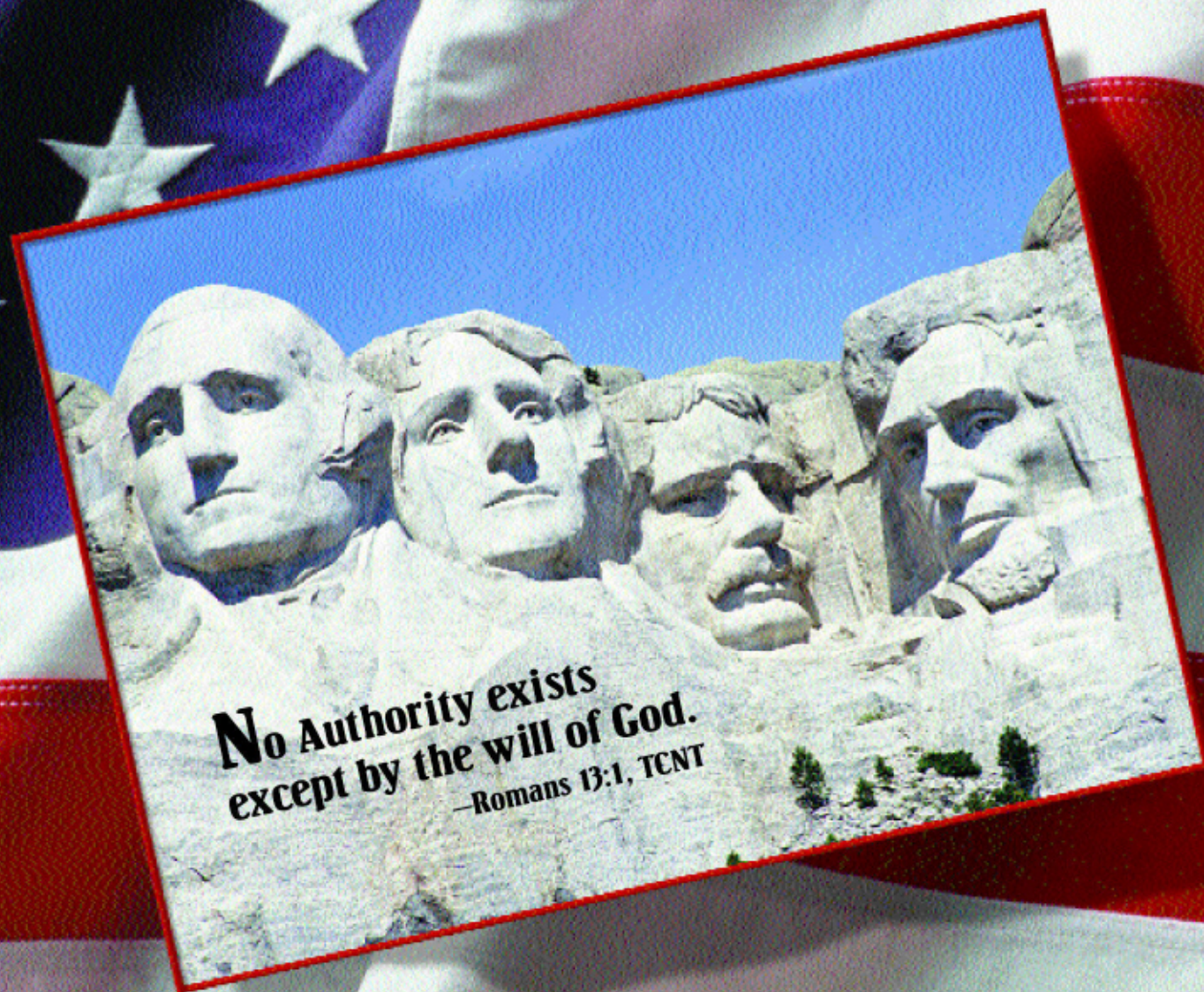


Megiddo Message



**No Authority exists
except by the will of God.**
—Romans 13:1, TCNT

Vol. 85, No. 6
July, 1998

"IS THERE ANY WORD FROM THE LORD?"

It is the pathetic query of a king who has gone his own way so long and so far that his doom is inevitable. "Is there any word from the Lord?" he asks wistfully—hopeful that there may have been some change in the Divine mind, some altering of the Divine will, some lifting of the awful curse. But the word of the Lord, spoken through the dedicated, unfaltering prophet, is still the same word of doom and gloom that has been from the beginning: "You will be handed over to the king of Babylon."

The king is Zedekiah. The prophet, Jeremiah. The time, about 605 B.C. Well this prophet knows his very life is in danger; yet the word of the Lord is precisely what it has been, and the prophet of the Lord needs great strength to speak that word with respect, forthrightness and quiet courage. There is no flaying of the pathetic king with whips, no stings of prophetic indignation; just the same solemn, solid, and unwanted truth: "You will be handed over to the king of Babylon."

Have we ever inwardly sought for some new word from the Lord, one that would make life easier, less self-denying, less structured with "Do's" and "Don'ts"? Do we ever ask, "Is there any word from the Lord today?" hoping for some change, some release, some lifting of the sentence pronounced so long ago?

There is always a word from the Lord; and though it may not be what we want to hear, it is always what God knows we ought to hear. Should we not welcome it, then, as we hear it again and again, as it keeps us reminded of our sacred duty to Him before whom we shall one day have to render an accounting of our service? What right have we to seek some altering of this word? None at all.

In an English cathedral is a tomb. On the tomb are these words: "He was a

painful preacher of the truth." More than likely the truth was the cause of the pain. Hasn't more than one spokesman for the Lord been the preacher of painful truth? What is more painful at times than the plain, unalterable facts?

This was the experience of the woman at the well. "He told me everything I ever did," she said. It was all facts, but facts she did not feel comfortable being reminded of. She would have liked to hear something more pleasant than the truth. But true religion is not intended to make us comfortable; it is intended to make us strong.

We ought always to be prepared—even eager—to hear the preacher of the painful truth. And when we are in the wrong, how forthrightly we ourselves ought to be that preacher—and to keep right on with this preaching until the sin is removed.

Years ago a man was addressing a group of seminary students who were about to graduate. "Gentlemen," he began, "preaching will prove a difficult task in the days to come. Again and again you will be tempted to give people what they want to hear, rather than what they ought to hear." This is the criteria that separates the true from the false, those who dispense the word of the Lord from those who dispense the thoughts and philosophies of men. The word of the Lord is always what we ought to hear. It may—or may not—be what we want to hear. And whether that spokesperson be ourselves, a trusted spiritual friend, or one whom we consider far beneath us, let us take the message as from the Lord and act upon it.

Is there any word from the Lord today?

There is! It is the same message of obedience that we have heard before. Let us hear it again, and obey it that we may live! □

MEGIDDO MEANS ...

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

WE BELIEVE ...

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

The Herald and the KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: ... lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

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What Concerns You?

From the infant who cries for milk to the aged man or woman whose only desire is for a few moments of comfort, everyone is concerned about something. The first concern of a mother is the welfare of her child. The serious student is concerned about his career. The conscientious nurse is concerned about her patients; the employee, his job; the professional, his chosen career. And underlying for all are the common concerns for health, money, security, happiness and the basic satisfactions of life. Multitudes put up with day after day of drudgery, hoping always hoping that they will encounter something better further on.

The foremost concern of Alexander the Great was to conquer the world, and history records that he wept when there were no more worlds to conquer. Columbus' great concern was to reach the shores of another land that he fully believed lay beyond the broad expanse of uncharted sea, and he lived to see that desire fulfilled.

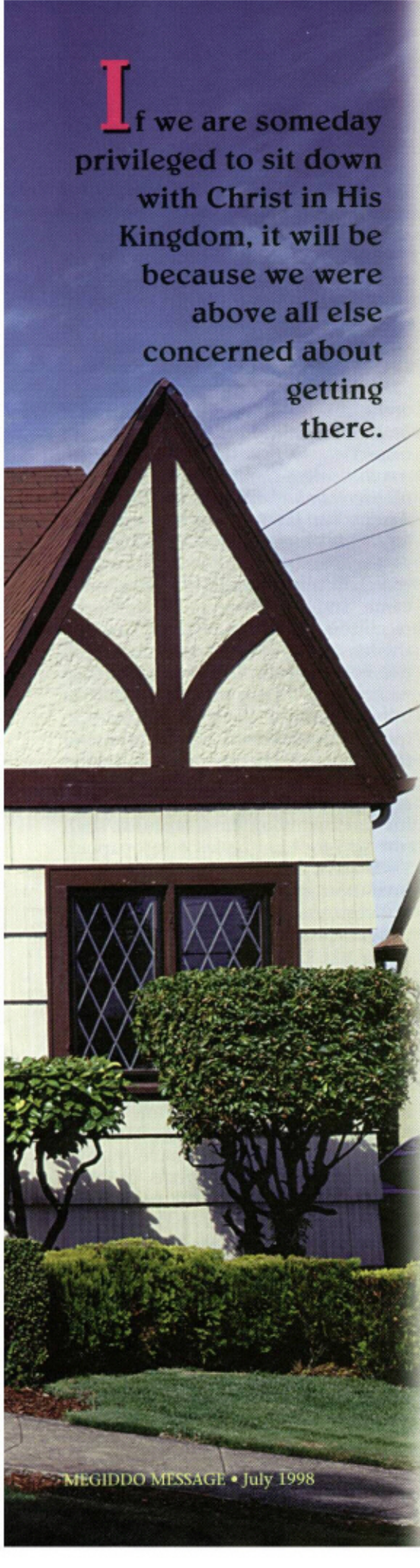
Admiral Byrd spent the greatest portion of his life in deep concern over what he might see and discover in the wide waste of the polar regions; but he died a disap-

pointed man because he did not have the honor of setting his feet where the compass shows no direction.

The rich young ruler who came to Jesus showed that he was at least marginally concerned about his own future existence. "Master," he asked, "what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" But our Master soon revealed to him that his real concern was not the heavenly Kingdom but his riches, and when he thought he would have to part with them, he "went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (Matt. 19:16-22).

Saul's great concern was his own pride and self-esteem. If we had asked him, this might not have been his answer, but actions speak louder than words. So long as he was first on the popularity scale, there was no problem. But let circumstances change and another receive some of the popularity he had enjoyed, and Saul was beside himself with jealousy. He simply *had* to be first.

So consuming was this passion in him that there was no solution short of doing away with his rival. And so he plotted, and schemed, and hounded David at every step; but it was all in vain, because he hadn't consulted God's



If we are someday
privileged to sit down
with Christ in His
Kingdom, it will be
because we were
above all else
concerned about
getting
there.

plans. With all his strategy, there was absolutely nothing he could do to prevent the Lord's chosen from being king.

