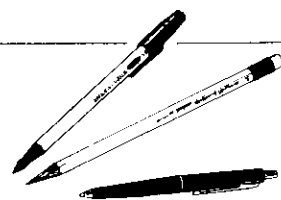


Megiddo Message





Winter in the Soul

IN THE northern regions of the northern hemisphere, winter is as much a part of the year as spring or summer. Though modern methods of living have reduced the inconvenience and suffering for millions, winter is still often cold, bitter, bleak and unpleasant. It is still winter.

There is another kind of winter of which we are reminded at this season, and that is winter in the soul. Everyone experiences it at some time or other, when the outlook is bleak, the backlook bitter, and the surroundings chill and uncomfortable.

This winter of the soul descended with all its icy, chilling blasts, upon the disciples of Christ at the time of the crucifixion. Things had been going so well. Their Lord, their Master, their King—they had such hopes for Him. He had won their deepest love and respect, and had been favorably received by multitudes. But suddenly it all turned sour. He was taken into custody and, after a mockery of a trial, condemned to die a criminal's death.

How crushed must have been the spirits of those who had believed in Him; how hopeless everything must have seemed just then. Goodness had been set against evil, and evil had won. All their hopes of Him and the better world He was to bring—was it only a dream, a vision for fools? Would Rome rule the world forever? Life must have seemed incredibly bleak at such a time.

We who look back on the time may think we would have avoided the despair and the depression that beset His sorrowful followers. We would have looked beyond—to the empty tomb, the resurrected Lord, the glorified and ascended King. Wasn't all that as surely part of the plan?

But let us not be too sure. It is quite possible that the chill of that night would have penetrated our soul also. Yes, springtime was just ahead; but that night was bitter cold.

The years just before the Apostasy, when the light of divine knowledge was burning lower and lower,

must have been like winter to the few who struggled to keep its flame alive. The world was hostile; the surroundings unfriendly; even family and nearest of kin could not be trusted to be true. Surely such a time caused bitter winter in the souls of the few stalwarts who held fast. It was winter, but they knew that spring would come again, that the future on which they staked their lives was as sure as the promises of God, and so they endured.

Should we feel thwarted and depressed because we encounter an occasional cold blast of winter in these days of chilly indifference? It is inevitable that such will come. Did not David wonder when he saw the prosperity of the wicked and saw himself—a true-hearted servant of God—having to live day after day in peril? Was it not a season of winter for him? And what of Jeremiah, when he saw the “way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?” (Jer. 12:1-2). Jeremiah, the loyal prophet of God, whose life was threatened by his own kinsmen, who knew the damp mire of the pit, the chill nastiness of the prison, and the hopelessness of the king's court—did he not know winter? But hear the joy in his soul as he looks beyond winter to the spring which was sure to bud and blossom and bear fruit: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth” (Jer. 23:5).

Let not the winter dull our spirits or chill our hopes. Winter is but the harbinger of spring, and how glad we will be, when the springtime comes, that we had faith in God to carry us through the winter of the soul.

About Our Cover

For this prime view of winter tranquillity we are indebted to the kindness of Photographer D. C. Lowe. In the background is Mt. Hood; in the foreground, Mirror Lake.

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—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

JB—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

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

Williams—The New Testament, A Translation in the Language of the People

Rotherham—The Emphasized Old Testament

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

Megiddo Message

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Yearning for Newness

YEARNING is a strong word. Webster defines it as "longing persistently, wistfully; feeling tenderness or compassion." It is a passionate craving, desire or longing which in the normal course of events is beyond possibility of satisfaction. When we yearn for something, we are willing to sacrifice almost anything, if only we may satisfy the longing of our heart; and when a measure of satisfaction is obtained, the desire is proportionately increased.

To a greater or lesser degree we all have experienced certain yearnings. They are part of normal life and are in a sense "God-given" in that they cause us to be persistently dissatisfied with our present state or condition. On the human level, we all have certain cravings for love, for appreciation, friendship or recognition. On the higher level of the spirit, we experience other longings. As we ponder the far-flung beauties of our universe and the deep mysteries of life and consider the wealth of knowledge that is the secret possession of our great Creator, and then look upon our small, finite state, we yearn for God. To know Him, and to be known by Him is our one desire. We yearn for a place, however small, in His providential care, and for a firsthand experience of the higher, immortal life.

David Yearned for God

Perhaps no one ever expressed more vividly these inner cravings of the heart than did the Psalmist. David, who knew firsthand the shameful depths of sin, and the heights of repentance and forgiveness; David, who knew both how to despise and reject, and how to love and appreciate; David, who knew both the pull of the earthly and the challenge of the heavenly. In the majority of his psalms, his desire for the heavenly is dominant and he seeks the holy satisfactions that will draw him nearer and nearer to the divine circle. David knew that the God he served was a God of austere holiness and justice; he

knew Him also as a God compassionate, tender, loving and merciful. Again and again his psalms express the longing he felt for God's presence, His protection, His guidance, and loving beneficence. "The Lord is merciful and gracious," he wrote, "slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy" (Ps. 103:9). His mercy is beyond measure, for "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (Ps. 103:10). Perhaps no one could appreciate this more deeply than David. "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (vs. 11-12).

Can we wonder that David *yearned* for such a God? Do not our hearts yearn for God, His strength, His forgiveness, His peace, His protection? Do we not also need Him whom David declared was his "goodness," and "fortress," his "high tower" and "deliverer," his "shield" and He in whom he could trust? (Ps. 144:1-2). Can we not say with David, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God"? (Ps. 84:2). Again, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Ps. 42:1). A gentle, pastoral scene, yet how intense the yearning it conveys.

We may easily conclude from even a cursory reading of the Psalms that David's whole heart and soul were bound up in seeking God, His wisdom and His ways. Feel the weight of desire he expresses as he pours out his soul in this reverie: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple" (Ps. 27:4). Could desire ever be more pure or lofty? Or hear him as he tells how he confided in the God of his salvation: "I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. . . . I cried unto thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living" (Ps. 142:1-3, 5).

David's yearning was for God, His wholeness, His

Note: *Yearning for Newness* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

holiness and all that accompanied it. But complete satisfaction was *not* beyond possibility with God. David was confident that someday he would be satisfied. These are also his words: "I shall be satisfied." When? "When I awake with thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15).

We Also Yearn...

Do our hearts feel that same yearning? Will we not also be satisfied, if only we can one day awake with the likeness of God?

This intense yearning for God includes a yearning for the complete fulfillment of *all* that He has promised concerning the earth and its inhabitants. There are promises of personal benefit to each faithful servant of God; there are also promises of benefit to the entire human race—or all members who will cooperate with God in His advancing and cleansing efforts. Altogether, it will mean a whole new creation—a new government, new populace, and new goals, objectives and opportunities for everyone on earth. It is a promise beyond the possibility of human limitation—because it is the promise of God Himself. As we think about it, how our hearts yearn for its reality. And this is another yearning which is real and tangible—it *will* be! A better world is coming! We can be sure of it. No wonder our hearts yearn for it!

Our yearnings are intensified as we see the present civilization becoming what someone has appropriately called "unglued." Today, when an increasing number of people are affirming the irrationality of life and the world, when there is a growing intellectual uncertainty in the absence of any perceivable integrating principle, when questions of meaning and personal destiny become hopelessly confused, when the world gives the appearance of having gone mad for pleasure and personal pride, our hearts yearn for the *new* world which will be infinitely better.

A modern playwright named Ionesco has graphically pictured the present disarray by creating a setting in which nothing has very much to do with anything else and everything is haphazard. The clock strikes at random, when and as many times as it pleases. The expected sequence of ordered time is demolished, conversation is nonsense, logic vanishes, lifelong associations provide no bridges of memory, and communication has broken down. It is a world out of control, going head over heels to its own destruction.

The depicting is extreme; but it is a world frighteningly familiar in the face of unfolding national and international events.

But through the insights given us by the prophets of God in His holy Word, we are able to look beyond the trouble and turmoil to a better time. Our hearts have caught the vision, and we are able to look up and rejoice—

Do not our hearts yearn for God, His strength, His forgiveness, His peace, His protection?

rejoice that the time of turmoil is nearly over; that the time of man's mismanagement is approaching its end and soon the God of heaven will assume visible and active control. We look beyond, to the time when "they shall sit every man under his own vine and fig tree" with none to molest or make afraid, when the "work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever"; when "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick" and men shall learn war no more; the time when "all thy children shall be taught of the Lord and great shall be the peace of thy children," and over the broad face of the earth "all shall know" the Lord, from "the least of them even unto the greatest"; when there will be no more crime, no more injustice, no more inhumanity of man to man.

As we ponder these abundant blessings of the age to come, does not the longing of our heart increase? Do we not yearn for that better time?

Yearning...for the New Life

We yearn, perhaps more than all, for the personal benefits which we may share, for the new life and vigor which may be ours. To be ourselves partakers of the divine nature! to experience the change from flesh and blood to something infinitely superior! to feel the pulsations of immortality in our being and know that never, never again shall we feel pain or misery or any sense of physical discomfort! To know the thrills and joys and freedoms of the higher life which the angels share! To be forever victorious over weakness, disease, decay and death itself! Do we not yearn for all this? Is it not the deepest longing of our hearts? Do we not, with the apostle Paul, "groan," or send forth a longing cry, "not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (II Cor. 5:4)?

This is the final goal of our life-effort; this is what God has promised to each of us, if we will meet His divine standard; this is what we desire above all else. It is the apex of our hope, the center and circumference of our expectation. To have part in the physical change from mortality to immortality, to be made in actual fact "equal unto the angels" never to die any more (Luke 20:35-36), to have our vile, corruptible body changed, fashioned

like unto His "glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21)—here is our hope. Do not our hearts yearn for its reality?

Yearning, but...

But we realize also that between us and the satisfaction of that yearning is a definite distance, a distance which we ourselves must cover; and the measure of that distance is exactly the distance that lies between what we *are* and what we must become by God's standard, between the old creature and the totally new, remade man. And so, hand in hand with our yearning for God and the fulfillment of His promises comes a yearning for *newness*—newness of heart, desire, ambition, temperament, of every interest in life: the one is inseparable from the other.

If we would be privileged to live forever in the presence of God, to inherit His riches and share the delights of His family, we know that we cannot remain as we are. The old natural creature must give way to the new. Human-kind, untrained, undisciplined, undeveloped, are of no

eternal worth to the Almighty and All-holy God and will never be recognized by Him. And this includes you and me in our natural state. We ourselves must become *new* before He will recognize us; we must be new *through* and *through*. Hence, the highest yearning we can develop—yearning for *newness*.

