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# Megiddo Message

How Can I  
Add Meaning  
to My Life?



by GERALD R. PAYNE

## IT WILL HURT

**L**istening to some popular evangelists today, one would get the impression that serving Christ is like being on a never-ending excursion. Lean back in your easy chair, fold your hands, and enjoy the scenery.

While we do not for a moment wish to devalue the joy and happiness that come from serving God, we are not being fair to ourselves or others if we close our eyes to reality. The Christian life is a struggle, a battleground. It will hurt. Jesus experienced it. So did the apostle Paul, and so has every truehearted follower since. For many there were outside foes. For all there were (are) foes within.

How can anyone teach that it will be pain free?

The early Christians had serious external foes, authorities bent on stamping out their outlawed religion. These believers could worship, preach, and practice their faith only in the face of severest opposition. Do we wonder why the apostle Paul said, "...so fight I"? (1 Cor. 9:26), and to his own, "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12). At the close of his glorious career he could say triumphantly, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7).

How does the idea of hurt go along with Jesus' promise of peace? Didn't He pronounce a blessing on every one who would follow Him? Didn't He say that each faithful one would receive a hundredfold of blessing in this life, to be followed by eternal life in the future?

But to have this peace, this blessing, one must die with Him. How is this possible? "The death he died," says the eminent Apostle, "he died to sin ... In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin" (Rom. 6:10-12 NIV). Death means a life surrendered. And where a life is surrendered there will be suffering.

Jesus said it yet another way. He called His followers to lose their lives for His sake (Matt. 10:39), and loss means suffering.

I am reminded of a conversation I had with a theologian. His concept was no different from that of many others. "If it doesn't feel good, then God did not command it. He does not command anything that hurts," he said very emphatically.

With a little reflection one can see quite clearly that the god he studied was not the God of the Bible—or the God that Moses, Joshua, or Caleb trusted. Nor was he the God that Abraham, Isaac or Jacob obeyed. Nor was he the God whose prophets declared His word at His command—and at their peril. The God whom all of these obeyed was the one God of whom Paul, speaking for all, said, "For us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live" (1 Cor. 8:6).

Did this God make commands that caused hurt? Here is the experience of some who obeyed Him. They "were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground" (Heb. 11:35-38). Yes, obeying was not pain-free.

It is common knowledge among all Christendom that Christ was obedient unto death. Yes, He agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane. He knew that within moments He would be arrested, tortured and put to death on a Roman cross. Yet, even knowing all this, He still did not

### 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.

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**Sometimes  
there is no help  
without hurt.**



## Megiddo Message

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**BDAG**—Arndt, W., Gingrich, F. W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (1996). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature; **DBL**—Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains; **EDNT**—Balz, H. R., & Schneider, G. (1990-). Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament; **GES**—Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures; **HAL**—Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M., & Stamm, J. J. (1999). The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament; **LSJ**—Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996). A Greek-English lexicon; **LN**—Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains; **SHG**—Strong, J. (1997). The new Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words. **THAYER**—A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1889).

### 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).



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# How Can I Add Meaning to My Life?

by KENNETH E. FLOWERDAY

**T**he very raising of the question of the meaning of life is the beginning of its answer. As long as one struggles only with the problems of everyday existence, he is not very much above the animals. He begins to be a person when he starts to wonder what life is all about.

The question of the meaning of life is an immensely personal one. Each of us is responsible for his own destiny. What is the meaning of events in the lives of the people of this century? Why should they endure the pressures of everyday living? Is the pressure leading somewhere—the juggling to balance the family budget, the family taxi service to innumerable clubs and activities, the round of social affairs, the endurance of the daily routine?

Jesus' words in Luke 21:34–36 (Moffatt) are pointed and concise: *"Take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be overpowered by dissipation and drunkenness and worldly anxieties, and so that Day catches you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all dwellers on the face of all the earth. From hour to hour keep awake, praying that you may succeed in escaping all these dangers to come and in standing before the Son of man."*

## BELONGING TO A PURPOSE

The tumbleweed is a striking example of a purposeless life. It is a plant that upon maturity breaks away from its root and is driven

by the wind. One moment the tumbleweed is going in one direction, the next moment, in another, depending on how the wind blows.

I believe we have all seen human tumbleweeds. The tumbleweed life is confined to the moment and loses meaning because it is related to no end. Without purpose existence shrinks to the zero-point.

Even little purposes, when they are worthy, bring significance to life for a time. To win the contest, to finish reading the book, to perfect a skill or complete one's self-imposed task brings its measure of satisfaction. But these small purposes alone are not enough for life's enrichment. To give long-term benefit they must be bound together and related to some great central cause. And what cause could be greater than the quest for eternal salvation. It is this goal that gives meaning to our lives.

The larger purpose is needed for one to come to complete self-fulfillment. And what purpose could be more fruitful than the development of complete self-control? Said the wise author of the book of Proverbs: *"It is better to be patient than powerful; it is better to have self-control than to conquer a city"* (Prov. 16:32 NLT). Over the ages the conqueror on the battlefield has been held in high esteem, but the Word of God gives the one who can rule himself a much higher rating.

By belonging to a great purpose, by put-

**T**he Christian's challenge is to introduce the element of depth to life; to live meaningfully in a world of meaninglessness.



ting life and soul into a noble cause, we learn to render a great obedience. God's Word through Moses the great Lawgiver is forthright and speaks with undisputed authority: *"Be sure to do everything I have commanded you. Do not add anything to it, and do not take anything away from it"* (Deut. 12:32 NCV). And for obedience to be acceptable it must be immediate. Delayed obedience is disobedience. When Jesus appeared to Paul on the Damascus highway he was immediately obedient to the heavenly vision (Gal. 1:16).

Living with a purpose gives great freedom: freedom from self, freedom from the corroding evils that only make life miserable and provide no hope of a future. In this way we can attain a great excellence and so enhance our value in the scale of Almighty God that He will choose to set us apart for His very own (Ps. 4:3).

True freedom is not the freedom to do as we please—that would be leading a life of meaninglessness—but the freedom to do as we ought. Christ's free man is one who has won freedom from himself through slavery, through complete surrender to Christ. *"For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want"* (Gal. 5:17 NIV).

Belonging to a purpose can bring great happiness: *"Happy is the person who finds wisdom" ... "If you know these things, you will be happy if you do them" ... "The one whom God corrects is happy" ... "Happy indeed are those whose God is the Lord." "Happy are those who are helped by the God of Jacob. Their hope is in the Lord their God" ... "But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.... Be happy if you are insulted for being a Christian"* (Prov. 3:13; John 13:17; Job 5:17; Ps. 144:15; 146:5; 1 Pet. 3:14; 4:14 various translations).

It often happens that belonging to a purpose becomes allegiance to a person. This is especially true when we enlist in the great Cause of the Kingdom of God. Jesus becomes the Lord whom we obey, the Source of our freedom, our standard of excellence, and the chief joy of our life. This is a sure antidote for living a life of meaninglessness!

## MEANINGLESSNESS VS. GOING SOMEWHERE

Abraham, honored by both Judaism and Christianity, was a man who went on a willing pilgrimage. Verbs of action mark his story: *"he departed... went forth... passed through... journeyed on."*

Note that Abraham's action was in response to the heavenly call. It is written: *"Then the Lord told Abram (Abraham), 'Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you'"* (Gen. 12:1 NLT). What if Abraham had not obeyed the Word of God? What if he had said, "Lord, I don't want to pull up stakes and move to unfamiliar territory; I want to stay with my flesh kin. I am happy with things just as they are"? He would have been unfit for the honored position as *"father of all who believe."*

What about all those who are insensitive to the summoning voice? Suppose Moses had failed to see the burning bush? How many miss the adventure, the worthwhile life, the arrival at a destination, because they have made themselves insensitive to a summons?

What is the summons? Christians often believe in what they describe as the "call" of God. God speaks, and one responds by making his life an answer to the spoken Word of God.

However, God's calls are not standardized. They follow no pattern. God's call often comes to one where his talent and some human need intersect. Even though God does not speak with audible voice, yet He calls just the same—through His written Word. It is our part to listen, then obey. The Psalmist declared: *"I listen carefully to what God the Lord is saying, for he speaks peace to his people, his faithful ones. But let them not return to their foolish ways"* (Ps. 85:8 NLT).