So it will be when Christ the Anointed, the David after God's own heart, comes to rule the world in righteousness. All the Sauls with evil eyes will unite their forces to defend their rights and destroy the usurper, but they shall fail utterly. The Lord's anointed shall be King.

Concern with Trivia or...?

Countless thousands are concerned with the trivia of life—what shall we eat, drink, wear? Possessing a distorted sense of values, they busy themselves in grasping for more and more of these petty pleasures, oblivious to any real objective or purpose for life.

Other people are concerned with the government and management of others. Time fails to tell of the host of politicians, kings, potentates and ecclesiastical divines whose major though perhaps unwritten concern is for authority over others.

What is *your* longing desire? What is *mine*? What makes life meaningful for us?

A concern is something we feel deeply. It touches our heart and determines how we respond to what happens around us, about us, to us. Our concerns are the great impellers of our lives. If something is of no concern to us, we scarcely notice what happens to it. If it is a concern, we react strongly.

It might be said that our whole Christian life is a task of redirecting our concerns—away from our selfish instincts and toward God and the interests of His kingdom.

Mary, Martha, Us

Ponder again the lesson taught by Jesus at the home of Martha and Mary in Bethany. What made the great difference between Martha and Mary that day? It was their concerns. Martha's whole thought was on preparing a just-right meal for the Master. She was hot and tired,

flustered and driven. And there, in the very presence of the Master Himself, it broke through to the open view of thousands who would afterward read of her mistake.

Mary's concern, meanwhile, lay deeper—this was her opportunity to hear from the Master more of those precious lessons of life. Everything else was secondary.


Most of us can identify with Martha's misplaced concern, and can share in her rebuke from the Lord. How easily in the midst of temporal duties we lose sight of the eternal. How easily the really great values of life are pushed aside by the unimportant. Preoccupied with the obligations of the moment, we overlook the priceless opportunities with which the ordinary days are crammed—opportunities to practice those Christ-like virtues of patience, forbearance, kindness, love; opportunities to think high thoughts and ponder our lofty goals; opportunities to build faith and fortitude and hope.

The task of maintaining our existence is complex and time-consuming, to be sure. But it need not consume all our thought. If it does, if what we perceive to be the needs of living are all our absorption, we shall find in the end that this is all we shall have. There will be nothing more for us to hope for beyond.

But perhaps we have learned. Perhaps we have mastered Martha's lesson and even in the most pressing hours of every day can conduct ourselves as in the fear of God. Perhaps we have learned to make temporal stresses train us for eternal glories. If we have, we shall find that whatever we are doing, the future is more real and more vivid in our mind than anything of the present.

Still, we must be careful, lest while paying outward respect to the law of God we neglect the weightier matters of inner holiness, our sacred task of nurturing and developing the new nature within.

Like Martha, we want to give



What Concerns You?

Our concerns are the great impellers of our lives.

Jesus our best. But oh, how easily we lose our perspective. How easily we become so concerned with the task at hand and the eternal glory fades away. The little incident at Martha's house that day should remind us even the best of temporal concerns are not an end in themselves but only a means to an end—to perfect in us the holiness God is seeking. When we become overly anxious, flustered and tried in the thing we are doing, our Master's kind and thoughtful words should reclothe us in our rightful mind: *"Stop your frenzied rushing about, Martha. There is only one thing that really matters."*

Excuses, Excuses

Jesus taught the same lesson in the parable of the Great Supper, recorded in Luke 14. Said the Master, *"A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations"* (v. 16, NLT). Yes, our King prepares invitations—personal ones. Shouldn't we feel honored? Think of being personally invited to a wedding feast where only the truly noblest will partake.

"At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'" When our King returns, He is going to spread a great supper. Some will have been *"bidden"*—invited by special invitation.

Shouldn't such an invitation awaken in us the deepest concern—to be ready when the time comes for the great feast?

How did the guests in Jesus' parable respond to the invitation? Were they ready and anxious to come? No, we read, *"They all began making excuses."* Imagine it! Imagine being invited to the greatest feast ever spread, and declining the invitation!

Yet that is exactly what the majority of the human race has been doing from the beginning.

They all had other interests, other concerns, to which they assigned a higher priority than the invitation. These things had to be done immediately; the feast could wait. *"One said he had just bought a field and wanted to inspect it, so he asked to be excused. Another said he had just bought five pair of oxen and wanted to try them out. Another had just been married, so he said he couldn't come."* Oh, excuses, excuses, excuses.

When the servant in the parable came and reported to his lord the reception the invitations had had, did the Master say, *"Hurry back and plead the harder with them—maybe they will change their minds?"* No! The opportunity for them was gone. *"Go quickly out into the streets and find the lame, the halt, and the blind. Find those who recognize their need and are eager to come.... But those ungrateful ones with all their excuses shall not so much as taste of my supper. They have received the one and last invitation they will ever get. They are not concerned with Me—neither am I concerned with them"* (paraphrased from Luke 14:20-24).

Our Answer

How are we replying to the invitation from our King? Are we too busy with this petty interest, or that? Are we saying by our actions, if not by our words, that we don't have time for the banquet right now, that we would like to go later—after we have had a chance to pursue the goals or pleasures or happiness of this world? Or do we complain of lack of time, or opportunity? Or do we feel that this person, or that one, stands in our way—while, deep down in our hearts we know our *real* lack is our own lack of desire?

Opportunities are all about us, if we just open our eyes to recognize them. Wherever we are, whatever we are doing, each hour is loaded with spiri-

tual possibilities—to improve ourselves, to upbuild our minds, to strengthen our wills, to fortify and encourage every noble desire within us. If we miss these possibilities, it is our own fault.

A woman who was visiting at the home of a busy wife and mother was impressed by the many pieces of beautiful needlework about the house. Upon learning that the mistress herself was the artist, the visitor exclaimed in utter amazement: "How do you do it? I could *never* find time for all those stitches!"—to which the mother replied in a quiet, sober tone, "I use the moments you waste."

It is the stabbing truth. And it is the same truth that we, if not careful, shall hear someday from those who win in the race for life. How did they do it? What made the difference? Simply this, that they *used* the moments we *wasted*!

Only a moment, we say; but a moment here, and a moment there, and what vast potential is lost. Only a moment, but these moments are life itself. And what tremendous value they *can* yield.

If only we would watch our moments as carefully as we watch our dollars and dimes, how many we might be able to save!

The moments we let slip could, with a little concentrated effort, be turned to real, spiritual profit. How can we measure the value of the moment we use to check a wrong attitude, to silence an unkind word, or suppress a wayward thought? Who can tell the value of the moment we seize to catch a fresh vision of the goal ahead, or send a sentence prayer to heaven. Yes, only a moment, but how much it *can* yield!

Oh, that we today might catch the spirit of the apostle Paul, that tireless dynamo of spiritual energy! We have not the least trouble seeing what concerned him. "Dear friends," he wrote, "I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven" (Phil. 3:13–14, NLT). We know a little of the activities that filled his days—traveling, tent-making, teaching, writing, counseling, sitting in prison—yet what was he doing *all* the time? "One thing" was dominant, and from this he could not be moved. "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38–39, NIV).

See this noble Apostle kneeling down on the shore to offer one last prayer with the Ephesian brothers and sisters he loved. What was his great concern? Listen to his pleading words: "Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31, NIV). Can't we feel the concern, the love, the self-sacrifice in that warning?

Yet Paul's concern for others, deep though it be, was always secondary. Over and above all was his personal concern for himself and the fulfilling of his own obligation to God, on *finishing* the work he had begun. "I con-

sider my life worth nothing," he said, "if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me" (Acts 20:24). And the only way to finish with joy was to keep on pressing, struggling, fighting, all the way to the end. With such determination he was sure to win. And when the Marriage Supper of the Lamb is spread, he will be there. Yes, he will be there—will we?

The concern of the beloved John was that his children be found walking in obedience to God's truth: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4).

The patriarch Jacob, leaning on his staff, blessed the two sons of Joseph "concerning things to come." Where was his concern? His mind was set on the future.

What of us? Where is *our* concern? Is our eye of faith fixed on the great things God has promised, or are we distracted by present joys, present troubles, present distresses? Are we contenting ourselves with goals already achieved while we let valuable opportunities slip through our fingers?

The Right Kind of Treasure

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught several lessons on properly placing our concerns. Comparing the security of spiritual achievements with that of anything we might set aside for ourselves in this world, He said:

"Don't store up treasures here on earth, where they can be eaten by moths and get rusty, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where they will never become moth eaten or rusty and where they will be safe from thieves. Wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be" (Matt. 6:19–21, NIV). Every one has treasure. And where our treasure is, that is where our concern, our heart, our motivation, our first love will be.

This is the Master's question: Where is your treasure? Where is your heart? What is your really first concern in life? Then He compares the possibilities—and let us notice the contrast in their surety, the contrast between things of this world and things to come; between the things of this world that so soon are gone and the life and joy that last forever. In the everyday affairs of life it is simple wisdom to purchase things which will last. That is exactly what Jesus is advising here: Concentrate on securing the things which *really* last.

The "moth" and "rust" He mentions are especially meaningful when we consider what they would have meant to people of Jesus' day. He first says to avoid the things that moths can destroy. In the east, a substantial

The best of temporal concerns are not an end in themselves but only a means to an end—to perfect in us the holiness God is seeking.

The task of maintaining our existence is complex and time-consuming, to be sure. But it need not consume all our thought.

things temporal, for they are bound to offer diminishing returns. He is foolish if he gives his heart to anything which the years

part of a rich man's wealth was in elaborate clothing. When Gehazi, servant of Elisha, wished to make some forbidden profit out of Naaman, he asked for "75 pounds of silver and two sets of clothing" (2 Kings 5:22). A "beautiful robe imported from Babylon" tempted Achan to sin (Josh. 7:21). We are foolish, says Jesus, to set our hearts on such things, for moths get at them and their value and beauty are soon gone.

Then there is the threat of "rust." The Greek word translated "rust" means literally "eating away." It is the picture of a man whose wealth consisted of large stores of wheat and other grain. Rats and mice could easily invade and ruin the entire supply.

Jesus was saying that the man is foolish who finds his consuming pleasure in

can take away—he is asking for disappointment! And yet how much we see of it, people whose whole life and love are bound up in being busy and active, getting and spending, with little or no thought of the future. It is good as long as it lasts. But the not-too-hidden truth is that it cannot last. Sooner or later the years will take their toll; health will fail, and the life that has been centered in these will be broken.

What a contrast to the triumph of the one who finds his greatest delight in the values which time is powerless to erode, pleasures which grow brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

Again Jesus warns against pleasures that can be stolen. All material things are just that uncertain. Build your happiness on them—on money and the things money can buy; on youth and the activities that accompany it; on health and the things you can enjoy—and you are destined to lose.

