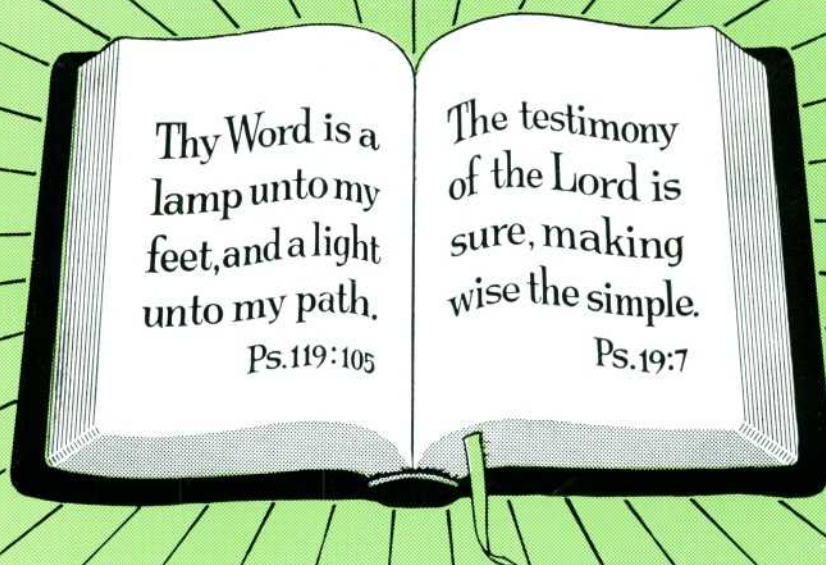


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



Is This All There Is?

"And I John Saw . . ."

Life After Life?

Appreciation and Kindness

Was It Really Worth It?

SEVEN days of leprosy; seven days outside the camp; was it worth it, Miriam? Was it? We understand how you felt—it was the same jealous spirit we have felt wrangling in our hearts. It seemed as though your brother had too much authority; at least *part* of it should be yours—weren't you his senior by quite a few years? One day you vented your feelings. But was it worth it, Miriam?

You must have thought it would feel good, Achan, to have all that extra wealth—to be the richest man in the camp of Israel. But after you had it, did you wonder? Was it really as good as you thought it would be? Where would you put it? How would you carry it? How long could you keep it concealed? As you tried to sleep that first night, knowing you had done wrong, did you wonder? Did you still feel it was worth it?

We know you were anxious to get on with the battle, Saul. Getting that sacrifice accomplished looked so important—so much more important than keeping your place and trusting in the Lord and obeying the words of Samuel. Surely you thought Samuel would understand. So you went ahead. You probably gained a little advantage on the advancing enemy (which the Lord could have subdued at a single stroke). But was it worth it, Saul? Was it worth all it cost you?

You knew better, David. You knew you were doing wrong that night you let the lust of your eyes lead you into sin. Was it worth it? Was it worth all it cost you—in self-respect, in integrity, in favor with God? We know you found out; you learned the painful price of sin. But how could you have done it, David? You, the God-fearing shepherd boy who once had killed the mighty Goliath in the strength of the Lord, how could you plunge yourself into the depths of guilt for a few moments of lustful indulgence?

And you, Peter. We can hardly blame you for wanting to look out for your own safety. But was it worth it? Was it worth the shame of having denied your Lord that night, Peter? You knew it immediately—when that cock

crowed, you would have given anything—even to your own life—if you could have retracted those words. Oh! the galling bitterness of sin; it wasn't worth it.

You really thought you had it figured out right, Ananias, didn't you? You thought no one would know the difference; you could give "everything" to the Lord and still have a small reserve of your own, just in case. But how terribly expensive that reserve turned out to be! Was it worth it?

They all found out. Yet we follow them. Why? Why dabble in what is sure to bring us grief?

We justify ourselves when we know we are wrong; we do or say just about anything to save face—as if we would be losing by honestly admitting our wrong and starting over. We indulge in some small thing we know we would be better off without. Our eye falls upon the printed page, and we let ourselves read on and on—instead of checking ourselves instantly when we realize it is not the best food for our minds; we find out how the story ends, but is it worth it?

There is some sickly satisfaction in giving another a piece of our mind—when we have no "peace" to give; there is some mite of pleasure in proving ourselves "right," or in getting the better of our opponent in an argument, or getting "even" with someone who has wronged us. A sharp retort that puts another in his place gives us some paltry satisfaction. But what is it worth?

We do some little thing just to be sure we are noticed; those bits of acclaim from one another are so precious. Or we entertain grandiose thoughts about ourselves and our possibilities. They lift our spirits for a moment, but is it worth it? Is it an even exchange for the high honor we could have someday from the hand of God Almighty?

Someday we shall know; someday, when we stand in the presence of Christ and the saints and all the holy angels. We will surely agree *then* with those who sinned ages ago, that it was NOT worth it. ●●

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

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

The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

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

Published monthly by the
MEGIDDO MISSION CHURCH
481 Thurston Road
Rochester, N. Y. 14619

● SUBSCRIPTION RATES: One year, \$2.00; six months, \$1.00. Make checks or money orders for all literature payable to the Megiddo Mission Church. Please notify promptly of any change of address. Foreign subscribers, please make all payments by international money orders, available at most banks and post offices.

Second Class Postage paid at Rochester, New York.

Megiddo Means

"a place of troops"

—Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon

"a place of God"

—Young's Analytical Concordance

Geographically, Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, located at a strategic point, demanding heavy fortification; for Palestine is the age-old gateway between East and West, and the avenue connecting North and South. Supremacy there has long been the envy of aggressive nations, and the prevailing power has guarded it with jealous eye. The famous pass at Megiddo through a solid mountain range is the one means by which this avenue between continents may be traversed.

In the spiritual parallel, it is a place of troops, where soldiers are equipped for spiritual warfare against the forces of evil without and within. "The weapons we wield are not merely human but divinely potent to demolish strongholds; we demolish sophistries and all that rears its proud head against the knowledge of God; we compel every human thought to surrender in obedience to Christ" (II Cor. 10:4-5, NEB).

Megiddo Message

Vol. 65, No. 1

January, 1978

EDITORIAL

2 Was It Really Worth It?

The price of sin far exceeds its satisfactions.

SPECIAL FEATURES

4 Is This All There Is?

What the Bible says—and doesn't say—about life after death.

8 If Christ Should Come Tonight . . .

Would our heart be filled with joy or fear, if He should?

12 "And I John Saw . . ."

The book of Revelation and the holy, heavenly City.

17 Life After Life?

The "new scientific evidence" of life after death reviewed.

19 Appreciation and Kindness

Kind and loving deeds live longer than granite monuments.

23 Remember How It Feels

The moral is this: Do to others as you would have them do to you.

REGULAR FEATURES

9 Out of the Archives: *The Didache*

Thou shalt, and thou shalt not.

10 One Lord, One Faith: *Is There A Hell? Part One*

24 Pro & Con

Discussing the resurrection, mortal or immortal.

26 Our Readers Write . . .

27 Scriptural Spotlight: *The Healing Touch.*

On Matthew 8:3. We, too, need healing of our spiritual diseases.

28 Cover Feature: *Close your eyes for a moment . . .*

Bible Quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version

Other versions are abbreviated as: *New International Version* (NIV); *New English Bible* (NEB); *Revised Standard Version* (RSV); *The New Testament in Modern English* (Phillips); *The Living Bible* (TLB); *New American Standard* (NAS); *The Jerusalem Bible* (JB).

Is This All There Is?

“WHEN I die,” says a noted minister, “—but I die no more—and someone finds my skull, let this skull proclaim to him: I have no eyes, nevertheless I behold Him; I have no brain nor mind, nonetheless I comprehend Him; I have no tongue, nevertheless I praise Him with all of you who call on His name. . . . I lie outside on God’s acre, nevertheless I am inside Paradise.”

No doubt about it, this minister believes death is not the end of life; and he can find hundreds of thousands of people throughout Christendom who agree with him. As the poet expresses it,

There is no death. They only truly live
Who pass into the life beyond, and see
This earth is but a school preparative
For higher ministry.

—John Oxenham.

Such is the poet’s conclusion. But it has no authority behind it, and the age-old question remains: After death, what?

It is a question that touches each of us. We breathe and eat and sleep and wake and work day after day after day, with scarcely a thought that it must someday end, until suddenly something happens that brings us face to face with reality, and we ask in the words of the popular song, “*Is this all there is?*” Did God give us life only to have that life perish shortly in the oblivion of death?

Repelled by the idea of nonentity, man has been dreaming of immortality since man was. Generation after generation has renewed the dream and sought to stay the power of death, but with no success. In the face of death, we modern citizens with all our boasted civilization are not a single notch ahead of the first century Romans or the ancient Egyptians or the primitive tribespeople. Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great could conquer kingdoms, but they could not conquer death. Leonardo da Vinci and Einstein learned much about this world, but they had no knowledge of the next.

Dreams of Immortality

Unable to overcome death physically, men have sought to overpower it mentally, and have settled generally upon the conclusion that this life is *not* all there is. Beyond this life must be more life—immediately. The body dies; but the body is not all there is to life, they reason. There is an immortal something within us that leaves the body at death to live in a higher realm. As the poet says again, “Dust thou art, to dust returnest Was not spoken of the soul.”

What is the foundation of this belief? “Feeling” seems to be one of its most convincing arguments. “I feel my immortality,” says the poet, “o’er-sweep all pains, all tears, all time, all fears, and . . . peal to my ears this truth: ‘Thou livest forever.’”

Believing the soul is immortal is the result of the simplest reasoning, says one. “Do not tell me that all this [superior quality of life] ends with my last breath! If God loved us, it is sheer madness to believe that only our brief threescore and ten years here on this planet was involved. Not for a single sane moment do we believe that!” The evidence is simple logic (human, of course)!

Another man states the basis of his faith in these words: “We do not believe in immortality because we have proved it, but we forever try to prove it because we believe it.”

Says another, “I know as much about the after-life as you—nothing. . . . I must wait and see.” And another: “We are much better believers in immortality than we can give grounds for. The real evidence is too subtle or is higher than we can write down in propositions.” What a foundation for faith!

Says another: “I have never seen, and never shall see, that the cessation of the evidence of existence is necessarily evidence of the cessation of existence.” And another, “The Creator made us to be the image of His own eternity, and in the desire for immortality we feel we have sure proof of our capacity for it.”

The evangelist Billy Graham founds his faith

on this reasoning: "Such universal agreement of belief and such harmony of opinion in people so varied culturally is in itself convincing evidence of the truth of man's immortality." The mere fact that nearly all people who ever lived have had some idea of man's inborn immortality proves that it must be!

For centuries this type of thinking has been accepted at large, almost without questioning. Now some people, disillusioned with the traditional, are seeking something new, whether fad, fancy or fact. Today the public are being served a dismaying variety at the cosmic buffet: there are pseudo-Christian cults, gurus, pundits from the East, various psychological cults—it is almost unbelievable what people will believe! But almost all still cherish some idea of inborn immortality.

In the midst of all this human speculation and the vain reasonings of vain men—on a subject so vital as our own future existence—our hearts cry out for evidence! What can we know and be sure of? We need authority above the words of dying men. What says the Word of the Lord our God?

A certain believer in the immortality of our souls ventures to say that the Bible supports the belief. "This is precisely what the Bible itself teaches," he asserts—but he fails to cite a single text on the subject, and continues, saying that the idea "is not intrinsically irrational, as some would claim; nor, of course, can it be rationally proved as some would wish." In other words, we have no concrete evidence.

Says another about the Biblical support for the belief: "In general, the Bible treats the subject of the soul's immortality in much the same way that it treats God's existence. Such belief is assumed as an undeniable premise. The Scriptures make flat assertions that when we die we shall continue to know, love, will and feel"—a splendid statement! but he does not quote even *one* such flat assertion.

