### JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 2004

SSAUR

Lord, be our shield... Our praise shall rise from air and land and sea.

Weylillo

# KEEP THE WATER (WORLD) OUT!

f you are on a ship, of course you want the water on the outside! And as long as the water is all outside the ship, you don't even think about it. But discover even a very small leak, and you have a major concern.

Let the water represent the world, and the ship, our heart. Now we have the picture the poet describes:

> All the water in the world, however hard it tried, Could never, never sink a ship Unless it got inside.

> All the evil in the world, its wickedness and sin Can never sink your soul's fair craft Unless you let it in.

In Jesus' last recorded prayer before He was crucified, He expresses a deep concern for His disciples. Soon He would be leaving them, and they would be on their own. Like a good parent, He was thinking of their future. And so He prayed this prayer for them alone, *"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"* (John 17:15–16).

What did Jesus mean? What was the "world" Jesus feared?

When Jesus spoke of keeping His disciples out of the world, He used the Greek word cosmos. Used 150 times in the New Testament, it refers to an "arrangement," the world including its inhabitants. In Jesus' context it spoke of the godless structure of the world, its standards, its morals, its culture, its manner of speech and behavior.

Jesus said He wanted His disciples "in" but not "of" this cosmos. God calls us to be separate. He says, "Come out from among them and be ye separate." He says, Don't go for it, don't go with it, don't be part of it. Paul put it in very strong, personal terms when he said he was "crucified to the world" and "the world to [him]." (Gal. 6:14). In other words, he was saying, "I am as good as dead so far as this world is concerned. And it is dead so far as I am concerned." We have no living, vital connection with it, no communication. He was living in another world. He had a different attachment.

> The Apostle James said we should keep ourselves "unspotted from the world," unstained, uncontaminated (James 1:27). His advice shows that this world contaminates, that it is hostile to God's way of thinking. Do we wonder why Jesus prayed to the Father to protect and keep His disciples safe?

> Why be in but not of it? Because we need the present *cosmos*. We need its structures, its government, its law and order. We use it, but we are not entangled. Our heart is not in it. We are not living for its pleasures, goals or satisfactions. It is not the source of our happiness. There is a place for this world, but it is outside, separate from our affections. We cannot have the world in our heart, or our heart in the world. If we do, we let the water into the ship, and as sure as we do, our ship will sink.

> As long as the water is outside, how deep it is, how corrupt, does

not matter. If our vessel is watertight, we can keep afloat. What will sink us? The Apostle John spelled it out: *"all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life."* What will come of these? *"The world passes away, and the lust thereof"* (1 John 2:15–16).

Think about it next time you are tempted by something that belongs to the present culture. Someday it will all be gone. And if we have let it get inside our ship, we will go with it.

Why? because "the world and its enticement are passing away." What will remain? "Whoever does the will of God remains forever" (1 John 2:17 NAB).

Think about that: "Whoever does the will of God remains forever."

Isn't it worth it to keep the water (world) out? •



We cannot have the world in our heart, or our heart in the world.

# LIVINGin

Why so downcast, why all these sighs? Hope in God! I will praise him still, my Savior, my God. –Psalm 42:11 NJB God has a plan for this earth and its inhabitants, a plan that is going steadily forward.

All of us know the feeling of crisis, or just plain, unrelenting stress. At the same time magazines are filled with dark statistics. Televisions broadcast evil. Newspapers are inked with depressing accounts of immorality and injustice. Without God, the horrors of reality are frightening.

Yet for the Christian, the future has never been brighter—and this hope is not blind optimism. It is sure because it is hope in God, our Creator, He who gives every one of us life and breath. God has a plan for this earth and its inhabitants, a plan that is going steadily forward. Our world shall not be forever marred by violence, war, and wanton destruction. Innocent victims will not always suffer under inadequate and mismanaged governments. The wicked will not always prosper. Some day this earth will be filled with the glory of God (Num. 14:21), a righteous people (Isa. 60:21) enjoying the benefits of peace and prosperity world without end (Isa. 32:17–18). This is the hope the Bible offers.

Outside the Bible, hope can be little more than an optimism that trusts feebly that there is something better ahead. Or its hopes are focused on objects which can bring only temporary satisfaction—a career, a business opportunity, marriage, children, money, a new home, a new car, and so on and on.

In contrast, the Bible offers a hope that is sure and certain. This hope consists of an unrelenting confidence in the God who created us and in the Word He has caused to be written to instruct us. This Word tells us we need not live in a constant conflict between hope and doubt, because God is true. The promises He has made will most certainly come to pass. He has given His word: *"But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord"* (Num. 14:21).

The Apostle Paul was standing on this solidly grounded hope when he wrote, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). Paul did not say that this was an idea, or a speculation that maybe—perhaps—if everything works out just right—Christ will return. We have no feeling of anxiety as we read his words, no wavering, no wondering, no idea that perhaps Christ is coming but we are not sure. Paul knew.

That same, rock solid hope is ours today. Christ is coming. Just as surely as He went away He will return. "This same Jesus...shall so come in like manner as ye

### have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

That hope in the returning Christ was the basis the Apostle Paul gave for encouraging others. After describing Christ's return and the hope Christians share in it, he tells his brethren, "Wherefore comfort one another [encourage one another] with these words" (1 Thess. 4:18). Our hope is a patient, confident expectation that Christ is coming just as surely as He went away. He is coming to set up a Kingdom of righteousness and peace which will extend "from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8). He is coming to put down every evil and exalt righteousness, to institute new laws, new government, and a new way of life for everyone on earth. He is coming to fulfill the prayer He taught His disciples to pray: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

Our confidence in this hope is unshakable because it is grounded in the sure Word of the God of heaven, and every aspect of our life is shaped by this sublime promise. For the coming of Christ will mean the opening of opportunity to a new and better existence for everyone who lives.

This confidence, then, becomes a model for our reaction to all God's promises. Every area of our lives is touched by this promise, that *"He that*"

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Your Ship

God built and launched this year for you.

### 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.

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 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 a world where disillusionment overwhelms the depressed inhabitants of a despairing planet, the Christian believer can live in hope.

### continued from page 3

shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37). This hope gives us a confident attachment to the future that even in the midst of trouble fills us with joy.

At the same time, our confidence of hope must be linked to our lives personally. Here is the real ground for hope, because our share in those coming joys depends directly on what we are doing now, on the standard of holiness we are developing in our lives today. Our participating in joys of the future is conditioned on our obedience now. For example, obtaining the right to eat of the tree of life depends on our keeping the commandments of God (Rev. 22:14). Securing an entrance pass to the Eternal City depends on our having in our lives nothing that defiles, because "there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life" (Rev. 21:27). Over and over the little word *"if"* precedes the Divine promise: *"If ye* be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isa. 1:19). "If" we will humble ourselves and obey and seek His face and turn from our wicked ways (2 Chron. 7:14); "if" we will hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord our God (Deut. 28:1). We have the promise of being sons of God, made physically like Christ. This is our hope. But first we must qualify for these privileges. First we must become like Him morally. For "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure" (1 John 3:1-3).

### **Our Personal Hope**

As we progress in the Divine life, as

we become more and more like our Master, the confidence of hope becomes linked to our lives personally. This fact is illustrated vividly in the life of Peter, that impulsive Apostle whose leap from despair to hope is among the most spectacular on record.

After the resurrection of Jesus, Peter had to replace carefully every foundation stone in his wall of hope.

First he had to come to grips with his denial of Christ. Yes, he had failed. But he learned that personal failure is not the death of hope. Peter learned the hard way, especially after his embarrassing boast, *"Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison, and to death"* (Luke 22:33). And only a few hours later, he denied Christ three times (Luke 22:54–62).

Could God forgive such a colossal failure? Could Peter even ask for forgiveness? The answer to both questions is Yes! In just a few days, Peter had learned from Jesus Himself that the door of opportunity for him was still open, that he still had reason to hope.

The lesson: Personal failure need not destroy hope.

Our failures are serious, and God does not mean us to take them lightly. But neither does He want us to park beside them. He wants us to repent, reform, and advance. It is all part of the growth process by which we come to spiritual maturity in Christ Jesus.

A second lesson we can learn from Peter is that circumstances are not permanent. They are simply God's means of training us for something better.

This was true with Peter's trial, and

after the resurrection of Jesus, Peter found a whole new set of circumstances awaiting him. He had been called to go out and preach, defending the very cause for which Jesus had suffered, and which he himself had denied.

But he went out with a broken and a contrite heart, and a heart broken with penitence is a giant step toward hope. It is that *"godly sorrow"* that *"worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of"* (2 Cor. 7:10).

Peter's third lesson was that we are inherently responsible for all we do, and this is sure ground for hope. We are not mere things to which events happen. God has given us the ability to make things happen. This means that we can actually take the steps to make our hope real and certain for us. God in His Word has told us what we must do to have hope, and we are able to do it.

And what must we do? What will make our hope real for us? The Apostle John gives us the answer while reaffirming his own vital hope. We read: "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. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2–3). Notice that "every man that hath this hope in him"—no exceptions—"every man...purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure."

We have hope, living hope because God has given His Word, revealing His plan and His manner of dealing with us. Our circumstances are not a barrier but our means of responding to Him, obeying Him, living according to the laws *continued on page 7* 

# ARE YOU His blearing?

**H**ark! The Great Creator, robed in majesty, Called the Earth to being, all its land and sea; Hark! In countless numbers all the angel throng Hailed the earth's creation with a burst of song.

**B**right the world and glorious, calm both earth and sea, Noble in its grandeur, silent in its peace; Then He made earth's mortals, giving life to all, Offering them salvation, who would heed His call.

