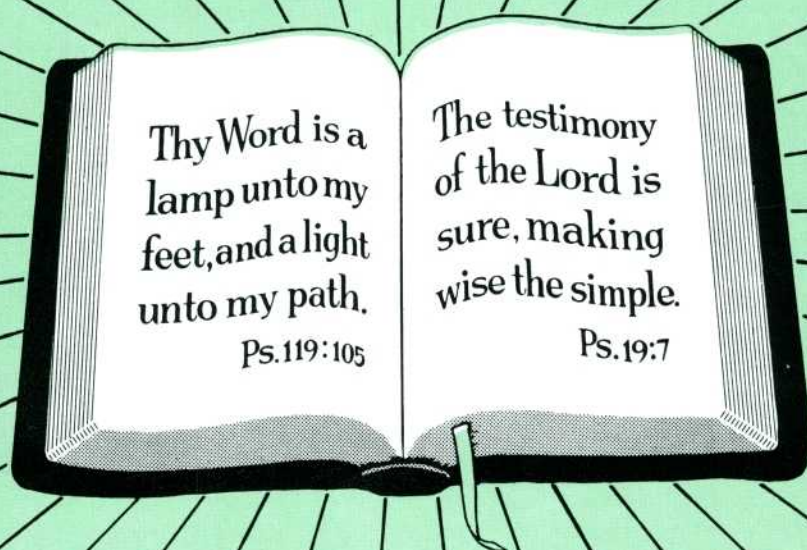


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



Ready or Not, I'm Coming

He Must Increase, I Must Decrease

What Is Truth? The Great Infidel Discussion

Why Does God Allow Suffering?

Not All Natural

THE “all Natural” label seems to have overwhelmed the selling market. Advertisers are capitalizing on the popular idea that everything as it occurs in “nature” is just right, and so all kinds of marketed products are “all natural,” whether the product be rug cleaner or cheese. The fact that it is “all natural” is intended to lead the buyer to believe this particular product is free from any and all contaminants and chemicals that might cause harm, and thus is the “just right” purchase to make. (Which leads one to question what is the absolute value of that which is “all natural.” Lard is “all natural,” so is gun powder, so is formaldehyde, so is opium.)

Another aspect of the “all natural” advertising is that done by appealing to one’s natural nostalgia. A sign in the front window of a small restaurant announces that “home cooked food” is being served—“just like mother used to make.” But a second glance at the side window, with its dirty, fly-spotted glass and dusty curtains, makes one wonder just whose mother the restaurateur had in mind. It may be all “natural” cooking, but. . . .

Then there is the philosophy that one should do “what comes naturally,” what “feels good,” without regard to former standards or mores or the effect on others—a far cry from the strict obedience demanded by the law of God.

Is there not something suspect about anything “natural” so far as Christians are concerned? Is not God’s call away from that which is natural, our natural ways, our natural thoughts, our natural inclinations and feelings? Is He not calling us to *His* level—which is as high above our natural level as “the heavens are above the earth”? Is He not continually calling, “Come up higher”? to rise above what we naturally are to a *higher* plane of thought and action? This was the message Paul relayed to his brethren in Ephesus, as he had been taught by Jesus. “Throw off your old evil nature—the old you that was a partner in your evil ways—rotten through and through, full of lust and sham. Now your attitudes and thoughts must all be constantly changing

for the better. Yes, you must be a new and different person, holy and good. Clothe yourself with this new nature” (Eph. 4:22-24, TLB). Again he wrote, “Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (Col. 3:9-10, RSV). It is not a matter of doing “what comes naturally,” but of putting to death, crucifying, getting rid of the old nature.

Our “nature” is something we have to change—change so completely that we acquire a totally new nature which will do “good” with the same ease that the former nature did evil. This means a “second nature.” But the change must be so complete that the one wholly replaces the other and the old nature is gone. A fountain may have had salty, impure water at one time. But change the water in the fountain, and the new water will cause the fountain to spout nothing but clean, sweet water; the sweetness has become “natural.” In the same manner each of us must change—from what we are “naturally” to what God wants us to be, according to the Perfect Pattern He has given us—until we are wholly “new.”

This is our God-appointed task, to transform our selfish, sensitive natures until they are like His; to change ourselves until it is natural to forgive, rather than to carry a grudge; until it is natural to give up our own opinion, rather than to hold to our own; until it is natural to think before we speak, rather than speak without thinking; until it is natural to consider God’s will first, rather than our own.

When we have succeeded in completely changing our nature, then we shall be able to do whatever seems right to us—if governed completely by the new nature. But let us not trust this privilege too far until God has accepted and approved us and changed us from mortality to immortality. For the changing process requires work; righteousness is not an “all natural” product—it is not even *partly* natural. “If any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*”—not natural, but *new!*••

Megiddo means

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

We believe
—in God the Creator of all things, all men, and all life.

We believe
—in the Bible as containing the genuine revelation of God and His purposes for men, and as being our only source of divine knowledge today.

We believe
—in Christ the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was born of a Virgin, ministered among men, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.

We believe
—in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.

We believe
—in all mankind as providing the nucleus from which a superior, God-honoring people shall be chosen to receive the blessings of immortal life.

We believe
—in ourselves as capable of fulfilling the demands and disciplines given us in the law of God, thus perfecting that high quality of character which God has promised to reward with life everlasting in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

We believe
—in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth will be filled with His glory, His people, and His will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

Bible quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

- Other versions are identified as follows:
- NEB—*New English Bible*
 - NIV—*New International Version*
 - NAS—*New American Standard*
 - RSV—*Revised Standard Version*
 - TLB—*The Living Bible*
 - TEV—*Today's English Version*
 - Phillips—*The New Testament in Modern English*
 - Berkeley—*The Modern Language New Testament*
 - Weymouth—*The New Testament in Modern Speech*
 - Moffatt—*The Bible, A New Translation*

The use of selected references from various versions of the Bible does not necessarily imply publisher endorsement of the versions in their entirety.

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Ready or Not, I'm Coming!

IT WAS a game many of us played in childhood, commonly known as "hide-and-go-seek." There was a certain ritual about it. Whoever was "it" would close his eyes and begin to count, while everyone else ran to find a hidingplace. When the one who was counting reached one hundred, he would open his eyes and announce in a low, slow, reprehensive tone, "Ready or not, I'm coming!", at which instant he would uncover his eyes and dash forth to find the hiders. Everyone knew that the time for hiding was over.

"Ready or not, I'm coming!" These words speak to us of God's manner of dealing with men, also of the limitation which God places on man's time. God speaks; He warns—verbally, prophetically, or through His written Word. The days that intervene may be long; but inevitably the moment arrives when it is, "Ready or not, I'm coming!" It means that the time of God's silence is ended; the time of His longsuffering is expired; the day of probation is done. The time has arrived for God to act—and act He will, whether or not the result is to the liking of His human creation. How else can He work? He *must* see His plan through to a successful finish; and He *will*.

What does this say to you and me today? First, it tells us that God will always have the last word. We can protest and fight and complain—and suffer the consequences of our folly; or we can feel ourselves privileged to be called to fit into His plans and comply with His stipulations—and *live!* The choice is ours. Secondly, these words speak to us of our obligation to prepare ourselves so as to be ready whenever He speaks.

God is supreme—none can challenge that. Is not the Creator greater by far than any of His creatures? And when the time is right, God acts, and acts decisively. And He doesn't need to take an opinion poll to find out what men think might be the right time, or the right manner for His action. He dictates His own terms, formulates His own plans, and knowing the end from the beginning He is able to make those terms and plans for the best interests of all with whom He is dealing. Thus, when it suits His wise and considered purpose, He acts.

So accustomed have we become to the democratic ideals, to the idea of majority rule, to the consulting of the mass opinion before any action is taken, that we may be inclined to think God is rather dictatorial to do as He does. Is it right for Him to design His plan without consulting us, or to give no consideration to *our* opinion when He takes a decisive step? But let us check any such tendency quickly, before we are caught by His authoritative "Ready or not, I'm coming!" Who are we, after all, to question the great Omnipotent Creator of heaven and earth? Where were we when He was designing His system, anyway? Is it not rather our honored and rare privilege even to *know* of His plan—much more, to be called to participate in it?

God is supreme, and we are awed by that lofty supremacy. It is within His power to kill, and to make alive; to debase, or to honor; to make low, or to exalt. When we think of it, we in our natural state, are little more than helpless creatures of dust before Him. He had no obligation to give us life in the first place, much less to perpetuate that life. And when we realize the standard maintained in His vast universe, we marvel that it is possible even to live before Him. Apparently those who saw angels in times past felt this way, as though they were looking upon God's holiness and were unworthy even to live. As Manoah said, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God" (Judges 13:22). Or Gideon, "Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face." But "the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not; thou shalt not die" (Judges 6:22-23).

The Creator who made us knows our strength and our possibilities; and He also designs a way whereby we can live in His favor now, and continue on—and on—and on—even into the eternal age beyond. He is not a ruthless God delivering an ultimatum that we cannot survive whatever we do. There is no fatalism with God. He warns and warns before He acts: urgently, forcefully He warns; and then, when the time is right, it is His divine prerogative to act. When it suits His wise and considered purpose, it is "Ready or not, I'm coming!" In other words, if you have heeded My warning, all well and good; if you have not, the fault is yours, not Mine; I gave plenty of warning.

Note: "Ready or Not, I'm Coming" is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

Ready or Not—in the Beginning

The Lord had not been working very long with the inhabitants of our planet before He said in effect, "Ready or not, I'm coming!" We find it in the very first record we have of God's dealings with men. Adam and Eve were in the garden where God had placed them, "to dress it and to keep it" (Gen. 2:15). But there were rules—"Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not." Do we not find them in our lives today, express commands from the God of heaven meant to train us in the ways of obedience and right? There are times to speak, and times to keep silent; there are times to move forward and times to stand still; there are always many do's and don'ts, limitations intended for our good, for "no good thing" doth He ever withhold from them who "walk uprightly" (Ps. 84:11). The rules and principles He has set are for our good; we violate them to our own detriment.

What was the law to Adam and Eve? "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat," they had been told. "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17).

The law was plain, unmistakable. But the forbidden fruit looked so tempting—as forbidden things so often do—and Eve decided, at the behest of the serpent (her own lower nature) just to *sample* it. She did, and the fruit was good—delicious! She gave some of it to her husband, and he agreed. They had found just what they liked!

But—but just at that moment, when all seemed so good, Adam and Eve heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden, "in the cool of the day." What did this mean? It was one of those moments of truth, one of those times when the word was "Ready or not, I'm coming!" Adam and Eve were *not* ready, for they went and "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden" (Gen. 3:8). Some of these trees they hid among may have had more of that delicious forbidden fruit; but there is no record of their being tempted by it now; the attraction was gone—their sins had been found out. They were in hiding.

But what did their hiding avail? It availed just as much as yours or mine or anyone else's does when they or we try to hide from God—*nothing*! "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3). It was true then; it is true today. And though the account of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2 and 3 is an allegory, it is written for our learning; the lesson is there for us: We cannot hide from God. And when our day of probation is expired and we must face ourselves as we are and our record as it stands, there will be no successful hiding.