Immortal Soul Not In Bible

Some people are recognizing that the idea of the immortal soul was not the original belief of the Biblical authors. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Vol. 13, p. 449), under the heading "soul," states: "There is no dichotomy [division] of body and soul in the Old Testament. The term *nepes*, though translated by our word soul, never means soul as distinct from the body."

The *New American Bible*, in its Biblical Theology Terms, under the heading "soul" states: "In the New Testament, to 'save one's soul' (Mark 8:35)

does not mean to save some 'spiritual' part of man, as opposed to his 'body' (in the Platonic sense) but the whole person with emphasis on the fact that the person is living, desiring, . . . in addition to being concrete and physical."

One of America's foremost Hebrew scholars says regarding the use of the word "soul": "The Hebrew word in question here is 'nefesh,' . . . The Bible does not say we have a soul. 'Nefesh' is the person himself."

It is interesting to note that a few theologians today are recognizing this fact. Milton Gatch, in his book, *Death: Meaning and Mortality in Christian Thought and Contemporary Culture*, states: "Not only do the biblical writers on the whole have no conception of a soul as a separable element of human existence, but also there is agreement that death is the . . . termination of existence and that there is no such thing as an individual afterlife."

Oscar Cullman, in his book, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead?* points out the inconsistency of believing in both and argues in favor of the Biblical teaching of a physical resurrection. Socrates believed the soul was immortal. Jesus taught the resurrection of the dead. "The fact that later Christianity effected a link between the two beliefs and that today the ordinary Christian simply confuses them has not persuaded me to be silent about what I regard as true; and all the more so, since the link established between the expectation of the 'resurrection of the dead' and the belief in the immortality of the soul is not in fact a link at all but renunciation of one in favour of the other." He says "First Corinthians 15 has been sacrificed for Plato's *Phaedo*. No good purpose is served by concealing this fact. . . . We must recognize loyally that precisely those things which distinguish the Christian teaching from the Greek belief are at the heart of primitive Christianity. Even if the interpreter cannot himself accept it as fundamental, he has no right to conclude that it was not fundamental for the authors whom he studies." Mr. Cullman is right. Regardless of the conclusions of men, the Word of the Lord stands unchanged. Jesus and Paul taught the resurrection, not the immortality of the soul.

Where did the idea of the soul as separate from the body come from?

From Plato, Not Scripture

The belief has been handed down for centuries. Long before the time of Christ, the Greeks and Romans believed it. "All men's souls are immortal," stated Socrates of Greece. He believed death to be the soul's great friend. It is deliverance, said

he, from one's bodily entanglement in the world of sense, and the delivered immortal soul is "freed to roam in the eternal world of ideas to which the soul belongs."

But Socrates had no evidence beyond the human imagination.

Plato wrote, "The soul whose inseparable attribute is life will never admit to life's opposite, death. Thus the soul is shown to be immortal, indestructible. Do we believe there is such a thing as death? To be sure. And is this anything but the separation of the soul and body? And being dead is the attainment of this separation, when the soul exists in herself and separate from the body, and the body is parted from the soul. That is death. Death is merely the separation of body and soul."

Doesn't this sound strangely similar to the popular idea being taught in many churches today? But this is Plato, not Bible.

For at least two centuries after Christ, history tells us, the church continued to teach and believe that man was mortal, just as the prophets and Jesus and His apostles had taught. One of the early church writers, Justin Martyr, who died about A. D. 166, wrote: "But our Jesus Christ, being crucified, and dead, and having ascended to heaven, reigned; and by those things which were published in his name among all nations by the apostles there is joy offered to those who expect immortality promised by him" (quoted from the *Anti-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1, p. 176). Notice he wrote of those who "expect immortality," not who possess it. He had not yet adopted the new idea.

But only a short while later we find that the school of professing Christians in Alexandria added Platonism to their creed. A well-respected teacher, Origen, wrote: "Souls are immortal," and signed himself "The Platonist, who believes in the immortality of the soul." Tertullian was another teacher of the day who was carried away with the ideas of Plato. He wrote, "For some things are known, even by nature: the immortality of the soul, for instance, is held by many. I may use therefore, the opinion of a Plato, when he declares, 'Every soul is immortal'" (quoted from *Anti-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. III, p. 547).

At the same time another man was denouncing those who were "carried away with the extravagant opinion of themselves that souls are immortal." But finally the last contender for the true teaching was silenced, and the established church issued a stern decree against all who might dare

to "assert concerning the nature of the reasonable soul that it is mortal; all so teaching are to be punished as heretics."

Should we not thank God from the depths of our heart for the privilege that is ours? Here we are, free to read our faith in the Bible and we can believe it without fear of being punished as heretics. Praise God! the night of superstition is past.

Problems

But let us suppose for a moment that the reasonings of men were the best available to us, and that we were trying to accept the idea that the soul of man is immortal. Several problems would confront us immediately: Where is the "spirit world" to which these souls go when the body dies? And "who" lives in that world—criminals, insane, rebellious, and righteous all together? And what is the activity of such spirits? What do they *do* through all eternity—without minds to think, or hands to work, or feet to walk, or voices to speak the praises of their Creator? What to do with "bad" immortal souls is a major problem, for clearly good and bad cannot remain together forever; what can happen to the bad? And so falsehood has been built upon falsehood, and the whole is as unreasonable as it is unbiblical.

What the Bible Says

The true teaching of the Bible, thank God, is plain and forthright. "For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" (Ps. 6:5). "The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything" (Eccl. 9:5). "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccl. 9:10).

If souls live on forever, why should Ezekiel have written that the "soul that sinneth, it shall die"? (Ezek. 18:20). Or why should Isaiah have stated that "the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth"? (Isa. 38:18). If the personality lives on, why should the Bible have recorded of Josiah that he would go to his grave "in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place" (II Chron. 34:28)? If he were to be conscious in death, or looking down upon his people from another sphere of life, he *would* see. And why should Peter have said of the long-deceased David that "David is not ascended into the heavens" (Acts 2:34) if the spirit of man goes to heaven at death?

No, the Bible consistently declares that man is mortal (Job 4:17); that souls *can* die, and

NOTE: "IS THIS ALL THERE IS?" is available as a Church-service recording on cassette. Price: \$3.00

will die if they sin. More than seventy years ago our founder offered \$1000 to anyone who could find any statement in the Bible that the soul of man is immortal or undying; and the offer still stands—unclaimed.

The word translated "soul" is the Hebrew word *nephesh*, which is defined as "Breath, breath of life by which the body lives, the token of which life is drawing breath, hence life, vital principle. . . . The soul is also said both to live and to die; to be killed. . . . the mind as the seat of the senses, affections and various emotions . . . every living thing. . . . Specially it is a man, a person, in a census of the people as 70 souls, 70 persons. It is sometimes I, myself, thou, thyself" (*Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon*).

In *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott* is a brief summary of the uses of the words "soul" and "spirit" in Scripture. We read: "The Hebrew word *nephesh* of the Old Testament occurs about 700 times, and is rendered soul 471 times, life and living about 150 times, and the same word is also translated a man, a person (24 times), self, they, me, him, anyone, breath, heart, mind, appetite, the body dead or alive, creature, beast. It is 28 times used or applied to beasts, and every creeping thing. The Greek word *psuche* of the New Testament corresponds with *nephesh* of the Old Testament. It occurs 105 times, is rendered soul 59 times, life

40 times. The same word is also rendered mind, heart, and is twice applied to the beasts that perish. Perhaps it may be worthy of notice that in all the 700 times which *nephesh* occurs and in the 105 times of *psuche*, not once are the words immortal, immortality, deathless, or never-dying found in connection as qualifying terms."

Some Objections

The Bible is plain. But there are a few texts not so plain as the majority, and these have been widely used to support the idea of the immortal soul.

Lazarus Alive After Death?

Almost every branch of orthodox Christianity agrees that Jesus' account of the Rich Man and Lazarus is sure evidence that the dead are conscious. "In the light of this story," says Billy Graham, "there can be little doubt that Jesus believed that the souls of both the wicked and the just live on in the life beyond."

But is this true?

Our chief problem here lies in determining whether the Rich Man and Lazarus is historical or whether it is a parable. Those who see it as teaching that the dead are conscious assume

(Continued on page 20)

Let Us Pray . . .

Our loving Father, once again we bow humbly before Thee thanking Thee for all the blessings showered upon us. They are more than can be numbered. We thank Thee that we can have fellowship with the children of light, that we can assemble with the fixed purpose in mind to be helped and to help others.

Father, grant us the insight to see that the only way to obtain that much desired haven of rest which Thou hast promised is through keeping Thy holy precepts. May we not be stiff-necked or indifferent to Thy call, or unconcerned about the interests of our brother in the Faith, remembering that each must be a brother's keeper.

Help us never to forget Thy great concern for us. Thy Word was preserved through the ages when men destroyed everything that did not agree with their way of thinking, and was delivered to us in its ancient purity, that we may know what is Thy will for us, and possess a lively hope of a life beyond the fleeting present.

We rejoice to know that life as it is lived today upon earth is not all that Thou canst give, nor are its limitations and distractions the full scope of Thy munificence to man. Life need not be a dead-end street getting us nowhere. Thou dost plan to bless and eternally save all who fit themselves for perpetuation. Then may we be up and doing, making the very most of each precious moment so graciously provided us.

Father, give us an unwavering faith that the prophecies not yet fulfilled will be accomplished in Thine own good way and time. Our Lord shall return from heaven, the dead in Christ shall rise, and the boon of immortal life will be bestowed upon all who are worthy of it.

Give us a fixed purpose, that having started in the way of righteousness nothing may deter us from reaching our goal. Give us oneness of mind that we may work together in Christian harmony. May we be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in Thy work, that our labor be not in vain. May our hope be a real thing to us, a fire that burns brightly in our hearts; and our prospect of life in the world to come an anchor to our souls both sure and steadfast. In Jesus' name. Amen.

If Christ Should Come Tonight . . .

*If you could know that Jesus would appear
Before another morn would give its light,
Would your heart be filled with joy or fear—
If you could know that He would come tonight?*

IT IS a serious question for us to ponder. God has done on His part. He has told us He will send His Son, and He has told us what we should be doing to get ready. What are we doing? Is the hope of Christ's return growing brighter every day? or do the passing days with their experiences bring from us doubtings, murmurings, little roots of bitterness here and there?

How is it with each of us? Is our lamp flickering because of His seeming delay? Are we thinking how differently we might do if—if we could only know, if He would only give us a sign? What a stir there would be among us, if we could know that Jesus would come before another morn should give its light!

Have we forgotten that Jesus said it is not for us to know the day or hour? But when we see these things begin to come to pass, we must lift up our heads and rejoice!

I want to ask myself: How will it be with me? What about

*The things you would do, the words you would
say,
Perchance the letter you had thought to
write—
How many plans would have to change today
If you were sure that Christ would come to-
night?*

How many acts would be done quickly, and how many would be set aside as unnecessary, if we knew that Christ would come tonight?

*How many acts would then remain undone
How many wrongs would have to be made
right,
If you should meet Him before another sun
And know for sure that He would come
tonight?*

Could we but remember that no words we write or speak leave others unaffected, they would be as sparkling jewels weighed carefully for their value for everyone concerned. How easy it would be to seek out and make right every wrong if we knew

Jesus were standing at the gate. Just feeling sorry in our heart is not to gain forgiveness from another. And telling our wrong to God is not all-sufficient either. He would have us also approach our Christian friend and make it right, lest we be guilty of laying a stumblingblock in a fellow-pilgrim's way. We must humble ourselves, express our sorrow for our wrong, and make such amends as we are able. And if with true humility these things we strive to do, God will then forgive us—and, no doubt, our friends will, too!