Furnishing Our Mental House

Each of us has an inner, mental house which we are responsible to furnish. Every experience of our lives, great or small, adds something to the furnishing of this house. By nature we like to adorn this house with all sorts of things that suit our fancy, whether the colorful hues of pride and jealousy, or the more subdued tones of deceit and self-love. If we look closely at our furnishings, we may discover much that is self-defeating. The entire decor may be self-centered. We have a piece of guilt here a stand of doubt there, a storage cabinet filled with sensitive feelings, and high above all a polished, shiny fixture of self-love. We look at these furnishings and

Let Us Pray...

O Thou gracious heavenly Father, Creator of all that is in heaven above and in the earth beneath; Thou who formed this mighty sphere and created man upon it, who makest light in the midst of darkness and hope in the midst of horror: we praise Thee. There is no God like unto Thee, neither are there any works like unto Thy works. We rejoice to know Thee, and to know that someday all nations whom Thou hast made will come and worship before Thee, and will glorify Thy name. Father, we anticipate warmly the joy of that Day.

We thank Thee for the gift of life, and for the countless blessings which attend it. For the wonderments of personality, for our varying gifts of body and mind which we may use in serving Thee; for health, for usefulness, for desire, and for the ability to care and to appreciate, we thank Thee. Thou alone art the giver of every good and perfect gift.

We praise Thee, too, for the acquaintances Thou dost permit us in our journey through life: for the persons who cause us to think; for the friends who disagree with us when we are in the wrong and encourage us when we do well; for children who show us ourselves as we are, and who remind us of Thy mercy; and for elders who exem-

plify the beauty of life truly lived. Help us to use all to draw nearer to Thee.

Lord, we come confessing our cankered sins of attitude. Many times have we embraced unholy and unwholesome thoughts, ignoring Thy plain commands to abstain from all such; we have clung to personal loves of questionable value, which have kept us from sharing fully in Thy joy. We have found pleasure in censure and criticism when we should have retained that spirit of meekness Thou dost love. We have called evil good and good evil. We have deceived ourselves through muddy thinking and paltry prejudices. We come acknowledging our lacks and our need for Thy continued help in becoming made over new.

Father, we yearn for that newness. To attain it is the deepest longing of our heart. We must become new, for we know Thou art of too pure eyes to behold any iniquity with tolerance, and wilt have none of it in Thy finished creation.

Father, grant us the courage and the honesty to submit every attitude to the scrutiny of Thy all-seeing eye. And as Thou seest we are making a change in our lives, we pray Thou wilt grant restoration, renewal, and a full measure of Thy holy forgiveness. We know that Thy highest delight is the fully re-made man or woman. Father, we pray Thy help in the completing of this great undertaking, that the good work Thou hast begun in us may reach its fulness in the Kingdom of Thy Son.

Father, we join this prayer with those of Thy people everywhere who are seeking Thee in sincerity and in truth. In Jesus' name. Amen.

wonder why we are miserable. Someone has suggested that when we find our mental house furnished this way, there is only one thing to do: walk out, shut the door on our old self behind us, and lock it forever. Then discard the key. We don't have to live with all the old furnishings around us unless we choose to. There is a new and *better* way to live.

The trouble so often, though, is this: when we decide to leave the old house and walk out, we begin to gather our arms as full of the old as we can carry, as though it were all such precious stuff. There is something in us that likes to retain some likeness of the old, something that may be singularly identifiable as our own. However, this is *not* the way to newness. And this is not the way to prepare ourselves for the new age that is coming. We must become new through and through, completely new. And before that can be done, we must accomplish a *total* renovation of our mental environment. We must *think* in the new realm before we can *live* in it.

At this point it might be well for us to take a lesson from the elderly hermit who, looking back over his life, commented somewhat philosophically. "I ain't all I *ought* to be, and I ain't all I *wanted* to be. But thank God I ain't what I *used* to be!" There is a time when we should stand back and see where we are in relation to where we want to be, and encourage ourselves in the progress we have made. We have started. If we have come a good distance, we should thank God.

But at the same time, we want to guard warily against any feeling of self-satisfaction that might come stealing in to rob us of the determination to keep on. We need constantly to *renew* that desire, to keep it alive and growing in us, to keep increasing our yearning for *newness*. If ever we would become wholly new, we must *yearn* for it.

So let us extend the thinking of the man who thanked God he wasn't what he used to be and thank God for the time that is still ours to become what we *ought* to be—and know we *must* be.

Looking Unto Jesus

We picture the ideal person we long to be. We think of Jesus, and how He must have furnished His inner, mental house. We picture Him contemplating the plans and purposes of His heavenly Father at every opportunity. We see Him often in prayer with His Father, seeking the strength and guidance He needed to bring His brief but intensive career to a successful completion. We see Him preserving that undisturbed and undisturbable calm in every trying situation.

As we ponder Jesus' flawlessness, oh, how our yearnings grow! If only we could go to bed some night and wake up in the morning a brand new person, new

**Because our hearts have
caught the vision,
we can look up and rejoice—
that the time of turmoil
is nearly over.**

through and through! If only we could submit ourselves to some miraculous all-transforming "heart" surgery that would give us new values, new goals, new wishes, new ambitions, new loves all in one operation! We long for that patience that is never ruffled, that love that is never selfish, that vision that is never clouded, that faith that is never dim. If only we could get at the *source* of all our problems and transform them so that we would have no inclination to wrong!

We feel like the woman who heard a drunken man voicing this petition: "Lord," he prayed, "clean out the cobwebs in my life." Her response was emphatic: "Lord, forget the cobwebs. Kill the spider!" If only we could kill the spider in our lives, get the evil at its source. If only we could replace all our selfish motives with godliness and let Christ be seen in our actions, our attitudes, and our relations with one another every day, how much better we would be!

What is the answer? It is found in these words of the Psalmist: "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Ps. 51:10). God wants us to be new, totally new. And this means a change of heart. It is not a case of mere outward obedience; we must obey "from the heart" (Rom. 6:17). It is not merely a set of do's and don'ts; it is a matter of learning to *love* to do what God has required and *delighting* to do His will. Various of God's spokesmen have described it in various ways. To Micah, "newness" meant "to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8). To Isaiah, it was a matter of "not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasures, nor speaking thine own words" (Isa. 58:13-14). To the Psalmist it was a matter of being "undefiled in the way" and walking "in the law of the Lord; they also do no iniquity, they walk in his ways" (Ps. 119:1, 4). To aspiring men and women in all ages it is summed up in these words of the Lord God Himself: "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (I Pet. 1:16).

Newness: How?

The apostle Paul also said it simply: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17).

**If we would inherit
God's riches and share
the delights of His family,
we cannot remain as we are.
We must become new.**

But when we think of these words in their total perspective—a new creation that is not bound by any earthly desire, that is not tempted by any of the passions or pleasures of the fleshly mind; that is not dominated by any selfish pursuit or harried by any less-than-holy interest, that is not led by any but the Spirit of God—we wonder. How does one come to this? How can you and I do it?

We feel like saying, "Yes, Paul, we know you understood it; it may have been easy for you. But we have so many distractions. Our lives are so different from yours. We have not been struck with the light from heaven that changed your life. Is it practical for us to consider this newness—or is it like an earthly yearning, something which is beyond the bounds of practical fulfillment? We need some down-to-earth suggestions that we may apply in our lives today."

Paul's Advice

The noble Apostle has plenty of experience from which to reply. He tells us it is possible, but that it is a step-by-step process not begun at dawn and accomplished by dark. It is a steady putting off the old and putting on the new, much as we would take off one garment and put on another, much as we stop doing one task and begin another. "You must lay aside that old human nature, which, deluded by its lusts, is sinking towards death. You must be made new in mind and spirit, and put on the new nature of God's creating, which shows itself in the just and devout life called for by the truth. Then throw off falsehood; speak the truth to each other" (Eph. 4:22-25, NEB).

Paul says it again in these words to the Colossian brethren: "Put to death those parts of you which belong to the earth—fornication, indecency, lust, foul cravings, and the ruthless greed which is nothing less than idolatry. You must yourselves lay aside all anger, passion, malice, cursing, filthy talk—have done with them! Stop lying to one another, now that you have discarded the old nature with its deeds and have put on the new nature, which is being constantly renewed in the image of its Creator" (Col. 3:5, 8-9, NEB).

Do something—this is Paul's directive. Put off, put on. Stop the wrong, start the right. This is the process.

A Page from His Personal Experience

But this is not all. The brave Apostle has even more information to pass on, information directly from his own experience. Throughout his epistles Paul shows his feelings and motives with the utmost candor, but in his letter to the Romans he describes even more fully how he came to be so enthusiastic toward God and so thoughtful and self-controlled toward his fellow Christians—so totally new through and through. The passage is a page from his own autobiography. It reads like this:

"The Law, of course, as we all know, is spiritual; but I am unspiritual; I have been sold as a slave to sin. I cannot understand my own behavior. I fail to carry out the things I want to do, and I find myself doing the very things I hate. I often find that I have the will to do good, but not the power. That is, I don't accomplish the good I set out to do, and the evil I don't really want to do I find I am always doing. . . . My experience of the Law is that when I want to do good, only evil is within my reach. For I am in hearty agreement with God's law so far as my inner self is concerned. But then I find another law in my bodily members, which is in continual conflict with the law which my mind approves, and makes me a prisoner to the law of sin which is inherent in my mortal body. For left to myself, I serve the Law of God with my mind, but in my unspiritual nature I serve the law of sin. It is an agonizing situation, and who can set me free from the prison of this mortal body?" (Rom. 7:14-16, JB; 7:18-24, Phillips).

This is no hypothetical case. The passage rings too true to be explained away. It is Paul reporting on himself and his own conflict; and conflict there is. "When I would do good," he writes, "evil is present with me." Do we not know what he means? Is it not the same paradoxical situation each of us has experienced?

When Paul wrote these words, he was probably between fifteen and twenty years from his Damascus Road experience. He had been struggling, but there was yet more to be done, more victories to be won. He knew the law, but he had yet to fully apply it. Is that not our problem also? It isn't that we don't know what we ought to do to fulfill the newness we desire, to become that brand new creature in Christ Jesus; it is a matter of doing.

An Individual Examination

We each are engaged in this conflict. What kind of progress are we making? Which side is winning in us—old or new, flesh or spirit? Should we not, like Paul, make a careful check on ourselves? Self-examination is the only way to find out. I want to check myself, because I

want to know just what kind of fight I am making, and who is going to win.

I do not want to patch myself over, for I am yearning for newness, and I want to become new through and through. I do not want any of the old to remain, however well-covered and well-protected and vital it may seem to be. I want to get to the very bottom and become all new.

Here are some heart-searching questions that will tell whether I am really becoming new, or whether I am still at heart the same old creature. Let us each examine ourselves in the very presence of God. And let only the Spirit of truth prevail.

