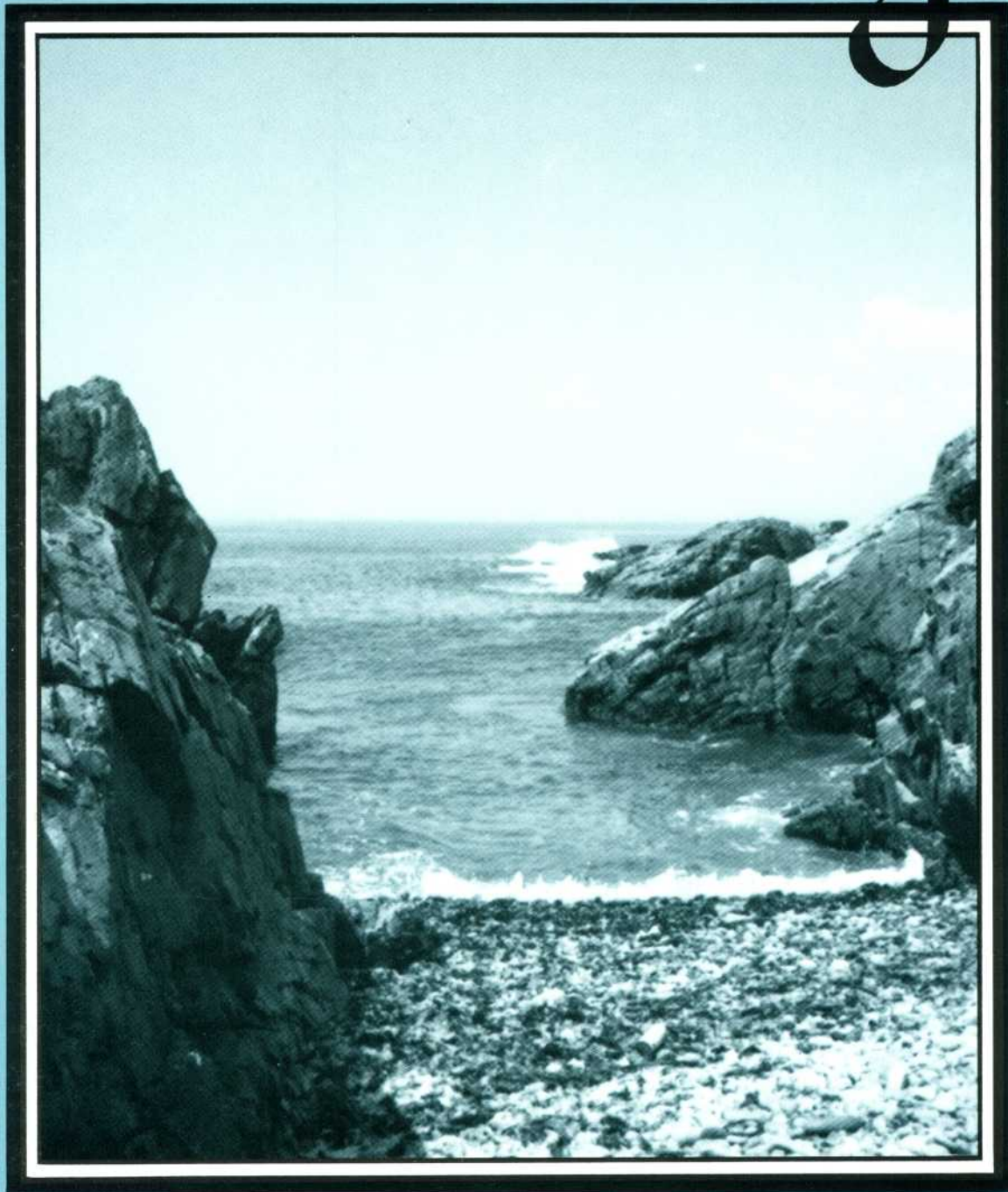


# Megiddo Message



## Does Your Tone Ring True?

THE THOUGHT of tone and tone-quality associates itself with sound. There is "tone" to one's voice. There is "tone" in music. In fact, in the highly developed art of music, tone is often a criteria for judgment, for whatever other qualities a performer might possess, an inferior tone is a defect which will render his best efforts distasteful. The way he performs is as important as *what* he performs.

As Christians, the Law of God is our written score, but the way in which we seek our noble goal will require the most detailed attention and diligence. *How* we serve God—humbly, sincerely, steadfastly, earnestly—is as important as the fact that we serve Him. That is the tone of our spiritual performance. An outward ritual, a routine performance of a set of requirements, is not real service.

There is also the fine element of tone in the little affairs of daily life. It is here that we manifest our true selves and what we really are. Even in the smallest mannerisms we display the *spirit* of the law, as well as its letter. We tell whether we are genuine and true, or merely acting a part.

Especially does "tone" apply to our conversation. It might seem like straining at a gnat to make an issue of such a technicality as the tone and modulation of the voice. But the way in which we speak can be more effective in transferring our message than the actual words we use. The people who observed the preaching of Peter and John perceived that they had been with Jesus. Was not this part of their message conveyed with the tone in their voices? Likewise those who listened to Stephen. Would they have been moved to violent action against him if the tone of his message had been halfhearted and insincere?

The divine instruction is to "provoke unto love and to good works" and to be an example of the believers "in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit." Our conversation is the witness of our spirit and, consequently, our tone. Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

There is no activity more universal to man than conversation. How important, then, is this little indicator of our real selves! We cannot overestimate the need for care in the use of it. Our friends do not judge us by what we think or feel so much as by what we say and *how* we say it. Said David, "to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God." Jesus Himself warned, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

We may claim to love God. But if we manifest a harsh, rough spirit toward "the least of these my brethren," we show that we do *not* love God. Even the Golden Rule demands that we think of the effect of our words on others. This surely includes the tone of the voice. Do we love God? Our great apostle Paul said, "Love has good manners, is very kind, is never rude, never selfish"—what could better define a true Christian tone?

The way we say a thing is also important to our God. All our mannerisms tell a story. God demands *willing* obedience, and this has to do with the tone of our spiritual performance. He is sensitive to our spirit and our motives. The outward tone and the inward heart are one.

Let us pray and meditate on these things, for they are the ground upon which we must work out our salvation. By them we shall stand or fall in the great Day to come.

## Megiddo means

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

## Bible quotations

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

## About Our Cover...

The photograph was taken at Ogunquit, Maine.

# Megiddo Message

Vol. 72, No. 1

January, 1985

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The **MEGIDDO MESSAGE** is a religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ, and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Church. L. T. Nichols, Founder; Kenneth E. Flowerday, President and Editor.

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**MEGIDDO** is a way of believing and living, grounded solidly in the Bible as the reliable Word of our Creator. A total view of life, the world and the universe, it sees all events, men and nations moving together toward one God-ordained climax: the Kingdom of God on earth. This has been the plan of God since the beginning. Christ will return visibly, bodily, as King, and the governments of this world will be joined to form a totally new worldwide government. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants. This is the purpose and goal of all creation.



# "I Cannot Go Back"

Scripture Reading: Judges 11:29-35.

"I Cannot go back." Who said it? Without doubt, every one of those heavenly hosts, the angels of God, said it. Millions and billions and duodecillions of those happy immortals, who at this very time are enjoying the fruits of their life effort and are the privileged inhabitants of God's limitless universe said to themselves in one way or another, "I cannot go back." This divine quality of persistence, this determined spirit of constancy, is a quality belonging to all God's high achievers. "I cannot," "I must not," hence *I will* not go back. True enough, they *could* have gone back to what they had left behind, what their contemporaries considered a "normal" manner of life; but had they done so, where would they be now? For that was perhaps a few million years ago. We have no way of measuring or describing the infinite ages during which our merciful Father has been saving those who love and obey Him; we know only that it has been "from everlasting."

Who in our earthly realm said "I cannot go back"? Doubtless, Lot said it one bright early morning as he made his way out of Sodom. Human nature, human forgetfulness, and human absentmindedness being what they are, "I cannot look back, I cannot go back" may have been a theme he repeated to himself a thousand times as he walked by the angel's side—especially after the shocking experience of losing his wife in disobedience by the way. *She* looked back. He could have also, but he did not. He did not even look back to see what happened to her, or her doom would have been his also; he kept his eye fixed on the mountains—and safety.

## The Winners' Theme

"I cannot go back" has been the continuing theme of each one who will stand among the winners in that great Day to come. Abraham, leaving his native home-

land at the command of God, might have weakened at some point, given up, and gone back, had his eye not been focussed on what God had promised him. The writer of the book of Hebrews, speaking of Abraham and all the saints on God's honor roll, makes special note of this fact: "Truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly" (Heb. 11:15-16). They could have gone back, but their thoughts were in the better country—ahead!

"I cannot go back" is at once a promise and a determination. It is not an absolute. Anyone who says it *could* go back—if he allowed himself to go back. But it is an expression of determination. It is the spirit in which Sister Hembree replied one time when asked how she knew she would never go back. "There is no way of absolutely knowing," she said, "but it is my determination." She said it, and she meant it.

## In History . . .

The words "I cannot go back," however, in their historical context, carry a slightly different meaning. They come down to us from the days of the Judges of Israel. That was the time when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." But there were a commendable few who did not follow that permissive pattern, and Jephthah was one of these few.

We are all familiar with the story. For more than 18 years, Israel had been suffering at the hands of the children of Ammon—because they had forsaken the Lord and were serving other gods. But as usual, in their distress they acknowledged their sin and besought the Lord for deliverance. The Lord's answer was what they deserved: "Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation" (Judges 10:14). But they persisted, promised again to serve God, and pleaded for help. Accordingly, the elders of Gilead sought out a man who would

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Note: "I Cannot Go Back" is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

champion their cause and fight for them—Jephthah the Gileadite.