How empty life becomes without a goal. Imagine a ship at sea filled with happy travelers, enjoying the voyage. Suddenly one day the captain announces that the ship will never arrive at any port. It simply will go on riding the high seas until such a time as a storm destroys it, or other mishap occurs. How would the passengers receive such an announcement? If the captain's words were unalterable and true, the

## What kind of life does God honor?

The Psalmist asks the question: *"Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill?"* This precious place of protection is promised to *"He whose walk is blameless and who does what is right, who speaks the truth from his heart."*

— Psalm 15:1–2



## What is life?

**T**o the Patriarch Job, the days of life pass so rapidly that they can be compared to a swiftly flying shuttle, relentlessly flying forth and back, (Job 7:6) until, before one realizes it, life's web is complete, the pattern of the fabric finished; and whether artistically or shoddily formed, the weaving must witness for itself.

**T**o James, life is *"like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone."*

— James 4:14 NLT



magnitude of despair that would overtake those travelers would be fantastic. Take away a port of arrival and see how empty life becomes.

## THE GOAL: SALVATION

Christians have a goal, and that goal is eternal salvation; to be placed beyond the possibility of pain, sickness, old age, death, to be saved for time and eternity.

It has become popular among the theologians to discredit the idea of eternal salvation, or the hope of eternal rewards. One might check over dozens of sermons by leading theologians, and the thought of rewarding righteousness is conspicuously absent. It is their considered opinion that salvation is not life's highest goal, that right living should bring its own rewards in peace of mind and satisfaction as one passes through life, and nothing more can be expected. But Almighty God offers more, much more than that.

Increased service for God, increased interest in the welfare of our brother, a higher standard of moral excellence are sufficiently worthy ambitions to attract a man or woman who appreciates virtue; however, they are not incentives strong enough to impel one to perform the entire will of God.

Our aim should be to be saved for eternity, to be made equal to the angels never to die. Salvation is the highest goal in the Christian's life and the only incentive strong enough to lead a reasoning man or woman to take up his or her daily cross of self-denial and make a complete surrender to Christ. It was for the joy set before Jesus that He *"endured the cross, despising the shame"* (Heb. 12:2) and it is the goal of eternal salvation that will urge you and me on to a full and complete surrender.

## COMPLETE COMMITMENT

Living a meaningful life demands that we be Christians here and now, that we commit ourselves unreservedly to God. To accomplish this, we will need a generous supply of spiritual gumption. The word gumption implies the willingness to start a project and the diligence to see it through to a finish; stick-to-itiveness; a practical approach to a problem. Webster defines the term as "common sense, enterprise, initiative." In what better

way could the alert Christian show his common sense, his enterprise, his initiative, his wisdom and good judgment, than by investing his life in the quest for eternal salvation?

It was to this complete commitment that Paul referred when he said: *"Yes, I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor ruling spirits, nothing now, nothing in the future, no powers, nothing above us, nothing below us, nor anything else in the whole world will ever be able to separate us from the love of God..."* (Rom 8:38–39 NCV). Are we thus persuaded?

Paul's practical approach to his commitment showed in his letter to the church at Corinth: *"I shall stay here in Ephesus...for there is a great opportunity of doing useful work"* (1 Cor. 16:8–9, Phillips Translation). He wanted to be where he could accomplish the most for God. Paul the Apostle was in an actual living situation, that of being Christian in an unchristian world. When the Holy Spirit said "go," he went; when it said "stay," he stayed.

Let us commit ourselves as totally to the leading of God's Word!

Our commitment must be here and now. Ephesians 5:15–16 (Moffatt) pictures our Christian duty in words that are clear and understandable: *"Be strictly careful then about the life you lead; act like sensible men, not like thoughtless; make the very most of your time, for these are evil days."* We have no time to be Christians in name only, upholding no standard, living meaningless lives, or even bordering on that un-Christ-like attitude. We need to be alert to the dangers of indifference, all on fire with our sublime hope of life in the world to come, acting like sensible men, not like thoughtless. Without living a fully consecrated life we cannot know the joy of complete commitment to the faith we profess.

We need more of the spirit of the Apostle Paul, who said: *"Brothers and sisters, I know that I have not yet reached that goal, but there is one thing I always do. Forgetting the past and straining toward what is ahead, I keep trying to reach the goal and get the prize for which God called me through Christ"* (Phil. 3:13–14 NCV). Paul was a one-idea man; his commitment was complete. Let us copy Paul as he copied Christ!



## TO WHAT ARE WE AS CHRISTIANS COMMITTED?

1) *We are committed to an interpretation of life and its meaning—the Christian interpretation*, which says that behind all of life is God, that life makes sense when it is seen as subject to His purpose, to His judgment, to His will. How many of us have actually considered the purpose of God for us and our lives, for example, in the daily operation of our business, in our relationships with others at work, in our association with our brothers and sisters in the faith, and especially toward the members of our own household? Every part of our lives must be directed from above if we would live meaningful lives.

2) *We are committed to a way of life.* We are no longer on our own; we must live the life that our Christian commitment sets for us. *“For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature”*; so that we cannot do the things that we naturally would. But within those limits we find the very essence of true freedom. Our situation is much like Paul’s, that of being Christian in an unchristian world. At times the uncommitted will think of us as “fools”—or worse—because we do not act and think as they do.

3) *We are committed to a Person.* We have a Master, a Lord, a Saviour. And through Him we are committed to the great God of the universe.

Because of this we are committed to a trust in His essential rightness, and to make our decisions in the light of this commitment to Him. It is not a take-it-or-leave-it-at-will commitment, for because of Him we are under orders—His, not ours.

This total commitment must be central for each of us. Jesus defined as the first and greatest of all the commandments: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength”* (Mark 12:30 NIV). Without this kind of commitment, we are lost. Without this commitment we cannot understand the meaning and purpose of life in God’s service, and are in danger of growing weary in well doing.

Jesus was depicting the fully committed life when He said: *“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven”* (Matt. 5:16 NIV).

This way of life—this Christian way of life—cannot be a separate and impractical theory found in a Book which we accept with a fragment of our minds and then deny with our deeds. Nor is it satisfied by an occasional gift to the church, spasmodic attendance at worship, “busyness” with affairs of the church, or repeating memorized texts from Scripture. This commitment affects every area of our lives.

Our lives must be transparent. If fully committed to God, we will have nothing to hide.

## LIVING CREATIVELY

Another dimension of meaningfulness is discovered in the word creativity. The Divine intent for the human individual is to become a partner with God in completing creation. He wants to make something of us. God’s purpose is to create a composite “man,” an individual including every member of Christ’s body or church, *“in righteousness and true holiness”* (Eph. 4:24); so that we become part of a dynamic, continuing creativity. “The perseverance of the saints,” says an excellent old adage “is made up of ever new beginnings.”

God wants us to grow. We cannot improve on Paul’s description in Ephesians 4:11–13, 15 (NLT): *“He is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ, 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....becoming more and more in every way like Christ.”*

The spirit of God works in us to create, not to destroy; to open new windows to holiness, not to deface the work of His hands; to expand our horizons and appreciation for goodness and truth, not to cripple or shrivel our sensibilities. The true meaning of life comes to us when we participate with God in this creative process. Let us therefore be *“workers together with God”* that it may be His good pleasure to invite us to share a place in His eternal home, and become part of His innumerable heavenly family!

Attaining this, we will know firsthand the ultimate in meaningful living. ■

## Belonging to a purpose can bring great happiness:

- ♦ *“Happy is the person who finds wisdom”* Prov. 3:13
- ♦ *“If you know these things, you will be happy if you do them”* John 13:17
- ♦ *“The one whom God corrects is happy”* Job 5:17
- ♦ *“Happy indeed are those whose God is the Lord”* Ps. 144:15
- ♦ *“Happy are those who are helped by the God of Jacob. Their hope is in the Lord their God”* Ps. 146:5
- ♦ *“But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed...Be happy if you are insulted for being a Christian”* 1 Pet. 3:14; 4:14



Reprinted from June, 1946  
By **Rev. Percy J. Thatcher**



## WHAT IS THE READING ON

# GOD'S BAROMETER?

You may have it hanging on the wall, this instrument which is designed to register changes in the atmospheric pressure as an aid to forecasting the weather. You may have marveled at its hand pointing steadily to rain—when the sun was shining. But when a few hours later the clouds began to gather—yes, you had to remember the trusty barometer. And soon it was raining!