Not one of us is any bigger than the way we treat our fellowman. We owe a part of ourselves to others, for Jesus said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto me." Why do we find it so difficult to acknowledge a wrong? After all, in doing so we are only saying that we are wiser today than we were yesterday.

The man who is never wrong in his own eyes is never right in God's eyes.

Someone has said, "Don't stand there and stare up the steps, but *step up the stairs!*"

The very best way to get ready for the Lord is to admit our wrongs and set to work to make them right. Admitting a wrong relieves the mind, leaving a clean place for something better. And when a wrong is admitted and turned from, instead of the mistake that plagues there will be an accomplishment that thrills!

If He should come tonight,

*How many things would you find time for
then,
Now crowded out or else forgotten quite—
The kindly deed, the hour of prayer again?
Would aught be different should He come
tonight?*

Is God actually crowded out of your life by the things you should have renounced for Christ's sake? That hour of prayer, how hallowed it should seem if we could know that He would come tonight! How anxious we would be to pour out our hearts to Him who has ever stood near to hear and help.

Someday it will be too late to get ready. And lest, in that day, a host of unrighted wrongs go marching before our eyes, let us today make a fresh endeavor; for remember, He *could* come before another morn shall give us light. He *could* come tonight! ••



Out of the Archives

The Didache

The following is taken from the Didache, or Teaching of the Apostles. It was written early in the second century.

THERE are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the two ways. The way of life is this: First of all, thou shalt love the God that made thee; secondly, thy neighbor as thyself. And all things whatsoever thou wouldst not have befall thyself, neither do unto another. Now of these words the doctrine is this. Bless them that curse you, and pray for your enemies and for them that persecute you; for what thank is it, if you love them that love you? Do not even the Gentiles the same? But do ye love them that hate you, and ye shall not have an enemy.

Abstain thou from fleshly and bodily lusts. If any man give thee a blow on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also, and thou shalt be perfect; if a man impress thee to go with him one mile, go with him twain; if a man take away thy cloak, give him thy coat also; if a man take away from thee that which is thine own, ask it not back, for neither art thou able. To every man that asketh of thee give, and ask not back; for the Father desireth that gifts be given to all from His own bounties. Blessed is he that giveth according to the commandment; for he is guiltless. Woe to him that receiveth; for, if a man receiveth having need, he is guiltless; but he that hath no need shall give satisfaction why and wherefore he received; and being put in confinement he shall be examined concerning the deeds that he hath done, and he shall not come out thence until he hath given back the last farthing.

And this is the second commandment of the teaching: Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not corrupt boys, thou shalt not commit fornication, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not deal in magic, thou shalt do no sorcery, thou shalt not murder a child, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods, thou shalt not perjure thyself, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not speak evil, thou shalt not cherish a grudge, thou shalt not be double-minded nor double-tongued; for the double tongue is a snare of death. Thy word shall not be false or empty, but fulfilled by action. Thou shalt not be avaricious nor a plunderer nor a hypocrite nor ill-tempered nor proud. Thou shalt not entertain an evil design against thy neighbor. Thou shalt not hate any man, but some thou shalt reprove, and for others thou shalt pray, and others thou shalt love more than thy life.

My child, flee from every evil and everything that resembleth it. Be not angry, for anger leadeth to murder, nor jealous nor contentious nor wrathful; for of all these things murders are engendered. My child, be not lustful, for lust leadeth to fornication, neither foul-speaking neither with uplifted eyes; for of all of these things adulteries are engendered. My child, be no dealer in omens, since it leads to idolatry.

My child, be not a liar, since lying leads to theft, neither avaricious neither vainglorious; for from all these things thefts are engendered. My child, be not a murmurer, since it leads to blasphemy, neither self-willed neither a thinker of evil thoughts; for from all these things blasphemies are engendered. But be meek, since the meek shall inherit the earth. Be long-suffering and pitiful and guileless and quiet and kindly and always fearing the words which thou hast heard. Thou shalt not exalt thyself, neither shalt thou admit boldness into thy soul. Thy soul shall not cleave together with the lofty, but with the righteous and humble shalt thou walk. The accidents that befall thee thou shalt receive as good, knowing that nothing is done without God.

Thou shalt not hesitate to give, neither shalt thou murmur when giving; for thou shalt know who is the good paymaster of thy reward. Thou shalt not turn away from him that is in want, but shalt make thy brother partaker in all things, and shalt not say that anything is thine own. For if you are fellow-partakers in that which is imperishable, how much rather in the things which are perishable?

Thou shalt not withhold thy hand from thy son or from thy daughter, but from their youth thou shalt teach them the fear of God. Thou shalt hate

all hypocrisy, and everything that is not pleasing to the Lord. Thou shalt never forsake the commandment of the Lord; but shalt keep those things which thou has received, neither adding to them nor taking from them. This is the way of life.

Be watchful for your life, let your lamps not be quenched and your loins not ungirded, but be ye ready; for ye know not the hour in which our Lord cometh. And ye shall gather yourselves together frequently, seeking what is fitting for your souls, for the whole time of your faith shall not profit you, if ye be not perfected at the last season. The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him. Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.

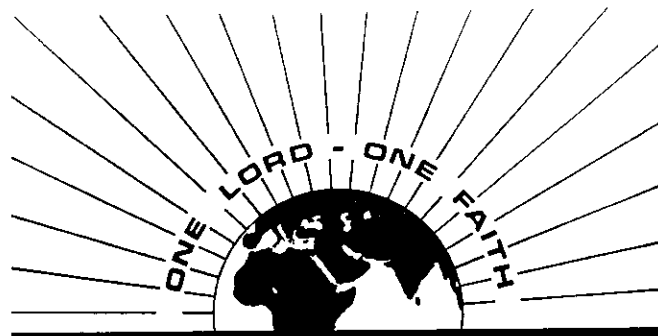
We give Thee thanks, Holy Father, for Thy holy name, which Thou hast made to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality, which Thou hast made known unto us through Thy Son Jesus. Thine is the glory for ever and ever. Thou, Almighty Master, didst create all things for Thy name's sake, and didst give food and drink unto men for enjoyment, that they might render thanks to Thee; but didst bestow upon us spiritual food and drink through Thy Son. Before all things we give Thee thanks that Thou art powerful; Thine is the glory for ever and ever. Remember, Lord, Thy Church to deliver it from all evil and to perfect it in Thy love; and gather it together from the four winds—even the Church which has been sanctified—into Thy kingdom which Thou has prepared for it; for Thine is the power and the glory for ever and ever. May grace come and may this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David. If any man is holy, let him come; if any man is not, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen. ●●

ABSOLUTELY CLEAN

I was recently impressed with the absolute cleanliness of what is called "Cereal City," headquarters of the Kelloggs in Battle Creek. They spare no effort in keeping the food lines clean, dirt-proof and rodent free.

It reminded me of how tremendously important it is for me to keep my mind uncluttered with trash and needless information and my emotions clear. Jesus said it is that which cometh out of a man which defiles the man (Mark 7:20). And since I am what I ingest—physically, mentally, and spiritually—I would do well to follow Paul's suggestion to feed my mind only that which is "true and honourable and just and pure and lovely and admirable" (Phil. 4:8, Phillips). If my mind is cleaner, that which comes out in action will be cleaner also.

—From A Reader in New York



Is There A Hell?

Part 1

There is some beastly instinct in man that delights in seeing others suffer. The man-made doctrine of hellfire might have been an expression of this horrible instinct; what dreadful injustice to accuse a just God of such a plan of punishment. God promises to punish those who agree to serve Him and do not; but the simple oblivion He devised for them was not sufficient to frighten unbelievers into the church—so thought certain preachers of the early centuries. Thus developed the idea of eternal torment in flaming fire, a nether-world of misery into which the wicked will be cast to suffer forever and ever. Modern concepts of hell in some churches have moderated ideas of what hell is, but the fiery idea still persists among many fundamentalists.

To know what we should believe, we must go to the Scriptures! and there we find no teaching which even slightly resembles what is common in theology. The entire concept of hell as commonly believed is foreign to Scripture. It is "the goodness of God"—not fear of eternal torment in hell—which "leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom. 2:4).

Our Merciful God

THE very idea that God would punish anyone in eternal misery for what evil he could do in a few short years of life is revolting to thinking people. God is a God of goodness. "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee," exclaimed the Psalmist (Ps. 31:19). Again, "Gracious is the Lord and righteous; yea, our God is merciful" (Ps. 116:5). How can any idea of eternal torment belong to a God of such mercy?

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. . . . He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us ac-

cording to our iniquities" (Ps. 103:8, 10). Again, "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works. . . . The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" (Ps. 145:8-9, 17).

Our Just God

God is a God of justice. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face" (Ps. 89:14). Years previous, Job wrote, "Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?" (Job 8:3). Would not punishing a man or woman for even a single day in hellfire be a gross perversion even of a *man's* sense of justice? And does not God's justice and mercy exceed man's?

God has always set the highest standard of justice. "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deut. 32:4). He is a "God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed" (I Sam. 2:3). God shows His unvarying justice in giving to every man "according as his work shall be" (Rev 22:12). This is His plan: "With the kind Thou dost show Thyself pure; and with the crooked Thou dost show Thyself astute" (Ps. 18:25-26, NAS).

God's Proposition to Men

What is the offer God makes to men? Is His most gracious offer an escape from an otherwise sure fate of burning forever in hellfire?

Let us read the law which Moses set before Israel. He said, as He delivered God's message to them: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil. . . . If thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish" (Deut. 30:15, 17-18). Then he pleaded with them: "Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (v. 19). But there is no idea of hellfire, or eternal suffering if they disobeyed, only "death."

What does the prophet Ezekiel say about the man who does not obey? Will he suffer in some eternal agony? We read, "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he"—suffer eternally in torment? Never! "In them

shall he die" (Ezek. 18:24). It is simply this: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20). And, "The dead know not anything" (Eccl. 9:5), so how can they suffer?

Again and again the Bible states the reward of the wicked as death, perishing, sleep, being cut off—nothing that suggests continuing misery. "The wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it" (Prov. 2:22). "The Lord preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy" (Ps. 145:20).

The apostle Paul wrote that when the "Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels" He will "in flaming fire" take "vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power"—no idea of eternal suffering here (II Thess. 1:7-9).

"Hell" in the Bible

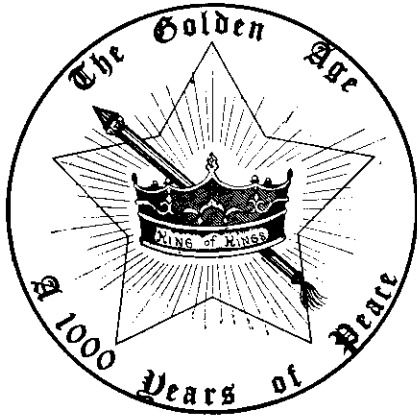
What is there in the Bible that might suggest the idea of a place of eternal misery or suffering for the wicked, or a "hell" as popularly believed?

There is not a single text in the Old Testament which refers to any kind of punishment as "hell" or "hellfire." The word "hell" is used as a translation of the word *sheol*. In the Hebrew original of the Old Testament, *sheol* appears 65 times. It is translated "hell" 31 times, the "grave" 31 times, and the "pit" 3 times, in our Common Version. The meaning in all cases is the same: it referred to a hollow place, a pit, or a grave, a place where the dead are buried.

In the New Testament the word "hell" is used 23 times, and is translated from two Greek words, *hades* and *gehenna*. *Hades* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *sheol*, and is used eleven times. It is said to have been used in the original as denoting the "abode or world of the dead," sometimes with the more general meaning of death. *Gehenna* is another word translated "hell." *Gehenna* was literally the area outside Jerusalem used as a dumping ground for all kinds of rubbish and garbage. The term *Gehenna* became a symbol of death and utter destruction.