Jephthah's first strategy with the children of Ammon was via messengers. But when this strategy failed, realizing there was no easy way out and apparently unsure of himself against a foe so strong, Jephthah besought the Lord for victory. "If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands," he vowed to the Lord, "then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, (or) I will offer it up for a burnt offering" (Judges 11:30-31, with marginal reading from the Hebrew).

The Lord heard Jephthah's request and granted him victory. Then came the happy day of home-coming when Jephthah returned in all his glory and triumph. But as he returned, what came forth of the doors of his house to meet him? Not one of his many servants, as he might have hoped, nor any of his animals, but his one and only daughter "came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances" (v. 34).

The music was meant to increase the joy of a joyous occasion, but this was not the result for Jephthah. At once recalling the vow he had made to God, his joy turned to grief; for, we read, the great, victorious general "rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! Thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back."

We are privileged to have in the Divine Record the outcome of Jephthah's decision. Greater, far greater, was his inner victory that day than any victory ever won on any battlefield, for it was a victory of Spirit over flesh, of loyalty over natural desire, of God over man. By his faithfulness that day to the vow he had made, Jephthah showed himself unflinching and unswervingly a man of fidelity to God. What was his reply? "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back." He *could* not—because he *would* not. He gave no thought or consideration to going back on his word. What he had vowed is what would be.

We are not told all the details we would like to know, but his daughter apparently cooperated with her father in carrying out his vow. She went right ahead and arranged to dedicate her life to the service of the Lord. It also seems very possible that her dedication meant spending her life away from home, serving at the tabernacle of the Lord in Shiloh, much as the young Samuel did. This suggestion is also supported by the fact that she immediately requested of her father "two months" to spend with her friends "upon the moun-

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## **"I cannot go back" has been the continuing theme of each of the winners in life's race.**

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tains of Israel." In any case, she gave up the joys of marriage and of having her own home and family.

It is difficult for us today to appreciate the magnitude of this sacrifice for Jephthah or his daughter. In the early days of Israel, perpetuating the family name and inheritance from generation to generation was the joy and pride of every family. By giving up his only child to a life of virginity, Jephthah was relinquishing his only claim to remembrance in this world; he was giving up his whole inheritance. All that he had would at the time of his death go to others—strangers, as it were; for Jephthah would have no heirs. No small sacrifice was this for a loyal Israelite, even a ruler of the nation.

But is there not a parallel in Jephthah's sacrifice for us? Are we not asked to make a like sacrifice? By investing our all in the world to come, are we not giving up our right to any lasting inheritance, name or fame in this world? But let us have the good judgment of Jephthah to look beyond, to realize that claims in this world are not all that they seem, that loyalty to our God will pay us immeasurably more than the best this world can offer. Indeed, how can any sacrifice here be equivalent to the smallest share in the "inheritance of the saints in light"?

### **No Faltering**

Many people feel that in this instance of Jephthah's vow, the Bible upholds human sacrifice, that Jephthah offered his obedient daughter in flames upon an altar, a "burnt offering." But praise be to God! no such dire account blots the pages of His Book. A careful study of the passage does not lead to any such conclusion. At the time Jephthah made the vow, he stated two possible ways in which it might be fulfilled: that whatsoever came forth 1) "shall surely be the Lord's," or 2) "I will offer it up for a burnt offering." There were two alternatives. What need for two stated alternatives if only the burnt offering were intended? As Jephthah made the vow, he apparently recognized two possibilities and made provision for each: one if it were animal, the other if it were human. This was the customary manner in which God was honored at that time—by the burnt

offering of an animal or by the dedicated life of a person. God never approved of human sacrifice.

The fact that Jephthah's daughter did not die but gave up the joys of marriage and family is also supported by the Biblical statement that her father "did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man." The nature of her sacrifice is also disclosed by her request for two months in which to "bewail (her) virginity upon the mountains." Furthermore, what need for the "daughters of Israel" to go up yearly to "rejoice with" (Margin for "lament," KJV) the daughter of Jephthah four days each year if she had been killed? No, let us thank God, no such dark deed was ever commanded or commended by our God.

### **Our Vow**

Let us return to those words which express Jephthah's unswerving fidelity: "I cannot go back." Let us think

about them as they apply to us and our vow unto God. We, too, have opened our mouth unto the Lord; and we, too, cannot go back—not if we want a share in the great events which are just ahead.

We have opened our mouth to the Lord. We have vowed a life of consecrated faithfulness, a dedicating of everything we have and are. Should we be surprised that God takes us at our word and expects us to keep it? Do we not expect Him to require fidelity and responsibility from those with whom He has offered to share the exceeding riches of His grace? Is it not with but one objective—that He may someday reveal to us the grandeur and glory of His promises and the absoluteness of His word?

"I cannot go back" was the resolve made by our founder at a very young age. At one point he seriously considered giving up. The task of searching out the true teachings of the Bible seemed prodigious as he

## *Let Us Pray . . .*

We would extol Thee, our God, O King, and we would bless Thy name for ever. Every day would we praise Thee, Thou great and mighty God; unsearchable in Thy greatness, unapproachable in Thy brightness, unfathomable in Thy munificence, Thou great God and greatly to be praised. In comparison to Thee we are as nothing; our little life is as a fleeting shadow, a tale that is told, a bit of water spilt upon the ground.

We come to Thee, Lord, seeking greatness, vision, hope, and purpose for our lives. We come to Thee to find the real values of life, to catch fresh visions of Thy truth, new glimpses of Thy grandeur, a firmer grasp upon Thy great and precious promises to us, and a keener awareness of our duty to Thee.

Lord, we realize how prone we are to let temporal concerns obscure the bright prospects before us. In the everydayness of our lives we forget the seriousness of our covenant with Thee. We forget that Thou dost take us at our word, and once we have made a commitment to Thee we cannot disregard it with impunity. Lord, make us mindful of Thy goodness and Thy severity, realizing the seriousness of our obligation to Thee and its tremendous consequences of good or ill. We shall be judged according to the terms of our covenant;

we shall appear before the Judgment seat of Christ; if we are accepted, there shall be no words that can describe the joy that shall enrapture us; if we are rejected, there shall be no sorrow or shame like unto ours.

We pray Thee, our Father, to keep us mindful of this fact through today, and tomorrow, and every succeeding tomorrow. Help us to say it to ourselves again and again—and mean it: "I cannot, I must not, I will not go back; but with my eye fixed steadfastly on the reward Thou hast promised I will keep myself unswervingly in the way to life."

Lord, we thank Thee for assuring us that the fulfilling of our covenant is not beyond us. Thou dost not ask of us the great or the heroic; Thou dost ask only that which we can give: a heart pure, a will resigned, and hands that are washed from every defilement of sin.

O Thou God of heaven and earth, we beseech Thee this morning to become God of our minds and Lord of our affections. Fill our hearts with kindness, our actions with love, and our spirits with gladness. Give strength and support wherever Thou in Thy infinite wisdom seest need; comfort the sorrowing, support the suffering, strengthen the weak. Be with Thy people wherever they may be, who are seeking in sincerity and truth to keep Thy law. Be with those also who are preparing their hearts to seek Thee. Hasten the glorious Day when all of Thy people from all ages shall be gathered and Thy will shall be done on earth as in heaven above. And may we all strive with deeper dedication to live acceptably before Thee, that we may share the blessings of Thy eternity. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

confronted a world for the most part cold and unwilling. And yet he came to the conclusion that either the Bible was of God, or it was all false. The evidence convinced him that it was of God; hence should be worthy of his all-out effort. Thus his resolve, "I cannot go back." He could not—because he *would* not. His determination was fixed.

There may be times, though, when going back is not the issue. What we are seeking to avoid is anything that hinders our going ahead. It may be only a backward look or some petty satisfaction.

### **I Will, But . . .**

Let us consider an example. Jesus calls two people. One says, "Lord, I will follow thee." "Very well," says Jesus, "come and follow me." The other says, "Lord, I will follow thee, *but* . . ." The commitment is the same, yet how different. What is the difference? That slight reservation, something held back "just in case." It might be that these two persons are two children from the same household, having had the same instruction. Both are impressed by the surpassing excellence of Christ. Both feel the desire to work for what God offers. Both are willing to say of the Master, "Never man spake like this man." Both should reach the same goal. The only difference is one word: "but."

What happens? For quite some time, their paths lie so parallel that an outside observer would scarcely detect a difference. Both seem to be going straight ahead in a life of piety, zeal, devotedness, useful service and spiritual growth. But God, who sees the hearts, sees the difference. And in due time it is apparent to all. The paths which began so apparently parallel grow further and further apart as that slightly diverging reservation becomes wider and yet wider. "Lord, I would follow thee, but . . . I am not really sure this sacrifice is necessary"; or "Lord, I would follow thee, but . . . it will be easier later"; or "There's time enough yet, I'm still young"; or "I'm waiting for a more definite command from the Lord; I do not wish to act presumptuously." And so the commitment which could have been wholehearted is found to be more and more lacking, and soon there are so many "but's" attached to it that "Lord, I will follow thee" is forgotten.

Oh, let us beware; this is the very reason we need to renew our commitment each day, to take a fresh look at the goal and tell ourselves firmly, "I cannot go back."

### **Our Reasons**

What are the reasons underlying our determination? Let us think through our decision, lest in some unwary moment we find ourselves rebuilding the things we

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## **When we agree to serve God, we seal a contract of obligation.**

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have destroyed. Exactly *why* will you and I not go back?

Our reasons may vary slightly, but perhaps one of the first is the reverse question: What is there to go back to? What is there behind us to call us back? A limited amount of self-satisfaction; a few short pleasures interspersed with pain and problems; a life without a future and ultimately death without hope; a few momentary absorptions, and a few friends and relatives to share our short-lived joys and sorrows; but when it is all over, what then? Surely nothing to justify the grief and loss of backtracking.