This is not to suggest that the barometer is always accurate in its predictions. The weather bureau relies on it only in conjunction with other observations and instruments.

But there is a barometer that is accurate, un-

der our God that this sensitive instrument has been placed in our hands. Its marvelous mechanism was not completely assembled until about AD 70. But since it was completed, not one improvement has been made on it. John the Revelator was the last workman to place in position the final gear and pinion which brought this instrument to completion.

Multitudes say that the readings on this barometer are obscure, that they cannot be read with certainty. But like any other information, it is *all "plain to him that understandeth and right to them that find knowledge"* (Prov. 8:9). Sadly, though, few trouble themselves to take its daily readings. Sadder still, we have been careless and heedless of its signals. We have rejected it, because we looked at its readings and, not seeing them reflect what we saw about us, we felt it was false, unsure, uncertain—when our very observation should have confirmed our faith in it! For it is a barometer, always looking ahead.

This God-given instrument has been tested severely, and serious study has proven it to be totally harmonious with itself and accurate in all it reveals. Many have picked up the Eternal's barometer, thinking they might tinker with it and improve its mechanism so that the readings might more closely correspond to what they see (or wish to see). But in all this they have failed utterly, and today it remains the same God-given instrument that it was when it left His workshop. We may not always understand, but we can never mistrust. What God has spoken is sure. Who are we to judge it otherwise? Who are we to challenge what *He* says is going to be?

So perfect is this instrument, so delicate, so specialized that—even though it is not patented—no human hand has been able to duplicate it—far be it from the mind of man to fathom the mind of God! *"For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who can instruct him?"* (Rom. 11:34).

***We lift our hearts in thanksgiving to the Lord our God that this sensitive instrument, God's Barometer, has been placed in our hands.***

failingly accurate. This special instrument is God's barometer.

This specially designed instrument measures not weather conditions but *world* conditions and *human* conditions. Unlike the barometer, it does not depend on the present to foretell the future. Its information comes directly from its connection with heavenly sources of information. It knows because *God* knows.

No human hand can predict with any accuracy. But God's instruments are just as accurate today as they were thousands of years ago when Jesus said, *"I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe"* (John 14:29).

We lift our hearts in thanksgiving to the Lord



Years ago, this barometer was predicting a long dry spell when rain from heaven was abundant. Yes, even while His people were enjoying the gifts of the Spirit poured out in a measure never before seen (during the Apostolic Age), the hand on the barometer was pointing to “Very Dry.” Slowly, almost imperceptibly at first, then more and more rapidly the effects of drought—the apostasy from true religion, as predicted (2 Tim. 4:3–4) were seen. Then felt. A few hundred years passed, and it was indeed very, very dry. The barometer had been right!

Then, some thousand years later, the hand on the barometer was pointing to change. How could it be, when the power of Rome was so strong? But the barometer proved true, and a period of change again arrived.

### Looking Ahead...

What is God’s barometer telling us now? What does this delicate instrument say about what is coming on the earth?

To our astonishment, we see it pointing to “Fair and Clear.”

Can it be? Is it possible that this instrument is accurate? With all the storminess in the world of today, unrest and unsettled conditions—wars in different parts of the earth—how can God’s barometer be predicting “Fair and Clear”? How can it escape being influenced by the tumultuous weather prevailing worldwide?

The reason is that God’s barometer sees beyond the moment that is. It even sees beyond the moment that is coming, to predict the ultimate condition which will soon be seen worldwide. True, it will grow more stormy. There shall *“be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation”* when Michael, the great Prince

stands up and claims authority as earth’s rightful Heir and all-glorious King (Dan. 12:1). Conditions will be so stormy that the battle will rage worldwide. But it will be a battle different from any that has been before. This battle will be a battle of right against wrong, and none but the wrong will suffer. This battle, which the Bible calls Armageddon (Rev. 16:16), will result in the worldwide defeat of everything that opposes justice, equity, righteousness and goodwill. It will be the greatest triumph earth has ever seen. Conditions will begin at once to turn from “Stormy” to “Fair and Clear,” until that condition prevails worldwide.

Are you tempted to feel downhearted as you see the tumult in the present world picture? It is only the Word of God fulfilled. This is the very condition God predicted. It is here! We are seeing it with our very eyes! And what does Jesus tell us to do when we see these things coming to pass? *“Look up,”* He says, *“and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near”* (Luke 21:25–28).

Redemption—release—liberation—deliverance—salvation! Yes, look at God’s barometer and *look up!* Soon our Redeemer will appear, for the deliverance and salvation of His people and all who will submit to His rightful authority.

Amid the stormy conditions today, keep your eye on God’s barometer and know that “fair and clear” will soon be a reality—and once that condition has arrived, it shall prevail until—

*No sky shall ever be o’ercast  
Eternal day has dawned at last.  
The angry sea has ceased to roar,  
For peace has come forevermore. ■*

**Look at God’s Barometer  
and “look up because your  
redemption draws near!”**

## IT WILL HURT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

rescind His commanded *“follow me.”*

Could it have been the persecution of those early followers who obeyed Him that prompted Peter to say, *“Dear friends, don’t be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you”*? (1 Pet. 4:12). Yes, Christ commanded it: *“follow me.”* And following could hurt.

Christ still speaks today to those who will hear: *“Follow Me.”* And it still hurts because our old nature is at odds with

Christ, and we cannot follow Christ and hold onto our old nature. Paul compared this struggle to a battle when he said, *“For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want”* (Gal. 5:17).

Why go contrary to nature (and cause hurt) when it would be so much easier to follow our instincts? Because the route that causes hurt makes life better right now (the hundredfold of present benefits that Jesus promised), and it is

the only way to be eligible when Jesus comes to receive the greatest blessing: *“eternal life”* (Mark 10:28–30).

Remember, only the *“strait gate”* and the *“narrow way”* lead to life! (Matt. 7:13–14). There is no other way. ■

# FAITH *in Action*



by RUTH E. SISSON

*Bible Text: Acts 6:1–8 NIV*

1. In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.
2. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.
3. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them
4. and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."
5. This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.
6. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.
7. So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.
8. Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.

## THE LEADERS RESPOND

### WHEN SOMEONE COMPLAINS

 Read Acts 6:1–8

The young church was growing. There were now several thousand believers in Jerusalem—quite a change from the time of Jesus. Many were meeting in the Temple, others in the homes of some of the believers. As the Church grew, it wasn't strange that they grew into a few problems. Methods that once worked fine now had to be modified.

Some of the believers who had property had sold at least part of what they owned and given the proceeds to the Apostles for distribution.

What do you do when you hear someone complaining? Do you take their side, and add perhaps fuel to the fire, looking for something else to complain about? Or do you immediately take the defensive, and make every possible attempt to silence their complaint?

There is yet a third course, which is better than either of the first. And it is simple: listen to the complaint, investigate what is wrong, and correct the problem. This latter course is what the leaders of the new Church in Jerusalem did.

It seemed like an ideal system, but everyone was not happy. The first complaint sounded very much like a modern cultural battle. ("We of this race, gender, network" didn't get as much as "they" of another race, gender, network)!

It does seem that the nature of the problem was cultural. In the Church were two types of Jews, those who spoke Aramaic and were native to Palestine, and those from the west who were Greek. The Greek Jews complained that their widows were not receiving a fair share of the daily distribution. Was it a modern case of discrimination?

Nothing in the record says that the complaint was just or unjust. And that wasn't the issue. If there was a perception of a problem, the problem was real enough, and needed action.

The Apostles acted promptly. The program clearly needed better direction.



So what did they do? Did they simply appoint more “staff” to handle it? No, first they called a general meeting of the Christians, and explained the situation. They had studied the problem, and had a remedy to suggest. The Apostles reasoned that they should not be spending their time “serving tables” (gathering daily provisions and distributing them). Their primary work was to teach and preach the Word of God.

Responsible people should be appointed to run the Church’s ministry of assistance. Apparently everyone agreed, and seven of the believers were selected. These seven, sometimes called “deacons,” were chosen on the basis of their quality of character. With seven to share the task, the workload could be divided, and all money matters could be above suspicion.