- Is the first desire of my life to be like Christ? Is my character taking on the loveliness that will attract His attention? Or am I going on day after day in my own old unregenerate way?

- Am I ever conscious of a secret spirit of pride, an exalted feeling in view of some success or position I have achieved, or because of my appearance, my natural gifts and abilities, or training?

- Am I ever conscious of any love of human praise or love of supremacy? Is there any secret fondness in being noticed, or a secret desire to draw attention to myself in conversation? Is there even a slight swelling out of self when I have had an opportunity in speaking or performing?

- Am I ever conscious of stirrings of anger or impatience which, deceptively, I call nervousness or holy indignation?

- Am I conscious of a touchy sensitive spirit, a disposition to resent and retaliate when disapproved of or contradicted?

- Am I conscious of a desire to throw sharp or heated remarks at another?

- Am I ever conscious of self-will; a stubborn, unteachable spirit, an argumentative, talkative spirit; harsh, sarcastic expressions; an unyielding, headstrong disposition; a driving, commanding spirit? Am I conscious of a disposition to criticize and pick flaws when I am set aside or unnoticed? Have I ever a peevish, fretful spirit, or a disposition that loves to be coaxed or humored?

- Am I ever conscious of carnal fears? Do I fear the face of man, what he or she will think or say of me? Do I shrink from doing my whole duty?

- Am I ever conscious of a jealous disposition, a secret feeling of envy shut up in my heart, an unpleasant sensation in view of the prosperity and success of another? Have I a disposition, an urge to speak of the faults and failings of another, rather than the gifts and virtues of those more talented and appreciated than myself?

- Am I ever conscious of a dishonest, deceitful disposition? Do I ever try to evade the facts about myself, or cover the truth when I am in the wrong? Do I wish to

God wants us to become new through and through, completely new. This means a *total* renovation of our mental environment.

leave a better impression of myself than is strictly justifiable, a false humility? Do I ever exaggerate or stretch the truth?

- Am I ever conscious of unbelief, a spirit of skepticism even in the face of evidence? Am I ever overcome by a spirit of discouragement in times of pressure and opposition? Do I feel sometimes a lack of confidence in the power of God, a lack of faith and trust in Him?

- Am I conscious of a disposition to worry and complain in the midst of pain, poverty, or at the wise dispensations of divine Providence? Do I ever have an overanxious feeling as to whether everything will come out all right?

- Am I ever conscious of formality and deadness, a lack of concern for others; dryness and indifference in matters of spiritual importance; a lack of spiritual power, power with God?

- Am I ever conscious of selfishness, love of ease, love of money?

These are some of the traits which reveal the old, self-seeking nature, the unglorious, unbeautified old creature we naturally are.

Oh, let us look closely; let us look deeply for any trace of anything which God will not approve, which will not be part of the newness for which we yearn. Let there be no more dipping our fingers in the fingerbowl and then claiming that we are clean all over, but let our earnest prayer be, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

We know that with God's help we *can* become new; we can put the old lower nature to death; we can *starve* the self-seeking beast within us. We can be new, all new, *through and through*. Then, when God's Kingdom has come and His will is done here as it is done in heaven above, we can abide—because we became part of that new creation.

MM

The fool thinks himself oh! so wise. The great savant realizes how little he knows compared with what there is to learn, and that he can never hope to do more than scratch the surface of knowledge.

With a Right Spirit

IT IS good to be reminded of the nearness of joyous times to come, also of the brevity of time, which, if wisely spent, will ensure us a place in the world when everything will be made new and all will be peace and happiness, for all the earth will be filled with the glory of God.

However, before all the troubles of mortality are over and forgotten, and before we are in a fit condition to be called a child of God, we too, must make ourselves over into new creatures; "Help Me to Keep a Right Spirit, Lord" should be our prayer.

When we consider the difficulty we have in controlling just one person, ourselves, we realize that it will take time and much patience to acquire a "right spirit," but it will be worth all our labour, for whatever we give up

for the Kingdom of God will be repaid many times over in this age, and in the age to come we will get eternal life. Not only are they counted happy who do God's commandments in the keeping of which is "great reward" but, with a "right spirit" we can make God's true and righteous judgments more desirable than anything, including "much fine gold"; even the bitter things may be made sweet—"sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."

We also will have no time for our "old man" of the flesh, or the things of the world which are not of God and which are destined to pass away.

Thieves can break in and steal hoarded up gold or, indeed, any worldly treasures. And what earthly use are they anyway, if they have to be hidden away, only to be brought

out secretly from time to time to be admired, and then put away again? Wise King Solomon sought to find out how best the sons of men, including himself, might fare under the sun during the few days of their lives, but he found no good in his pleasures, his riches, or his treasures. When he looked at all he had achieved, his toil and trouble, he found it all vain and futile, and that nothing in this world is worthwhile. Things of this world are not "worthwhile," therefore, it is so wonderful to know that God has precious treasures which are safe and secure. Thieves cannot steal these heavenly riches, neither can they become corrupt.

May we "soften this heart of stone" and with our trust in God, cease to be impatient, to fret and worry when things go wrong, but strive to remember, and to make ourselves worthy of these precious wonderful promises which together with God's great goodness, are laid up and reserved in heaven for His faithful children.

—R. B., Swansea, South Wales

Making New

THE WORLD of today certainly needs renewing, and we know that most assuredly it will be made new, with a grandeur and wonder that shall go from one glory to another! Why, we cannot grasp the magnitude of it all, but we can work with ourselves to become new. We must work to reach God's high standard of righteousness. That alone can make us new, with pure thoughts, good deeds, and determination that will blossom forth to the fullness of God's righteousness. We do need to be rooted and grounded in the truth of God, and the deeper our roots go, the easier we shall find the task of overcoming the old ways of the flesh and becoming the new creature in Christ.

How exceedingly thankful we should be that such a wonderful faith and hope has been entrusted to us! Can we, like Paul, say "For me to live is Christ"? Above all else we must strive to be like Him, our great Example, that the joy of the future may be ours, with

Him in the new order of His glorious Kingdom. We know also that our obedience to God's saving Truth will make us into the new creature so well pleasing to Him.

The honour of knowing the beautiful saving Truth of God is so high, and we are assured that if we are faithful to our high calling, we shall be exalted in due time. If we hold fast to the law and to the testimony of our faith, God will help through every trial; He will show us that way of escape and save us. We shall be kept on the uplands of righteousness, and be saved from the fogs of the lowlands of error and sin.

If not watching, the old ways of the flesh will gain in strength to drag us down again to godless deceits and corruptions. But let us watch, adhere to the wisdom of God, look up to the perfect Example of Righteousness, and do that which is right and well pleasing in the eyes of the Lord our God. He has told us that only by so doing can we ever hope to receive the "Well done, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

May we press on until we are wholly made over new.

—A. B., Warwick, Australia

— And Still She Speaks —

Part Five

The following lines are extracts from sermons, discussions, talks, comments by Rev. Maud Hembree (1853-1935). Seen together, they convey her practical approach to life and her keen appreciation of eternal values—which we trust will be of benefit to our readers.

We are naturally so sensitive—I believe sensitiveness is just about as bad a disease in a spiritual sense as there is, a miserable thing! We must watch out for it along this highway of life; it can injure a person; it blinds us to the facts and arouses evil feelings. A Christian must get beyond all that. All who have it must watch.

We cannot walk as other Gentiles walk; they love to spend their time like the pagans did, gratifying their natural desires. It is a pagan world in which we live. They think it so strange we do not go to picture shows and we do not play cards. But church members in my day did not think it strange that we did not play cards. Only those who made no profession of religion did such things.

It means something to have all our speaking in harmony with God's Word. Sometimes it is wisdom to keep still, but when we speak we must always speak in harmony with the word of God.

We are going to have some trials along the way, some trials to test our faith, to test our courage, to see whether we have courage to stand for right under all circumstances.

Trials are good for us. We should take them joyfully, knowing they will work good for us in the end.

We cannot just pretend to be righteous. We must be righteous, as were Zacharias and Elisabeth, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

We are thankful for this life, but how short it is at best; we do not know how long we shall possess it. Would we rather have that than gain life eternal and appear with Christ in glory? But the only way to get that glory, honor, and renown is to fix our minds on things above.

Die to sin, put to death those members that are on earth. Oh, put to death this old nature—"sexual vice, impurity,"—that is natural to the natural man. Put it to death; do not let it rule you, but you rule it.

Whatever we eat or drink, we must be convinced that what we do is best for our physical system. We must eat that which is best for our health. God cannot give us one rule for all, as Paul tells us. Some want to live on vegetables, and some on more of a meat diet. But he says that whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

We must control the mind. We cannot have any rage, any malice, any slander, or any foul talk. That is one problem in the world today—foul talk, vulgar talk, talk not to the glory of God.

People used to think (and they still do) that the devil tempts them. That is what Martin Luther thought. But it is the old nature, the workings of our own natural mind.

In all things we must be thankful—thankful for the situation in which we are placed, thankful for the age in which we are living, thankful above all for this wonderful light of God's Word which lightens our pathway.

Do not allow your mind to go out to some nonsensical music. Put that all away. Someone says, "There is a tune that brings to mind some words"—often foolish words. If it comes to your mind, put it away.

GETTING READY

I HAVE accepted the invitation to the great coming Feast and am now in the process of getting my garments ready. I would not want to be ashamed when that day arrives. Some spot of pride, selfishness, impatience, etc. would cause great sorrow, even weeping and gnashing of teeth.

I have been reading in II Kings recently; and as I read the accounts of the deeds of King Jehu, King of Israel, of all the good that he did—slaying all the remains of the house of wicked Ahab, destroying all the worshippers of Baal, I noticed there was one thing he lacked—he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam. He failed to destroy the golden calves that were in Bethel and Dan.

How many will be holding onto the “golden calves” of hidden sin when Christ arrives? In retrospect, I can see that I have made progress. I can look into the past and know that I have destroyed many “groves” of selfishness and pride, “images” of self-pity, envy, doubt, and that “brazen serpent” of fear. But, looking ahead, I see much work yet to be done. As I search my heart daily, I want desperately to rid my life of all the “high places” remaining.

The sacrifices at times may seem too great, the work just too hard to do. If we ever keep in sight the blessed hope, then the burden seems much lighter. Not until we follow the Lord with all of our heart, turning not aside to the right hand nor to the left, will we be acceptable in God’s sight. King Hezekiah was one who wiped the slate clean. He utterly destroyed all the high places and departed not from following the Lord. Thus, “the Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth...” (II Kings 18:7).

Are we not given the promise also that God will not forsake us? “For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints: they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off” (Ps. 37:28). Also, what a thrill to know that “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him and delivereth them” (Ps. 34:7).

