



Megiddo Message

*May what I say please You,
and what I think about
be what You like,
O Lord, my Rock and
my Redeemer.*

Psalm 19:14, Beck Trans.

Open Door Closed

*The road
marked TOMORROW
usually leads to the
town called NEVER.*

MORE than one tale has been told of “too little and too late.” Matthew 25 records the parable of 10 virgins awaiting the imminent return of the bridegroom. Five of them were wise and well prepared for his arrival, even if it should be unexpectedly delayed. And five were not so wise, and not so well prepared.

We all know the story, of the lamps that went out, and the second five who had to go out and seek oil for their lamps—and of their too late return. “And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut.”

The open door closed. Opportunity was suddenly gone, and gone forever.

The same calamity overtook the people of Noah’s time. After all those years of preaching and building, the day arrived when the ark was finished, and Noah and his family went in. And the Lord shut the door (Gen. 7:16).

The open door closed. Suddenly opportunity was gone, and gone forever. The door was shut, and no one else could get in.

Luke 19:20 tells of the man who carefully wrapped his talent in a napkin and put it in a safe place. This surely did not seem like any serious crime. The man was not openly defiant, or rebellious, or dishonest. And his sin was only this: that he did nothing with his opportunity. The door was open, and he did not enter.

But when the lord of that servant returned, what did he say when the servant proudly unwrapped the unused talent and handed it back to him? He learned suddenly that his door of opportunity was closed. Said his master, “Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds” (Luke 19:24).

The book of James tells the same truth in these stark words: “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

We quite naturally think that something we do wrong is more serious than something we simply do not do. But James tells us this is not true. He says that *not* to do what we know we should is equally as wrong as openly committed sin. In other words, sins of omission are just as culpable as sins of commission.

Neglect is serious. It is the warning of the book of Hebrews: “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation . . . ? (Heb. 2:3). Let us repeat, “How shall we escape, . . . if we neglect . . . ?”

In Jesus’ parable, the virtue of the “merchant man, seeking goodly pearls” was that “when he had found one pearl of great price, [he] went and sold all that he had, and bought it” (Matt. 13:45-46). He did not wait. There was no neglect, no delay. *When* he had found the pearl he was seeking, he immediately took action and “went and

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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 precepts and principles given us in the Word 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

Goodspeed—The New Testament translated by
Edgar J. Goodspeed

Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation

RV—Revised Version

About Our Cover

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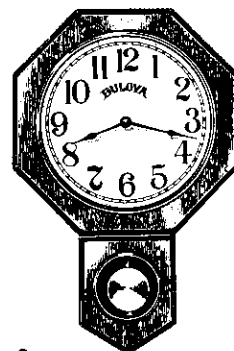
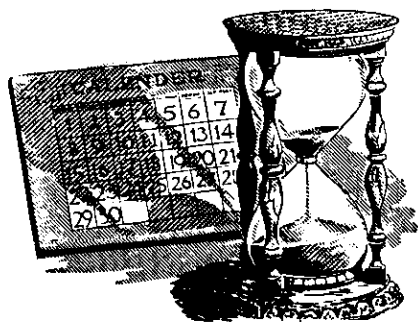
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The MEGIDDO MESSAGE is a religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ, and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Church. L. T. Nichols, Founder; Newton H. Payne, President and Editor; Ruth E. Sisson, Executive 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.



TIME

This Minute Will Never Come Again

The minute-by-minute dispensing of time teaches us several lessons.

TIME has the singular characteristic of being constantly on the move. It is here, and it is gone, never to return. This minute you are now living will never come again.

Each day the bank named "time" puts a fresh deposit in our account. Every morning we have 1,440 new minutes to spend or to invest, one at a time. No balances and no overdrafts are allowed. If we fail to use all of the day's deposits, we lose what is leftover.

Each fleeting minute brings with it its own minute-measure of pleasure or pain, of joy or grief, of satisfaction or frustration. It comes unbidden, and departs undismissed. All that remains is what has been set down either for or against us in the angel's book of remembrance. All that remains is what has been written, for this minute will never come again.