If we think of these words and their meanings when we read the word "hell" in the Bible, we shall have a much better idea of its true meaning. ●●

You cannot control the length of your life; but you can have something to say about its width and depth.



*This is the tenth in a series
of articles on the coming
MILLENNIUM.*

*"Blessed is he that readeth, and
they that hear the words of
this prophecy, and keep those
things which are written therein:
for the time is at hand"
—Revelation 1:3*

"And I John Saw"

AT CERTAIN times in history, the Almighty Designer has purposed that His people have exact and exalted ideas of His glory—in some form or other they should *see* it. To Moses at the burning bush; to Isaiah in the temple; to Jeremiah at his consecration to his prophetic office; likewise to Ezekiel God showed great things and marvelous, in vivid imagery or vision, or by direct communication through His divine messenger. The apostles Peter, James and John had a miniature preview of glory on the Mount of Transfiguration.

But perhaps more glorious than all was the glimpse into the bright New World which was given to a lonely prisoner on a lonely island. He, one of the two that Jesus once called "Sons of thunder," one of the fishermen-team, affectionate but always aspiring, the beloved disciple, even John—this was the man chosen by Christ to receive the magnificent Revelation of "things to come." And what should be the sanctuary chosen for this Revelation but dreary Patmos!

Patmos was a place well chosen by the Roman emperors; it could hardly have been more suited to its purpose, the punishment of criminals. Rocky and barren, without tree or river, almost uninhabited, seldom visited—the Romans lost nothing by turning it over to criminals and unwanted. We can almost feel the sinking in the heart of that esteemed elder brother, that noble Apostle of Jesus Himself, as he watched the ship disappear over the horizon, the ship that had brought him to this lonely island to die. Little did he imagine that day that Patmos would become the portal of heaven itself! Little did he imagine the work he yet had to complete—the writing of the grand finale for the Holy Volume—before his career was finished!

How can any of us know what God has prepared for them that truly love Him?

We visualize John, stepping carefully from rock to rock, occasionally stopping to watch the rolling surf, while his heart moved with the brethren he had left in far-away Ephesus. But John had no time for despondency, or idle dreaming, or sentimental longing. His Lord would work all things together for good. Meanwhile, his mind was on the future, the Day when heaven would open and down the parted skies would come the King, his Lord and Master! Oh, glorious Day! He was lost in the grandeur and glory of it, when suddenly—a voice, as clear and as sharp as the sound of a trumpet. What could it be? It was a message from

heaven sent directly from the Master Himself—"by his angel unto his servant John"!

Let us think more about this message and what it discloses to us about the glorious age that is now just ahead.

A Revelation

The book of Revelation is "the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw" (Rev. 1:1-2).

There has never been anything like Revelation either before or since, in the history of God's people. It is a message from God through Christ "by his angel" and delivered "unto his servant John." Through the work of John it reached to the heart of the early Christian community; it thus came to the Christians from one of their own number. The man who made it available to those Christians—and now to us—was the apostle John. We feel deeply indebted.

The Introduction

In the first of the book, John introduces himself as "your brother and companion in tribulation" (1:9). This was especially meaningful to the Christians of that day. If anyone had a right to speak, it was John; he had come through all that those to whom he was writing were going through. Men will never listen to the man who preaches the virtue of endurance from the comfort of an easy chair. But John had been in their place; he spoke from experience. When he told them to "endure," they knew that *he* knew what it felt like to "endure."

No lover of ease and comfort, no coward, no one flabby in body or mind ever achieved greatly in this life. The journey to the Kingdom is the greatest and most demanding of all, and it requires the greatest measure of endurance. The way to the Kingdom is the way of courage and endurance; it is a journey for stalwarts only.

And John was surely one of the stalwarts. Even as he wrote, he was enduring. Patmos, that small, barren bit of bedrock, was no pleasure resort. And it was John's unshakable loyalty to the Word and preaching the message of Jesus Christ which brought him to that place. But even while John was there in exile, lonely Patmos turned into an island of glory, for there God showed him marvelous revelations of "things to come." Had we a choice, wouldn't we select Patmos for our residence if we could know that there we would be privileged to see such glorious visions of the future as John saw on Patmos!

Fresh Stimulus

It seems that the book of Revelation from Jesus came at a time when persecution was severe, and God's people were in need of

*"John to the seven churches
which are in Asia:
Grace be unto you, and peace,
from him which is,
and which was,
and which is to come. . . .*

*"And from Jesus Christ,
who is the faithful witness and
the first begotten of the dead,
and the prince of the kings
of the earth"
—Revelation 1:4-5.*

*"I . . . heard behind me
a great voice,
as of a trumpet, saying,*

*"I am Alpha, and Omega,
the first and the last:
. . . What thou seest, write
in a book, and send
unto the seven churches"*

*"Write the things
which thou hast seen,
and the things which are,
and the things which
shall be hereafter"
—Revelation 1:10-11, 19.*

fresh stimulus. At the time, emperor worship was the official religion of the whole Roman Empire. Loyal Christians could not cooperate with its demands, and for this reason many had to suffer.*

The expectation of glory became the environment in which the early Christians lived. However hostile and evil and threatening the world around them, they could always escape into an inner world of faith and find joy in their hope; Rome would not endure forever; God would endure.

In Revelation, John addressed himself and his writing "to the seven churches of Asia" (Rev. 1:4). The Asia which the New Testament knew was a small part of Asia Minor. It had been in earlier days a small kingdom; the king willed the land to the Romans upon his death. It included the western seacoast of what is now Asia Minor.

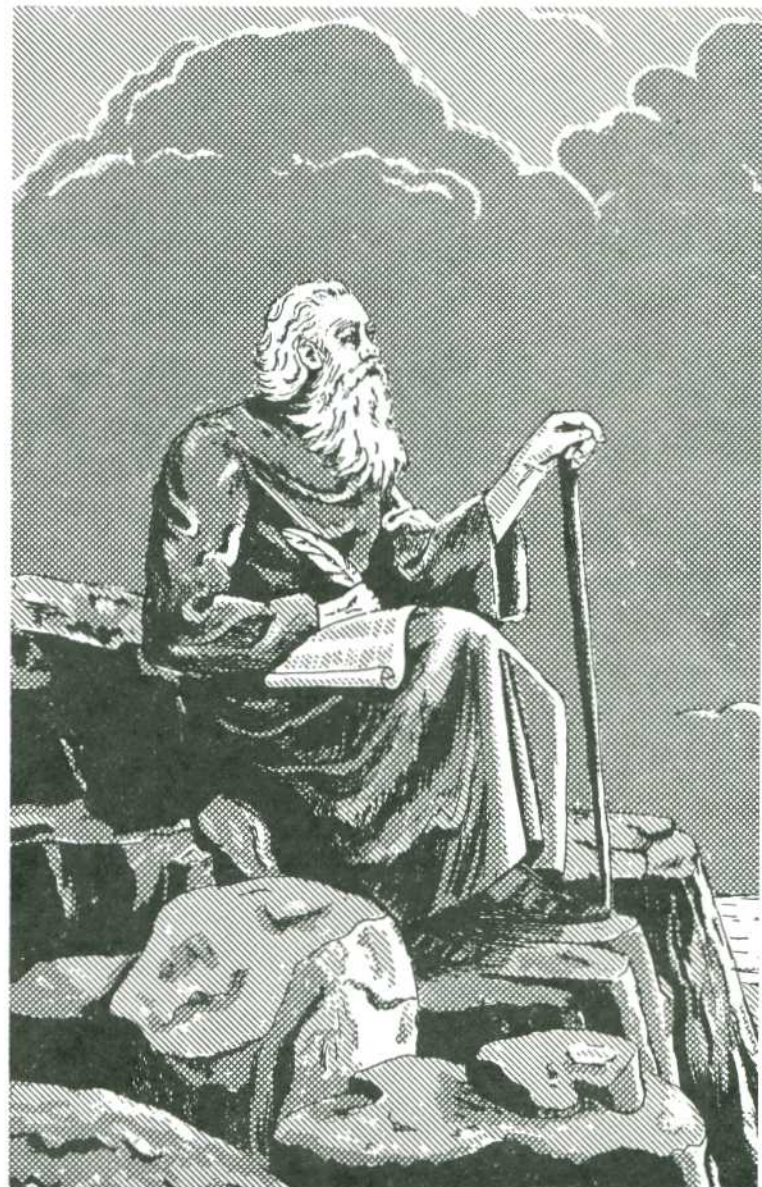
The numeral "seven" was regarded by ancient people as the perfect number, meaning completeness; hence it seems likely that in writing to "seven" churches John was writing to the whole Christian church in its completeness.

It may be possible, too, that in "seven" churches specifically named John had a special place, a special influence and a special authority. These may have been in a special sense *his* churches; and by speaking to them he was sending a message first to those who knew him and loved him best, and then through them to every church in every place and every generation.

The people he addressed had come from a variety of religions, races, nations and cultures. Their whole past spoke to them in a thousand ways. Many of these old ways had yet to be cast off to make room for the ways of Christ. These were people who were listening to the gospel message with minds and lives already filled with the interests of this world. But the compelling words of

the apostles had come to them with such power, such transforming power, that slowly they were becoming made over into new men and women. It was a challenge and an opportunity beyond all comparison.

The Christian religion is that way. It is a living, dynamic thing, working itself into the very texture of the lives of its votaries. The precious truths it brings are not only to be verbally acknowledged and accepted; they are to be personified in life and glorified by the richness of living adoration. At the very thought of them, the dedicated are ready to burst into song. This is very noticeable in the book of Revelation. There is much of tragedy; there is more of triumph and glory. In the book we constantly hear bursts of heavenly music; it is this rapture which takes old materials and makes them into new.



*It is quite possible that John was on Patmos for this very reason.

The essence of Emperor worship was that the emperor, embodying the spirit of Rome, was believed to be also divine, and was to be worshiped as deity. Once a year everyone in the Empire had to appear before the magistrates in order to burn a pinch of incense to Caesar and say "Caesar is Lord." To refuse to do this ceremony was an act of political disloyalty. To the Christians, there was one Lord and one Lord only; no human being could receive such honor at their hands.

The Emperor Domitian is said to have banished his niece Domitilla to Pontia, another small island like Patmos, and to have executed her husband because they had been attracted to the new religion and refused to worship the emperor according to the law. Such was the fate of many a Christian. In the face of such sufferings, many compromised their faith; but others stood firm.

Looking Forward

The book of Revelation is poetic; it is emblematic; but it is supremely elevating, and forms a beautiful and appropriate and climactic closing to the Sacred volume, for to its wonders the saints in every age look forward. Here is the glorious termination of the hopes and fears of all the years, the grand culmination of the struggles and conflicts and victories of the Church of God in all ages.

Because the book is concerned with an overall picture of events and not with minute details or exact sequences of last things, Revelation is highly figurative in structure and moves quickly from one scene of action to another. Often it takes only

a rapid overview of a scene and states only general results of a great event. Again, it is specific and more detailed. Many particulars remain obscure.

As one Bible scholar comments, this may be due to the original purpose for which it was sent. "Revelation was intensely practical in purpose. It sought to strengthen the hearts of embattled Christians in hard times. Its main purpose was to inspire. It sought to build courage with its message of hope, encouragement, and faith."

Says another scholar, "We must not treat the symbolic pictures of this book as if they represent an ordered and chronological record of events which step by step unfold. Each picture presents some insight and some principle with complete and secure sharpness. The writer moves forward and backward in the easiest fashion. We see the end, and then for the sake of emphasis we are taken back again to an earlier period. . . . We have become accustomed to the fact that in Revelation there is a recurrent presenting of finalities."