The great and precious promises of God far, far exceed any fleeting moment of pleasure derived from holding onto one graven image of sin.

May our “golden calves” and “graven images” of sin be totally ground to powder and cast to the four winds and may our new temple be foursquare, founded on that Chief Cornerstone, Christ Jesus, having walls of pure gold and like unto clear glass.

—Contributed.

Thy duty rightly done,
No matter what the station,
Is preparation well begun
For future coronation.

To do thy part, and do it well,
Though humble toil may bind you,
Will train the virtues that excel
Till nobler spheres shall find you.

’Tis not by sudden bounds we reach
The goal we often sigh for;
’Tis not the dreams we lightly preach
That we would care to die for.

We slowly climb the upward way
And scale each opposition;
We turn the darkness into day,
And win by transposition.

And every honest labor brings
Us nearer our endeavor,
And all our glad awakenings
Have songs of God’s Forever.

—Author Unknown

Announcing...

Abib Is Coming!

This year the members and friends of the Megiddo Church will welcome the beginning of another sacred year on the evening of March 25, Bible time being measured from “evening to evening” (Lev. 23:32). The ancient Hebrew pattern, according to the law God gave to Moses, was to begin the New Year with the month “Abib,” which is the month beginning with the first new moon following the spring equinox (March 20 this year). This new moon occurs this year on March 25.

The day has double significance as we commemorate the beginning of another sacred year and also as we set aside the time to remember and honor our great coming King.

Distant members and friends, plan now to join us at this sacred season.

New Year services and programs will be held on March 25 and 26. The anniversary of the Lord’s Supper will be on April 6, the Resurrection on April 9, and Pentecost will fall 50 days later on May 28.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

APOSTASY: Departing from the Faith

APOSTASY. It is not a word common in our everyday conversation, nor does it belong to the business world. Nevertheless, it has been a very real and common occurrence through the ages. The result of man's natural tendency to seek an easy way through life, it offers him a form of escape from difficult choices.

Simply defined, *apostasy* is "desertion of one's faith, religion, party or principles." To join a political party and accept the principles of the party and then turn from it is apostasy. To make a profession of faith in God and embrace a certain doctrine and then forsake that belief is apostasy.

Apostasies can occur in either the secular or the religious world. In this study we will be concerned with apostasy as it has affected God's true Church from the time God first began His work with men on earth. When He called the first workers into His vineyard, He gave them His law. The command was: Obey and live; disobey and die. The reward: "A blessing if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God" (Deut. 11:27-28). Men were left free to choose their course of action *and* their destiny—whether to obey and receive a blessing, or disobey and receive eternal death.

From the beginning there have been many apostasies among God's people. Israel as a nation was favored by God. He had chosen them to be His people. By means of visions, dreams and the words of angels, He had given them His law. They had received it and promised to obey. Repeatedly they had been warned of the penalty for disobedience, yet how often they forgot their sacred covenant and rebelled against the God who had miraculously delivered them from Egyptian slavery.

The history of the Exodus from Egypt and of the wanderings in the wilderness is filled with miracles demonstrating the power of God. But along-

side the miracles are numerous apostasies. When the way became rough, they quickly forgot God. Only three months out of Egypt, Moses was appealing to the Lord that the people were ready to stone him. Within a year they were ready to make themselves a captain and return to Egypt.

One of the most serious apostasies during that time was the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. These three, together with 250 "men of renown," "princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation," accused Moses and Aaron of usurping power, saying, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, . . . and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" (Num. 16:2-3). Being Levites, they thought they had as much authority over the people as did Moses and Aaron. But God did not agree.

Their apostasy occurred at a time when God was not silent, when He was working openly among His people, and retribution was swift and severe. Today men can turn against God and His leaders with impunity, but at that time God answered with destruction. To convince the congregation that Moses and Aaron were God-appointed, "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. . . . And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men" that stood with them (Num. 16:1-35).

The people feared greatly, but the impression was not for long.

Once the Israelites were settled in the Promised Land and Joshua was dead, there was a continuous round of apostasies. Each time the sequence of events was much the same: First a time of recognizing God and serving Him for a period of time; next the falling away, forgetting God, doing evil in His sight; then God's retribution, followed

by repentance and deliverance under the hand of another judge.

The nation of Israel under Ehud, the second judge, is a classic example. Ehud delivered Israel from the oppression of Moab. This was followed by an unusually long time of peace, for we read that "the land had rest fourscore years" (Judges 3:30). But when their deliverer had died, they soon forgot and turned away: "And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, when Ehud was dead" (Judges 4:1). Following this apostasy, God allowed Israel to be oppressed by the king of Canaan who "had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel" (v. 3). But they repented, and "cried unto the Lord," and God sent Deborah a prophetess, to their rescue. With God's help she and Barak, the captain of the army, subdued the enemy and afterward "the land had rest forty years," when they again did evil and "the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years" (Judges 5:31; 6:1). It was God's way of punishing them for their evil ways.

But in spite of all their oppression and suffering, the lesson was never learned; for under Samuel, the last judge, they committed even greater apostasy in rejecting God as their King and asking for an earthly king that they might be like the nations around them. Their wish was granted, but they were no more loyal to their earthly king than they had been to their heavenly King. Throughout the years of the kings, until the nation ended in dispersion and dissolution, apostasy was frequent, just as it had been under the judges.

Israel's apostasies from God are summarized in II Kings 17: They "walked in the statutes of the heathen"; they did "secretly those things that were not right against the Lord their God, and they built them high places in all their cities"; they "set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen...for they served idols" (vs. 7-12). God demanded their undivided loyalty; to worship other gods was apostasy.

The instances of apostasy under the kings are too numerous to relate in detail; but we may note that under the influence of a good king, they served the Lord and prospered, while under a wicked king the people, as well as the king, apostatized and suffered. During this time God sent His prophets to testify against them, but with little success. In the end He allowed them to be carried away captive into foreign lands. He had promised to be with them as long as they were with Him; but when they apostatized and forsook Him, He let them go their way.

I. THE GREAT APOSTASY

From the beginning of God's working with men, through the period covered by the Scriptures, there were many apostasies but never was the apostasy complete. Always a few continued to cling to the true faith. In the wilderness wanderings, when we read that the "whole congregation rose up against Moses," we can know that a few abstained, for we have record of Caleb and Joshua who "wholly followed the Lord."

The same was true in the time of the Judges and Kings. Although from the reading it may often appear that all turned against God, we can know that a few obeyed the Law and kept themselves separate from the wicked multitudes. God had promised that He would not cut off the house of David until His Son, the Messiah was born.

There is little in the Bible to indicate the number of faithful, but we read in Hebrews 11 of Abel who "offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice...by which he obtained witness that he was righteous"; of Enoch who "before his translation...had this testimony, that he pleased God"; of Abraham, who "by faith...offered up Isaac" and heard the covenant of God confirmed by an angel; of Moses who chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season"; of Isaac, Jacob, Joshua, Samuel, the prophets, and others "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness" and had their names entered in God's book of life.

These, and others whose names we have never heard, form the remnant that endured. But the time was to come when none would endure, when *all* would be turned away from God, when there would be no one to hold up the light of true religion. This is the apostasy upon which our study will focus, the "great apostasy."

This time of apostasy was clearly prophesied in the words of Paul to Timothy: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:3-4).

That this happened is a matter of history. However, it was first a matter of Bible prophecy. Let us study some of these prophecies.

A. Daniel Forecasts the Great Apostasy

God's plan and purpose for this earth has been a matter of record from beginning to end. And this

plan and purpose has been revealed to men through His prophets, for "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). The prophets spoke and wrote the words which they received, and "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4).

Outstanding among the prophecies of the apostasy are those of Daniel. Two prophecies that span the entire sequence of events are included in his words. These two visions are found in Daniel 7 and 12.

1. Daniel's first vision of the apostasy (Daniel 7). In this vision Daniel saw four beasts rising out of the sea. "The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings:...A second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side,...and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads;...and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth" (Dan 7:3-7).

Bible students recognize in this vision the four major world kingdoms.

a. Three beasts. At the time of the prophecy only the first, Babylon, was in existence. Babylon was to be supplanted by the Medo-Persian government, represented by the bear. And Medo-Persia in turn, was to be overturned by the Grecian Empire, represented by the leopard, its four heads suggesting the four generals who succeeded the conqueror Alexander the Great.

b. The fourth beast. The fourth beast, described as "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly," represented the Roman Empire which was to conquer all the nations in that part of the world until it encircled the Mediterranean Sea, then known as the Great Sea.

This fourth beast, which Daniel described as "dreadful and terrible," not only had great iron teeth, but as he watched "it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it; and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns." In the midst of the ten horns, another "little horn" came up, "And, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things." (v. 8).

In verse 25 (chapter 7), Daniel said of this "little horn," "And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time."

Daniel appealed to the angel that he might understand the vision, and the angel obliged in detail.

Briefly, he was told that the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, was the destructive power that would 1) make war with the saints, and prevail against them; 2) speak great words against the most High; 3) wear out the saints of the most High; and 4) think to change times and laws (Dan. 7:21, 25; 8:12).

2. Daniel's second vision. Daniel's second vision was for the purpose of identifying the period of time covered by the first vision, the time of total apostasy. In the final chapter of the book bearing his name, the angel Gabriel showed Daniel a vision of a river with a man standing on either side. The angel was asked, "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" And he answered, "that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished" (Dan. 12:5-7).

How long is "a time, times, and an half"? To us mortals accustomed to counting time in days, months and years, this reckoning of time seems strange. But the Bible does not give us a riddle without an answer concerning so important a period of time.

a. Prophetic time. This time figure is part of a prophecy, hence must be understood as prophetic time. Students of prophecy agree that prophetic time in the Bible is not figured as we count time today, but on the basis of a thirty day month and a 360 day year. On this basis, let a "time" equal one year; "times," then, would be two years, and the "dividing of time," or "half" time, one half year, bringing the total to three and one half years. Applying the Bible rule of "a day for a year" (Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6), the three and one half years (or 1260 days) represent 1260 years, the time during which the power of darkness would prevail, the duration of the complete apostasy.

b. The 1260 years in Revelation. This same space of time is also to be found in the last prophecy to be recorded, that of the Book of Revelation. What is identified as "time, and times and the dividing of time," or "time, times, and an half" in Daniel is separately identified as "three days and a half" (Rev. 11:9, 11); "forty and two months" (Rev. 11:2; 13:5); "a thousand two hundred and three score days" (Rev. 11:3) and "time, times, and a half a time" in Revelation 12:14. Careful study reveals that all are identical in application; all cover the same period of time, the dark Medieval Age, the time of total apostasy from true religion. Using the same formula applied to Daniel's prophecy, we arrive at 1260 years for each of the prophecies.