Our second, and equally definite reason for not going back, is, *Why go back when everything we want is ahead? Life is ahead. Glory is ahead. Happiness and vigor and immortality are all ahead. Why even think of going back? Everything above and beyond what we can ask or think or ever imagine lies ahead. Why go back?*

I am reminded of what a man once told of his boyhood days. As a small boy he enjoyed frequent walks in the woods with his grandfather. One particular day as they were walking through the woods, he was so enchanted with this and that along the way that he was constantly looking back and constantly stumbling and falling. At length his grandfather became weary of the slow progress they were making and reprimanded the lad. "Why, Sonny, are you always looking back? That isn't the direction we're headed!" It was a lesson the man never forgot. Back is *not* the direction we are headed either. Everything we want lies *ahead*. Nothing we left behind deserves even a look. Our gaze is fixed forward, beyond the horizons of this world. In the words of the apostle Paul, our eyes "are on the unseen, not on the seen; for the seen is transient, the unseen, eternal" (II Cor. 4:18, Moffatt). To go back would mean to give up our right to everything that lies ahead—a loss which none of us can afford. One of our greatest reasons for not going back is that by doing so we would be dishonoring the solemn pledge we made to God: to comply fully with His laws in return for a share in His promises. Does He not expect us to pay that which we have vowed? And if we do not, shall He not someday require it at our hand? Is that not why the King Solomon, soberly reflecting on his own wayward expe-

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## On the road of every life is a "Past Redemption Point".

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riences, wrote: "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Eccl. 5:4-5)? When we agree to serve God, we seal a contract of obligation. We are bound by our agreement, and God has no use for defaulters. Truly, to be honorable and respectable in His sight, we *cannot* go back.

Going back on one's word is not even honorable in our present world. This was the main point against the striking Air Controllers in our country. Wages and benefits were not the issue. They had each pledged under oath that they would not strike, and by striking they were going back on their word. Men do not honor such action, and what of God? Was not the executive authority of our country justified in penalizing those who defaulted? And shall not the Lord do so by us if we go back on our word?

Oh, how serious a matter is our contract with God. We look down on men who go back on their word, but how many times have we dishonored our contract with God as though it were a small thing and He does not care? Oh, let us remember, "God is not mocked"; whatever we sow, we shall ultimately reap.

Then, too, *I cannot go back* because others are expecting great things of me. They are depending on me to be faithful. If my faith wavers, will not the strain be greater on them? For "no man liveth to himself alone." Oh, let us never discount the power of our influence. We may think that it is a small thing; but there is just no way of measuring the full extent of our influence upon others.

There are also those who are looking to me for an example. They are depending on my success. If I fail, what of them? I may not even be aware of it, but my success or failure means more to them than I can imagine. For their sake, too, I cannot go back.

Then, too, *I cannot go back* because God has dealt so bountifully with me. He has provided brethren to go before me, prophets and apostles to write for my inspiration and learning; and teachers to instruct me. He has given me all things richly to enjoy, and has opened to me His good treasure and has revealed to me some of the great things of His law. Shall I prove a traitor with so much done in my behalf?

Then, too, for the sake of my own salvation *I cannot go back*. If I do not do all I can toward my own salvation, whom can I expect to intercede for me? No one. And what sane person would invest x number of years in training for a particular position and then turn around and pursue something entirely different—especially when he knew that the first was immeasurably more rewarding and incomparably better value? What sensible person would give their best years to a specific career only to suddenly throw it all overboard, so to speak, and just when they were on the verge of success? It would be foolish in this world; how much worse in things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Then *I cannot go back* because of the factor of time. There is a limit to how much time I can waste in starting over and over, and have time left to accomplish anything. Mortal life is not forever; and if I keep changing my mind and starting over I will be much like the bricklayer who every day laid a certain number of bricks, and every night tore them down so that he could do better the next day. When would he ever get anything done? Who would hire such a workman, even though his work be near perfection? God wants me to do my best, but he wants me every day to be accomplishing something, every day improving on the preceding day's performance and so build up step by step until I reach His standard. To be continually going back will get me nowhere.

There is yet another reason *I cannot go back*. If at this point I spend time going back, I stand to lose everything—both this world and the world to come. Bitter experience during six thousand years has shown that beyond a point it is impossible to find happiness in the old way of life. Having caught a glimpse of a better, cleaner, brighter world to come and experienced the true fellowship of the heavenly way, the things to which we might return are certain to be dull, flat, stale and unprofitable, its pleasure overshadowed by a certain fearful looking for of judgment, a haunting fear that perhaps God is right and we are wrong.

Jesus described the unhappy condition of the back-tracker as like that of one who wanders "through dry places, seeking rest and finding none." Returning in desperation to the old "house" or false religion from whence he came, he finds that it, too, is empty. The outcome of it all is, "the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Matt. 12:43-45). It is better never to have known the way of righteousness, as said the apostle Peter, than after having known to turn from the holy commandment (II Pet. 2:20-21); and for very good reason.



### "Past Redemption Point"

There is yet another reason *I cannot go back.*

Above the great falls in the Niagara River is a point formerly known and marked as "Past Redemption Point." It was so named by some navigator who figured out that anyone who went beyond that point had no possibility of escaping the horror of being swept over the falls to death.

There is on the road of every life a "Past Redemption Point," which we do well to recognize. In the time of the apostles and the power of the Holy Spirit, it was easy to pass this point—irrevocably. As we are told in the book of Hebrews, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance" (Heb. 6:4-6). Here was a "Past Redemption Point" we today do not have to fear, for we have not "tasted of the heavenly gift" or been made "partakers of the Holy Spirit."

However, there is still in our age a fatal point, no less real, beyond which sin may be unpardonable to us. The reason: our own willful neglect of golden opportunities. A noble Christian character is not the product of a day, or a month, or a year. There is much we must do if we are to be saved, and little time in which to do it. Therefore, time is of the essence; and a misuse of what remains will inevitably carry us, before we realize it, beyond our Past Redemption Point.

It is the lesson our founder illustrated with the man on a bicycle who wanted to reach a city about fifty miles away by evening. If he started early in the morning, he could conceivably make it. If he waited till midday, still he might be able to make it if he pushed really hard. But if he dallied all day and did not get started until four o'clock in the afternoon, he could travel as hard as he might, but it would be impossible for him to make it by evening. He had delayed too long.

Just so it will be with us if we put off too long the making of a serious effort to overcome our evil ways. We will find ourselves so far behind the procession that a victorious come-back is utterly impossible, no matter how hard we try. Careless living, overconfidence, and evil habits will have become a part of us, not to be dropped at will; and we shall awaken when life is too far gone to make up the wasted days. We shall find ourselves in company with Esau, that tragic figure who "found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb. 12:17).

"Hear ye, and give ear," comes the solemn warning of the Prophet. "Be not proud: for the Lord hath

spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness . . . Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jer. 13:15-16, 23).

By delay and negligence in the narrow way, even though we do not wholly go back, we make double shipwreck of our lives. By the distance run toward Zion we lose the consolations of this world which, while paltry enough, are far better than nothing. And by

*I have done at length with dreaming;  
Henceforth, O thou soul of mine,  
Thou must take up sword and buckler,  
Waging warfare most divine.*

*Life is struggle, combat, victory  
Wherefore have I slumbered on  
With my forces all unmarshaled,  
With my weapons all undrawn?*

*O how many a glorious record  
Had the angels of me kept  
Had I done instead of doubted,  
Had I warred instead of wept.*

*I have wakened to my duty,  
To acknowledge strong and deep  
That I reckoned not aforetime,  
In my long, inglorious sleep.*

*'Tis so sweet, and yet so awful,  
So bewildering, yet so brave,  
To be king in every conflict  
Where before I crouched a slave.*

*'Tis so glorious to be conscious  
Of a growing power within  
Stronger than the rallying forces  
Of a charged and marshaled sin.*

*O those olden days of dallying,  
When I wantoned with my fate;  
When I trifled with the knowledge  
That had well-nigh come too late.*

*Yet, my soul, look not behind thee;  
Thou hast work to do at last;  
Let the brave toil of the present  
Overarch the crumbling past.*

*Build thy great acts high and higher;  
Build them on the conquered sod  
Where thy weakness first fell bleeding  
And thy first prayer rose to God.*

postponing or refusing a full surrender we miss the hundredfold of blessing promised for this life. Although God will pay us for all we do, in the end we shall lose the world to come, through our own postponing. It is a dangerous possibility. It is later than we think.

Oh, let us fix anew in our lives a solid commitment to God and say with all determination, "I cannot go back." If we have not said it before, let us say it now, this very moment. And if we have said it before, let us say it again with renewed determination. "From this time on, God helping me, I will not turn back, I will not turn aside, I will not delay. I could do so, but I will not. 'For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate

me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'"

This decision once made, we cannot go back—not without breaking our promise to God. We cannot go back—because everything we want is ahead.

Brethren, we have dallied long enough with our sins and mistakes. Let us burn every bridge we cross; and forgetting the things behind and straining after the things which lie before, let us press with all our might toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, not allowing ourselves a single backward look. If our surrender is complete, there will be no regrets—only a supreme delight in accomplishing the greatest task of which men and women are capable: the fashioning of that fully new creation in Christ Jesus. For of such are the Kingdom of heaven. MM

## We're Safe—If

**I**F WE'RE lazy, we won't be up and doing our Father's will, bringing every thought to the obedience of Christ.

If we're lethargic, we simply are too weak to say No to the promptings of the flesh.

If we're apathetic, we are in real danger, for then we've come to the point of not really caring any more. We find also that we're losing our appetite for things spiritual. This condition can be fatal!