Suppose, though, that Adam and Eve had resisted the temptation to partake of the forbidden fruit. Sup-

When the time is right, God acts, and acts decisively.

pose that they had done just exactly as the Lord had commanded them, had tilled and kept the garden as they were instructed, and had eaten only of the right tree. What would have happened then, when they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day? Would they still have run to hide? Would they not have been *glad* to meet Him and to show Him how faithful and obedient they had been? Would they not have been *ready*? And will not we, when our day of probation is ended, if we have been faithful and true; will not we be glad and happy? Will we not be presented "before the presence of His glory *with exceeding joy*"? His ultimatum, "Ready or not, I'm coming!" will be a cause for joyous concern if we are ready.

Ready or Not—in Noah's Day

The whole problem with God's authority and finality of action, then, has been a dire lack of readiness on the part of men. It was so in the time of Noah. When "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5), there was a long period of warning, a time ample for repentance for any who would repent. But that time was not forever. The moment arrived when it was "Ready or not, I'm coming!" The door of the ark was shut. The sky grew frightfully black, and it began to rain. And rain. And rain. And rain. It was the flood God had foretold. Whether the people were ready or not—and most of them were not—the hour had come. God's longsuffering with them was ended.

Ready or Not—in Sodom

There was another "ready or not" moment at the time God pronounced judgment upon the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The angels came with their warning cry; but few, very few, listened and took heed. It was just hard to believe that God meant what He said, everything in and about Sodom seemed so perfectly normal. But the divine countdown had begun; the ticking of the clock was but counting the seconds of grace remaining while the angels hurried the few would-be escapees. "Escape for thy life," they urged, "look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain." It was a moment for action; it was a moment when God was saying, "Ready or not, I'm coming!" And scarcely had Lot and his family left when the fire began to fall.

Ready or Not—in Egypt

The “ready or not” moment arrived for the Pharaoh who refused to let the Israelites leave his land. His insolent reply, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?” hardly did anything to win God’s favor. He saw himself the ruler of a great and powerful nation. He saw not the Lord, the ruler and governor of all creation. And so the Lord went about to show him. Egypt’s water turned to blood. Then, there were frogs everywhere—a plague of them! all over his land. Then there was the plague of flies. By this time it would seem that any half-perceptive person would have realized there was a power greater than Pharaoh, a power it was useless to withstand. But not Pharaoh. He was determined to hold out, and he did—to the bitter end. Not until ten plagues had run their destructive course would he give consent. And then, the Lord did not wait for his consent. Whether Pharaoh was ready or not (Pharaoh would *never* be ready to part with a host of productive slaves!) the time for action had arrived, and under the guiding hand of Moses the Israelites departed. The official decision of the Egyptians to pursue them only increased the Egyptians’ grief and loss—their armies were drowned,

and the hosts of Israelites were safe beyond the sea.

This is what always happens to those who try to withstand God’s purposes—it is all defeat, defeat, defeat. We oppose God only to our own hurt. He is supreme. How else could He say absolutely, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isa. 46:10)?

Ready or Not—in Israel

The people of Israel and Judah found themselves facing God’s authority at one of those “ready or not” moments. It was after His mercy and longsuffering with them had run its course and they had proved themselves corrupt, apostate, forgetful of Him and His laws. He who had planted, fathered, protected, defended and nourished them—could they possibly be so dishonoring? But not forever. The time of judgment arrived, and with it war, destruction, captivity; these were the harsh words that came with the “ready or not” pronouncement. Of course they were not ready. But the fault was not God’s. He had sent prophet after prophet to warn them, to show them the error and folly of their lawless ways, to show them that they were hurting themselves and would have to suffer in the end.

Let Us Pray

Our Father in heaven, this morning brings us under renewed obligations to thank and praise Thee for Thy abundant mercies to us; if we should try to count them they are more than can be numbered. We thank Thee for life itself, for our goodly mortal frame, for the blessing of sight, of hearing; for the ability to reason, reflect, and relate. Grant, Father, that we may use all these gracious favors in the building of a Christian character, in doing the things that will fit us to become a part of Thy finished handiwork, a member of that blessed society with whom Thou wilt share Thy munificence throughout endless years.

We thank Thee for Thy Word, for the quickening words of Thy dear Son. Help us, Father, to be aware of the responsibilities that entail upon us for being brought into Thy sphere. We have been enlightened, we have been made acquainted with Thy plan to select only the best of humankind to share Thy eternal blessings, Thou hast revealed this plan to us in great detail, and hast warned us of the suddenness with which that

plan will be initiated upon earth, and the importance of our being ready when that day breaks upon an unsuspecting world.

It strengthens our faith in the truthfulness of Thy Word, and of Thy ability to foretell future events, when we see the world in the very condition Thou didst foretell it would be in just prior to the return of Thy dear Son to earth, that as it was in the days of Noah, or as in the days of Lot, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. And we see that forecast fulfilled today. And with our faith thus strengthened may we be fully convinced of our own relation to these divine forecasts and realize that whether we are ready or not, the great Judge *is* coming, and now make every move count toward being ready for Him when He comes.

It is the unfaithful servants who say “My Lord delays His coming,” and begin to drag their feet in their journey toward holiness. To each of these the Lord will come in a day when he looks not for him, and at an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him off, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.

Father, grant us the wisdom to continue faithful in the service of our heavenly King, that when He comes to reckon with His servants He will be pleased to speak to us His blissful Well Done, and share with us the endless delights of His heavenly Kingdom. In His worthy name we pray. Amen. ••

But they preferred to die rather than repent; and many did. Thousands perished at the hands of their enemies. Others were carried away to live in exile. The proud, independent nation was ended. The beautiful temple lay in ruins; the holy city was burned with fire. It was that moment of "Ready or not, I'm coming!"—and for apostate Israel and Judah, it meant ruin.

Ready or Not, Christ Came

It was so in the birth of His Son. "When the proper time had come, God sent His Son" (Gal. 4:4, Williams). "When the right time came" (Beck)—the right time according to God's schedule. It was not the right time if He had consulted Herod. For Herod, the time would *never* have been right for the birth of a rival capable of supplanting him. But God didn't consult Herod. "When the time was right, God sent forth his Son."

The gospel of Matthew records the instructions of Herod to the wise men: "Bring me word when you find the new-born king, that I may come and worship him also." And we are told that these words came not only from Herod but from "Herod and all Jerusalem with him." What does this mean? Obviously Herod and all his court, those who had a personal interest in maintaining the local power structure, were worried. Governments fight bitterly to prevent the loyalty of any people being given to any but the current leaders. The soldiers of Jerusalem also worried about a new king, so they eagerly destroyed every boy child under two years of age. And the priests of the Jewish religion had been charged with the responsibility of keeping alive in the Jewish people the hope of a messiah, a divine ruler to govern them; under Herod's rule the priests enjoyed privileges they could not be sure of keeping under a new king; so they too, worried about the report of the wise men. The common people also preferred Herod. They knew him and could anticipate his actions. All Jerusalem worried with Herod. So, if God had consulted them, they surely would not have given consent. But they were not consulted; nor did their resistance hinder God's divine purpose. It was one of those times when the message was clear: In effect, "Ready or not, I'm coming!"

If Herod and his co-agents could but have realized how great the power behind this great event in the history of the world, they would have been astonished that they even dared to resist it. But Herod never realized how silly and futile his efforts were. All the king's horses and all the king's men were powerless to stay the plan of God. And so it went forward. When it suited God's time for the king to be born, whether the world seemed ready or not, Christ came.

Readiness

What, then, is the message of "Ready or not, I'm coming!"? Is it a message of inevitable doom? We know

His ultimatum, "Ready or not, I'm coming!" will be no cause for concern if we are ready.

it is not, for God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (1 Pet. 3:9). The only trouble is, they *will* not. Thus it often becomes a signal of His severity; but that same signal can mean goodness, deliverance, blessing, if men are ready. Consider the moment that came to Enoch. We read that "Enoch walked with God three hundred years." A long time to walk and not grow weary; but Enoch did it. Then, one day, the moment arrived when Enoch "was not; for God took him." The "ready or not" moment had arrived, and to Enoch's everlasting credit, he was *ready*. His days of tribulation on earth were over; God was ready to take him to serve in another phase of His great plan; and Enoch was ready.

What, then, are we to think of when we think of "Ready or not, I'm coming"? It is not a threat or proclamation of doom; it is a warning to *get ready*. The whole focus is upon one word: *readiness*. If we are ready, it is a message of supreme joy; and if we are not—oh, let us make sure that the plight is not ours. It need not be. This is why the ancient prophet Amos spoke those solemn words: "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (Amos 4:12). It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God if we are not ready to meet Him, if our record is still spotted and marred by acts of willfulness, selfishness, pride or complacency; but if we have sustained a lively interest in those higher realms of life and activity, if we have fitted ourselves to the pattern He provided us and have made Him our closest friend, then what joy! What pleasure supreme to fall into His hands, to know that we are ready and that we are His!

But "ready or not" implies a singular quality of God's which we should never forget. It points out *the maximum limit of His mercy*. God is good, supremely good; He is longsuffering and benevolent beyond anything we can imagine. What man would be willing to wait six thousand years for the first small phase of His plan to succeed? The years have proven how exceedingly patient God is with His human family. Time and again we have transgressed His law; we have done the things we knew we should not do; we have left undone the things we should have done; and still His mercy waits. But this does not mean that His mercy and His goodness and His longsuffering is forever.

***“Ready or not” is not
a threat of doom; it is a
warning to get ready.***

Nor is it equal to everyone. To the disobedient, the fault-finding, the hard-hearted and recalcitrant, His mercy is very limited. It is also limited to those who harbor lesser sins of sensitiveness, jealousy, bitterness and pride. “The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting” only “upon them that fear him, . . . and to those that remember his commandments to do them.” Hence, if we want His mercy, we must strive the harder to fit ourselves into this category. And there is a limit to the time He will give us to do this; there is a limit to the years He will wait while we stumble and fall and rise and stumble again and again. There is a limit, even with our long long-suffering God. True, “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Ps. 103:10); but neither are they removed from His book of remembrance until we ourselves have taken the steps to remove them. Soon or late the time will arrive when it will be for every one of us, “Ready or not, I’m coming!” Our opportunity will be ended, the day of grace will be done.

Oh, let us try the harder to use to the maximum the moments that are ours.

This was Jesus’ message in His parable of the evil servant, that servant who says, either vocally or in his heart, “My lord delays his coming.” He complains that his lord is late—when he himself is far from ready. What is the attitude of this servant? “My lord tarries” expresses a secret belief that the lord may not come at all—perhaps even a secret, hidden wish that He *will* not. He doesn’t really *want* Him, because now, in His absence, he is *free*.

The possibility that He will not come removes all the trouble and worry and leaves him totally carefree. Now he can enjoy himself in any way his heart desires. Now he can eat, drink and be merry with no thought of accountability tomorrow.

And so he does just as he pleases. But what is the prospect for such a one? “The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of” (Matt. 24:50). Caught unawares! And what shall be his portion? He shall be appointed “his portion with the hypocrites,” those who say and do not, and “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” All this because he was not ready. What a contrast with the commendation given the faithful servant: “Blessed is that servant, whom his lord

when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath” (Luke 12:43-48; Matt. 24:45-50).