Long the nations waited, through the troubled night, Looking, longing, yearning for the promised Light. Prophets saw the morning breaking far away, Minstrels sang the splendor of that opening Day.

**B**rightly dawned the Advent of the new-born King, Joyously the shepherds heard the angels sing. Briefly, for a moment, closed this hallowed life, Then it burst in triumph—ended was the strife.

Lo! Again He cometh, robed in clouds of light, He the Judge eternal, armed with power and might. Nations to His footstool gathered then shall be; Earth shall yield her treasures, and her dead, the sea.

*esus!* Lord and Master, Prophet, Priest, and King, To Thy feet, triumphant, hallowed praise we bring. Thine shall be the Kingdom, Thine the victory; Power, praise, and honor be, O Lord, to Thee! "There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing".

—The Apostle Paul (2 Tim. 4:8)

Very true believer shares the lively expectation of the soon return of Jesus Christ to this earth. He *is* coming! The Word of God is explicit. Before He went away, our Lord promised to come again, and the promise of His coming is repeated again and again in the New Testament.

The apostle Paul went one step further than simple expectation. He said that all true believers will *"love his appearing"* (2 Tim. 4:8). The expression is almost at the end of his last letter to his son-in-the-faith Timothy. Writing about his imminent martyrdom, he said that there awaited him *"a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."* The promise is to all who *love* His appearing. And the word Paul uses is *"agape,"* which is more than a sentimental feeling. It is a love that is a deliberate judgment of the will; a love that will quicken the pulse and energize determination. This love will warm and direct the attitude of all true believers.

Why?

First, we should love His appearing for our own sake. This is the most obvious of all reasons because Christ is coming to bring us our reward. "Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him" (Isa. 40:10). If our work has been well done, what a wonderful day of triumph that will be, for "that is what the Scriptures mean when they say, No eye has seen, no ear has head, and no mind

has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9 NLT).

Jesus' coming will mean the end of all the suffering, pain, disappointment and distress that we experience here. When Jesus comes, we shall be released from the constant watching, the incessant battle with our lower nature and the sins of the flesh which plague us.

Second, we should love His appearing *for His sake*. This may seem strange, but our Lord has yet to reach the apex of His career. The long years of preparation, His mortal career on earth, His years at the Father's right hand, all are training for the work He has yet to do as King of the earth. Today He sits at the right hand of God, *"expecting till his enemies be made his footstool"* (Heb. 10:13). But when He comes, He will enter into His glory as earth's rightful Lord and King. He shall "sit on the throne of His glory" (Matt. 25:31). And He will have dominion "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth...All kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him" (Ps. 72:8-11). Does He not deserve the honor He will receive? Truly, we should love His appearing for the joy, the victory and triumph will bring to Him.

In Revelation we are told of the joy and rejoicing that will accompany the marriage of the Lamb. "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. 19:7-8). Every prospective member of that Bride has reason to rejoice, because the marriage of the Lamb is coming. And can't we imagine Jesus will rejoice also when the marriage takes place? Isn't He even eager for it?

Truly we should love His appearing for His sake.

Third, we should love His appearing for the world's sake. Our world today needs help. No sane person can deny this. These are days of uncertainty and fear, of peril and suffering. People are afraid as never before. People are oppressed. People are mistreated. People are suffering. People are victims of their own ignorance and self-will. People are victims of crime and injustice.

The coming of Christ will correct all this. When He sits on the throne of His glory, nations will "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Mic. 4:3). Why shouldn't we ardently love His appearing!

 ${
m W}$ hat does it mean to love His appearing? Surely it does not mean a mere intellectual belief in the fact of His return. There are many today who claim to believe that Christ is coming, but whose lives show little evidence of the fact.

Do our hearts long for Him? Do we truly love His appearing, not merely expect it?

It is significant that Paul uses the phrase "love his appearing" in connection with the "crown of righteousness" Christ will bring. This crown of righteousness was Paul's real and vibrant expectation. And he was confident that it would be his, because he had "fought a good fight," he had "finished his course." He had "kept the faith." All of this indicates that loving His appearing means more than merely wanting Him to come. We, too, must fight the good fight. We, too, must finish our course. We, too, must be found keeping the faith, because we want the same crown of righteousness Paul had won.

To love His appearing is, as Paul wrote to Timothy, to "devote your attention to the public reading of the scriptures, to exhortation, and to teaching" (1 Tim. 4:13 NEB).

Christ is coming, and His glory will shine in matchless beauty over all the earth. On that coming we have set our hope, wholly and completely. What does that hope do for us? "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). To love His appearing, then, is to be pure, separate, set apart.

If we are constantly reminding ourselves that this day may be the Day, that today our Lord may come, we will not be dabbling in the things that would displease Him. We will keep reminding ourselves that we are His property, and must "set [our] affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2).

And that hope will energize us! We will have zeal and ardor, we will be awake and alive to His interests. Christ is preparing His Church, His body, "one new man," who will rule the world in righteousness. When that new man is complete, Christ will come. And if we love His appearing, we will do all that we can, as long as we can, in any way that we can to hasten that Day.

Some years ago a man who had been through World War II was talking to some people about the war. He told how he rejoiced on coming home. He was sailing up the river toward New York and there on the shore was a huge electric sign which read "Welcome home! Well done!" In that great day of our Lord's appearing, can we even faintly imagine the joy that will fill our hearts as Christ says to every victorious believer, "Welcome home! Well done!"

Will He be able to say "Well done" to us? ◆

## LIVING in Hope continued from page 5

that govern His family. And it is this obedience to God that gives us hope. Rather than being a burden, our circumstances become the means of giving us hope.

Paul shared this same solid confidence in hope. He wrote, "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. 8:24-25).

However dark and hopeless our surroundings, we are living in hope because our confidence is in God, and God will never disappoint us. He has a plan in view, a plan that is as sure of fulfillment as His own existence (Num. 14:21), as sure as the fact that day follows night and spring follows winter (Jer. 33:20, 25; Isa. 61:11).

Let us not look with dismay on the hopelessness that engulfs the world. But rather let us look up to God, and see to it that we are taking the steps that will make our hope sure to us. The humblest circumstance, the severest trial can be a steppingstone to eternity.

This life is brief, only a flash, a breath, a shadow. But we have hope, we have confidence, we can rejoice, because our hope is in God. In spite of our failures, in spite of our circumstances, we are responsible beings with power to purify ourselves even as Christ is pure, and so to become part of that life in Him which is permanent.

We are living in hope, because our hope rests in the Lord God of Eternity! ♦



The 2003 Megiddo Messages will be combined with the issues of 2004 to make one 2003-2004 hard bound volume early in 2005. There will be no single volume

for 2003.



When troubles come into your life...welcome them as friends... -James 1:2-3 Phillips

Let us not reject too hastily the theme of this text. "When all kinds of troubles crowd into your lives, my brothers and sisters, don't resent them as intruders but welcome them as friends. Realize that they come to test your faith, and to produce in you the quality of endurance."

James, the Lord's brother, wrote these words to Christians in the first century when the storms of persecution were breaking everywhere about them. He is not wading in shallow water, but is out in some pretty deep water. As we venture with him there, we will come to fathom the depth of his insight.

Walt Whitman, the American poet, gave the same advice when he wrote, "Make friends of the wind and the rain."

"When difficulties come into your life...welcome them as friends..." Why

## MAKE Friends of the Wind and the Rain by Russell HAMBY

should I welcome them as friends when they interrupt my comfortable existence with pain, anxiety, frustration? Because they can teach me some of the most important lessons of life that I don't seem to be able to learn any other way.

I read somewhere, "Like all men, I love and prefer the sunny uplands of experience, when health, happiness and success abound, but I have learned far more about God and life and myself in the darkness of fear and failure than I have

ever learned in the sunshine." As an old adage puts it: "The same

fire that melts the butter hardens the egg." The clue to the difference is discovered in our text. Instead of resenting difficulty as an intruder, we need to welcome it as a friend. How do we do this? First, by acceptance. Suffering, trouble, difficulty are "facts" of life. They do not go away because we wish them to. Suffering is a universal fact. As a popular song says, "Into each life some rain must fall." But, make friends of the rain; accept it as the reality of your life at this moment. Use it creatively and positively in your life. The winds are blowing. Change the tack of your sail to take full advantage of them.

Acceptance is not resignation. To resign to something as one's fate is passive, even negative. Sometimes a person

will resign to a situation as the will of God for his or her life. God gets blamed for a lot of things with which He has had nothing to do. Although God does not send suffering, He can use it in the fulfillment of His purpose. To welcome suffering as a friend is to begin the healing process. A healthy acceptance is expressed in the statement: "There are no problems in life, only opportunities."

Difficulties are opportunities to develop our capacities for wisdom, joy, and inner strength that would not likely develop otherwise.

What is the benefit? James says further: "Realize that [these difficulties] come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed, and you will find you have become [persons] of mature character."

Suffering has been aptly characterized in the Bible as a winnowing process through which the wheat is separated from the chaff; the false is blown away and the true remains.

Suffering can be our friend, bringing us into the very presence of God. A man who had suffered one failure after another prayed, "God, there is nothing that you and I can't handle together"

We can find benefit in every difficulty when we face it with God. ◆

*t* is not what happens to you, but what you do with what happens that determines your character. EARTH'S GOLDEN AGE: THE MILLENNIUM

NOAH

After the judgments of God have broken the strongholds of sin and reversed the pattern of centuries, the road to progress will be open worldwide.