And if we're sleeping, how can we do anything? In such a state it is absolutely impossible to know of impending danger.

"Watch ye therefore for ye know not when the master of the house cometh" . . . "Watch ye therefore and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the son of man."

Weather forecasters today have much more advanced methods of forecasting the weather than in the

past. One method is by radar. They are able to track storms for many miles and most of the time long before a storm strikes, they can predict its arrival within hours or even minutes.

When a storm is approaching, the forecasters issue either a "storm watch" or a "storm warning." If a "watch" is in effect, we know the conditions are prime for a certain type of storm to strike—be it tornado, hurricane, snow storm, ice storm, flash floods, etc. We are advised of the potential danger and should be alert, cautious. Even though we go about our daily routine, we are constantly checking the status of the storm.

When a "warning" has been issued, however, we know for a fact that a storm has been spotted on radar, that the danger is imminent, and that we need to take shelter and wait until all danger is past and the warning lifted.

Aren't we living in a time when all the "watches" have been issued by holy men of old? "Hear ye and give ear"; "Watch ye therefore"; "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found"; "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise";

"Walk honestly, as in the day"; "Hold fast till I come"; "Hearken, O daughter and consider"; "Depart ye, depart ye, touch no unclean thing."

A great storm is approaching. "And there shall be (indeed, there are) signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring" (Luke 2:25). One day, a "warning" is going to be sounded by Elijah himself. Will we be able to find shelter?

The King of kings is on His way. What a great Euroclydon storm of fury is coming! We can have a "refuge" then, a "refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." If we're anchored steadfastly in the truth, we will have nothing to fear. Though everything be crumbling around us, we can have faith that all will be well.

What a day that will be when Christ will stretch out His hand over the angry seas and say, "Peace be still."

We'll be safe . . . if we'll only take heed! Contributed

# And Still She Speaks

Extracts from sermons, discussions, talks, comments  
by Rev. Maud Hembree (1853-1935).



*Are we working every moment, or are we allowing our minds to be filled with foolishness?*

*Do you want to live to all eternity? Do you want to be clothed upon with that house which is from heaven, immortality? Do you want to live forever, or would you rather go like the worm of the earth and perish forever?*

*Do you want something better than this life can give? Do you want to get on higher ground or are you satisfied to go like the worm to the congregation of the dead? Oh, "be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."*

*These words mean something. They are not idle words, written to fill up a book, but God means every word.*

*Do you know, there is something to do; whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, to do all to the glory of God. It covers everything—your dress, the company you keep what you say, what you think, what you read. Whatever you are doing, all must be done to the glory of God. That will make of you men and women worthy of living, worthy of future existence; and God says nothing less will suffice.*

*Be honest, do not be one thing inside and another outside. Do not daub with untempered mortar but be a living Christian, or else do not profess. Be consistent, be righteous.*

*As we grow older, we realize more and more the necessity of being diligent for something better than the present, something better than this world can give us. Oh, to live, to work for something that will be enduring! The human mind is willing to work for something that will pass away with the using, but how difficult it is to get people to work for something that will endure, something that the ravages of time can never destroy!*

*If there ever was a time when men and women needed to be stirred up it is now in our day. There never was a time when it took more courage and moral fortitude to keep alive in divine things than it does in these days. Those around us are all absorbed in their pleasure seeking. Worldly pleasure seeking will undermine the very foundations of truth if we are not watching; but there are a few who will hold on to the end.*

*This Bible is the dearest treasure on earth to me, and anything that will prove it divine is of great value to me. As I have often said, I would rather that someone would say something against me—that is a small thing compared to saying something against this Blessed Bible and the God who caused it to be written.*

*You must shut your eyes from seeing evil—not go where it is, but avoid it. You can shut your eyes even if you have to go where it is, if you do not take any pleasure or delight in it.*

*Meditate on the Word, keep in mind the glories to be revealed, the joy set before us. If it were not for the joy set before us, we never would endure. No one ever endured to the end except by keeping the reward in mind. I have heard people say we should serve God without a thought of the joy. But Moses had "respect unto the recompence of the reward." Jesus and every faithful one endured for the joy set before them. Paul endured hardships for the hope of the reward, by keeping the prize in view. We should do the same.*

# A Sense of Spiritual Discrimination

DO WE know the difference between what is vital and what is only supplemental in our lives?

We might use food as an illustration. Food is vital. Without food, we would soon die. Vitamin products are supplemental—useful in addition to and not in place of food. Their value lies in being a useful supplement, and the supplement never displaces that which is vital.

The same is true in the higher realm. God does not want us to confuse what is good as a supplement with what is vital for life. He is just that discriminating. And since God is discriminating, we must be discriminating also.

The apostle Paul expressed this need in a prayer in behalf of his Philippian brethren, that they might have “a sense of what is vital” (Phil. 1:10, Moffatt)—vital as opposed to that which is supplemental.

We need to pray that prayer today, for help in developing a keen “sense of what is vital,” spiritual discrimination. What is vital in our lives? What is supplemental? Too easily do we confuse the two; but God does not. In our worship, in our service, in our daily living we tend to displace what is “vital” (faith, hope, and obedience from the heart) and to substitute what should be only supplemental (outward acts of piety, church activity, and general good will).

So much religion today is lacking that which is vital, heart-rending, soul-stimulating, mind-exalting, life-changing. Even worse are those religious circles where much that may rightly be called claptrap and junk abides under the ingenious—though wholly unscriptural—explanation that it will draw the crowd or hold the interest of young or old; and so it is tolerated and all too often even approved. Of such it might be said, as the prophet Jeremiah said of Jerusalem long ago, “Take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord’s” (Jer. 5:10). Christian disciplines have been relaxed to accommodate so much of the “world” that very often there is little difference discernable. How did it happen? It is the situation so aptly described by the poet in these words:

*Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,  
As to be hated needs but to be seen;  
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.*

At the extreme are those congregations where pop bottles, paper plates, and rough and irreverent music find a place in what is called “worship.”

We may be confident that we will never be tempted by such, but what of the finer lines of distinction and spiritual discrimination? Do we ever attempt to offer to God a substitute for what He really requires? Have we the fine sense of discernment that can judge between what is vital in our lives and what is not? Have we been living so close to the holy men and women of old through God’s written Word that we are sure we can maintain the same difference that separated what to them was essential to spiritual well-being from what was merely supplemental? Or have we become so dulled by the clamor of the carnally-minded all around us for that which gratifies the senses that we are unperceptive of the voice from above that says, “This is the way, walk ye in it”?

WHAT is vital in the spiritual lives of those who would be heirs of salvation?

First, we need a sense of God’s reality, power and presence. “Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). Then we need a firm belief in His presence. Moses, sent of God to bring the Israelites across the desert and into Canaan, protested at one point: “Thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me.” The divine answer was, “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest” (Ex. 33:12-14).

Even so do we need His presence to go with us today. We cannot have the visible presence of angels that Moses had, but their presence is still with us, if we are with God. And we need it; we need it desperately in this wicked and ungodly world. How dreadful

the outlook if God be not with us!

In the early days of the nation of Israel, the Ark of God served as a symbol of the divine presence. In the face of it their enemies quaked with fear. "God is come into the camp," they declared (I Sam. 4:7). Do we feel that assurance today when we read and study His Word, that God has come into our camp, that He is near, that His angels are with us, directing, recording, ministering to our needs?

It is not just a matter of an hour or two a week that we want to spend in His presence. We need to inject His thinking into all our days. In the words of the hymnwriter, "I need Thy presence every passing hour." We need it as much in the throb of the busy factory, amid the pressures of business, in the distractions of the home or the problems of school, as in the church. In the sunshine or shadow, amid losses or crosses, amid pleasures or pains, this sense of the overshadowing of the Almighty is vital. How much more circumspectly will we walk, how carefully will we order our speech, our conduct, and even our inmost thoughts if we are always dwelling "in the secret place of the most High" and abiding "under the shadow of the Almighty"! How trusting and confident will we be if we are, figuratively speaking, covered "with his feathers" and "under his wings"! (Ps. 91:1-2, 4).

Sitting at the feet of Jesus and meditating on His words is also vital. Perhaps Martha is representative of all too many of us today; we are "careful and troubled about many things" while only one thing is needful. The cooking of that meal was important. No one condemns Martha for wanting to prepare a good meal for the Master. But the meal was supplemental, not primary. It was not of sufficient importance to draw Mary away from the feet of Jesus.

When we are too busy to pray, too busy to meditate, too busy to sit at the Master's feet, we are too busy.

What we are doing to keep busy is not nearly so important as feeding our minds at His table. Realizing this in a practical manner takes a highly developed sense of spiritual discrimination. What shall we eliminate from our crowded lives to make more time for what really counts? What shall we expand? What shall we do with these lives that we have dedicated to serving our King?

What is the word from the Lord? "Be still, and know that I am God." The Psalmist said it this way: "While I was musing the fire burned." Too often we are fagged with our much serving. More than anything else we need to "take time to be holy" and then to arise from such an exercise to say:

*Lord, what a change within me one short hour  
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make;  
What heavy burdens from my bosom take. . . .  
We kneel how weak; we rise how full of power.*

This experience can be ours, and in so doing we will develop a sense of spiritual discrimination that will double our effectiveness in overcoming evil.

It was with a holy sense of their high calling that those first century preachers appointed capable, spiritually-minded men to help them with their tasks, men who gave themselves "to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:2-4). These were the type of men the early Church needed; they are the same type God is seeking today.

