

Megiddo Message

2000
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Vol. 86, No. 10
December, 1999

UNCOMMON COURTESIES

"Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous." —1 Peter 3:8 NKJV

Courteous (as used in the Bible): kind, friendly of mind, a friend, understanding
—Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

Discourtesy is close to selfishness.

Simple, everyday courtesies are part of our Christian obligation. Yet sometimes, those nearest to us—our own family members—receive less courtesy than strangers.

How well are you doing? Answer these questions thoughtfully.

1. I (*always, usually, seldom, never*) repeat a story about another family member without his or her permission.
2. I (*always, usually, seldom, never*) make an effort to be neat and tidy.
3. I (*always, usually, seldom, never*) listen to others with respect and don't try to hold the floor myself.
4. I (*always, usually, seldom, never*) say "Please" and "Thank you" for even the smallest favors.
5. If talking to someone who doesn't know one of my family members, I (*always, usually, seldom, never*) introduce them.
6. I (*always, usually, seldom, never*) bark out orders, requests or answers but speak carefully and gently.
7. I (*always, usually, seldom, never*) interrupt when someone else is speaking. If the matter is really urgent, I ask their pardon.
8. I (*always, usually, seldom, never*) keep my promises.
9. I (*always, usually, seldom, never*) admit my mistakes, and say that I am sorry, then do all that I can to rectify the mistake.
10. Instead of getting upset when something goes against me, I (*always, usually, seldom, never*) stop and think, and try to see the other person's point of view.
11. I (*always, usually, seldom, never*) withhold a cheerful greeting, even if I know something has not gone well between me and that person.

Seven (*always*) to four (*never*) is an excellent score.

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.

IN THIS ISSUE ...

Editorial

UNCOMMON COURTESIES..... 2

Articles

2000: WHAT DOES IT MEAN? By Gerald R. Payne 4

LIVING BELIEVERS WILL WELCOME JESUS..... 7

MEEKNESS: STRENGTH UNDER CONTROL.....10

Dialogue

MADE IN HIS IMAGE — (Part 2)..... 12

THREE STEPS TO SALVATION

Step 1: Changed in MIND

Step 2: Changed in CHARACTER

Step 3: Changed in BODY

GARY RUNS FOR CLASS PRESIDENT..... 17

Articles

HOW MUCH WILL YOU LEAVE BEHIND? 18

by Elizabeth Kucharska

Know Your Bible? 19

James and John ♦ Men and Prayers

♦ Bible Characters

Bible Study

THEY DID IT—THEIR WAY by Ruth E. Sisson 20

The Downward Trek (Judges 10:6-11:40)

The Turning Point ♦ Enter Jephthah ♦ Jephthah

in Command ♦ Jephthah Prepares for Battle

♦ Jephthah's Vow

Questions and Answers

DINING IN AN IDOL'S TEMPLE? 25

Back Cover

GOOD MORNING, GOD! 28

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2000 WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

*You do not know what will
happen tomorrow!"*
"—James 4:14 NCV

By GERALD R. PAYNE

A lot of predictions, prophecies and apprehension about Y2K (year 2000) are circulating. It is believed that the prophecy business will boom as the Y2K fever spreads. One evangelical commented, "If the moneychangers of Jesus' time were living today, they would probably be selling Y2K supplies."

Year 2000 Prophecies

Many people believe that one or more extraordinary events will occur near the start of the year 2000. Predictions include:

- A cosmic storm will hit the earth. Winds of 1000 mph and tremendous swings in temperature will kill millions.
- Massive upheavals will destroy much of human civilization.
- The world will end.
- A giant asteroid will hit the earth and start a fire that

will burn up the planet.

- Visitors from outer space will change the world.
- Nuclear war will erupt just prior to 2000 in the Middle East and an environmental disaster will occur, burning the whole world with fire.
- World War III will begin.
- The 7-year tribulation will begin.
- The United Nations will take over the United States and form a one-world government.
- The rapture will occur.

What should we believe?

Looking at the diversity of predictions, I would have great difficulty knowing which to believe. Why? Because we know by authority of God (James was His spokesman) that no one has the ability to know what Y2K will bring. "*You do not know what will happen tomorrow!*" (James 4:14 NCV).

Our only confidence is in God and what He has told in His written Word.

What can we know from the Word of God?

Some things we can know from the Word of God include:

- No one knows when Christ will return. *"No one knows when that day or time will be, not the angels in heaven, not even the Son. Only the Father knows"* (Mark 13:32 NCV).
- Christ will come when not expected, as He mentioned in His parable, *"But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into"* (Matt. 24:43 NIV).
- Conditions at the time of Christ's coming will be comparable to Noah's day, when only 8 persons were saved while multitudes drowned (Matt. 24:37, Gen. 7:13). It will be like it was when Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed in fire, when only Lot and his two daughters were saved (Luke 17:29). As then, life will seem as usual. *"People were eating, drinking, marrying, and giving their children to be married"* (Luke 17:28 NCV).
- There will not be another one-government world until after Christ returns (Daniel 2:35-45).

Certain conditions will exist when Christ returns:

- There will be scoffers saying, *"Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation"* (2 Pet. 3:3-4 NIV).
- People will be *"fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken"* (Luke 21:26 NASB).
- There will be *"distress of nations,*

with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring" (Luke 21:25)

- It will be a time of peril. *"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come"* (2 Tim. 3:1 NKJV).
- It will be a time of *"business as usual"* (Luke 17:30 TLB).
- Elijah will return before Jesus. *"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes"* (Mal. 4:5 NIV).
- Some will be expecting Christ's return and be ready to receive Him (Matt. 25:1-13).

What Does The Year 2000 Mean To Us?

Should we anticipate the coming year with apprehension and dread? Never! Despite the prophecies of doom, the earth will not be burned up or destroyed. The One who created the world promised that it would never be destroyed. *"He made the world to be lived in, not to be a place of empty chaos"* (Isa. 45:18 NLT). The Lord said through the Psalmist, *"Those who are gentle and lowly will possess the land; they will live in prosperous security"*

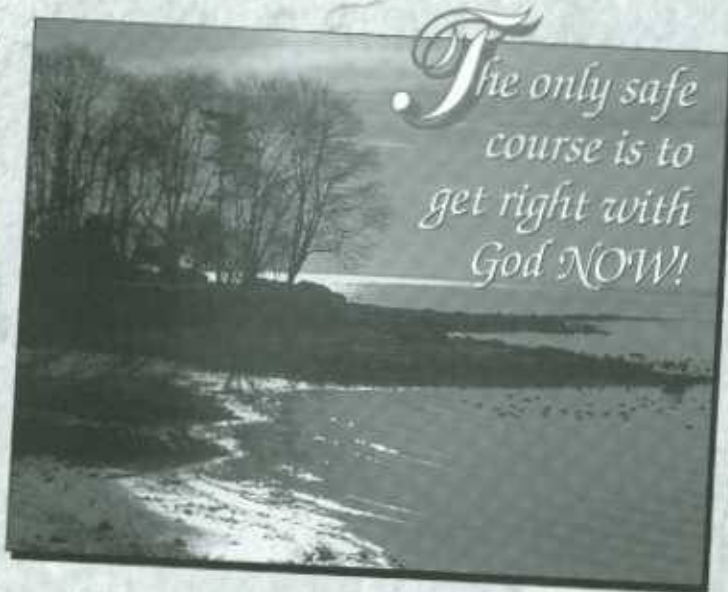
many years of study I have complete confidence in this library of books. Why? Because it contains hundreds of prophecies that have already been fulfilled exactly as foretold. If all these prophecies came to pass as predicted, is there any reason to doubt that those few end-time prophecies will fail? No! The Lord said through Isaiah, *"My word...will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it"* (Isa. 55:11 NIV).

According to a recent poll, 95 percent of those professing to be Christians said that they must "get right with the Lord" in anticipation of Christ's coming. This is a wonderful statement! First, 95 percent have confessed that they are not right with the Lord. Second, they seem to be saying that they want to get right with the Lord.

Will you take the second step and get right with God? In Romans we are told, *"the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 6:23 NASB). Getting right with God means putting away

sin and learning to do right. Or as Isaiah said, *"...cease to do evil; Learn to do well..."* (1:16-17). This is not something that can be done in a moment. A lot can be done in a short time, but sins that have become habit years ago are not as easy to get rid of as shedding a coat when the sun gets a little hot. Only by studying can one really know all that God calls sin and be able to put them away—with His help.

Suppose Christ returns at the beginning of Y2K as many think He will. Making a New Year resolution to get right with the Lord would be too late. The only safe course is to act NOW. The Scripture is very plain about who will not enter the Kingdom. *"But for the cowardly and*



*The only safe
course is to
get right with
God NOW!*

(Ps. 37:11 NLT). Christ gave us this same promise when He said, *"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth"* (Matt. 5:5).

Some claim the Bible is not reliable, but the problem is rather that their understanding is faulty. After

unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second

that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matt. 7:14 NIV).

So what does the arrival of the year 2000 mean to those who are making every effort to be true to their compact with God? It means another day of opportunity to become all that God wants us to become and do what He wants us to do; another day to be thankful; another day to study and meditate on the Scriptures, to learn and apply God's law to our lives. God will not forsake those who love Him, but will work with them as a loving Father.

Are you working with God?

The date January 1, 2000 is just another date on the Gregorian calendar marking a place in time. Its only distinction is that it has three zeros. Like every January 1, it marks the beginning of another calendar year and the end of one that is gone.

This is a sobering thought. For many, what they have done in the year 1999 will be what they will do in the year 2000 and beyond, perhaps until Christ returns. Don't you think this is a serious thing to consider?

Look back over your past life and see where you need to change, and do it NOW.