Is it not more than coincidental that all these prophecies figure out to the same period of 1260

years? We believe that this was God's way of informing us that the total apostasy, the period of darkness when there was no true religion proclaimed on the earth, was to last 1260 years. That it did happen and that it lasted more than twelve centuries is amply proven by both secular and ecclesiastical history.

In Revelation 11:2, one of the verses cited above, is another statement identifying this period of time as the apostasy: "And the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months." The "holy city" represents God's people, His true Church, those professing and living by the commandments of the Holy Scriptures. The "holy city" corresponds with the "saints" of Daniel 7:21, against whom the "little horn" made war and prevailed, which the "beast, dreadful and terrible, . . . devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped . . . with the feet of it" (Dan. 7:7). During this same period of time, God's "two witnesses," the Old and New Testaments, lay dead in the street "of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt" (Rev. 11:8), symbolic of wickedness. God's Word had been temporarily silenced. He no longer had living witnesses to proclaim His Word.

B. Jesus and Paul Forecast the Apostasy

In Matthew 25, Jesus spoke a parable that was actually a prophecy of the coming apostasy. In the parable He used five wise and five foolish virgins to picture two groups, faithful and unfaithful covenant-makers. The bridegroom (Christ) was to be gone for an extended period of time. The ten virgins (representing all covenant-makers) were to wait and watch to be ready to welcome the bridegroom whensoever He might return. But "while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept."

There would be a time during the bridegroom's absence when *all*, both the wise and foolish, would "slumber and sleep." During periods of sound sleep, one is totally unaware of what is happening, hence the parable is a fitting illustration of the apostasy.

The words of Jesus' parable are convincing: *All* slumbered and slept during His absence; none were holding to the true faith. Many religious organizations give some credence to the idea of an apostasy, but will not assent to the event as being complete. They are confident that in all ages some believers—if only a silent few—held on. But Jesus' words refute that argument. He says clearly, "They all slumbered and slept."

The apostle Paul, appointed by Jesus Himself, was explicit concerning this same period of time: "For the time will come when they will not endure

sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:3-4). The time would come when men would no longer teach sound doctrine, but seeking to please themselves they would seek out teachers who would teach what they wanted to hear, or as rendered in the Phillips translation, "They will want something to tickle their own fancies, and they will collect teachers who will speak what they want to hear. They will no longer listen to the truth, but will wander off after man-made myths."

Paul again forewarned of the apostasy in his second Epistle to the Thessalonians: "Brothers, relative to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . let no one in any way deceive you; for the apostasy is to come first, and the man of sin is to be revealed, the son of doom, the adversary, so proudly insolent toward everything called God or worshipped, as to seat himself in the temple of God with the acclaim that he himself is God. . . . the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (2:1-4, 7, Berkeley, KJV).

In our Common Version, the "apostasy" is rendered "falling away," and Paul says it was to happen before the return of Christ could be expected. From Paul's statement it appears that the Thessalonians had been misinformed concerning the Second Coming and Paul was writing to correct their misunderstanding. Some had wanted them to understand the lapse of time that must intervene between them and that great event. Included in this period of time would be the apostasy, and Paul saw the first evidence of it already at work. When he said "The mystery of iniquity doth already work," some Bible students think he had reference to Gnostic perversions of the Christian faith, which taught salvation through a secret *gnosis* or "knowledge," and not as the apostles and Jesus taught.

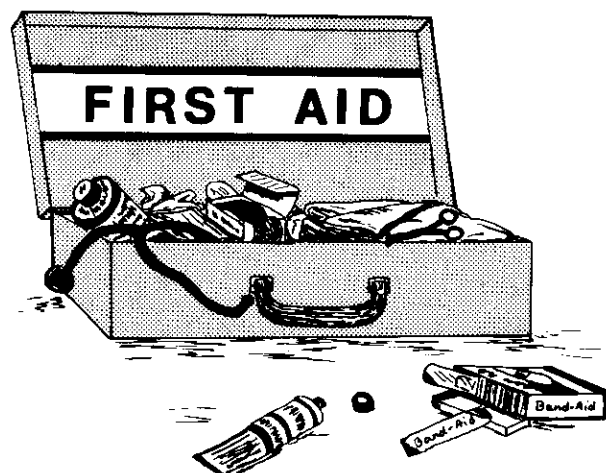
In his farewell address at Ephesus, Paul warned, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). The prophecy was as sure as any that had been spoken before. It was part of the Word of God, which never returns unto Him void (Isa. 55:11).

What was the age-old method of determining the authority behind a prophecy? "...If the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken" (Deut. 18:21-22). The apostasy *did* come to pass; hence, the prophecy *was* the Word of God.

MM



VS



IN RECENT years the majority of the larger business and manufacturing firms in our country have instituted major changes in their safety regulation policies. Accident prevention has become the key word, resulting in much closer attention being given to the recognition and removal of hazardous working conditions. Employees are urged to be on the alert for accident breeding situations—why require first aid for an injury when closer attention could easily have averted the mishap? To further implement safety awareness, management offers educational courses, incentive programs, and special bonuses for safety suggestions. Needless to say, periodic nationwide surveys indicate that the program is really working. There are fewer reportable accidents, and employee morale has shown marked improvement.

How is safety awareness applicable in our Christian lives? The answer is simple. It should and must occupy a position of top priority with all. How much grief, pain and wasted time can be directly traced to our not being safety conscious in a spiritual sense. Stop and think how often our impetuous, consider-later natures have been responsible for robbing us of peace of mind. Is not that hasty temper or any one of a host of other thoughtless acts directly attributable to our utter lack of Christian safety awareness? Yes, our spiritual well-being revolves very, very closely around our alertness to safety hazards.

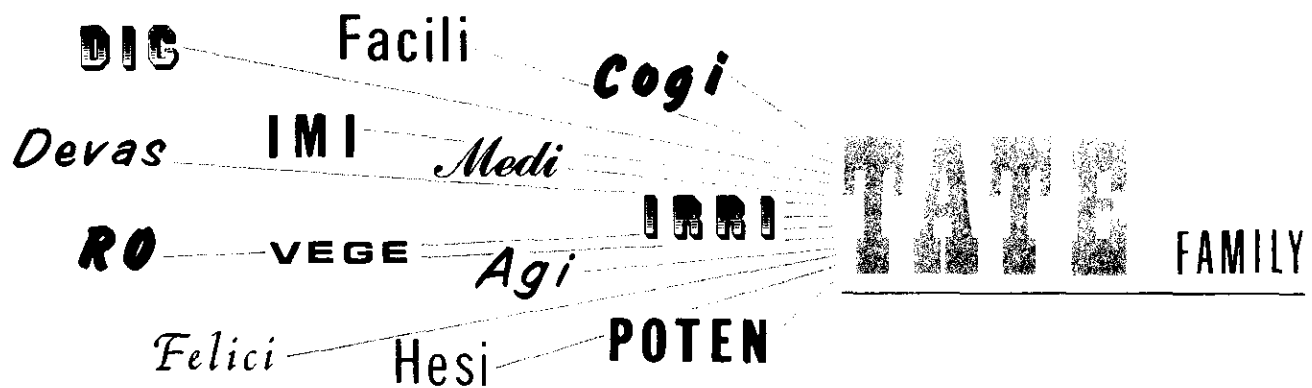
Not that mishaps will never occur and there will be no need for first aid. Far from it! We are all very human, and spiritual safety awareness does not just happen. It is the result of giving diligent attention to those circumstances in our lives which are most frequently the cause of our spiritual cuts and bruises.

Most often it is our own inherent temperament that causes the wound. As much as we would like to blame another for a good many of our accidents, honest self-evaluation will all too frequently reveal that the cause was our own inadequate safety awareness.

Take, for example, our reaction to the occasional slights or cutting remarks of individuals we come in contact with from day to day. Does our safety awareness keep us alert to our tendency to hurt feelings so that they can be prevented, or do we occasionally lose our poise and self-control? Oh, what a host of unsavory characteristics are unleashed if we fail to recognize the first sign of danger. At first, perhaps, only a slight feeling of hurt is noticed. But the longer the mind is allowed to dwell upon the injury, the more agitated and aggravated becomes our thinking until—much to our shame—our minds are forming spiteful and revengeful thoughts. What a horrible price to pay for being careless! And just think of the hours, and days, perhaps even weeks of “first aid” and emergency treatment that will be necessary to heal the harm—and all because of our gross lack of safety awareness. Is it really worth it?

We also find the concept of spiritual safety awareness invaluable in maintaining a steady, determined pace in the struggle toward perfection's peak. Most of us mortals are beset by highs and lows, ups and downs. We are inclined toward spasmodic and inferior effort. Perhaps for some time our spiritual growth is rapid and gratifying; then, suddenly and for no apparent reason, a feeling of lethargy pervades and our zeal slackens. What is wrong? What is the cause? More important than determining the cause is our need to

(Continued on page 19)



I'M SURE you have met some of the TATE family. Or maybe you are *part* of the family.

There are two sides to the family. Let's see. First, there is old man *Dic* Tate and his clan. If you can get along with him, you can get along with any of them. Know the secret? Let him have everything *his* way! Then there is his brother *Poten* Tate, who cannot bear not being heard. But don't worry—he always is.

You don't know all the Tates until you've met old Uncle *Ro* Tate. He is always trying to change everything, good or bad. His sister *Agi* Tate helps him. She is a master at stirring up trouble—even where you least expect it. She, together with her brother *Irri* Tate, can set anything in a whirl.

Then there are the more passive members of the clan. There is brother *Hesi* Tate, who can never come

to any worthwhile decision, and sister *Vege* Tate, who always prefers doing *nothing*, whatever the issue. And there is sister *Imi* Tate, who supports any program that mimics someone else. When brother *Devas* Tate comes around, everyone quakes. You just can never tell where he is going to strike.

But be sure you don't forget the other side of the family, for they are very different. There is brother *Facili* Tate, a most helpful friend to know. And a delightful member is sister *Felici* Tate. You never met anyone happier. And brother *Cogi* Tate and his twin *Medi* Tate are among the best persons I've ever met—they are a tremendous support and encouragement in Christian living. Be sure to get acquainted with them and keep them for your lifelong friends.

Yes, don't forget the Tates!

Those Minutes, Hours...

TIME passes so swiftly! Are we taking advantage of every moment? These words stay with me daily, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-16). The past day is now history. Those wasted minutes and hours are gone forever, never to be recalled. That we shall be judged for every idle word and thought is a sobering thought. Let us in this present time—today is the day of salvation—press on with more earnest determination than ever before to redeem

the time, making every moment count for righteousness.