PATRIARCHS

2000 BC

IUDGES KIN

CAPTIVITY

FARLY CHURCH

ROMAN POWER

CURIST'S KETUR

Gone will be the industries that supported a culture based on lust, selfish pleasure, and pride. Gone the video producers who made money at the expense of decency and morality. (Rev. 18:3–4, Luke 17:26–30)

Gone the movie theaters and all the heroes of Hollywood. Gone the publishers of pornography and all indecent, immoral literature. (1 Cor. 6:9–10; Rev. 21:8)

Gone all the perpetrators of crime, and the organizations that supported them. (Isa. 60:17–18; 11:9)

Gone the war machine that consumed billions of earth's resources. (Ps. 46:9; Isa. 2:4; Mic. 4:3)

Gone the drug producers, pushers, and peddlers, along with all their worldwide money interests. (Rev. 18:9–19)

Gone the industries that catered to human lusts, wanton pleasure, and greed. (1 John 2:15–17)

Gone the power-hungry rulers who found pleasure in the suffering of their fellowmen. (Isa. 32:17–18)

It is a transformation that we today can hardly picture in our most fantastic dreams. But just try to imagine what the presence of Divine power on earth will be able to do when resisters do not have to be pleaded with, or appealed to, or coerced—what a change! The ultimatum will be simply, Desist or die!

As a result, two-thirds will have to be removed (Zech. 13:8). But those who remain will become part of a program that in a few short years will fill the earth with happy, God-fearing, God-honoring people.

### A THOUSAND YEARS

In the allegory in the first of Genesis, after God had completed the work of creation in six days, He saw that His work was *"very good,"* and we read that *"God rested the seventh day."* That seventh day became a pattern of worship, one day out of seven. In the bigger picture, it is a type of God's larger plan: Six days, or six thousand years of work, developing the rulers for the new Kingdom; to be followed by one thousand-year Day of rest, when the new rulers, along with Christ, take over the management of the earth and God is said to "rest."

The writer of Hebrews speaks of this seventh day of rest as it describes God's larger plan. The Israelite nation under Moses were not given a share in it because they did not believe. But, *"there remains…a Sabbathrest for the people of God…let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest so*  PART SIX by Ruth E. Sisson

### Steps Into the Kingdom

- 1. Elijah the Messenger arrives
- 2. Holy Spirit power is restored
- 3. The dead in Christ are resurrected
- 4. Jesus Christ returns
- 5. Jesus Christ chooses His co-rulers (Judgment of covenant makers)
- 6. Jesus Christ is crowned King
- 7. The Millennium begins
- 8. Battle of Armageddon; one third of the earth's population submit to Christ
- 9. Satan is bound (no open manifestation of evil)
- 10. Earth is repopulated and re-trained under new rulership (Christ and Saints)
- 11. Satan is loosed (strict authority is relaxed)
- 12. Second resurrection
- 13. Open rebellion against Christ's government
- 14. Rebellious element is destroyed
- 15. Final judgment of mortals who lived during the Millennium
- 16. Glorified earth is annexed to God's family in heaven and the Eternal Age begins

that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience" (Heb. 4:9–11 NIV).

After God has selected the rulers for His heavenly Kingdom on earth, He is said to "rest" because He turns the project over to these rulers, Christ and His saints (Dan. 7:27). This will be done at the Second Advent of Christ, at the end of the first 6000-year period. During the next phase of the project, the next 1000-year day, the vast multitudes who will compose the populace of the Kingdom will be developed, those who will fill the earth with the glory of the Lord (Num. 14:21; Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14; Rev. 7:9, 11–13). These people will be those who survived God's purifying judgments and their descendants, and their probation day will be the thousand-year period which we are speaking of as the Millennium.

When Christ returns with power and authority to conquer and subdue every form of evil, He will literally turn the tide of history. He will mandate new laws, new standards, and new codes of living worldwide. And He will have authority to enforce these new, righteous laws. The result will be the transforming of a largely godless culture into a worldwide, God-fearing people.

How will this be brought about? The first reaction will be resistance, which we have already talked about, the Battle of Armageddon, a necessary step on the road to a new and better world.

### **TRANSITION**

Can you picture any of our modern cities or states under the rulership of Christ and the saints? Can you picture people accustomed to "doing their own thing," making their own decisions in their own way, suddenly submissive to all the do's and don'ts that the rulership of Christ will impose? There will of necessity be a period of transition.

The second Psalm pictures this period of transition graphically, along with the human emotions that will accompany it.

The chapter opens with the raging of the nations. Raging suggests anger, outrage, disapproval. Why? asks the Psalmist. What is their problem? The problem is that a usurper has arrived, and He must be put down! They do not stop to reason that this usurper bears the authority of the God of Heaven and has come to bring them good. They only know that He wants to tell them what to do, and their instinctive reaction is: Resist! Fight!

For the first time in the history of the planet, all the nations are united against a common foe. We read:

"Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot a vain thing? The kings of the

earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us" (Ps. 2:1–3). They set themselves against the new Ruler and His associates, the newly crowned kings and priests (Rev. 5:9–10), those who served God faithfully during the previous 6000 years. They set themselves against the very ones who could deliver and bless them. They believe that, acting together, they can successfully put down the new authority that has arrived.

Their resistance is a fulfillment of Jesus' own prophecy, given in the parable of the laborers, who say, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14, 27).

But all such resistance is predetermined to fail. If only they could realize that by resisting they are harming themselves!

What is the Lord's reaction to their resistance? "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh" (Ps. 2:4). Who is puny man to challenge the power of Almighty God! As paraphrased in other translations, He "scoffs at them." He "laughs them to scorn." Then He openly "shall speak to them in His wrath,\* and distress them in His deep displeasure" (Ps. 2:5). But Divine authority will be vested in this invading usurper. The next voice is that of God, speaking prophetically of Christ. "I have enthroned My king on Zion My holy mountain... 'You are My son,' He said; 'This day I become your father. Ask of Me what you will: I will give

### \*God Angry?

Why is God said to be angry? Is anger becoming to a God of love and justice? God does not become "angry" as we humans think of anger. He is not moved by any human passion. But His love and justice cannot tolerate evil. He can only make a way for the good by eliminating the evil, those who resist Him. His "anger" refers only to the vengeance of His law. He "executes on them the written judgment" (Ps. 149:5–9). There is no judgment without warning; nothing by surprise; nothing unfair. you nations as your inheritance, the ends of the earth as your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, you shall shatter them like a clay pot" (Ps. 2:6–9 NEB).

Notice who holds the power: the resistance of the powers of earth is as a clay pot against a rod of iron. If only they realized how futile were their efforts!

In the face of such inevitable destruction, the next passage is a solemn warning to the resisters: "Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the Lord with reverence, and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled" (NASB). No other options will be open. It will be literally "obey and live" or "disobey and die." All will be compelled to "do homage," to recognize earth's rightful King. All will be compelled to "Give unto him the glory due his name." Those who refuse will literally "perish in the way." They will be cut off from among the living. "For the nation and kingdom which will not serve You [the God of heaven] shall perish" (Isa. 60:12).

As always there will be blessing for the humble, the penitent, the obedient. Notice the gracious promise to those who seek His favor: *"How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!"* (Ps. 2:12 JB).

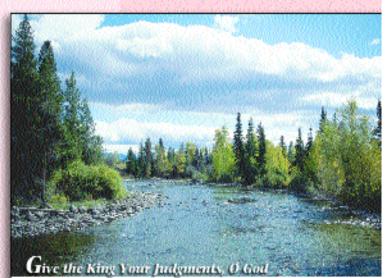
Psalm 72 is a picture of the Millennium after the resistance has been overcome and Jesus Christ is the victorious, loved and honored King.

### New Laws and Justice

One of the first steps in setting up the new government will be the establishing of universal laws. The prophet Micah describes this step: "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Mic. 4:1–2).

The new laws will be strictly enforced for the good of everyone. The Book of Revelation describes the government as rulership with "*a rod of iron*" (Rev. 2:26–27). The rod of iron is a symbol of law firmly enforced for the good of everyone.

The book of Revelation uses another symbol to describe the control of evil by firmly enforced law. During the Millennium, sin, typified by the term "devil" (*diabolos*, meaning adversary, i.e., sin and all sinners) will be *"bound,"* i.e., under strict control. For the first time in the history of the earth, universal law will be immediately enforced. No law breaker will be able to get away with any crime, because law enforcement agents will be everywhere all the time, and will have power even to read the mind of the willfully disobedient. Jesus had this power when He was on



And Your righteousness to the king's Son. He will judge Your people with righteousness, And Your poor with justice. The mountains will bring peace to the people, And the little hills, by righteousness. He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, And will break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear You As long as the sun and moon endure, Throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the grass before mowing, Like showers that water the earth. In His days the righteous shall flourish, And abundance of peace, Until the moon is no more. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth. Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; All nations shall serve Him... His name shall endure forever; His name shall continue as long as the sun. And men shall be blessed in Him; All nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, Who only does wondrous things! And blessed be His glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen. -excerpts from Psalm 72

earth. He "had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man" (John 2:25). The apostle Peter had the same power when he pronounced judgment on Ananias and later on his wife Sapphira. They had sinned, and though they tried to cover it with a lie, they could not escape Divine justice. Even though they had not confessed and Peter did not have the testimony of witnesses, he could render a just verdict, saying: "Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God" (Acts 5:1–7).

Imagine how different our world today would be if the criminal died in his tracks, stricken by an unseen angel of God! Suppose the police officer on the street could

read the mind of his suspect, and also had power to execute an immediate penalty! What if every bank robber dropped over dead the instant he laid hands on the bag of money he had demanded of the cashier? What if every person who told a lie immediately lost the ability to speak? This is what the prophet meant when he said, *"When Your judg-*

To visualize the Millennium, think about what will *not* be there that is so common to our world today:

ments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9). They will learn—speedily.