For many, January 1, 2000 will be a day of partying, merrymaking, drunkenness and entertainment. There will be no thought of God, no thought of the soon-coming Kingdom. But for a few it will be a day—like every other day—for seriously reflecting on their conduct before God; another day to

search their hearts and live better than the day before.

For a few it will be a time of looking back on the lessons that have been learned, and forward to new opportunities.

For a few it will be a time of commitment, a time of renewal, a time to fulfill the promises we have made to God.

It will be a time to renew our perpetual thanksgiving; a time to stand for right and not for wrong.

It will be a time to search our souls and ask, **Am I worthy of God's mercy? Am I ready?**

Why? Because the Lord WILL come soon.

A poem by John Oxenham captures these thoughts:

*To every man there openeth
A Way, and Ways, and a Way.
And the High Soul climbs the
High Way,
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
And in between, on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A High Way, and a Low.
And every man decideth
The Way his soul shall go.*

Where are you? Are you groping along in the Low Way, among those who say, "There is no God" (Ps. 53:1)?

Or are you among those who are walking on the High Way, eagerly obeying every word of Christ, praying every day, "Lord, plant my feet on higher ground"?

Those on the High Way are focusing their whole attention on developing that holy character that honors Christ and that Christ will honor with the gift of eternal life. They are loving Him with all their heart, worshiping Him with all their being. And soon they will hear Christ say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matt. 25:21).

God grant that we may be among them. ♦



*Am I worthy of
God's mercy? Am I
ready?*

death" (Rev. 21:8; also see Rev. 22:15 NASB). It is also just as plain about who will enter the Kingdom: it will be "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).

How many will be prepared when Christ comes? Only a few. Said Jesus, "Small is the gate and narrow the road

Living Believers Will Welcome Jesus

The time for Jesus' return, though unknown to us, has been set by the Father. The hour is fixed. Will there be any of His people living and ready to welcome Him when He comes?

Here is a point that has special interest to us who are living in the era when the return of Christ is imminent. Do we have any sure evidence that there will be living believers to welcome Him?

The answer is a resounding Yes! Equally as certain as the promise of His return is the promise that there will be living believers to welcome Him. Of course the plan includes the resurrecting of the dead in Christ (1 Thess. 4:16-18), but these alone will not complete the number. The Bible indicates there will be those living and ready to welcome Him at His return. What a glorious thought!

What is the evidence? How do we know that some will be living and believing when Christ returns? How do we know that the light of Divine knowledge will be shining when the New Day dawns?

Perhaps most familiar and most explicit are Jesus' words to Martha at the time Lazarus died. When Jesus said confidently, "Your brother will rise again," Martha's mind went immediately to the great resurrection at Christ's second advent, and she answered in full faith, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus' reply, as warmly assuring as it must have been to Martha, says even more to us who find ourselves living right on the verge of the Resurrection Day. "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26 NIV).

Could words be more explicit? First Jesus con-

Isaiah 25:9 "In that day....we have waited for him and he will save us."

Matt. 24:46 "whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

Matt. 25:6-7 "the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him....all...arose."

Mark 13:35-36 "Watch....Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping."

Luke 12:37 "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching;"

Luke 21:27-28 "they see the Son of man coming....then look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

vs 31 "when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand."

John 11:26 NIV "whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Acts 10:42 NIV "he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead."

1 Cor. 11:26 NIV "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

1 Cor. 15:51 "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

2 Cor. 5:9 "we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him."

1 Thess. 4:17 "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."

1 Thess. 5:9-10 "to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, ...whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."

2 Tim. 4:1 NIV "Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead."

1 Peter 4:5 NIV "they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead."

2 Peter 1:19 "as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise."

Rev. 16:15 NIV "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake."

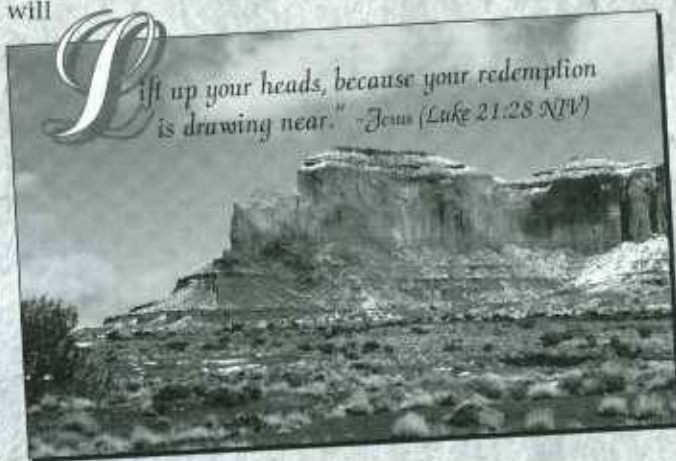
firmed her faith. Believers who have died will be resurrected: "He who believes in me will live, even though he dies." But beyond this He pointed out a select group: "and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." Some will be "living and believing." And what of these? They will "never die."

The apostle Peter made a statement equally definite, that the light of Divine knowledge will be shining when the great Day breaks, and the light cannot shine without living light-bearers. "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises" (2 Pet. 1:19 NIV). The Word of God will be shining as a light in a dark place—how long? "Until the day dawns and the morning star rises." Who is the morning star? It is Christ, the "bright and morning star" (Rev. 22:16). The "word of the prophets made more certain" will shine as a light "in a dark place" until the arrival of the Sun of Righteousness and the dawn of a new day of Christ; there will be no interval of darkness.

The apostle Paul also mentioned the same point. After discoursing upon the resurrection and how vitally important it is to the Christian, he made this positive statement: "We shall not all sleep" (1 Cor. 15:51). It was as if he said, all of us will have to receive the physical change, from mortality to immortality; but not all of us will need to be resurrected. Looking ahead some nineteen centuries, he may have realized how much this special encouragement would be needed in an especially difficult time.

In his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul spoke again of this favored group. Expressing his personal desire to live to see the

coming of Christ, he wrote: "Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent [living or sleeping when Christ comes] we may be accepted of him." In other words, some will be present (alive); not all will be sleeping (2 Cor. 5:9).



Speaking again of the believers' hope of the resurrection, the Apostle again voices his confidence that all would not need to be resurrected; and again he speaks of the entire body of Christ as "we": "For this we tell you as the Lord's word: we who are left alive until the Lord comes shall not forestall [gain an advantage over] those who have died; because at the word of command, at the sound of the archangel's voice and God's trumpet-call, the Lord himself will descend from heaven; first the Christian dead will rise, then we who are left alive shall join them, caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:15-17 NEB). Notice how clearly he states that some will be "left alive until the Lord comes." Is it not a wonderful promise!

Several times Jesus pictured living believers welcoming Him when He returns. He said it by comparing the time of His coming with the days of Noah and Lot. Both periods were times of extreme wickedness, but at both times a few were spared. Jesus' comparison is positive: "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:26-30). Only a few, but those few were pre-

cious—and the Lord arranged for their safety and deliverance. And, "even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." Some will be faithful, some will be delivered.

In Jesus' dissertation on events leading into the last days and the prophecies of His second advent recorded in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, He pictured the time of the end, when "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." Then follows the promise: "Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

Then He speaks directly to believers who would be living at that time: "When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:25-28 NIV). How could Jesus have said this unless He knew there would be believers living right at the time of the end who would be worthy of "redemption"?

Jesus continued with the parable of the Fig Tree, which would produce leaves in time to be bearing fruit in summer. The "fig tree," a symbol of true religion for many years would lay barked and peeled (Joel 1:7-12). Then the call goes forth, "the day of the Lord is at hand" (v. 15), life enters into this tree, and it "shoots forth leaves" and prepares to bear fruit. Jesus is picturing the reviving of true faith in the last days, which He follows with this positive statement: "This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled" (Luke 21:29-32). "This generation"—the company of faithful believers—"shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled." Once it comes to life, the

tree will continue to grow and bear fruit right into the new age. Never again will true religion be silenced.

Jesus' parable of the Ten Virgins also shows that some will be living and ready when He comes. Some would lose faith, but others would hold on, though late the hour, their lamps trimmed and burning brightly—a symbol of due preparedness—and be ready to welcome the Bridegroom upon His return (Matt. 25:1-12).

Jesus pictured it again in His message recorded in Luke 12. Here He compared Himself to a lord who would be going away and returning. He says, "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him." Some will be on the watch, ready to "immediately open the door for him...It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night" (Luke 12:35-38 NIV).

Jesus knew that His coming would be later than many expected, and that some will be awake and watching, hence His promise: "It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night." There would be a seemingly prolonged delay at the time of the end, when faithfulness would be tested, but some would see it through and be rewarded for it.

The prophet Isaiah also pictured living believers at the time Christ should return. See the prophetic drama in his words: "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God;

we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isa. 25:9). Some will be there to say "we have waited for him," and these will "be glad and rejoice in his salvation"—another positive assurance that there will be living faithful believers when He comes.

The prophet Malachi gave the same solid assurance, and we can know that he is speaking of Christ's second coming because of the association with Judgment—which was no part of His first advent. Speaking first of His forerunner, then of the Messiah, he says that "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple" (Mal. 3:1). To whom is our Lord coming? He is coming "to his temple"—and His temple is composed of believers (1 Cor. 3:16-17), those who are actively working for Him, who are being cut and shaped into stones for His eternal use.

How many times in the New

the long day of salvation. At the eleventh hour, He gave one final call. When the time for the dispensing of the rewards arrived, He commanded that the rewards be given "beginning from the last unto the first" (v.8). The last received special recognition!