What else is vital in our Christianity? Perhaps a sense of the divine approval. All too often we are concerned with meeting the approbation of our fellowmen; all too seldom are we concerned with meeting the approbation of God. Our fellowmen judge largely by what we do outwardly; God sees the heart. God's whole concern is for what we *are*. Inside. And He *knows*. He has no misinformation, and He makes no misjudgments. In the day of final account, He will judge each of us by the motivations behind our actions; He will read the heart, the inner thought, the intent. At that moment, much that looked like pure gold in the dazzling sunlight of man's approval may turn out to be but wood, hay and stubble. And conversely, much that seemed mediocre in its worth may turn out to have the hallmark of divine favor, and to such will come that sublime word of approval, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord"

How do we determine what is vital and what is not? Perhaps the words of the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:8 may provide a guideline for our thoughts. Whatever is "true, . . . honest, . . . just, . . . pure, . . . lovely, . . . of good report" is safely counted as worthwhile; anything less than this should be eliminated.

Are there seemingly good and necessary duties that are dwarfing our spiritual life, so that while we are helping keep the vineyards of others our own vineyard is being neglected? If so, then let us take time to make a calm reappraisal of the whole meaning of our lives and in the words of the greatest of all Christians resolutely say, "This one thing I do, . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Whatever keeps us going toward this goal at the fastest possible speed is vital, and God will accept no substitutes for that vital obedience. In the day of final account, actions will be weighed; what we have done or failed to do with the vital issues of life will either vindicate or condemn us.

MM





## *Lines to Live By*

*There is coming a city from heaven,  
The beautiful City of God,  
Where sin has no power to enter,  
Where all shall submit to the Lord;*

*The City—its equal has never  
Been seen in the ages now past;  
Whose grandeur and beauty shall ever  
Throughout an eternity last.*

*That city shall one day be planted  
Securely on Zion's fair shore;  
There Jesus shall reign in His splendor  
And Him shall all nations adore.*

*We look for this city from heaven,  
Whose Builder and Maker is God;  
And long for its joys to be given  
To those who the narrow way trod.*

*And lo! it will soon be descending—  
Not long have His children to wait  
Till Christ, with His angels attending  
Is seen, as He stands at the gate.*

## HABITS

The greatest iceberg once was just  
A tiny flake of snow;  
And flake on flake adhered to it  
And it did slowly grow.

And so it is with habits good,  
Or habits very bad;  
In time they'll give you lots of joy  
Or make you very sad.

*While others hide behind their good qualities, let us remember the hideousness of sin.*

## The Signposts

God has set His signposts  
On life's strange and winding road.  
When we're blindly stumbling  
With the burden of the load,  
He will lead our footsteps through  
The pathway's twist and bend.  
In some form He guides us, through  
The Book, a song, a friend.

In the dark uncertain hours,  
We need not be afraid—  
When we're at the crossroads,  
And decisions must be made;  
Though the track is unfamiliar,  
And the light is gray,  
Rest assured, there's bound to be  
A signpost on the way.

## God's Care

God's eye is on His children dear,  
And to their cries He lends His ear.  
He hears their prayer, and helps them win  
If they will daily die to sin.

Not heavy is the ear of God,  
Nor short the arm that wields His Rod.  
'Tis sin alone that hides from view,  
Nor lets His blessed glory through.

When holiness replaces sin,  
And beauty fills the soul within,  
Then God has promised He will hear,  
And drive away all anxious fear.

In times of stress, in times of care,  
When burdens 'most too hard to bear  
Fall on us, oh, the sweet relief,  
To know that He will share our grief,

And strengthen us to meet each test,  
Provided we put forth our best.  
A help is He in time of need,  
A very present help indeed.

So let us lift our hearts to God,  
And humbly bow beneath His Rod;  
Serve Him with all our mind and soul,  
And yield our all to His control.

Yes, let us lift up heart and hands  
To God, and, keeping His commands,  
Prove worthy of His loving care,  
And His eternal blessings share.

—L. L. S.

*It is well that our Father knows better than we what constitutes a blessing.*

## Points for the Month:

**Week 1:** I am going to be a better person, better tomorrow than today—a new creature.

**Week 2:** Prayer allays spiritual fatigue.

**Week 3:** Be strong, for your work shall be rewarded.

**Week 4:** I'll not willingly offend nor be easily offended.



# In the Days of the Judges

## The Last of the Judges

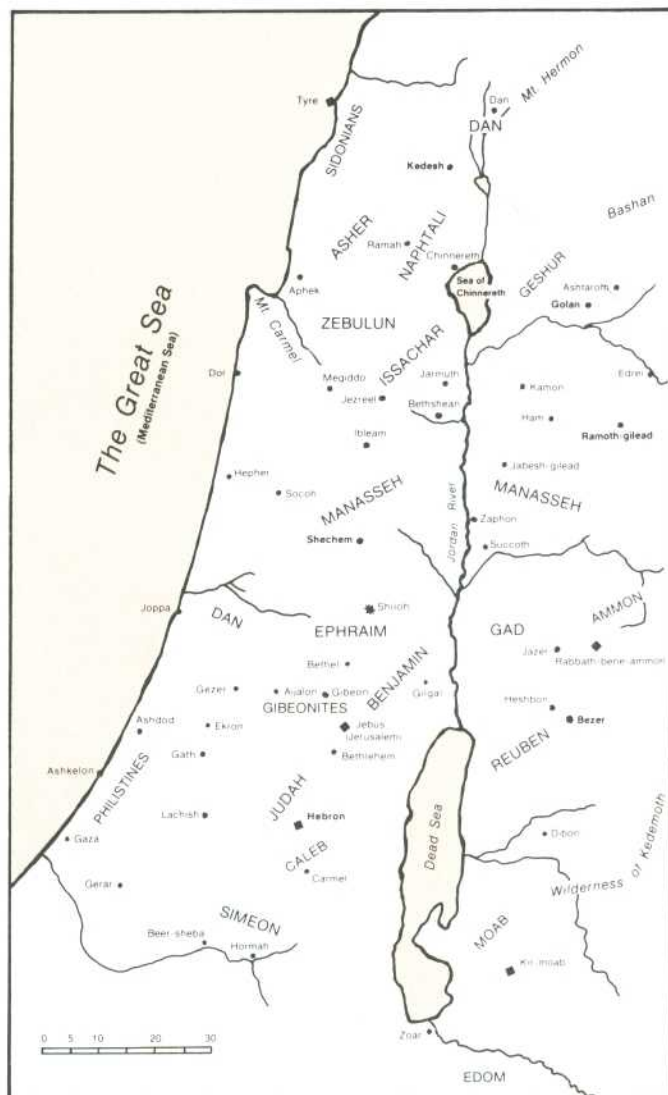
### Revival in Israel

ISRAEL had long needed a strong leader; doing what looked right in their own eyes had brought them nothing but grief for generations. After the death of Eli, the position fell to Samuel, "and the word of Samuel came to all Israel." And after Samson's demise (probably about the same time as that of Eli), Samuel became the sole judge as well as the spiritual leader in Israel. The task facing Samuel was enormous. They had already been straying after the gods of the nations for twenty years; now it fell to Samuel to turn them to the Lord.

Samuel instituted a revival. He called the people together and exhorted them to repentance: "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only; [then] he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines" (I Sam. 7:3). The foundation of Samuel's revival was the restoration of the moral and religious life of the people. If they would make the first move; if they would exhibit a desire to return to God with all their heart, God would help them.

Israel had so long worshiped strange gods that their hearts were hardened. Superstitious veneration of idols had passed rapidly to unbelief and irreverence. A drastic change was needed. "Prepare your hearts unto the Lord," was Samuel's admonition. To prepare the heart implies heart-searching, a cleansing from evil, turning the thoughts to the true God. There must first be a desire to serve the Lord. A heart filled with idol worship cannot worship the true God at the same time. The people expressed a willingness to change; they answered in the affirmative, and "did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only" (v. 4).

Reading the account of Samuel's revival in the Scrip-



tures gives one the impression that it happened almost overnight, but in reality, it covered a period of twenty years. Israel had forsaken the true God for so many years that it required much time to prepare their hearts to serve God, and more time yet before they were ready to throw out their idols. Samuel was in touch with the people, and he knew when the time was right. When he saw things were ripe for change, he called the people together.

"And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord" (v. 5). Samuel called for an act of national repentance. All Israel had sinned; all Israel must repent and turn to the Lord. Immediately they declared a fast. A fast was appropriate; God's people have often fasted in times of great distress. But

a fast would have been meaningless without heartfelt sorrow for sin. God does not delight in mere outward formalities.

Humbled by fasting, they willingly admitted their sin: "We have sinned against the Lord." Admission of guilt is the first step toward repentance. Sin cannot be overcome unless and until it is recognized. Then they backed up their words by their actions. They tossed out the idols and gathered at Mizpeh with a resolve to fight to rid themselves of their enemy, the Philistines.

To throw out their images and idols and break down the shrines of Baal and Ashtaroth was an open act of faith toward God and of open rebellion toward the Philistines, for the Philistines worshiped these Phoenician idols, the very idols Israel was discarding. "And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines" (1 Sam. 7:7). And they called on Samuel for help: "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines" (vs. 8). Their faith was yet weak; they were not sure the Lord would deliver them, hence they were afraid.

Quick action was needed. Israel was unarmed, for the Philistines had a monopoly on the business of iron working. The Philistines were assembling for battle. Samuel took a young lamb and offered it for a whole burnt offering to the Lord, "and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him" (v. 9). And while the offering was still burning and the Philistines drew near, the Lord answered in a most unusual way: "The Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discom-

fited them; and they were smitten before Israel" (vs. 10).

There must have been something unusual about the thunder that day, for they would have been accustomed to thunder in summer. It has been suggested that it happened during the dry season, when thunder and rain are not to be expected, and the Philistines were thrown into confusion as a result. In any case, it was something out of the ordinary, for it alarmed the Philistines, and in their consternation, they turned and fled. And Israel, inspired by the quick answer from the Almighty, forgot their lack of weapons and ran after them. In panic, the Philistines fled for their lives to a place of safety. It is called in the Scriptures Bethcar, but is not locatable on maps today.