If wise, we will build our happiness on things which are independent of the chances and changes of life, on treasures which are eternal.

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"—our heart, our affections, our real inner love and concern. It is not natural, it is not instinctive, to transfer our loyalties to things above, but it can be done; and oh, the delight, the security, the joy, the release that will come with the new perspective! We will learn to see everything—pleasant or otherwise—in the light of things to come. In that bright,

all-penetrating light, present pleasures will seem cheap and tawdry; and present distresses will be viewed for what they are: minor, temporary inconveniences sent to train us for better things to come.

With such a picture before us, how can we possibly get distracted, even for a moment! But, strangest of realities, we can.

Avoiding Distractions

Have you heard of the hunting dog that disappointed her new owner? The hunter bought the dog because she was reputed to be excellent in "tracking down the big ones." Eager to see how his new dog would perform, the hunter took her and set out for the woods. Sure enough!—no sooner had they gotten into the woods than the animal picked up the trail of a deer. Excited, the hunter followed close behind his wonder dog. Then suddenly the dog stopped, sniffed the ground, and headed in a different direction. She had picked up the smell of a fox that had crossed the path of the deer. The hunter was somewhat disappointed, but still hopeful—at least he would get something! They followed a good distance, then suddenly the dog halted again, this time captivated by the scent of a rabbit that had crossed the path of the fox. And so on and on it went until finally the breathless hunter caught up with his new hunting dog only to find her barking triumphantly down the hole of a field mouse.

Oh, how far short of our goal we can fall when we let ourselves be distracted by the things at hand.

Jesus presents this point of divided loyalty again in verse 24, using another simile: *"No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."* Yes, you cannot be faithful to two masters. This is not a threat, but a truth plainly stated. A slave in those days was a living tool. He had no time which he could call his own. Every moment belonged to his owner.

This, then, is our position as servants of God. We never have the right to ask, "What do I want?" but must always ask, "What does God wish for me?" The Christian has no time off from his responsibility. There is no time when he can relax his Christian standards and call his life his own, as though he were off duty. Spasmodic, off-again-on-again service is no service at all. Being a Christian is a full-time job.

"You cannot serve both God and money." The point is not what is possessed but what is served. Serving money cannot coexist with the service of God.

It is all a matter of choices. And when all is carefully compared, the choice narrows down not to a hundred possible masters but only two, which Jesus calls *"God and money."* The original word is *"mammon,"* which comes from an Aramaic word meaning "property" or "riches" and implies the many facets of worldliness. In other passages of Scripture the choice is described as being between figs and thistles, right and wrong, the Father and the world, the narrow road and the broad, time and eternity.

Choose, choose, choose we must, not just once but

again and again and again. Life is a series of choices. If we choose to make the things of this world our first concern, that is all we will have; we will never receive anything eternal. That is why Jesus advised, *"Be ye not of the world."* Why would He say this? *"For this world is fading away, along with everything that it craves."* Only *"he that does the will of God abides for ever"* (1 John 2:17).

Jesus' climaxing thought is in verse 33: *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* A lens cannot have two focal points. A country cannot have two prime ministers. The universe cannot have two First Causes. And so a life cannot have two first concerns. One must dominate.

What is our propelling interest? What are we living for? What are we concerned about? If our first love and affections are bound up in God, our minds will as automatically turn toward Him as the hands of the compass point toward the North, and nothing that comes or goes about us will be able to draw us off course. Whatever we consciously apply our minds to think about, the "pull" will be always there; and whenever our minds are freed from concentrating on the task at hand, they will instantly return to that which is good, and wholesome, and pure, and heavenly. The pull will be that strong.

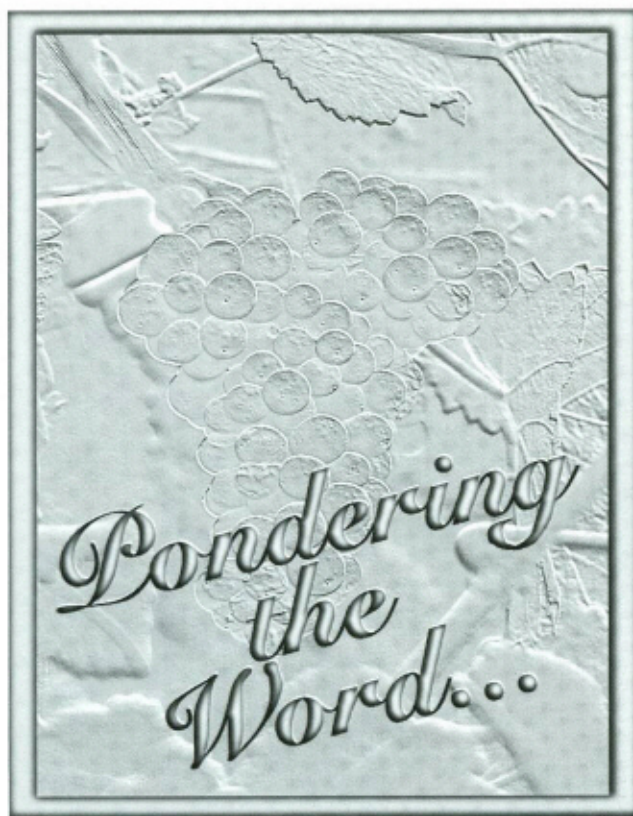
And what we are thinking about is what we will be talking about. If we come and go, swinging in and out like a door on its hinges, without concern or longing for the glory and majesty of His kingdom and the invitation we have received, we cannot expect to partake of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. For when we get our prior duties all done and come knocking, we will find that the place we could have had has been taken by another.

Oh, we cannot take too seriously the invitation of our King. Think what our King has to give—we are invited to share His honor, His riches, His happiness, His life!

Opportunity is not forever, and if we desire to have our life perpetuated in His Kingdom, we must be seriously seeking that Kingdom now. In the home, in the shop, in the field, in the office, wherever we are, we must be showing that we really *want* the things He has offered us.

If we are someday privileged to sit down with Christ in His Kingdom, we can be sure that it will be because we were above all else concerned about getting there. □

Our whole Christian life is a task of redirecting our concerns—away from our selfish instincts and toward God.



THE RIGHT RESPONSE

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.
—James 1:19

Here is assigned a triple duty: "Swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." The preliminary "let every man be" indicates that no one is exempt. It is as if he said: "Now listen to me, every one of you." Here is a duty incumbent upon every believer. More than that, it is a continuing duty. Whatever one's extent of knowledge or degree of maturity, he or she needs this warning.

"Swift to hear" suggests eager attention, as by one who is ready to apply the message heard. To listen eagerly was the first duty of discipleship.

Being "slow to speak" does not mean slowness in forming words but is a call to restrain all hasty and ill-considered words. Words spoken in haste are often regretted. Time (being slow) may actually be a safeguard against immature or immoderate reactions. It takes time to frame words worthy of the ears of God. It takes time to speak and let that speech be guided by Omnipotence.

The next phrase "slow to wrath" exposes another danger: rash or reckless speech that provokes animosity. Explosive or unrestrained temper is often accompanied with a train of bad passions, none of which the Christian wants on his record before God, hence the need to be "slow to wrath."

"Wrath" is a powerful word, implying more than passing irritation or displeasure. It denotes a strong and persistent feeling of indignation and active anger. In the view of Scripture, wrath is always wrong. "Cease from anger and forsake wrath."

What, then, does James mean when by saying be "slow to wrath"? Be so slow to express your feelings of wrath that it dissipates entirely before it is put into words.

YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW

Don't be misled. Remember that you can't ignore God and get away with it. You will always reap what you sow! Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful desires will harvest the consequences of decay and death. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time.
—Galatians 6:7-9, NLT

Wouldn't you be surprised if you planted potatoes and pumpkins came up! But no one worries about this, because it does not happen. It is a firm law of nature that we reap what we sow.

And it is a law of life as well. Every action carries with it its predetermined results. If we "plant" to please God, we can be sure of joy and everlasting life. If we sow the "weeds" of our own selfishness, we can be sure of death. No more, no less.

Paul challenges his brethren to keep on doing right and trust God for the results. In due time, they can be sure of a harvest of blessing, even "everlasting life" in the world to come.

What kind of seeds are you sowing?

PLAN WITH GOD

Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.
—James 4:13-14

What is wrong with making plans for tomorrow? Nothing—unless we plan without God. James is condemning the arrogant attitude of self-sufficiency that totally disregards God in the restless pursuits of daily life. He does not suggest that commerce or trade is wrong, or that those who conduct business cannot please God. His condemnation is of those who act in self-will, independent of God. In all, God ought to be central.

"Today or tomorrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade and get gain"—they have a fully developed action plan. The whole thing is spelled out in detail, even down to the profits from the year's trade.

The language reflects an air of assurance and confidence as though the executing of their plan is entirely within their control. No thought is given to their dependence upon God or the uncertainty of life.

"And spend a year there"—they presume that the whole year is at their disposal to use as they please—yet do they know what day may be their last? This statement only adds to their presumption and ignores God.

They even plan to *"get gain"*—here is the profit. These ancient entrepreneurs were not far behind us! The whole picture has a modern ring.

James does not say it is wrong to *"get gain."* The fatal defect in their program is their presumptuous disregard of God's will.

A living faith faces the unknown future with calm dependence on God. *"You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow,"* reads the passage in the New American Standard Bible. In other words, you do not even know that *you will be alive tomorrow, so what are you doing planning without God?* You—with a life that is like a puff of smoke, or like the breath appearing momentarily in cold air—how foolish you are to ignore God and proudly plan for a life that is as fleeting as a wisp of vapor!

What is the proper alternative? Instead of their arrogant attitude, they should be saying, *"If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that"* (v. 15).

"If the Lord will" recognizes God as the absolute Authority and the effective Controller of all life, activity, loss or gain.

God alone can make our plans prosper.

A MOMENT VS. FOREVER

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. —Isaiah 40:8

It seems that every generation has been impressed with the beauty—and brevity—of wild flowers. The Septuagint renders the Hebrew *"the flower of the field."* The picture is not to be restricted to grass but includes any green herbage. In Palestine especially, with the spring rains come blossoms in great abundance. But the dry summer heat follows quickly, and they are gone.

Is it not a realistic picture of the nature of human life? And is it not a warning to look beyond the temporal to the spiritual values that endure?

Withering grass... fading flowers ...

What is the grand contrast to these? *"The word of our God shall stand for ever."* What a contrast—a moment versus *"for ever"*!

Where is the greater value?

THERE'S NO RIGHT
WAY TO DO A WRONG THING.

Re:

ADVICE FOR THE CHRISTIAN

Re-think: As Christians we need to check on our progress, our direction and our goal. *"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments"* (Ps. 119:59-60).