This type of justice will be reality in the Millennium. No open evil will go unpunished. The Divinely appointed officers, able to read the mind of the violator, will administer punishment instantly, in this way eliminating the need for the law enforcement officers, courts and juries. The result: *"Violence will disappear from your land; the desolation and destruction of war will end. Salvation will surround you like city walls, and praise will be on the lips of all who enter there...Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain. And as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the Lord" (Isa. 60:18; 11:9 NLT).* 

This is how the prediction of Micah will come true: *"Everyone shall sit under his vine and under* 

*his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken"* (Micah 4:4). Everyone everywhere will be absolutely safe!

### No PROFITEERING

he Babylonian economy, along with all Babylonian teaching and thinking, will be gone (Rev. 18:1–4). Gambling will be gone, along with all alcohol interests, tobacco interests, and drugs both legal and illegal. The entertainment industry will be gone, along with all the promiscuous publishing, and pornography, and the corrupt video industry. All child profiteering will be gone and the illegal ways people use to make money. There will be nothing *"to hurt or to destroy"* (Isa. 11:9).

### New Educational System

One of the first steps toward the making of the new world will be education. The

survivors will have to be taught in the ways of God, both for their own good and the good of their offspring. Like those who served God faithfully during the previous 6000 years, they will have to be disciplined and proven, for God will have only proven character in His eternal Kingdom.

A worldwide program of education will be initiated for the development of the vast and burgeoning populace. Everyone everywhere must *"learn righteousness,"* i.e., understand it, apply it, and teach it to their children. Everywhere in the world, new "rules" will be published. Morality by God's standard—will be taught, and the law will be enforced. No lying, no cheating, no devious conduct, no low morals will be tolerated, for *"all dominions shall serve and obey him"* (Dan. 7:27).

Who will be the teachers in this vast program of education? Let us read from Isaiah chapter 66: *"For I know their works and their thoughts. It shall* 



### No FALSE RELIGIONS

loday anybody can teach anything and find someone to listen. During the millennium, no false teaching will be allowed. Only the true Gospel will be promoted, and anyone who disagrees will be forced to comply or die. Today there are devil religions, and spirit religions, and numerous cults that have no God, no future and no basis. All will be gone during the Millennium. On the contrary, "they shall teach no more every man...his brother...saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me from the least of them unto the greatest of them" (Jer. 31:34).

be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory. I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations: to Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles" (Isa. 66:18–19). The earliest to learn and accept the policies of the new administration may serve as missionaries to the rest. As people submit to the new authority, they will be spared and given new assignments. "People from nations and cities around the world will travel to Jerusalem. The people of

one city will say to the people in another, 'Let us go to Jerusalem to ask the Lord to bless us and to seek the Lord Almighty. We are planning to go ourselves.' People from

*many nations, even powerful nations, will come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord Almighty and to ask the Lord to bless them"* (Zech. 8:20–22 NLT).

Can you picture people from all nations coming to Jerusalem to learn of the one true God and His ways?

### EARTH'S GOLDEN AGE OF PROGRESS

Can you imagine the ideal state where there is nothing to fear and every family is happy, everybody has enough of what they need, everyone has equal opportunity for a good edu-

cation and a good life? This is what the Millennium will offer worldwide, when everyone who lives is serving God and working for the good of all. It will be indeed earth's golden age!

A thousand years sounds like a long time in our scale of thinking. Compared with our lifetime, it is. Think about having lived back in the year 1004 instead of now in

2004—how different our lives would be! We would not have electric lights. We would not have automobiles, or furnaces, or air conditioners. We wouldn't have many of the common things we use every day—like running water, telephones, computers. If we think about how far progress has come in the last thousand years, can we imagine how fast it will advance during the next thousand years after Christ and His saints take over the government of the earth and there is no more need to spend earth's energies and resources for defense, or war, or crime control or prevention? There will be no need for doctors, nurses, pharmaceuticals or any of the medical

profession, because "the inhabitant will not say, I am sick" (Isa. 33:24).

There will be no need for the legal profession—no lawyers or paralegals, no courts, or judges. Justice and the administration of justice will be in the hands of those who know instantly and unerringly who is innocent and who is guilty without trial or jury, so there will be no need for costly trials or time-consuming investigations. The

Department of Police, the FBI, and all secret service agents will be out of business. Can we imagine how many resources will be available for the beautifying of the earth, for meeting the needs of its burgeoning populace, when there is no evil to punish or restrain? Every part of life will be better for all who live!

The 20th century saw progress unrivaled in the history of our planet. But there was also more wanton destruction, more suffering, more loss of life than in any century previous. Try to imagine a world without hate, a world without war, with no open rebellion, no agitators, no obstacles to progress. This will be part of earth's Golden Age, the Millennial reign of Christ.

We can hardly imagine the change, yet all this is within the plan of God. Angels will be directing, using earth's resources to bring about a new world that the Lord has planned, the kind of world He wanted from the beginning. It could have happened under human direction, if men and women had been willing to cooperate with God and had obeyed His laws. But they were not, and during the Millennium, the enforce-



At the present time many people are persecuted in various parts of the world because others disagree with them. There is also ethnic fighting, waste, and needless suffering and destruction. All will be gone, and everyone will enjoy health and prosperity (Isa. 32:17, 18).



### No OPPRESSION/MISMANAGEMENT

At the present time many people are oppressed by cruel governments, or those who misappropriate resources. There would be plenty of food for everyone on earth if it could be rightly divided. But this will not happen until the present administrators are removed and righteous authorities take their place (lsa. 60:17, 18).



continued on page 25

### No SICKNESS OR SUFFERING

During the Millennium there will not be any suffering. No one will be sick, no one will need the services of hospitals, or doctors, or medical insurance. Just think of the resources this alone will open up for education and progress! just because there will be no more sickness (Isa. 33:24). Every one who lives will enjoy perfect health!

### Lesson Seventeen THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### Bible Text: Acts 14:1-3 NKJV

1 Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed.

2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren.

3 Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.



### From the Word **"To the Jew First"**

When Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch, they made a definite decision: *"We turn to the Gentiles"* (Acts 13:46). Nevertheless, they continued to go *"to the Jew first and also to the Greek"* (Rom. 1:16).

When Paul and Barnabas reached Iconium (14:1), they went directly to the local synagogue. Why? It was customary for the synagogue ruler to invite visiting rabbis and teachers to be guest speakers. There they could easily get an audience. Also, the synagogues had the scrolls of the Law and Prophets, which were read at each service. Also, they had regular times for meetings, which provided Paul with a ready-made audience. And many times both Jews and Gentiles attended, which must have been the case when Paul spoke at Iconium, because "A great multitude believed, both of Jews and of Greeks" (14:1). The Gentiles attending were likely proselytes to Judaism, or perhaps those who were interested in becoming proselytes.

by RUTH E. SISSON

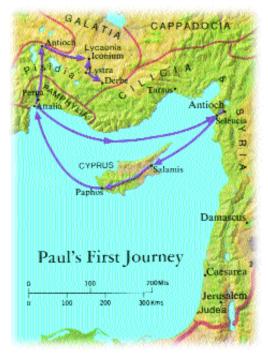
## CONFLICT AND CONTENTION (CONTINUED)

### Jew or Gentile?

READ ACTS 14:1–7

As Paul and Barnabas left Antioch behind and headed for Iconium, let's imagine what they might have been talking about. The issue of Jew versus Gentile had enormous implications. How would it affect serious, superior-feeling Jews? How would Christian Jews treat brother Gentiles? Would over zealous Jews succeed in discouraging or at least silencing Gentile believers?

What could be done to keep new Gentile believers encouraged? Even though the majority of the believers-and they themselves-were Jews, both missionaries knew that God was calling individuals, not a nation. No one would be excluded because of nationality (Acts 10:34-35). Were they using the right approach in their missionary efforts? Jesus had told Paul clearly that he was to be a voice to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15), and both Paul and Barnabas had affirmed at Antioch that by rejecting the apostles the Jews were closing the door against themselves. This fact made Paul say, "Since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46).



MEGIDDO MESSAGE JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2004

(below) Mountains near Pisidian Antioch (present day city of Konya, Turkey)



(above) Recent excavations underneath the Church of St. Peter have revealed a first century building which has been identified as a synagogue. This supports the site's authenticity as the place Paul preached (Acts 13).

ICONIUM

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TODD BOLEN IN ISRAEL

But how far should they take this? If they avoided the synagogues altogether, they were avoiding the easiest and most logical place to find a captive audience, both Jew and Gentile.

Paul and Barnabas must have agreed to continue their policy of, *"to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile,"* because when they reached Iconium, *"They went both together into the synagogue of the Jews."* Success!

A great number of both Jews and Gentiles believed.

Then, almost immediately, the contention began again, as *"unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles"* against Paul and Barnabas. The old prejudice, fed by religious hatred, was strong, and the missionaries could expect to encounter it wherever they went.

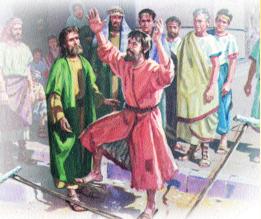
- 1. Where did Paul and Barnabas go in Iconium to preach the Gospel?
  - (14:1)

What was the result of their preaching? (14:1)\_\_\_\_\_

- 2. What was the immediate source of opposition? (14:2) \_\_\_\_
- 3. How did Paul and Barnabas confirm the truthfulness of the words they spoke? (14:3)
- 4. When Jewish and Gentile opponents, along with their rulers, attempted to stone Paul and Barnabas, what did they do? (14:5–6) \_\_\_\_\_\_

For Paul and Barnabas to have stayed stubbornly at Iconium just to prove their courage, would not have been wise. There is a time to escape from danger. Think also of the effect that an uprising against Paul and Barnabas might have had on the new believers. Hard as it was to leave the new converts alone in the infant stage, it was wiser to move on.