Hence, Jesus’ timely admonition: “Watch,” “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. . . . Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 24:42-44). If we maintain this attitude, if we are fully concentrating on getting ourselves ready for that Day, there will be no feeling of “My lord delays his coming.” If the time tarries longer than we expect, we will rejoice and thank God for extended mercy.

A Lesson from the Ten Virgins

The time for preparation is critical—upon it depends our entire future. Hence, He warns again and again. He warns us that we have no time for relaxing, diversion or distraction. If we would be ready, we must be conscious of every act, aspect and attitude of life that promotes or hinders that readiness. We must do everything as before Jesus’ warning—“lest coming suddenly, I find you sleeping” (Mark 13:37). It is the message He repeated again in His parable of the Ten Virgins. Some will be found ready, He says; others will *not* be ready. And where each of us stands depends entirely upon us. We are not predestined to be either accepted or rejected; God does not decree whether or not we shall be ready. The ten virgins who went forth to meet the bridegroom *could* have all been ready and waiting for him, with their lamps trimmed and burning; they *could* have if they had made proper preparations, if they had all taken a sufficient supply of oil with them in their lamps. But they did not, for “five of them were wise, and five were foolish.”

It is interesting to note in this parable that all the virgins took *some* oil. All had *some* desire to be ready to welcome the bridegroom, and all had made *some* preparation. The difference lay in their *degree* of preparation. The five wise virgins had anticipated a possibly extended delay and had taken what they thought would be *more* than enough oil—just in case. The other five took only the normal supply. So when the hours of waiting proved unexpectedly long, the five wise virgins were able to hold out; the lamps of the other five went out. So it is with the supply of faith and endurance we need today. It must be a supply we keep continually renewing; if we do not, we shall find as the hours wear on that *our* lamps are going out, and we shall not be ready when our Bridegroom finally *does* appear.

The warning is there. It is for us. There is no need that those five foolish virgins should include any of us. There is no shortage of this precious type of oil. The evidence is ours for the taking, and it can be quickly turned into burning and shining faith. We *can* be ready; we *can* keep our faith lamps fueled and burning brightly, if we *will*. We *can* be ready, if we will just set our hearts upon

it. But we have to be acting now, for the hour draws ever nearer when it will be "Ready or not, I'm coming!"

Take Heed!

Jesus said it again in words too plain to misinterpret. "Take heed to yourselves," He warned, "lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke 21:34). Here again is the ultimatum. And Jesus, knowing the great and growing temptation to fill our lives and hearts to the brim with the affairs of time, gave this warning. No more needful or seasonable counsel could He have given for us in this final hour, than these words: "Take heed to yourselves, lest . . . your hearts be overcharged with . . . the cares of this life." Undue and unwise carefulness about secondary things—whether good health, good homes, good friends, good tasks in this world—may endanger that which is even more important—our salvation. They may do it simply by absorbing our interest to the exclusion of the direct service of God which is our means of deliverance from this world. They may so absorb our time and mind as to dwarf the inner life and starve the soul. They may shut us up to the lesser and lower activities and so leave us little time or strength for spiritual meditation and exercise.

The warning is plain: "Take heed." If we would be ready when the great Day arrives, we must not be enlarging our interests in this world when such enlargement means spiritual shrinkage. We must not let the cares of this life crowd in and crowd out the culture of the inner man. If we do, if we put second things first and sacrifice ourselves to circumstances, we shall find ourselves unready for the advancing day and shall be caught unawares.

What is Jesus' preventive formula? "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36). "Watch . . . and pray." And how great the results! How great, how surpassing the privilege—think of it! to be permitted to stand before the Son of man, He who has trod every step of this way before us, He who was crucified, resurrected, taken to heaven and glorified in the presence of the great Creator Himself! To think of standing before so glorious a being, now immortal, the King of the whole earth! No such privilege is afforded by even the greatest of earthly kings.

With such a prospect before us, should we not be downright earnest about our calling? Should we not be making an all-out effort to make it sure? To stand means that we are prepared to give a worthy account before Him, an account of our faithfulness, of worthy work well done. What shall we have to say? To stand means

that we are prepared, prepared to show how closely we have followed His example, how obedient we have been, how fervent, how faithful. We shall also want to show how heartily we have sustained, valued and embraced our friendship with Him.

He will also want to see how like Him we have become. We know that He is holy, and He will be looking for that same holiness in us. To stand before Him, then, we must be like Him, for He will look to those who stand before Him and judge them as to their purity of heart, their abhorrence of evil, and their love of good. He will look for their spirit of unselfishness that duplicates His, their devotedness, their humbleness of mind and their sincerity of purpose. He will look to them for their reverence and wholehearted consecration. He will look, and what will He see in us?

We shall each be called to stand before Him. It will be the moment of "Ready or not, I'm coming!" This is our whole purpose now, not to run and hide, but to prepare, so that we may meet Him with joy and "stand before the Son of man"—accepted and approved forever.♦♦

God's Hall of Fame

*Your name may not appear inscribed
In this world's hall of fame;
In fact, you may be so unknown
That no one knows your name;
The Oscars and the praise of men
May never come your way,
But don't forget God has rewards
That He'll dispense someday.*

*Man's hall of fame is only good
As long as time shall be;
But keep in mind, God's Hall of Fame
Is for eternity.
To have your name inscribed by Him
Is greater, greater far
Than all the fame and all the praise
Of every man-made star.*

*This crown on earth, they soon forget
When you're not at the top.
They'll cheer and cheer until you fall,
And then their praise will stop.
Not God—He never will forget,
And in His Hall of Fame,
By doing all His will on earth,
You'll win a lasting name.*

*I'll tell you, Friend, I wouldn't trade
My name, however small,
Once it is written on the walls
Of that celestial Hall,
For all the famous names on earth,
Or glory that they share;
I'd rather be an unknown here
If my name's written there.*

—Selected

HE MUST INCREASE

MOST OF US like the driver's seat. And if somehow life shoves us into the back seat, we like to be back-seat drivers. He is a rare soul who can behave himself graciously in life's back seat.

But it has been done. Samuel did it. He was the last of the judges. He got caught in a change of dispensations. The people of Israel wanted to be like the nations around them—the first step in many a downfall. They wanted a king.

Samuel counseled against it. He knew that it was not God's best for them. But when he learned that God was willing to grant their request, Samuel graciously took a back seat in favor of the glamorous Saul. And there he remained, for the rest of his days, a far abler and far godlier man than the king. Samuel took a back seat and stayed in it well.

John the Baptist did it also. This man gladly exclaimed, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Willingly he took a back seat. For a little while his was a spectacular career. Standing beside the Jordan, he called the listening multitudes to repentance. A colorful figure, he was the talk of the country.

Then Jesus came along, just as John had said He would. And soon the multitudes turned to Him. When this was reported to John, he answered with this classic text for all saints of the back seat: "HE MUST INCREASE, but i must decrease."

Let us go back a little and see why John said this.

We see the disciples of John the Baptist watching in bewilderment the sudden and unexpected ebbing of the tide that had been flowing in so strong and full. With a feeling of resentment, they watched the masses now streaming away to a newer voice and leaving yawning blanks that widened every hour, where till now there had always been a solid mass of followers. They had no doubt discussed and argued over the crowd's fickleness. And now, agitated and unhappy, they clustered about the Baptist, upset and shaken in themselves, hurt by the pain they felt that this must cause their master, chagrined above everything else by the remembrance that it was his own enthusiastic eulogies of his too successful rival that had set in motion this landslide from him to the other.

John, the voice, the herald, had publicly identified the Messiah. On the very next day after that identifica-

I MUST

DECREASE

tion, he had again pointed Jesus out to two of his disciples as our Lord was seen passing along that way, just as He was starting upon His public ministry. At once those two left John and went after Jesus. But when John was the *herald*, should his followers really be surprised?

But the central figure in the scene is, of course, John himself, with his total lack of envy and bitterness, with his splendor of generosity and his complete forgetfulness of himself. Wonderingly he looked at these puzzled friends of his. "Did I not tell you that this is what I wanted, and that it was for this that I have been working? Each of us can use only what God has given us. For any good we do comes not of ourselves, but is God working in and through us. To me He gave the privilege of being the Bridegroom's friend, who faithfully performs his duty and that done, steps back into obscurity again, with no feeling but happiness in his friend's happiness. All this that is happening is right and fitting, and that is as it ought to be. He must increase, but I must decrease. And I exult that my preliminary work has made it possible for Him to come, that He has come, and now I may be forgotten." There was no unwarranted derogation of his own personality or work but only the inner delight one feels as the luster of the star is lost in the rising glory of the sun.

One of the great pictures of the Old Testament is the picture of Israel as the Bride of God, and God as the Bridegroom of Israel. The union between God and Israel was so close that it could only be likened to a wedding. When Israel went after strange gods, it was as if she had been guilty of infidelity to the marriage bond. The New Testament took this same picture and spoke of the Church as the bride of Christ.

The foregoing verses reveal that John the Baptist realized the greatness of his mission when he referred to himself as the friend of the Bridegroom. That was a great office in the Eastern lands. The friend of the bridegroom was the one who ceremonially handed the bride to her groom; and until he had done it, the groom's voice was not heard.

John, recognizing the relationship between God and His people, said, "I am the friend of the Bridegroom. I have heard His voice. That is my joy. Now my joy is fulfilled. It has been my privilege to point the way to Christ."

He had an important part to play while the ceremonies lasted, but his importance pales quickly when the Bridegroom appears on the scene. John's part is to be the *friend*. He is no rival. There is no room for any thought of competition or rivalry. He had received his call from heaven. And by saying he must "decrease," he was not employing any term that could be construed as derogatory to the splendor of his work. He was magnifying his office. He was claiming that he was sent, not as Christ but *before* Him. He was "a voice." And John greatly rejoiced at the Bridegroom's voice.

John's reply to the jealous loyalty of his disciples means, "We must be content with what God gives." He assured them that his was not the leading place but that he was merely sent as the herald, the announcer, the forerunner and the preparer for the greater one who was to come.

How much of life's friction might be removed if more people were prepared to play the second part, to take a back seat, a subordinate role.

What of us? Do we look for great things to do? It might save us a lot of resentment and heartbreak if we could realize that there are certain things which are not meant for us, and if we accepted with all our hearts and did with all our might the work that God *has* given us to do. Any task done for God becomes a *great* task.

Our Master paid high tribute to John when He said, "Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." This passage enables us to see something of John's size. To be surpassed and superseded and take one's own eclipse without a trace of rancor or jealousy, with nothing indeed but exultation in the other's success, is an achievement indeed. John was sent to bear witness to a greater than himself; and he faithfully discharged his commission. Then, with true magnanimity, he stepped aside that Christ might have the pre-eminence.

John the Baptist showed us how to glorify the back seat.

And now, turning our eyes inward, let us probe our own feelings. How comfortable are we occupying the back seat?

Could it be said of us that it is greatly more difficult to rejoice with those that rejoice than to weep with those that weep? Failure brings out sympathy, but does another's rise to success and recognition cause our hearts to overflow with joy on their behalf? How much more we might accomplish in our work for God if we would only rise up and play our part, and not bother who gets the glory for it.