Oh, the inestimable honor of being permitted to carry on a work so near to the heart of God, and in a time when the culmination is right upon us! When we think about it, isn't it amazing that the Lord would entrust such a precious mission to the likes of us! And when we look back through the wonders of eternity, we shall only wish that we had done more, sacrificed more, prayed more, labored more. These are the things that will shine like diamonds on the pages of our life-record. And the "well done" of our Master will be the crowning glory that will make it all worthwhile, as it opens to us the vistas of eternity, where we shall join with millions and billions and quadrillions of God's happy

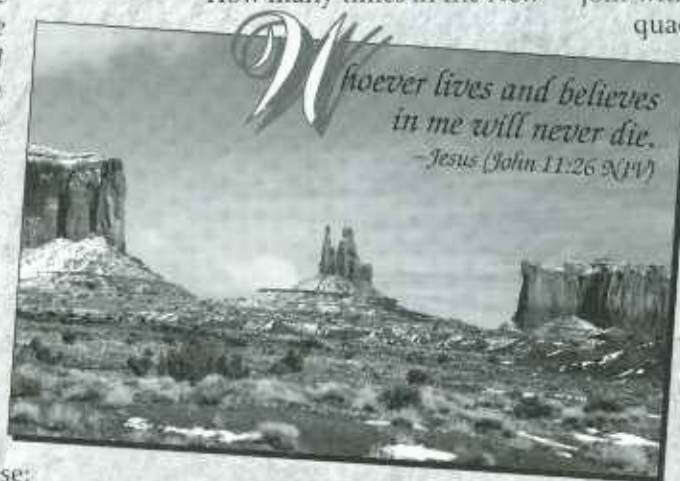
sons and daughters in a life of challenge and delight that will grow more and more wonderful with every passing eon.

Is it worth it? Is it worth the long days of darkness and uncertainty, the days of testing, fighting, struggling, suffering, carrying on by faith, for a life that will go on and on and on, from glory to glory—through

all eternity?

These things have been written for us. Let us hear and take heed! How pure, how upright, how diligent and full of faith we should be, we who are privileged to live in this last hour of the day, right at the culmination of all that God has foretold, knowing that we can have a share in all that God has promised—

If we just prove faithful. ♦



Testament are believers admonished to be faithful "until the day of Christ"—a statement that would have little meaning if no one were to be in that category (see Phil. 1:9-10).

There are still other passages of Scripture that give distinguished recognition to those who belong to the last hour of the day. In His parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16), He pictured God calling at various hours all during



Meekness:

One of the keys to the Kingdom of God is meekness. But to some, meekness is a sign of weakness. Some think it is preferable to be like the little boy whose mother kept calling him, "My little lamb." Finally, he said, "Mother, I don't want to be your little lamb. I want to be your little tiger."

We like to think of ourselves as being courageous and strong. We sing with spirit, "The Son of God goes forth to war, a kingly crown to gain," but meekness has no appeal. We want to be conquerors; meekness sounds too much like surrender.

When Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek," He was not advocating a spineless acceptance of life or a doormat mentality. He was telling His followers to put their strength under God's control.

Think of it this way: There is a wonderful cooperation between a powerful horse and its rider. An animal of tremendous size and strength, seven or eight times the weight of a man, submits to its master's control. A horse may race, leap, turn, prance, or stand motionless at the rider's slightest command. That is strength under control. And that defines the Christian concept of meekness.

For the full value of meekness turn to the 37th Psalm (NIV). There you find it stated, "The meek will inherit the land."

Jesus lifted up that phrase of the Psalmist's and made it one of the Beatitudes, a key to God's Kingdom. When we place ourselves under the control of God, we are following the example of Jesus, who was completely submissive to God. He did only those things which pleased His father, and He certainly cannot be accused of being cowardly. When the New Testament writers spoke of meekness, they used the Greek word *praos*, meaning "gentle."

Meekness: Submitting to Law

Can't we say that a person who is meek is one who submits to law—for his own good?

The laws of God are already established when we are born. His ways are fixed. We have a choice: we can accept God's law and live according to it, or we can rebel against Him and take the consequences. But we cannot change what He has fixed.

A meek person is one who submits to law—for his own good.

Strength Under Control

For example, the world is round and the sky is blue. Suppose you don't like round worlds and blue skies. There is nothing you can do about it.

God made the laws of the universe also, and these laws are just as unchangeable. Among these are the laws of the seasons. The successful farmer learns these laws and cooperates with them. He plants his crop when it should be planted, and harvests when he should be harvesting. For him to rebel and plant out of season would not change the laws of God. It would mean only the failure of his crop. For the farmer, meekness means submitting to the law and planting when he should plant.

So with life, God has His will, and man has his will. Gentleness or meekness stems from trust in God's ability to control the situation. Man has the choice of being meek or of being self-willed. He can say with Christ, *"not my will, but yours be done"* (Luke 22:42 NIV), or he can say, *"I will do as I please."* The Psalmist says, *"Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart"* (Psalm 37:4 NIV). To fail to cooperate with or be controlled by God's will is to destroy ourselves.

In the last chapter of the book of Job is a thrilling statement. Job's life had both sunshine and shadows. He had his successes and also his defeats. He had faith in God, yet at times he doubted. It seemed that Job might "curse God," as he was advised to do. But in the end his faith triumphed, and Job says, *"I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you"* (42:2 NLT).

There are times when, with our limited vision, it seems that God's way is not best. We are stubborn and rebellious, and question God. Oh, how shortsighted we are! God has offered us happiness and peace, if only we submit to His will. But we resist. If we would just look to the end of the matter, we would gladly be controlled by God.

A sublime statement in the Scriptures is this: *"Those who love your law have great peace and do not stumble"* (Psalm 119:165 NLT). The opposite of peace is conflict, and the reason we do not have peace of mind is that we are at war in our own minds.

In each of us there is the voice of duty and the voice of inclination, both demanding to be heard. We struggle to decide, and the struggle squanders our powers. Only when we decide to do the will of God is the conflict resolved.

Such a decision takes all of the dread out of tomorrow. The wise man of the Bible tells us, *"Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths"* (Prov. 3:6 NLT). The very act of accepting the will of God for our life today places the responsibility for what happens tomorrow on God. Meekness toward God is that disposition of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good and do not dispute or resist—or worry about the result.

There is wonderful peace in leaving the results in His hands.

As you study the lives of the "God-molded" patriarchs, you realize that every time God made a way for His faithful ones, God is never defeated.

Look at Moses, the meekest man who ever lived. Could you have stood up to Pharaoh and declared the word of the Lord, *"Let my people go"*? Moses had both courage and meekness, and surely God was with him.

Yes, there is great strength in meekness. Anyone who is totally committed to the will of God will be strong.

Meekness requires the utmost in courage and strength. A Christian soldier is one who is fighting mightily against that old man of sin and will one day, if he wins the battle, be privileged to share the Kingdom with Christ—for ever. ♦



Dialogue

- ◆ What does it mean to be made in God's image?
- ◆ Who, if anyone, is now in God's image? Or who has the prospect of being made in God's image?
- ◆ Is being in the image of God the birthright of every human being, or is it an honor based on one's merit? And if it is merit based, what are the conditions?

3 Steps to Salvation

The Bible outlines a plan whereby God is fashioning men and women into one singular, composite "man" that is in His image, bearing His likeness. The process spans centuries of time, and demands the total consecration of those who compose this "man." But when the development is complete, God will turn over the dominion of the earth and everything on it to this "man" that is created fully in His image.

This, we believe, is the core of the plan of God, from start to finish, which will culminate in filling the earth with His glory (Num. 14:21; Hab. 2:14). It is His purpose to fill the earth with worthy, upright, glorified beings, His own sons and daughters, who have been totally remade so as to be like Him in mind, in character and in body (mentally, morally, physically).

What brings us to this conclusion?

Looking at the first description of this plan as it is revealed in the first of Genesis (1:26), we read of God's intent to make "man" in His own image. *"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."*

This passage reveals several facts. First, the agent doing the "making" is plural: "us." And God said, *"Let us make..."* God is working with some associates. (We believe that these "associates" are angels, a topic that will be discussed later).

If we take Genesis 1:26 as a simple statement of a historic event, its meaning is difficult to understand. Was the human race given immediate dominion over every living creature on the earth? Has the human race yet been given dominion over every living creature on the earth? The answer is no.

But if we take Genesis 1:26 in a broader significance, as describing a larger, spiritual creation (see our booklet, "God's Spiritual Creation"), we discover a thought that is in harmony both with the facts we can observe and with the rest of Bible teaching.

One Composite "Man"

The Bible describes God as creating out of the raw material of humankind a select group of men and women to whom He will give authority over His creation, i.e., *"the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth..."*—symbols of the human creation, in all their various designs. This one new man to whom God will give dominion will be made in His image.

From other passages of Scripture we learn that this "man" is not one single individual but a composite man. For example, we read in Isaiah 43 where God states that He will bring His sons and daughters from the ends of the earth, even *"every one that is called"* by His name. Then He says about these sons and daughters: *"I have created him for my glory, I have formed him, yea I have made him"* (Isa. 43:7). It is one "man" made up of many sons and daughters *"from the ends of the earth,"* clearly a composite individual. Note also that this "individual" has gone through several processes: He has been *"created...formed...made."*

This same composite "man" appears in Daniel 7:27, where the *"saints of the most High"* are given authority over the kingdoms of earth, and *"all dominions shall serve and obey him."* It is stated also in Psalm 8, where "man," this one multitudinous man, is given dominion over the earth and its inhabitants (Ps. 8:3-6). The same "man" made up of many is described in Hebrews 2 as one *"made a little lower than the angels," "crowned with glory and honor,"* and *"set over the works"* of God's hands. Up to this point we might think that this one man being described is Jesus. However, the Sacred writer says at the end of the description: *"But now we see not yet all things put under him [because the composite man is not yet complete]. But we see Jesus."*

Then verse 10 calls those who compose it *"many sons":*

MADE IN HIS IMAGE

Part 2

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things in bringing many sons unto glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." This passage also tells us that these "many sons" are likewise brought "unto glory," another term that might suggest the meaning of being "made in God's image."

