hearts open in readiness to receive Him when He knocks; for without fail He will come again, when the term of His promise has expired. ●●

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## What time is it?

Time to do well.  
Time to live better,  
Give up that grudge,  
Answer that letter;  
Speak the kind word  
To sweeten a sorrow,  
Do that kind deed  
You would leave till  
Tomorrow.

# Misusing the Past

THE writer of Ecclesiastes is the most pessimistic of Biblical authors—he has ample reason to be—yet he makes some vivid observations of human life. In this short book of the Old Testament, sometimes called a “medley of proverbs,” is this startling thought: “Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this” (Eccl. 7:10).

This text deserves our consideration because it goes counter to what is commonly believed. We have celebrated the past. We have revered the past. We have learned from the past. We have turned to the past as a source of wisdom and strength. Very well, but over against all this the writer of Ecclesiastes warns of lurking danger: “Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.”

Consider his point. Are we in danger of misusing the past? Is it possible that the past can become more of a problem in our lives than a power? Think of some of the possible misuses of the past.

When we romanticize a vanished past to escape from present reality, we are surely misusing the past.

Many examples of this type of misusing the past are to be found in the Bible, but most memorable is the story of Lot's wife. Lot had been warned to flee from the condemned city of Sodom. The angel was leading, and Lot and his family were instructed never to look back. But Lot's wife, still yearning for the pleasures of a remembered past, defied the divine decree and looked back—and lost her life. Nostalgically she tried to see and feel just once more what had been real in the past. And from her backward look she became a petrified piece of salt, a monument to the futility and danger of the backward look—the look that becomes a misuse of the past.

Consider a second possible misuse of the past. We are misusing the past when the long arm of the past attempts to determine and dominate the present. The apostle Paul faced this problem when dealing with Jews who had accepted the teachings of Christ. So accustomed were they to Jewish

habits and ceremonies and practices that to convince them of the worthlessness of their former way of life was difficult indeed. Even the apostle Peter had to learn by means of a vision that he should fellowship with Gentile Christians.

Another misuse of the past is probably the one most common and most dangerous in your life and mine. The past can burden us with unbearable weights of remorse, regret and resentment. When we allow the past to darken the present, we are misusing it.

The past can be a ball and chain to the human spirit. When we cling to it and live it over and over, we are guilty of crime, the great crime of wasting the present. Our true freedom comes when we can capture the lessons of the past, stop regretting our failures, and do whatever lies within our power to do in the present. Regret is worse than futile, for there is nothing past that we can bring back to us by longing for it; there is only an eternally new *Now*.

The great word in the New Testament is *Now*. *Now* is the word that beats the rhythm of life. Yesterday can become a prison, a bondage of the past. Tomorrow can become an excuse for procrastination. The only given time is today—this hour—this moment.

Forget the past and live the present hour;  
Now is the time to work, the time to fill  
The soul with noblest thoughts, the time to will  
Heroic deeds, to use whatever dower  
Heaven has bestowed, to test our utmost power.  
Now is the time to love, and better still,  
To live for God, and over passing ill  
To rise triumphant. . . .  
Be glad today, dread not tomorrow's fears;  
Be brave today, the darkest night will pass.  
And golden rays will usher in the dawn;  
Who conquers now shall rule the coming years.

The writer of Ecclesiastes was right: “Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.” Why? because “*now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation.”●

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

# UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

## Original Sin

THE doctrine commonly known as "original sin" and accepted by most major denominations today, has resulted largely from a too literal interpretation of the book of Genesis. Even in the light of twentieth century scientific knowledge, many cling to the belief that the earth was created in a six-day sequence such as our present week; that God made man in His own image and that from this man the Almighty took a rib and made a woman. Carrying the literalism still further, even to the point of absurdity, they teach that Eve was tempted by a literal serpent (representing Satan), and that as a result both she and Adam sinned; and on the assumption that all humanity descended from this first couple they base the doctrine of "original sin," a sinful nature with which man is born through inheritance.

But among theologians we find a few dissenters, some of whom exhibit an exceptional understanding of the book of Genesis. One of these theologians is the Reverend Peter DeRosa, who states that what "we find in the early chapters of Genesis is a pictorial representation of theological truth." He is confident that God did not intend us to understand that plants were made before the sun, nor that God created the world in six literal days. He further describes Genesis as containing "the deepest truth of all, God's own truth, which comes to us in the form of ancient imagery. Genesis is teaching us that God, the Unmade, is the sovereign and undisputed Lord of all creation. He is not one deity among many, . . . not a tribal god, . . . not a nature god like the Canaanite Baals," but a God on which everything that exists depends.\*

To accept Genesis as an allegory is the first step to an understanding of the Scriptures. Without the prop of a literal interpretation of the first three chapters of Genesis, the theory of original sin falls of its own weight.

It is a Bible principle that every person is responsible for his or her own sin. God's unequivocal law remains as it has always been: "Whatsoever a

man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). "If he sows seed in the field of his lower nature, he will reap from it a harvest of corruption, but if he sows in the field of the Spirit, the Spirit will bring him a harvest of eternal life" (Gal. 6:7-8 NEB).

It has been said that "Death is as natural as life." Certainly this is true; the death of the body is a natural occurrence because of mortality, not a punishment for an inherited sin. Theology in general fails to recognize that death in the Scriptures is not always natural death. The choice that God sets before men is one of life and death, good and evil. But it is not biological death that men can avoid by choosing the good; rather it is penal death, the death or wages of sin that can be avoided. Nowhere in the Bible do we find natural death attributed to a man's sins except in cases where God brought it about as immediate punishment. (This subject is covered in this study.)

We have learned that sin, according to the Bible, is not something inherited from our ancestors, but something for which we ourselves are responsible. We learned that it did not originate with Adam, but that it is conceived in the hearts of all sinners. The individual in whose heart the sin is developed has the option of stanching the evil thought or allowing it to grow and become sin. It is entirely a personal matter; no one else puts the sin in the heart and no one else can remove it.

In this issue we will continue our study of Original Sin, following our outline:

- V. The Fruits of Sin
  - A. Sin Punished by Immediate Death
  - B. Punishment Other Than Death
  - C. Sin—the Wages Not Yet Paid
  - D. Other Fruits of Sin
  - E. How We Nullify Sin

Sin, as rendered in some translations, is literally "missing the mark." When the Bible says that "all have sinned," it is actually saying that "All have missed the mark," all have sinned, not because

\* Peter DeRosa, *Christ and Original Sin*, pp. 74, 76.