A chaplain told of his experience in World War I.

"The battalion with which I served saved the line. Weeks later as the lads lay about so tired that they could speak only in small almost inaudible voices, the papers

arrived from home. By some mistake the feat was credited to a battalion which had been miles away, and ours was never mentioned. There fell a moment's somber silence, and the Colonel's face flushed red, and then his head went up. 'What does it matter, gentlemen, who gets the credit for it? We know we did it!'"

Can we continue to press the cause just as enthusiastically when another gets the credit that we have rightfully earned?

In some ways it is even harder to be surpassed by one who really is bigger and abler and better than ourselves; to have to fall in behind, where we had been leading.

It is difficult for people getting on in life to accept with cheerfulness the fact that their way of things, their mode of thought, the world they know and feel at home in, must decrease; and another, alien to their mind, must increase.

How are we to gain something of the Baptist's largeness of mind and soul for such times? One great help is intercessory prayer. It would be impossible to harbor animosity or jealousy toward one for whom we keep interceding before God. If someone is leaving you behind in the spiritual life and you are in danger of becoming jealous and embittered, keep praying that he may have success in the very matter where he is awakening your envy; and whether he is helped or not, one thing is sure: that your own soul will be cleansed and ennobled, that you will grow nearer to the stature of the Baptist.

Not every professing life-seeker has learned to take second place, even to Jesus. How often He has taken the background while proud self has refused to resign in His favor! We may even have accomplished much in the Lord's work, but at times by our actions we give the impression that if we are in the back seat, we are back-seat drivers!

Few there be who attain the "none of self, all of Thee" attitude.

It may be that sometimes we would do well to remember that it is not to ourselves that we want to bring attention; it is to the cause of *Christ*. It is not for ourselves that we seek acclaim; it is for Him. Paul summed it up in these words: "For to me to live is Christ," and "not I, but Christ liveth in me."

He who so gives Christ the chief place will likewise esteem others better than himself. He will walk in the steps of Him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to glorify the "back seat." Such a one will be a blessing to everybody, for he will have learned the Beatitude of the Background.

In a day when men climb for the ladder's topmost rung, blessed is he who can take a back seat, whether as Samuel, for a lesser, or as John the Baptist, for a greater, even the Greatest of All. ••



What Is Truth?

The Great Infidel Discussion



Reverend L. T. Nichols vs. Professor W. F. Jamieson

Part Ten

Mr. Jamieson's Address

Mr. Nichols made a mistake in commencing his speech last night when he represented that I said Jeremiah was drunk. He then proceeded to lash me for not allowing the author to make his own explanation. I always do, when he makes one. Now in point of fact, there is no proof that Jeremiah wrote the account, notwithstanding the book is called by his name. The man that I thought was drunk was Ezra, the old priest, who rewrote the whole of the Old Testament, according to the book of Ezdras.

My friend admits that if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not raised from the dead, then they will not possess the land; and the prophecy will be false. It is all built on an "if." A legacy that depends upon a man who has been dead several thousand years, coming to life again, would be a shaky inheritance. Mr. Nichols says, "Is it not fair to let God tell what he meant?" This assumes the very point in dispute. That God had anything to do with it, I am satisfied has never been shown.

My friend, who is one of those Free Thinkers that believe on evidence, says "they were not to inherit the land in their lifetime." We would like to see them own one acre after their lifetime. After this absurd and inconsistent statement, my opponent advises his people to think for themselves, "governed by the evidence"; but that I am a Free Thinker not governed by the evidence. He fails to note that what is evidence to one person is not evidence to another. What is evidence to a well-trained lawyer or judge is not evidence to a farmer's boy who never heard a case in court or saw a law book. Jesus, he says, will come to this earth, and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will be raised. Of that, he says, he is sure. The evidence must be overwhelming to his mind. When I will see Jesus, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and

they will kindly give me infallible proofs that they are the identical individuals mentioned, I will give in.

In my last speech, prophecy was the theme. Rev. Nathaniel West, D. D., says, "The prophecies are records of the revelations of Jehovah to men, chosen by him to reveal his will to his chosen people." The same author says that in the "religious and highest sense," "the records written down by the prophets is the proof afforded by their predictions, and the fulfillment of them, that the Bible is what it claims to be, a revelation of God's will to man." "If ever it be proved that the prophets lived when they are said to have lived, and that they said what they are recorded to have said and that the things happened which they foretold would happen, it follows that the divine power which they claimed to speak through them did so speak, since man alone does not predict."

Rev. Nathaniel West further says of the prophecies of Isaiah that "the predictions respecting Christ are so clear, so detailed and circumstantial as to constitute together one of the most important proofs of the inspiration of the Bible and true Christianity."

Says Pascal, "The greatest proofs of Jesus Christ are the prophecies and those God foreordained: for the fulfillment of the prophecies is a miracle subsisting from the beginning of the church to the end."

Characteristics of prophecy: Before a prophecy can be received as of divine origin, it should be expressed in clear terms, such as is claimed for the prophecies of Jesus Christ. It should be shown that it was made before the event foretold, and that it could not be foretold by human wisdom. It should be shown that it was literally fulfilled. About five hundred years before Christ there were many prophecies among the heathen. The greater part of them were given in ambiguous language, which could be interpreted in any way to suit the thing

predicted. This mysticism, always connected with religion, miracle, prophecy, superstition, is well illustrated by the case of the ancient prophecy related by Grote. Croesus sent to inquire of the oracle of Apollo at Delphi, whether he could undertake an expedition against Cyrus. The reply was that if he did, he would subvert a mighty empire. He sent again to inquire whether his empire would be durable. The reply was, "When a mule shall become king of the Medes, then thou must run away." Croesus attacked Cyrus, was defeated, made a prisoner, and his kingdom was subject to the Medes and Persians. He accused the oracle with falsehood, but the reply was that "when he, the god, told him he would subvert a mighty empire, it was his duty to enquire which empire the god meant; and if he neither understood the meaning nor chose to ask for information, he had himself to blame for the result. Besides, Croesus neglected the warning given to him about the acquisition of the Median kingdom by a mule. Cyrus was that mule—son of a Median mother, of royal breed, by a Persian father, at once of a different race and lower position. This triumphant justification extorted even from Croesus himself a full confession that the sin lay with himself and not with the god."

How shall we know when a prophecy is true or false? Deuteronomy 18:22 contains the answer: "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken." So it appears even as great a man as Sir Isaac Newton was mistaken when he declared that prophecies were for the purpose of enabling men to foreknow things.

But there is another rule that flatly contradicts the passage quoted from Deuteronomy. "If the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet" (Ezekiel 14:9).

That is a contradiction of the passage in Deuteronomy which says, "If the thing follow not nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken?" (Deut. 18:21). "The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him" (Jer. 28:9).

Now I come to the alleged Messianic prophecies, having reference to Jesus. All the passages in the Old Testament claimed as prophetic of Jesus Christ, it may be admitted, were written several hundred years before he was born. But not one of them foretells His coming and character in a clear and unmistakable manner. The phrase frequently occurs through the first part of the New Testament, when even trifling incidents are alluded to, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken"

by some Old Testament prophet; but when we read the prophet, there is no prophecy at all to be found. Here is an instance, one of the strongest prophecies of Jesus Christ, so claimed, in the whole Bible.

Matthew says, 1st chapter, 22d and 23d verses, "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

This no doubt refers to Isaiah 7:14, which reads, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Passages of Scripture taken out of their connection, a phrase here, a sentence there, doing violence to the meaning of the writer, may serve to patch many circumstances into the garment of prophecy. The Christians do this almost constantly. They will take a single verse, or part of one, and talk an hour upon it. But an Infidel is expected to read the whole chapter, or book, if he quotes any!

Now what does Isaiah further say (Isa. 7:15): "Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings." That has no more reference to Jesus than to John the Baptist, Paul or Judas. This language was addressed to king Ahaz as a sign when the king was expecting an attack from the kings of Syria and Samaria. The Lord, it appears, promised that before a child, soon to be born, should grow to boyhood, these two kings should be overthrown. Who was the child? The son of the prophet; for he says that he had a child by a prophetess, and Jehovah again promised that before the child would know enough to cry, "My father and my mother," Samaria and Syria would be taken by the Assyrian king.

Another allusion to the prophecy of Christ is in Matthew 2:6, to the effect that out of Bethlehem shall come a governor that shall rule Israel. Micah may be the prophet referred to, verse 2. But the prophet in the same chapter says that this ruler should deliver us from the Assyrians. Jesus was neither a ruler in Israel nor a conqueror of the Assyrians.

In the 19th psalm David seems to be speaking of the material heavens and the movements of their heavenly bodies. "Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world," is the way the writer of Romans quotes it. That was claimed to be a prophecy of the publication of the gospel by the apostles. We would like to have the proof that the apostles came to America or went into Japan!

The mistakes of the writers of the New Testament in

their allusions to the so-called prophecies are numerous. Whiston, a devout orthodox man, published a book to prove that the Jews during the early ages of the Christian church, had fraudulently altered the passages of the Old Testament referred to as prophecies of Christ. He says, "We find throughout the New Testament reference made to various passages in the Old Testament, which are alleged as prophetic of Christ, or of some parts of the Christian dispensation. Now, if we turn to the context of these passages, and so endeavor to discover their meaning, according to the only sound principles of interpretation, it will often appear that they do not relate to the Messiah, or to Christian times, but are either expressions of the religious affections generally, such as submission, love, hope, or else refer to some particular circumstances in the life and condition of the writer, or of the Jewish nation, and do not at all show that anything more remote, or any events of a more universal and spiritual character were designed to be prophesied." But he thinks prophecy must have a double meaning; one entertained by the prophet himself and the other sense infused into it by God. If Isaiah, Daniel or Ezekiel did not know their own meaning, how do Dr. Arnold, Rev. L. T. Nichols, or Rev. Nathaniel West know the meaning, or any other interpreter of the Bible?

Theodore Parker said that there is nothing to show that these prophecies referred to the appearance of Jesus Christ on earth, that "those texts refer to eminent individuals in Israelitish history: many are not prophecies at all. The Messiah, the anointed deliverer expected by the Jews, hoped for and called for by their poets and prophets, was of a character so different, so opposed to this of the meek and lowly, longsuffering Jesus, that the passages describing the one never could have been applied to the other without a perversion of ingenuity and a disloyal treatment of their significance."

There will not be opportunity to show how utterly irreconcilable the book of Genesis is with the science of geology, and how the Bible flatly contradicts astronomy, how common sense laughs at its childish accounts of miracles. The truth is, the Christian world has not much actual faith itself in such a thing as a miraculous conception, else Christians would thank Mr. Schweinfurth, of Rockford, Ill., for demonstrating the Bible account of the manner in which Jesus was born to have been literally proved. But this second Jesus says, "He came unto his own and his own received him not"; and that they scoffed at him just as they did when he was on earth the first time. So I turn with relief, and I think you will, to science for a little while, to what it has done for the world.