Require: What does the Lord require of you? That is the first question to be answered. Not until we know what God requires can we hope to receive His eternal blessings.

It's like finding out the price of an item we wish to buy.

Renew: It's what we must be constantly doing to our minds, as we review the promises of God and what He will shortly do to bring in His Kingdom of peace and righteousness. Only renewed minds can keep in focus the bright picture of future joy and see the present distresses in proper perspective.

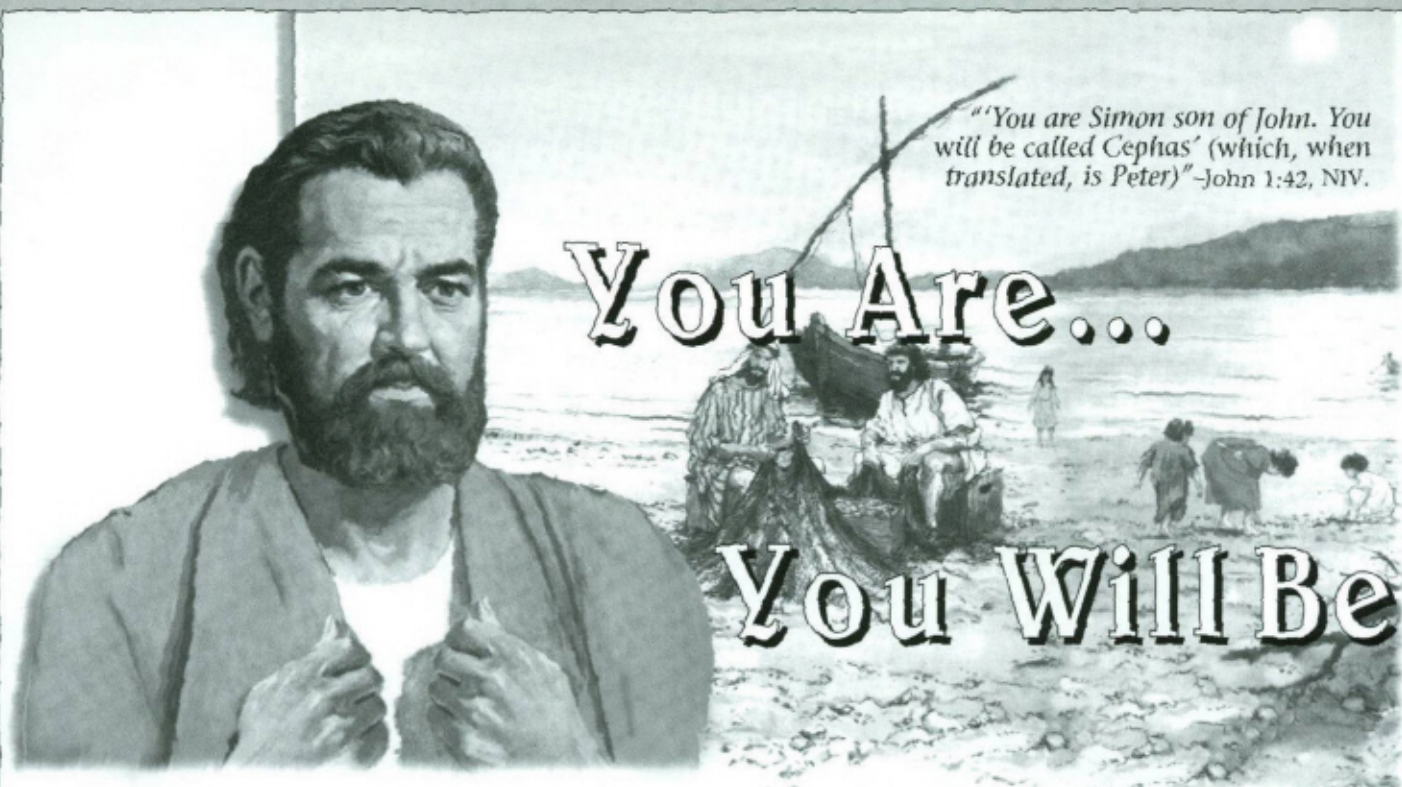
Restore: Bring back the joy, the peace, the satisfaction, the delight that comes from keen anticipation. *"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation,"* prayed the Psalmist (Ps. 51:12).

Minds and bodies need continual restoring, as resources are continually being used up.

Reward: What has God promised? What is He holding out for faithful service? What can He do for loving, obedient earthborns? The answers are glowing.

More than eye has seen or ear has heard, or heart can imagine (1 Cor. 2:9). *"Exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think"* (Eph. 3:20). A right to the tree of life, with eternal riches, and honor, and glory (Rev. 2:7; Rom. 2:7). a place of honor and a crown of righteousness when Jesus comes (1 Pet. 5:4). Are you...

READY?
READY?
READY?
READY?



When Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus, those who knew Simon best decided that Jesus did not really know the man He surnamed Cephas (Peter). But time proved them wrong.

Jesus presented His challenge to Simon in two graphic phrases: "You art... you will be." Jesus was saying literally, "I know what you are at the moment, I know your weakness for lying, profanity, bluff, and bluster. But I know also that you can have granite-like stability, unflinching loyalty, and undying love. Mix that quicksand in your nature with the solid cement of integrity and you will become immovable."

Perhaps no life recorded in Holy Writ contains more contrast than that of Simon Peter. Here is a man we can all understand, love and forgive because he is so like ourselves. A strange bundle of contradictions, he was earthly, and heavenly, boastful and humble, cowardly and courageous.

One might wonder why Jesus would choose for His disciple such a mixture of good and evil. It was because He could look past the evil and see the warm-hearted loyalty,

the fervid zeal, the strong leadership, the granite-like courage which lay hidden in this rough-hewn character.

Outspoken, vigorous Peter, we feel we know him because we know what he thought. We know what he thought because he said it. On the spot. Out loud. To him, thought meant action, and sometimes trouble. Energy and determination are good in a good cause, and how much better when used in the best cause of all, in building a lofty and noble character worthy of being perpetuated.

"You are...you shall be." It was a most amazing thing to say, and no one was quite so amazed as Simon himself.

People would say, "Oh, yes, we know Simon, he is a good sort..." But here were eyes piercing his own and a voice that said, "You will be part of the great rock of ages." Peter was captured. Simon, a great elemental soul, yet as weak as a man can be—until the day he was apprehended by Jesus Christ and the transforming process began, transforming his shale-like nature into a character of rock.

Recall the night Peter denied his Master. Cut to the heart, he went out and wept bitterly.

What happened to Peter after that we do not know; the Gospel story kindly draws a veil over the agony of his shame. But we do know that this was not the end for Peter. On the morning of the Resurrection, no less a personage than an angel from heaven gave instructions that were to Peter words of encouragement and hope: "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter..." (Mark 16:6-7, NIV). Yes, don't forget Peter. Here was a message of hope. Penetrating beneath the smothering weight of shame, it was the fresh air of hope. For all his shameful faltering and denial, he was not rejected. He could breathe again, and with new strength he faced the Ten apostles, ready to charge ahead into a new life!

No disciple was so pointedly reproved by our Lord as Peter, and no disciple ever ventured to reprove his Master—but Peter. To Peter, the

Master spoke words of approval and praise, even blessing; at the same time, almost in the same breath, He reproved him sharply.

Hasty, headlong, speaking impertinently and unadvisedly, but ever ready to repent; ever wading into waters too deep for him, and ever looking to his Master for help: that was Peter. Our Lord implied the strength of his character when He named him "Peter" (Greek: *petros*), meaning a "stone."

Peter became the Gibraltar of the early church. See him fearlessly preaching to the multitude at Pentecost. After being cruelly flogged, hear him rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's cause! See him accusing the men of Israel of denying the Holy One, crucifying Him and preferring a murderer's freedom instead. Hear him as he fearlessly proclaims, "*We ought to obey God rather than man,*" (Acts 5:29). See him in the prison guarded by sixteen soldiers, awaiting death at Herod's caprice (Acts 12:3, 6). But the time was not yet for this man whom the Master Himself had picked. He had more—much more—work. So, while Herod raged, God's angel miraculously delivered Peter.

Note his Epistle, written years later, as he exhorts his fellow believers (both slave and free) to be brave and strong in the face of persecution. For the faithful there awaits an everlasting crown of glory, an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade (1 Pet. 1:3-4). *Be faithful to your masters,*" he exhorted again, "*rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind*" (1 Pet. 2:1, NIV). Again he urged them to war against sinful desires, to have their conduct such that the Gentiles seeing them would glorify God.

This same Peter set a standard so lofty as to require all of one's mind, might and strength to reach it. When they were accused falsely, they should "take it patiently." Was not theirs the highest calling, even to membership in the royal priesthood of God?

Peter was a sufferer with them, and he exhorted them that theirs be a trial-proof, fire-proof faith more precious than perishable gold and which might be found unto praise, honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:6-7).

A man as human as his brothers, Peter became an unflinching, valiant man of God, a pillar in the Church. Christ's holy example shone through Peter and gave them hope that they could be like him.



Amid severe persecution, his great joy of living the Christian life overflowed. With body and soul on fire for God, Peter knew no half-way ground. He wanted these brethren to know and love their Master even as he knew and loved Him. Though they had not seen Him, yet as believers they could "*rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*"

If our Christianity does not fill us with joy, there is something lacking in our surrender.

But a study of Peter's character would be fruitless unless we ourselves benefit from it. So let Peter ask us: What are you doing? What do you want?

Yes, what do I want? What is the central inspiration, and urge beneath all my life's activities? What am I looking for? What am I trying to extract from life? What is my aim and goal? If I am honest, what holds first place in the depth of my heart—my Master or my own natural desires? Am I like the first Peter (a fragment), or am I like the second Peter, changed, solid, fixed?

As we strive to bridge the gap between "*you are*" and "*you will be*," we see how shamefully we fall and must rise again. For we, too, have sinned grievously. Have we stumbled so many times over the same weakness that we are ashamed to go to the throne of grace and once more ask to be forgiven?

Peter, you did not allow your crushing defeat to hold you back. Like you, we would go out and weep bitterly for our sins, then charge forward into a new life.

Beneath the failure, Jesus could see what Peter would become. Just so, our Master knows what we can become. He sees not only our faithlessness but our loyalty, not only our defeat by sin, but in our reaching after goodness, Peter's win-ability.