And so they headed eastward down the Roman road toward Lystra, a distance of 30 or 40 miles.



Lame man is healed by Barnabas and Paul at Lystra



### Confirming the Message

"The Lord proved their message was true by giving them power to do miraculous signs and wonders" (14:3 NLT).

Wouldn't we like to be able to confirm that our message is from God by performing a great miracle? This was a privilege that Paul and Barnabas had, that we are denied.

The best way that we can convince others of our message is to live by it, to show them that putting it into everyday life really works, that it makes us better parents, better teachers, better workers, better husbands and wives, better children, better neighbors—even better as individuals.

It is our job to show that the Gospel of Christ makes a difference—a great difference—in our lives.

> (*left*) Inscription found in present day city of Konya, bearing the name of biblical ICONIUM.

Did you know...

Paul, an Apostle...to the Churches of Galatia

When Paul wrote the book of Galatians, it is very likely that he was addressing the Churches in Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, churches that he set up on his first missionary journey. These Churches apparently had a mixture of Jewish and Gentile members, and those of Jewish background found it very difficult not to impose their Jewish laws on the Gentile believers. Paul explained carefully in his letter to these Churches that in Christ we are free from the bondage of Moses' law, its rites and its ceremonies. But does that mean we are free from all laws. We are only free as we obey God's laws and war against our sinful nature. "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish" (Gal. 5:17).

God does not care whether one is a full-blooded Jew or a Gentile. He is looking for a *"faith working through love"* (Gal. 5:6). He is looking for the life that will produce the *"fruit of the Spirit,"* which is *"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control"* (Gal. 5:22–23).

### Insight **The Apostles Protest!**

When the people of Lystra called Barnabas and Paul "gods," and gave them the names of Zeus and Hermes, and started worshiping them, the Apostles protested! We read that they "tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out...'Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you'" (14:14-15). True teachers of God never accept worship in the place if god. Even angels do not accept worship. When the Apostle John met the angel, and fell down to worship him, the angel said, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God" (Rev. 22:8-9).

Notice also Paul's text, as he addressed a non-Jewish audience. Instead of speaking of God as "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," Paul spoke of God as "The Living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them,...[who] gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (14:15-17). These were facts that anyone could identify with. They did not have to be Jewish to understand God the Giver of life, God the Great Provider.

### Bible Text:Acts 14:4-13 NKJV

4 But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

5 And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them.

6 they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding reaion.

7 And they were preaching the gospel there.

8 And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked.

9 This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed.

10 said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked.

11 Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"

12 And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.

13 Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes.

### **Trouble at Lystra**

READ ACTS 14:8–20

Reaching Lystra, Paul again started to preach. He might have been thrown out of Antioch and chased from Iconium, but he was still preaching the Gospel. In fact, he said, "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16). He might be mocked, and scourged, and shipwrecked, and beaten. But he could not be silenced. Paul was a man of duty. Christ had called him to be an ambassador. Christ had given him a message to proclaim, and he would proclaim it. Fearlessly.

As Paul preached at Lystra, he noticed in his audience an eager listener, a crippled man who had never walked.

- 5. When Paul told the crippled man to stand up on his feet, what happened? (14:8–10)
- Why was this cripple an excellent candidate 6. for healing? (14:8)



(above) Near the gates of the city of Lystra a temple to Zeus has been found, which explains the excitement of the citizens to hail Barnabas as Zeus (Acts 14:11-13). Also unearthed here are third century AD inscriptions mentioning priests of Zeus and a statue of Hermes dedicated to Zeus.

7. What was the reaction of the people to Paul's healing of the cripple?

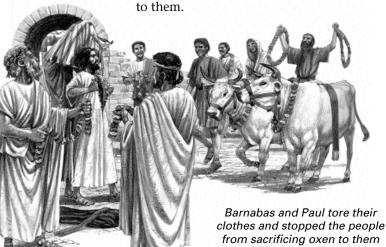
### (14:11)

The people were overjoyed to see the healing. Instantly the crippled man leaped to his feet in response to Paul's command and for the first time in his life began to jump around and walk-without even having learned how! Do we wonder that the people were impressed?



garlands as used in the worship of Zeus

But the reaction of the people shows that their thinking was on the earthly level. They did not know the true God, and could not give Him the credit for the miracle. Accustomed to thinking that their gods were capable of such miracles, they immediately wanted to deify the missionaries. So they named Paul "Zeus" and Barnabas "Hermes" and proceeded to prepare sacrifices to offer



- 8. Why do you think the people of the town named Paul and Barnabas after their gods? (14:11–12)\_\_\_\_\_
- 9. When the people started bringing sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas, how did the apostles react? (14:13–14) \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. How would you compare the apostles' attitude toward this sort of treatment with the attitude of king Herod? (Acts 12:23)

It is not likely that Paul and Barnabas understood much about the action of the crowd because in their excitement the people were using their native tongue, shouting, *"The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"* (14:11). But when the missionaries realized what was happening, they were horror stricken, and tore their robes—this was a Jewish way of expressing horror—at the attempted homage and worship.

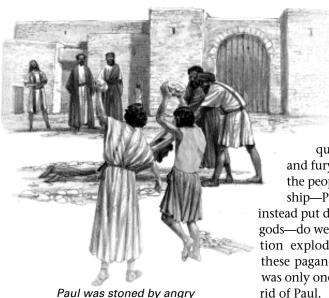
Paul saw his opportunity to speak, and right here we have recorded a minisermon that Paul addressed to a people who had no knowledge of the true God. What did the great Apostle say? He made several strong points.

a. "We are men like you"—we are all human, none worthy of worship above any other. James made a similar statement about the Prophet Elijah, who stood head and shoulders above his contemporaries, yet was a "man of like passions" with believers in any age. His point is that, unlike God our Creator, who is above all human tendencies, we all have the same human nature to work against.

b. Paul exposed the idolatry of the pagan culture—he confronted it head on, describing it as utterly vain, empty, worthless.

c. Paul pointed out the mercy of the God of heaven, "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways"—when He could have immediately judged and destroyed them. The inference is that God is being merciful to the very pagans Paul is addressing, these people who distort or deny Him and His message by worshiping idols, by allowing them to continue in their folly and sin without consequences.

d. All nature witnesses to God's goodness, a goodness which even this very pagan audience could understand. They have food to eat, and rain on their crops—because God sends it.



Paul was stoned by angry pagans at Lystra

Paul would likely have gone further if he could have, but *"certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium"* entered the picture, and everything changed—for the worse. Resentment

quickly turned to hatred and fury. The very men whom the people had wanted to worship—Paul and Barnabas—had instead put down and mocked their gods—do we wonder that the situation exploded? In the minds of these pagan-minded people, there was only one right thing to do: Get

### 🔏 A closer look

### Was Paul Dead?

When the Jews stoned Paul "dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead," and the next day he "rose up and went into the city," do we assume that he was dead and God performed a resurrection?

We are not told. But the text does read that they "supposed" him to be dead, which might infer that he was not dead. However, to be near death, and to be able to rise up the next day and resume a journey over mountains and rugged terrain, are we out of place thinking that God may have provided Divine assistance?

When Paul recounts his tribulations to the Corinthians, he says among other things, *"Once was I stoned"* (2 Cor. 11:25). That *"once"* was at Lystra.

"And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe." Do we wonder why someone has called Paul "unstoppable"?

It is possible that young Timothy was among the *"disciples"* who gathered around the bruised body of Paul, who sent prayers to heaven on his behalf that he might be restored to them. It is also possible that Timothy made his decision at this time, that Paul's God would be his God. He may have even started planning to be Paul's helper as soon as he was old enough and giving his own life for the Gospel—like Brother Paul was doing.



Have you ever noticed how short-lived is human favor? Today's hero may be forgotten—and even doomed—before the sun sets.

It happened to Paul and Barnabas. Only a few hours, and the same people who had been trying to worship them as gods were throwing stones to kill Paul.

#### Bible Text: Acts 14:14–15 NKJV

14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out

15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them,..."

### A closer look

"Continue in the Faith" (Acts 14:22) When Paul and Barnabas had reached their furthermost point, "they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch." What was their message to these new disciples? That they must "continue in the faith." They were not immediately guaranteed salvation. They had to "continue," and learn that "we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

Paul and Barnabas were not teaching an easy way. They were teaching a way of total consecration, all-out commitment, the Kingdom of God by the road of tribulation. He didn't encourage them to expect a smoothly paved highway. There would be persecution, there would be danger, there would be sacrifice. Old friends might haunt them, their employers might reject them, their families might turn against them. They had to be ready for opposition. They needed loads of encouragement.

And Paul was ready to give it. He said *"Many tribulations"* line the road to the Kingdom. But he also assured them that it would be worth it.



#### In Spite of the Danger

Imagine Paul and Barnabas returning to the very cities where they had recently been threatened and attacked! They were fully aware of the danger, yet they believed they had a responsibility to the new believers that was more important than their own safety.

These noble men of God knew the meaning of Jesus' words: *"I have not come to be ministered unto, but to minister."* Others came first. They were not living for comfort and convenience. They were living to fulfill their duty to God. The cost to themselves was nothing in comparison with the rewards of commitment. Derbe "tell" (unexcavated raised mound) viewed from the east.