It is said that science is a matter of fact. That is true. The world has been deluged with fiction, it needs fact, truth. It is said that science is adverse to the exercise and

development of the imaginative faculty. Far from it. The visions of science eclipse in splendor the figments of fiction, as the dazzling sun surpasses the flickering rays of a dim, distant star. Truth is more fascinating than fiction. Science revels in the poetry of truth. Fiction belongs to the misty ages of oriental tales. Science finds nature's broad tablets thickly written over with significant signs, more entertaining than Arabian Nights' fairy tales. A piece of amber, when rubbed, will attract and then repel light bodies. This fact was known 2500 years ago. How insignificant the fact, but how grand the result! It now permits people to communicate instantaneously across continents and under seas. Amber, a vegetable production of the middle tertiary period, the resin of an extinct pine, became a fossil wood, a safe in which were preserved organisms of the more fragile kinds.

Mr. Nichols' Reply

The order of this discussion has been somewhat surprising to me, and I presume that it has been to my opponent. His tactics of warfare seem to have been entirely changed. He came here, no doubt, with the anticipation and expectation of meeting a common believer in the theories of the professed Christian world; but he finds quite a different thing. He has studiously avoided the real thing all the way through. Instead of coming up and grappling with the subject and showing you wherein we have been mistaken in reference to any particular, he has failed to do so. He seems to be content—and if he is, I should be—with getting up and rattling off his speech by reading what somebody else has said. What does that matter to me? We have come here for the purpose of discussing the merits and demerits of that Book; and when he has brought forward an objection to the testimony in the Bible we have taken it up and handled it, and how has he replied? Just as he has about the prophecies to Abraham. That is a sample of his reply. I need not go over the ground, I have been over it before.

Why does Mr. Jamieson not answer us? I will tell you the reason why. Neither he nor any other individual that walks the face of this earth can answer it. The reason is that it is unanswerable. We have challenged him every night in this discussion to take up these original words and show where we have made a mistake. Has he done it? He has done what he has done tonight; done the best he could. Poor man! When a man does the best he can, why that is all any man can do. I don't blame him; when a man does the very best he can to answer an argument, do have mercy upon him; pity him for his ignorance; or rather, that he did not come out like a man

and say, Friends I will acknowledge to you that I don't have a better argument, and I must withdraw what I said.

Mr. Jamieson has made remarks and speeches here, and tried to tickle the ear, but when you have said that, you have said all. What are his tactics tonight? We showed you last night that the Bible could be its own expositor. He quoted to you from Genesis 13 last evening, that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were to inherit the land of Canaan. He then called your attention to Acts 7, where they received no inheritance in it. Did I not take you right back to the 15th chapter of Genesis, where God made known to Abraham that he did not intend to give him the land in his lifetime but that a long deep sleep should pass over him before he came into possession of the land? Why didn't he take up Genesis and show that my argument did not clear away the objection and contradiction? Why didn't he do it? He just swerves around the point. He has not grappled with one of my answers to his objections, not a solitary one. Mr. Jamieson should come squarely up and handle the arguments fairly, and show that my answer is irrelevant; let him show that I did not prove what I attempted to prove last night. Did I not show that it had reference to a future day when Christ was to return and raise Abraham and Isaac and Jacob from the dead? Did I not cite the texts that plainly state that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were going to be raised from the dead—no question about it—consequently this is the time referred to for their coming into possession of that land, and inheriting it throughout the endless ages of eternity?

We carried you over to the testimony that you found in Galatians, chapters 3 and 4, and to the testimony found in Acts 3; now we will call your attention to another testimony in Hebrews 11, where it is said, "These all died in faith." Yes, they had faith; and if they died in faith, looking for a city that was to come, they looked for a time in the future, for a city that was to come.

Just so in reference to David never wanting a man to sit upon his throne. We showed you that this too had reference to a future time.

He said time would fail him to tell about the flood story. I was hoping he would bring up the flood story, and tell us about those beasts coming from every quarter of the earth, coming from South America, and Australia, coming tramp, tramp, along in good military order, just in time for the ark door to fly open, and they pass in before the rain started to fall. I was in hopes he would tell something about the great light, the sun, standing still all at once at man's bidding. I was in hopes he would bring it out before us. We are prepared for all these things; we are prepared to solve them before you. I can only give you an idea of these matters by running over them in this shorthand way.

I don't care what this man or that man says about

prophecy. What I want him to do is to take up those prophetic teachings that I brought out before you, and show that I have made a mistake in this matter of the rise and fall of four world kingdoms that were predicted a long time before. I did not take up minor prophecies but the powerful ones that are plain, straightforward and unmistakable, with which Mr. Jamieson dare not grapple. Let him show us that that prophecy was not in existence long before it was fulfilled, of the rise and fall of the four world kingdoms. Let him take it up, if he dares! He knows he cannot do it. That is the reason he does not.

We showed you there were four kingdoms, the Babylonian, the Median-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. We showed you this prophecy was in existence before the time of Josephus, long before his day; and in his day Rome was in its consolidated form, and then it was divided up into two kingdoms, represented by the two limbs of the image; and then in the fifth century it was divided into ten kingdoms, represented by the ten horns of the fourth beast. And there was a little horn arose and plucked up three horns.

We find, then, he has utterly failed to establish the proposition: "Resolved, that the Bible is wholly of human origin and abounds with contradictory, absurd, immoral and inconsistent teachings." When you come to Mr. Jamieson as a man, I have nothing to say against him as an individual. He is a pleasant man, nice to talk with and be in company with, and as we are stopping at the same hotel, and are friendly, such ought to be the case. But as an opponent, that is quite a different thing. As an opponent he has failed, and made the greatest failure. If he would only step up and try to grapple with some of my arguments, take up some of them and try to

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get to the bottom of them, then we would have what I would call discussion. But he has failed. If he is as anxious for the truth as he says he is, would he not be willing to go back to the original and look up these evidences, and definitions, and see if the definitions will allow of this board being swept clean of these contradictions? But he has a theory at stake. Probably that is the reason, the only reason. It is the only one I can see; it may be so, it may not.

How Readest Thou?

It is one thing to read the Bible through,
Another to read to learn and do.
Some read it with design to learn to read,
But to the subject pay but little heed.
Some read it as their duty once a week,
But no instruction from the Bible seek;
While others read it with but little care,
With no regard to how they read, nor where.

Some read it as a history, to know
How people lived three thousand years ago.
Some read to bring themselves into repute,
By showing others how they can dispute;
While others read because their neighbors do,
To see how long 'twill take to read it through.

Some read it for the wonders that are there—
How David killed a lion and a bear;
While others read it with uncommon care,
Hoping to find some contradictions there!
Some read as though it did not speak to them,
But to the people at Jerusalem.
One reads it as a book of mysteries,
And won't believe the very thing he sees.
One reads with father's specs upon his head,
And sees the thing just as his father said.

Some read to prove a pre-adopted creed—
Hence understand but little that they read;
For every passage in the book they bend,
To make it suit that all-important end!
Some people read, as I have often thought,
To teach the book instead of being taught,
And some there are who read it out of spite—
I fear there are but few who read it right.

So many people in these latter days
Have read the Bible in so many ways
That few can tell which system is the best,
For every party contradicts the rest!
But read it prayerfully, and you will see
Although men contradict, God's words agree.
For what the early Bible prophets wrote,
We find that Christ and His apostles quote,
So trust no creed that trembles to recall
What has been penned by one and verified by all.

—Selected.

He tries to make out that there is nothing in the testimony that was brought before you in Matthew 1:12, and Isaiah 8, that shows that the one in Matthew was a fulfillment of the prediction of Isaiah. We go back to Isaiah 8, and find there is such language used, and although it has an application to the son Maher-shalal-hash-baz, is that any evidence that it cannot have any application to Christ? Could there not be two applications, one at the time and one to Christ? Hence, he makes no point whatever.

He comes down again to "deception" and calls your attention to Ezekiel 14:9. What is the testimony? "And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel." The Hebrew word here for "deceive," where it says, "permitted the Lord to deceive him," reads, according to the definitions given in the Hebrew Lexicon, "And the Lord permitted him to be deceived." If he is as anxious for the truth, why not grapple with it, and take that original and show I am mistaken in this, or forever hold his peace. I do not care where he turns, he is in the wrong. Let me appeal to you, my friends, to your candid intelligent judgment: do you suppose that if I were in the wrong, that if the Bible abounded with contradictions, absurdities and immoral teachings, that I could find in the original a definition to clear away every question? I tell you nay! It would be an utter impossibility if it were of human origin.

No, Mr. Jamieson came to fight the so-called Christian world; he did not come to fight me. He did not know what I believed. I do not believe that Christ had any existence until He was born of the virgin Mary. Before that He existed only in the plan and purpose of the Deity. I do not believe a man can be older than his father.

A word as to the sun standing still. I do not believe the literal sun ever stood still. He said he would like to have time to bring forward this argument in connection with the flood and the creation. Why did he not do this in his last speech, instead of going off into science? The sun that stood still is said to be "the cities" in the 11th chapter of Joshua, and the greatest city is said to be the sun city, and Gibeon is said to be one of the greatest cities, greater than Ai, as one of the royal cities, and consequently appropriately styled "the sun."

I do not believe that the flood deluged this earth from one end to the other. The Bible nowhere represents that the earth was deluged all over, but as we are plainly told in the epistle of Peter that he brought in the flood upon the world of "the ungodly." It was not the literal world that perished but the people on whom the flood was brought. I am ashamed that the professed Christian world do not understand this. The literal heavens and earth will last onward through eternity.♦♦

"I CAN DO It!"

THIRTEEN-year-old Rodney glanced up to see his mother standing in the kitchen window as he dashed down the sidewalk toward the house. Behind him, out on the street, the boys were still shouting at him. Half-sneering, half-taunting, their words pierced him like darts. "Poor ol' Ronnie-Ron, can't learn his algebra."

Why did they insist on making fun of him? Weren't there things *they* couldn't understand? Was it because they overheard the teacher making arrangements to meet with him after school tomorrow to give him extra help?

Slipping in through the side door, he stole quietly up the stairs to his room, too ashamed and too discouraged to meet his mother's cheery "Good evening, Son."

Throwing himself onto his bed, he hid his face in his hands. And there he lay, until his mother called supper.

What was the matter? *Why* couldn't he do better? He had been trying so hard. Oh, if only he never had to go to school again!

It was just those few boys. And just because *they* got the right answers—. *He* was on the top in English and history, but when it came to algebra, and trying to figure out all the time what "x" was, he just couldn't make any sense of it. And today, when the teacher was out of the room, they even called him "Dunce."

He had an idea how some of *them* got the right answers—they cheated. But, hard as it was, he had resolved long ago never to give in to that. Better to fail honestly than to get somebody else's credits—and how could you be sure the answers you were copying were *right*? And he surely didn't need any more *wrong* answers!

As the family gathered around the table, it seemed that everyone was looking at him. Even little Timmy. And the greeting from Dad—"How's our Rodney tonight?" and his mother's "Are you all right, Son?" only made him feel worse.

The night was cool, and the crackling fireplace made a cozy corner for their devotions that evening. As each found a place in front of the fire, everyone seemed so happy—even Rodney lost a little of his gloom. Everyone just seemed to feel something "special" was in the offing.

"Tonight," Dad began, "before we have our regular devotions, I want to tell you about an experience I had when I was in school.