Adam sinned or "missed the mark," but because they themselves "missed the mark." And as we will learn from this and succeeding lessons, contrary to present-day theological teaching, men are not cleansed from their sin by the righteousness of another. The Bible states categorically: "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God. . . . The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 14:14; 18:20). Only the sinner shall bear the punishment of his own sin; only the righteous shall be delivered by his righteousness.

## V. THE FRUITS OF SIN

"The wages of sin is death," said the great Apostle. It was such words as these that stirred the early Christians to separate themselves from a corrupt society by which they were surrounded. But by the end of the seventh century, the faith of the Apostolic Church had been lost and the teachings of Jesus had been obscured by a maze of man-made creeds and doctrines. A few centuries later, the Catholic Church had degraded to the point of selling indulgences, a system by which one could draw on the merits of another to cover his sinful deeds.

It was against such practices that such reformers as Calvin and Luther protested. But unfortunately, when they withdrew from the mother church they carried with them the majority of her man-made creeds and doctrines, not the least of which was the doctrine of original sin which remained intact.

Today we live in an age when sin is taken lightly, overlooked, and passed off as "just human nature." The cries of a few against the multitude of sins of the world cause hardly a ripple on the sea of nations, the great majority of humanity. Because God has been silent these many years, His influence has diminished and His precepts are flouted. Because the wages of sin are not paid on a current basis, men are less aware of the fruits of sin. But sin is no less grievous in God's sight today than it was in olden days.

Under Moses' law, received from the Almighty Himself, judgment was swift and punishment certain. It was "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." Sin was recognized as such and men had to pay for their evil deeds, often with their lives. We will review some cases where sin was punished when it was committed.

### A. Sin Punished by Immediate Death

Today men break God's laws with impunity, but there were times in history when God paid the wages of sin when that sin was committed. A defiant Korah, Dathan and Abiram and "all that appertained unto them" paid with their lives for challenging the authority of Moses and Aaron. Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, "died before the Lord" for doing that "which he commanded them not." Whole generations of people perished in the flood because "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). The inhabitants of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah perished when "the Lord rained upon [them] brimstone and fire from . . . heaven" (Gen. 19:24).

Some twenty centuries later, God was still meting out the wages of sin. "Great fear came upon all the church" after Ananias and Sapphira were cut off for conspiring together to defraud the Lord (Acts 5:1-11). And just a few years later Herod was smitten by the angel of the Lord "because he gave not God the glory" and he died (Acts 12).

**Such incidents as these and others that could be mentioned indicate that God held men responsible for their sin and in each case the punishment was death. In no case was any allowance made for an inherent sinful nature.**

### B. Punishment Other Than Death

Death was not always the punishment for sin. Sin was punishable by varying degrees of harshness, but it was never overlooked. Nations as well as individuals were punished. The children of Israel prospered under the rule of the Judges as long as they followed the Lord, but when they forsook the Lord He punished them. Israel's history under the Judges is a cycle of rebellion, retribution, repentance and restoration, but the lesson remained unlearned. The most common punishment at this time was defeat in battle and oppression by heathen kings. **In each case it was God's doing and punishment for their own sin, not that of their ancestors.**

Other individuals were punished by the hand of God. The wicked Jeroboam, king of Israel had his hand withered because he worshiped the golden calves and taught his people to do likewise (I Kings 12:28; 13:6). Gehazi was smitten with leprosy for his sin of covetousness (II Kings 5:15-27). King Saul was deprived of his kingdom because of his incomplete obedience (I Samuel 15). Elymas the sorcerer was struck blind because he withstood the words of Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13:8-11). **Again, in each instance, the individual was held respon-**

sible for his sin and punished accordingly. There is no suggestion of Adamic condemnation.

### C. Other Fruits of Sin

While the ultimate fruit of sin is death, penal death, at the hand of a just God, there are other fruits of sin mentioned in the Scriptures. The Psalmist said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18), hence we learn that if there is iniquity in us, our prayers will not be heard. We learn that sin also:

1. **Alienates from God.** Paul called on Christians to "walk not as other Gentiles walk," because such a life, a life in sin, alienates from God (Eph. 4:17-18). The New English Bible renders the text, "Give up living like pagans . . . for they are strangers to the life that is in God." **It was the way they lived, the things they did which alienated them, not an inherent sinful nature.**

2. **Separates from God.** "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." These words from Isaiah 59:2 may have formed the basis for the words of Paul quoted above. The Prophet was warning the people that the fault lay with them and not with the Almighty; it was not that He **could** not hear but that He **would** not hear because of their sins. **It was their own sins that caused the breakdown in communication with God, not the sins of their forefathers.**

3. **Cuts off all hope.** "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth," said the Wise Man, "so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death" (Prov. 11:7, 19). Again, it is **only the sinner himself that shall suffer. "The hope of unjust men" shall perish; death is the result of their own sins.**

4. **Ends in death.** "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" asked Paul, "for the end of those things is death." And again Paul asked, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" (Rom. 6:21; I Cor. 6:9). The end result of sin, unrighteousness, is death after that fact is made known at the Judgment. **But the penalty will be only for the one who committed the unrighteous acts, and no one else.**

### D. How We Nullify Sin

We have learned that sin separates from God, sin causes God not to hear our prayers, sin keeps men out of the Kingdom of God, destroys all hope of a future life and ends in death. **But there is a redeeming factor: Sin can be overcome, its effects can be nullified.** Practically all Christendom declares that it is Christ's death on the cross, a

vicarious atonement in which humanity may share by the simple expedient of belief, that nullifies sin. **But all creeds and catechisms notwithstanding, we are confident that this is not the teaching of the Scriptures.**

Sin, we learned is a personal matter. The individual performs the sinful act of his own volition; he is not predestined to sin nor has he inherited sin from his forefathers. Likewise, overcoming sin is a personal matter. It does not require the blood of Christ literally speaking, but to overcome sin requires a death to sin, a death which Christ accomplished, and "to which [we are] called, because Christ suffered on [our] behalf, and thereby left [us] an example; it is for [us] to follow in his steps" (I Pet. 2:21, NEB). It is obvious that Peter did not refer to Christ's literal death at the hands of His enemies, else we would all likewise have to be martyred to "follow in his steps."

Peter explains further how sin is nullified in the same chapter: "Remembering that Christ endured bodily suffering, you must arm yourselves with a temper of mind like his. When a man has thus endured bodily suffering he has finished with sin, and for the rest of his days on earth he may live, not for the things that men desire, but for what God wills. . . . you must lead an ordered and sober life, given to prayer. Above all, keep your love for one another at full strength, because love cancels innumerable sins" (I Pet. 4:1, 8, NEB).