There is no greater courage than the courage needed to face ourselves. To search our hearts and try our ways requires not only high courage but also Peter's continuous overflow of determination and energy. We must let nothing hinder our advancement until we have reached the point where perfecting an upright character and securing the approval of Christ is our all-consuming desire. □

Long ago in old Judea
By the shores of Galilee,
Jesus spake unto the fishers:
"Leave your nets and follow Me."
Little children, hear the story
Peeling through the ages dim:
*Who of you will leave your pleasures,
Take your cross and follow Him?*

Dialogue

"There is much in the Bible to support that Adam and Eve were the first persons on the earth. Old Testament and New Testament scriptures all point to Adam and Eve being the first created human beings. "There is nothing in Genesis chapters 1 to 3 to suggest anything other than a literal creation story. If there is would you please point it out to me?"

I can readily understand how that when one has always thought of the Genesis account as a narrative describing the literal creation, it is shocking to suggest anything else.

However, we feel satisfied that the Divine author did not intend that it be understood as an account of a literal creation. First, consider one basic principle of Bible study: We must compare "spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Cor. 2:13). In other words, all the examples in a narrative must be symbolic, or they must be all literal. Take, for instance, Jesus' parable of the Wheat and the Tares: we cannot say that the "wheat" represents the righteous and "tares" represent the wicked, then have the literal fires of hell consume the tares. Or in Jesus' parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, we cannot have a literal man named Lazarus in a spiritual "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:19-27). Again, the Divine author calls upon us to "reason". "Come, and let us reason together, saith the Lord" (Isa. 1:18).

We would as readily accept Genesis as a literal account as to apply it spiritually; but to do so we would have to close our eyes to the most obvious discoveries of science, which is simply the observing of God's handiwork. Our only purpose in allegorizing Genesis is to avoid contradiction and to arrive at the understanding the Author intended, in harmony with the rest of Scripture.

It seems impossible to accept the Genesis account as literal without closing our eyes to obvious facts all around us. Consider a few relevant points:

- **Were the billions of galaxies visible to the Hubble Telescope made in six literal earth-days (the time it takes our earth to make one complete revolution on its axis) and only a few thousand years ago?** Can we look at the magnitude of the heavens, billions of

galaxies each composed of billions of stars, and think that all this vast creation came into being only a few thousand years ago in six 24-hour earth-days?

- **Can we believe the eternal Creator lived millions of aeons in the past and then a mere 6000 years ago did His first creating?** The Bible says clearly, and I'm sure you agree, that God is from everlasting, that He is the one Source of all being, the One uncreated who existed from eternity past and will always exist. Here we are treading on ground much too expansive for our little minds, but is it reasonable to think that God lived in holy isolation through billions of ages (from eternity past) until suddenly and all at once a few thousand years ago He decided to create *something*—the heavens and the earth, and all that is in them?
- **Two accounts of creation in Genesis?** If God (as in verse 1) created the heavens and earth "in the beginning," why the subsequent details of different creations on different days?

Inconsistencies between specific points mentioned in Genesis if interpreted literally.

Look at a few specific details, and observe the contradictory statements that result if the details are understood literally.

■ Genesis, Chapter 1:

Day One: On day one of creation, God said let there be light: and "there was light...and God called the light day, and the darkness he called night." How could there be day and night when as yet the sun, moon and stars were not created (until the fourth day)?

Day Two: The waters were divided, separating waters from waters, creating a sky between the two waters. Dry land did not exist at the time. It would seem that there would have been a mass of water without form and void. But now we have a mass of water (void) surrounded by a sky, which, in turn was surrounded by another mass of water?

Day Three: The water was divided from the land causing dry land to appear. Where did "land" come from—since there was nothing but a shapeless mass of water? Then grass, trees, etc. were created, and all prior to the creation of the sun. Would this be reasonable? If these entities are all literal, is this according to our understanding of them as we see them today?

Day Four: The sun, moon and stars were created. This

A SPIRITUAL CREATION?

provided the first heat for the earth. It would seem that all must have been one block of ice until the creation of the sun—what other source of heat had God provided?

Day Five: Life in the sea and fowls of the air were created. This was the next day after creating the sun—if these are literal days, could one expect the waters to be thawed and warmed sufficiently to support marine life in 24 hours?

Day Six: The beasts, creeping things, and man were created. Man was given dominion over everything. Did man literally have dominion over everything immediately? Have there not been many men that were conquered by beasts? Even today, men still fall victim to disease, viruses and other “living things.” Many have been conquered, but many have not.

■ Genesis, Chapter 2

“Generations in a day”? In Genesis, chapter 2, we read, *“These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens...”* (Gen. 2:4). Did the Lord make the heavens and earth in one day (“the day”) or as stated in chapter 1, in “six days”? And how could there be “generations” (plural) in a single 24-hour “day”? Isn’t it another evidence that the inspired author is not speaking of a literal “day” or a literal “generation”?

“Adam” means “man.” Another point suggesting that the first of Genesis was not intended to be understood as a literal account of creation is the name given to the man that was made: Adam. Translated literally the name means “man”—in the Old Testament the same Hebrew word is translated “Adam” fourteen times and “man” more than 480 times. Doesn’t this suggest that Adam is being used as a representative being? When the Divinely inspired author has built in such a cross-connection and we apply it to one individual man, doesn’t it seem that we miss his point?

“Adam” (singular) can refer to male and female together. Another point that seems significant is the fact that “Adam” (the word translated “man” in the Old Testament) can be used to refer not solely to an individual being but also to both male and female (see Gen. 5:2: *“male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam [man]”*).

“Adam” is also used in a plural form. Doesn’t this suggest a composite “man,” or group, rather than an individual? According to *Gesenius’ Hebrew Lexicon* the term is plural in Genesis 1:26 (*“Let us make man in our image, ... and let them have dominion”*).

Adam was told that if he sinned he would die the day that he sinned. He sinned, but did not die until many years later. Was Adam’s physical death, then, the result of his sin?

The command of God to Adam and Eve concerning the forbidden tree was: *“in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”* They did eat of the forbidden tree and they were condemned, *but they did not die the day that they sinned.* They went on living for years, and became the parents of children (see chapter 4). In fact, Adam lived a total of 930 years, *“and he died”* (Gen. 5:5)—if he had suffered literal death because he ate of the fruit of the tree of good and evil he should have died *at the time* he was condemned for eating it, or else God was not true to His word. Clearly the penalty for Adam’s sin was not immediate literal death.

Was there a literal “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” in the garden of Eden? The very name of the forbidden fruit tree: *“the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”* identifies a non-literal (or symbolic) tree. What literal tree produces fruit of “knowledge”? Who learns good from evil by eating literal food?

Was there a literal “tree of life” in the garden of Eden? I’m sure you agree that the “tree of life” that was growing in the garden was symbolic. Is such a tree growing anywhere today? What natural tree produces “life” as its fruit? Yet if the rest of the story is literal, how can we have a symbolic tree in a literal garden?

Was Adam able to give names to “all cattle, and the fowl of the air and every beast of the field”? This is a feat not yet accomplished even by devoted scientists working forty hours a week for a lifetime. With all the documenting presently done, it is said that a large part of the living animals and plants (something like 40 or 50%) have yet to be named and catalogued.

A few more details to observe:

♦ If Adam and Eve were the progenitors of the whole race, how is it possible that races of people living today are different in skin color and various features, features which are transmitted generation after generation? How could they all have descended from two human parents?

♦ If Adam and Eve disobeyed by eating literal (forbidden) fruit, how did that act of eating give them knowledge? We read that following their partaking of the forbidden fruit, *“the eyes of them both were opened”* and *“they knew that they were naked.”* What possible con-

nection could there be between the eating of literal food and recognizing one's nakedness?

♦ When God placed a curse upon the serpent, He said to it, "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle,...upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." Is there any serpent today that is known to live by feeding on literal dust?

♦ When God cursed Adam, he said, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (Gen. 3:1)—this is inconsistent with the threat of judgment God had stated to Adam before he sinned (Gen. 2:17). Both cannot be taken literally.

Were Adam and Eve the First Two People on Earth?

"Correct me if I am wrong, but it appears that you are basing your entire assessment that there were humans on our earth before Adam and Eve on the theory there must have been other families present for Cain to dwell with and a wife to marry (Genesis 4). There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that Adam and Eve didn't have other children while Cain and Abel were growing up. We are not told how old they were when the events of Genesis 4 took place.
"In fact, there are MANY things about Bible times that we are not told that we would love to know, but God has given us what we NEED to know."

We agree heartily with your last statement: there are MANY things we are not told that we would love to know! But just as Moses said to ancient Israel, "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God," so it is true today. Yet we can be sure He has revealed all that we need that we may "live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world" (Tit. 2:11-12).

If we had only the statements in Genesis about Adam and Eve, we too would believe that they were the first and—at that time the only—two people on the earth.

What makes us believe that Adam and Eve were not the first and only persons on earth at that time?

Consider the following:

♦ When Cain was condemned, and he said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear" (Gen. 4:13), he said that he would be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth: "and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me." Would this be said ("everyone that findeth me shall slay me") if his family were the only people on earth? Again we read, "The Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him"—this sentence would be without meaning if there were not other people on the earth.

♦ Besides getting a wife in Nod, Cain built a city there. We read that "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod...and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son Enoch" (Gen. 4:16-17). How could he build a city if his family were the only people on earth?

We are not prepared to discuss the rate of decay of radioisotopes over time and its effect on dating methods used by scientists. However, even without going into detailed discussion, remains unearthed by geologists indicate that there was animal and human population on the earth long before six thousand years ago.

"Jesus himself made reference to the creation story (Matt. 19:1-5)."

In this passage Jesus, rebuking those who asked Him about divorce, was speaking of the sacred bond of marriage, in which He drew from the book of Genesis the material for a deep spiritual lesson, as He frequently did; but in this case He did not state it. He left that for Paul who, making the identical statement about the joining of male and female (referencing Genesis), showed clearly its deep spiritual meaning: "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32).

"The Apostle Paul stated that Adam was formed first, then Eve (1 Tim. 2:13-14). He did not say they were born."

Your observation is correct. But if we believe that the author of Genesis intended a non-literal understanding of his account, then Paul's words fit in perfectly: Adam was first "formed" [the word translated "formed" is the Greek *plasso* and means "to mold, shape"]. God is still in the process of completing this creative work, the spiritual creation of men and women who will, when complete, be fully made in the moral and physical likeness of God. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:" (Gen. 1:26). Humankind is not yet in "[God's] image, according to our [God's] likeness."

"The days of creation in Genesis 1 represent literal 24-hour days (Exodus 20:8-11)."

Is there any evidence to support this? A literal "day," i.e., the time required for the earth to complete one revolution on its axis, is very earth-bound, and is not a meaningful term with reference to the heavens.

The first chapter of Genesis states what was accomplished on each of six "days." If each of these is literally a 24-hour period, then what should we conclude about the statement in Gen. 2:4, "These are the genera-

tions of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens..." (Gen. 2:4)? The word translated "day" is *yome*, and its usage, as defined by the Lexicographer, is: "literal (from sunrise to sunset, or from one sunset to the next), or figurative (a space of time defined by an associated term)." It is used of "days (agone), (for) ever (-lasting, -more), full, life,... perpetually, presently,... (as) when, (a, the, within a) while (that), x whole (+ age), (full) year" (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*).