"I was eager to go to school—I always liked school. But sometimes the lessons seemed so difficult. The teacher would explain them carefully—I had some really fine teachers. But I still seemed to miss something. And when tests came, I studied real hard, but still I was doing terrible. My grades were . . . well . . . they didn't make it. I was failing, and I knew it. I kept telling myself I had to do better, and I kept trying.

"The weeks passed by without much improvement. This continued until half of the school year was gone.

"Just after the second semester started, my work took a turn for the better. My grades went right up, and my teacher commented to me, 'Ted, I'm proud of you. You've been working so hard, and it is beginning to pay off.' It was the kind of comment that makes you really feel good. And do you know, I kept on and pretty soon I had the highest grades in the class."

"What class was it, Dad?" inquired Rodney, with particular interest.

"It was algebra. But I want to tell you the rest. As the school year was coming to a close, our principal announced that there would be open house for the parents and friends of the students. All our classwork would be on display, along with various projects we had done, our tests, art creations, and so forth. Oh—I was just horrified. The first half of the year I had done so terrible, and all that would be on display for everyone to see!! But what could a fellow do? And I *knew* Mom and Dad would plan to go.

"Well, the fateful night arrived, and first they had a meeting for the parents. And then, then the students and teachers went to the classrooms, while the parents went from room to room, looking so carefully at everything. I could just see those terrible tests from the first of the year. How I wished I could destroy that part of the book, and just let them see the last half.

"I waited and soon my parents were at the table where all our books were on display. I sat there shuddering, watching as they opened my book. I watched in absolute amazement as Mom and Dad exchanged looks of happiness and pride as they looked at my book. I just could not believe it! Why—what was the matter? My grades were all failing for so long. They couldn't really

(Continued on page 23)

Why Does God Allow Suffering?

WE understand God to be merciful, kind, compassionate—and above all, loving. Why then, does He allow His earthly children to suffer sickness, accidents and calamities such as earthquakes and tornadoes? Do men suffer because of their sin? Is physical suffering punishment for sin?

Theology would have us believe that it is. Says one, "Whenever we see any kind of suffering, whether it be ordinary sickness and pain or whatever, we can safely conclude that there has been sin."

Q. Is this true?

A. No. Sin often brings about suffering in some form, but the righteous may as often be sick as the sinner. The good man is not immune to disease and when he is ill we know God did not cause it as punishment.

Q. If it is not punishment, why does God allow people to be sick or suffer?

A. He could not do otherwise. He created man mortal, and suffering is just part of being mortal.

Q. Is God concerned with the suffering of His earthly children?

A. Yes, but contrary to popular belief, all mankind are not God's children, hence are not His concern. Paul said in Romans 9:8, "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

Q. Yes, that is an important

point to understand: Everyone is not a child of God. Just because God set in motion a plan in the beginning whereby the human race might be propagated does not mean that He is responsible for every human being that plan produced. Natural birth does not make one a child of God. How does anyone become one of His children?

A. The first requirement is that we learn His law. Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:44-45).

Q. We first have to learn what God requires of us before we can even start to become one of His children. Then what is the next step?

A. After learning, we have to do what we have learned. Knowledge not put into practice is worthless. Jesus Himself said, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10). In other words, if we don't keep His commandments, we are not part of His family.

Q. To be God's sons and daughters would be about as close a family relationship as we could get. How did Paul say we

could obtain that?

A. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:17-18).

The first verse of Chapter 7 shows the importance of doing something to be worthy of that position: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Q. There is something more Paul said about being adopted into His family that we should have.

A. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:14-17). We have to be adopted into His family.

Q. If we comply with the conditions He has caused to be written, are we automatically one of His children for the rest of our life?

A. Only if we continue in the

Way. If we are a "forgetful hearer" we are no part of His family.

Q. Then if we are keeping His commandments and following in Jesus' footsteps, becoming part of His family, why are we still subject to suffering? Why does He not keep His children from pain and accidents?

A. If we had everything just to our liking in this life, without any pain, or without trials, we would be in danger of forgetting God and what He offers. Moses warned Israel against just such a possibility: "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, . . . when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, . . . and all that thou hast is multiplied. . . and thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deut. 8:11-17).

Q. Certain sufferings may serve the Christian well. Can we have some proof for this from the Scriptures?

A. Jesus said, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:10). Persecution is a form of suffering.

Tribulation is a form of suffering, and Paul tells us that "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope" (Rom. 5:3).

Suffering could also be in the form of afflictions which Paul also said work for us. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Cor. 4:17).

Q. In what way could we say that suffering or affliction works for us?

A. It shows us our dependence on God and brings us to the realization that we cannot rely entirely upon our own strength. Trouble of

any kind seems to draw one closer to God. Even the unbelieving call upon Him when they are in distress. But we know that if we are not drawing near to Him in our everyday life, there is no need to call upon Him in trouble.

Q. When we have trouble or suffering of any kind, we have to remember that the Bible says that "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Whatever afflictions we are called upon to suffer, we can know it is for our good. But how can we know that we can bear what He sends?

A. Because He has promised not to send too much. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13).

Q. Even Paul was tested through suffering. He wrote that he asked three times for relief from his "thorn in the flesh," but his plea was denied. Apparently that "thorn" was just what he needed "lest [he] be exalted above measure," as he said.

God does "not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies" (Lam. 3:33,32). Whatever He sends, it is not too much for us to bear.

Q. Do we have record where anyone rejoiced in suffering?

A. In the book of Acts, the apostles were arrested for preaching Christ. They were beaten, then "commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus." When they were released, "they departed from the

presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:40-41).

Peter might have been thinking of that incident when he wrote, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; . . . yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed" (I Pet. 4:14-16). Then he wrote, "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (v.19).

Q. The people of God willingly suffered severe persecution in the days of the early church. They knew that their persecutors could not take away their hope of eternal life, hence they did not fear death.

We are not called upon to endure that kind of suffering today, nor does God allow us to suffer at the hand of others as punishment. But there were times when God had a kingdom on earth that He did allow suffering as a means of punishment for evil doing. Could we have some proof for this?

A. During the time of the Judges, God frequently allowed their enemies to chastise them. After they had divided the land that they had conquered, we read that "the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim: and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt. . . . And the anger [divine displeasure] of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies; whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them. . . and they were greatly distressed" (Judges 2:11-15).

Q. Then what happened?

A. Then "it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them" and "the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge" (Judges 2:18).

Q. Do we have any other examples where the Lord allowed suffering because of sin?

A. The prophet Jeremiah told the people, "Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you. For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. They are waxen fat. . . . Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" (Jer. 5:25-29).

The Psalmist, recounting the experiences of Israel, noted how God had allowed them to suffer to teach them to serve Him, because they "believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation"; "for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant. . . . He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them. He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost. He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath and indignation, and trouble, . . . he made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence" (Ps. 78:22, 37, 45-50).

Q. There are many, many more examples we could have. Is God still doing this today? Is God punishing people by allowing them to suffer today? Can we assume that the victims of crippling diseases, accidents or calamities such as hurricanes and tornadoes today are being punished?

A. No. God gives to all life and breath; He makes "his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust," as we read in Matt. 5:45. But if they are people who have never heard and learned of Him and have not agreed to serve Him, they are not under His jurisdiction. He neither punishes nor rewards them; they are not His special concern. It is simply a matter of time and chance when they are victims of some calamity.

Q. Can we have a text for that?

A. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all. . . . so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them" (Eccl. 9:11-12).

Q. "Time and chance happeneth to them all." If they happen to be in the right place at the right time, they could be the victim of a natural calamity such as an earthquake or tornado.

Jesus gave a good example of time and chance in His teachings. What was that?

A. He was told of some Galileans whom Pilate had slain, and He "answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? . . . Or those eighteen,

upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:1-5). These people were no worse sinners than others of their time, but they were the victims of time and chance.

Q. The New English Bible renders this: "Do you imagine that, because these Galileans suffered this fate, they must have been greater sinners than anyone else in Galilee? . . . or do you imagine they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? I tell you they were not; but unless you repent, you will all of you come to the same end." Unless they repented of their sins, turned over a new leaf, and came into His family, their end would also be death—eternal death from which there is no resurrection.

It is clear that Jesus did not equate sin and suffering, but there is a certain amount of suffering that is related to men's sin. Could we mention some such cases?

A. Many suffer from their own indulgences, from their lack of self-control. It is a well-known fact that overweight contributes to many diseases, yet the majority of obese individuals are that way simply because they do not control their appetite. Such people have no one to blame but themselves if they suffer.

Smoking is another case in point. The relationship between cigarette smoking and lung cancer has been demonstrated beyond doubt—yet more people start smoking than stop in any given year—and more people die of lung cancer each succeeding year. But they cannot blame God.

Q. God created us all as free moral agents. Each of us is

endowed with a certain amount of will-power, but only we ourselves can call upon it. We are free to choose what we will do in this life, and by the choices we make, we create our own destiny. If our own free choice brings suffering, it is entirely our own fault. God has no part in it.

There is another evil which causes much suffering which we have not mentioned.

A. Alcohol abuse causes much suffering—not only for the problem drinker, but often for his family, his employer, and even for those whom he must meet on the highway. But we cannot blame God because man takes harmless substances and distills them into intoxicating beverages and then consumes them to his own hurt. Each has the power to resist the temptation if he will but exercise it.

Q. Yes, but sin is not always the cause of suffering. Jesus made a good point on this in His teaching—concerning the man born blind. What was the situation?

A. This man had been blind from birth, and when it was brought to the attention of Jesus and the apostles, they asked Him, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus' answer left no room for question: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents" (John 9:2-3).

Q. Sin had nothing to do with the man's blindness. Nor does it with our infirmities unless we willfully go against known rules of health. We have to remember that we are yet mortal, and as such we are subject to aches, pains, injuries and accidents.

We are not promised a pain-free existence or life without the possibility of accident. We cannot be sure we will have the use of two eyes, two hands or two feet

for our entire mortal existence. But what are we assured of?

A. We are assured of sufficient life to finish our work to qualify for eternal life—if we are doing His will. Our assurance is found in I Timothy 4:8: "But godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Only His children share in that promise.

Q. That text is very good from the Jerusalem Bible: "Physical exercises are useful enough, but the usefulness of spirituality is unlimited, since it holds out the reward of life here and now and of the future life as well." In other words, if we are attending to our spiritual duties, we can know that we will have enough of this life to complete our work to qualify for eternal life. But God does not force anyone—we are free to choose. It is entirely the responsibility of each individual whether or not he or she becomes a member of God's family.

What other benefits do His children enjoy that are not shared by those outside His family?

A. His children have the benefit of hope beyond this life. Whatever they have to face now, they can know that it is only temporary; and if they use it to add to their spiritual stature, they can have all the joys and pleasures and comforts that are denied them now. There is never a time when the serious, striving Christian must give up hope, for God will allow nothing that will make it impossible for him to serve faithfully.

God's people also have the benefit of being "never alone," never forsaken, never forgotten.

Q. Does that mean we will not have times when we must be alone without human hands to help us?

A. It means that God will never

forsake us. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," is the promise (Heb. 13:5). If we are serving God, we can always take comfort in the thought that He is with us and all things will work together for our good (Rom. 8:28).