What is the process by which God brings men and women into His likeness? Let us divide the process into three subprocesses, one involving a change in mind (mental), the second a change in character (moral), and the third a change in our physical bodies. The first two are processes for which we are responsible (turning our minds toward God and learning His knowledge, then being made in His moral, character likeness). The third is a process for which we must depend on God, as it involves the physical changing of our mortal bodies to be made undying like the "glorious body" of our Maker (Phil. 3:20-21).

STEP 1 **Changed in MIND (Being Made in God's Mental Image)**

The first step in bringing men and women into God's likeness is the same as in any process of development: knowledge. They must change their attitude of mind and heart, be willing to submit to God's authority, learn His knowledge and cooperate with Him in this process of development. They must be taught what God requires of them, what God is doing, and what He will do, as revealed in His Word.

"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord," said the ancient prophet (Isa. 54:13). And Jesus repeated: "It is

written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me" (John 6:45 NIV).

The learning process includes also a re-orienting of one's mind away from the values and goals of this world and toward the purposes of God. In the words of the apostle Paul, *"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things"* (Col. 3:2 NIV). Jesus affirmed: *"seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well"* (Matt. 6:33 NIV).

STEP 2 **Changed in CHARACTER (Being Made in God's Moral Image)**

The next step in making man in God's moral or spiritual likeness is a change in character, a process of moral re-creation.

Everyone who composes a part of this man made in God's image must be remade. Upon this remaking process the entire Bible is focused, and all who have aspired to be God's people must submit to this moral remaking. It is a plan whereby individuals consecrate themselves in complete obedience to the will of God, however that will is revealed to them. To Abraham, it meant a faithful following of God's instructions, even to the offering up of his most valued earthly possession, his son. As a result of this sacrifice, Abraham was called "the Friend of God" (James 2:23). To

the prophets, it was a life dedicated to proclaiming the message God wanted proclaimed, in obedience to His direct commands, though it meant persecution and suffering at the hand of their followers. To the apostles and their fellow men, it was also a life of consecrated obedience, living strictly by the law which God revealed through them, and which is recorded for us in the Scriptures.

The apostle Paul speaks of this remaking process by which we are mentally and morally remade to a form which is "good, and acceptable, and perfect" in the sight of God (Romans 12:2). In the fourth chapter of Ephesians, Paul speaks again of the making of this one new man, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24). This new creature is distinct in the God-like qualities of holiness, purity, and forgiveness. The process is gradual, "until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ" (Eph. 4:13 NLT).

God calls us to grow
in character—in
patience, kindness,
meekness, love.

God does not ask what we cannot do, but according to the Bible He does require the utmost we can achieve: "Be ye holy; for I am holy." Appeals to be like Him in character are made all through Scripture. Consider the following:

We are to be like Him in holiness. This command to copy His holiness was built into the law of the Israelites. "Ye shall be holy unto me; for I the Lord am holy...ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves and ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (Lev. 20:26; 11:44). The apostle Peter repeated this in his Epistle (1 Pet 1:15-16).

We are to be complete in moral uprightness, integrity, purity, and goodness. Jesus described it as being "perfect" as He is perfect. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). The word "perfect" is defined in Strong's Dictionary as "complete (in various applications of labor, growth, mental and moral character)." It does not imply that we never sin, but that we

grow more and more into His likeness, that we keep turning from sin and toward righteousness until we are pure as Christ is pure (1 John 3:3).

We are to be like Him in love. God is a God of love, and He requires the same in His children. The apostle John speaks of love as one of the cardinal virtues. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8).

We are to be like Him in His righteousness. "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright" (Ps. 11:7).

We are to be like Him in His justice and mercy. Said God's prophet Micah, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8).

We are to be new in nature. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a

new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor. 5:17 NIV). In the third chapter of Colossians, Paul again writes of the making of this new creation, this one composite man, in whom the natural, fleshly instincts have been put to death and the new nature is allowed to grow. The old must be put off, the new put on. "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:9-10; see also verses 12-15).

All of these qualities are part of God's moral or spiritual "image" or likeness.

Now it is quite obvious that we do not naturally have God's character likeness. How can we be made into that image when we are by nature prone to sin, selfishness, impatience, impurity, and every low and base passion? To be changed in character to be like God is a challenging proposition.

Is it possible? God does not ask

Changed Into His Image

STEP 1 Changed in MIND	STEP 2 Changed in CHARACTER	STEP 3 Changed in BODY
A mental change	A moral change	A physical change
<p>How: Change one's thinking/ viewpoint/beliefs to correspond to what God says is right (Rom. 12:2)</p> <p>Process: Reorienting our minds/attitudes away from self and toward Christ</p> <p>Effect: Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About God and what He has revealed in His Word • What God requires of us • What God has done • What God is doing • What God is planning to do 	<p>How: Change one's life by applying God's laws and principles to everyday situations</p> <p>Process: Remaking our character to the likeness of Christ (Eph. 4:13)</p> <p>Effect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes our temperament • Changes our character values • Changes our appreciations • Changes our responses to life situations • Changes our approach to problems • Changes our attitude toward others 	<p>How: Change one's physical body to incorruptible substance; (accomplished by Jesus when He comes the second time)</p> <p>Process: "He will change our corruptible body, and fashion it like His own glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21)</p> <p>Effect: (future, after Judgment)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes our flesh and blood to a superior, undying substance (1 Cor. 15:50, 53) • Removes us from the threat of corruptibility and death (Luke 20:35-36) • Removes us from being subject to sickness, sorrow, accident, disease and death (Rev. 21:3-4)
OUR INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY		GIVEN BY CHRIST

what we cannot accomplish. He knows that we are creatures of dust, that we are by nature weak, but He calls us to grow into His likeness. It is a progression, a gradual acquiring of a new nature and a laying off of the other (Eph. 4:22-24). He does not expect us to have these qualities from the start, but we can grow in purity, in forbearance, in longsuffering, in patience, and every virtue. We can grow until we reach the stature of Christ, the moral likeness of God.

STEP **3** **Changed in Body: Made in God's (Physical) Image**

The final step is being recreated in God's physical image, and this is a transformation for which we must depend entirely upon God, because we cannot remake ourselves physically.

What does the Bible say about being made physically in God's image? A physical change to the likeness of Christ is part of God's plan for each faithful one. This fact is revealed in several passages of Scripture, among them 1 John, chapter 3. Speaking of those who aspire to be sons of God, the apostle writes, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). Note: "when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." "We shall be like him"—changed physically (after Christ returns and after the Judgment—2 Cor. 5:10).

Paul speaks of this same physical change, which will result in mortal man being physically like Christ and in God's image. He says that when Jesus Christ appears, He will "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21). Christ Himself is already in God's image. He has already been changed from flesh and blood to the higher substance. He already has immortality (1 Tim. 6:16).

Paul again mentions the physical change in 1 Corinthians 15, when speaking of the resurrection and events that will follow it. He says that "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly" (vs. 47-48). Up to this point, we might not be sure of the meaning of Paul's argument. But his next words are beyond question: "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (verse 49). Two different natures are indicated. The first is given us at birth, the second we receive from Jesus when He returns (Phil. 3:21). Here is the physical change to the immortal state, being made physically in God's image. First Corinthians 15:50 confirms the need for this change: because "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." Before any can live in that perfect realm, they must be changed physically.

Paul describes how this will be done: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality"—this statement also shows that we are not in that glorified state now. A change is necessary: "This corruptible must put on incorruption...this mortal must put on immortality." And when this change has been made, "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (verse 54). Then, after the change, after we are made in God's image, we will not be subject to pain, disease, sickness, or any of the effects of mortality. All fear of death will be gone, along with the tendency to sin (verse 56).

Jesus described this same change as

being born again, or born from above. In conversation with Nicodemus, He revealed that there is a birth higher than the natural, which He called being "born of the Spirit" (John 3:3-5), another description of the physical change to immortality.

How do we know that those born of the Spirit

*If we become like
Christ in mind and
character, He will make
us physically like Him
when He comes.*

are changed in nature?

Because Jesus said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Then, in His last words with Nicodemus, He confirmed that He was not speaking of natural birth. "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John 3:12). He was telling of heavenly things in these words, about being born of the Spirit, made into God's image.

In Summary:

To be made in the image of God, we must be changed in mind, believing only what God has written for us in His Word. Then we must be changed in heart and life, by remaking our lives according to His character likeness. Then when Christ comes He will change us physically and "we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2), be placed beyond the reach of mortality, no longer subject to pain and decay.

This is what it means to be made in God's image. ♦

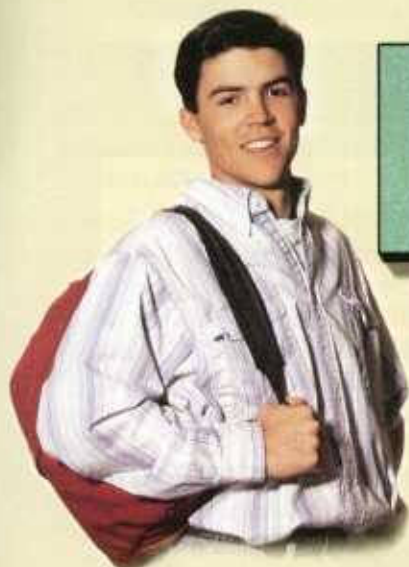


May...