This minute concept of time is the loving provision of our merciful Father, for our good. It is evidence that He knows the measure of our strength, and what we are able to bear, and apportions life accordingly.

Lessons from Time

This minute-by-minute dispensing of time teaches us several lessons. First is the *brevity of time*.

Life, or time, is brief. Young people tend not to believe this. And you don't have to talk very long with older people to learn that they didn't *used to* believe it either. A simple query like "If you could live your life over again . . ." is likely to open a volume of wishes and longings and unfulfilled dreams of what they might have been, or done—if. But time went speeding by, and left their dreams behind.

Yes, life is brief. The Scriptures tell us this by many familiar comparisons:

"Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee" (Ps. 39:5). "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night" (Ps. 90:4). "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Pet.3:8). "Like the grass we spring up, and like the grass, we are mowed down" (Ps. 90:5-6). "What is your life? It is even a vapor, that

appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (Jas. 4:14). "My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass. But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations" (Ps. 102:11-12). A handbreadth, a vapor, a bit of grass, so quickly it is gone; and if we are not alert, we may miss it going by.

At the same time, God is "from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps. 90:2). He measures not time but eternities. This is more than our finite minds can comprehend, so attuned are we to the boundaries of time and space.

Each of us is given the same amount of time—1,440 minutes a day, 168 hours a week. When it is all added up, "the days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Ps. 90:10).

The second emphasis of the minute-concept of time is at the point of *urgency*. That is why the great Apostle tells us, "Redeem the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:16).

There is a tone of urgency in these words. You must make the very most of your time, he says, because the days are evil. What is the connection between the exceedingly evil days and making the most of them? Because this is a sign of the nearness of the end. Even people who are unaware of the plan of God see the present state of unrest and uncertainty and feel that the present world is collapsing upon them. Clouds of World War III hover on the horizon. If ever there was a time when men and women are trembling in perplexity with hearts failing them for fear, it is now.

Philosophers are writing stories and articles about this perplexity all the time. Multitudes are discon-

tented, unsettled, disillusioned, not finding fulfillment or happiness.

These visible signs of unrest are to us a fulfillment of prophecy, indicating that time is growing shorter and shorter; and when these things "begin to come to pass," said the Master, "then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."

What would I do if I knew that Christ was coming tomorrow? That is a good question, and one which

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if I knew that
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tomorrow?

we should ask ourselves often. Would I go on doing just as I am? Am I sure enough of my steps that I would want to continue them if I knew He was coming tomorrow?

What would you do? If you are faithfully doing what God has assigned you to do, you should go right on, right to the moment of His appearing.

A third lesson from the minute-by-minute concept of time is its *tyranny*. Time is the dominating factor of our lives. It controls us, and we become frustrated, running from one thing to another because we do not feel that we have enough time to get everything done. There is so little time, and so much to do!

The Primary Concern: Finishing

We are not amiss in feeling the pressure of time. It is good that we feel it, and feel it keenly. Even Jesus felt it. "I must work the works of him who sent me," He said, "while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work" (John 9:4).

Actually, Jesus' mortal life was very short—only 33 brief years. Yet how much He taught us in that time. He taught us that the quality of life is more important than the length of life. To the world, when He was put on the cross to die, He must have seemed the greatest among failures. Yet just before that He had said, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). The chapter completed, the book was closed. And God was not long in declaring His intent. Only hours later the next chapter of His life was opened, never to be closed again.

That is the important point: If you have placed your life in God's care, you don't need to be so much concerned about how long you live as about finishing the work God has given you to do. Yes, finish it, complete it, perfect it. Bring your life to the standard He has set. That is the important thing. When we are called to Judgment, God is not going to ask us how long we lived, but what did we accomplish—of the things that count for eternal worth, the things that reveal the inner quality of our lives. How well did we carry our cross in all the situations of each day?