Q. Are there any other benefits shared by those within God's family that are not known to those outside? Can suffering ever make us "better"?

A. It is said that suffering can either make us "bitter" or "better," depending on how we take it. Through our own experiences with suffering we can learn to have compassion on others who suffer; we can learn to be more longsuffering with others, more understanding of their problems, and more humble before God. Jesus learned "by the things which he suffered," and so can we.

Q. Any other benefits—something about our safety?

A. God promises angelic protection to His own. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Ps. 34:7).

Q. Does this mean He will see that we never have to spend any time in a hospital, or that we will always be delivered immediately from our sufferings?

A. It means that He will be with us in our sufferings. "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (Isa. 63:9).

Doesn't that picture our compassionate God! But we want to remember that this special concern is only for those who "fear Him," or keep His commandments. If we are not doing that, we do not qualify.♦♦

No Variableness

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." —James 1:17

THESE WORDS, penned so long ago by a man named James, place our present blessings in a proper—and heavenly—perspective. They identify the one great source of all, God. And what do they tell us about the great Creator? With Him there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Many are the attributes of God related in Scripture to impress us: His mercy, justice, longsuffering, goodness, love, power, might, and all in infinite measure. And here we learn of His exactitude: "No variableness."

This singular quality, so foreign to humankind, is present in all His visible creation. There is nothing chanceful or uncertain. The regularity with which the phenomena of nature recur, the movements of the heavenly bodies, the planets, the sun, the perfectly patterned structures of atom and molecule, the laws of force and motion, the wonders of the living cell and all the intricacies of the human body—such unbounded power and exquisite skill are exhibited in the most minute as well as in the mightiest parts of His creation. How true that with Him is "no variableness."

Our personal experience and observation concur with nature in testifying to the invariableness of God's laws. Yes, our aches and pains and those of suffering humanity cry loudly that we cannot compromise with them. Destroy the optic nerve and sight is gone forever. When by accident, illness or disease the heart ceases to beat, life ends. And these laws respect neither person, time nor circumstance; for neither life nor sight can be restored except by a higher law.

We turn to the Bible and find lessons of God's invariableness taught again and again. We read of Solomon's temple, which is a type of the Lord's spiritual house, His people. The stones of this temple were so perfectly prepared, measured and fitted, that they went together without the sound of a hammer, axe or tool of any kind. The people of God are also represented as the man created in the image of God, exact in all measurements of righteousness and true holiness. There can be no sin,

enlarged or minimized, in this great man, but all must meet the exact proportions of holiness as directed by the Head, Christ, in whom "the entire Body is welded together and compacted by every joint with which it is supplied," and "the due activity of each part enables the Body to grow and build itself up in love" (Eph. 4:16, Moffatt Bible). The saints' robe of "fine linen clean and white" must meet the same requirements, without "spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27). It must be holy and without blemish.

The Bible makes clear that God's purposes are all based upon exactness; and if we do not measure up satisfactorily, we shall be just outside the ordained scheme of things. We have been given the rule and hammer, the chisel, and whatever is necessary to make us fit into the great plan of the Almighty. But all must be used with diligence and great care, for we remember that with God is "no variableness."

The Mosaic law was an example of the standard God requires. It was inflexibly just in all its requirements, and justice is but accurate judgment. While we know that the law of Moses without the law of faith could not give eternal life, still it was a law designed by God to serve a singular purpose for the nation of Israel, and at the same time providing marvelous types and shadows of things to come. The law of Moses was an exact law.

The same exactness is needed in our preparation for the Day of the Lord, and we should always be looking after the minute details, putting the finishing touches on our work in order that it may fit *exactly* into the place prepared for the faithful in God's building. For with God is "no variableness." How diligently we should watch the "little things," for as has been said, "We hew our way through rock and pine, and stumble on some little vine."

The little things that come in conflict with our pride, our readiness to take offense, our selfishness, and every evil inclination are what we must guard against. We are inclined to be too lax and careless in spiritual things. But

remember, he who keeps the whole law but for a single point is nonetheless a lawbreaker in the sight of God. The apostle Paul made this very plain in his chapter on charity: "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (I Cor. 13:2-3). If the one essential is lacking, all else is of no avail. We must meet the *full* requirements, put away *every* evil practice, for we serve a God with whom is "no variableness."

On the other hand, our God gives spiritual help in the exact proportion to our endeavor. When we act earnestly and give Him our entire devotion, when we show our desire to live in exact harmony with His laws, He helps us. This was His promise to Israel: "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people:

for all the earth is mine"(Ex. 19:5).

God's inflexible justice means something else also to those who claim to be His servants: It means that He is sovereign right, and that His retributive justice must fulfill its destiny. His law is "Obey and live, disobey and die," and He means just this. The one is as sure as the other. If we disobey, we shall receive the consequences of our disobedience.

If we seek God's favor by putting away evil, conforming exactly to the standard of righteousness He has set, if we meet and satisfy His unvarying demands, we shall become part of His great plan that never wears out nor breaks down, nor any part ever fails to do its work at the right time in just the right way. We shall obtain that which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor has entered into the heart of man to conceive. How can we be sure? Because, in the words of our text, "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."••

"I CAN Do It!"

(Continued from page 17)

be proud of all that! I was so ashamed. But Mom and Dad turned and smiled at me and began to speak with the teacher.

"Just as they were leaving the room, I slipped from my desk and over to the table where the books were on display. I opened my book, and what do you suppose—the first pages of my book were—were gone! they just weren't there!"

"What had happened to them?" asked Rodney's younger brother.

"My teacher, she was really kind-hearted, and she didn't want my parents seeing all that bad work, and so she had pulled out those pages and left only the good part. I started to cry with delight—it was just too good to be true. My teacher had wanted my parents to see only the good!"

Rodney expelled a long breath, but didn't interrupt.

"But do you know, in that hour I learned a lesson from my teacher that has stayed with me through all the years since—always try to promote the best in those around you, don't be always picking at their worst qualities."

"I've heard you say that before, Dad," commented Mom. "If you can't say something good about someone, don't say anything."

"If we could always remember that—if everyone in the world always remembered that, I don't think there would be such a word as discouragement in the dictionary."

Mother looked thoughtfully into the dancing flames on the hearth. "The Bible teaches that we are to be kind to one another, and that was just what your teacher was teaching you. Worth more than all the algebra lessons in the world. Right, Rodney?"

"Right, Mom."

"It says also, 'Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth'—"

"But that which is good to the use of edifying," continued Dad. "That leaves no room for the words that would discourage or dishearten."

"But what should you do, Dad, when others throw those mean, ugly words at *you*?" asked Rodney, thoughtfully.

"Do you think, Rodney, that ducks get hurt by the water that falls on their backs?"

"No—."

"Well then, what do *they* do?"

"Just let it run off, I guess," Rodney was very matter-of-fact.

"Don't you think you can do that, too, with the unkind words others may throw at you?"

Rodney's chin was high and his shoulders square as he stood up. If Dad could do it, so could he—he was made of the same stuff. He wouldn't let biting taunts of others get him down any longer. He'd just let them run off—like water off a duck's back. And he'd do like his Dad, keep working. After awhile, maybe he'd be at the top of his class, too, and they could all be looking up to him!••

Letters

Keep Looking Up

I have just finished reading the last issue of "The Message" and I did enjoy every page and line; it was very interesting. I am passing it on to my friend.

The day is fast approaching when our Lord Jesus will come again as the signs tell us, and we have to keep looking up as our deliverance draweth nigh. We have to try our very best to follow the commands of our dear Lord as we would not like to be left out of the "Marriage Feast of the Lamb." "Praise the Lord, Praise His Holy Name."

Perth, W. Australia

B. A.

Remember the Promises

So if we want the reward that God has offered, we must keep in mind the wonderful promises. They will help us to do the things we should do.

Rome, Georgia

S.J.

To Keep Afloat

In times of trouble we tend to draw closer to the Lord because we are much more aware of how much we depend on Him for everything, for our strength and guiding care.

I just don't see how people with no faith and hope in God can survive. When times are rough He is our Life-line, a Ballast for our rocking lives and our Anchor. Without His aid we would surely capsize. Whatever the circumstances or wherever we are, He will be there if we want Him.

Alice, Texas

P.F.

I Must...

I must redeem the time. World conditions are in a turmoil and we should be ready when the great change comes.

Williamsville, New York

Mrs. J. K.

Lots To Do

Every day is a good day allowing us one more day to work with self. The time is swiftly passing by. We have lots to do to watch self every moment.

Canton, Texas

B. N.

So What Do You Know?

From City to City

1. In what city was the centurion's servant healed?
2. On what island was Paul shipwrecked on his way to Rome?
3. What was the northernmost city of Canaan?
4. In what city did Paul and Silas pray in prison at midnight?
5. What place do these objects suggest: a casket and a widow's son?
6. Where did Paul find Timothy?
7. In what city was the upper room located where Jesus and His disciples gathered to observe the Passover?
8. In what city did Paul preach on the subject, "To the Unknown God"?
9. Where was the home of Boaz?
10. Where did Lazarus and his sisters live?
11. In what city south of Babylon did Abram live?
12. Where did Luke first join Paul?
13. Where were the disciples first called Christians?

14. What place do these suggest: a sword and the death of Israel's first king?
15. Where was the early home of Barnabas?
16. Where was Jacob buried?
17. From which town did Andrew, Peter and Philip come?
18. In what city was Lydia when she became a Christian?
19. Where did Jesus perform His first miracle?
20. At what city were Paul and Barnabas mistaken for gods?
21. Locate the two Antiochs of the New Testament.
22. What city became the inheritance of Caleb?
23. What are the six cities of refuge?
24. In what city was the field that Jeremiah bought?

Answers:

1. Capernaum (Matt. 8:5-13); 2. Melita/Malta (Acts 27:41; 28:1); 3. Dan (Ezek. 48:1); 4. Philippi (Acts 16:12, 25); 5. Nain (Luke 7:11-15); 6. Lystra (Acts 16:1); 7. Jerusalem;
8. Athens (Acts 17:16, 22-23); 9. Bethlehem (Ruth 1:19; 2:1); 10. Bethany (John 11:1); 11. Ur (Gen. 11:31); 12. Troas (Acts 16:8, 11). The narrative changes from "they" to "we." 13. Antioch (Acts 11:26); 14. Gilboa (I Sam 31:1-6); 15. Island of Cyprus (Acts 4:36); 16. Cave of Machpelah (Gen. 49:33; 50:13); 17. Bethsaida (John 1:44); 18. Philippi (Acts 16:12-15); 19. Cana in Galilee (John 2:1-11); 20. Lystra (Acts 14:8-13); 21. Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14); and Antioch of Syria (Acts 18:18, 22); 22. Hebron (Josh. 14:13); 23. Kedesh, Shechem, Hebron, Bezer, Ramoth, Golan (Josh. 20:7-8); 24. Anathoth (Jer. 32:7-9).

Building for Tomorrow

Our position in the future depends upon what we make of ourselves, now, in this life; it is indeed a solemn thought to know that today we are building tomorrow's character. In this age when most people are doing what seems good in their eyes, we must have the courage to stand for virtue in all we do and say.