Meanwhile, what did the Apostles resolve to do? *“We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”*

1. Who took responsibility for stating the qualifications of those who would serve the church? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Why were the men chosen on a basis of character rather than ability alone? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What effect did the new arrangement have on the Apostles? \_\_\_\_\_

One might think that anyone could administer goods. But the people of the Church took care to choose those who would represent Christ, who would do the work *“in a responsible manner, with good practical sense”* (Acts 6:3 Williams).

Why was this so important? Because every part of God’s work is holy, and needs to be done with an attitude of reverence for God, because it is God’s work. A small job done well is an excellent preparation for greater responsibilities later.

## OPPOSITION

 Read Acts 6:9–15

The Church needed those who were both spiritual and capable. One of those chosen was a man named Stephen, one who not only did the job given him but did more. It is written of him that he was *“full of grace and power”* (verse 8). When he taught the people, it is said that they were *“unable to cope with the wisdom and the spirit with which he was speaking”* (verse 10).

Anyone with that kind of power and ability—a gospel that the people did not want to hear—was bound to arouse opposition. Apparently soon after Stephen began teaching the people, they started to find ways to oppose him. There is an old saying, “If you can’t win an argument, start a fight,” and that is just what they did. A group of Jews from outlying provinces began to argue with Stephen. When they could not win the argument, they hired men who falsely accused Stephen of blaspheming God and talking against Moses. Twisting his words, they gathered public resistance against him. As a result of these trumped-up charges, Stephen was taken before the Sanhedrin for trial.

Stephen’s accusers had no evidence with which to indict him, so they hired false witnesses, who charged him with two statements of blasphemy: 1) that



A closer look

### Qualifications of the Deacons

Those chosen for public office in the Church were not chosen for financial success, or organization ability, or good business acumen. The Apostles had other criteria to judge by. A successful man might not be a spiritual man. On the other hand, a spiritual man might not be a sensible businessman. What were the Apostles looking for?

First, he had to be a **good** man. This was of paramount importance. He had to be one who commanded the love and respect of others because of personal integrity and unblemished character, one who avoided evil and devoted himself to the Cause of Christ and the well-being of others.

Then, too, he had to be a godly man, **“full of the Holy Spirit”** and **“full of wisdom.”**

Imagine what kind of government we would have today if all who served were godly, wise and “good” by God’s standard of goodness!

### Bible Text: Acts 6:9–15 NIV

9. Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen,

10. but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.

11. Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, “We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God.”

12. So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin.

13. They produced false witnesses, who testified. “This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law.

14. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.”

15. All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.



Insight

### Calm and Radiant

A man facing deadly charges was calm, radiant, his face shining with the light of another world, just as Moses' face had shone when he came down from the mountain. Those who saw him must have marveled that there was no hate, no bitterness, not even fear, but only a heavenly radiance in his countenance.

Isn't there a tremendous lesson here? Can we imagine how the young man named Saul of Tarsus who was present might have perceived that angelic face? Doubtless it haunted him, though at the moment it may have filled him with anger.

Jesus of Nazareth said He would destroy the temple, and 2) that Jesus changed the customs which Moses had given the Jews.

Can't you hear the tone of contempt in their accusation?

4. Why do you think the opposition accused Stephen as they did? \_\_\_\_\_

How did the accusations against Stephen compare with those brought against Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What was the general attitude of the Jews toward the Temple? \_\_\_\_\_

What was Jesus' attitude toward the Jewish Temple? \_\_\_\_\_

6. How did Stephen react to their charges? (6:15) \_\_\_\_\_

Having heard the indictment, Stephen was now given the opportunity to respond. What was the initial reaction? *"But the counsel, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel"* (Acts 6:15). ■

TO BE CONTINUED



## Abib Is Coming!

**Abib First**, the beginning of another sacred New Year as God directed Moses to measure time, is approaching.

According to Biblical records, the ancient Hebrews began their sacred year with the new moon of **Abib** (see Ex. 12:2, 13:4). Abib is the first new moon following the spring equinox. The equinox this year occurring on March 20, and the first new moon following on April 5, the beginning of the month Abib will be the evening of Friday, **April 5**, continuing through Saturday, **April 6**, Bible time being counted from evening to evening (Lev. 23:35). The day has double significance, being both the first day of the sacred New Year and the day which we of the Megiddo Church observe as the anniversary of the birth of Christ. Our foremost purpose is to give honor to Jesus Christ, our coming King.

Thirteen days later (Abib 13, this year on Wednesday evening, **April 17**), we will observe the Lord New Passover, and the morning of **April 20** (Abib 15) will be the anniversary of Christ's glorious, bodily resurrection, when God raised Him from the dead, to be the firstfruits from death, and the first to triumph forever over death and the grave.

Fifty days later (**June 8**) will be the anniversary of the day of Pentecost, when the power of the Holy Spirit descended upon the assembled disciples. ■





## WHERE WAS...

1. Anna, the prophetess, when she first saw Jesus?
2. Saul slain in battle?
3. The temple of Diana located?
4. Jesus when He prayed, *"Not as I will but as Thou wilt"*?
5. The Pharisee of Christ's parable when he praised himself?
6. Peter's mother-in-law when healed of her fever?
7. Moses when the angel spoke to him from the burning bush?
8. Gehazi, Elisha's servant, when he became leprous?
9. Jesus when He healed the man of his infirmity which he had for thirty-eight years?
10. John the Baptist when he sent two of his disciples to Jesus?
11. Mary when she sat at Jesus' feet?
12. Noah's ark when the waters of the flood receded?
13. King Belshazzar when he saw the handwriting on the wall?
14. Lazarus (parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus) when the dogs licked his wounds?

## BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Name the twelve sons of Israel.
2. For what is Anathoth most remembered?
3. Name Noah's three sons.
4. Elijah's mantle was used in what miracle?
5. How many times in Christ's life did a voice from heaven testify to Him?
6. How was the man sick with palsy brought to Jesus?
7. How long a rain made Noah's flood?
8. Among what heathen tribe did David take refuge when he was fleeing from Saul?
9. What did Adonijah do against his father?

## WHO

1. Who was Jehoshabeath? Who was the baby prince she saved? What was her husband's name and occupation?
2. Who said that Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit?
3. Who used his ingenuity to rescue Jeremiah from a pit?
4. Who was the distinguished son of Elisabeth?
5. Who put singers in front of his army which sang *"Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever"*?
6. Who gave water rights to Achsah?
7. Who wrote, *"The just shall live by faith,"* and in what Book is it found?
8. Name two of Nehemiah's chief enemies?
9. Who in the Bible lived the longest, and how long did he live?

## WHAT

1. What mountain is a Sabbath day's journey from Jerusalem?
2. What did Moses call *"that great and terrible wilderness"*?
3. What were the Hebrew names of Daniel's three friends?
4. What was Daniel's Chaldean name?
5. What did Christ do for His mother just before He died?
6. What Bible book has for its sub-title, *"The Preacher"*?
7. What was the ancient name of Bethel?
8. What did two cows without drivers bring back to the Israelites?
9. What was the appearance of the Holy Spirit at Christ's baptism?

ANSWERS ON PAGE 16



**T**he following suggestions are for those individuals who sincerely believe that this life must be fulfilled and enjoyed to the fullest, for those who are totally committed to Number One's best interests, and for those who claim their "rights" at any cost. Their goal—? to be happy, popular, significant, and to enjoy life, lacking nothing. These individuals scorn spirituality—definitely seeing no benefit in serving or reverencing a Higher Being. Why follow a set of rules for self improvement unless, of course, it is to climb farther up the ladder of success and fulfillment?

Actually, many suggestions appeal to practically everyone. You can pick and choose. They are not hard to follow and are "feel good" ideas. Believe me, you won't be lonely. Many of your friends will be happy to join you. This lifestyle is very popular and has so many wonderful choices and ideas.

By the way, these suggestions are *not* for those certain few who professes the name of Christ. Nor for those who are full of faith, active and growing believers, who seek first the Kingdom of God and avoid all possible delays. They speak of laying up treasure in heaven, of reaping what they sow, and coming out from the world. Why, it would be a waste of time to offer any of these popular suggestions to sincere Christians. They just don't think like most.