If Christ did not do it for us, how then do we nullify sin? For our answer, we will go to the Scriptures. The answers are abundant, but we will mention only a few.

1. **God's call to Abraham.** One of the first examples to be found in the Scriptures is found in Genesis 17:1 where it is recorded that the Lord appeared to Abraham "and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." Abraham had lived among the idolatrous people of Ur, but he must now change his ways, separate himself from his forbears and walk as God would have him walk. **To be perfect, to form a godly character, nullifies sin. There is no suggestion of the necessity of any propitiatory sacrifice.**

2. **God's Word through Micah.** Speaking through the prophet Micah, God let it be known centuries ago what He requires of His followers: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (6:8). **To obey these directives is to nullify sin. The verses immediately preceding verse 8 condemn human sacrifice as well as the sacrifice of other material possessions, hence we can be sure God did**

not require the death of His innocent son for the transgressions of all humanity.

**3. God's Word through Isaiah.** "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (55:7). **These words make it clear that if the sinner will turn from his sin and return to the ways of God, he will be pardoned and accepted. Sin is thus nullified.**

**4. God's Word through Ezekiel.** "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him" (Ezek. 33:15-16). **To turn from sin and do as God requires nullifies sin so completely that none of his former sins shall so much as be mentioned at Judgment. Nothing is required but to stop sinning and do what is right.**

**5. God's Word through His Son.** During His short ministry Jesus made no mention of nullifying sin through His approaching death on the cross or through His blood. Theology has read that into His words. His teaching was plain and understandable: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: ... because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life,"; "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me"; "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"; "If ye love me, keep my commandments"; "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me"; "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father,"; "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you"; "The flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"; "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love"; "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment"; "And what I say unto you I say unto all, WATCH" (Matt. 7:13-14; Lk. 9:23; John 8:32; 14:15; 14:6, 21; 15:3; 6:63; 15:10; Mark 12:30; 13:37).

**These direct commands, and many, many more contained in the Gospels tell us how sin is nullified; it is by doing the commandments.**

**6. God's Word through the apostles.** Said Paul: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. ... cast off the works of darkness, and ... put on the armour of light. ... present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, ... and

be not conformed to this world. ... Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, ... Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you" (Rom 12: 21; 13:12; 12:1-2; Eph. 4:29, 31). Paul's writings are rife with commands directed to the various churches of his time, but let us remember that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." Paul was telling them and us how to nullify sin, how to become clean in God's sight.

James likewise had much to say which, if followed, would nullify sin. We will add a few of his commands which complement the words of Paul: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, ... for ... faith without works is dead. ... Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. ... But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:22; 2:26; 4:8; 1:4).

**Paul and James are often accused of teaching diverse means to salvation, but a careful study of their works indicates they are in complete agreement that the only way to nullify sin and be saved is through both faith and works of righteousness.**

The writer to the Hebrews may or may not have been an apostle; we are not told. Nevertheless, he gave some good admonitions concerning nullifying sin: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; ... and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as [we] see the day approaching"; "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise"; "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross ... " (Heb. 10:23-25, 36; 12:2). The writer called our attention to Jesus as an example of one who had overcome sin; endured all for "the joy that was set before him." **Laying aside every sin leads to perfection of character, death to sin, which is sin nullified.**

#### MEMORY VERSE

**"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11).**

*Reprints of these studies are available upon request.*



# The Lift of the Far View

*"Who is made... after the power of an endless life"*  
—Hebrews 7:16

IN the midst of a lengthy discussion in the Epistle to the Hebrews appears this intriguing but tremendously dynamic description of Jesus: "Who is made, . . . after the power of an endless life." The author has been comparing the old with the new; the outworn, outmoded, earthbound rules of the Jewish system of laws and customs with the new and infinitely superior system of faith and obedience inaugurated by Christ. The former was a priesthood "after the law of a carnal commandment," i. e., it was based on physical qualifications of inheritance and ancestry. Christ came, a priest of a higher order, with higher qualifications—"on a basis of a power flowing from a life that cannot end. For the Scripture bears witness: 'You are a priest forever . . .'" (Heb. 7:16-17, Williams Translation).

Here is Jesus introduced to us with His authority independent of the temporary ordinances and customs of the Jewish system out of which He came. Jesus has been perfected, judged, exalted, glorified, freed forever from the bounds of time and circumstance. The author of the Epistle has taken the whole matter out of the familiar and ordinary, out of the limitations of the human realm and has placed it in line with the living, creative, ongoing, cosmic force behind the universe. We see Jesus in a long-range perspective, an integral part of eternity itself. His whole existence is vivified by the power of an endless future life.

Life! it is a miracle which holds our keenest attention; no wonder that Jesus should have been seized by its prospects and possibilities. Life is the key to all that is profitable, pleasant and delightful. Life on this planet exists by so narrow a margin. It walks a straitened path between threats of disease on the one side and accident on the other, forever on the precipice of extinction. Instinctively we cling to it. And in a desperate desire to extend it, we seek to understand it, to wrest from it its secrets, to live it to the full, to extricate it from the bounds of time and temporality. But here we reach

the limit of mortal capability; we must look up. We must look to Jesus, for only He of all our earth-born race is "made . . . after the power of an endless life."

How splendidly those words describe the whole purpose and personality of Jesus—"made . . . after the power of an endless life." Even during His mortal career Jesus was no ordinary human being pursuing a fruitless round of work and worry and rest. His whole life was propelled by a higher power. "My meat," He said, "is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. . . . I am come in my Father's name. . . . I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:17, 43, 30). So perfect and absolute was His dedication to that higher power that He could say, "I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. . . . for I do always those things that please him" (John 8:28-29). Here lay the secret of His power—obedience, unflinching, unfailing, unquestioning obedience.

Thus when we try to learn the art of mastering life; when we desire to know how to live it so as to extract from it the greatest good—in this world and in the world to come; when we seek to learn the scale of values by which we may determine what is really most worthwhile, how fitting that we look to Jesus. Into the short months and years that He moved among the children of men He crowded so much insight of the depths of life, so much of mental illumination and aspiration, combined with a flawlessness that equalled moral perfection, that His brief life has become the measuring stick by which all of us can measure our achievements. How did He do it? He lived "after the power of an endless life." The great forces of eternal and ongoing life flowed through Him on to the future. He lived by the lift of the far view.

Many scholars have been determined to locate

Jesus in His exact setting historically, socially and politically. They have striven with painstaking accuracy to know what the people of His time thought, how they lived and with what ideas they approached life. But such knowledge, interesting though it be, does not begin to touch the real Source of the power that made Jesus what He was and is. Suppose we could describe accurately the philosophy of life generally accepted in His time—even that did little to lift Caiaphas or Judas to goodness and greatness. Suppose we could finally settle the last detail of the history of His betrayal, His death, His burial—certainly those were not the facts which electrified and empowered those who were nearest to Him.