The Bible indicates that God's view of a "day" is

much more than 24 hours. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3:8).

In Summary

If we take the Genesis narrative as an allegory, we have in it a glimpse into the whole message of Scripture—the plan of God by which He is developing from His human family a people upon whom He can bestow His eternal blessings, until the earth is filled "with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14; Num. 14:21). □

☆☆☆ BE There! ☆☆☆

Our human nature has beastly instincts which we must curb and conquer if we would live well in this world and, above all, receive the approval of God. Even if we are very careful, one may still raise its ugly head and do mischief. I think Eugene Greissman's discovery regarding successful advancement in a career is just as applicable to our Christian career of conquering our beastly nature as to his subject of animal training.

Greissman asked Gunther Gebel-Williams, the celebrated animal trainer, what advice he had given his son, who is following his father's career.

"I told him to be there," Gebel-Williams replied.

Greissman wasn't sure what he meant. "Perhaps it was a father telling his son to always show up for work, the way he had for over 10,000 straight performances. But no, he had something else in mind."

"When he's in the ring with lions, tigers, and leopards, he can't be somewhere else. He must never let his mind wander," the best known animal trainer in the world explained. "He must be in the ring mentally."

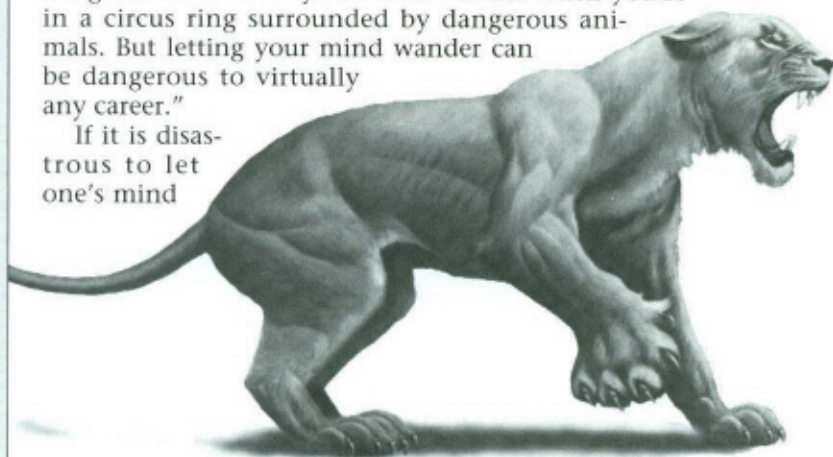
Mr. Greissman concluded: "It's pretty obvious how dangerous it is to let your mind wander when you're in a circus ring surrounded by dangerous animals. But letting your mind wander can be dangerous to virtually any career."

If it is disastrous to let one's mind

wander in a career, when competing with others, it is doubly disastrous for the Christian, as he must be on the watch for the creatures lurking in the shadows, those ugly old-natured traits which are so often not seen until they have done their destructive work.

We as Christians must be on guard at all times, because the evils of our nature are there. Not only must we be on guard, but we must keep on the armor God has provided for us to use against these "wiles of the devil," these old natural ways. If we would follow Paul's advice and bring into "captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5), we must constantly be there, alert, wide awake, conscious of what we are thinking, what we are saying, what we are doing. Only in this way can we avoid being ripped to shreds or swallowed alive by our own beastly thoughts.

—Contributed





Tom's Revenge

"I hate Ned Lane!" said Tom Bixby, doubling up his fists and stomping his feet. "He's mean and spiteful. I wish he was dead, I do!"

Then Tom broke down and fairly burst into tears. His mother, who had heard his angry words, came out to the garden to see what had caused them. She, too, was indignant at what she saw. There was Tom's pet dog, Fawn, stretched out cold and stiff on the ground. Around his neck a string was tied, from which dangled a card. On it these words were written in a scraggy, blotted hand: "You'll never chase my chickens again.—Ned Lane."

"Oh, mother!" cried Tom, "look at poor, poor Fawn. See what that cruel Ned has done. Oh, how I hate him. I want revenge."

Fawn had been a favorite with the Bixby family, in spite of the fact that he would occasionally chase the chickens, or catch and hide away stockings and handkerchiefs that had been laid on the grass. She had hoped that his youthful faults would be cured in time. She knew that Ned Lane had been very angry because Fawn had caught two of his rare fowls, and shaken and torn them to pieces. Yes, she knew that Fawn had been a great annoyance to the neighbors, and a great transgressor.

But what to do now was the

question, for Tom's heart was almost broken.

"Tom," she said, "you say you hate Ned. Do you, as I heard you say just now, do you really want revenge?"

"Yes, mother, I want to see him suffer. I wish all his chickens were gone."

"Ned has done a cruel deed, and I do not wonder that you are deeply hurt. But two wrongs do not make a right, and, my son, he that hateth his brother is a murderer."

"He's not my brother."

"No, but in one sense he is. I am sure you do not mean that you would really like to see him dead and cold like your dog. If you think of the meaning of your words, Tom, I am sure you wish him no such ill. I think there is a way you can make him feel very sorry for this, yet keep your own self-respect."

Mother's gentle tones won their way to Tom's heart. He sat down by his mother, and she passed her soft hand over his hot brow, and soothed him tenderly. Then she gave him her plan for being "quits" as she called it, with Ned, and for getting the victory.

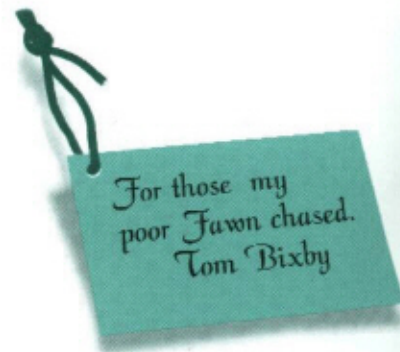
The next day, when Ned Lane met Tom Bixby on his way to school, Ned was rather mortified to hear nothing from Tom about Fawn. Ned was prepared to defend

himself if attacked. But Tom passed in silence. All the morning, when the boys were in classes together, Tom looked and acted as usual, and at recess he engaged heartily with the other boys.

When Ned, feeling more and more uncomfortable, went home to dinner, he found a surprise waiting for him. There on the front porch was a box containing a superb pair of brahma-pootra fowl, with a string and card attached. The card read, "For those my poor Fawn chased. Tom Bixby."

I cannot say truly that the two from this time on became fast friends, but this I know, that Ned Lane was thoroughly ashamed of his meanness, and never after was guilty of the like cruelty.

And Tom felt, even at Fawn's grave, that forgiveness is sweeter than revenge. □



Know Your Bible?

Burial Places

1. Where was Judas buried?
2. The first real-estate transaction mentioned in the Bible was the buying of a burial ground. Who bought it and where was it?
3. Where was Jesus buried?
4. Was Moses buried in the promised land?
5. What famous man prayed: *"Bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt"*?
6. Where was Elijah buried?
7. What famous woman in the Old Testament said: *"Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried"*?
8. What happened to Joseph's body after his death in Egypt?
9. What great monuments were raised over the burial places of some of the kings of Egypt?
10. Where was David buried?

Eating and Drinking

1. What great feast was initiated when the Israelites left Egypt?
2. To what great feast did Vashti refuse to go?
3. At whose feast did the handwriting appear on the wall?
4. At whose house was Jesus eating when Mary anointed Him with ointment?
5. When and where in the Bible was a meal served to the greatest number of people?
6. What name is given to the last meal which Jesus had with all His apostles?
7. At whose banquet were orders given for the death of a great prophet?
8. Who poured out water which had been brought to him from the well of Bethlehem at great risk?
9. Who, while sitting at his tent door, welcomed three angels, and entertained them?
10. Does the Bible say: *"eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die"*?

Callings

1. Hazael—king or priest?
2. Gehazi—petty king or servant?
3. Joab—scribe or soldier?
4. Philip—doctor or deacon?
5. Andrew—fisherman or sorcerer?
6. Eliashib—priest or king's cupbearer?
7. Thaddeus—merchant or apostle?
8. Shishak—necromancer or king?
9. Apollos—foreign god or learned Jew?
10. Zenas—husbandman or lawyer?

Excuses

1. Who made the following excuse for hiding from God: *"I was afraid"*?
2. What three excuses were made (in a parable) by those who were bidden to a wedding feast?
3. What excuse did Agrippa make for not releasing Paul, when he found nothing against him?
4. What excuse did Moses give to God for not wishing to lead the Israelites?
5. What excuse did Felix make for not listening to Paul's warning?
6. What excuse did the Israelites make for not going in to possess the land of Canaan, when the spies returned with such wonderful fruits and glowing descriptions of the land?
7. What was Herod's excuse for killing the babes of Bethlehem?
8. What excuse did Gideon make when God told him to come out and save Israel?
9. What excuse did the money-changers make for plying their trade in the temple?
10. What excuse did Ahab give for taking Naboth's vineyard?

Daughters of the Bible

1. The oldest daughter of Job.
2. This girl was the daughter-in-law of Naomi. She stayed behind.
3. This daughter helped to save her brother from death, when he was a tiny baby.
4. This girl was the only daughter of Jacob, and she had twelve brothers.
5. This daughter of Laban was given in marriage to Jacob by trickery.
6. This daughter's father was Jethro. She married Moses.
7. This daughter of a king adopted a baby boy.
8. Of this daughter Jesus said: *"She is not dead, but sleepeth."*

ANSWERS ON PAGE 23

What about Armageddon?

"Am I right in thinking that Armageddon means 'battle on the hill' from when Megiddo was sacked? Thanks."

The word "Armageddon" is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew *har megiddo*, literally, "mountain of Megiddo" (*Holman Bible Dictionary*).

There have been many battles fought at or near Megiddo during the past several milleniums. "The plain of Megiddo was the scene of frequent and decisive battles of antiquity. Megiddo was a stronghold at the head of the Plain of Esdraelon, called the plain of Megiddo by Jerome" (*The Interpreter's Bible*).

Megiddo has changed hands many times during the course of history. According to *Eerdman's Bible Dictionary*, archeological explorations indicate that Megiddo was occupied before the 33rd century B.C. It was subject to Egypt as early as the first half of the 19th century B.C. Solomon rebuilt Megiddo as an administrative and military center. Egypt later conquered the city in 925 B.C. Assyria defeated Megiddo and established it as a provincial capital in 733 B.C. These are some of the more noted battles when Megiddo was "sacked."

If you are thinking of one of many times Megiddo was conquered, then you might think of "the battle of Armageddon" as one of the times "Megiddo was sacked."