For Jesus, finishing the work He had been given didn't mean enlightening all the people on the face of the earth. Nor did it mean healing all the sick, or feeding all the nation. Yet with what He had done He had finished the work God gave Him to do. This shows where His real work lay—in the pattern He set before men, in the perfecting of His own heart and character in the sight of His Father. Here was the work that He finished.

Life is precious, and we cannot afford to let it come and go in a random manner. Every day we should commit ourselves to fulfilling

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“Remember Lot’s Wife”

Scripture: Luke 17:22-33

The major portion of the following is edited from a discourse by J. C. Ryle. Mr. Ryle was Bishop of Liverpool, England, during the latter part of the nineteenth century. A fearless advocate of practical Christianity, he was strongly criticized for his vigorous and straightforward preaching—because he saw in the Bible a message that was written to be obeyed. Let us hear, and take it to heart.
—Editor.

THERE are few warnings in Scripture more solemn than that which is contained in these words of our Lord to us, “Remember Lot’s wife.”

Lot’s wife was a professor of religion: her husband was a “righteous man.” (II Pet. 2:8.) She left Sodom with him on the day when Sodom was destroyed; she looked back towards the city from behind her husband, against God’s express command; she was struck dead at once, and turned into a pillar of salt. And the Lord Jesus Christ holds her up as a beacon to His Church: He says, “Remember Lot’s wife.”

It is a solemn warning, when we think of the person Jesus names. He does not bid us remember Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, or Sarah, or Hannah, or Ruth. No: He singles out one who was lost for ever. He cries to us, “Remember Lot’s wife.”

It is a solemn warning, when we consider the subject Jesus is discoursing upon. He is speaking of His own second coming; and He is describing the awful state of unreadiness in which many will be found. The last days are on His mind when He says, “Remember Lot’s wife.”

It is a solemn warning, when we think of the person who gives it. He was one full of love, mercy, and compassion; He could weep over unbelieving Jerusalem, and pray for those who crucified Him; yet even He thinks it

good to remind us of those who were lost; even He says, “Remember Lot’s wife.”

It is a solemn warning, when we think of the persons to whom it was first given. The Lord Jesus was speaking to His disciples: He was not addressing the scribes and Pharisees, who hated Him, but Peter, James, and John, and many others who loved Him; yet even to them He thinks it good to address a caution. Even to them He says, “Remember Lot’s wife.”

It is a solemn warning, when we consider the manner in which it was given. He does not merely say, “Beware of following—take heed of imitating—do not be like Lot’s wife.” He uses a different word: He says, “Remember.” He speaks as if we were all in danger of forgetting the subject; He would stir up our lazy memories; He would have us keep the case before our minds. He cries, “Remember Lot’s wife.”

Lessons for Us

We want to examine the lessons which Lot’s wife is meant to teach us. Her history is full of useful instruction to the Church. The last days are upon us; the second coming of the Lord Jesus draws nigh; the danger of worldliness is ever increasing in the Church. Let us be provided with safeguards and antidotes against the disease that is around us; and, not least, let us become familiar with the story of Lot’s wife.

Note: *Remember Lot’s Wife* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

She left Sodom on the day the city was destroyed; she looked back towards the city, against God's express command; and she was struck dead. It is a solemn warning to us.

More than Privileges

Let us first think about the *religious privileges which Lot's wife enjoyed*.

In the days of Abraham and Lot, true saving religion was scarce upon earth: there were no Bibles and no churches. The knowledge of God was confined to a few favored families to whom it had been directly revealed; the greater part of the inhabitants of the world were living in darkness, ignorance, superstition, and sin. Not one in a thousand had such good example, such spiritual society, such clear knowledge, such plain warnings as Lot's wife. Compared with her fellow-creatures, Lot's wife was a favored woman.