It was not the physical, the historical, or the legal, political or social features which distinguished Jesus from His contemporaries. It was the resurrection and the endlessness of that prospect His Father had set before Him—*life*. Jesus was a specialist on life. He was its embodiment, its champion. He was called “the son of man” because He seemed to have within Him the most perfect exemplification of all the highest and finest that humanity can produce. He was called “the son of God” because He belonged to the Eternal Being who is the inventor and giver of life, the author of immortality; and He was expressing the Eternal’s purposes in His own daily life on earth.

The will of that God was His will. When people listened to Him, they felt the power and authority of that God in every word. When they followed Him they felt the thrill of the cause of that God. Even in the dire moments of His suffering on the cross there was a haunting consciousness, even within those who were His executioners, that surely this Man had something beyond their power to kill.

Through the centuries numerous doctrines have been formulated about Jesus, the majority of them inconsistent with His own life and teaching. Man uses his intellect at its best only to find it impossible to crowd into words the force, the dynamic element in Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus eludes the dogmas; He is bigger than our intellectual pigeon-holes; He marches on, growing, changing in the same sense that life is growing and changing. While in one sense He is “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever,” in another sense He is new and vital and contemporary. There is nothing static about Him; He is no perfect marble statue. Jesus was made “after the power of an endless life,” and the example of His life reaches even to us in this century.

Whence came Jesus’ power?

Among the greatest of Jesus’ interpreters undoubtedly were the writer of John’s Gospel and the

Apostle to the Gentiles. In their writings are profound explanations of the over-mastering power of Jesus. They describe Him as a man from among His brethren with His entire life focused forward. “In him was life; and the life was the light of men,” writes the beloved John of the logos or divine wisdom personified in the life of Christ (John 1:4). “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:26). “[Him] God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it,” says Peter (Acts 2:24). The apostle Paul wrote of “Christ, who is our life” (Col. 3:4). Indeed, He *is* our life; for only when He returns will we, if worthy, receive of “glory and honour and immortality, eternal life” (Rom. 2:7).

To these men, the words they penned were attempts to express to others the reality of Jesus by which they had been gripped. These writers, mastered by the magnetic and powerful personality of Jesus, felt and knew that Jesus “was made... after the power of an endless life.” They could not explain His tremendous accumulation of living and vital power; but they were thrilled by the fact that right among them had lived the future King of the whole earth. They were gripped by His message, activated by His challenge.

Take again their words about His rising from the dead. They could not explain what they had experienced after this resurrection without trying to describe how they had been caught up on a rushing spiritual current. At first it seemed impossible. They had seen Him crucified, to be sure, but only a few hours and He was once again among them! It was impossible for Him to be holden of death; and the touch and the thrill of that personality this side of the grave was even more powerful than it was on the other side. While the debate went on as to exactly what had happened, the disciples went forth everywhere to preach the gospel of Jesus—crucified, resurrected, glorified, and returning—a gospel that changed lives, revived hope, and electrified all whom it touched.

In what way does Jesus’ life affect us? It challenges us as one living “after the power of an endless life.” He has the same effect upon us now as He did then. His humility shames our self-exalting pride. His largeness of soul defies our cheap smallness. He calls us to that which is noble and heroic; He inspires within us all that is holy and pure.

These are the realities to which He brings us. He still lives “after the power of an endless life,” and it is this far view of Him and in Him that teaches us to lift our eyes from our short-range problems and by longer vision see all things work-

ing together in one divine plan for our eternal good. It is our privilege to feel here and now the lift of the far view that inspired Him. We can take each piece of work in which we are engaged and give it larger meaning by putting it against the perspective of the far view.

As men and women whose destination is the Kingdom of God, we must learn to see every circumstance and event of our lives as becoming a part of that great enterprise. Just as a man bending over a pattern in a mosaic, fitting tiny pieces of stone of different colors into some small figure, gets his real inspiration by taking his eyes from it at times and seeing the large sketch of the whole picture, so we must learn to look up and get the lift of the far view.

Many things cannot be understood unless they are put against the far view. The goals which we are unable to realize; the plans that crash about our heads; the sacrifices that seem so hard and so needless to our short-range vision; the friends that turn against us because of our involvement in the cause of righteousness; all these are meaningless in temporal perspective—they are self-defeating. Without the far view we would die, brokenhearted, unfulfilled. But *with* the far view we may be like the heroes in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, of whom it is said: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:13). Had these men judged everything and measured their work by the period of persecution in which they lived, they would have seemed as great failures to themselves and others as Jesus seemed when on the cross. But in the light of the far view they gained hope, and in that distant prospect we judge them infinitely more important than those who beat them down and persecuted them.

Hammurabi was a great king and a man of tremendous power in the ancient civilization out of which Abraham went; but it is Abraham, not Hammurabi—the man who left, not the man who stayed; the man who, to those in that country, seemingly failed, instead of the king, who seemingly remained in power—who lives on in the plan of God and whose faith has been a stimulus through the ages. The power of Egypt erected gigantic works and physical monuments on its soils, but the intangible and seemingly unimportant words and teachings of Moses, whom Pharaoh rejected, have lived on while the Nile-valley civilization has gone into eclipse. Rome, in all its vast power and grandeur, came and went; but the humble Galilean, whom it crucified, lives on eternally.

We cannot judge whether a cause is right or wrong by the crowd that follows it. We must think and act and plan in the light of God's purpose, not according to the plaudits of our contemporaries.

In the midst of a bemired and soggy world, with its cynicism and doubt and dread, we still can live pure in the prospects of the far view. We still can live after the power of an endless life and feel the thrill of a faith that reaches across time and strikes hands with the God of eternity.

We are in a great procession; we work in a cause that moves across the ages; we are within the compass of a power that is as resistless as the force that inspired Jesus—"endless life." Why shouldn't we feel the lift of the far view? ●●

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## On Paying Tithes

*(Continued from page 10)*

### If I am in debt, should I pay tithes?

The Bible principle of giving, as aforementioned, is according to every man's ability. If you are in debt, the money is not actually yours to give.