*The promise of God inspire you,
The strength of God uphold you,
The goodness of God sustain you,
The wisdom of God instruct you,
The hand of God protect you,
The love of God correct you,
The shield of God defend you,
The will of God control you,
The Word of God direct you,
The Son of God exalt you.*

AMEN.

GARY RUNS FOR CLASS PRESIDENT



Interest in the junior class election was gaining momentum, and posters were beginning to appear at strategic points in the halls at the Southside High School. They bore such slogans as "Vote for Hawkins for President, Win with Wilkins—Treasurer."

One day at a table in the school cafeteria, Mike said to Gary, "You ought to run for class president, Gary." The rest of the boys were quick to agree.

"Unh-unh! No politics for me," objected Gary. "I'm one of those rare birds who is going to school to get an education."

"That's exactly why you would make a good president," reasoned Mike. "Even though it may not look like it, most of us are serious about getting an education and growing up to be good citizens. But we need capable leaders, and in my opinion a practical joker or a hot-rod enthusiast is not qualified to be a class officer."

"Mike!" objected Lee. "You make the word *politics* sound as if it's a dirty word."

"Most of the time it is," added Duane.

Daryl, usually a silent listener, could not keep quiet. "Most politicians *do* have shady reputations, and that's all the more reason why upstanding, honest fellows should step in and take over, whether in school or in government."

Eventually the boys persuaded Gary to become a candidate for president.

Then came a day when all the candidates made speeches at the school assembly. When it was Gary's turn, he stood before the group and began.

"One candidate has promised you a winning football team. I can't do that.

"One jokester has agreed to work for more school holidays, jukeboxes in the halls, and fifty-minute 'Coke breaks' each hour. I can't do that.

"So perhaps my platform will not sound exciting, because I shall make *only* promises I can keep."

There were cheers from the front row center as Gary continued. "My platform is quite simple. In fact, it's called The ABC's of Education. I have jotted down some suggestions to serve as a guide to a successful school year. Whether or not I am elected, I pledge myself to make an honest effort to live up to this standard."

Some of Gary's friends moved into the aisles and passed out copies of his "platform."

How would you have voted? Do you think Gary won the election? ♦

THE ABC'S OF EDUCATION

Average work is not good enough. There should be continued effort to improve the average.

Broadcasting empty chatter is a waste of time. Spend your time tuning in to knowledge.

Be **Courteous** to classmates and teachers.

Don't get the wrong kind of exercise by running down your friends, jumping at conclusions, side-stepping responsibility, or pushing your luck.

Be **Enthusiastic** about class projects and completing your assignments on time.

Fences run around a lot without getting anywhere, so don't be a fence.

Keep **Growing**. The one who stops growing soon starts shrinking.

"**Hear** no evil, see no evil, speak no evil" isn't just "monkey business".

Intelligent discussion is constructive, but arguments are foolish.

Join no group that gets pleasure out of hurting others.

Keep your mind open and your standards high.

Laurel chasing is selfish. Do your best, but share the honors and praise you get.

Make new friends and be loyal to the old ones.

Never pass up an opportunity simply because it wears work clothes.

"**Order** is heaven's first law." There is a right time and place for everything—studies, religion, exercise and social life.

Make **Promises** sparingly and keep them faithfully.

Ask **Questions** intelligently to show interest and alertness.

Rule your emotions, **respect** authority, and **reverence** that which is sacred.

Service is a stride toward success. Step lively, but don't step on others' toes.

Try, try again on things that seem difficult.

Use your mind to solve problems wisely.

Value only that which is good and true.

Work to be worthy of others' faith in you.

X-press sincere thanks and appreciation.

Yield to authority, and yield to others' opinions when it is apparent you are wrong.

Zealously pursue the goals you have chosen.

—From Unity Sunday-School Leaflet

HOW MUCH WILL YOU LEAVE BEHIND?

By ELIZABETH KUCHARSKA

When we undertake something, we all like to think how much we can gain in it.

Our experience, however, teaches us that before we can profit we have a price to pay. There is something to leave behind.

Consider some people of God who left something to gain something of greater value. Should we think about what they left, what they surrendered, what they sacrificed? No! Rather, let us think what they gained after giving up what was a hindrance to progress, a hindrance in God's plans. Very often "leaving" does not mean losing but gaining.

"The Lord said to Abram: 'Leave your own country, your kinsmen, and your father's house, and go to a country that I will show you'" (Gen. 12:1 NEB) — and then a promise followed (verse 2): *"I will bless you and make your name so great that it shall be used in blessings."* The Living Bible reads: *"Leave your own country behind you...go to the Land I will give you. If you do, I will..."* The Lord gives His command, then His promise of guidance and blessings. He says, *"If you do, then I will."* What did Abraham do? He left what God commanded him to leave. He left his people and his homeland, but he gained the best friend possible—God, along with an eternal inheritance.

Soon after, God through His angels addressed a similar order to Lot: *"Get out of this place, because we are going to destroy it"* (Gen. 19:12 NEB). Lot passed God's order on to his intended sons-in-law. *"Be quick and leave this place; the Lord is going to destroy the city"* (verse 16). Did Lot obey? Did he leave anything? Lot did leave the place and probably many things he owned as well. What did he gain? He saved his life. What a gain!

Another instance from the Old Tes-

tament worth thinking about is Moses. He left behind the quiet life he had led in the land of Midian and, obeying the Lord's command, began a new and completely different life. Was it easy? No. Did he undertake the new task without reservations? No, he hesitated, but he obeyed.

What did Moses gain? The indescribable and unforgettable experience of being in the presence of God's angels, speaking with them, being led by God and being taught by God.

Perhaps we say, "I could obey God, too, if an angel spoke to me. If God would give me a 'burning bush' experience like He gave Moses, I am certain I could leave everything and obey."

But God is not speaking that way to anyone today. We today hear God speak to us only through the words He uttered to holy men long ago, which have been recorded for us to learn.

So what should I leave behind? Is it necessary for me to leave something in order to gain something else?

The answer is "yes." Those of us who desire to be genuine followers of Christ should consider three aspects of the "leaving" issue:

- ◆ What do I have to leave in order to take the strait and narrow way to life?

- ◆ What should I leave to make it possible to go faster, to be sure to get to the end of the way in time?

And then, on the other side, are some things I should never leave. What should I never leave because I wouldn't be able to complete the task without it?

What did Peter say? *"We here have left everything to become your followers"* (verse 27). Look closely at Jesus' reply: *"Anyone who has left brothers or sisters, father, mother, or children, land or hous-*

es for the sake of my name will be repaid many times over, and will gain eternal life" (Matt. 19:29 NEB). Think of it: *"You will gain eternal life."* Yes, if you have left something for Christ's sake, you will gain!

A young rich man came to Jesus one day (Matt. 19:16-22), and he decided not to take this first step. His riches were a hindrance which he could not remove to follow Jesus.

Indecision is another obstacle that can hinder us. Though we may be going forward, we are not able to run.

What must we leave to be able to run swiftly? For each of us it may be something different. It may be:

- ◆ Our grudges and resentments which are so hard to forget.

- ◆ Our interests which take too much of our time.

- ◆ Our friends or relatives who do not wish to run with us in the race for eternal life.

- ◆ Our temptation to love something of this fleeting world, which we are commanded not to love.

Leave them behind! Leave them all behind!

When Jesus was sending out His disciples to preach the Gospel for the first time, He told them, *"Don't even take along a walking stick...nor a traveler's bag, nor food, nor money. Not even an extra coat"* (Luke 9:3 NLT). Likewise, let us not take anything extra—it is only more weight to carry, and will hinder our progress and restrict our freedom to speed down the way to the Kingdom.

How much baggage could Philip take with him when the Spirit snatched him away to Azotus after he had baptized the Ethiopian? (Acts 8:39-40).

What could Paul take with him when he was saving his life from the sinking ship (Acts 27:43-44)? How

(Continued on page 24)

JAMES AND JOHN

1. Which John wrote the Revelation?
2. Which John preached (not the Gospel of John): "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"?
3. Which John sat in at the trial of Peter, recorded in Acts?
4. Who were the parents of James and John?
5. How many men named "James" were apostles?
6. Which James became pastor of the church at Jerusalem, and was later martyred?
7. What relation to Jesus was James, son of Alphaeus (or Cleopas)?
8. What names were given to James and John, because of their fiery dispositions?

Know Your Bible?