Thanks to the Lord and to Samuel, "the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel" (v. 13). God set His seal to Samuel's work with the defeat of the Philistines at Mizpeh. Inspired by their victory, Israel

went on to recapture other cities that had previously been occupied by the Philistines.

Israel had defeated the Philistines in the very same place where twenty years before they had suffered a humiliating defeat. Because of the importance of the event in the minds of the people, Samuel set up a memorial to mark the victory: "Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer," or "Stone of Help," saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" (v. 12).

It was a significant victory; forty years of oppression were brought to a close and the deflated Philistines did not trouble Israel for many years. Now Israel could settle down to a period of peace and quiet.

But not for long, for they were not satisfied with God as their King and Samuel as His representative; they wanted an earthly king like the nations around them.

We cannot but admire Samuel for his upright character and unswerving loyalty to God in so difficult an age. And if he could do it in his day, what of us today? MM

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## The Jealous Ephraimites

**T**HE CAPACITY for self-esteem is highly developed in most of us. It was especially so in the ancient Ephraimites. Not that this tribe was without its true heroes, but the traits of pride and jealousy are strongly conspicuous in their history.

When Jacob, the grandfather of Ephraim and Manasseh, blessed the sons of Joseph, he placed Ephraim before Manasseh. This honored son of the distinguished Joseph was the progenitor of the tribe of Ephraim. While Jacob's blessing was given for its spiritual rather than literal significance, the tendency to pre-eminence revealed itself more than once in later generations of the tribe.

Very early the tribe of Ephraim enjoyed a certain position of pre-eminence among the Israelites. When the children of Israel on the way out of Egypt set up the tabernacle at the campsite, three tribes were assigned to each of the four sides. On each side, one tribe was always leading the others. Again,

when they marched, the tribe of Ephraim held a prominent position. Ephraim was the leader of the western camp, followed by Manasseh and Benjamin (Num. 2:18-24).

The tribe of Ephraim was again prominent when the twelve spies were sent out by Moses to spy out the land. The leader of the group was Joshua (Moses' servant), who was the representative of the tribe of Ephraim. Joshua, together with Caleb, brought back a true report of the land. And Joshua, who became the successor to Moses (Num. 13:8), had the rare privilege of leading the children of Israel across Jordan into the Promised Land.

When they divided the land, who should find fault about their inheritance but Ephraim and Manasseh! They were not satisfied with their lot, and so they came to Joshua complaining: "Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people?" (Josh. 17:14). The "Big I" was there. No doubt about it. They thought someone had been favored above them; someone had something better than their lot. They were envious of the other tribes' inheritance. Their portion was too small, they said—when in reality no tribe had more or better land.

Isn't that the insidious nature of jealousy? We all know what it is like to be dominated by this treacherous feeling—the more we have, the more we want. And so it was with Ephraim.

Joshua had a ready answer for these faultfinders: If you want more land, go clear the mountain! These are his words: "If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself." That wasn't exactly what they wanted to do, and so they offered another excuse: "The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of

the valley have chariots of iron." It might be all right, but those chariots of iron, they could never overcome *them*! Couldn't they have something else—something easier? They were afraid to venture it—who wouldn't be! The enemy was too much for anybody.

Joshua did not give in to their excuses. They could have the extra portion, but they could clear it for themselves.

The mountain they received gave them a strategic position among the tribes in the central highlands. And more pre-eminence. Because of its central location, the tabernacle was located in this mountain, at Shiloh, after Israel had settled in the land and had driven out the Canaanites (not all of them, but all they intended to) (Josh. 18:1).

The tabernacle at Shiloh became the sanctuary for all the tribes, the whole nation. Here the national assemblies and the worship services were held. Having the tabernacle located in their territory added to the prestige of the tribe of Ephraim.

All these little privileges together added up to one big bump of pride, making them feel very important. It was only natural that they became jealous of the prestige that was theirs because of their position of leadership, first in the marches, then in having in their land the location of the tabernacle. They had not really been appointed as leader of the twelve tribes, but wasn't it obvious that they were superior? Thus almost from the beginning, the tribe of Ephraim had the pre-eminence among the tribes. And they loved it!

But love of pre-eminence is an ugly root, and theirs was no exception. The root was the source of bitter strife, jealousy and rivalry among the tribes.

This pride of position caused them to feel that they should be consulted and be given a prominent

part in all significant matters. They could not take second place and like it; they had to be first. They just could not stand seeing someone else receive recognition above them.

Worse still, they were not merely envious of the success of others—they became furious when others triumphed.

We first note the jealousy of the tribe of Ephraim during the judgeship of Gideon when, but for the skillful diplomacy of Gideon they might have declared war on him!

"The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon" had won a great victory over the Midianites from which all Israel was benefiting. But was the tribe of Ephraim happy? No, they were furious—because they could not claim it for themselves! They were jealous because they had not been invited at the start of the campaign, only at the close to man the water fords.

When Gideon had gone forth to deliver Israel from the Midianites he had first called his own tribe, then the neighboring tribes. Then, after the initial victory with his army of 300 unarmed men, Gideon called the tribe of Ephraim to catch the fleeing Midianites at the ford of the Jordan River. The Ephraimites performed the mission well. They captured the two Midian princes Oreb and Zeeb. But they missed out on the applause. There was no glory for them, and no share in the spoils.

Distressed, they came to Gideon to voice their complaint: "And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply" (Judg. 8:1). Gideon at this time was still completing the pursuit of the defeated Midianites, chasing them back toward their homeland. Were



he to hesitate too long, the battle might be lost.

But the Ephraimites apparently gave it no thought. To them, mollifying their wounded pride was more important. Nursing their hurt feelings had top priority.

Even though he had been rudely interrupted by the Ephraimites, Gideon was still able to be patient with them. His diplomacy averted disaster. His considered reply proved to be balm in Gilead. "What have I done now in comparison of you? . . . God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, . . . and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that" (Judg. 8:2-3).

Gideon knew that a soft answer turns away wrath; hasty words would have led to a fight. He pacified them by complimenting them generously for what they had done; he used good psychology. And he was humble. Had he answered with a sharp retort, telling them that what they had done was little enough, the argument could have continued and he would not have been able to pursue the fleeing Midianites and complete the deliverance of Israel.

But Gideon's psychology did little to change their jealous disposition, for we find another flare up of this jealous spirit in the days of Jephthah. The Lord had given Jephthah a great victory over the Ammonites. Such a victory after eighteen years of oppression should have brought joy to all Israel. But not Ephraim. Again they were furious for not having shared in the victory. It was just too much for this proud tribe. An outcast of Gilead had defeated the Ammonites—without them!

Ephraim's display of pride in this instance was even worse than in Gideon's time. They complained that

they had not been called to help in the battle: "Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire" (Judg. 12:1). They were even ready to threaten God's leader! But the facts were these: They had been called; they simply did not respond.

They came to voice their complaint to Jephthah in great numbers, intent on destroying him, house and all, because they had no part in the victory over Ammon. In reality, their complaint was hypocritical, they were not so much interested in helping fight the battle as in sharing in the spoils and the glory of the victory. They were more than jealous; they were angry. It was a terrible threat to come from men of Jephthah's own country, tribal brothers.

Jephthah was not the diplomat that Gideon had been in handling the Ephraimites. He was ready to

defend what he had done and to explain his side of the matter: "When I saw that ye delivered me not, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the Lord delivered them into my hand" (Judg. 12:3). He took no glory to himself, but told them God had delivered the Ammonites into his hands. But his speech failed to placate their anger, and a battle ensued.

The battle proved disastrous for the Ephraimites; they were better at complaining than they were at fighting. They were no match for Jephthah's warriors. A great number of them fell in battle. This tribal warfare was a blot on Israel's history, and its only cause was Ephraimite pride and jealousy. They were just too proud to back down in their contention with Jephthah and so suffered a humiliating defeat. But this is the last we read of their pride. No more did they insist nothing could be done without them.

MM

## Providence

*We acknowledge both Thy power and love  
To be exact, transcendent, and divine;  
Who dost so strongly and so sweetly move,  
While all things have their will, yet none but Thine.*

*For either Thy command or Thy permission  
Lay hands on all: they are Thy right and left:  
The first puts on with speed and expedition;  
The other curbs sin's stealing pace and theft.*

*Nothing escapes them both; all must appear  
And be disposed and dressed and tuned by Thee,  
Who sweetly temperest all. If we could hear  
Thy skill and art, what music would it be!*

*Thou art in small things great, nor small in any;  
Thy even praise can neither rise nor fall.  
Thou art in all things one, in each thing many;  
For Thou art infinite in one and all.*

—Selected.



# Do You Believe in a

# Future Life ?

- The Nature of Man
- Natural Immortality?
- The Resurrection
- Conditional Immortality

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**"But I would not have you to be ignorant,  
brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye  
sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (I Thess. 4:13).**

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**S**UPPOSE someone should ask you today, "Do you believe that you, or any part of you, is immortal or eternal?" You would probably answer "yes," followed by some nebulous explanation of a soul or spirit which you believe lives on. But if that same person should ask you *why* you believe this, what would you say? What *could* you say? Perhaps you would express your confidence that most people believe it, therefore it must be true. Or maybe you have a strong feeling deep within you that you are immortal. Or maybe you regard it as a basic fact of life to be accepted if not wholly understood.

You might even venture to say the Bible teaches that there is something immortal or undying about us. Here you may be astonished, for *the Bible does not teach it*. There is not a single text in the Bible which says that the soul or spirit or personality is immortal or undying or indestructible.

But surely there is some proof that we are immortal.