Revelation presents its message in imagery, vision, symbol. There is much in it that we do not fathom; but how we should thank God for that which it reveals, even "things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1:1).

The Holy, Heavenly City

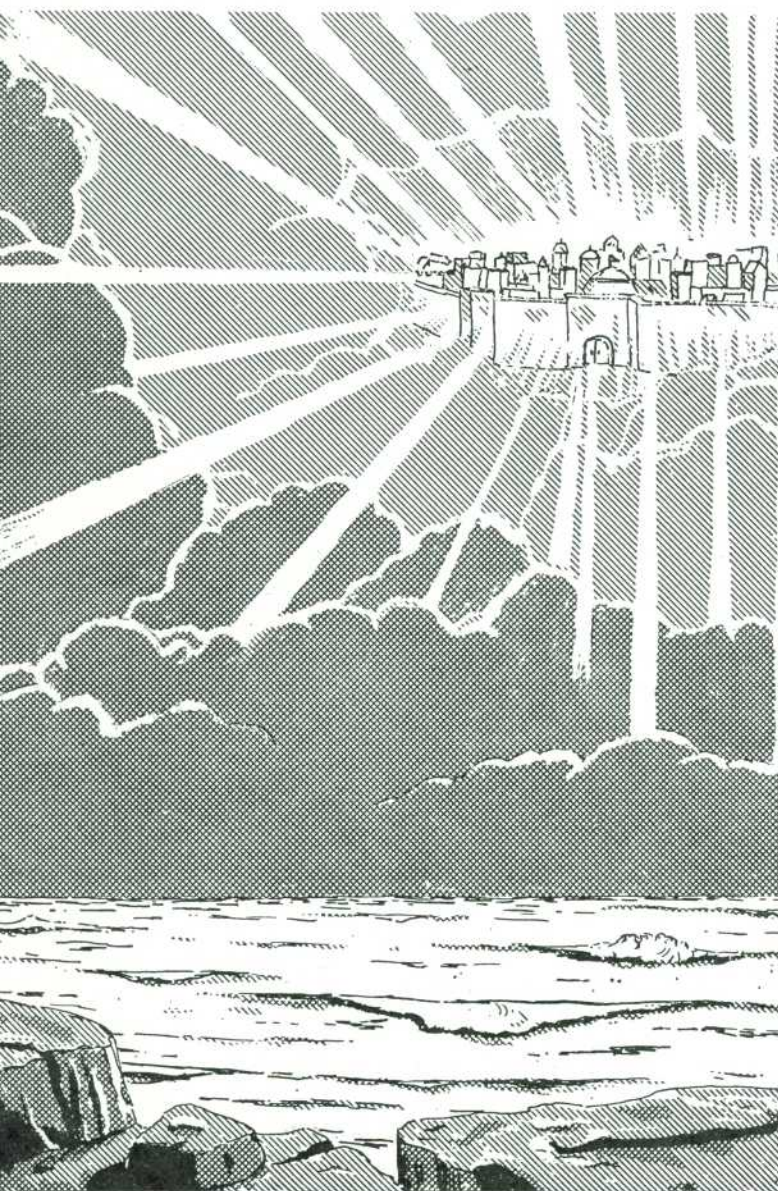
As John nears the end of the Revelation, he sees all things coming to a climax. Far transcending all earthly beauty and grandeur is the magnificent new creation which John sees in vision (chapter 21). The angel introduces it to him in the representative figure of "the bride, the Lamb's wife." And what is the picture?

"And he [the angel] carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (21:9-10).

Should we think it strange that the faithful are represented as a "city"? Such was the vision of the ancient Prophet who wrote, "They shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 60:14).

This "city" is said to descend from heaven because it is authorized and energized by the great God of heaven. As Paul wrote, "We are a colony of heaven, and we wait for the Savior who comes from heaven, who will transform the body that belongs to our low estate till it resembles the body of his glory" (Phil. 3:20-21, Moffatt Bible).

John, eager to encourage his brethren to meet



ing down from God out of heaven"—Rev. 21:2.

victoriously the trials they daily faced, recorded a number of details about this heavenly city of which every faithful man or woman of the first six thousand years of God's plan will be a part. In John's mind there was nothing too beautiful, too shining, too lavish, too rich to describe it. His first impression of the city was its *brightness*: "and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." "Jasper" and "crystal" represent the highest quality of perfection which each member of this spiritual "city" has attained.

Then John observes the city's strong defense and support: It had "a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" (v. 12). All who form a part of this city belong to the twelve tribes of spiritual Israel, God's true chosen people (Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6). Supporting the city wall are strong foundations, in which John sees written "the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (v. 14).

Can we picture this now-aged Apostle sitting on a rock on lonely Patmos, seeing in vision this transcendently beautiful city, and reading the names inscribed in its foundation—when John sees his own name among them! Can we not hear his shout of sheer joy and acclamation?

Still gazing at the perfection of this glorious city, John wonders about its dimensions. The angel measures, and finds the city "foursquare. . . . The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal" (v. 16-17), another evidence of its perfection.* John wants us to note, as he did, that the whole of the Holy City is holy and perfect.

A present-day believer in the reality of this spiritual city comments on its dimensions:

"By the colossal dimensions of the city John surely means that in that blessed life there will be spaciousness, to say nothing of unfettered liberty to enjoy it—such delight! Even those who could say with the Psalmist, 'Thou hast set my feet in a large room' (31:8) will enjoy the unspeakable large room in glory."

There will be blessings of mind and heart that human frailty, the pressures of life, and the demands of occupation deny us now. There will be

room for capacities which find no outlet here, for friendships we are unable to make or to continue in this life. There will be room for every holy joy and aspiration conceivable in the immortal mind!

Lastly, John takes note of the beauty of this Holy City. He portrays a dazzling picture: walls of jasper; foundations garnished with all precious stones; gates of pearl; the whole city shining with clear gold. All are symbols of the supreme and pure and holy character of those who compose the Holy City.

The meaning of "gold" is "the perfect ones, his dear ones, the pure ones."

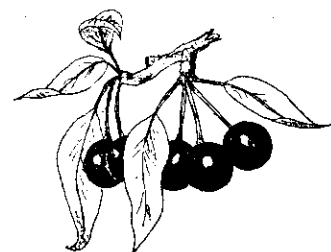
"Jasper" is a precious stone of various colors. "Jasper walls" appear to be emblematic of "every divine perfection of God which will be manifested in the holy and faithful" saints.

The "twelve precious stones" that embellish the foundation of the Holy City may symbolize the varied excellencies of the holy character of the apostles.

What beauty! What grand visions of things to come are ours through the work of that lonely prisoner on Patmos! How tragically incomplete would be our knowledge of the Millennium and "things to come" without his work.

But the end is not yet. ●●

Fruitful
Fragments



Oh to have the gift to think for ourselves as we can think for others!

It is better to understand a little than to misunderstand a lot.

Even if you are on the right track you will be run over if you just sit there.

A man wrapped up in himself makes a very small parcel.

The greatest of faults is to be conscious of none.

Worry never robs tomorrow of its trouble; it only saps today of its strength.

*If taken literally, the dimension of the city would be monstrous. Most translators give the measurements as 1500 miles square, and the city is said to be as high as it is wide.

Both the square and the cube were symbols of perfection. We must remember that the city itself is a representation of "the bride, the Lamb's wife" (v. 9), and is not intended to be in any sense a literal city.

Life After Life?

IN RECENT months there has been a tremendous surge of interest in the subject of life after death. Much of it is a direct result of some widely publicized research being conducted by certain doctors and psychiatrists in our country, particularly Raymond A. Moody, Jr., who is a doctor of philosophy, and Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, a highly respected Chicago-area doctor of psychiatry long famous for her work with the terminally ill. For years Dr. Kubler-Ross expressed no belief in life after death; now, on the basis of her recent studies and research, she is convinced that death is not the end of life. Her evidence is derived from experiences of some of her patients who were "clinically dead" and who were revived through medical intervention. They saw what death really is, she asserts.

This is how she describes it: "There is an experience of floating out of the body and of seeing what is happening to the corpse. Something supernatural must happen at the moment of death," she says, adding that while the person is "floating out of his body he does not want his life to be prolonged" (a rather strange statement if the person is already dead!). So respected is Dr. Kubler-Ross that some of her devotees have said, "If Dr. Kubler-Ross says there is life after death, then it must be so." (Dr. Kubler-Ross now claims that she has talked with and been touched by "spirit guides" during the night! Must this also "be so"?)

Dr. Moody, who claims no belief in or association with the "spirit" world, has written a book *Life After Life*, in which he discusses the results of his research of cases similar to those studied by Dr. Kubler-Ross. His research is based on detailed interviews with fifty people who experienced "clinical death"* and who revived. No two gave identical reports, but their experiences included moving through a long, dark tunnel, watching resuscitation efforts from 'outside' one's body, be-

ing greeted by relatives and friends who died earlier, seeing strange and dazzling lights, having one's life reviewed, and in every case returning to this life. He also acknowledges that some persons returning from "clinical death" remember nothing of the experience.

The reports may seem strange, but deathbed experiences are nothing new. In many a family are strongly cherished memories of what dying loved ones saw or told about. The reality of the experiences cannot be denied; these people see *something*. But is it another real world they are seeing, or a real hallucination, or a real nervous reaction, or what?

We cannot say that we know exactly *what* causes the experience, but we know what does *not* cause it. It provides absolutely no evidence of life beyond death—for the simple reason that the Author of life tells us otherwise.

The Bible has been proven right so many times, as against human conclusions, that we should consider one word from God worth more than all the testimony of all the men in the world combined. The Creator of life can surely be counted on to know more about it than the little beings who try to search out and understand its secrets.

Now the Bible says nothing of continued intelligence after death. Future life is possible only through physical resurrection, whatever men may think to the contrary. "The dead know not anything" (Eccl. 9:5). "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (Ps. 146:4). "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccl. 9:10).

That is why Paul wrote, "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: . . . then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (I Cor. 15:13-19). Here is the only life beyond death—*resurrected life*.

What can we safely conclude, then, about the "scientific" findings of doctors like Moody and Kubler-Ross?

First of all, we must hold the Word of God as

*"Clinical death" is defined as the absence of clinically detectable signs of life, such as the heart stopping, blood pressure so low as to be unreadable, body temperature dropping.

the source of supreme knowledge. Can we safely place the opinion of one who claims to contact "spirits" on a par with Scriptural facts?

Second, we may conclude quite safely that the research conducted thus far has not rendered any conclusive results; findings of differing doctors are contradictory, and solid conclusions are impossible to draw. Mr. Moody, for example, does not claim as much authority for his research as many people have credited him with. In his book he does not even venture to draw any "conclusions," only "impressions." He says, "I am not under the delusion that I have 'proven' there is life after death." Mr. Moody also admits freely the limitations of his research. "Because of the limited nature of my sample of cases," he writes, "I am unable to give a significant estimate of the prevalence of this phenomenon."

Third, in dealing with this type of subject, it is very important that we define our terms. Were the people interviewed "dead" as the Bible speaks of one who is dead, or as we understand the term? Had all their body functions ceased totally and "irreversibly"? (They had not, or they could not have been "revived." A function ceasing "irreversibly," we are told, is part of the definition of "death.") Furthermore, all tests necessary to determine the total absence of any life in a body cannot be performed on the "clinically dead" because of the emergency of the situation and the complex nature of the tests, and the shred of hope that the person may yet respond to some effort at resuscitation. In all cases interviewed, the person returned to life through physical and medical means of resuscitation.