Our honored founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, was aware that among his followers were some who were just about able to make ends meet financially without that additional 10% drain on their meager income. Hence, he would not accept tithes from any member if that member were in debt—that is, if he owed a grocery bill, or a doctor bill, or his house rent was not paid, etc. (A mortgage on a home, a farm, or a business, could not be considered as a debt, but rather an investment.) ●●

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## Eleven instructive booklets

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WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?  
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# Bible A B C's



**N**OAH was a very good man who lived long ago. The Bible tells us that Noah "walked with God." Do you know what it means to walk with God? It means that we must love God very much and obey His commandments, just as Noah did. He loved God and was willing to listen to Him; but he lived in a very wicked place.

One day God told Noah to build a great big boat. Do you know why? It was because God was going to send a lot of rain that would cover up all the bad people and drown them. Noah warned the people over and over again that God was going to send a flood to punish them for all the bad things they were doing. But I am sad to say that the people would not listen to Noah. They just laughed and would not believe him and kept right on doing as they wanted to.

But Noah knew that God was telling the truth, so he and his sons worked very hard in order to get the boat built before the rain started. They knew that God would take care of them if they did just as God had told them.

Finally the boat was all fin-

**N** is for  
**N**oah

ished. The day had come for Noah and his family and his animals to go into the boat where they would be safe and dry. They closed the door real tight so no water could get in. Then it rained and rained for forty days and forty nights. The water rose higher and higher so that the boat began to float. All the wicked people who would not obey God drowned.

After a long time the rain stopped and the water started going down. Noah sent a dove out of the boat to see if it could find a home, but it came back because there was still too much water. He sent the dove two more times, and it found a home on the dry land and did not return to the boat any more. So Noah knew that it was time to come out of the boat, and how happy he and his family were

to go outside again! Do you know the first thing he did when he came out of the boat? He built an altar to God and prayed and thanked God for delivering him and his family from the terrible flood. God was very pleased with Noah and blessed him.

God will be just as pleased with you if you try to be like Noah and do the things that God tells us to do in the Bible. There is much wickedness in the world. But if you are good, God will take care of you and keep you safe and help you to walk with Him. ••

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Once a very little robin  
Sat outside the kitchen door;  
He wanted very much to go  
And hop upon the floor.  
"Oh, no," said Mother Robin,  
"You'd better stay with me,  
For little birds are safest  
When sitting in a tree."

"I don't care," said Little Robin,  
"And I don't think you know;  
Inside that lovely kitchen  
Is where I want to go!"  
So down he flew, the cat was there  
And it is sad to say,  
But 'twas the end of Robin  
Who wanted his own way.



# Climbing the Hills

*"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills"*

—Psalm 121:1

SOME of you have been spending your holidays among the hills, and if you have been among the hills there is one thing, I know, that you wanted to do—you wanted to climb them. That is the way hills are. They keep calling and calling to you, "Come and climb us; come and see the wonderful things we can show you from our summits." And they keep on calling until you just have to start climbing.

So you gathered a few provisions and set off with a company of friends. Sometimes you lost the path and had difficulty finding it again. Sometimes you ran ahead of your companions and called back to them from your superior position, telling them of all the wonderful things you could see from above. It was tiring, of course, but you did not mind that—you wanted to get to the top—the very top. Often you thought you were approaching the summit, only to find when you reached that point that there were more heights beyond.

At last you reached the very highest point—and was it worth it all? You looked down on the fields and villages far, far below, and you marvelled at the thought of the God who could create so much. No sound reached you but the faint bleat of a sheep in the valley or the bark of a dog, or the far-off sound of cars on the highway.

Now, boys and girls, as you go through life, I want you to do a little hill-climbing. I want you to lift your eyes to the hills and answer their call. Don't be content with the low levels. Don't be afraid of the hills. You will meet many of them—hills of difficulty, hills of hard work. You may avoid them by walking around them, but if you shirk them you will never reach the heights of character that God wants you to reach.

But hills of difficulty are not the only hills we have to climb. There are also hills of goodness. Don't be content to remain on the low levels. That temptation will come to you sooner or later, and you will want to be satisfied with what you are. But that is a poor way of looking at things. Rather try to be like the small boy who stood up in a religious meeting once and said, "I want to be gooder and gooder, and better and better, until there's no bad left in me."

That's what God wants us to be—better and better all the time. Why should we trouble to climb

these hills of goodness? Because Jesus is coming back to this earth to set up a glorious, eternal Kingdom. And in that Kingdom only those who are good and pure and holy will be permitted to live. So we want to be good and obedient and then we can live with Him forever in His Kingdom. ●●

## The Living Creatures

*(Continued from page 6)*

win Christ. For worldly fame and distinction men will suffer hardship and privation only to find the crown that they attain is corruptible, a bubble that bursts with a touch. "Now they do it," says Paul, "to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible"; and only those who endure to the end will obtain it. "He conquers who endures."

### The Intelligence of a Man

The third living creature had the face of a man. This suggests the mental faculties that distinguish the intelligent being from the rest of the animal creation: intellectual insight, the powers of reason, reflection, retention and decision. Those who compose this glorified living being will have learned to direct all their mental powers toward spiritually constructive ends, to promote the growth of their inner lives. These exceptional persons will have expanded to the utmost their mental power in moral discernment.

One of the most significant aspects of the symbol of the "face of a man" is the mental faculty which permits him to learn to discern between good and evil, to discriminate between loyalty and disloyalty, goodness and evil, truth and falsehood. Upon the sharpness of this discrimination in our own lives will depend our likeness to the moral quality of the third living creature. When we lose our sense that good is good and evil is always evil, we have become evil and faithless to a faith which has lost its power over us.

God has given us minds, and He intends us to use them. He wants us to be thinking, reasoning beings, not rendering a blind obedience but an intelligent, understanding service. He wants us to know what we believe and in whom we believe and to be able to defend our faith to all who may ask "a reason of the hope that is in [us] with meekness and fear" (I Pet. 3:15). And He wants us to be among those who, through use and practice, have added to their natural acumen the super-quality of exercised sense by which they can judge between right and wrong from God's point of view.

Thinking is a Christian imperative. God gave us an intellect by which we are able to order our lives by the light of His knowledge and truth. If we fail to use it, we are responsible to Him. Only the thinking man is a whole man, a cultivated man, a mature man—a Christian.

Another quality which distinguishes the face of a man from his animal counterpart is vision. The intelligent being is capable of looking beyond the horizon of this fleeting present to eternal realities afar off; however, unfortunately, all intelligent creatures do not exercise this capability. The apostle Peter speaks of those who, lacking Christian virtue, are "blind, and cannot see afar off." Esau was nearsighted. He saw no further than his hand could grasp—the mess of pottage. His brother Jacob had the face of a man—he saw something beyond. He saw the grandeur of the eternal Day looming up before him in all its beauty. Hence, he readily exchanged the morsel of meat for the birth-right.