No, we can't keep our minds back in last year, wishing we had done more; but like Paul, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before," we must ever keep in mind the prize that we are striving for.

Knowing that each day we live is one more day closer to that great Day when we'll be judged and if found worthy, permitted to enter into the joys of the Lord, is enough to keep us stirred to action. In that

Day there will be no more record of time such as it is now. What is one 24-hour day in comparison to eternity? There can be no comparison. But those hours that make up the days mean literally everything to us now; for if we do not use our time and talents wisely, we will surely hear Jesus say, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23).

Our days may bring many trials, sorrows and burdens to bear; but we will be able to face them and overcome if we daily redeem that time and partake of that daily "Bread" from Heaven.

I thank God daily for another day that He has let me live to work in His vineyard.

Safety Awareness vs. First Aid

(Continued from page 17)

be spiritually *aware*, to recognize that danger is threatening, and to take immediate preventive measures to avert trouble. This "low time" can become the gateway to a host of setbacks and injuries if we do not recognize and deal with it immediately. We may feel discouraged and defeated, but why add to our problem tenfold by allowing ourselves the liberty of slipping back into the laxities and sins of former days? Consider the precious time and effort necessary to retrace those hard-won steps. And don't ever think it becomes easier after repeated back-tracking to regain what was lost. Far from it! Regaining lost ground is always a most painful process.

There is yet another area where a great deal of caution needs to be exercised to avoid some especially painful mishaps. How alert are we to the dangers of too casual an association with the world around us? True, our daily occupations may necessitate that we be in the world, but does that give us any license to be of the world? Not at all! If really safety conscious and completely honest with ourselves, we will be able to recognize our weakness, whether it be light talking, foolishness, or an inner desire to be "one of the crowd." Whatever its nature, we will identify it, call it by its true name, and then take definite safety measures to avoid getting "hurt." Remember, we cannot play with fire without getting burned. We cannot lightly cast aside our principles to satisfy some whim and not expect to pay for it later. Life just isn't that simple. How much better, then, to find the courage to say "no" to temptation before becoming dangerously entangled, before first aid becomes a necessary and unhappy experience.

Can we expect any special benefits or extraordinary bonus for having instituted a "spiritual safety awareness" program in our lives? The answer is Yes, a thousand times, Yes! Obviously it will result in far less mishaps, falls and bruises, thereby sparing us considerable spiritual misery and heartache. And most important, we will be guaranteeing our success in achieving recognition in God's bonus program. Yes, "exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think" is the offer He has made to those who can prove to Him that their safety awareness program works. Gone will be the frequent stumbling, falling and sinning; and finally they shall receive the reward of their efforts, even "life forevermore."

Let's choose "safety awareness"—it is a thousand times better than all the First Aid measures combined!

MM



About the Devil

IF *there is a literal devil or superpower of evil,*

THEN WHY did James credit the source of evil to the heart of man, saying, "Let no man say when he is tempted of evil, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:13-15).

AND WHY did Jesus say that the source of evil is the human heart? "For from within, out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts," and all the evils that plague mankind (Mark 7:21-23).

IF *the devil is a being independent of mankind, or a spirit of evil that may possess men,*

THEN WHY did Jesus say to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me" (Matt. 16:23)? Why did He not say, "The devil in thee is an offense unto me"?

AND WHY did Jesus say, addressing His apostles, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil" (John 6:70)? Why "one of you is a devil," not one of you is possessed with a devil?

The great soul prays:

"Lord, make me as big as my trouble."

While the little soul prays:

"Lord, let me off easy."

The giant soul asks:

"Lord, give me strength sufficient for a hard day,"

While the small soul begs:

"Lord, let me have a lighter load."

The great heart prays:

"Lord, let me stand firm when the fight is the hardest."

The craven soul cries:

"Lord, let me escape!"

The crusader soul sends up the prayer:

"Lord, stand with me till I finish my task."

Sel.

The Evolution Theory: An Examination

By Jerry Bergman, Ph. D.
Bowling Green University, Bowling Green, Ohio

MOST scientists believe that the process which produced the natural world as we know it today was biological evolution. These scientists believe that all living things on and in the earth evolved from one or many one-celled specks of "protoplasm" that somehow formed through a type of spontaneous generation in a "sea slime" some hundreds of millions (or more) of years ago.

Although evolution is now accepted as "fact" by many scientists and non-scientists, *most people* have not carefully considered both sides, and *this includes many, if not most, scientists and even biologists.* (Actually biologists who major in evolution often do not learn the evidence both for and against evolution). If the facts could be known, probably most believers in evolution know very little about the case either for or against evolution. They know only that scientists usually *speak* of it as fact, universities usually *teach* it as fact, the public press usually *assumes* it to be true. Even many clergymen accept it as true.

If evolution has a strong case, it should welcome open examination. But when evolutionists purport that their theory is no longer debatable, and that only the ignorant will attack it; when they meet opposition with a haughty air of superiority and belittle the intellect of non-evolutionists—does not all this cause us to question how sure evolutionists are about their position? A science which rests on a solid empirical basis does not have to erect a front to ward off inquiry, nor does true science have to smear the opposition to "protect" its discoveries. Yet, like an onrushing tidal wave, evolutionary assumptions flow from the pens and lips of modern educators and flood our high schools and colleges.

The sheer number of words about evolution likely influences many persons to accept the theory. The daily press, radio, T.V. and the mass media as a whole speak as if evolution were a proven fact, when this is not at all the case. But when something is said often enough, regardless of the evidence, many people will believe it.

The testing of scientific concepts was stifled by authoritarianism for thousands of years, while schol-

ars accepted blindly the "truth" of their predecessors. It took men like Galileo and Harvey to brave persecution and break free so that progress could be made. Even today though, some authoritarianism remains deeply entrenched in science. Children are often expected to accept unquestioningly the information provided by teachers and textbooks. And in subjects such as the sciences, while much of the information is correct, much of it may consist of half truths.

Much that is taught as "fact" in science has *not* been empirically demonstrated and is often undemonstrable. Much of science is simply "facts," such as the names, classification, habits, descriptions, etc. of various types of animals, organs, etc. On the other hand, much is assumption or generalization based on facts—and some, such as evolution, is clear speculation based on belief structures. It is assumed that evolution took place; and because this assumption is so universal, many conclusions are made to "fit" this assumption. There are certain things that are fairly clear, and there are many theories that are assumptions. This difference should be made clear. Students should realize that generalizations are subject to challenge, and theories to modification (or even rejection). A parallel example from education itself is the difference between what *happened*, and the observer's *opinion* of what happened. This difference should be clearly differentiated for several reasons. For example, "Johnny threw an eraser at Sally," may be, by and large, a judgment if all that the teacher saw was an eraser traveling from the direction of Johnny towards the direction of Sally. Although it may be true, "Johnny threw the eraser at Sally," it is an assumption.

Of course, the real danger of authoritarianism is that it stops the inquiry process—which is the basis of science.

Evolution: An Old Idea

Many people feel that the theory of evolution is a modern idea, a product of our scientific age. This, it clearly is not. Evolution was first taught as early as the fifth century B. C. The Greek philosopher Empedo-

cles (493-435 B. C.) has been called "the father of the evolution idea." He believed that spontaneous generation was the explanation of the origin of life, and thought that organisms evolved gradually after much trial and error. He also taught, in rough form, a theory of survival of the fittest. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) claimed that "man is the highest point of one long and continuous ascent" (*The Encyclopedia Americana*).

It has been suggested that the Greek philosophers gleaned their evolution ideas from the Hindus, who believe that souls migrate from one animal to another until they reach the perfection of *nirvana*.

The Mayan culture (started about 600 B. C.) and its religion taught a "streamlined evolution," saying that the rain-god made living things in this order: a river, a fish, a serpent, and then man. In addition, many people believe in "totems," or a "clan" which is generally a species of animal or plant. On this subject the *Encyclopedia Britannica* states:

The members of a totem clan call themselves by the name of their totem, and commonly believe themselves to be actually descended from it. Thus, the turtle clan of the Iroquois are descended from a fat turtle, which, burdened by the weight of its shell in walking, contrived by great exertions to throw it off, and thereafter gradually developed into a man. The Cray-Fish clan of the Choctaws were originally cray-fish and lived underground, coming up occasionally through the mud to the surface. Once a party of Choctaws smoked them out, and, treating them kindly, taught them to walk on two legs, made them cut off their toenails and pluck the hair from their bodies, after which they adopted them into the tribe. But the rest of their kindred, the cray-fish, are still among the living underground...Prof. Sayce finds totemism among the ancient Babylonians.

W. Beebe writes in *The Bird*, (1974, p. 97): "The idea of miraculous change, which is supposed to be an exclusive prerogative of fairy tales, is a common phenomenon of evolution." Dr. McNair Wilson, formerly editor of the Oxford Medical Publications, observed that evolution is "a theory which is as full of ogres, mermaids and centaurs as any fairy tale."

Scientists and Evolution

Some scientists try to cling to a belief in God along with full belief in evolution. In this class are A. Cressy

Morrison and Lecomte du Nouy. The former, in his book *Man Does Not Stand Alone*, contends that the Supreme Being will give us time so that ultimately man, by evolution, will develop into "pure spirit." The latter, in his *Human Destiny*, argues that present-day man is actually "the forerunner of the future race, the ancestor of the spiritually perfect man, of which Christ was, in a sense, the prime example by emerging victorious from the fight. Thus Christ can be assimilated to one of the intermediary, transitional forms, perhaps a million years in advance of evolution."

As early as the turn of the Century, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* stated that although there is much evidence against evolution, nonetheless:

It is in perfect agreement with the Christian conception of the universe; for Scripture does not tell us in what form the present species of plants and...animals were originally created by God...To what extent is the theory of evolution applicable to man? That God should have made use of natural, evolutionary, original causes in the production of man's body, is *per se* not improbable, and was propounded by St. Augustine. (Augustine of Hippo, A. D. 354-430).

More recently, the *Catholic Digest* (Sept., 1974) concluded: "There could have been pre-Adamic men, with animal bodies and rational souls." But as early as 1947 Cardinal Achille Leinart, wrote in the Jesuit periodical *Etudes* (Dec. 1947): "One can say that paleontology has...caught the inner movement of this history (of life) under the aspect of a slow evolution which, starting from the most rudimentary stage, has

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WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?
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produced beings of an increasing perfection, until it reached, in the person of man, the dawn of the spirit."