Spiritual Bankruptcy may seem scary to think about, but it isn't that bad. After all, you only have one life. You want to enjoy it to the fullest, don't you? There are many who have achieved high status and feel good about themselves. You can too. Just think about it: if you don't go after all your wants and desires now,

who will get them for you? Nobody will. The saying, "You get what you go after" is true here. You who feel life is going nowhere and you long for the good things you deserve, have no reason to be down hearted. Your opportunity to reach your goal fast is here! Practice the following tried-and-true methods and you will find your faith in anything beyond this life rapidly diminishing to the vanishing point.

Why waste time trying to be what is unnatural? Obeying rules or denying yourself? Why sacrifice all the good things of life now for future benefits that are uncertain, when with only a little effort you can be self-made? The experts have whipped up ten easy steps, all in connection with one's daily life, to help you go into spiritual bankruptcy. Of course, if you are spiritually minded and want to stay in the narrow way, you will not want to follow this advice. (You are also being warned by the experts that if you turn the advice around, you will find yourself growing spiritually rich and you will spend a useful life in the service of the Eternal, and end up in His Kingdom! This warning is urgent.)

**#1 SUGGESTION:** *Never express thanks for anything that you receive or for anything that is done for you.*

You have many blessings, that's true: temporal and spiritual. In fact, they are innumerable. You know that. But why be thankful? These things you deserve! They should be yours anyway. And why shouldn't others help you out frequently? Just maintain your pride and feel that you get less than you deserve, and you will seldom be grate-



ful. Why! gratitude is the mother of virtues, and that's the very thing you want to stay away from.

## **#2** **SUGGESTION:** *Impress upon your associates that you are always right.*

Never make allowance that you could have been mistaken. Always insist that you know better, that you have the evidence on every point in question. Make it a point to argue on controversial subjects. Always force your opinion forward. If you have some little pet theory of your own, get as many to listen to you as you can. If they agree too readily, substitute something harder and more fantastic. Keep yourself mysterious and in an attitude of superiority. It will surprise you how many old friends you can lose in this way, and how quickly you can be left stranded alone.

## **#3** **SUGGESTION:** *Disregard authority.*

Granted, the world needs some kind of government. But you are different. You are an exception. Have you not read in the Bible *"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes"*? Then why not believe it!

## **#4** **SUGGESTION:** *Never accept advice that may improve you. Why, that would be humiliating.*

Don't you recognize that you are good enough as you are? Don't ever ask for advice, and avoid those persons who are apt to give you a *"Thus says the Lord."* If, however, you are unavoidably faced with having to consult a superior, just pre-sent your case in such a way that you will have to be agreed with, and you will end up having your own way every time. See? There are some who seek counsel about everything—well, one thing certain, they will never reach your goal!

## **#5** **SUGGESTION:** *Never do anything for anyone else. Don't even think of it.*

Think of yourself first, last and always. If you try to help others, more than likely they won't really appreciate it. But if you should do something nice for some one, talk about.

There are some people who turn this squarely

around and are always thinking of others first. They are continually looking for a way to be helpful or kind. They write encouraging letters to distant friends, they answer inquiries. And when visitors come, they encourage them in the best possible manner, and even stir up each other. They say that in this way, they are strengthened and much encouraged to face their own problems. Don't be influenced in anything like this. Just say when asked to do something for someone else that you have no such ability, or that you are too busy.

## **#6** **SUGGESTION:** *Disregard the old idea that the easiest time to overcome a fault is at its first appearance.*

Some folks insist that you should resist the first impulse to evil. But wouldn't that help ruin your chances of becoming the failure that you want to be?

## **#7** **SUGGESTION:** *When you go to church, do not make preparations beforehand. And be sure not to listen to the message.*

Stay up late the night before, get in at the last minute, or a little late. Then, if you are tired and sleepy, why, you can doze right off quick!

Or, if you have some business problem that needs much serious thought, the church is a good place to think it out. Don't forget, you have a living to earn, after all. And it's more important to get something into your stomach than something spiritual into your head. And, if you have any ill feelings against anyone, just brood about them during the service. In this way you will hear very little of the sermon. In fact, within a few hours, you will remember nothing about it.

## **#8** **SUGGESTION:** *Keep yourself sensitive and easily hurt.*

When someone says some little thing to you which may hurt only slightly, make the most of it. Don't forget it. No. Brood over it. Let it grow, fertilize it with evil imaginations until it grows to immense proportions. If ill is done to you, whether real or fancied, let it make you bitter and fill you with a spirit of vengeance. Develop a slight peeve into a grudge, and a grudge into resolute hate. Let discouragement and disappointment keep you in a blue mood until gloom and defeatism become the regular tone of your months and years.

## #9 **SUGGESTION:** *Be sure to neglect reading the Bible and other literature which may influence you to godly living.*

By neglecting reading, your faith will grow weaker daily, in fact you won't have any faith! Take care not to commit any new Scriptures to memory. If you are asked to recite any, just use the old easy standbys you can repeat like a parrot. Be careful you don't overlook this advice—it's important. Why, if you should practice daily reading of the Word as some do, your faith would increase immensely. It would drive away your doubts as you read those prophecies and promises. It would revive your interest and get you living right up to the mark. And, if you should happen to make the mistake of memorizing a chapter occasionally so that you could meditate on it while you were busy working with your hands, there is just no telling what it would do for you. Your chances of reaching spiritual bankruptcy would be ruined.

## #10 **SUGGESTION:** *Never pray—unless you are in trouble and need help, or you wish to request something.*

You may be told repeatedly that prayer is an important part of the lives of those men and wom-

en whose first desire is genuine spiritual growth. Through prayer God's people have overcome the hardest inner battles. Through prayer they have even turned defeat into victory. Of Jesus it is said that He prayed frequently. The solemn scene in Gethsemane, by His fervent prayer, was really His victory, even when the cross still awaited Him.

The advice to you from the experts is: Neglect prayer. Let it alone. Cease praying entirely, and there won't be any danger of your making any headway for the Kingdom.

There are just numberless ways of going into spiritual bankruptcy. No group of experts could possibly list them all. But the ones I have given you ought to be helpful, and if you consider the fellows of other ages, such as Cain, Solomon, Judas and Demas, you can use some of their methods for yourself to good advantage.

As a final word: Do not fail to consult the experts if you are in need of further advice. An invitation is extended to you from the offices of Petifogger and Sheister. They are located on Darkway Street in the Flimflam Building. Their offices are in the lower left wing.

Their doors are never closed.

Signed,

*Carnal Blackguard, Esquire*  
Offices of Lawyer Flesh Consultants, LLC ■

### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 13

#### WHERE WAS...

1. In the Temple in Jerusalem (Luke 2:36–37)
2. Mount Gilboa (1 Samuel 31:1–6)
3. In Ephesus (Acts 19:35)
4. In the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36–39)
5. In the temple (Luke 18:9–14)
6. In the house of Peter in Capernaum. (Matt. 8:5, 14–15)
7. Mt. Horeb (Ex. 3:1)
8. Samaria (2 Kings 5:3, 25–27)
9. At the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem (John 5:1–9)
10. In prison (Matt. 11:2–3)
11. In her home in Bethany (John 11:1; Luke 10:38–40)
12. On Mount Ararat (Gen. 8:1–4)
13. At a feast in the king's palace (Dan. 5:1–5)
14. Lying at the gate of the rich man (Luke 16:19–21)

#### BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, and Joseph. (Ex. 1:1–5;)
2. It was the birthplace of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1)

3. Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen. 6:10)
4. When Elijah smote the Jordan with it, a passage was opened up through the water (2 Kings 2:7–8)
5. Three times: at His baptism, (Mark 1:9–11); at His transfiguration, (Luke 9:28–35); and when the Greeks sought Him in Jerusalem (John 12:20–28)
6. He was let down through a hole in the roof of the house where Jesus was staying (Mark 2:1–4)
7. Forty days and forty nights (Gen. 7:11–12)
8. The Philistines (1 Sam. 27:1)
9. He led an insurrection against his father David (2 Sam. 3:2–5; 1 Kings 1:5)

#### WHO

1. The wife of Jehoiada the priest. She hid her baby nephew Joash six years to save his life from his grandmother Athaliah (2 Chron. 22:10–12)
2. John the Baptist (Mark 1:6–9)
3. An Ethiopian eunuch Ebedmelech pulled Jeremiah from the dungeon (Jer. 38:7–13)