She had a godly man for her husband: she had Abraham, the father of the faithful, for her uncle by marriage. The faith, the knowledge, and the prayers of these two righteous men could have been no secret to her. It is impossible that she could have dwelt in tents with them for any length of time, without knowing whose they were and whom they served. Religion with them was no mere formal business; it was the ruling principle of their lives and the mainspring of all their actions. All this Lot's wife must have seen and known. This was no small privilege.

When Abraham first received the promises, it is probable Lot's wife was there. When he built his altar by his tent between Hai and Bethel, it is probable she was there. When

her husband was taken captive by Chedorlaomer, and delivered by God's interference, she was there. When Melchizedek, king of Salem, came forth to meet Abraham with bread and wine, she was there. When the angels came to Sodom and warned her husband to flee, she saw them; when they took them by the hand and led them out of the city, she was one of those whose hand they took. Once more, I say, these were no small privileges.

Yet what good effect had all these privileges on the heart of Lot's wife? None at all. Notwithstanding all her opportunities—notwithstanding all her special warnings and messages from heaven, she lived and died graceless, impenitent, and unbelieving. Her conscience was never really aroused and quickened; her will was never really brought into obedience to God; her affections were never really set upon things above. The form of religion which she had was kept up for fashion's sake and not from feeling: it was a cloak worn for the sake of pleasing her company, but not from any sense of its value. She did as others did around her in Lot's house: she conformed to her husband's ways: she made no opposition to his religion: she allowed herself to be passively towed along; but all this time her heart was wrong in the sight of God. The world was in her heart, and her heart was in the world. In this state

she lived, and in this state she died.

In all this there is much to be learned: here is a lesson which is of the deepest importance in the present day. How many of us are to some extent like Lot's wife?

You live in times when there are many persons just like Lot's wife: come and hear the lesson which her case is meant to teach.

Let us listen and learn, then, that *the mere possession of religious privileges will save no one*. You may have spiritual advantages of every description; you may live in the full sunshine of the richest opportunities; you may enjoy the best of preaching and the choicest instruction; you may dwell in the midst of light, knowledge, holiness, and good company. All this may be, and yet you yourself may remain unconverted, and be lost for ever.

More than Favorable Circumstances . . .

Many will say that they realize they are not what they ought to be at present; but their position is so hard, they plead, and their difficulties are so many. Give them a godly husband, or a godly wife—give them godly companions, or a godly master—give them the preaching of the Gospel—give them privileges, and *then* they would walk with God.

But it is all a mistake, it is an entire delusion. It requires something more than privileges to save us. Joab was David's captain; Gehazi

was Elisha's servant; Demas was Paul's companion; Judas Iscariot was Christ's disciple; and Lot had a worldly, unbelieving wife. These all died in their sins. They went down to the pit in spite of knowledge, warnings, and opportunities; and they all teach us that it is not privileges alone that men need. They need faith and a sincere depth of conviction and loyalty to God.

Let us value religious privileges, but let us not rest entirely upon them. Let us desire to have the benefit of them in all our movements in life, but let us not put them in the place of Christ. Let us use them thankfully, if God grants them to us, but let us take care that they produce some fruit in our heart and life. If they do not do good, they often do positive harm: they sear the conscience, they increase responsibility, they aggravate condemnation. The same fire which melts the wax hardens the clay; the same sun which makes the living tree grow, dries up the dead tree, and prepares it for burning. Nothing so hardens the heart of man as a barren familiarity with sacred things. Once more, let us repeat: it is not privileges alone which make people Christians. It is faith and conviction.

It is a great privilege to live in a house where the fear of God reigns. It is a privilege to hear family prayers morning and evening, to hear the Word of God regularly expounded. These are the things that you ought to seek after when you try to get a situation; these are the things which make a really good place. But take heed that you do not rest content with these things: do not suppose because you have all these spiritual advantages, that you will as a matter of course be saved. You must have the fear of God in your own heart, as well as in your surroundings.

Make Faith Your Own

You must have repentance of your own, faith of your own, and sanctification of your own. If not, *you are no better than Lot's wife.*

I pray that each one of you may lay these things to heart. May you never forget that privileges alone cannot save us; light and knowledge, and faithful preaching and the company of holy people are all great blessings and great advantages.