(right) This inscription, telling of a dedication by the council and people of Derbe, has identified the location of Derbe. It was found about 30 miles from Lystra.

- 11. What God were Paul and Barnabas preaching? What did they say He had done for people in times past? (14:16–17)
- 12. What changed the minds of the people from worship to anger? (14:19) \_\_\_\_\_
- 13. What drastic turn did the people take and what did they do? (14:19)\_\_\_\_

Before nightfall, they had done the worst that they could design. They had stoned Paul, had dragged him outside of the city, and then departed, leaving Paul for dead.

We learn that there were some newly converted believers in the town because a group of them encircled Paul, likely hoping to guard his body from further desecration.

What is the next fact we are told? Paul was on his feet, and back in the city! If the next sentence told us that Paul was headed for home, we could easily believe it. If any of us had been there, we would likely have had enough—maybe even before Lystra!

14. Who came to the side of Paul after he had been dragged out of the city

for dead? (14:20)

15. Toward what city did Paul and Barnabas go the next day? (14:20)

Whether this was a resurrection, or whether he appeared to be dead when he was not, we are not told.

In either case, God was with his chosen one. The missionary may have been knocked *down*, but he was not *out*! He was thinking already of the next city down the road—Derbe. "That's where we need to go next," he said to Barnabas.

Derbe lay some eighty miles to the east.

The record in Acts gives us only two short lines



DERBE

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about the preaching in Derbe—that they preached the Gospel to the city and *"made many disciples."* Not much information, but it is enough to tell us it was worth the effort, the courage, and the perseverance that it cost Paul and Barnabas.

Then what?

### "Safety First"—or Second?

### READ ACTS 14:21–28

What was foremost in Paul's mind as he traveled on? When they had been mistreated so terribly in the cities of Galatia, wouldn't we expect the missionaries to make their way to the coast and take the first ship that sailed toward home? Why risk anything more on such hot heads? It wouldn't be long before they wouldn't have anything with which to help the brethren back home!

Isn't there a saying, "Better safe than sorry"? That saying didn't originate with the Apostle Paul! Not that safety is to be discounted, but Paul's mission was to do the work of Christ, whatever the cost. As he said later when told that "chains and tribulations" were ahead for him, "my life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:24 NLT). The risk was nothing compared with the reward of having Christ's approval and commendation. In serving without reserve he was not being reckless but fully dedicated. The most important task on his mind was to be that "apostle to the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:13), doing the tasks to which Christ had called him, whatever the danger, whatever the suffering.

So for Paul it was safety second, and Christ's work first.

This meant heading back to the very towns where they had been persecuted.

16. What decision did they make after preaching in Derbe? Why do you

think they made this decision? (14:21-22)

17. How did Paul and Barnabas try to strengthen and encourage the new

disciples in these towns? (14:22–23)

Paul was a true shepherd. He was not interested only in converting disciples. The believers in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch needed strengthening and encouraging. In each city they had left new believers without any guidance or directions as to how to carry on. These fledgling Churches needed to be showed how to survive. They needed instruction in how to organize themselves, and how to select leaders and teachers, so they could function and grow in their new faith.

Paul was a true shepherd. He was not interested only in converting disciples. The believers in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch needed strengthening and encouraging.

Paul knew that he would not be back for some time, and he wanted the young Churches prepared to carry on.

They also needed to be warned that it would not be easy. To be committed to Christ in a godless culture where the heads of state opposed Christ was to invite persecution, opposition, ostracism, even death. One thing they should always remember, and that was the reason for the tribulation, that it is to *"enter the Kingdom of God."* Nothing less would make the suffering worth it—for them, or for us.

As the missionaries said good bye to each new group of believers, Paul prayed with them and *"committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed."* 

18. Where was the last place they preached before sailing for "home"?

 $(14:25)_{-}$ 

- 19. In what city was the "home" Church? (14:26)
- 20. Describe the "welcome home" meeting. (14:27–28)\_\_\_\_\_

Bible Text: Acts 14:19-28 NKJV

19 Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

20 However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,

22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

23 So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

24 And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

25 Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

26 From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed.

27 Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

28 So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.



When Paul and Barnabas "strengthened the souls of the disciples," do we picture a comfortable living room with everyone sitting in a circle, each with a black leather Bible on his lap, a pencil in hand, and a notepad, in a brightly lighted room?

Remember that at this time there were no Bibles as we have them today. Even Paul and Barnabas didn't carry the Scriptures with them—except as they carried them in their minds. There were hand-lettered scrolls, but these were kept at the synagogues. They taught others from what they had memorized, and they encouraged others to memorize from each other. That is why Moses said concerning the Law, *"These words...shall be in your heart"* (Deut. 6:6).

Lacking our modern means of note taking and reading, these new believers had to pay close attention to their teachers.

to be continued

### T

Le entries we have made on the credit and debit sheet for our life will determine where we will stand in the Day of Judgment.

I recently had a wake up call: If I want a favorable verdict from the Lord's judgment of my record, I must use every moment possible for that purpose.

I began to look at all the timepieces that are in our house. It is something I never paid much attention to, but would you believe that I see a clock in just about every room, including the garage and also the basement? And of course each one is set in the most conspicuous place so that it can be seen from every corner of the room. In addition, there are clocks in the oven, the water meter, the stove, car, radio, safety alarm, exercise machines, computer, and the telephone answering machine. Then there are the wrist watches.

Now wouldn't you think that this quantity of time-keeping devices should be sufficient to keep a person conscious of making the right use of the time, all day, every day? Shouldn't they be sufficient to keep one right up to date on the time measurement of each day? But this is not the case with me. I sometimes find myself looking for a clock to tell me the time.

What is wrong here? The problem is that I have seen these clocks so many times that they no longer communicate any message to me. I have become accustomed to not noticing them. This means that my daily priorities are not ordered by the passing of time, and instead of a well- planned life, my life has become a process of leaving many important things undone.

Our priorities should always begin

by Edward Shayler

with God. And if every moment of the day is committed to Him, then no matter how difficult our situation becomes we can always find peace.

I can remember some moments when I didn't manage my time well. One was when I ignored the alarm clock's announcement of the *Get Up* message. The result was, I owed my employer something.

Living without an awareness of time is dangerous if we want peace of mind, and nothing much will happen until we find and fix the cause. The first requirement is to become willing. And when we do, we will soon find wasted time is the main cause of discontent. The first priority is to find out what God wants us to do, and then work hard with all our determination. "If ye be willing and obedient," said the Prophet (Isa. 1:19). If we are, then soon we will find a new peace, and this will cause us to want more of it. And if we persevere, it won't be long before we will have in our possession a future beyond our most brilliant comprehension. Then, every time we see a clock it will remind us that it is time to be pressing, pressing "toward the

Nothing you can reach is as far away as a minute ago.

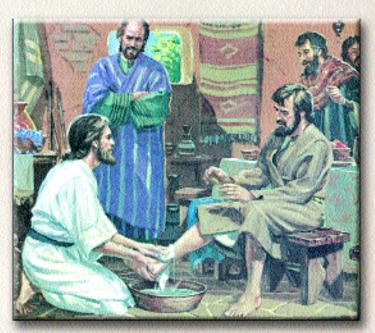
*mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 3:13–14).

Pressing for *"the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"*! What a wonderful result that little time-reminder can produce! ◆

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It is impossible to live in the past. Work at living in the present.





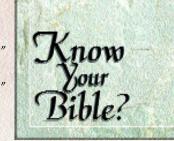
### WASHING AND WATER

- 1. Who found a baby in the river?
- 2. Who washed his face after an emotional meeting with his young brother?
- 3. Which governor washed his hands before a crowd to prevent a riot?
- 4. Who had to wash their hands and feet in a wash basin at the entrance to the tabernacle whenever they neared the altar?
- 5. Who invited two angels to spend the night at his house and washed their feet?
- 6. Who, before starting a journey to Bethel with his family, had them destroy their idols, bathe, and put on fresh clothing?
- 7. Who gave a traveling servant and the men accompanying him water to wash their feet?
- 8. Who was told to wash seven times in the Jordan river and he would be healed of his leprosy?
- 9. Who mentioned washing with snow?
- 10. Who instructed a blind man to go and wash in the pool at Siloam, which resulted in the man regaining his sight?

### NEW TESTAMENT SAYINGS New Testament Sayings 1. "Pray without ceasing \_\_\_\_\_."

- 2. "With good will doing service, as to the \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_."
- 3. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall \_\_\_\_\_ ."

4. "\_\_\_\_\_ the temple of God."



- 5. "We have \_\_\_\_\_\_ in earthen vessels."
- 6. "Fight the good fight of of faith, \_\_\_\_\_."
- 7. "Follow peace with all men \_\_\_\_\_."
- 8. *"Bodily exercise profits a little but*
- 9. Fathers should train their children " ."
- 10. "See that none render evil \_\_\_\_\_\_."
- 11. "Great is the mystery of \_\_\_\_\_."
- 12. "A little leaven \_\_\_\_\_
- 13. "We are made partakers of Christ, if \_\_\_\_\_."
- 14. "For whom the Lord loveth he \_\_\_\_\_."
- 15. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and \_\_\_\_\_."