4. John the Baptist (Luke 1:5, 13)
5. Jehoshaphat after a prophet promised God would fight the battle (2 Chron. 20:13–23)
6. Caleb gave Achsah his daughter the upper and lower water springs (Judg. 1:12–15)
7. Habakkuk (Hab. 2:4). Paul quoted it (see Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38)
8. Sanballat and Tobiah (Neh. 4:1–3)
9. Methuselah; 969 years (Gen. 5:27)

#### WHAT

1. Olivet (Acts 1:12)
2. The wilderness between Horeb and Kadesh–Barnea (Deut. 1:19)
3. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Dan. 1:6)
4. Belteshazzar (Dan. 2:26)
5. He committed her to the care of John (John 19:25–27)
6. Ecclesiastes (Eccl. 1:1)
7. Luz (Judg. 1:23)
8. The ark of the covenant (1 Sam. 6:1–15)
9. That of a dove (Mark 1:10)





# JESUS NOT A JEW?

***"I have a book published in 1936 by a Mr. Connor, entitled 'Jesus Was Not A Jew'. The author makes broad claims for his position, basing them mainly on the geography and history of the area as researched and taught by William Harnack, whom he highly regards. I would appreciate your comments."***

Even a brief, cursory review of the book tells one quickly that the author had no knowledge of or regard for the Bible. In his Forward to Part 1, he writes:

***"Inasmuch as we have no trustworthy genealogical data we may dismiss all evidence of that character."***

Yet the Bible spells out clearly the genealogy of Jesus in dozens of places. He was prophesied to be coming from the House of David (Jer. 23:5; 33:14–15), of the stem of Jesse (Isa. 11) and will return as *"the lion from the tribe of Judah."* Rev. 5:5 says it all, positively identifying Christ with Judah. To say otherwise would be to contradict Bible prophecy and the testimony of the prophets and apostles and Jesus Himself (Luke 24:46–48), which altogether make up the sure Word of God, and we know God our Creator cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

To read such a book would be a total waste of time, because the author based his entire theory on man's records and writings. We absolutely believe the Bible, that God inspired and directed its writing, and that it contains no errors or contradictions in the language in which God delivered it to men. Any apparent contradictions or issues are due to our faulty understanding, not to the original text, and can be fairly and honestly resolved and harmonized by study.

This is not to say that we have "all the answers" instantly and always, but most of the claimed "errors" are not a concern because they are not regarding points of belief or salvation.

The evidence for the truthfulness of the Bible is overwhelming when one studies it honestly and deeply and sets aside the false teachings of man that have been taught through the centuries. Often the intended meaning is not on the surface, but serious study only discloses more and more evidence that confirms our faith in the Bible. Any

part that seems out of line with the overall teaching HAS an answer when one defines the terms properly and studies it as God intended, *"here a little and there a little"* (Isa. 28:10), by subject. God inspired ALL the Bible authors to write only what is true, and that is why the Church is *"built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone"* (Eph. 2:20).

If God left us to figure out what was "true" or "false" in His Word, we would have no hope—every evaluator would have a different conclusion as to what he or she liked or disliked. But God avoided all this by closing the writing of the Bible when He withdrew His Holy Spirit power at the end of the Apostles' time, which we believe closely coincided with the time Jerusalem was destroyed (about AD 70). By a special dispensing of the Holy Spirit power, Jesus gave His apostles the tools they needed to preserve His teaching, so they could call to mind and write down accurately what He had said for the instruction of future generations (John 14:25–26). As a result we have a reliable book that is harmonious from beginning to end when properly understood, and which presents *one* plan of salvation and *one* doctrine.

A few additions were made by copyists and translators, but they are very few and are easily seen when checked against manuscripts from earlier time periods (earlier manuscripts are usually the most accurate). There are texts the wording of which has been severely slanted by the beliefs and bias of the translators, but these also can be discovered by comparing Scripture with Scripture or by going to the original Greek and Hebrew. And the final authority always rests with the Bible itself, starting with clear, plain statements, and then seeing how difficult passages may be harmonized with them. Very often the solution is finding the meaning of the terms as they were used in Scripture at that time. In other words, let Scripture interpret Scripture.

This was the pattern of the founder of the Megiddo Church, who took his lifelong study of the Bible very seriously. He would not believe what he could not read in the Bible. There are *apparent* contradictions, but that is why we have to keep studying. And as we study, our purpose is always to seek harmony when two passages seem to contradict. The first question is always: What is the general, plain teaching of the Bi-

ble? Then we can look deeper to understand allegories and parables and symbols as they relate to the subject of the passage. Without this approach we would not be able to understand the true teaching of Scripture.

In reference to the book titled, *Jesus Was Not a Jew*, we really need go no further than the title. Why? We know immediately the man has no understanding of Scripture and is not even reverent or respectful.

The Bible is explicit when it lays out the genealogy of Jesus. History also weighs in on this. For the Jewish people, genealogy was necessary for certain important responsibilities in religious matters, as well as property ownership. This also is revealed in Scripture. An honest person would not ignore this, even today. Nor would they ignore the requirements for salvation as the multitudes and their leaders do.

We will never know what the Lord says as long as we listen to man's misguided ideas. *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness"* (2 Tim. 2:15–17). The English Standard Version has, *"Avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene."*

We have no choice but to *"Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty"* (2 Cor. 6:17–18).

### ◆ WHO WILL BE JUDGED?

***“Why did Jesus say that Sodom and Gomorrah would be better off in the day of Judgment than the people He was talking to? Does this mean that every one will be resurrected to be judged at the last day, even the people of Sodom and Gomorrah? (See Matt. 10:15; Luke 10:12; Mark 6:11; Matt. 11:24)”***

Those who believe that all who ever lived shall be resurrected at the last Day often build on these words of Jesus, where He seems to be saying that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah will be present at judgment.

Let us look individually at these statements. The first is in Mat.10:15, where Jesus was sending the Twelve on a missionary venture. Whenever city or house would not receive them, they were to *"shake off the dust"* from their feet as a

witness against that city and depart. And Jesus commented, *"verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city."* Jesus repeated the statement in condemning Capernaum for their unbelief: *"But I say unto you. That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee"* (Matt. 11:24).

The Bible does not teach that all who ever lived will be resurrected. On the contrary there is a class who shall *"sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake"* (Jer. 51:57). Those who *"sin without law"* shall also *"perish without law"* (Rom. 2:12), and there is no indication that they will be resurrected for any future purpose. In view of those texts, it seems hard to conceive of Sodom and Gomorrah ever being called to judgment, though a surface reading of Jesus' words would indicate this.

However let us look further. A statement in Jude 7 is enlightening. *"Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"* i.e., everlasting destruction. Nothing suggests that they will be brought back to the scene of action, only that they were to be remembered as an example of how God requites evil.

A statement in 2 Peter 2 makes the same point, that Sodom and Gomorrah were to be remembered as examples. God turned *"the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes"* and *"condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly"* (2 Peter 2:6).

Jesus Himself used Sodom again as an example, to describe the Judgment that would come upon the world at the time of His second advent. After speaking of the fall of Sodom and the cities of the plain, He said: *"Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed"* (Luke 17:28–30.)

Sodom was a proverbially wicked city, and is referred to as such a number of times through Scripture. Jewish history states that the rabbis debated whether or not the people of Sodom would be resurrected and judged on the day of Judgment. It does not seem that this could have been Jesus' meaning. It seems more likely that He was merely employing a figure of speech to picture the unworthiness of the people of His day. In other words He was saying, If Sodom and Gomorrah were to rise and appear with them at Judgment Day, even they—wicked as they were—would condemn the people of His time for their hardheartedness and unbelief.



The cities of Tyre and Sidon were used in the same manner. Will those people be raised at Judgment Day? Any who were under covenant to serve God will certainly be raised, being amenable. However, the entire population would not be in this category. The prophet Ezekiel used the name Tyrus (Tyre) to represent the unfaithful followers of God in any age. Speaking for God he said: *"Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering...Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created till iniquity was found in thee"* (Ezek. 28:12–15). This language is highly figurative, but it pictures a people who knew the law of God and were disobedient, rather than those who were totally ignorant of God's commands.

God looks upon all transgression of His law as displeasing to Him, however those who are not voluntarily subject to His laws are not accountable, only as He may choose to send judgments upon them. In the words of Paul, *"For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified"* (Rom. 2:12–13).