MEN AND PRAYERS

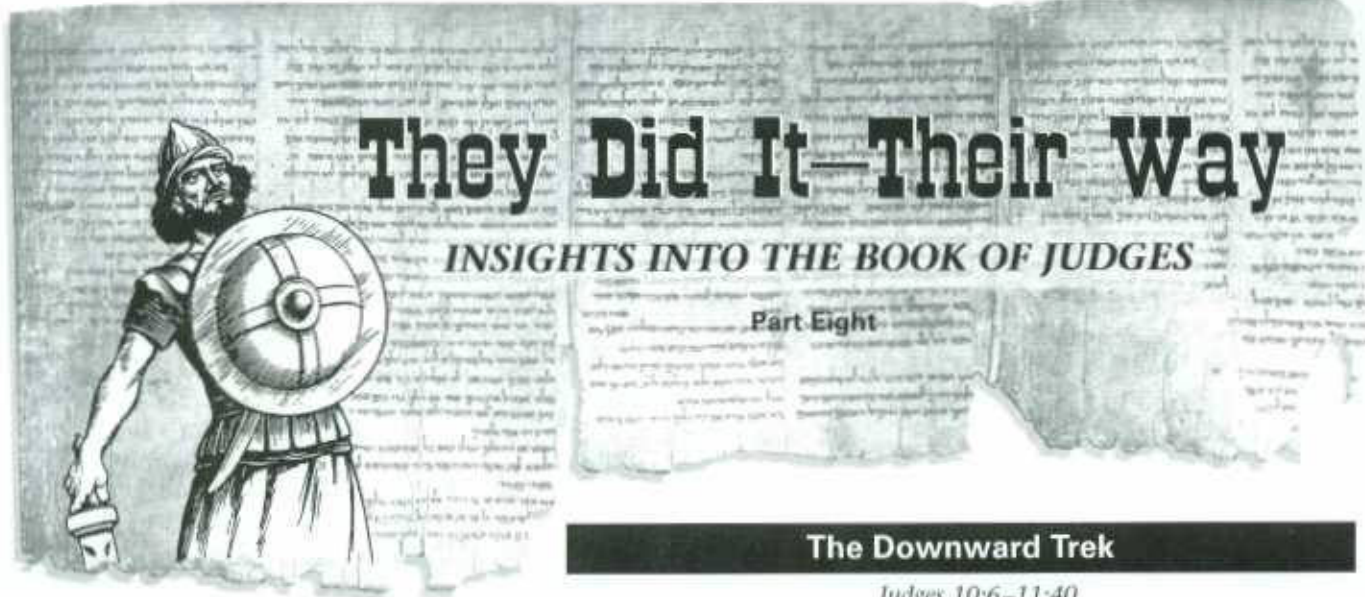
Who prayed:

1. _____ "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."
2. _____ "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."
3. _____ "Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."
4. _____ "I know not how to go out or come in."
5. _____ "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"
6. _____ "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."
7. _____ "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble."
8. _____ "If not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written."
9. _____ "God be merciful to me a sinner."
10. _____ "I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might."

BIBLE CHARACTERS

1. Of what king was it said, that while he was yet young he began to seek after the God of David?
2. What judge refused to become ruler of Israel saying, "The Lord shall rule over you"?
3. What King had his life lengthened fifteen years in answer to prayer?
4. What king was humbled until he acknowledged the God of Daniel to be the Lord?
5. What woman left a land of idolatry and became the mother of a line of Jewish kings?
6. What Persian queen instituted the annual feast of Purim?
7. Who was the son of Haran and the nephew of Abraham?
8. What woman was admonished and cheered by an angel at a fountain in the wilderness?
9. What prophet foretold the life and death and glory of the kingdom of Christ?
10. Who was let down by cords into a deep dungeon and left to nearly starve?
11. What woman was sole ruler of Judah for six years?
12. What disciple did Paul find at Lystra and take with him to help in preaching the gospel?
13. Who was the first king of the revolted ten tribes of Israel?
14. Who was the second king of all Israel?

ANSWERS ON PAGE 26



by RUTH E. SISSON

Judges 10:6–11:40

During the judgeship of Jair, the people enjoyed another period of peace. But then it ended.

With the death of Jair the people of Israel repeated the cycle that had been their pattern. Notice the use of the word "again." The peaceful years turned quickly into a downward spiral, as the Israelites became more and more entangled with pagan gods. And so we read: "Again the Israelites did evil in the Lord's sight. They worshiped images of Baal and Ashtoreth, and the gods of Aram, Sidon, Moab, Ammon, and Philistia. Not only this, but they abandoned the Lord and no longer served him at all" (Judges 10:6 NLT). This is a formidable list of pagan deities, including just about every type known in their then heathen neighborhood. This was probably the greatest involvement with paganism yet in the history of the Israelites. No wonder the Bible writer concludes with the statement, "They abandoned the Lord and no longer served him at all." The new generation preferred a religion that appealed to the senses. The worship of God was too dull and limiting. They wanted excitement and all that the idolatry of their neighbors could offer.

Isn't it the same tone that was expressed by the prophet Hosea 400 years later? "Your faithfulness is as the

morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away" (Hos. 6:4 NKJV). Israel not merely returned to their own ways but they also addicted themselves to idolatry. And not content with one set of idols, they took on the idolatry of all their neighbors—to such an extent that the Most High had no place among their objects of worship.

To chastise His wayward people, the Lord allowed the Philistines and the Ammonites to execute His rod of justice upon Israel. All at once, the Israelites discovered themselves in a vice. They had enemies on both sides, on the east and on the west. Both the Philistines (on the west) and the Ammonites (on the east) oppressed them. For eighteen long years the oppression continued.

It is difficult to see how the Israelites could tolerate this harshness for eighteen years without seeing the reason for the suffering—their own waywardness. Possibly the false prophets kept assuring the people that the oppression was only temporary, that their false gods would deliver them. But year after year went by with no relief, nor did the people show any desire to seek the true God.

Why do we suggest that there may have been false prophets offering false relief? Look at the experience of Jeremiah, Micaiah, and Nehemiah. All

had to contend with false prophets and their false predictions of easy times and prosperity apart from God (see 1 Kings 22:5–12; Neh. 6:10–14; Jer. 2:8; 23:13). Had the people of Israel been closer to God and more knowledgeable of His law, they would not have been so easily duped.

Isn't the same thing happening today? False gods lure multitudes into seductive pleasures, offering happiness and ease and often at the expense of morality and virtue. But it is a false seduction, and not until they are ruined will they realize they have followed the wrong voice.

Finally, reality struck home as to why they were suffering, and the people cried to the Lord. "We have sinned against you because we have abandoned you as our God and have served the images of Baal" (Judges 10:10, NLT). Finally they were waking up.

We are quick to condemn. How stupid could they be! Would they never learn? Didn't they know what had happened to the previous generations who had forsaken God, who had deliberately walked into trouble?

But when we look at them, we are really looking at ourselves. In so many ways our tendencies reflect theirs. And the reason is simple: we have no king, and are doing what is right in our own eyes.

This time the Lord's answer to their cry was a new approach to the problem. Were they sincerely penitent? Was it time for God immediately to answer by sending a deliverer? First He reminded them of past deliverances. *"The Lord replied, 'Did I not rescue you from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Sidonians, the Amalekites, and the Maonites?' When they oppressed you, you cried out to me, and I rescued you"* (10:11-12 NLT).

Then to show up the falsity of trusting in gods who have no power to help, the Lord put forth a challenge: *"Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen! Let them rescue you in your hour of distress!"* (10:14 NLT). Could they miss the message? The gods they had served could lead them into sin, but they could not rescue them.

Isn't it the same today? Gods of lust and pleasure and materialism can provide many opportunities to do evil, but they can do nothing to help or save.

God wanted to teach the people a lesson. They were crying to Him only because they were suffering, not because they were sorry for their sin. They were not grieving over their wrong, but only over the consequences.

We, too, can go our own way. But let us remember that when we choose one end of the road we choose the other end also. When we choose to

serve gods of money and pleasure and lust, we choose also the consequences of our willfulness. Only by giving up the gods of this world, only as we seek God by a life of humble obedience, can we expect any long-term good.

Is it not a lesson? We may be unhappy with the consequences of our wrong choices, but are we willing to look deeper, to see where we erred, so that we can turn and do right?

Just because the wages of sin are not paid every night, let us remember that they *will* be paid. Like Israel of old, we must prove the sincerity of our words by our obedience and show whether we are worthy of God's favor.

Why did God say to Israel, *"I will deliver you no more"* (10:13)? This statement must be seen in context. God was not whimsically turning them away. As long as they were forsaking Him and seeking their own gods, He would not deliver. But each time they turned to God, He mercifully would turn to them with deliverance.

In between they wanted peace and protection, but they wanted it on their own terms. At the same time,

they were by their disobedience preventing it.

The road to peace leads through the avenues of repentance, forgive-

The Israelites were crying to God not because they had sinned but only because of the consequences.

ness, and obedience. Only as we follow these routes can we expect to find peace with God.

Said the Psalmist, *"Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them"* (Ps. 119:165).

Turning Point

As soon as the Israelites humbled themselves and began to seek God, things began to change. It was a desperate point. Hopeless and discouraged, the Israelites called a meeting at Mizpah. *"The leaders of Gilead said to each other, 'Whoever attacks the Ammonites first will become ruler over all the people of Gilead'"* (Judges 10:18,

(Continued on page 23)



Christianized or Paganized?

What Is Wrong with Celebrating Christmas on December 25?

✓ December 25 is NOT the birthday of Christ.

The Bible makes no mention of a winter date, nor does it associate Christ's birth with any account or event of the winter months. (The shepherds were tending sheep on the Judean hillsides the night Jesus was born—and this is done only between March and October.)

✓ December 25 was a pagan feast day centuries before Christ was born.

Any good encyclopedia or history will tell how the date was observed in ancient Babylon as the birthday of the "queen of heaven," or among other ancient peoples as the birthday of the sun-god. The Romans celebrated the date because at this time the sun reached its southernmost point.

✓ The December 25 date was adopted as the birthday of Christ during the fourth century after Christ to help attract more "converts."