How grateful we should be to our Beloved Father that He has opened our eyes and ears that we may see and hear and understand His wonderful plan for this world in the very near future. Our goal in life must be to please God and do the things that will fit us for a place in His glorious soon coming Kingdom. It is through God's mercy and longsuffering that we are still allowed time to work out our salvation.

The Psalmist asks the question, "Lord who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" The answer is, "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness and speaketh the truth in his heart."

Time has been given us for a purpose; we can either use it for good or squander it; God leaves us free moral agents to choose our own course of action; we can serve Him and fit ourselves for the life to come, or we can do as we please, invest our all in the world of today and lose the world of the future.

Present world conditions shout loud and clear that the day of the Lord is near, very near; we can see the handwriting on the wall and it tells us that the time is almost upon us when we shall have to give an account of ourselves. Will we be weighed in the balance and found wanting? It is up to us. May God give us the will and the strength the fight for right and be found worthy.

Swansea, South Wales

M. S.

Thankful

Life is a battle to the finish, and the prayers and encouragement that we receive from one another help to strengthen each of us.

I thank God for this Truth He has given to me, and I pray for forgiveness of my sins and to help me to live a life that is pleasing to Him.

Andalusia, Alabama

D. McD.

Hearing Ears

"The ear that heareth the reproof of life, abideth among the wise" (Prov. 15:3). Deflating as this is to anyone's ego, to hearken to the reproofs of life is an indispensable characteristic of the wise and it remains the God-given prescription for correcting our naturally defective traits.

Solomon was reported to be the wisest man that ever lived. He is the classic example of a man unable to take his own advice. A hearing ear suggests a willingness, or a desire to hear. Naturally we are inclined to hear only what we want to hear, that which we are interested in. But to "abide among the wise" this is what makes everything so worthwhile.

Norton, South Wales

G. S.

Friends and More Friends

It surely must have encouraged the Christian brethren and sisters to have Paul's greetings, and to have their names mentioned personally in his letter to their church in Rome; to read also all the heartening things which he had written about them, such as: "all over the world they are telling the story of your faith" and "everyone has heard of your loyalty to the gospel." Such faith was a source of rejoicing to Paul. While some had heard the call and had belonged to Christ Jesus before he had, they were all chosen of God by their abounding faith and zeal and worked hard in the Lord, some even "kopian"—toiling very hard, and risking their lives in the service of the Lord. As they were encouraged by Paul, so Paul was encouraged by them.

Behind the faithful ones at Rome there was probably many an interesting and even exciting story, for among this household of God there were members of Satan. Paul admonished them to avoid all such, for, "with their plausible and pious talk they beguile the hearts of unsuspecting people." However, Paul had faith in their loyalty, for with them was the "real thing" with a loathing for evil and a bent for what is good. May we also apply these lovely principles which they possessed, and may we also labor hard in the Lord. How thrilling it would be and what joy would be ours if we were found worthy to hear our Leader say: "You are one that was loyal and true."

Many are under the impression that Brother Paul was prejudiced against women, but in this last chapter of Romans, he makes it very plain that the women he mentions were of infinite value in the church. Was it not Sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchraea, who was delivering this letter of Paul's to the church at Rome?

He asks them to stand by her if she should need any help, for she herself had been a good friend and had helped many people, including Paul himself. Salutations were sent also to all the other loyal women who worked hard in the Lord.

What wonderful fellowship there is among all who are working for the same thing, who have the same wonderful Lord and Master, for "There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female: for you are all one person in Christ Jesus." It is wonderful to think that we, too, may belong to this happy, united family, and be children of God if we are true and faithfully keep His commandments.

Swansea, South Wales

R. B.

ORDER NOW!

To be sure you get your copy of the *Megiddo Message* 1980, all eleven issues in one hardcover volume, **order now**. Price: \$8.00, Postpaid. Your order will be acknowledged when received; volume will be mailed to you as soon as it is available.

"I Don't Have Time"

"I DON'T have time" seems to be a readymade, standard excuse from anyone who doesn't *want* to do whatever is being asked of him. One person is always ready and willing to lend a hand, while another seems never to have the time. Yet God has given each the same amount of time. Each is blessed with sixty seconds in each precious minute; each has sixty minutes in each precious hour; and each has twenty-four hours in each God-given day. Yet one is able to help, and the other is not.

What is the difference? It has been said that if you need something done, don't ask someone who is doing nothing; ask the busiest person you know.

This has been true for a long time. Let us look at some of the examples recorded for us in the Bible, people who were called to do a special assignment when they were already busy, and see how they handled the situation. Moses was busy tending Jethro's flocks when the angel appeared in the burning bush. But did Moses say, "No, Lord, I can't, you see I'm busy. I can't leave what I am doing; these are my father-in-law's sheep"? No, Moses began immediately to make ready for his new undertaking. The results were so far-reaching that we today are still reaping the benefits from his example. Let us thank God for Moses!

Isaiah was another outstanding prophet. When he heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah did not hesitate but answered, "Here am I, send me." As a result of this ready obedience, many of Isaiah's prophecies have reached to us, admonishing, warning, teaching, encouraging and promising what God has prepared for those who turn from their wicked ways and serve Him. The benefits to be reaped are many: sickness, sorrow, pain and finally death will become a thing of the past. Everyone will have his own abode and dwell safely. The promise is, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9). And, "They shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Isa. 65:21-22).

Gideon was busy threshing much-needed grain when his call came; but still he was not too busy to take on more responsibility. As a result, Gideon freed Israel from the oppressors, leaving us the lesson that a minority *with God* is mightier than the majority without Him.

Gideon was obedient even when he might have had

reasons *not* to obey. When God told Gideon he had too many men, we can hear ourselves saying, "What—too many men? They are outnumbering us many times already, and you say, *too many men?*" But no, Gideon did not waver but did as God said, and with just three hundred—plus God—he won a great victory over the oppressors. What if Gideon had been too busy for such a campaign?

Then we have Elisha, who when called was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen. Doubtless the work he was doing was important to the family's livelihood. But was he too busy to answer the call? Never! He left it immediately and went with Elijah. He was busy but not too busy to take on new duties.

There are many other great men who were busy, but who did not fail to lend a hand when it was needed. Let us thank God for them all.

Then we have examples of those who were too busy. Jesus illustrated one group of these in Luke 14:16-20. These were people who had been invited to attend the King's banquet; but when the time arrived, they all had one excuse or another. The first man had purchased a piece of ground and explained that he had to go and see it. We might wonder what difference *seeing* ground that he had already purchased would make—it was his, and seeing it would not make it either better or worse. But this was his excuse. The next had just bought five yoke of oxen and needed to go and "prove them." It couldn't be done another day; it had to be done on the very night of the banquet! And so he asked to be excused. The third had just married a wife—who could guess what might happen if he asked *her* to come along *with him*! And so, there were none to attend. What did Jesus say? "I tell you that none of these that were bidden shall taste of my supper."

If we want to eat of the tree of life, we cannot be too busy now.

In First Kings 20 we have the parable of the servant who was appointed to guard a man. But during the course of the charge, this servant became too busy "here and there"—and his prisoner got away. Then the prophet pronounced his fate. "So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it. . . . Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life" (I Kings 20:40-42)—a serious consequence for being "too busy."

These things have been recorded for us, so that we can take the lesson to heart. With God's help may we watch ourselves that we may not be like those who were too busy when God called but like those who responded in instant obedience. ♦♦

*Too busy to read a chapter a day,
Too busy, yes, much too busy to pray.
Too busy to think of our wasted past
In this whirlwind life which we know won't last.*

*Too busy to speak a word of cheer
To the heart-broken friend that stands so near.
Too busy to help him lift the load
That he's trying to carry on life's rough road.*

*Too busy gathering the dollars and dimes...
For the worthwhile things we haven't the time.
While something keeps whispering, "Grab your
share..."*

Why waste precious hours in useless prayer?"

*Too busy to heed the Master's cry;
With just a glance we hurry by;
But someday we'll lift a sad voice to the sky,
For none of us will be too busy to die.*

*Perhaps when we stand at the great white
throne,
God will be too busy to claim us His own;
Let us calm down to a slower pace
And get ready to meet Jesus face to face.*

—Selected.

Hold the Fort

The story is told about a Fort in Georgia back in the days of the Civil War. This fort was besieged for many days and was getting to the point where the commanding officer thought they could hold out no longer. He was almost ready to surrender to the enemy.

About this time, there was another general marching through Georgia. When he was about fifty miles away from the fort, he sent out a messenger with this message, "Hold the fort, for I am coming." With this extra encouragement and hope, they were able to hold on a little longer.

It seems that Jesus is saying that to us today. "Hold the fort, for I am coming." His messenger has not yet arrived, but we can have faith as we see fulfilling prophecies telling us what to expect in the last days of man's rule, "evil men and seducers" waxing worse and worse, men doing evil "with both hands earnestly." And surely the weak are saying "I am strong."

How thankful we should be that we have the strong tower of God to keep us safe in times like these.

—C.B., Fort Myers, Florida

Forewarned. Ready?

WHAT ARE our thoughts on the second coming of Christ? Is it an event that may someday occur but not now? Or is it a certainty that is constantly on our minds and a part of our very being?

We are aware, of course, that only God knows the day and hour, but Jesus foretold certain events that would precede His second appearing. He said, among other things, that His coming would be in a time such as it was in the days of Noah. What did the people think before the flood? What were they doing? We do not know a lot of particulars, but we do know they scoffed and ridiculed Noah. Are they not doing much the same today? In Noah's time they went right on living in their own routine, worldly ways, giving no thought to the impending end of their world. Are not people today doing the same?

But what of us? Are our ways pleasing to God Almighty? In Matthew 24:42 Jesus tells us, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

If ever the words of the ancient prophet were true, they are true today. "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near and hasteth greatly." What are we doing to prepare ourselves for that Day?

Do we read the Word of God as we should, as He expects us to, as eager students of God's knowledge?

What of our loves? It is written, "Love not the world." We have been forewarned. Why? Because "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof." Only "he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17). Have we taken the warning to heart? Art we ready for the fall of the Babylon around us?

Many are the people today who love themselves, their things, their earthly goals and goods more than they love Christ. But there is no such thing as a worldly-minded Christian; if we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us.

We will have to sever that which is evil from our lives. We cannot serve God and hold to our own thoughts. We cannot love the world and let it control and motivate us, or we will find ourselves not loving God—and not being loved by Him.

Let us take inventory of our lives. Are we ready for the coming of the Lord? We are not ready if we have sin in our lives. We are not ready if our hearts go after the interests of this world.

Are you ready? Only you can answer, for you have been forewarned.♦♦

Almighty Maker

*Before Jehovah's awesome throne,
Ye nations, bow with sacred joy;
Know that the Lord is God alone;
He can create, and He destroy.*

*We are His people, we His care.
Our souls and all our mortal frame;
What lasting honours shall we rear,
Almighty Maker, to Thy name?*

*We'll crown Thy gates with thankful songs;
High as the heavens our voices raise;
And earth, with her ten thousand tongues,
Shall fill Thy courts with sounding praise.*

*Wide as the world is Thy command,
Vast as eternity Thy love
Firm as a rock Thy truth shall stand
When rolling years shall cease to move.
— Selected.*