Liberal Protestantism also has accepted a form of evolution since the turn of the century. *Christian Century* (July 7, 1948; p. 681) ballyhooed evolution and claimed that the result of modern research has been "to establish more firmly than ever the doctrine of evolution and the theory of natural selection." *Comfort* (Dec. 1930) reported that a then recent Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops adopted a resolution declaring that "evolution was accepted as a process of creative development consistent with Christian theology." S. Parkes Cadman, D.D., lamented the "neglect of Christian theology to baptize the theory into (the) Christian faith"; also, "The Biblical account reflects the primitiveness of its age; the Darwinian explanation appears to me as the greatest I have ever known." Harry Emerson Fosdick pressured Christendom to accept the theory by using the "tyranny of authority," saying that many of "our greatest teachers, as well as the poorest, those who are profoundly religious as well as those who are scornfully irreligious, believe in evolution." This may be true, but it is also true that many of our greatest teachers, scientists, etc. do not believe in evolution.

As for Judaism, the *Jewish Encyclopedia* says that the relation of Judaism to evolution is "not necessarily one of hostility and dissent," although many, possibly most, conservative Jews even today do not believe in evolution. It says also that the Talmudic view of miracles is not inherently irreconcilable with the hypothesis of evolution, while modern (Reform) Jewish theology is not concerned to defend the belief in miracles based on literal constructions of Biblical passages."

Actually, the massive acceptance of evolution by many religions only shows that they put faith in man and popular opinion above faith in God and His Word. Yet, if the religious leaders would examine the evidence, they would be forced to conclude, as more and more scientists are concluding today, that evolution is not supported by any empirical evidence but by a *secular belief structure* which refuses to acknowledge God and His Word which states unquestionably that God is the great Creator (see Neh. 9:6; Isa. 45:10-11).

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The Higher Life

*To play through life a perfect part
Unnoticed and unknown;
To seek no rest in any heart
Save in the Lord alone;
In little things to own no will,
To have no share in great;
To find the labor ready still
And for the crown to wait.*

*Upon the brow to bear no trace
Of bitterness in care;
To write no secret in the face
That men may read it there;
The daily cross to clasp and bless
With such consuming zeal,
To be, and do, for God alone,
When heavy weights you feel;*

*To own no treasures, soft disguised,
To which self-love is prone,
Unnoticed by all other eyes,
Unworthy in your own;
To yield with such a happy art
That no one thinks you care,
And say to your poor bleeding heart,
"How little you can bear!"*

*O, 'tis a pathway few would choose,
A struggle few would share;
For human pride would still refuse
The nameless trials there.
But since this path will lead, we know,
To endless life and bliss,
What higher grace could God bestow
Than such a life as this?*

—Selected

What Is Pharisaic Pride?

The following from Bereshith Rabba, will illustrate: "Rabbi Simeon the son of Jochai, said: The world is not worth thirty righteous persons such as our father Abraham. If there were only thirty righteous persons in the world, I and my son should make two of them; and if there were but twenty I and my son would be of the number; and if there were ten I and my son would be of the number; and if there were but five, I and my son would be of the five; and if there were but two, I and my son would be those two; and if there were but one, myself should be that one."

—From Wilson's *Emphatic Diaglott*

TIME



and Opportunity

I am yesterday, my friend, and I am gone forever;
If you did not use me, I'm a day of lost endeavor.
Once I was tomorrow, then I was today,
And now, p'raps to your sorrow—I AM YESTERDAY!

Gone—there is no returning—I can't be regained.
You have just the burning from the hours you profaned.
If you learned, I'm happy; if you failed, I'm sad;
I was just another—just another chance you had.

I am yesterday, my friend, but I am gone forever;
Gladly had I served your ends before Time came to sever.
Once I was tomorrow, then I was today;
Grant you used me, now you can't, for I AM YESTERDAY!

“**B**E STRICTLY careful then about the life you lead; act like sensible men, not like thoughtless; make the very most of your time, for these are evil days” (Eph. 5:15-16, Moffatt).

Time—what is time that we should be given such a direct command? “Time,” said Napoleon, “is everything.” He won battles with its aid—yet it was principally time that brought about his defeat at Waterloo. Just a few minutes were lost and Napoleon was defeated in battle, and died in exile.

We often speak of time as a mere thing of reckoning, when really it is the substance out of which we mould characters worthy of an eternal existence. Hand in hand with time is opportunity—opportunity to walk circumspectly in all the commands of God. The advice of our former pastor, Ella M. Skeels, was “Do now, while you have time and opportunity.” And the work must be done joyfully and willingly.

Time lost can never be recovered. Time becomes gold, or it becomes dross as we use or waste it. We must not forget if our time is lost it becomes opportunity lost. Let us search and try our ways to see where we are letting the precious *seconds, minutes, hours* slip by *unredeemed*. To those instructed, time has brought a new significance. Every second was given to us to use. How we have wasted this great wealth and not made use of our choice opportunities!

Looking back on time gone by, we can see where we could have done better. We should not think any moment too small to put to some good use, but we must not forget we can lose days lamenting over lost days. “To worry about tomorrow is to fail of devotion to the tasks of today, and so spoil both days.” Right now is the time we must redeem. The Psalmist says, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Ps. 90:12). If we let our time with its golden opportunity slip away, we will be among the class who will say, “Summer is over, the harvest is ended—with nothing to keep us alive!” (Jer. 8:20, Moffatt).

The angel did not tell Lot they could make their escape from the doomed city in a leisurely manner, but—Hasten!—“Escape for thy life!” We cannot linger on the plain but with renewed zeal and energy climb in haste to the mountain of His holiness. If we linger, God’s curse will be upon us. Our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, said, “We see the storm coming and the Tower is within our reach; how foolish we are if we do not run while there is opportunity.”

Is time everything to us? Or, are we lazy, dilatory spiritually, as those in the days of Lot? Do we say by our actions, “Let me sleep for a little, a little, let me fold my hands for a little, to rest?”—yes, and poverty will pounce on you, want will overpower you” (Prov. 24:33-34, Moffatt). This battle against sin is real. Time can be for us a terrible enemy unless we work harder and longer to beat it to the goal. Do we realize just a few minutes unredeemed means we have fallen before the enemy, and may never rise again?

Let us, then, make the most of our time, for,

“Just beyond time’s misty river, . . . Gleams a city bright and fair, . . . And no sin shall ever enter. . . With its vain and blighting care; . . . There upon its streets of beauty, . . . Angel feet forever roam, . . . In the holy, peaceful stillness. . . Of the saints’ beloved home. . . Just beyond the cares and sorrows, . . . Just beyond the smiles and tears, . . . There’s a life where time is never. . . Measured out in days and years.”

Inquiries and Answers

• The Fig Tree Jesus Cursed

"Why did Jesus curse the fig tree that had no figs on it when the passage says 'the time of figs was not yet'? Wasn't He expecting the impossible?"

It is the nature of fig trees to set fruit before growing leaves. This particular fig tree (Mark 11:13) did have leaves. The passage reads: "And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet." It was not the time of fig harvest, "it was not fig time" (Moffatt); "it was not the season for figs" (NASB). Nevertheless, if the tree were going to bear fruit to harvest, that fruit would have had to have been set and growing at the time Jesus saw the tree, because the tree had leaves. He may have been looking for a few early fruits to be ripe, firstfruits, even though it was not harvest time.

The lesson is easily applied to our spiritual lives. If we are going to bear fruit to harvest, we have to set that fruit and let it grow. If we let the summertime of our lives go by with no fruit of holiness set and growing, we cannot expect a great crop at the end. At the time Jesus spoke the curse upon the fig tree, He may have been making an illustration to the Jewish people who heard Him, pointing out their fruitlessness as a nation and God's impending curse upon them. God demands fruit from *all* His people in every age. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 7:19).

• Observing Sparrows?

"What is the meaning of Jesus' words that 'not one sparrow' shall 'fall to the ground without your Father'? Surely God has greater work to do than observing sparrows."

Jesus used the illustration of the sparrow to show how small may be the objects of God's special concern and still receive it, if worthy. It is not to say that God observes sparrows; He is fitting persons to receive His eternal love and blessing, and these He watches. "His eye is on the

sparrow" is a figure of speech of His concern for any object of His love, however small. His love goes out to His own and His watchful care and protection is over them. In other passages of Scripture they are the "apple of his eye," his own "prized possession," his "jewels," and his own "sons and daughters" (see Zech. 2:8, Ex. 19:5-6, Mal. 3:16-17, II Cor. 6:17-18).

• "My Lord and My God"

"Thomas said to Jesus, 'My Lord and my God' in John 20:28. Didn't he think Christ was God? Doesn't the Father call Christ 'God' in Hebrews 1:8?"

To answer your questions, it is first necessary to determine exactly what we mean by the term "God" and, even more important, to determine as nearly as possible what the Scriptural writers meant when they used the term "God."

When we think of God, we think first of the great Creator, the eternal, everlasting, omnipotent God, the One in whom we "live, and move, and have a being." This is by far the most frequent application of the term "God" in Scripture.

But there is another. When the Lord was commissioning Moses to go and deliver His people from Egyptian bondage, He appointed Aaron to be the "spokesman unto the people: and he shall be...to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God." Aaron was to serve in a position of speaker, and Moses was to have the authority behind the words spoken, serving in the stead of "God" to them. There was surely no suggestion that Moses was going to take the place of the great God of the universe. He was simply filling a role of authority in behalf of the people he would be leading.

One of the names given to Christ by the prophetic utterances of both Isaiah (Isaiah 7:14-15) and the angel Gabriel (Matt. 1:23) was Emmanuel, which means "God with us." This is the role Christ will fill in the future in relation to His people when He returns to take over the governments of this world. It is the prophecy of Revelation 21:3-4, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people,

and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." "God" with them and dwelling among them will be Christ, the son of God and Eternal King of the earth, the supreme ruler of this planet in that Day.

Speaking of Christ as "God with us," Emmanuel, it would seem reasonable for Thomas to say to Jesus "My Lord and my God," humbly acknowledging His authority and knowing that He was then victorious over death and destined to be earth's eternal King. The writer of Hebrews is referring to this same preeminent position of Christ when he says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." His future Kingdom, His throne over the whole earth, will be forever and ever, and in that position He will be "God" to the inhabitants of this planet, "God with us."

This application of the term "God" to Christ in His role as future King does not suggest any connection with any belief in the theological concept of the trinity. The Bible does not uphold any idea of a triune godhead of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. There is one supreme Being called "God" in the Bible, who is the Creator of the universe, and Jesus Christ the Son of God, who did not exist until born of the virgin Mary, and who was never in heaven with His Father until He was taken up after His death and resurrection.

• Did Michal have five sons?

"Did Michal, the daughter of Saul, have five sons? II Sam. 6:23 says 'Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death'; and II Sam. 21:8 speaks of 'the five sons of Michal, the daughter of Saul.' How do you explain the discrepancy?"

Second Samuel 6:23 says, "Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death." This is true. But we learn that Michal had a sister called Merab, and Merab married a man called Adriel. In I Sam. 18:19, we read, "It came to pass at the time when Merab Saul's daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel."