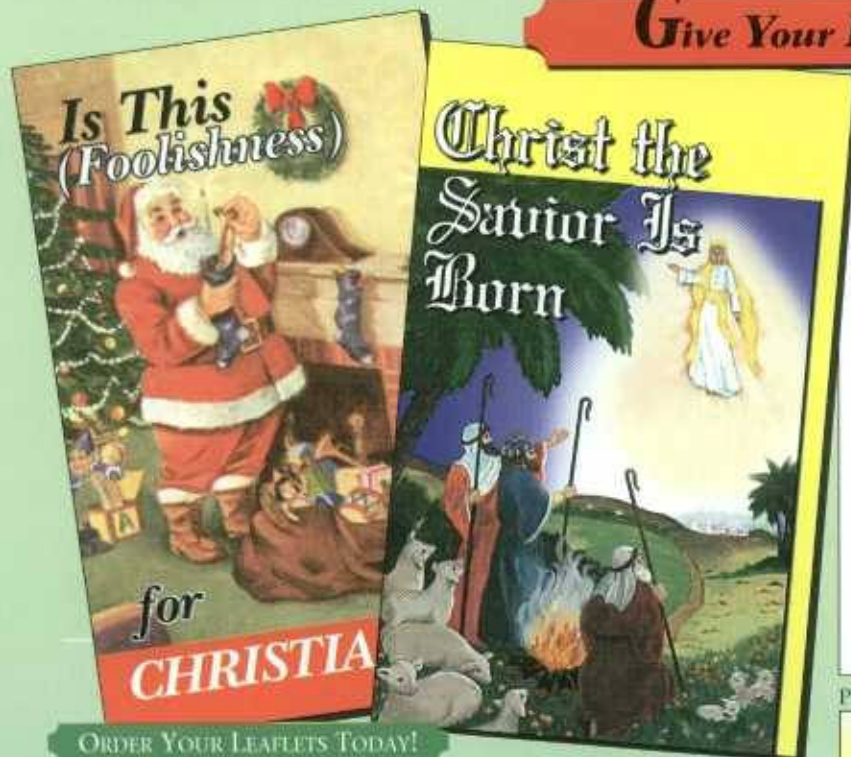
December 25, 353, was the first "Christmas" celebrated in Rome. —*Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, topic: "Christmas."

Church officials, anxious to bring converts into the church, added "Christian" significance to the Roman Saturnalia, in this way pacifying the pagans they wanted to convert by allowing them to retain their time-honored festivity. "The Saturnalia in Rome provided the model for most of the merry customs of the Christmas time." —*Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, topic: "Christmas."

✓ The December 25 holiday has been so thoroughly commercialized in modern times that it bears scarcely any resemblance to a religious observance.

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(Continued from page 21)

NLT). But who was ready to do it?

There are times in history when God moves in unexpected ways. What takes place from a human point of view seems completely contrary to logic or likelihood. At what point can blessing follow disobedience? When does God recognize repentance and begin to bless?

Only He can answer this question. But at this point in Israel's history, suffering had reached its limit. The Ammonites, who had long oppressed Israel, are invading, threatening to engage the Israelites in battle and defeat them. And the Israelites, even though they have repented and turned to the Lord are still being invaded. What are they to do? There seems to be no one among them to take the leadership and gather an army to defend Israel.

Enter Jephthah

At this point, a man named Jephthah, Israel's eighth judge, enters the picture. A man who showed great respect and devotion to the true God, he is a startling contrast to Abimelech, though he too came from poor circumstances. But God does not judge us by our beginnings, or our family, or what we inherit. He judges only by our character.

Who was Jephthah the Gileadite? An illegitimate child by birth, one cast out of the family, rejected by his brothers, not even a proper Israelite, he was homeless and stateless. To make things even worse for Jephthah, his father was named Gilead. At the same time, it appears that Gilead was the name used to refer to the whole area east of Jordan. Gilead was also the name of the country where Jephthah grew up. So Gilead the man just happened to live in Gilead county which was part of the Gilead state. How anonymous can one be!

Finally, he was rejected by his family and told to leave town. This is how Jephthah put it after his brothers called him back as a possible candidate to defend them. Jephthah says, "Aren't you the ones who hated me and

drove me from my father's house? Why do you come to me now when you're in trouble?" (Judges 11:7 NLT).

But sometimes things have a way of turning completely around. Not only were his brothers calling him back into their community, they were inviting him to be their head.

What did Jephthah do? He turned the matter over to the Lord—a commendable action, which points up a quality of character that may have caused the brothers to seek him in their time of need. He was one who could communicate with the Lord. Said Jephthah, "If I come with you and if the Lord gives me victory over the Ammonites..." (11:9)—Jephthah was already putting the matter in the hands of the Lord. If there was a victory, it was to be the Lord's credit.

Jephthah consented to be their leader, and the people promised to do whatever he said. We read that Jephthah "went with the leaders of Gilead, and he became their ruler and commander of the army," and "at Mizpah, in the presence of the Lord, Jephthah repeated what he had said to the leaders" (11:11 NLT). He made a covenant with them in the presence of the Lord.

Notice that there is no indication of bitterness on the part of Jephthah, nor seeking of revenge. He identified himself with the Lord and his people and spoke on God's behalf.

Jephthah in Command

How did he approach the problem with the Ammonites? His first step was to try to settle the dispute by diplomacy. He sent a diplomatic envoy to the king of Ammon, demanding to know why Israel was being attacked. The king of Ammon replied that the Israelites had stolen his land "from the Arnon River to the

Jabbok River and all the way to the Jordan" when Moses was marching his people through the wilderness (11:13 NLT).

Jephthah replied by explaining that Israel did not steal any land from Moab or Ammon, that when the peo-

*The road to peace
leads through the
avenues of repentance,
forgiveness, and
obedience.*

ple of Israel had arrived at Kadesh on their journey from Egypt they had sent messengers to the king asking for permission to pass through his land, but their request was denied. Then they asked the king of Moab for similar permission, but he wouldn't let them pass through either. So the Israelites went around the two nations, never once crossing into their territory. There was no problem until king Sihon attacked the Israelites, at which time the Lord intervened, giving victory to Israel, and so Israel took control of all the land of the Amorites in that region. "So you see, it was the Lord, the God of Israel, who took away the land from the Amorites and gave it to Israel. Why, then, should we give it to you?" Could they argue against such reasoning?

Jephthah then offered the ideal peace plan: "You keep whatever your god Chemosh gives you," he told them, "and we will keep whatever the Lord our God gives us" (11:23-24 NLT). Then, thinking even further, Jephthah said that Israel had been occupying this land for 300 years. If the king of Ammon really wanted it, why didn't he try to recover it long before now?

Jephthah had made a strong case.

(Continued on page 24)

(Continued from page 23)

His evidence was convincing. But the king of Ammon would not be persuaded. There was no alternative but to fight. So Jephthah concluded, *"I have not sinned against you. Rather, you have wronged me by attacking me. Let the Lord, who is judge, decide today which of us is right—Israel or Ammon"* (11:27).

Jephthah committed the outcome to God.

Jephthah Prepares for Battle

Jephthah must have known from the start that there was little chance for a peaceful settlement, because the Ammonites had been harassing Israel for eighteen years. Still we must commend his effort to avoid the use of arms.

Here is another principle of God's way of working. He never uses destructive means until He has tried every other. On the same principle, *"he does not enjoy hurting people or causing them sorrow"* (Lam. 3:33 NLT). If they suffer at His hand, it is always the result of their own hard-heartedness and stiffnecked rebellion.

Jephthah's attempt at negotiation with the Ammonite king proved that he was a man of high principle. He was a man of war, but he tried to avoid war by the avenue of negotiation. The men of Gilead had called him for his military ability, for which he was well-known. It would have been natural for him to have wanted to show off his heroism to the people of his old hometown, to let them see what a capable fighter he was. But Jephthah did not go to battle to bolster his own pride. He tried to avoid unnecessary bloodshed. He had a fine unit of fighting

men, but he would not put his men into greater danger than necessary.

Before the battle, we read that *"the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah,"* signaling Divine approval of the job he had been called upon to do. In Old Testament times, God often provided His Spirit to humans for some special purpose, giving them superhuman power to accomplish His purpose. For Jephthah, receiving the *"Spirit of the Lord"* was significant in that it provided whatever special instruction he needed to carry out his special work, i.e., to deliver Israel from the Ammonites.

Jephthah's Vow

We remember Jephthah especially for his vow and for the strength of character he showed in fulfilling that vow. Not everyone would have done it.

Jephthah's vow was intended as an act of devotion, an act of gratitude to God for the victory.

The victory would not really belong to Jephthah; it was the Lord's. It was the Lord that delivered the enemy into his hands. With the Lord's help, Jephthah and his army not only drove the Ammonites from the field of battle but all the way to their home area, clearing them out of the cities as they went.

Jephthah was singular among the Judges in his great respect and total devotion to the Lord. Unlike many of the Judges, he showed a deep allegiance to God, and so obtained His support and favor. At the same time, he won the respect of his people and they asked him to remain as their judge. ♦

Next month: Did Jephthah Sacrifice His Daughter?

HOW MUCH WILL YOU LEAVE BEHIND?

(Continued from page 18)

much could the believers in Christ take with them as they were leaving Jerusalem in obedience to Jesus' command (Luke 21:20-23)? All of them experienced the task of leaving in order to gain.

But we are not speaking of material things. The one great thing we must all leave behind if we want to be true followers of Christ is called *"SELF."* This is what Jesus commanded His followers. He said, *"If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine he must leave self behind; day after day he must take up his cross, and come with me"* (Luke 9:23 NEB). Self is something to sacrifice, something near and dear, something we really love. Yet, it must be left behind.

Many of us have been trying to leave self for years and have found it is a difficult task. It seems every time we look back, self is following. It is encouraging when we see *"self"* further behind every time we look back. Let us not let self get close or catch up with us. Instead, let us strive with all our might to leave *"self"* behind completely, and not even look back! Let us leave behind anything and everything that hinders our progress that we may reach the place of safety together.

The Lord our God has promised that He will never leave nor forsake us. May we turn our hearts toward Him that we may conform to all His ways, observing His commandments, statutes and judgments (1 Kings 8:57-58 NEB). He who is the *"Source, Guide, and Goal of all that is to him be glory for ever"* (Rom 11:35 NEB). May He always be first in all we do and think, first in all our plans and decisions.