*FIRST: Are there any proofs that the life survives after death?*

None. Science has nothing concrete to offer in support of it. And all the evidence of the senses and of human experience is against it. Physically, man is an animal, and his life processes from beginning to end are those of all the higher mammals. True, man possesses a reasoning mind, but there is no evidence that thought survives the destruction of the organ of thought. The Bible even says that when a man dies, "his thoughts perish" (Ps. 146:4).

*SECOND: Is there any logical proof of survival?*

So far man has failed to find it. The idea that we are eternal because the majority *think* they are does not appeal as sound logic.

In fact, this ancient and time-honored belief is definitely illogical and involves us, if we accept it, in serious difficulties. Natural immortality means that some disposition must be made of each "immortal soul" after the death of the body. It must live on somehow, somewhere. There are three major choices among the popular ideas of men: 1) re-incarnation, which is utterly absurd and without evidence to support; 2) universal salvation, which is manifestly unfair and contrary to all Bible teaching; and 3) eternal torment for the wicked, a doctrine which represents a just and loving God as worse than any human fiend.

Human speculations on the subject must be dismissed as unworthy of serious attention, for the simple reason that no living man has any experience beyond the realm of this life. One man's guess is just about as good as another's. Any worthwhile information must come from our Creator.

### **THE SECRET AND SOURCE OF LIFE IS WITH GOD**

God lives—no sensible man or woman can deny that. We live in a vast universe. Our little world called Earth is, by comparison with the whole of

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**There is not a single text  
in the Bible which says that the soul or spirit  
or personality is immortal or undying or indestructible.**

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God's creation, but a drop in the bucket, one tiny grain of sand upon the ocean beach. As the Psalmist said, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Ps. 19:1). The order and expanse of creation are beyond our power to fathom. Astronomers now report discoveries of huge galaxies of stars that are 10 billion (10,000,000,000) and more light years away. In view of man's utter inability to create even the simplest form of matter or the lowest form of life, how can anyone think even for a moment, "There is no God"? All creation testifies to the existence of a Creator.

Since the secret and source of life lies with the Giver of all life, any information as to our nature and our chances of survival must come from Him. This vital information is to be found in the Book which He caused to be written for our instruction, the Bible, which we confidently believe to be the inspired Word of God. Fulfilled prophecy proves its authenticity, while the utterly non-human nature of its teachings also convinces us that it is of divine origin. Human works bear the imprint of humanity and human thought; the Bible bears the stamp of God. When the Bible speaks upon a given subject, it speaks with authority and agrees with reason, logic and all true science (though it may not agree with our inherited or acquired wishes).

**TEST YOUR BELIEF BY THE  
BIBLE**

What is man's nature?

"Shall mortal man be more just

than God?" (Job 4:17). Man is mortal.

When death overtakes a man, how much does he know?

"The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing" (Eccl. 9:5).

So far, this agrees with our experience. Did anyone ever see a dead man who appeared to know anything?

Does thought survive the body?

"His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (Ps. 146:4).

The Bible answers are plain and straight, whether they appeal to us or not; and they do disagree with many ideas of song and hymnal and the time-honored idea of singing praises to God when "this poor lisping, stammering tongue lies silent in the grave."

"The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence" (Ps. 115:17).

But what about the soul? Surely it cannot die!

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20).

Just what is the "soul" as mentioned in the Scriptures? It is translated from the Hebrew word *nephesh*, and means "A living creature, an individual, a person, life, living, also applied to beasts." We do not have souls; we are souls.

What about "spirits"?

The word "spirit," taken from the Hebrew word *ruach* and the Greek *pneuma*, means the breath of life, which, is composed of oxygen, nitrogen, etc. and possesses neither personality nor intelligence. In all the 1686 times that the words "soul" and "spirit" are used in the

Bible, never once are they qualified as being immortal, deathless or never-dying!

In death, man is not superior to a beast.

"For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath [spirit]; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again" (Eccl. 3:19-20).

Deflating as this may be, it is in perfect accord with all physical phenomena and observations.

The New Testament also agrees.

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep" (I Thess. 4:13). Asleep, not alive and intelligent.

These are only a few of the hundreds of passages of Scripture, plain, unmistakable, requiring no interpretation or explanation. Will you believe them?

**OUR ONLY HOPE—  
THROUGH RESURRECTION**

All future life hinges on a physical resurrection from the sleep of death.

The Resurrection at the last day was the confident expectation of all of God's prophets of old. After stating that he would "wait" in the grave until his "change" should come, Job wrote: "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 14:14; 17:13; 19:25-26).

The Resurrection was the great event Isaiah looked forward to when

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**The secret and source of life lies  
with the Giver of all life. All future life  
depends on a physical resurrection from death.**

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he cried, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead" (Isa. 26:19).

The prophet Daniel foresaw the Resurrection as the time when "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (12:2).

The Resurrection is the glorious day Paul wrote of in his famous funeral sermon (I Thess. 4:13-18): "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven . . . and the dead in Christ shall rise . . . Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

The Resurrection was Paul's only hope, for he stated plainly, "If there be no resurrection of the dead . . . then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (I Cor. 15:13-18).

All hope of future life depends upon the Resurrection. And the God who created us is able to reform us into living bodies as capable of motion, thought and memory as we were at the first.

### **CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY**

Immortality is a reality, but it is a state reserved for those who meet

certain qualifications. It is to be sought for and attained by "patient continuance in well doing" (Rom. 2:7). Jesus promised it to His followers at the "resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:14). At the returning of Christ, the dead in Christ will be raised to life, judged and rewarded according to their life record (II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:12, 14). Those who are found to have attained the standard God requires will receive immortal life. And they shall become physical, eternally living beings, who will be able to enjoy life and learning and expansion through all eternity.

This is the Bible teaching of conditional immortality— eternal life shall be the gift to those who meet the qualifications; eternal death (unconsciousness, not torment) shall be the wages of sin.

Humanity is the vast reservoir from which God is selecting material for His Kingdom; this life is the time of probation, the proving-ground, the time given us to prove our interest in and our desire for the greater life He offers us. Is not this a just and righteous plan? Those who do not choose to seek a future life, who would rather get what they can from this life, are free

to choose just that.

But to those who would rise above the level of human thought, who live the life prescribed by God, who not only wish for but *work* for future life, the Creator and Giver of all life has promised a glorious, pain-free, eternal existence, continually to grow in knowledge and power. When Jesus promised, "they that attain that world . . . are made equal unto the angels, neither can they die any more," He meant that we can really become a part of the Power which makes and sustains the universe. We can have our minds expanded to comprehend the magnitude of His universe in which countless immortal beings inhabit countless glorified worlds, all glorifying their great Creator.

When that resurrection of the body has taken place, "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (I Cor. 15:54-55).

Do YOU believe in a future life?

WE most certainly do! MM

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## *Announcing Abib*

This year the members and friends of the Megiddo Church will welcome the beginning of another sacred new year on the evening of March 21, 1985, and extending through March 22, Bible time being measured from "evening to evening" (Lev. 23:32). The ancient Hebrew pattern, according to the law God gave to Moses, was to begin the New Year with the month "Abib," which is the month beginning with the first new moon following the spring equinox (March 20). The new moon occurs this year on March 21.

## **ORDER NOW!**

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## • Concerning Ephesians 4:8-10

***"Please explain Ephesians 4:8 'When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.'"***

We probably cannot be sure of the exact meaning of this passage, as it is not among the most straightforward in the Bible. But let us consider a few possibilities in the light of Scriptural teaching.

First let us look at it in the context of the chapter. In Ephesians 4, the great Apostle begins by exhorting his brethren from his own esteemed position in the plan of God. He writes, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called"—and then he proceeds to describe that calling both in terms of vocation and obligation.

Then Paul describes what is behind this calling, even the unity of the plan of God: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

He then describes his own relationship to that calling, and also that of his brethren. "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (v. 7). Or as phrased in the *New English Bible*, "But each of us has been given his gift, his due portion of Christ's bounty. Therefore Scripture says: 'He ascended into the heights with captives in his train; he gave gifts to men'" (v. 8). The *American Bible* says that "when he went up on high, he led a host of captives." Christ's chief mission being that of showing men the perfect Example and treading every step of the way to salvation, could it not be that the "captives" He led were those who wished to follow Him? Was not Christ showing the way to God and glory? And had not Christ's life, Christ's death, Christ's resurrection, and Christ's triumphant ascension been the most dramatic demonstrations of that way in the history of the earth?

This passage is quoted from the prophetic words of

David recorded in Psalm 68:18, where the Psalmist celebrates the triumph of God over the enemies of His people and talks about the dramatic appearance of God on Mt. Sinai. "O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel. . . . The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them" (Ps. 68:7-8, 17-18).

It is possible that the Psalmist in this passage was voicing an utterance which was at the same time historic and prophetic. Looking back to Sinai he saw God's dramatic presentation at Sinai, when Moses went up into the mountain to receive "gifts," i.e., laws and ordinances, for Israel. Looking ahead he foresaw by prophetic vision the time when Christ would ascend to heaven to receive "gifts" for His people—which may well have included any and all divine provisions for His people in all ages to come.

For some, those "gifts" would be the Holy Spirit power. For others, the "gifts" would be whatever they needed to attain salvation, including the written Word of God and any and all forms of divine guidance provided by God for His human family in every age. The apostle Paul, citing this passage, could see both applications: the comparison with Sinai, when Moses "ascended" into the mountain to receive the law; and by far the greater application at that time, Christ, who had ascended to heaven and received gifts from God and dispensed those gifts among men, thus fulfilling the promise He had made to His disciples (Acts 1:5, 8). It is a triumphant picture of a heavenly ascent.