#### ◆ CHRIST NOT THE CREATOR

***"After studying your booklet, Trinity Or Unity, I have several questions I would like to get cleared, if you would please. "On page 64 you explained Col. 1:15-17 but did not go into much detail. I am still confused and troubled by the apparent meaning of the passage. Paul seems to be stating that Christ is the Creator of the universe. Could you clear up for me with a more detailed explanation of the passage. Thank you for your time and kind consideration."***

**I**n view of the almost universal misunderstanding of the role of Christ in the plan of God, it is not strange that a passage such as Col. 1:15–17 seems confusing. The problem is further complicated by the fact that the translators themselves did not have a correct understanding, hence their translation is often colored by what they believed.

In considering a passage such as Col. 1:15–17, we must not overlook the key which is in the following verse (v. 18). Paul is addressing the preeminent position of Christ with relation to *"the body, the church,"* **not** in relation to the physical universe. This *"body,"* or *"church"* constitutes the new creation of which he is speaking, *"the world to come whereof we speak"* (Heb. 2:5). We should keep in mind also that the Bible speaks of *"heavens"* and *"earth"* in this same context, referring to the entities of the new creation, i.e., rulers and populace.

Col. 1:16 continues to describe His preeminence: *"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible"*—remember that Paul is speaking of the new creation, composed of new heavens (new rulers) and a new earth (a new populace). This fact is reinforced by the remainder of the verse, where Paul goes on to explain that he is speaking not of the planet itself but of *"thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers."* He is not speaking of mountains and oceans and stars but of the earthly authorities over which Christ will be **the** authority. *"All things [of this 'world to come'] were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."* The Scofield Reference Bible observes the following point: that Christ is *"before"* all things in the sense of His position, not of origins. He was not *"before"* in time, but He is **"before"** in authority, in preeminence. Verse 18 confirms this point: *"And he is the head of the body, the*

*church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the preeminence."* Christ has preeminence, not pre-existence. Christ has the highest authority. He is the first and foremost among *"the body, the church."* He is *"the firstborn from the dead,"* the first to receive immortality.

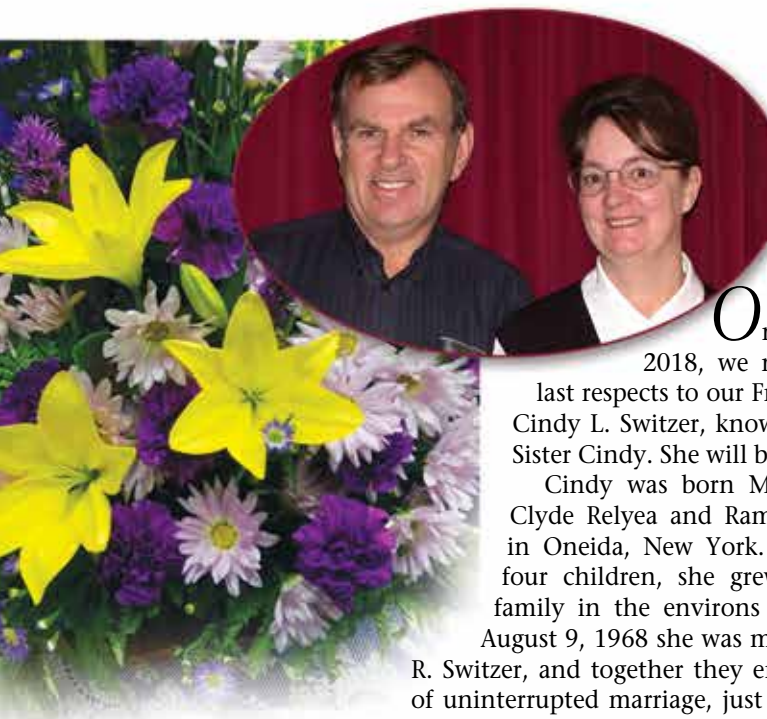
Many passages of Scripture support the thought of Christ's preeminence in relation to the new creation, the new world, the kingdom which He will establish on earth. This is the purpose for which He was born. By His own testimony, this was the purpose of His life. *"Certainly, said Jesus, I am a king. This is why I was born, this is why I came into the world"* (John 18:37 Moffatt).

Paul in his letter to the Philippians also pictures the total authority that Christ will have when He has been established as King of the whole earth: *"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* (Phil. 2:10–11). Here again we recognize the *"heaven"* as the ruling powers of earth, in contrast with the populace, termed earth. *All* will be subject to His authority.

The book of Ephesians also pictures Christ's supreme authority; He will be *"Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all"* (Eph. 1:31–33). In this passage Paul shows clearly the region of Christ's authority. He is *"head over all things to the church, which is his body."* This passage shows also that Paul is speaking of *"the world to come"* (v. 21).

There is nothing in these passages to suggest that Christ was existing before the creation of the literal stars or earth. ■

***We make our decisions  
and then our decisions make us.***



## IN MEMORY OF

*Cindy L. Switzer*

5-3-1950 – 11-12-18

On November 15, 2018, we met to pay our last respects to our Friend and Sister, Cindy L. Switzer, known among us as Sister Cindy. She will be missed.

Cindy was born May 3, 1950, to Clyde Relyea and Ramona Richmond in Oneida, New York. The second of four children, she grew up with her family in the environs of Oneida. On August 9, 1968 she was married to Henry R. Switzer, and together they enjoyed 50 years of uninterrupted marriage, just last August celebrating their fiftieth anniversary of faithful togetherness. They had two sons, Daniel and Stephen, and life was good until about 15 years ago when Cindy was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. The disease seemed more or less manageable for a number of years, but as time progressed, one by one she had to leave behind the things she loved most. Through it all she had the loving support of her family, especially her husband, as he transitioned from having a capable helpmeet who "did everything" to being caregiver to a nearly helpless dependent.

Cindy is survived by her husband, Henry Switzer, and their two sons, Daniel and Stephen, both of our Rochester congregation; also Daniel's two sons, Joshua and Kaleb; and Stephen's son Lukas and daughter Alexandra. She is also survived by her sister, Rebecca Relyea (ne Harrington) of Verona, New York; two brothers, Richard of Oneida, New York, and Carl of Oklahoma; and many nephews and nieces.

Sister Cindy became acquainted with the Megiddo Church through her husband, but even before they were married, she saw the church as a possible way to a better life and Henry saw her as a good person of high morals. They were married, and in less than three years they relocated to Rochester to join her husband's church. Her reason: there had to be more to life than being, in her words, "born to die." Her

husband commented recently that Cindy was a very determined, strong-willed girl—in a good way. She knew what she wanted, and was not afraid to let others know what she believed.

When they were first married, Brother Henry recalls, she didn't know the first thing about the Bible. When she saw him reading it, she thought that was strange—she had thought the Bible was just a book to lay on the shelf and look at.

But she soon learned that the Bible had principles to be applied, and in her husband's words, there was "no wavering." Her house had rules, and if you didn't like them, you didn't have to be there. No smoking, no drinking, no bad language, no immodest dress, no arguing—it was an imposing list for the unacquainted. And whatever you might have going on in your life, come Sunday you go to church. "It's only an hour," she said. "Who can't afford to give the Lord one hour?"

Sister Cindy was consistently generous and unselfish in giving her time—looking after the needs of the sick (she was an LPN by profession), church programs, church dramas, church dinners, and every month, Message mailing day. Until about 10 years ago, we did our own printing and mailing of the *Megiddo Message*. During the 1990s this meant labeling and sorting some 15,000 magazines and applying a mailing label to each. The labeling machine often balked, but Cindy was a dependable see-it-through operator.

When four grandchildren came along, each one received her special care and loving attention. She spent many happy hours teaching them the Bible, taking them places, and trying to show them the better things of life.

One of the brightest spots in her life was her love for the Church band. Even when she was suffering seriously with the effects of Parkinson's disease, she continued to play her saxophone, quitting only when it was impossible to continue.

Her book is closed, but she shared the hope of every believer—not of going to heaven, because the Bible tells us there is "no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave where you are going" (Ecc. 9:10), but of life beyond death—through resurrection. This was her very firm belief.