### FILL IN THE BLANKS (from NKJV)

- 1. [The prosperity of the wicked was too painful] until I went into the \_\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_; Then I understood their end.
- 2. I am the Lord your God, Who brought you out of the land of \_\_\_\_\_; Open your \_\_\_\_\_\_ and I will it.
- 3. *There remains therefore a \_\_\_\_\_\_ for the\_\_\_\_\_\_ of God.*
- 4. At \_\_\_\_\_\_ I will rise to give \_\_\_\_\_\_ to You,
- Because of your\_\_\_\_\_. 5. Apply your \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, and your \_\_\_\_\_ to words of knowledge.
- 6. Now the purpose of the commandment is \_\_\_\_\_\_ from a pure \_\_\_\_\_, from a good \_\_\_\_\_\_ and from sincere \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS**

#### WASHING AND WATER

- 1. Pharaoh's daughter (Ex. 2:5-6)
- 2. Joseph (Gen. 43:29–31)
- 3. Pilate (Matt. 27:24)
- 4. Aaron and his sons (Ex. 40:30–32)
- 5. Lot (Gen. 19:1–2)
- 6. Jacob (Gen. 35:1–3)
- 7. Laban (Gen. 24:29–32)
- 8. Naaman (2 Kings 5:9–14)
- 9. Job (Job 9:1, 30)
- 10. Jesus (John 9:1, 7-11)

### **NEW TESTAMENT SAYINGS**

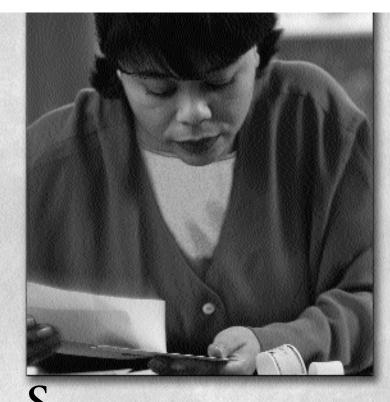
- 1. "In everything give thanks" (1 Thess. 5:17–18)
- 2. "Lord, ...not to men." (Eph. 6:7)
- 3. "not fulfill the lust of the flesh." (Gal. 5:16)
- 4. "Ye are the temple of God" (1 Cor. 3:16)
- 5. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." (2 Cor. 4:7)
- 6. "lay hold on eternal life," (1 Tim. 6:12)
- 7. "and holiness, without which no man shall see the
  - Lord." (Heb. 12:14)
- 8. *"godliness is profitable for all things, having promise* of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. 4:8)
- 9. "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4)
- 10. "for evil unto any man" (1 Thess. 5:15)
- 11. "godliness." (1 Tim. 3:16)

- 12. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." (Gal. 5:9)
- 13. "we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." (Heb. 3:14)
- 14. "chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (Heb. 12:6)
- 15. "be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Gal. 5:1)

### FILL IN THE BLANKS

- 1. "sanctuary," "God" (Ps. 73:17) 2. "Egypt", "mouth wide", "fill" (Ps. 81:10) 3. "rest", "people" (Heb. 4:9)
- 4. "midnight", "thanks", "righteous judgments" (Ps. 119:62)
- "heart", "instruction", "ears" (Prov. 23:12)
   "love", "heart", "conscience", "faith" (1Tim. 1:5)

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Damantha just makes my blood boil! She goes out of her way to be disagreeable. It's a fact, and I'm not the only one who feels this way. I know a lot of people who have tried—unsuccessfully—to get along with her.

At lunch time I try to forget her, or pretend she isn't there. But she is.

When we are at our desks, I close my ears to her words, but they still find their way in and grind me to the bone.

I even find myself thinking about her when she isn't anywhere around. Push such thoughts into the background and forget them? Impossible!

This is the way it used to be, until one day I happened upon this verse in Psalms. *"The Lord is for me, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"* (Ps. 118:6 NLT). I found myself repeating those last words over and over again. *"What can mere mortals do to me?"* Yet, Samantha was surely doing something to me.

Or was she? The more I thought about it, the more I realized Samantha wasn't doing anything to hurt me—I was hurting myself by the way I was reacting to her. Isn't that really what you are saying when you describe how someone else affects you? When you think somebody is a "pain in the neck," whose neck hurts? Or when someone gets "under your skin," whose skin is affected? Maybe someone makes you turn green with envy, or red with anger—who suffers the color change? Somebody makes your blood boil—whose misery is it? In all cases, the person who causes the trouble is not affected; it is the one who allows himself to be affected who suffers. We *harm ourselves*.

Am I saying that I was to blame for my trouble with Samantha? That's right! I was allowing *her* to determine *my* feelings. I was allowing *her* to upset *my* peace of mind.

Samantha has an attitude. She may not choose to control her peppery tongue and sour disposition. But my disturbed feelings are my problem.

There is a Bible verse which says all this: "Great peace have



those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble" (Ps. 119:165).

Nothing? That's right. Nothing. No matter what other people do to me, nothing need offend me. I hold the controls.

If the Samanthas in your life are difficult, that doesn't have to disturb *your* peace of mind. Not in the least. It's a fact. If your mind is stayed on God, nothing and no one can disturb your inner peace.

I'm talking to myself, but maybe I've said something that will help you sometime—if you should ever encounter a Samantha.

What sense does it make to go through life hurting yourself?  $\blacklozenge$ 

Little Things

Which may fall to my lot; Those little inconspicuous ones By others oft forgot.

A staff for age to lean upon, Strong hands to help the weak; A loving heart with open door To all who solace seek.

*L*o hold my tongue when hot words rise, Speak kindly ones instead; Nor harshly judge my fellow men In what they've done or said.

*L*o share another's heavy load By word of courage given; To help a fallen brother rise And look to God in Heaven.

*I* know not when the day shall cease, But when life's curfew rings, I want my Lord to find me then Still doing little things.

-Selected

# Are You Orejudiced?

**B***ut the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."* -1 Sam. 16:7 NIV

hris shuffled slowly toward home, his thoughts and feelings a jumble. Now he knew why he couldn't make friends in the new school. They thought him retarded.

Mother greeted Chris cheerily as he entered the kitchen.

"How was school today, son?"



"I wish I could run away and never show my face in school again," answered Chris emphatically.

"Why, Chris! Whatever happened?" Mother responded in surprise.

"They think I'm retarded," Chris blurted out.

"Retarded? You're sure they're not teasing?"

"Absolutely sure. I heard it

with my own ears." Chris went on to explain. "You know the history test I studied so hard for? Well, I got 105 on it. Mr. Dexter complimented me for my good grade and then read my report to the class. At first I was happy, but then I felt something was wrong—the whole class seemed to be staring at me. I heard Tracy whisper to somebody, 'Isn't Chris supposed to be retarded?' I felt like dropping through the floor!"

There was silence for a moment. Mother spoke first.

"Thank God, Chris, you have an excellent mind, but I know how you must feel."

"Why did I have to inherit your eye problem?" Chris said bitterly.

"I'm sorry, Chris, that you did. I, too, was teased about my thick glasses and at first it really hurt. But I had to have glasses to be able to see, so I made up my mind to concentrate on being thankful for them instead of being hurt. You know, what people think isn't nearly as important as what *God* thinks. He doesn't care how we look on the outside—He's looking for a good and honest heart. Chris, anywhere you live you will meet people with prejudices."

"What are they?" asked Chris.

"Prejudices are opinions people form before they learn the facts. Often it is a dislike of people who are different in some way," Mother explained. "God doesn't want us to be prejudiced, because it isn't being kind and He says, 'Be kind to one another.' Can you tell me about some in your class?"

"They're mostly just ordinary," answered Chris. "There's one boy, though, his name is Usak, he's different. I think he's from—from—Turkey?"

"There is a country called Turkey," Mother volunteered.

"Nobody likes him much. He doesn't eat with the rest of us in the cafeteria, and he doesn't dress like the others. And his mother picks him up right after school every day so he doesn't have to ride the bus. He's a snob!"

"Chris!" exclaimed Mother. "You shouldn't say that."

"Well, it's true, Mother. He is," Chris insisted.

"Chris, you don't know the reason why Usak is different. You are being prejudiced against him just like you said the others were against you."

"But, Mother-" insisted Chris.

"Does he speak English?" asked Mother.

"I think, a little." Chris answered. "He doesn't say much."

"Maybe he is just shy. Why don't you try to make friends with him," suggested Mother. "He may need a friend as much as you do. He could turn out to be a wonderful friend. You know, Son, prejudices do a lot of harm. There are many kinds of prejudices," Mother continued, "and all prejudices are wrong in the Lord's sight. Aren't you glad God doesn't care where we come from, or how we look, or how much money we have? He only looks at the condition of our heart. We can't read the heart, so we want to be very careful how we judge, don't we?" ◆

TO MEMORIZE:

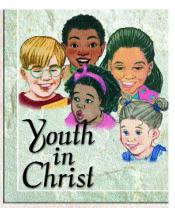
*Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another.* (Ephesians 4:32)

### HOW ABOUT YOU?

Christians must learn to be kind to everyone. We don't always know the

> situation or difficulty another person is experiencing. But if we are kind and courteous, maybe they will see our godly attitude and inquire about our God. When Jesus comes to earth and sets up His king-

dom, they may then want to serve and worship Him.



Watch how you judge. Always be kind.

THE LESSON:



# IS JESUS OUR REDEEMER?

I have almost written to you several times, but as you stated in your editorial, "Almost Is Not Enough."

This note is in response to the Megiddo Message which I periodically receive, re: "What We Believe," especially regarding Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and our Perfect **Example. I must also add that Jesus** Christ is our Redeemer. As was mentioned in the article, "There is a way out." There was a quotation from Job 19:25–26, "For I know that my redeemer [defender] lives and he shall stand at the last on the earth." Job called Him "Redeemer." Also Ephesians 2:8–10, "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God—not by works so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

A Christian's "high quality of moral character" does not come by the pulling up of one's bootstraps, but by faith in the crucifixion, the sacrificial death of his Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Then good works will follow. If not, his faith is dead, for "faith without works is dead" (James 2:14–26).