If we do not leave Him, He will never leave us (Heb. 13:5; Deut. 31:6-8; Josh. 1:5).

"May all God's mercies and peace be yours from God our Father and from Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 1:6-7 TLB). ♦

***If I can't fly, I'll run. If I can't run,
I'll walk. If I can't walk, I'll crawl, but
I will NOT QUIT!!***

Dining in an Idol's Temple?

"First Corinthians 8 sounds as though Paul says it is all right to eat meat sacrificed to idols in the pagan temple. He made the point that the meat was all the same, whether offered to an idol or not, because the idol did not exist anyway, but wouldn't it be wrong to dine in a pagan temple?"

The verses in question read: *"But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?"* (1 Cor. 8:8-11 NASB and KJV).

When Paul said, *"If any man see thee...sit at meat in the idol's temple,"* was he suggesting that it was all right to dine in a pagan temple? Let us look at several facts.

First, Paul used a grammatical construction called the subjunctive mood, which means he was making a hypothetical or conditional ("in case") statement. If I should say to you, *"If you see me get angry, do such and such,"* I am not angry, I am only stating what your response should be *in case you see me angry*. This is the type of situation Paul pictured. He was not saying that some of the believers were eating in pagan temples but only what might happen if they were seen doing this. (The unspoken fact, however, is that Paul had a reason for making this hypothetical statement, and that reason was very likely that this was happening and needed correction.)

Second, Paul was addressing only one issue in this passage, and that issue was the effect of a weaker brother seeing a stronger one eating meat that had been offered to idols.

The word *if* in this passage is said to be "an emphatic marker of condition, with the implication of reduced probability" (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*).

Paul says, just suppose—worst case—that you ate meat in such a place, and one of the weaker Christians, a newly converted Gnostic who had been accustomed to eating meat offered to idols, saw you. Your poor example might cause the newly converted Christian to stumble, thinking you approve of idol worship.

Paul went on to say, *"If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my broth-*

er to offend" (1 Cor. 8:13). It is said that some of the weaker Christians could not eat meat without thinking about it being offered to idols. Therefore they could not eat it with a clear conscience. To them, it was like falling back into the old pagan habit of offering meat to idols. This, said Paul, is sinful. It is sinful if one causes another to fall.

Paul said that there is no sin in eating meat that had been sacrificed to false gods because these gods are nothing more than idols made by the hands of men. However, the ones eating the meat that had been offered to idols must have a clear conscience to be innocent. They must be thoroughly convinced that the idols are nothing and that there is no difference in meat offered to idols and meat that is not offered to idols. *"But not all people know this. Some people are still so used to idols that when they eat meat, they still think of it as being sacrificed to an idol. Because their conscience is weak, when they eat it, they feel guilty. But food will not bring us closer to God. Refusing to eat does not make us less pleasing to God, and eating does not make us better in God's sight"* (1 Cor. 8:7-8 NCV).

Would Paul consider that one who socialized with idolaters by eating in an idol's temple took part in the idol worship? In chapter 10 he speaks directly to this issue, and clearly forbids it. He says:

"Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons" (1 Cor. 10:18-21 NIV). He says, *"I do not want you to be participants with demons [idols]."* If any of those attending the Church at Corinth were teaching that it was all right to eat meat in the idol's temple, Paul corrected their thinking. To do such would be to eat from the *"table of devils,"* a practice that cannot be mixed with the table of the Lord.

In 2 Corinthians 6, Paul again spoke plainly about not associating with idolaters in their worship. *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?...Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty"* (2 Cor. 6:14, 17-18). A believer who would dine

(Continued on page 26)

(Continued from page 25)

in an idol's temple would be transgressing this command. Many of the believers had turned "from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9). They turned from idols to God. They could not serve both, it must be either idols or God. Again and again God showed his disgust with idol worship.

The issue of eating meat that had been offered to idols came up in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15) as part of the complaints from Gentile believers who felt that some of the Jewish Christians were trying to impose Jewish customs on them. To resolve the issue a council of Christians met in Jerusalem. After discussing it, they came to a unanimous decision and sent official representatives, along with "our beloved Barnabas and Paul, who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ" to convey the decision to the Gentile believers. According to this decision, the Gentiles were required to observe only a few of the Jewish laws, one of which was to refrain from eating meat that had been offered to idols. The account of the decision is recorded in Acts 15:28-29.

"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay no greater burden on you than these requirements: You must abstain from eating food offered to idols, from consuming blood or eating the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality. If you do this, you will do well. Farewell" (NLT).

Notice particularly that:

1. It was a unanimous decision (v. 25).
2. They had the benefit of the Holy Spirit (v. 28).
3. Paul (with Barnabas) was highly recommended to tell them about their decision (v. 25-26).
4. Paul was there at the meeting of the council and, since it was a unanimous decision, Paul was also in agreement (v. 25).
5. At the head of the list of their message to the Gentiles was a message regarding eating meat offered to idols (v. 29). No way can

Some people reach the top of the ladder of success only to find that it is leaning against the wrong wall.

we make these words say anything other than that they must abstain from eating food offered to idols.

The Christians were not to eat meat offered to idols, not because it was a sin; meat was meat whether offered to idols or not. Paul even told them that if they purchased meat at the market, not to even ask if it had been sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 10:25). What made it a sin was eating it might cause their weaker brothers to stumble. One could eat it in thankfulness to God without regard to it being offered to idols and not sin. But if they thought of it as having been offered to idols, or if by doing so they led their brother astray, then it was a sin. Thus the injunction, "You must abstain from eating food offered to idols."

In Conclusion

In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul is emphasizing the responsibility each believer has to fellow believers to show the right example. But he is not saying it is right to dine in an idol's temple. Recall Paul's words once again: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31 NIV). ♦



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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 19

JAMES AND JOHN

1. John the apostle (Rev. 1:1)
2. John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1)
3. John, a relative of the high priest's family (Acts 4:6)
4. Zebedee and Salome (Matt. 4:21; 27:56; Mark 15:40)
5. Two—James, son of Zebedee, and James, son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:2-4)
6. James, son of Mary, and brother of our Lord (Gal. 1:19; Acts 12:1)
7. Cousin (Matt. 10:3; 27:56; John 19:25)
8. Boanerges—Sons of Thunder (Mark 3:17)

MEN AND PRAYERS

Who prayed?

1. Simeon (Luke 2:25-29)
2. Jesus (Luke 23:34)
3. Jacob (Gen. 28:20-22)
4. Solomon (1 Kings 3:6-7)

5. Saul (Paul) (Acts 9:1-6)
6. Stephen (Acts 7:59-60)
7. David (Psalm 31:9)
8. Moses (Ex. 32:31-32)
9. Publican (Luke 18:13)
10. Daniel (Dan. 2:20-23)

BIBLE CHARACTERS

1. Josiah (2 Chron. 34:1-3)
2. Gideon (Judges 8:23)
3. Hezekiah (Isa. 38:1-5)
4. Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:3-4)
5. Ruth (Ruth 1:16; 4:17)
6. Esther (Esther 9:32)
7. Lot (Gen. 11:31)
8. Hagar (Gen. 16:7-10)
9. Isaiah (Isa. 53:1-12; 9:7)
10. Jeremiah (Jer. 38:6, 9-10)
11. Athaliah (2 Chron. 22:12)
12. Timothy (Acts 16:1-3)
13. Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:31)
14. David (2 Sam. 5:2-3)

*Life without thankfulness
is devoid of love and passion.
Hope without thankfulness is
lacking in fine perception.
Faith without thankfulness
lacks strength and fortitude.
Every virtue divorced from thankfulness
is maimed and only limps along.*

You can find the world's shortest sermon on the traffic sign: *Keep Right.*

We must feast on the Bread of Life ourselves before we can serve it to others.

Every man of his word is a courageous man.

The difference between failure and success is the difference between doing a thing nearly right and doing it exactly right.

The Elements in Discipleship:
Obedience
Repentance
Submission
Commitment
Perseverance

Tomorrow's blessings depend on our willingness to do God's will today.

We shall steer safely through every storm as long as our heart is right, our intention fervent, our courage steadfast and our trust fixed on God.

There is nothing noble in being superior to someone else. True nobility is in being superior to yourself.

Do you have a little worry
That seems to stick around,
And will not let you sleep at night,
At least not very sound?
Well, now's the time to pull it up;
Don't let it go to seed,
For that nagging little worry
Is just an ugly weed.

The conditions of conquest are always easy. We have but to toil awhile, endure awhile, believe always, and never turn back.

The major part of tongue-control is thought-control.

When God delays the answer to your prayer, count it a blessing. He may be enlarging your capacity to receive it.

The only place where "success" comes before "work" is in the dictionary.

"In everything give thanks," I read,
And this I know is right;
The sacrifice of praise to God
Is ever His delight.

Patience...
*strengthens the spirit,
sweetens the temper,
stifles anger,
extinguishes envy,
subdues pride,
bridles the tongue, and
restrains the hand.*



*What you believe and how you
behave should match up.*

A man with dark hair and a beard is shown from the chest up, looking upwards with a contemplative expression. He is positioned in the lower right of the frame. The background features a dramatic sunrise or sunset with a sky filled with soft, wispy clouds in shades of orange, yellow, and pink. Below the sky, the dark, silhouetted ridges of mountains stretch across the horizon. The overall mood is peaceful and spiritual.

Good Morning God!

*You are ushering in another day
untouched and freshly new
So here I come to ask You, God,
if You'll renew me, too?*

*Forgive the many errors
that I made yesterday,
And let me try again, dear God
to walk closer in Your way.*

*But Father, I am well aware
I can't make it on my own.
So take my hand and hold it tight,
for I can't walk alone.*