Looking back might seem a small thing, but it revealed the true character of Lot's wife.

Happy are they that have them! But, after all, there is one thing without which privileges are useless: that one thing is obedience.

Looking Closer at the Sin . . .

Next let us think about *the sin which Lot's wife committed.*

The history of her sin is given in few and simple words—"She looked back, . . . and she became a pillar of salt." We are told no more than this. There is a naked solemnity about this bit of history. The sum and substance of her transgression lies in these three words, "She looked back."

Does that sin seem small to us? Does the fault of Lot's wife appear a trifling one to be visited with such a punishment? Do not forget that there was far more in that look than strikes you at first sight: it implied far more than it expressed. Listen, and you shall hear.

That look was a little thing, but *it*

revealed the true character of Lot's wife. Little things will often show the state of a man's mind even better than great ones, little symptoms are often the revealers of deadly diseases. A crack in an arch seems a little thing, but it proves that the foundation is giving way, and the whole fabric is unsafe. A little cough in a morning seems an unimportant ailment, but it may lead on to consumption and death. A straw may show which way the wind blows, and one look may show the rotten condition of one's heart.

—That look was a little thing, but *it told of disobedience* in Lot's wife. The command of the angel was strait and unmistakable: "Look not behind thee" (Gen. 19:17). This command Lot's wife refused to obey.

—That look was a little thing, but *it told of proud unbelief* in Lot's wife. She seemed to doubt whether God was really going to destroy Sodom: she appeared not to believe there was any danger, or any need for such hasty flight. But without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). The moment we begin to think we know better than God, and that God does not mean anything when He threatens, from that moment on we are in great danger. When we cannot see the reason for God's dealings, our duty is to hold our peace and believe.

—That look was a little thing, but *it told of secret love of the world* in Lot's wife. Her heart was in Sodom, though she herself was outside. She had left her affections behind when she fled from her home. Her eye turned to the place where her treasure was, as the compass-needle turns to the pole. And this was the crowning point of her sin. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God" (Jas. 4:4). "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15).

Worldliness at Heart

Let each of us give special attention to this. I believe it to be the part to which the Lord Jesus particularly intends to direct our minds. I believe He would have us observe that Lot's wife was lost by looking back to the world. Her profession was at one time fair, but she never really gave up the world. She seemed at one time on the road to safety, but even then the deepest thoughts of her heart were in line with the world. *The immense danger of worldliness* is the lesson which the Lord Jesus means us to learn. Oh, that we may all have an eye to see and a heart to understand!

I would fain raise a warning voice, and try to arouse the slumbering consciences of all who make a profession of religion. I would fain cry aloud, "Remember the sin of Lot's wife." She was no murderess, no adulteress, no thief—but she was a professor of religion, and she *looked back*.

It is sad to see how many a gallant ship launches forth on the voyage of life with every prospect of success and, springing this leak of worldliness, goes down with all her freight in full view of the harbor of safety. It is saddest of all to observe how many flatter themselves with the thought that it is all right with their souls—when it is all wrong, because of some secret love of the world within. Grey hairs are here and there upon them, and they know it not. They began with Jacob, and David, and Peter, and they are likely to end with Esau, and Saul, and Judas Iscariot. They began with Ruth, and Hannah, and Mary, and Persis, and they are likely to end with Lot's wife.

Beware of a half-hearted religion. Beware of following Christ from any secondary motive—to please relations and friends—to keep in with the custom of the place or fam-

Let Us Pray

FATHER in heaven, from whom all goodness flows, both of this world and of the world to come: we come to Thee with grateful hearts for all Thy mercies to us. We are Thy people, and the sheep of Thy pasture; through Thy munificence we live; in Thy promises we hope.

Lord, we pray Thee to speak to each of our hearts in the message this morning. Confront us anew with the seriousness of sin—*our* sin—as we stand before Thee, lest we let the days pass without making any real progress toward holiness.