Paul continues by describing a few details of the divine plan as it affected Christ and his brethren: "Now, the word 'ascended' implies that he also de-

scended to the lowest level, down to the very earth. He who descended is no other than he who ascended far above all heavens, so that he might fill the universe." There is no suggestion here of Christ being previously in heaven with His Father before being born of the virgin Mary.

The Apostle is recalling the wonderment of what they had seen and known in Christ and relating it to familiar Hebrew prophecy. The man so near to them, Christ, their perfect Example, who was now at the Father's right hand, had been made truly "of the earth"—He had been made in all points like them, had suffered, had died, had been resurrected. And now this same Christ had "ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." Every aspect of Christ's life had been prophesied and fulfilled just as foretold. It was all so wonderfully triumphant, entirely above and beyond the Jewish expectations which Paul was continually confounding.

"And these were his gifts"—we should note the wide variety of the "gifts," ranging all the way from "gifts" that included the power of the Holy Spirit to the "gifts" which we today have through the written Word of God. "And these were his gifts: some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip God's people for work in his service, to the building up of the body of Christ. So shall we all at last attain to the unity inherent in our faith and our knowledge of the Son of God—to mature manhood, measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ" (vs. 8-12).

When we realize how broad is the scope of God's plan in our behalf, to provide for the spiritual needs of His people in all ages, we will respond wholeheartedly to the Apostle's plea to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (vs. 1-2). And what a high calling it is!

MM

## With Mind on the Morning

I have been thinking so much of late of that far-off Morning, so far off to Abraham, to Moses, to Daniel, and Paul, and all those who "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off." So far to them, but to us so nigh, yes, even at the door.

Isaiah visioned the world cleared of strife and filled with peace. There was to come One who would be possessed of great insight and fairness, with the spirit of the Lord resting upon Him. Through Him would come a mighty change in the world. When he sums up that vision in a few words, he says, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

The Psalmist, looking forward to

that beautiful far-off Morning, uttered these sweet words: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven."

Jeremiah visioned that far-off Morning when the Lord's side would become the popular side. "O Lord, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit." What a day! What an hour!—and what a reversal!

Isaiah again picks up the glad tidings, saying, "The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bend-

ing unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet, they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel."

The Prophet Micah visioned that far-off Morning when nations shall lay down their arms, beat their swords into plowshares, their spears into pruninghooks and learn war no more; and they shall sit every man under his own vine and under his fig tree and none shall molest nor make them afraid. What assurance have we that such a Morning will dawn? Listen to the answer: "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

The apostle Peter visioned that far-off Morning when he wrote, "Ye do well that ye take heed . . . unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the daystar arise." Christ is that bright and morning Star; He is the Sun of righteousness.

The prophets lived for that Morning and prepared for it by transporting their minds from present perplexities to future glories.

*And so must we!*

## Striving

We must strive to build a character fit for the Kingdom of God, in order to be able to meet the Master when He comes.

I think so often of all those great ones that have gone on before us. They have made their calling and election sure; and it is ours to do the same.

We realize the world is in a bad condition, only Christ can set it in order.

Virginia

M. P.

## Something to Think About

We know God will have only the best for His rulers, those perfect in self-control.

It is something to think about. We must do the work that the Lord commands or we will be discarded. Another good example is: If we are working for some one, they expect us to do our best work and to be on time. If we don't show up for work, our employer will get some one else that will do the work. That's the way God is. We can't think "time enough yet" but must do the work right now.

With world conditions as they are, we know the Lord is coming soon.

Iowa

W. P.

## Looking Ahead

We have the blessed hope that if we are faithful, we will be born of the Spirit and really possess this wonderful power to fly like the wind and even be equal to the angels, with plenty of time to enjoy visits to other distant worlds, much bigger than this little planet. We will never walk alone either, for God has a family in heaven as well as a family on earth, all of whom it

will be our great pleasure and privilege to meet.

On a clear night, when we look at the beautiful stars in the sky, we realize that mortal man could never have enough time to discover or investigate every scientific fact, and even if it were possible, there would be the miserable thought that there would not be much time, if any, left for him to enjoy all his research; so we have every reason to live in the "perspective of eternity." What will it matter then, if our crosses now, were heavy or light?

South Wales

R. B.

## Tread Prayerfully

What a rare privilege is ours to have been called to make ourselves over into entirely new creatures by the power of the gospel working within us.

It is no small task to perfect an acceptable character. Our God is of too pure eyes to behold any degree of evil in His people. His law is inflexible and cannot be changed to suit our individual tastes. When God said to Abram, "Walk before me and be perfect," He meant it.

We have vowed all these things we will do and be obedient, therefore we must perform, for He has no pleasure in fools.

Every step of the narrow way into the Kingdom must be trod with much spiritual caution and prayerful self-denial. Why? The spirit of man is weak, and temptations are many and we in and of ourselves cannot direct our own steps. At every turn we must seek the wisdom of God, His counsel, His leadership.

New Jersey

L.M.K.

## Obituaries

### Maude E. Einam

We have received word of the death of Sister Einam of Warwick, Queensland, Australia, Sister Einam subscribed to the *Megiddo Message* and corresponded regularly with the Church for many years, until failing health forced her to curtail her activities. The following letter has just been received from the Biddle sisters, also of Warwick.

*Last Tuesday afternoon, November 6, Sister Einam passed away quietly. We went to see her as much as we could. We hope it comforted her to know we were there. She had all her faculties to the end. . . .*

*We don't know her resting place, as the family had a private funeral but she once said it wouldn't matter, that everything would be in God's hands.*

*How grand it will be in that coming New Age, when there will be peace on earth, and goodwill among men. We cannot imagine the glory of it all, can we? But we can set our hearts determinedly to work and pray to be worthy of a place in that glorious new order.*

*We had some very happy afternoons together with Sister Einam when she came and had a tape with us and then took a taxi back to her home.*

*May we ever press on fully believing the everlasting prize is just ahead. God has promised. It will surely come.*

Jean and Alice Biddle  
Queensland, Australia

### Carl Martin

We have also received word of the death of Carl Martin of Nunda, New York. Brother Martin had been a subscriber to the *Megiddo Message* since 1927.

### Frances Fern Byers

On November 19, 1984, funeral services were conducted for Mrs. Fern Byers of Rochester, New York. Mrs. Byers was the mother of two members of our Rochester Congregation, Shirley B. And Elva E. Byers.

## Keep Thyself Pure

**"KEEP** thyself pure." The great apostle Paul wrote these words to his son in the faith, Timothy. Why? Why Timothy? Did Timothy, brought up in the faith from his youth, have to be reminded to stay clear of the world? Timothy, who had known the Holy Scriptures since he could remember? Timothy, whose faith was grounded in a God-fearing mother and grandmother?

The answer is that purity of heart is Godlike, but it is not God-given. The first step toward purity of heart is to acquire a knowledge of the standard God requires, remembering that "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" come "through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Pet. 1:3). For Timothy and for us, the first step is to learn. Then we must ask God for forgiveness from our wrongs and for help in maintaining a pure heart. Reared in a godly home, Timothy was no doubt accustomed to prayer, but he did not grow up with a pure heart simply by being associated with his godly mother and grandmother. Nowhere do we read that anyone was born pure, or ever became pure by any miraculous or automatic means.

Moral purity is not an inborn characteristic; rather, purity is a growth. Nor do we find it portrayed as a permanent condition. It is something that must be "kept," lest it be lost.

No child ever learned to walk at the first attempt; neither was holiness ever achieved in one grand leap. There can be no better incentive to holiness, to purity of heart, than reading the Scriptures. Hence Paul's admonition to Timothy, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (I Tim. 4:13), is sound advice for maintaining a pure heart, and it is for us as much as for Timothy. Nothing will promote spiritual growth more than daily reading of the Scriptures.

Nor should we underestimate the power of influence. Even the pure heart is subject to outside pressure. Paul's words to Timothy presuppose that Timothy possessed a pure heart, nevertheless Paul thought it wise to warn him against bad company, saying "Neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure"

(I Tim. 5:22). What he had gained, he *could*—but he must not—carelessly cast away.

Even chance meetings with old acquaintances, planned or unplanned, can have unplanned consequences. Be not deceived: "Bad company is the ruin of good character" (I Cor. 15:33, Moffatt Bible), was Paul's admonition to the Corinthians. Well he knew that there was opportunity for bad associations in Corinth, where all kinds of evil flourished. Lystra, Timothy's hometown, may not have been much better, for Lystra was a stronghold of Gnosticism in that day. To keep one's self separated from all evil influences required constant diligence and concentrated effort.

Is it not so with us? Are we not constantly bombarded by the evils that fill the world around us, tempted by that which we see and hear? For us to maintain a pure heart requires as much diligence in our day—and perhaps more, for our world has become a veritable Sodom. To do what is right in one's own eyes is acceptable practice today in the area of morals. And in the area of religion, instead of Gnosticism we today are surrounded by a myriad of sects and a world that tolerates almost anything—even Satan worship.

The warning comes to us: "Keep thyself pure." Paul would not ask the impossible. Living in a world that is anything but pure, we also face the task of maintaining a pure heart, for the command still stands. Jesus' words bear the same message as the words of Paul, and to them is linked a promise without parallel: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." What supreme blessedness is reserved for the pure! The "pure in heart" shall actually "see God"!

The early Christian Church was electrified by the hope of Christ's return. That hope was real, vital, alive, a source of comfort and a spur to holy living. We today share this same hope, and what is its power in our lives? Do we look eagerly forward to being permitted one day to enter the Kingdom and to behold the King Himself? If we do, purity is inescapable, for "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (I John 3:3).

This is the word, this is the way. What more do we need?

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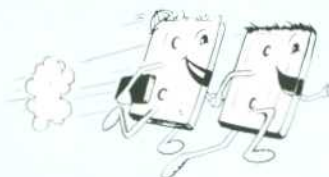
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