"Death" for these people who "revived" was quite different from that which was restored as recorded in Scripture. For example, Elisha restored the Shunammite's son to life. This was a genuine death and a genuine resurrection; there is no way Elisha's act may be construed as a cardiopulmonary resuscitation. God's power intervened. Resuscitation would have been impossible, for this child had been dead some hours before Elisha arrived on the scene (II Kings 4:32). It was a five- or six-hour journey from the Shunammite's home to Mount Carmel, where Elisha was, and the mother of the child had to go and tell the prophet he was needed.

Our Lord restored three people to life, and again these cases were entirely different from those interviewed by our researchers today. Each person Jesus restored to life—Jairus' daughter, the widow of Nain's son, and Lazarus—had been dead at least a number of hours; Lazarus had been dead four days.

And the Bible gives no indication that any of these people experienced any life between the time they died and the time they were resurrected.

Hence, we must conclude that those "clinically dead" who are restored to life today do not experience death; therefore they cannot report on anything beyond this present life; theirs are experiences of dying, but not of death.

Fourth, it is significant that the same experiences reported by those who have been "clinically dead" have been induced in perfectly healthy people by means of drugs, deprivation, hypnosis, shock and brain stimulation. In a few schools, we are told, there are classes being held to teach people how to induce these "out-of-body" experiences in themselves!

Is there any evidence, then, of life beyond death from those who see lights or hear new sounds as they are dying? The answer is definitely NO. It is very likely a result of mind and nerves reacting to stress, etc. The "new" scientific evidence presents no challenge to the Word of the Lord. There is only one means of escape from the clutches of death, and that is through physical resurrection by the power of God. ●●

*Oh! Why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift-falling meteor, a fast-flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
Man passeth from life to his rest in the grave.*

*The leaves of the oak, and the willow shall fade,
Be scattered around, and together be laid;
And the young and the old, and the low and the high
Shall molder to dust and together shall die.*

*The hand of the king that the scepter hath borne;
The brow of the priest that the miter hath worn;
The eye of the sage, and the heart of the brave,
Are hidden and lost in the depth of the grave.*

*The maid on whose cheek, on her brow, in her eye
Shone beauty and pleasure—her triumphs are by;
And the memory of those who loved her and praised
Are alike from the minds of the living erased.*

*So the multitude goes, like the flow'r and the weed
That wither away to let others succeed;
So the multitude comes, even those we behold,
To repeat every tale that has often been told.*

*'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud—
Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?*

NEGIDDO MESSAGE

Appreciation and Kindness

STRANGE how we humans are made. No one likes to be rejected. All of us have within us a desire to be loved and appreciated, and to love and appreciate someone else. Some of the grandest moments of our lives are when we are reminded that we *are* loved and appreciated.

One time a certain man was speaking about a teacher he had some thirty years before. The teacher had taken great pains to instill in his young mind some wonderful principles which he now valued highly. Someone asked the man if he had ever taken the trouble to tell this to his teacher, and he admitted that he never had. The query made him determined to do so, and he wrote her a beautiful letter of appreciation. In return he received her answer:

"My dear Willie: I can't tell you how much your note meant to me. I am in my eighties, living alone in a small room, cooking my meals, lonely, and like the last leaf of fall, lingering behind. You will be interested to know that I taught school for fifty years, and yours is the *first* letter of appreciation I ever received. It came on a blue, cold morning, and it cheered me as nothing has in years."

This illustrates the Bible proverb: "Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul and health to the bones."

A friend wrote to another, saying, "Your words lift the heart and stir up my hope." These were encouraging words. Everyone appreciates appreciation. Why do we humans give so little of it to one another? It costs nothing, and it is worth so much!

Expressed appreciation is really one of the ingredients of kindness, and what an excellent virtue is kindness! It has power to heal trouble, make friends, and build up brotherhood. It is priceless, for its value cannot be computed. Fear builds walled cities, erects iron curtains and sets rigid boundaries. Jealousy and pride create barriers that make aliens out of nearest kin. Mistrust and selfishness bring about bitter feelings. Only "love suffereth long and is kind"; only love can dispel these ugly elements.

Greatheartedness is another aspect of the kindly spirit. There is no more wonderful example of this in Scripture than in the love of Jonathan for

David. Jonathan knew that David was to have the position and the honor that he himself might have had—and yet Jonathan went out of his way to love and encourage and strengthen David. It is written in the Record that he "loved him, as his own soul." Normal human feelings might have prompted Jonathan to be jealous of David; this quality was very much in Jonathan's family—even while Jonathan and David were sharing the fondest friendship Jonathan's father was seeking David's life, so jealous was he of David's success. But none of this feeling is seen in Jonathan; Jonathan stood strong where his father fell. Jonathan was great in the grace of kindness.

This greatness of spirit is not common to the natural heart. We are by nature self-seeking, not self-effacing. Self-preservation—whether of body, place, name or face—is the first law of nature. To show a spirit of kindness, then, means to be greater than one's natural self, to rise to unaccustomed generosity in response to someone else's need. The blessing promised to those who practice this grace is: "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Prov. 11:25). Kindness has its rewards; like "bread cast upon the waters," it often returns a hundred-fold "after many days."

Kind and loving deeds live longer than granite monuments.

Kindness ought not to be like the echo, returning only what you give, no more, and sometimes less. Perhaps the hearts of some people have not opened outward for so long that the portal creaks when there is any attempt to obey a generous impulse. Smiles do not come easily when the face through years of practice has assumed a frown pattern.

If such is our problem, let us hasten and pray, "Lord, forgive our hardening ways, teach us loving-kindness all our days."

How quickly hearts respond to the least sign of kindness. Like doors, they open to welcome the kindly person.

Has there ever been one in your life from whom you would value a kindly feeling far above a goodly sum of money? God forbid that this virtue should ever be scarce in us. Sometimes we live kindly with inferiors, agreeable with equals, but

we grow hard and envious as soon as we must deal with one who surpasses us. How often when we meet with one who excels us does something of the old nature of Cain wake up in us. Kindness becomes a struggle. But this is our opportunity to exercise kindness that is kingly and excellent.

It has been said that the beautiful fruit which comes last to perfection, even in the kindest soul, is tenderness toward the hard, and forbearance toward the unbearingly. In such places our kindness is tested. And by meeting the test victoriously, it is brought to perfection.

We should never mistake soft sentimentality for kindness. Parental indulgence of emotional outbursts of children is disastrous to the home, and later to the state. Indulgence of their whims is not a demonstration of love. True kindness does not kindle the demonstration of unstable emotions. The advice of Paul the apostle is still timely: "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). We must not be harsh, but firm and kind.

What beautiful attendants the virtue of kindness has—it is gentle, good, gracious, forbearing, tender, compassionate, obliging, friendly, warm-hearted, Christlike. All these increase as kindness is spread abroad; they shine brighter with use. Silverware kept for special occasions tarnishes; but silversmiths tell us that using it regularly gives it a glossy richness that enhances its beauty. So with the lovely aspects of kindness. They lose their beauty when not used.

If we would be kind, polite and forbearing to strangers, why not polish these virtues by using them every day at home!

We should be so thankful that we can remove all hatred from our hearts, all severity and harshness from our lives, and that we can rejoice in the joy which a kind heart brings.

"Be ye kind one to another" was written for us to practice. Let us labor and bring this excellent virtue to perfection.

A kind heart is a fountain of gladness that spreads happiness all around. ●●

ORDER NOW!

You can have your 1977 Messages all bound in one black hard-cover book. Twelve complete Messages and binding, only \$5.00. Order must be received by January 30, 1978.

Is This All There Is?

(Continued from page 7)

that it is historical, an event that actually happened.

Now there are several problems in this. First of all, the Bible tells us to compare "spiritual things with spiritual" when studying that which has been revealed by the Holy Spirit of God (I Cor. 2:13). And there are several terms in the story—"Abraham's bosom," and the "finger" dipped in water, and the great "gulf fixed"—which no one thinks of as being literal.

Secondly, if the story is a historical account of a real event, then Christ was not the firstfruits unto life eternal—Lazarus was, for Jesus pictures him enjoying his reward. Paul says plainly that none other than Christ is the "firstfruits" (I Cor. 15:23).

A New Testament Commentary has this to say: Some have regarded this "as historical narrative rather than parable. But this view . . . ignores the element of symbolism that is quite apparent in the story. 'Abraham's bosom,' the 'great chasm fixed,' and 'this flame' obviously ought not to be pressed into too literal a meaning, and it would be rash to attempt a description of the after-life from the details given here. . . . The aim of the parable is not to acquaint us with details of the life to come, but to confront us with our duty in this life."

No, the Rich Man and Lazarus must be parable. As the inspired writer says, "with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them" (Mark 4:33-34). The Rich Man and Lazarus was not spoken to describe anyone's actual experience following death. In fact, the interval of death is passed over in a mere word or two. It is a parable to teach us the necessity of making the right use of our lifetime so that we may be on the right side at the time of the great separation. There is no way we can live to please ourselves now and find favor and happiness in the world to come. It is the lesson that was given to the Israelites long ago: "O that they were wise, that they understood this: that they would consider their latter end" (Deut. 32:29).

Spirit Returns to God—?

Another text that raises some question about the state of the dead is found in Ecclesiastes 12:7. The verse reads: "Then shall the dust return to

the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

If we read this verse with the idea in our minds that something about us goes to heaven at death, this verse will surely confirm our idea. But if we read it without any such idea, we will see nothing here to indicate it. The same point found in Ecclesiastes 12:7 is found in Psalm 104:29-30: "Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth." When a man dies, God takes away a man's breath. While he lives, God gives the breath. "All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils" (Job 27:3)—this is the condition of life according to God's design. He provides the "breath" which animates the body, and this breath of life is called the spirit of God.

Notice that Ecclesiastes 12:7 does not even say the spirit that returns to God is either good or evil. It says simply the "spirit" of man, which would have to include the spirit of all men whether good or bad. If this verse proves that good men go to heaven at death, it proves also that wicked men go to heaven. But God has no such plan, and the text says no such thing. It says only that when a man dies, his breath goes into the vast reservoir of atmosphere surrounding the earth, which is the property of God. The man no longer has any claim upon it.

James 2:26 uses the term "spirit" in the same way: "For as the body without the spirit [margin, "breath"] is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

Souls Do Die

The Bible leaves no question but that souls can be destroyed (Ps. 40:14; Ps. 63:9). The soul can hunger (Prov. 19:15). The soul thirsts (Prov. 25:25). The soul has blood (Jer. 2:34). The soul can die (Ezek. 18:20). Souls lie in the grave: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [*sheol*, the grave]" (Ps. 16:10). These Scriptures show that the soul is the entire man, made of flesh and blood, capable of hungering, thirsting, dying, and lying in the grave. No man *has* a soul; man *is* a soul. The soul is the whole person.

If there were no death possible to the soul, how could anyone save a soul from death? James says this is possible: "Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death" (Jas. 5:20). If a man is converted and changes his ways, his soul has been saved from death—he, a soul, a

being, a man has been saved from the wages of sin.

Depart, and Be with Christ?

What about Paul's saying that he preferred death to life? Didn't he expect to be with Christ as soon as he died?

This is the thought often drawn from Philippians 1:23: "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ." However, if we say that Paul expected to go immediately to be with Christ when he died, we are setting Paul against himself, because Paul said that there was no hope of anything beyond this life except through resurrection, and attaining to the resurrection was his whole concern: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:11). "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then . . . is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. . . . Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (I Cor. 15:13-14, 18). If those who are "fallen asleep in Christ are perished" and without hope except for the promised resurrection, how could Paul look forward to falling asleep in Christ and *being with Christ immediately*? He could not.