However, if you are thinking of the passage in Revelation (the only place Armageddon is mentioned in Scripture), this battle has not yet been fought. The introduction to the book of Revelation says that it was a message from Jesus revealing "things to come" (Rev. 1:1). It was

yet future when the book was written (near the end of the first century A.D.), and it is still future today.

The passage reads: "And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Rev. 16:16). The nations of the world will gather together at Armageddon to join in battle against Christ and the saints.

The Book of Revelation describes this battle in very symbolic language. Turning to the 19th chapter we read: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war" (Rev. 19:11). Jesus Christ is the one called "Faithful and True," and in righteousness He will judge and make war. "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron [unbreakable law]; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Rev. 19:15). On His robe and on His thigh He has this name written: "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

The prophet Daniel saw the Battle of Armageddon as a "a time of trouble" which will follow the time when Michael [Jesus Christ] stands up to take the rulership of the earth. The result will be a "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time" (Dan. 12:1). God's plan for this earth is to establish a real, literal Kingdom, having a King (His Son), co-rulers (the saints), territory (the earth), laws and populace. We read of the authority of this government: "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the

most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him" (Dan. 7:27). Before God's plan for this earth can be realized the world will be compelled to submit to Christ. Even though they will be informed and warned (Mal. 4:5-6; Matt. 17:11; Rev. 14:6-7), they still will not understand.

The rebellious element who will not submit to His judgments will have to be forcibly subdued and conquered. Isaiah describes their fate: "For the nation or kingdom that will not serve you will perish; it will be utterly ruined" (Isa. 60:12, NIV).

The Battle of Armageddon will be real, intense, destructive. But unlike the wars fought today, this will be a righteous war. Those in command will be just and fair, not cruel and hateful. The book of Revelation describes the very extraordinary system that will be in power: "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war" (Rev. 19:11, NIV). Only the evil element, those who will not submit to Christ, will be removed.

The Battle of Armageddon will be the war that ends all wars. "He [Christ] will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore" (Micah 4:3, NIV).

The results of the battle? Two thirds of the inhabitants of the world will perish before the remaining third will submit. "In the whole land, declares the LORD, two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This

third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God'" (Zech. 13:8-9, NIV).

How long will this new authority be in power? The Bible tells us that Christ's Kingdom will be everlasting. He [Christ] "was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.... The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15, NIV).

The Battle of Armageddon will be the war to end wars. The result: all evil will perish, but no good will be harmed. Christ's administration, headquartered in Zion, will be the unchallenged authority. "Many nations will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.' The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Micah 4:2, NIV).

This is the Kingdom for which we have so often prayed: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Who will be ready when the Lord accomplishes all this?

◆ The Marriage of the Lamb—When?

"When, relative to the return of Christ (not according to date), will the Marriage of the Lamb take place? Will it be immediately after Christ returns, before He comes or at some other time?"

The union of Christ and His faithful Bride, the one hundred forty-four thousand who are "called, and chosen and faithful" (Rev. 17:14), will follow soon after Christ's return to earth. But a few other events must precede it:

1) The resurrection of sleeping covenant-makers.

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

2) The judgment of God's servants.

Once the sleeping saints are restored to life, they must be judged, for not all are faithful, and only the faithful ones will be present at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

The Judgment will be the time of separating which Jesus spoke of as dividing the sheep from the goats (Matt. 25). This accomplished, the union of Christ and His Bride, and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb will follow.

John the Revelator describes the scene which he saw in vision: "Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: 'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty [Christ, Emmanuel, God with us] reigns. Let us be glad and give him honor! For the wedding of the

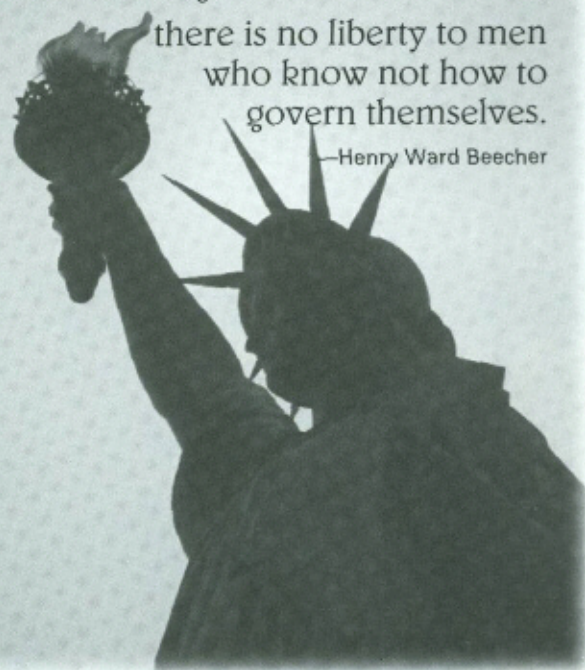
Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.' Then the angel said to me, 'Write: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb.' And he added, 'These are the true words of God'" (Rev. 19:6-9, NIV).

There is no liberty to men whose passions are stronger than their religious feelings;

there is no liberty to men in whom ignorance predominates over knowledge;

there is no liberty to men who know not how to govern themselves.

—Henry Ward Beecher



◆ From Death to Life Now?

"I found your article *Why Did God Test Abraham?*, very interesting. It has also been a question in my mind that had Abraham failed this test, had Abraham not been willing to sacrifice Isaac, what God would have done with his son?"

"I do disagree with one of your points and I think with good reason. You asked the question in your third paragraph, 'Is it any wonder that He requires each one to pass a severe test?' We do not need to pass a severe test. The severe test was already passed by Jesus Christ. We are the beneficiaries of His great victory. In fact, John 5:24 says that if we believe on the One who sent Him, we have already passed from death unto life and do not go through judgment (the Greek word is Crisis)."

The verse you mention (John 5:24), reads: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and

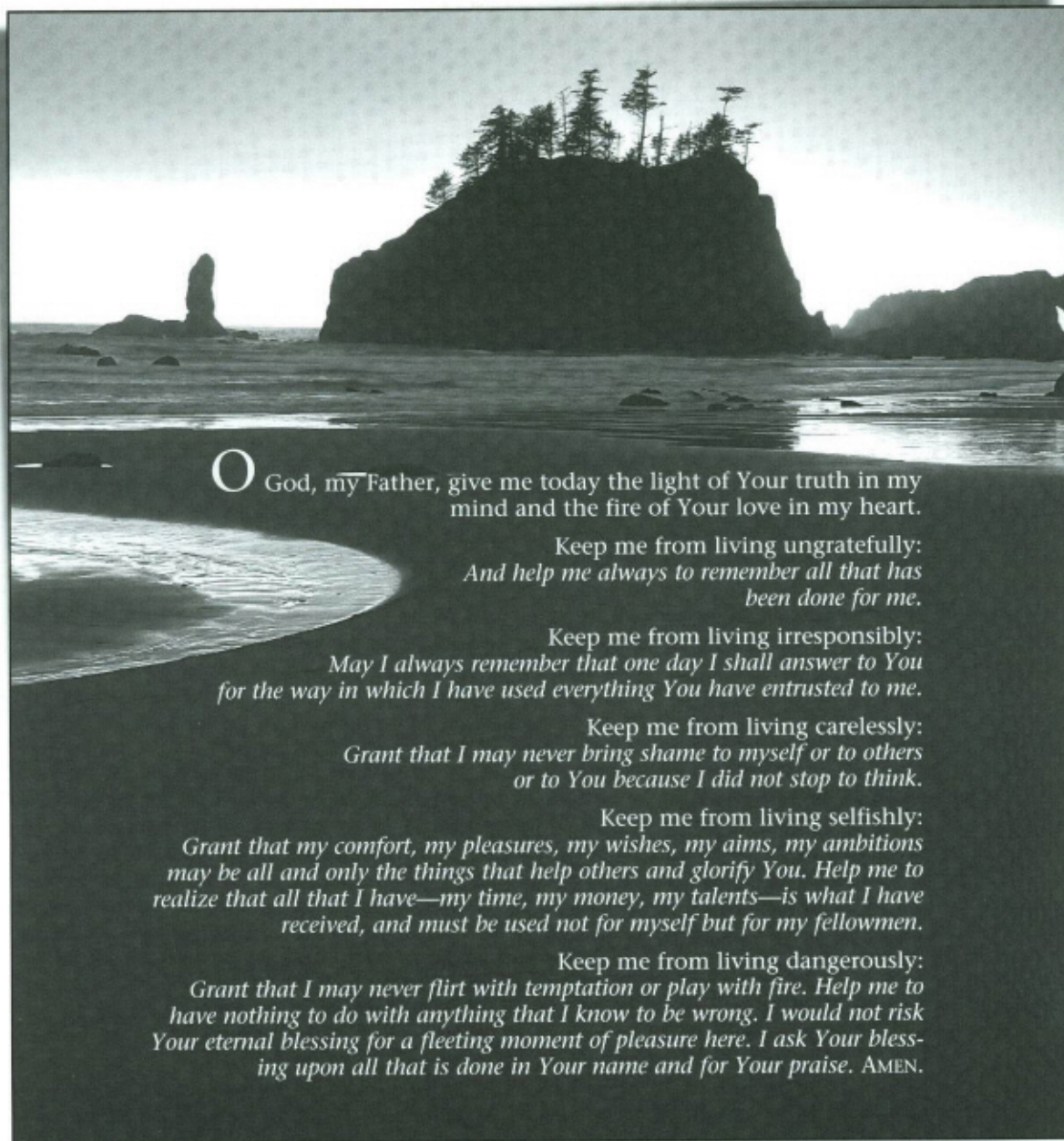
believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." As you said, these are Jesus' words. Jesus said also, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13). And He also included at the close of His last letter, which He sent after He had been in heaven for some years: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). In this same letter He said earlier, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7).

How shall we understand all these passages without establishing a contradiction? Shall we say that Jesus did not really mean it when He said "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"? Or that He

did not mean the right to the tree of life would go to the one who obeys His every commandment?

All is understandable if we take the word "believe" in the context of Scripture. The apostle Paul made the meaning of belief very clear when he said in Philippians 1:29-30, speaking of himself, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me." To believe on Jesus is much more than to verbalize the words, "I believe." If we say we know Him, yet do not do as He has commanded, we make ourselves liars (1 John 2:3-6).

What did Jesus mean when He said that the believer "has everlasting life"? Who can say that the state of life he possesses right now will be everlasting? Death will



O God, my Father, give me today the light of Your truth in my mind and the fire of Your love in my heart.

Keep me from living ungratefully:
And help me always to remember all that has
been done for me.

Keep me from living irresponsibly:
May I always remember that one day I shall answer to You
for the way in which I have used everything You have entrusted to me.

Keep me from living carelessly:
Grant that I may never bring shame to myself or to others
or to You because I did not stop to think.