We readily agree that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer. Job said it, as you cite, even before Jesus was born. The Prophet Isaiah said that *"the redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord"* (Isa. 59:20). It was prophesied of the faithful, that they shall be called *"the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord"* (Isa. 62:12).

To redeem means to "deliver,...purchase, ransom" (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*). What will they be redeemed from? The Prophet Hosea told us: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction" (Hosea 13:14).

The Apostle Paul quoted this passage

from Hosea when he wrote to the Corinthian Church about the second advent of Jesus, who will come as the Redeemer. He said it would happen, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at *the last trumpet."* Then he explained the great change that this Redeemer would bring to all ready believers: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption. and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in *victory.'"* Those who receive immortality will be redeemed from death. And then, he writes this triumphant song, "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (1 Cor. 15:52–55). What is the source of this great change? Where does it come from? Paul answers this question immediately: "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 57). Christ will bring this redemption. He will "swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Isa. 25:8).

Paul wrote again of this redemption that Jesus will bring when he said, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20–21).

The Apostle Peter said the same thing about the redemption that Jesus will bring: *"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"* (1 Pet. 1:13). And Jesus Himself said in His final message, and the final chapter of it, *"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work"* (Rev. 22:12).

How will Jesus be the Redeemer? This is a task specifically assigned to Him by His Heavenly Father. During His earthly ministry He said of Himself, *"For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judg-* ment also, because He is the Son of Man...for as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will...that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father" (John 5:26–27, 21, 23).

Your next question concerns who will receive this redemption. Who will Christ redeem? You say, "A Christian's high quality of moral character does not come by the pulling up of one's bootstraps, but by faith in the crucifixion, sacrificial death of his redeemer, Jesus Christ."

What Scripture says that a Christian's high quality of moral character does not come by his own efforts? What do we find in the Bible that tells us our moral character comes from our faith in the crucifixion, the sacrificial death of our Redeemer Jesus Christ?

I do not believe there is any testimony in Scripture that says we derive "high quality of moral character" by faith in Christ's crucifixion. Moral character is something that we as individuals must achieve by our day-to-day conduct among other people, and the standard is not left to everyone's particular whim. The Bible authors are very clear as to the meaning of upright, moral character. The Apostle Paul was so specific to tell us how we should think (2 Cor. 10:4–5), and what we should think about (Phil. 4:8); how we should talk (Col 4:6), and what we should refrain from saying (Eph. 5:3-4); how we should treat one another (John. 13:34-35), and how we should not treat one another (Eph. 4:31-32). As God's voice to the Churches of his time, the great Apostle even defined the standard of morality every Christian must keep, and said that those committing any kind of immorality, adultery, fornication, and homosexuality would have no place in the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9–10). Jesus condemned even the lustful "look" (Matt. 5:28). There are passages that tell us we must forgive those who wrong us. and that if we do not, we ourselves will not receive forgiveness for our sin (Matt. 6:14-15).

The book of James contains almost a

whole chapter describing the proper and improper use of our tongue, what we should say and not say (James 3). And the Apostle Paul brings all these commands together when he says that God "will give eternal life to those who persist in doing what is good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers" (Romans 2:7 NLT). Also, that "he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and practice evil deeds" (Rom. 2:8-9 NLT). Can we possibly think that our salvation does not depend on what we do?

As you mentioned in your letter, "faith without works is dead" (James 2:14-26). This does not say that works will automatically follow faith, but that if we do not back up our faith by the correct type of living, our faith is "dead."

One of the most frequently repeated statements in the Bible is this principle: That God will give to everyone according to what he has done (see Jer. 17:10; 21:14; 25:14; 32:19; 50:29; Lam. 3:64; Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12-13; 22:12).

When Paul said that we are saved by grace, he did indeed say that it was "the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." But was he saying that there is nothing for us to do? Note his very next words: "We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:8-10 NIV). What "works" have no effect on our salvation? The works that will not save us are those we design, those we want to do to make ourselves look good to ourselves or our fellowmen. These do not impress God. These are the kind the selfrighteous Pharisee in Jesus' parable told about, who could say, "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess" (Luke 18:12). These are "works" that God never commanded. These works will never win God's approval because they are aimed at winning the commendation of men, which Jesus said is an abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:15).

The works that God is looking for are those of obedience to His commands. "Be patient...", "be kind...", "love the Lord your God with all your heart" (Eph 4:31-32; Mark 12:30-31). He is looking for "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith" (Gal. 5:23-24), and these "works" will never occasion boasting but only the

### The Heavenly Kingdom on Earth continued from page 13

ment of His laws will force progress. Instead of resources being wasted, they will be used to eliminate want, and new moral and social standards will quickly remove the sad results of promiscuous living that are devastating our civilization today. Even the most backward areas will progress rapidly, and all because of the new authority at the top. For anyone who would hinder progress will be removed.

Here is the key to progress: the control of evil. During the Millennium, with the devil bound, no one will be able to sell, or buy, or steal, or design any type of evil. Today the entertainment industry thrives because people want what appeals to their lower nature. All this type of profiteering will end because the devil (sin and all sinners) will be bound. Does anyone have an evil idea, or evil scheme that will bring in a great amount of money? He will not be able to execute or market it. Anywhere he goes, he will not be able to

### No MORE SIN

 ${f S}$ in will not be destroyed, but it will be controlled. The Revelator saw this in graphic terms which he described in Revelation 20 verse 1 as an angel having the key to the bottomless pit, "and a great chain in his hand." This is figurative language, but see what happens: "He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan,...."-here are four terms describing this power of evil: the dragon, serpent, the devil, and Satan. This powerful angel has this power of evil in his control. This tells us that the evil is not dead, but under control. He is bound, captive, chained. And then this powerful angel casts "him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished" (Rev. 20:2-3).

set up a business to sell trash, or filth. It will not be allowed. All the centers of evil will be shut down. Only in this way can the Lord bring about the Golden Age of peace and happiness. This time is pictured beautifully in Isaiah 65.

"I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the Lord, they and their descendants with them. Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear...They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord" (verses 19–24 NIV). ♦





Courage, Brother, do not stumble, Though your path be dark as night; There's a star to guide the humble, Trust in God and do the right.

Let the road be rough and dreary, And its end far out of sight, Foot it bravely, strong or weary; Trust in God and do the right.

Perish policy and cunning, Perish all that fears the light; Whether losing, whether winning, Trust in God and do the right.

Trust no party, sect or faction, Trust no leaders in the fight; But in every word and action Trust in God and do the right.

Simple rule and safest guiding, Inward peace and inward might, Star upon our path abiding; Trust in God and do the right.

Some will hate you, some will love you, Some will flatter, some will slight; Cease from man, and look above you, Trust in God and do the right.

-NORMAN MACLEOD

# Annonneing... This year the *Moile* 2004

members and friends of the Megiddo Church will welcome the beginning of the sacred New Year on Sunday, March 21, extending through Monday, March 22. Bible time being measured from *"evening" to evening"* (Lev. 23:32). The ancient Hebrew pattern, according to the law God gave to Moses, was to begin the New Year with the month *"Abib,"* which is the month beginning with the first new moon following the spring equinox (March 20, this year). The first new moon occurs this year the evening of March 21.

Abib First has double significance as we commemorate the sacred New Year and also the birth of our great coming King.

We extend an invitation to our members and friends to join us for this sacred season. The anniversary of the Lord's Supper falls on the evening of April 2 (the beginning of Abib 13), and the Resurrection on the morning of April 5 (Abib 15). Every man is like a carpet tack—he can't go any further than his head will let him.

Add cheerfulness and kindness to your life. Subtract worry and fretting. Multiply your good deeds and actions. Divide with others.

*Every temptation is an opportunity to get nearer to God.* 

The Spirit bears fruit only if rooted in a pious life.

It's how we treat the small things of life that makes us big.

### The House with Two Bears

It was observed by friends that old Mr. and Mrs. Snyder were getting on more agreeably than they formerly had done. Asked for an explanation, Mr. Snyder replied: "Well, about a year ago we decided to keep two bears in the house all the time. One of these bears is 'Bear ye one another's burdens,' and the other is 'Forbear one another in love.' Since we took these two bears in, we have found the going smoother."

Impure thoughts are dangerous combustibles to keep in the mind.

The right way to begin trveling the right way is to begin right away.

 $W_{e}$  can purchase the future by making proper use of the present.

 ${
m A}$ re we making a sacrifice *of* the best or *for* the best?

 $T_{he}$  man who sits down to wait for a golden opportunity to come along may have a long wait.

 ${f F}_{aith}$  without works is like an automobile without gas.

HOLD ON

When troubles seem to linger And refuse to go away, When one thing and another Keeps coming day by day, Till faith is sorely tested And seems about to break, We must hold on! The Father knows Just how much we can take. Then, later when we understand The meaning of each test, Our thankful hearts will praise Him. For giving what was best.

We need to feed the fires of consecration to God with the fuel of meditation on His Word.

Blessed is the one who digs a well from which another can draw water.

Kind words don't wear out the tongue.

 ${
m N}_{
m o}$  degree of temptation justifies any degree of sin.

God built and launched this year for you, Upon the bridge you stand; It's your ship, your own ship, And you are in command. Tust what the twolve months' trip will do

Just what the twelve months' trip will do Rests wholly, solely, friend, with you,

Your los book kept from day to day-My friend, what will it show? The los will tell, like suiding star The sort of captain that you are.

For weal or woe, this year is yours; Your ship is on life's sea, And you as captain must decide Whichever it will be. So now, in starting on your trip, Ask God to help you sail your ship.

—Selected