What, then, about Philippians 1:23? The word *analuō* rendered "depart" in this verse is translated "return" in Luke 12:35, 36, where Jesus said, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return [*analuō*] from the wedding." When Paul expressed his desire to "depart, and to be with Christ" might he not have been thinking of the same grand event Jesus spoke of, the time of His *returning*? This is the thought of this verse as translated in the *Emphatic Diaglott*: "I am indeed hard pressed by two things;—(I have an earnest desire for the returning, and being with Christ, since it is very much to be preferred;)—but to remain in the flesh is more requisite on your account." He was eager for Christ to come, because he knew that at "his appearing" he would receive his reward (II Tim. 4:7-8).

Absent from the Body, Present with the Lord

Believers in the immortality of the soul are also sure to go to Paul's words "absent from the body, present with the Lord," as if the two conditions had to exist together. The passage reads: "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent

from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight)."

What was Paul saying? In I Corinthians 5 he discusses the two states: mortal and immortal. We are now in this body of mortality, he says, longing for the change to the immortal state, to "be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" (vs. 2-4). So long as we are in this mortal state we are "absent from the Lord"; (v. 6) that is, we cannot enter the kingdom of God in this our mortal condition for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (I Cor. 15:50). Before we can be "present with the Lord," Christ must come and change our bodies, fashioning them like unto his glorious body (Phil. 3:20-21). Only when we are absent from our body of mortality can we be "present with the Lord." "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent [alive at the time of Christ's return or sleeping in death] we may be accepted of him" (I Cor. 5:9). Our acceptance or rejection will be determined entirely by what we have done *prior* to that time, whatever our physical status. We will be judged by the "things done in [the] body" (5:10).

The Lesson To Us

This brings us to a sharp reality we should never forget. Lifetime is working time, and lifetime is limited. We are mortal. We know this, but we set it aside as something we should not think about. Death is in the land, but it is always someone else's death. But the fact remains that were time to go on long enough in the natural course of events, it would be your death and my death. We do not say this to be grim but to alert ourselves to our desperate need of seizing the opportunity that is ours NOW. "Only one life, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last."

The mass of humankind are very much like a great river flowing through the world on and on and out into oblivion. They are born, they eat, they breathe, sleep, suffer, enjoy, and finally grow old and die. And somewhere along the way, between the beginning and the end, they wonder, "Is this all there is?"

If this is all they have done with it, the answer is "yes," for we know there is no consciousness in death. And for anything beyond the extent of this life we are totally dependent upon the mercy of God.

Now . . . or Never

If what we have now is NOT to be all there is for us, we must take action NOW. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." It

is NOW or NEVER. Beyond the end of this short span of life is nothing, absolutely nothing, except as God sees something in us worthy of perpetuation.

NOW is the time for us to be securing God's favor, for someday we shall need it, and need it desperately. Someday we shall reach the point beyond which we have no power to go. And then it will be too late to merit God's good favor. The words of the prophet Jeremiah come to mind: "Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness" (Jer. 13:15-16).

How easily we forget this in the rush of day-to-day affairs. We absorb ourselves in the present moment, as though it would last forever. Like the child who delights in a bright balloon, we reach for the things of here and now. They look so attractive, so pleasing, so satisfying. But the beautiful balloon will surely burst, sooner or later, as balloons always do, and we shall be left gazing in dismay at the tiny twisted fragments of our folly.

NOW is the time for us to be working. We have not a moment to squander; when we squander time, we are squandering eternity, and this is a loss none of us can afford.

How our hearts should overflow with deepest gratitude to the God who has given us this mortal span, and who has offered us more, so much more in the age beyond—if we make the right use of our mortal days. For "as we have borne the image of the earthy," so may we, if faithful, someday bear the "image of the heavenly."

Let us thank God, and use every minute and every motion of this short span as God has directed; and then, as surely as God is true, it shall open into eternal vistas of pleasures and life more abundant. And then, when we ask our marvelous Benefactor if this is all there is, the answer will be a glorious "No!" for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." ●●

"So let our lips and lives express
The Holy gospel we profess;
So let our works and virtues shine
To prove the doctrine all divine."

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

Remember How It Feels

“MARK, will you stop teasing poor Doris!”
Mother’s voice rang from the kitchen.

“I’m not bothering her,” came the reply. “She’s just being a baby.”

Mother appeared in the doorway. “Stop tickling her while she is reading. Put that feather away and leave her alone.”

“She likes it, Mom,” argued Mark.

“I’m sure she doesn’t,” replied Mother. “How would you like being bothered while you read?”

“I think I should like it,” Mark responded, then muttered under his breath, “Things are so dull around here.”

“You heard me, Mark. Do behave and stop annoying Doris. There are other things you can find to do.”

There was peace for a few minutes, as Mark occupied himself by leafing through several magazines. Then he sauntered over to gaze out the window at the wintry scene. The frost pattern on the glass held his attention for awhile.

Suddenly he gave a shout as an idea struck him. “Let’s go outside, Doris, and build a fort. The snow is just right for packing.”

In a few minutes happy voices could be heard outside as the two packed and piled large blocks of snow. Then trouble began again.

“That’s mine!” yelled Doris.

“Get it if you can!” Mark laughed as he held Doris’ snow shovel as high over his head as he could reach.

“What is the matter now?” called Mother, who was at the window watching.

“Mark took my shovel,” cried Doris, “and—he won’t let me have it back!” she sobbed.

“I was only seeing how tall she is. She likes to jump for things,” called Mark. “She’s too little for this shovel, anyway.”

“That isn’t yours to decide,” replied Mother firmly. “Mark, give Doris’ shovel back to her. And if there is any more trouble, you will spend the rest of the day in your room.”

The two children went back to their building in the snow, and Mother to her work, feeling pleased that at last her warning had brought peace—she knew how Mark hated that punishment—when she heard the familiar cry again, only louder now than ever.

“Boo-hoo-hoo—”

She ran to the door, and what she saw didn’t

please her. Mark was holding Doris, face down, in the snow.

“Mark!” called Mother. “What on earth are you doing? Stop it!”

“Oh, Mom, she likes it,” cried Mark. “Her face was hot, it needed cooling. She just likes to yell.”

Mother disappeared into the house and in a moment came out with her coat. In the meantime, Mark thought it best to escape. Off he dashed for the far corner of the yard. But soon his mother had him captive.

“You think Doris likes the way you treat her?” said Mother, all out of breath.

“Do you, Doris?”

“No! I don’t!” shouted Doris.

“We shall see how well Mark likes it,” she said as she laid Mark down and held him firmly with his face in the snow.

Kicking and screaming, Mark tried to escape, but Mother held him. “Stop! Mom!—please!” he cried.

“Oh, but I’m sure you like it,” said Mother quietly. “Surely you can’t be cooled off yet.”

“I’m freezing,” screamed Mark. “Stop!”

At last Mother let Mark go. “I hope you’ll remember how that little treatment feels,” she said as the unhappy little boy scrambled to his feet and shook off the snow. “I hope you remember this when you are about to forget the Golden Rule, that we must do to others as we want them to do to us.”

Mark dashed to the house. Mother turned to Doris. “You can help Mark by not making such a fuss when he forgets and does tease you, Doris. Will you try?”

“Yes, Mother, I’ll try.”

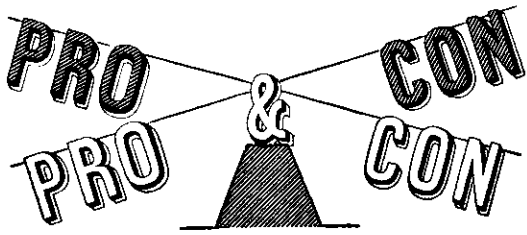
Mother and Doris walked to the house together, but Mark wasn’t anywhere around. He had made a beeline for his room—he didn’t want to hear any more.

Mark’s face soon warmed up, but he never forgot the lesson. And you can be sure there was a lot more peace around the house after that. ●●

**We are all blind until we see
That in the human plan,
Nothing is worth the building
That does not build the man.**

**Why build these cities glorious
If man unbuilds goes?
In vain we build the world unless
The builder also grows.**

—Selected



A Column for Open Discussion

All our readers do not agree with us. If you are among those who differ on some point, write us your views and we will consider them in the light of Scripture teaching. Our policy is the Apostle's injunction: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

• Are the resurrected dead going to be mortal or immortal?

"You also say that the Bible says (which it doesn't, by the way, one should never interpret the Scriptures from his own point of view, but Scripture should be interpreted from and by the light and harmony of other Scriptures)—the Bible says that those resurrected will be mortal. Not so. You say to be raised immortal would be to negate the judgment, for how could the Judge divide them 'as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats,' if only sheep stood before Him? All right, the Bible plainly answers that very question: Those whom the Son of God is 'dividing' are the resurrected and the then-alive saints, who are immortal, plus those mortals who survive through God's wrath."

We find no reference in the Bible to the Judgment that is for the purpose of dividing "the resurrected and the then-alive saints." If they are saints, they need no dividing or judging. Paul said in II Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." This is what the Judgment is for: to separate the wheat from the tares, the righteous from the wicked, the good from the bad.

If your theory is true and the righteous or saints are judged first and the wicked are judged a thousand years later, then Jesus got His facts reversed in Matthew 13:30. Speaking of the wheat and tares, He said: "Let both grow together until

the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." Both wheat and tares are present at the same time of separation.

Jesus taught the same when He described the Judgment as the separating of sheep and goats. Both were present, and while the sheep were placed on His right, the goats were turned to the left (Matt. 25:31-41).

"There will be mortals living throughout the thousand years. Haven't you ever read Zechariah 14, which proves this? Verse 16: 'And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.'

"There will have to be mortals around. Verses 7-8 of Revelation 20 read: 'And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations.' In order for them to be deceived, they must be mortal! Yes, some of the heathen and wicked will live through Messiah's second coming. Not all will be destroyed."

There will indeed be mortals who survive Christ's coming and who will live during the Millennium. The subjects of the Kingdom during the thousand years will be mortal; only the rulers, those who have been judged and rewarded with immortality at the time of the first resurrection, will be immortal.

"I just don't know how you can say that the righteous dead (that is, those who have died having the Spirit of God) aren't resurrected incorruptible (the very opposite of mortal). Will you please read verse 52 of chapter 15 of First Corinthians? 'In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised [not later, but then] incorruptible, and we shall be changed.' When Paul was saying, 'For this corruptible must put on incorruption,' he was simply stating in the present tense looking forward to the future, not meaning that this happens after a person is raised.

"I'm not saying that one is judged faithful while still in the grave. We shall all stand before the Son of God in Judgment (even the resurrected immortals), so they can be given rewards, chastisements, or whatever the case

may be. Remember the Scripture verse, 'For we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is [glorified, spiritual body]. How plain! No, I do not agree with your doctrines, for they aren't Scripturally sound.'

The prophet Daniel reveals the time of the Judgment as when Michael (the "chief one," Christ), stands up, "the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. 12:1). The Prophet then speaks of the resurrection: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Here again it is the faithful and unfaithful that come forth to be separated and rewarded at Judgment.

I am somewhat confused by your statement that "resurrected immortals" must be "judged" so that they can receive "rewards, chastisements, or whatever the case may be." Would not a resurrected immortal already have received the rewards of His labor? Paul includes "immortality" along with what shall be given to "them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for" it (Rom. 2:7). And how could one who qualifies for "immortality" need to be chastised? The Bible says that once we turn from our sins, "none of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him" (Ezek. 33:16).

For a fuller explanation of First Corinthians 15:52, see the February and March issues of the **Megiddo Message**, the section "Understanding the Bible," pages 13-17.

"Your doctrines aren't Scripturally sound. Neither is the doctrine of an immortal soul (speaking of humans) or of going off up to heaven to compare wing-sizes."