Keep me from living selfishly:
Grant that my comfort, my pleasures, my wishes, my aims, my ambitions
may be all and only the things that help others and glorify You. Help me to
realize that all that I have—my time, my money, my talents—is what I have
received, and must be used not for myself but for my fellowmen.

Keep me from living dangerously:
Grant that I may never flirt with temptation or play with fire. Help me to
have nothing to do with anything that I know to be wrong. I would not risk
Your eternal blessing for a fleeting moment of pleasure here. I ask Your blessing
upon all that is done in Your name and for Your praise. AMEN.

come to all of us, in the present state, whether we have lived our lives well or squandered them. God's promise of eternal life is a life in which there is *no* sickness, *no* sorrow, *no* pain, suffering, or death (Rev. 21:3-4). None of us have any surety against any of these, however believing we are. None of us has "everlasting life" at the present time.

What, then, could Jesus have meant? The apostle John explained how the believer has eternal life: by promise. *"And this is what he promised us—even eternal life"* (1 John 2:25). And that promise will be fulfilled to each one who truly believes, who demonstrates his faith by his life, who follows the example of Jesus and does always the things pleasing to the heavenly Father (John 8:29).

When Jesus said that the believer *"has passed from death unto life,"* we cannot take Him to mean that one has passed from the mortal to the immortal state, for there is no one immortal on earth; that change is reserved for the future, when Jesus returns. Paul said that it would happen at the appearing of Jesus Christ, *"who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body"* (Phil. 3:20-21). The change in the believer is that he is no longer *on the way to* eternal death. Now he is *on the way to* eternal life. Everlasting life will be the consequence of his active belief, if he endures to the end (Matt. 24:13), if he is judged faithful when Jesus returns to reward every man according as his works shall be (Rev. 22:12). □



You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer
And even once say "I."
You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer
And even once say "my."
Nor can you say the Lord's Prayer
And not pray for another.
For when you ask for daily bread
You must include your brother.
For others are included
In each and every plea;
From the beginning to the end of it,
It does not once say "me."



Answers to Questions on page 19

Burial Places

1. We are not told
2. Abraham bought part of the field of Machpelah, where the cave was (Genesis 23:9)
3. In the garden of Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:59-60)
4. No. His burial place is not known, but is supposed to be Mount Nebo (Deut. 34:1-6)
5. Jacob (Genesis 47:29ff)
6. He never died (2 Kings 2:11)
7. Ruth (Ruth 1:17)
8. It was embalmed in Egypt, and when the Israelites left his coffin was carried with them to the promised land
9. The Pyramids
10. In the city of David, Jerusalem (1 Kings 2:10)

Eating and Drinking

1. The Passover (Exodus 12)
2. The feast of her husband, Ahasuerus (Esther 1:12)
3. The feast of Belshazzar (Daniel 5)
4. The house of Simon the Leper (Matthew 26:6)
5. At the feeding of the five thousand (Matt. 14:15-21)
6. The last supper
7. Herod's banquet (Matthew 14:6-12)
8. David (2 Samuel 23:15-16)
9. Abraham (Genesis 18)
10. No (Luke 12:19)

Callings

1. King (2 Kings 8:15)
2. Servant of Elisha (2 Kings 4:12)
3. Soldier (2 Samuel 8:16)
4. Deacon (Acts 6:5)
5. Fisherman (John 1:42)

6. Priest (1 Chronicles 24:12)
7. Apostle (Matt. 10:3)
8. King of Egypt (1 Kings 14:25)
9. Learned Jew (1 Corinthians 3:6)
10. Lawyer (Titus 3:13)

Excuses

1. Adam (Genesis 3:10)
2. Married a wife, bought five yoke of oxen, bought a piece of ground (Luke 14:16-21)
3. Paul had "appealed unto Caesar" (Acts 26:32)
4. "I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Exodus 4:10)
5. It was not a "convenient season" (Acts 24:25)
6. They were afraid because the ten spies had said "the land is a land of giants, and we are as grasshoppers" (Numbers 13:33)
7. It was rumored that the king of the Jews was born, who might supplant him
8. *"O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor, ...and I am the least in my father's house"* (Judges 6:14-15)
9. So many foreigners came who needed to change their money in order to buy offerings to sacrifice.
10. The property was next his own, and he needed it for a herb garden (1 Kings 21:1-2)

Daughters of the Bible

1. Jemima (Job 42:14)
2. Orpah (Ruth 1:14)
3. Miriam (Exodus 2:1-10)
4. Dinah (Genesis 30:21)
5. Leah (Genesis 29:13-30)
6. Zipporah (Exodus 2:21)
7. The daughter of Pharaoh (Exodus 2:5-10)
8. The daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:22, 35-43)

An YSTER Lesson

There once was an oyster
Whose story I'll tell,
Who found that some sand
Had got into his shell.

It was only a grain,
But it gave him great pain.
For oysters have feelings
Although they're so plain.

Now, did he berate
The harsh workings of fate,
That had brought him to such
A deplorable state?

Did he rail at the government,
And cry for election,
And claim that the sea should
Have given him protection?

"No," he said to himself
As he lay in his shell,
"Since I cannot remove it,
I shall try to improve it."

Now the years have rolled around,
As the years always do,
And he came to his ultimate
Destiny...stew.

And the small grain of sand
That had bothered him so
Was a beautiful pearl
All richly aglow.

Now the tale has a moral,
For isn't it grand
What an oyster can do
With a morsel of sand?

And what couldn't we do
If we'd only begin
With some of the things
That get under our skin!



This Same Jesus

He is coming! tell the story,
He is coming! read His Word,
He is coming! once rejected,
Jesus, Saviour, King, and Lord,
He is coming! what a wonder
When He bursts upon our view,
With His saints, the tried and faithful,
Marshallled for that Great Review.
He is coming! swell the anthem,
Sing aloud the glad refrain,
He is coming, surely coming,
Over all mankind to reign.

Some will bow in adoration,
Some upon the earth lie prone,
Some will call the rocks to hide them,
When He sits upon His Throne.

Would you be found ready, waiting,
Watching for your glorious Lord,
Having on your wedding garments,
Spoken of within the Word?
Do not tarry till the morrow,
Follow Jesus while you may,
Say: "Dear Saviour, I surrender,
Gladly will I Thee obey,
Ever follow in Thy footsteps,
Ever feed upon Thy Word,
Till caught up with all the faithful,
By my Saviour, King, and Lord."

He is coming! tell the story,
He is coming! read His Word,
He is coming! once rejected,
Jesus, Saviour, King, and Lord.

High Risk Venturers

By faith Noah built an ark, when there wasn't any rain in sight.

By faith Abraham set out for a land he knew nothing about, and with no return ticket.

By faith Moses led two million ex-slaves into the wilderness where there wasn't a crop growing, or a vineyard, or even a supply base for hundreds of miles.

Those epic deeds took faith, faith in things not seen. They were what we would call high risk ventures. And the Bible is full of such, of the accounts of men and women who were willing to risk everything on the Word of God. The writer of Hebrews lists several of these Old Testament high-risk venturers in his eleventh chapter; then, after 31 verses, he realizes he has only begun, so he says, *"I don't have time to tell about all the others."* Everyone who committed himself to serve and obey God was, in a sense, a high risk venturer.

Even in our modern times, God still calls us to exhibit extraordinary faith—even more, for we walk entirely by faith. We have never seen even one angel, or heard one heavenly voice. It is a special test of faith. Will we stand? Will our faith hold up for the high risk involved? Is our conviction so deep and so solidly grounded that nothing in modern-day Babylon, threatening or appealing, can unsettle it?

God doesn't want us to neglect our property, or jeopardize our friendships, or sacrifice a promising lifetime career for a seemingly "risky" decision of faith. Or does He?

It may be that He does. If His promises mean anything to us, they must mean everything—at whatever cost. There is absolutely no risk as to the certainty of God's promises; but there is risk so far as the things of this world are concerned. We may or may not be able to enjoy the so-called "normal" pleasures of life. God must be first. His righteousness must come first. We are still called to sacrifice and serve.

Someone has said that the Christian gets the best of two worlds. In a sense this is definitely not true. We cannot be working and planning with our heart set on this world and expect to secure a place in the world to come. But we will find that by concentrating on preparing for the world to come, venturing everything on the Word of the Lord, we shall find a hundredfold of blessing in this world. The change of perspective makes half the difference.

Where are the great men and women of faith today who are willing to step out on a high risk venture for God? Shall you be one of them? Shall I? □



Neglected Field

*In this untended field the weeds grow high,
With only scattered heads of ripened wheat.
Self-sown, they still persist and will not die
Though drought should bake the earth or wild rains beat.*

*The weeds will surely conquer in the end,
Their evil hordes will choke out all the grain;
Unless I bring my forces to defend,
The struggle for existence will be vain.*

*So good must ever struggle with the ill;
There is no golden moment to relax.
Evil is ever ready for the kill;
Its seeds will sprout if men but turn their backs.*

*I'll lose forever if I harbor hate
Or if I slumber till it is too late
—Unless I work!*

We have to earn our convictions through hard study and thinking. Nothing of real worth comes easy.

Well DONE is better than well SAID.



*The way to peace undying
Is open for us all;
And if we take the highest road
We'll rise and never fall.
If we will let God lead us,
We'll never have to dread,
For those of us who follow God
Can always forge ahead.*

*A faithful God our champion,
We never can go wrong.
He fills the weak with power,
With faith He makes them strong.
Without our God beside us,
We stray and soon are lost.
But if we'd live eternally,
We'll have to pay the cost.*

*Gold will not buy God's favor
Or gain the goal we seek;
Only by living righteously
Can we surmount the peak.
We travel on life's roadway,
Through God we'll find the end
Where all our prayers are answered in
The life that ne'er shall end.*

Courage and Confidence

In Acts 5:17-42 we read the account of the Apostles being in prison and threatened by the Jewish hierarchy. They had absolute confidence in the Living God, and courage to go through terrible trials and suffering, if such service be required of them. They had courage and confidence.

What of us today? Most of us do not have the persecution and suffering to endure, but we still need the confidence and faith. We need this same boldness and certainty in our convictions that will inspire admiration and respect in our friends and associates for the cause of Christ and win His approval.





T ATTITUDES

*The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life.
Attitude can be even more important than facts.*

*It is more important than the past, than education, than money,
than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what
other people think or say or do.*

It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill.

It will make or break a company...a church...a home.

*The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the
attitude we will embrace for that day.*

*We cannot change our past...we cannot change the fact that people
will act in a certain way.*

We cannot change the inevitable.

*The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that
is our attitude...*

*I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90%
how I react to it. And so it is with you...we are in charge
of our **ATTITUDES**.*

— CHARLES SWINDOLL