Another text, II Sam. 21:8, tells us of "the five sons of Michal [Michal's sister, Merab] the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel." The five sons were the sons of Merab, Michal's sister, and Michal brought up her sister's children; that is, she adopted them as her own. In the Berkeley Version, in II Samuel 21:8, we are told that they were "the five sons of Saul's daughter Merab, whom she had borne to Adriel"; but they are here called the sons of Michal, because she adopted them and brought them up as her own. Is there any contradiction in the Bible because it tells us in one place that Michal had no children, and states in another place that she brought up her sister's five sons?

So What Do You Know?

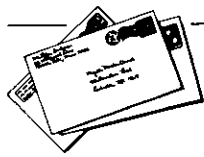
What Did They Do?

Match the person with his or her occupation.

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| _____ 1. Anna | a. Beggar |
| _____ 2. Ishmael | b. Physician |
| _____ 3. Ezra | c. Iron worker |
| _____ 4. Hiram | d. Sorcerer |
| _____ 5. Jochebed | e. Prophetess |
| _____ 6. Tubal-Cain | f. Cupbearer |
| _____ 7. Felix | g. Farmer |
| _____ 8. Aaron | h. Prophet |
| _____ 9. Jephthah | i. Seller of purple |
| _____ 10. Alexander | j. Fisher |
| _____ 11. Gehazi | k. Archer |
| _____ 12. Daniel | l. Ruler |
| _____ 13. Simon | m. Nurse |
| _____ 14. Abner | n. Publican |
| _____ 15. Amos | o. High Priest |
| _____ 16. Asaph | p. Coppersmith |
| _____ 17. Bartimaeus | q. Worker in brass |
| _____ 18. Micaiah | r. Scribe |
| _____ 19. Zenas | s. Lawyer |
| _____ 20. Nehemiah | t. Tentmaker |
| _____ 21. Cain | u. Singer |
| _____ 22. Aquila | v. President |
| _____ 23. Luke | w. Herdsman |
| _____ 24. Moses | x. Hunter |
| _____ 25. Lydia | y. Governor |
| _____ 26. Nicodemus | z. Servant |
| _____ 27. Cornelius | aa. Centurion/soldier |
| _____ 28. Abel | bb. Judge |
| _____ 29. Demetrius | cc. Captain of the host |
| _____ 30. Zacchaeus | dd. Lawgiver |
| _____ 31. Nimrod | ee. Silversmith |
| _____ 32. Elymas | ff. Shepherd |

Answers:

1. e (Luke 2:36); 2. k (Gen. 21:20); 3. r (Ezra 7:6); 4. q (I Kings 7:14); 5. m (Ex. 2:7); 6. c (Gen. 4:22); 7. y (Acts 23:26); 8. o (Num. 3:32); 9. bb (Judges 12:7); 10. p (II Tim. 4:14); 11. z (II Kings 5:20); 12. v (Dan. 6:2); 13. j (Mark 1:16); 14. cc (I Sam. 17:55); 15. w (Amos 1:1); 16. u (I Chron. 15:16-17); 17. a (Mark 10:46); 18. h (I Kings 22:8); 19. s (Tit. 3:13); 20. f (Neh. 2:1); 21. g (Gen. 4:2-3); 22. t (Acts 18:2-3); 23. b (Col. 4:14); 24. dd (Ex. 20); 25. i (Acts 16:14); 26. l (John 3:1); 27. aa (Acts 10:1); 28. ff (Gen. 4:4); 29. ee (Acts 19:24); 30. n (Luke 19:2); 31. x (Gen. 10:9); 32. d (Acts 13:8).



Letters

Watching

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Thank you for the tapes. They are always new like the Word of God; they never are old.

Daniel surely had a lot of experience; and even though he didn't quite understand it all, God told him all that he needed to know at that time—the same with us, He has given us sufficient knowledge to work out our salvation.

I hope I can still be here when Elijah comes, but we never know just when he will make his appearance. "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

Milton, Iowa

E. T.

Our Good God

We can't expect everything to go along as we would like. But we know if we are faithful, we will get what is best for us. For in God's Word He says: "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly."

How wonderful a God we serve. In these dark days we need all the strength and courage we can muster to keep our lamp burning brightly because this is the darkness before the dawn. Yes, we can well afford to wait for God's appointed time, because we need every minute of it to prepare to meet the Bridegroom. I don't think the wickedness was any greater in Noah's day than it is now, for as the Word prophesied, they are doing wickedness with both hands earnestly. How wonderful when God's "knowledge covers the earth as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14).

Port Au Port, Newfoundland

G. W.

Watching Ourselves

Yes, we all need to be on the watch over ourselves all the time to see what we are saying and doing, and strive harder to walk in the ways of righteousness that God teaches. It won't be easy, but no one else can do it for us. It is up to each of us.

Childress, Texas

B. N.

Working for Ourselves

Many changes are taking place in the world today. This should cause us to take a good look at ourselves, examine ourselves to see what progress we are making, and make great haste to get rid of all sin, for the day of the Lord is near and hasteth greatly. We must cast off *all* works of darkness, our own way and desires, and not step over into the broad road, for we are warned that this will lead to destruction. We need to keep on the strait and narrow path which leadeth to life everlasting.

There is a great work for us to do, but the prize is exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. So if we do the work for God we are also doing it for ourselves. We are the ones who will receive the prize; isn't it worth working for!

The great Creator is even now preparing for His Son and Heir a great feast, a wedding supper, and the faithful will become the Bride of His Heir, dressed in dazzling white; the Bride will have made herself ready. Our sole wish and hope should be to become part of that Bride and wear the wedding garment. We must show ourselves approved unto God.

Let us make good use of any time left to us and work out our salvation.

Swansea, South Wales

M. S.

In Training

We can see all the signs of Jesus' coming by reading in our Guide Book. We've got to get ready! We have a character to perfect. After the seed of truth is sown in our heart we have to nourish it with the Word of God and watch to see that we are growing into holiness.

Now is the time to get into action and take the necessary steps to achieve what we have set out to gain. We are training for a high position in eternity. That is our ultimate goal; a life that goes on and on; riches that will be lasting; the honor of being a son or daughter of the Almighty. Psalm 73:17 says, "All nations shall call them blessed." There will be no more pain or sorrow and God shall wipe away all tears and there shall be no more death. Then we will have strength, as Isaiah 40:31 says, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Another blessing among the promises of God is power. Then there is a promise of happiness as inheritors of "glory and honor and immortality, eternal life."

Yes, He has promised "everything" of life, beauty, happiness and joy. If we really want these promises, we will work to form a perfect character that God requires. Remember, He is faithful that promised.

Davenport, Iowa

W. P.

Hate vs. Love

Hurt feelings and bitterness can cause so much pain and be such a waste of time. What good does holding a grudge do? Does it clear up any problems? Why not use this energy in solving the situation? Forget the things that are making us bitter, for hate produces hate. We must rid ourselves of these enemies before hate takes hold of us. For hate can destroy life, eternal life. It also makes this life miserable.

But we can have love, God's love, in abundance, if we will only do His will. And love is like nothing else I know of...the more we give, the more we have to give, for it grows and grows. So let us strive to get rid of every little evil thought, and like Paul strive to make ourselves perfect. Let us say with him, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

Conyers, Georgia

C. P.

We Need God's Knowledge

A godly man once said, "The root of all knowledge is the knowledge of God." How true, for when you come to think of it, without the knowledge of God we have no roots, and a tree without roots is dead. How dead is dead? It is possible to live on even when we are dead. Does not our Brother Nichols live on, not in his mortal body but by the work he left? Of course Christ is living, but what about Christ? There's a chorus which goes, "Christ liveth in me." But if we have not the knowledge of God, even though a person might have great knowledge, being able to hold his own in any subject, without the knowledge of God what has he? Maybe he can claim fame and acquire a vast fortune, but after death what hope has he? Even the least in God's Kingdom will have more than this man.

Prophecy fulfilled? It's wonderful to see prophecy being fulfilled. All we have to do is to sit back and wait and see just how God keeps His Word; for again, just like another chorus says, "He cannot fail for He is God." God would never put His Word to a lie. What God says will surely come to pass.

Workshop, England

H. L.

Like Healing Medicine

I am very glad to be able to listen to the sermons on the tapes. They are like a healing medicine. God heals our ills as we wash in the water of life. We must be doers of the Word and not hearers only.

We know our duty is to cleanse one person—self. Also, we are helping others as good will rub off. By doing good, we are spreading the sweetness of good.

Crawford, Nebraska

M. M.

Finally, Brethren

Take My Life and Let It Be

IT IS sometimes a question where we should put the comma. In English it can make a great difference; in this statement, as it affects our Christian living, it also makes a great difference. "Take my life and let it be" is the title usually assigned to a well-known hymn, but it very probably is not the title assigned by the author of the hymn, nor does it convey the thought he intended. As we sing the words of the hymn, we are not to stop or pause after "let it be"—or even to take a breath—as there is no punctuation at this point. We are to keep going until we have sung the entire thought: "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee."

There is a vast difference between "Take my life and let it be" and "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee." The former is the impossible petition of the person who desires the best of two worlds but doesn't want to pay the price for either. "Take my life," he says in effect, so I can get the benefits of serving God and have some hope for the future; but "let it be." In other words, don't bother me too much; let me do as I please. Let me continue to go my own way without disturbance. "Take my life and let it be" is the plea of every fence-straddler, everyone who wishes to be *less than* fully committed. It makes some reservation for the flesh, some uncommitted part with which to satisfy oneself, should the sacrifice prove too great.

"Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee," is the plea of every wholly committed servant of God, everyone who desires real life and desires to have it more abundantly and forever. It is a plea that will allow nothing whatever held in reserve. It is the plea of every one who desires to please God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength.

The annals of history are filled with those who gave themselves to something—up to a point. They said, "Take my life" and also "Let it be." The reservation was made. Take it, they said, but don't consume it. I want a part for something else. "Let it be." There they stopped.

Those who will be remembered on God's records are those who saved their comma until they were past the "consecration" point. They gave themselves utterly, without reservation.

What shall we do? Shall we say, "Take my life and let it be," or shall we go on until the consecration is complete? MM

*I would be true,
For there are those who trust me;
I would be pure,
For there are those who care:
I would be strong,
For there is much to suffer;
I would be brave,
For there is much to dare.*

*I would be learning
Day by day the lessons
My heavenly Father
Gives me in His Word;
I would be quick
To hear His lightest whisper,
And prompt and glad
To do the things I've heard.*

*I would be prayerful
Through each busy moment;
I would be constantly
In touch with God;
I would be tuned
To hear His slightest whisper,
I would have faith
To keep the path Christ trod.*

—Selected