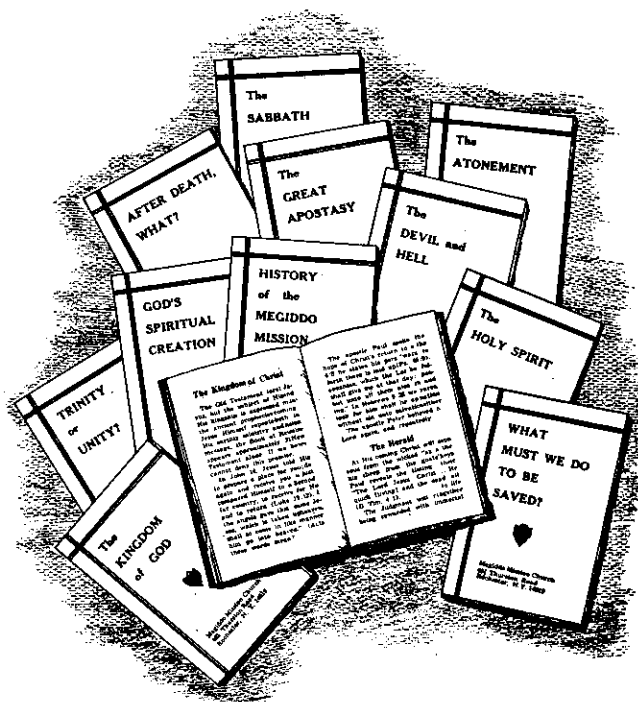
On these two latter points we agree wholeheartedly.

"I don't mean to put you down or anything. I'm sorry if I've offended you any. If you still disagree with me, then prove it to me by sending me some Scriptures to back your doctrine. I will be waiting."

Yes, we do disagree with you on the resurrection. We have given you our reasons from the Bible. ●●

January, 1978

Special!



For You -- and Your Friends

All for \$1.00

ORDER NOW!

(Offer good for limited time only)

Music or Noise?

Which does your life make?

One person gets nothing but discord out of a piano; another gets ravishing harmony. No sensible person blames the piano for the noise, or gives it all the credit for the music.

Life is very much the same. The possibility of discord is there—feelings of jealousy, hate, bitterness; impulses of deceit, dishonesty, anger. Also there is the possibility of harmony and peace. Our business is to learn to play correctly.

When we play our lives correctly, they will give forth harmony. If we play carelessly, they will give forth dissonance. Life is not at fault. Life may be a sweet, delightful experience if we touch the notes rightly and in tune.

Our Readers Write...

Nothing Short of Perfection

We thank God for people today who are strong in the ways of the Lord. Now that we know the way, we must not waste our time but constantly think on these things, for they are a joy and comfort to the soul and the only way to life eternal.

This writer would like to be known as a servant of God, a true follower of Christ, a worker of righteousness. We know a perfect character must be developed to be worthy of the Kingdom of God. We can stop at nothing short of perfection.

Phoenix, Arizona

W. C. G.

If It Were Not for the Bible

There is so much vice and evil going on in this world that it makes us wonder what next—except that we know these things are fulfilling the words of God. There is so much evil, and so many calling evil good and doing evil with both hands earnestly. If it were not for all the truths from the Bible that we have to feed on, I think we would shudder at it all.

Truly God has been so good to us all. May we never forget it all comes from God the faithful Giver. Each day we thank Him for a new day and may we ever be thankful for His wonderful words of life.

Kinards, South Carolina

H. C.

Needing Help

We need help to be encouraged to make better use of this short precious time given us, which is so rapidly running out. We can see very plainly by the signs along the way that the great Day of the coming of our Lord is right at the door, and it is indeed high time to wake up and get ready by putting away all our old natural thoughts and the ways of the old flesh man. Too many times we allow our thoughts to wander away, forgetting to bring them into subjection to the obedience of Christ. Yet our heavenly Father in His great mercy and longsuffering keeps us alive, giving us a little more time to make a complete change from old to new.

But as we are often reminded, we should not impose upon His longsuffering. Time is running out for us, so let us make haste and clean up. The prize is too great to miss.

British Columbia, Canada

Z. M. S.

No Escape

The warfare of innerself is the one that is most difficult to fight. It is what comes from within. We can be separated from the world, as we are to do, thus help ourselves in overcoming the besetments from the world.

But we cannot escape from ourselves. Wherever we go or are, here I am. So we must look out for ourselves. It is the tongue, and what it may utter; it is the ear, and what it is willing to listen to; it is the eye, and what it wants to look at, and it is the heart, or mind, and what it may think. The mind is continually thinking, good or bad, for the Lord, for self, or the devil (sin). A person dead physically

cannot do anything good or bad. So we must be dead unto sin. It is easy to let our tongue slip and say something we should not have.

But if we ponder on good things, things of divine nature, we shall develop a habit and that habit is good.

We must be stirred up, read, think and act upon the precepts of the Word. Without continually reading the Word and acting upon it we shall fail.

Alberta, Canada

J. G.

From A Reader—

Can I Change?

The weather is very unpredictable, so much like human nature until truly changed. And that is accomplished only through strenuous effort and daily self-discipline.

Can a fifty-year-old man change? Can we really be different? At this late date in life, can a start be made to live a life that will really be godly?

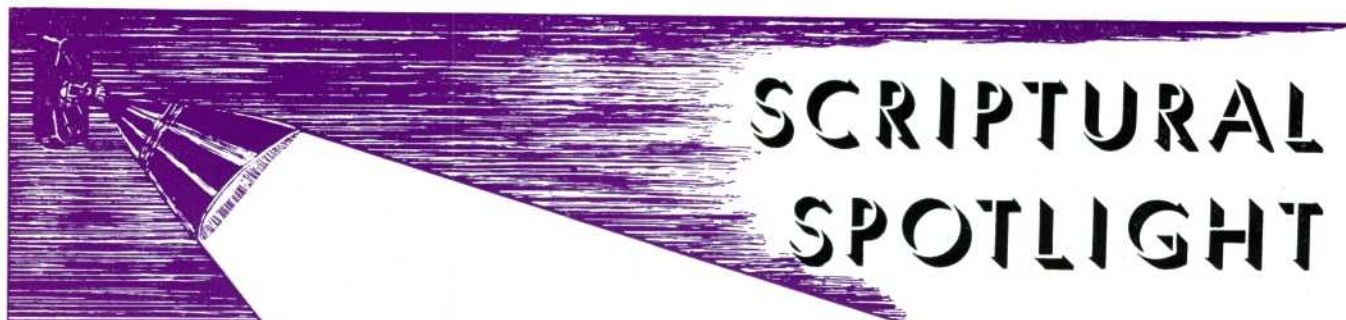
Yes. Positively! God never said that once a man reaches forty or fifty or eighty that he is incapable of change. Look what Abraham did when an old man. Look at the tremendous changes that God demanded of him in old age.

We should never fear change. The Christian life is a life of continual change. The Scriptures call life a walk, not a rest. When Christ said, "Take up your cross daily and follow me," He meant, Here is a daily struggle to change. It is a struggle to smile when you would rather not; it is a struggle to get up and do something when it would be easier just to sit and do nothing about it. It is a struggle to return good for evil when the disposition is all geared to slap back, slap for slap. And so it is that we can live according to the way we feel, or we can control those feelings of contrary wilfulness and be obedient to the Word of God. When reviled, revile not; when threatened, commit yourself to God.

It must have been hard for Abraham to change from his place of living and take up abode in tents somewhere else. It is a struggle to give up things and places, too, when we are so accustomed to things and ways of our own.

But change is the portion of all of us. What I may have to change from or into is my individual struggle, and yours is yours. And so it is. Truth is demanding, and cannot be by-passed. Discipline first requires self-examination and then go and crucify those old miserable ways of ours, give up what needs to be given up and be at peace with God and man.

I am striving to change now, so as to be able to face the Judge unashamed in that coming Day. ●●



SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

"And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, . . . Be thou clean"
—Matt. 8:3.

HE WAS a leper, and only Jesus could touch him; only Jesus *would* touch him. The law strictly forbade a leper to come within six feet of any person. The leper who came too close ran the risk of being stoned. *Anyone* else would have driven him away—but Jesus "touched him."

We do not have leprosy; we are thankful we do not have to fear that dreadful, *unclean* disease. But we have a need, a great need for the divine touch. Do we realize how unclean we naturally are? Ours is spiritual leprosy, leprosy of the heart and soul. Do we realize our desperate situation, that we are doomed to die, to die eternally unless a cleansing touch can make us pure and clean? The uncleanness of sin—the pride, the selfishness, the jealousy, and the many evils to which human nature is so prone—is deadly. God's almighty Hand is not shortened that it cannot save, but such blemishes separate us from His saving touch.

The leper implored Jesus, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean!" Let us join his earnest appeal, "Lord, help me to be healed of everything that is unclean in Thy sight! I know Thou canst make me clean." How overwhelming should be our thankfulness that the divine Hand still heals.

Hear now the words of our Great Healer as He diagnoses our disease: "It is the thought life that pollutes. For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts of lust, theft, murder, adultery, wanting what belongs to others, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, pride, and all other folly. All these vile things come from within; they are what pollute you and make you unfit for God" (Mark 7:20-23, Living Bible).

But we need no longer be polluted by the thirteen evils that naturally dwell within. Jesus has offered healing to all who will listen to and obey His life-giving words. He has told us that if we do, our spiritual health will spring forth speedily and our lives will be filled with thirteen vir-

tues. From within each heart enthused by the Master's touch will come pure thoughts, a spirit of humility, conversation that flows forth with the grand life-giving Word of hope, an example of life totally Christian and worthy of emulation, the noble virtue of longsuffering even as God is longsuffering with us, kindness obliterating all bitterness and an abounding love one to another that reflects the love of Christ. Then there will be that yielding to every good purpose that allows no stubbornness, a wholehearted praise for another which cleanses jealousy from the heart; a watchfulness to spend each golden moment to God's honor and glory; a guard set up against foolish, light or thoughtless words; the selfish spirit smothered by abounding goodwill. There will be words of encouragement, cheer and loving warning to help another along the way; determination, faith and zeal to stamp out every hindrance on the road to that life that shall never end. All these come from the heart cleansed by the Master's touch and make the owner clean and fit for God's Kingdom.

With our Master's touch, our petty self-centered lives can bring forth qualities of soul which have lain dormant and useless. We do not need to remain ordinary; we can be valuable to the Lord, to ourselves and to our fellowman by the example of holiness we show.

Has the Master's touch set our hearts vibrating with an overpowering love of the life to come? By a life in harmony with God's Word we show the Master's touch upon our lives.

Before the Mighty God "lies a record of His worshippers," and He "will spare them, as a man spares the son who works in his service. Then . . . shall you see the difference between good and bad, between him who serves God and him who does not serve him" (Mal. 3:16-18, Moffatt).

What makes the difference? It is the Master's healing touch. ●●

Close your eyes for a moment . . .

to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow, suffering and sin that yet prevail, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth.

Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society.

Not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word.

Love wells up in every heart and meets a kindred response in every other heart.

Every act of man to man is filled and overflowing with goodness and love.

There is no strife.

No division.

No war.

No crime.

No attitudes of haughtiness or pride.

No anguish of heart.

No ill-will.

No parting.

There sickness shall be no more; not an ache or pain, or any evidence of decay—not even a thought of such a thing.

No accidents, and no fear of them.

Think of the most magnificent beauty you have ever seen—God's perfect world will surpass it.

Think of the loveliest character you ever imagined, that highest perfection to which you aspire—such will be everywhere!

Think of the most soul-stirring music you have ever heard or conceived of—it cannot compare with the music of the immortals.

Inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance.

Such will earth's society be when earth becomes a part of heaven. Such will this world be when its glorification is complete.

Someday it *will* be.

HAVE YOU CAUGHT THE VISION?