In a time of great danger, the young man, the servant of Elisha, looked and all he could see was the mighty army of the enemy. He cried out, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" And Elisha prayed, saying, "Lord, . . . open his eyes that he may see" (II Kings 6). And when the young man looked again the mountain was full of chariots. A host of angels had come to deliver. The young man's sight was limited. He needed the broader vision, and God gave it to him.

In the parable of our Lord, how nearsighted was the man whose ground brought forth plentifully. Seeing the wealth he had gained with his own hands mounting so high, he cried out, "What shall I do?" His one and only thought was to pull down his barns and build greater. Then, his wealth secure and plenteous, he could sit down, eat, and be merry. His vision being so narrow and limited, he never once caught a glimpse of the eternal riches, the treasures which lay beyond, kept in store for the righteous; and even before his plans had taken shape, even that very night, his soul was required of him.

How clear was the vision of our great Example. He was able to look beyond, and for the joy set before Him refused to reach out His hand to grasp any of the petty transient things of this life that might cause Him to lose the eternal glory His Father had offered Him.

Look at Moses, the great lawgiver, born in Egypt, taken into the palace of the king's daughter and adopted as her own son. Wealth, honor and glory surrounded him. Had he been nearsighted, he would have sought no further; but his vision was broader and greater, and far in the distance

his eye caught a vision of the riches of Christ. His decision was made once and for all. Those great and eternal riches became at once his choice rather than all the wealth of Egypt; he was willing to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

The prophet Jeremiah, one of God's foremost spokesmen, warned against the danger of waiting too late before developing one's vision to look beyond: "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness" (Jer. 13:16). No one can see through the darkness of death, hence the necessity of learning to look beyond with vision during one's lifetime.

All who compose the four living creatures of Revelation 4 had this outstanding capability fully developed, and the "face of a man," the forward-looking faith, kept them pressing toward their goal of immortal life.

### The Face of an Eagle

The fourth living creature had the face of a flying eagle. As a character quality, this figure suggests the exalted living which has become second nature. It is the nature of the eagle to soar; its habitat is the high elevations of the mountain-side, the top of the highest trees, and using his broad, powerful wings, he reaches them with ease.

This soaring quality in a spiritual sense must become part of everyone who hopes to compose the four living creatures. He must strive continually to lift his thoughts above all that is low and earthy, sensual and devilish (James 3:14-18). He must seek the highest levels of conduct. This is described by the apostle Peter as he intreats his brethren: "I beg you, as those whom I love, who live in this world as strangers and 'temporary residents,' to keep clear of the desires of your lower natures, for they are always at war with your souls. Your conduct among the surrounding peoples in your different countries should be always good and right, so that although they may in the usual way slander you as evildoers, yet when disasters come they may glorify God when they see how well you conduct yourselves" (I Pet. 2:11-12, Phillips Translation).

God has always required a superior standard of conduct for His people. To the children of Israel He said, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (Ex. 23:2). God desires the highest and best, "for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." If we would learn to think His thoughts, we must lift ourselves to a higher plane of life and conduct.

"Aim at what is above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God; mind what is above, not what is on earth" (Col. 3:1-2, Moffatt Bible).

Jesus told His disciples that their standard of conduct should be far superior to that of the religious-minded people of His day: "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). That is why Paul wrote of himself: "I keep going on, grasping ever more firmly that purpose for which Christ grasped me. My brothers, I do not consider myself to have fully grasped it even now. But I do concentrate on this: I leave the past behind and with hands outstretched to whatever lies ahead I go straight for the goal—my reward the honor of being called by God in Christ" (Phil. 3:13-14, Phillips Translation). Such thinking, such determination, such pressing makes the living being who has the face of a flying eagle.

And some day the soaring Christian will be abundantly repaid for his efforts. The figure of a flying eagle may also suggest the reward, the promise of being able to come and go with the freedom of the wind (John 3:8). The faithful will be privileged even to mount up with wings, or power, as the eagle, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint (Isa. 40:31). The simile in Revelation 4:7 specifies a "flying eagle"; not an eagle in repose, perched on the edge of his eyrie, but an eagle on the wing. A "flying eagle" suggests exalted action. Every member of that holy community of saints described as the "four living creatures" will be given the power to move with the freedom of the wind. They shall become space travelers in the fullest sense of the word, with the ability to navigate the starry heavens and visit the farthest reaches of God's infinite universe. They will be introduced to space travel—danger-free.

Now let us see these four living, immortal representative creatures in the setting in which the Revelator places them (chapter 4). In their immortal state they now have some significant identifying properties.

The Revelator is describing the new world, composed of men and women who have attained the qualities signified by the four living creatures—they have the courage of a lion, the endurance of an ox, the wisdom that can be attained by human intelligence, and now they have been given the power of a flying eagle, to come and go with the freedom of the wind.

We read further in Rev. 4:8, "And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within." Note that they have "eyes within"—this suggests mental enlighten-

ment. All darkness and evil within has been dispelled by the revealing light of God's law. They had eyes to see themselves, eyes to discern between good and evil, eyes to evaluate their mode of life and perceive their own actions. And now they have been given eyes capable of discerning the motives and intents of the mortal populace over which they rule. Having these "eyes within" they are able to check evil at its source, the heart of man.

Beneath such all-seeing eyes, the nations are appropriately called a "sea of glass": "And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal" (Rev. 4:6). The sea, in Scriptural phraseology, sometimes denotes peoples and nations, as in Rev. 17:15: "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." And these nations now are transparent; they are as glass. Christ and His saints will have the power to read the thoughts and intents of men's hearts. All things will be "naked and open" to the new rulers of earth, designated as the four living creatures.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus possessed this power in a limited way. Of Him it was said: "And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (John 2:25). During the Apostolic Age, those who had Holy Spirit power could also read the thoughts of men, as is evidenced in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. They lied to Peter, saying they had sold the land for less than they had sold it for.

#### Ascribing Praise

What were these four living creatures doing when the Revelator saw them? "And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (v. 8). They are constantly ascribing praise and glory to the God of heaven. They learned during their mortal careers to praise and extol Him for all His goodness and righteousness, and now their praise shall continue through eternity.

"And when those beasts [living creatures] give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:9-11).

Let us use the time given us to develop in our daily lives the qualities of these four living creatures that we with them may become a permanent, enduring part of that bright new world. ●●

# LETTERS

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### Deceased

I just heard through my brother-in-law that Mr. J. K. Korsakoff of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, died on February 16. He was living alone, although he was ninety years old or more. His house burned down and he died two days later in the hospital. (He was a long-time subscriber to the *Megiddo Message*.)

*Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

S. R.

### Add Pressure

We have plenty of excellent examples to follow if we want eternal life; it is up to us as individuals to put pressure on our will power. It can be done—it must be done—the time is getting very short. Ominous clouds are already appearing, and—as in Noah's day—the flood will suddenly come. Jesus warns us of Noah's day, when this determined man kept on building, regardless of scorners and scoffers. Only Noah and his family were saved. Not only faith was required, but works.

*Mumbles, Swansea, South Wales*

W. S.

### Only Through Discipline

Before we can receive the unfading crown of glory when the chief Shepherd makes His appearance, we must "run with patience the race that is set before us." We will have trials, for "it is for discipline that you have to endure"; but the struggle is definitely not without purpose, for it is not in mortal man to even imagine the wonders which God has prepared for all who reach the goal.

Paul truly had every reason to despair, yet he proved himself a true minister of God by his suffering, and could write such wonderfully encouraging words to urge us on. So let us, who live in much better circumstances, change our ways—"off with all malice, all guile and insincerity and envy, and slander of every kind," and on with such qualifications that will render us active and fruitful and successful.

*Swansea, South Wales*

R. B.

### No Work, No Results

I noted your poem, "Results and Roses," with interest. It is so true that if you or a person wants something it is necessary to work for it.

I also wish to convey my appreciation and congratulations to the Megiddo Church for their permissiveness in this regard because I have searched in vain and nowhere have I found a copyright to your publication. I have and take other religious periodicals and they hold a copyright.

I assumed that if one is promoting the word of God, there should be no copyright. After all, the Supreme Being's Word is law and is worldwide; so therefore I see no limitations in verbal message or printed word.

*Peoria, Illinois*

H. G.

"According to what I have read in your literature, you do not believe that God can remove the evil works of a man and still save the man. But isn't this exactly what Paul says God will do? Read I Corinthians 3:15."

The text in question reads: "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." Some theologians apply this text as you have suggested, that a man may be saved in spite of the evil works he has done; that the evil works will be burned, only the good shall remain, and that the evil works shall have no adverse affect on the salvation of the man in question, for "He himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

But before we draw such a conclusion, let us consider some of Paul's other statements on the subject of salvation. If Paul were saying in I Corinthians 3 that a man's evil works in no way adversely influence his salvation, why did he write to the Philippians that he was still pressing for that to which he had not yet attained? "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (3:13-14).

Or why should it be necessary to "overcome evil with good" if God plans simply to burn our evil works and let nothing stand against us at Judgment? Why should we make any effort to bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" if God will overlook those unholy thoughts?

In understanding I Corinthians 3:15, we should consider the context of the chapter. Paul is writing to some Christians who were showing their immaturity in being divided over questions of human loyalties. "For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" (vs. 4-5). Both were missionaries performing the service of God.

Paul continues in the chapter to explain that they as missionaries will receive an extra measure of blessing for their labors in planting and watering seed for the Kingdom *if* that seed produces fruit unto eternal life. For his every convert that proves faithful, that stands the test of fire (the Judgment seat of Christ), Paul will be rewarded.

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For effort expended in behalf of those who prove disloyal and untrue, Paul will receive no additional reward; however, this loss will not deprive him of the salvation which his personal life-work merits. The missionary himself and those persons (his works) whom he enlightens are treated separately.

To use the simile which Paul uses in I Cor. 3:9-15, God has provided a foundation. A man (the human missionary) builds upon that foundation, and those whom he enlightens form the superstructure. "Ye are God's building" (v. 9). If the structure proves to be gold, silver, precious stones, it shall stand the test of fire and Paul will be rewarded for his efforts in helping erect that structure. If it proves to be worthless—hay, wood, stubble—it will not endure the fire of Judgment; but the loss of that building (Paul's missionary effort) will not affect Paul's salvation. Thus, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss [Paul will have no reward for that missionary endeavor]: but he [the Christian missionary] himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire [Paul also must stand the test of the fire of God's Judgment]." Only the Day of Judgment will disclose the success or failure of his missionary efforts. However, the success or failure of his missionary efforts will in no way affect the salvation which He shall receive for his complete dedication to the will and work of the Lord—"he himself shall be saved."

No, Paul definitely does not suggest that the evil part of a man's character may be burned and the man himself still be saved. Eternal life will be granted only for a perfectly formed godly character.

"I have heard that the blood type of the mother is not passed on to the child, but that the blood type of the father is. That being the case (if true) Christ's literal blood would be of the Holy Spirit (through His Father) and not of Mary. Therefore Christ's literal blood which he shed on the cross is holy, of God, and therefore can 'pay the penalty for sin.' The flesh profiting nothing (John 6:63) would not include his blood. Please explain."

The claim that the father's blood type is passed on to the child and not the mother's blood type is unfounded and false. The child receives a total of 46 chromosomes from his parents, 23 from each, which determine all his inherited characteristics, including blood type. The child may have the blood type of his father, or that of his mother, or a combination of the two. Or it is possible that he may have a blood type *not* belonging to either parent but carried by them as a recessive gene.

And the conclusion, that "therefore Christ's literal blood which he shed on the cross is holy, of God, and therefore can 'pay the penalty for sin' "

is likewise groundless and not Biblical. The Bible formula for the removal of sin is plain and straightforward: "Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19), and these are the words of the apostle Peter spoken after Jesus had died and been resurrected. Christ had not paid the penalty for sin, for they had still to "repent... and be converted... that [their] sins might be blotted out."

The idea that Christ shed His literal blood to pay the penalty for sin is part of paganized theology, not Scriptural teaching. The Bible does not teach that there is any saving efficacy in the literal flesh or blood of Christ, or in His death on the cross. It is only as we crucify our will and desires as He did, dying to every form of sin, that we shall be saved (Rom. 6:6-13; I Pet. 2:21).

You infer that when Jesus said "the flesh profiteth nothing," He was indicating that there was efficacy in His blood. Jesus didn't say this, but completed His statement by saying, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). Verses 54 through 56 classify both His flesh and blood as factors in securing eternal life, but both are figurative and not literal, as verse 57 indicates: His disciples could live by eating His flesh and blood just as He lived by eating the flesh and blood of His Father. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." The mention of only "flesh" in verse 63 is an instance of using a generic term.

"Were Pharaoh's magicians displaying demonic power before Pharaoh and Aaron in Exodus 7:11-12? I don't see how this could be."