Meanwhile, she sleeps in peace, until the promise of Jesus is fulfilled: "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work" (Rev. 22:12). ■

*The clock of life is wound but once  
And no man has the power  
To tell just when the hands will stop,  
At late or early hour.*

*Now is the only time you own  
Live, toil with a will.  
Place no faith in tomorrow—  
The hands may then be still.*





# THEIR *Hope* THROUGH *Resurrection!*

**THE RESURRECTION WAS THE HOPE OF JOB** centuries before Jesus was born. *"If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come"* (Job 14:14). Job said also, *"if I wait, the grave"—not heaven—"is my house"* (Job 17:13).

Every time we read Job's words, we can thrill with him in his solid, confident hope that in the far distant future he would see His Redeemer, Jesus Christ. *"But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and he will stand upon the earth at last. And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God! I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!"* (Job 19:25–27 NLT).

**THE RESURRECTION WAS THE HOPE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.** Eight times in First Corinthians 15 he spoke of the surety of Jesus' resurrection, and its meaning for us. Apart from the hope of a physical, bodily resurrection, says Paul, our *"faith is vain,"* and those who have fallen asleep in Christ have *"perished."* 1 Corinthians 15:16–19, *"For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."*

**THE RESURRECTION WAS ISAIAH'S HOPE.** *"Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise [notice Isaiah himself knew he would be resurrected]... The earth shall cast out the dead"* (Isa. 26:19–20).

**THE RESURRECTION WAS DANIEL'S HOPE.** *"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt"* (Dan. 12:2). When would one get that everlasting life? Jesus said it clearly, in Matthew 16:27, *"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then [not at death but THEN, when he comes in the glory of His Father—then] He will reward every one according to his works."* Hebrews reaffirms this fact, saying of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah and all the rest, *"these all... died in faith, not having received the promise... God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us"* (Heb. 11:39–40).

**THE RESURRECTION WAS DAVID'S HOPE:** *"God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave"* (Ps. 49:14).

**THE RESURRECTION WAS PETER'S HOPE:** *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"* (1 Peter 1:3–5) ■

## And Then—?

*Every day is a  
 God-given exercise in counting time.  
 How well do you and I score in  
 making time count?*

*A* youth told proudly his hopes and plans,  
 As with strong hand his future he drew,  
 To an elderly man, earth-tired, Zion-bound,  
 Who answered, from all that his wise heart knew  
 Only these two words:  
 "And then—?"

*"W*ith a strong steady foot and a willing hand,  
 I will climb to the heights of Earth's treasure-fold,  
 And claim my share of the wealth that she hoards  
 For her favored, the brave and the bold."  
 "And then—?"

*"A*nd then, with this wand in my happy hand,  
 I'll gather her sparkling bright gems at will;  
 I'll summon each draught of her pleasure fount  
 'Till it fail or my goblet I fill"  
 "And then—?"

*"O*h! then I'll try fame, and I'll coax till I win  
 From the noble old laurel a wreath;  
 This I'll cherish and keep—'tis Earth's choicest gift—  
 And its life-dew her balmiest breath."  
 "And then—?"

*I*'ll be kindly and share of my wealth and my joy;  
 So I'll bind many souls to my own;  
 For I'd sooner be prince of a dozen warm hearts  
 Than a monarch alone on a throne."  
 "And then—?"

*"W*hy then I'll be getting to staid middle age,  
 And the world will be Eden no more;  
 But I'll take of my wealth and I'll build me a home,  
 And be found at my own open door."  
 "And then—?"

*"T*hen...then I will grow to a quaint golden age  
 In the midst of my pleasure and peace;  
 So muffled in treasure, and comfort and love  
 That to my ear Earth's discord shall cease."  
 "And then—?"

*I*'ll grow older and older; and then, I suppose,  
 Life and I will grow weary—and—why—  
 As my fathers have done, as my children must do,  
 So I in my ripeness shall—die!"  
 "And then—?"

*O*h then! That's a question I've not thought about.  
 "What now is your lesson for me?"

*"My boy, spend this short fleeting hour you call life  
 To prepare for Eternity:"*  
 "And then—?"

*"W*hen the wealth and the fame and the glories and joys  
 Of this world have all passed away;  
 The joys of eternity will just have begun,  
 You'll have all you can ask for  
 "And MORE!"

*The largest room in the world is room for improvement.*

People remember how **well** you did a job long after they have forgotten how **fast** you did it.

*If for a tranquil mind you seek,  
these things observe with care:  
Of whom you speak, to whom you speak,  
and how, and when, and where.*

God built life around work; He expects you to put life into your work (Phil. 2:12).

*Where we go and what we do  
advertise what we are.*

Very precious experiences in our lives may be ruined by holding onto old grudges, resentments, and jealousies.

*There are hundreds of languages in the world,  
but a smile speaks in all of them.*

God does not want those who are fearful, whose faith fluctuates according to the demands placed upon it. He wants those who put their faith in Him and His promises.

## DO THESE THINGS THIS WEEK

*Look for a smile today  
and return it with one of your own.  
Give someone new faith and hope,  
it's such a beautiful loan.*

*Gather a thought that's kind—  
one that's sincere and deep,  
But be sure to pass it along,  
for such are too precious to keep.*

*Forget yesterday's old sorrows,  
mistakes, sadness and pain.  
Lift your heart with hope and song,  
as flowers to sun and rain!*

*Offer a word of comfort and prayer  
to help someone in need—  
A little kindly word, an act or smile  
makes all of us rich indeed!*

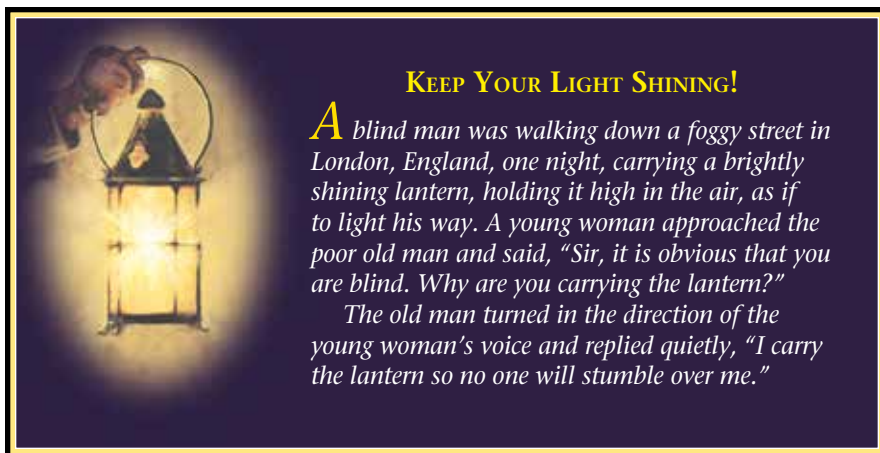
—Contributed

As long as we stand for God and truth, we will have conflict within and without.

*Make the most of your time,  
for it is life itself (Eph. 5:15–16).*

Disappointments that teach us to wait on God's appointments are blessings in disguise.

*What a different world if everyone  
tempted to point a finger would instead  
hold out a helping hand.*



### KEEP YOUR LIGHT SHINING!

*A blind man was walking down a foggy street in London, England, one night, carrying a brightly shining lantern, holding it high in the air, as if to light his way. A young woman approached the poor old man and said, "Sir, it is obvious that you are blind. Why are you carrying the lantern?"*

*The old man turned in the direction of the young woman's voice and replied quietly, "I carry the lantern so no one will stumble over me."*

### YOU WILL HAVE NO REGRETS...

*For doing good to all.  
For speaking evil of none.  
For hearing before judging.  
For thinking before speaking.  
For holding an angry tongue.  
For being kind to the distressed.  
For being patient toward everybody.*



## HE IS COMING!

*He is coming, Christ, Messiah,  
Coming to this world again,  
Coming as Earth's future Sovereign  
Over all the world to reign!*

*Even now He's getting ready,  
Counting down the hours till then.  
He has promised, "I am coming,"  
On His Word we can depend!*

*As we see the evil rampant,  
Hate and greed and pride and lust,  
Oh, it grieves our hearts so deeply,  
Fills our souls with deep disgust.*

*But though things now look so fearsome,  
Storm clouds hov'ring dark and drear,  
Lift your heads, redemption's nearing,  
Soon Earth's Saviour will be here!*

—Contributed.