We cannot be certain of all that happened, but judging from what we are told of this incident, it would seem impossible that the power the magicians displayed could have been anything less than divine power. The Egyptian magicians themselves certainly had no power to duplicate Aaron's miracle. But it would be quite impressive to see the magicians' rods turned to serpents only to be swallowed up by Aaron's serpent. We believe this to have been nothing more than evidence of God working through Aaron. God was demonstrating His possession of a power the magicians only *claimed* to have to confound the magicians themselves.

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*All sunshine makes the desert.*



# Meditations

## On the Word

AS we become aware of the many troubles throughout the world, we realize how much we need God's mercy. The distress among and within nations grows worse continually and fear is spreading as to what the outcome will be. But all this was foreseen and foretold by the holy men of old, and how truly we see it being fulfilled! Being forewarned, the people of God have always looked forward to that time and made preparations to be worthy of God's mercy. It was with this thought in mind that the Psalmist uttered the words of our text.

There are, of course, numerous trials and afflictions that we encounter as we pass through life. The success with which these are borne depends upon our trust and faith in God. So often we have fallen short of living as God would have us. And the more we realize our sinfulness, and the times we have walked contrary to the commandments, the more we will realize we need God's mercy. It is our manner of life now that will determine our success in passing through the future time of trouble victoriously.

To be deceived into thinking the world is growing better and that there is no greater time of distress coming will not in any way affect the plan of the Almighty. His purposes will come to pass though men may resist His claim and refuse to meet His demands. Unbelief and ignorance of His Word will not promote the faith and good works which alone will merit His mercy in that day. Knowledge of His prophetic Word is essential.

The Psalmist, divinely inspired, foretold the time when Christ the King should come to set up His throne and the way earth's rulers will react. He says, "The kings of earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord

*"Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast"*

—Psalm 57:1.

shall have them in derision" (Ps. 2:2-4). Their attempts will be vain. He will come and not keep silence. He will render just judgment. The oppressors shall be broken in pieces and the righteous shall then be exalted

and caused to flourish.

The prophet Isaiah foretold that in the last days the Lord's authority shall be established above all earthly governments, "and all nations shall flow unto it;" and as a result of His just rule the nations "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2). In chapter 17:13 he speaks of the "calamity" that is to come upon the nations of earth: "The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee afar off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind."

This same keen-eyed prophet gives the invitation to enter a place of refuge and escape the miseries that are coming upon the nations. He says, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity" (Isa. 26:20-21). Certainly everyone would like a place of refuge when trouble and devastation come; a place of security where their safety can be assured. With an assurance of protection, fears turn to rejoicing and discouragement to hope, even in the darkest hours.

Such must have been the assurance of the prophet Jeremiah, for he could say, "O Lord, my strength and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction" (16:19). During his lifetime he witnessed many hardships, but he also looked ahead to the

latter days and saw the time of great distress for the wicked. "Behold a whirlwind of the Lord is gone [or shall go] forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly" (23:19-20).

Daniel spoke of that day as a time of trouble "such as never was since there was a nation" (12:2), but he also comforts us with the thought that God's people shall be delivered then. Malachi said all the proud and all that do wickedly shall be cut off from the earth. Whether we read this prophecy from David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel or any of the minor prophets, they all speak the mind of God in reference to that future day.

Much also is said in the New Testament concerning this great time of trouble. Christ at His coming will find the world in an unconverted condition as it was in the days of Noah and the days of Lot (Luke 17:26-29). The apostolic writers agree with the prophets that a thorough purging of the earth from the incorrigible element must precede the conversion of the masses to God. It is for this reason that when Christ comes "all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him" (Rev. 1:7). He will come conquering and to conquer. None of the wicked can escape, nor shall any of the righteous be destroyed.

By reading these prophetic statements and observing how the world has drifted into the condition God foretold it would be in, we can be sure that the rest will be fulfilled. How needful, then,

to seek the mercy of God now, while we have time and opportunity and while it may yet be found! Should we not be longing to reach the place of refuge where we may be hid from the coming disaster? The writer of our text also said, "I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest" (Ps. 55:8), and a like-minded prophet wrote, "Flee out of the midst of Babylon" (Jer. 51:6). What we do about making our escape must be done quickly; delay will prove fatal.

There should be no question in our minds as to the course to take to be prepared for that day. It is mainly a question whether we are honest in accepting and willing to comply wholly with the conditions God has outlined. His mercy will flow out, but we have to do on our part. As through the voice of His prophets God has foretold the time of trouble, so also through these same men He has declared the way we can escape it.

The Psalmist looked for mercy because he trusted in God. To trust Him through poverty or prosperity, affliction or health, sorrow or joy, is a virtue indeed. In olden times, when God's power was openly manifested, those who trusted Him in times of peril were always rewarded, but how much greater the virtue now to trust Him by faith alone, without ever seeing any of His power manifested in like manner. It is the undivided heart which worships God alone and trusts Him as it should that will be raised above undue anxiety for earthly wants, and while expecting mercy when His judgments sweep the earth, will not slacken its exertion to enter the place of safety. ●●

## A Prayer at Graduation

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Our Father God, we come to Thee at a memorable moment in the life of all men.

We look upon a world which seems unlimited in opportunity and self-satisfaction. Awed by human achievement, we are tempted to say, "O Man, what is God, that thou art mindful of Him?" May such a prayer never be more than the youthful impatience of a growing mind.

Grant unto us who are sons of men the grace to become sons of God. In our search for truth and the fullness of living, confront us with responsibility rather than self-interest. Imbue us with a discontent of that indulgence which draws a tight circle around self.

Where we would launch rockets, let them be missiles of service rather than vainglory.

Where we would be teachers and thinkers and writers, let us be servants of integrity who grapple with the forces of injustice, separation, and human folly.

Silently, unknown to some and known to others, help us to be Thy prophets and leaders of Thy work. May something of what we have been taught be used by Thee to replace ignorance with truth, and meaninglessness with purpose and power—first in our own lives, and then in the lives of those we know. By Thy grace we pray. Amen.

## *O Thou Divine*

*Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;  
Wean it from earth; through all its pulses move;  
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art,  
And make me love Thee as I ought to love.*

*I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,  
No sudden rending of the veil of clay,  
No angel visitant, no opening skies;  
But take the dimness of my soul away.*

*Hast Thou not bid us love Thee, God and King?  
All, all Thine own, soul, heart, and strength, and mind;  
I see Thy truth--there teach my heart to cling:  
O let me seek Thee, and O let me find!*

*Teach me to feel that Thou art always nigh;  
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear,  
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh;  
Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.*

*Teach me to love Thee as Thine angels love,  
One holy passion filling all my frame;  
Teach me the joy of sacrifice and prayer--  
My heart an altar, and thy love the flame.*

*-Selected.*