Father, we realize that too often in the press of every day we have been unmindful of Thee. We have put second things first, and have treated lightly the great things of Thy law. We have allowed some petty desire, some unguarded word, some selfish motive, some lust of the flesh, to come between us and Thee. We pray that Thou in Thy mercy will grant us another chance to make good, to build high heaps where we have fallen and be determined never to fall there again.

May we never forget the admonition to remember Lot's wife, but let obedience to Thee be the ruling impulse of our lives, lest we fall where she fell, and share her fate.

Father, make us rigorous in the obedience we require of ourselves, realizing that the slightest sin—unrepented of—will stand between us and a place in Thy eternal Kingdom. We know that we cannot parley with sin, that Thou art true, and that if we are unfaithful to our sacred covenant Thou wilt deal with us just as with the unfaithful of other ages. Help us to be suspicious of ourselves, and never justify where Thou dost condemn.

Wilt Thou bless us in our service this morning. Bless all Thy people everywhere who are continuing earnestly in the fight against self and sin. And wilt Thou grant to each of us the honesty to search out and eradicate every trace of flesh that remains in our hearts, that we free our lives from every stain and at last stand before Thee with pure hearts and clean hands, and hear those sweetest of all words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

We pray Thy help in our sincere endeavor. Amen.

ily in which you reside—to appear respectable and have the reputation of being religious. Follow Christ for His own sake, if you follow Him at all. Be thorough, be real, be honest, be sound, be whole-hearted. If you have any religion at all, let your religion be real. See that you do not sin the *sin of Lot's wife*.

Beware of ever supposing that

you may go too far in religion, and of secretly trying to keep with the world. I want none to become a hermit, a monk, or a nun: I wish every one to do his real duty in that state of life to which he is called. But I do urge on every professing Christian who wishes to be happy, the immense importance of making no compromise between God and

the world. Do not try to drive a hard bargain, as if you wanted to give Christ as little of your heart as possible, and to keep as much as possible of the things of this life. Beware lest you overreach yourself, and end by losing all. Love Christ with all your heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. Seek first the kingdom of God, and believe that then all other things shall be added to you. Take heed that you do not prove a copy of Mr. Facing-both-ways. For your happiness' sake, for your usefulness' sake, for your safety's sake, for your soul's sake, beware of the sin of Lot's wife. Oh, it is a solemn saying of our Lord Jesus, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

God Will Punish

It is good for us to mark these things. It is good to be reminded that God will punish sharply those who sin wilfully, that great privileges bring great responsibility, and if spurned can bring down great wrath. Pharaoh saw all the miracles which Moses worked; Korah, Dathan, and Abiram had heard God speaking from Mount Sinai; Nadab and Abihu went up with Moses into the Mount, they were personally acquainted with the meekest man who ever lived; Hophni and Phinehas were sons of God's High Priest. Saul lived in the full light of Samuel's ministry; Ahab was often warned by Elijah the prophet; Absalom enjoyed the privilege of being one of David's children; Belshazzar had Daniel the prophet hard by his door; Ananias and Sapphira joined the Church in the days when the apostles were working miracles; Judas Iscariot was a chosen companion of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. But they all sinned with a high hand against

light and knowledge; and as they lived, so they died with the blackness of their sins upon them, unpardoned, unrenewed, and utterly unfit for the Kingdom. And being dead they yet speak. They tell us, like Lot's wife, that it is a perilous thing to sin against God, that God punishes sin.

If you desire to be a strong and healthy Christian, *consider often what your own end will be*. Will it be happiness, or will it be eternal

**Beware of a half-hearted religion.
Beware of following Christ from any secondary motive.**

oblivion? Will it be the glorious end of the righteous, or will it be like that of Lot's wife? Opportunity is not forever. There must be an end one day. The last sermon will one day be heard; the last prayer will one day be prayed; the last chapter in the Bible will one day be read—meaning, wishing, hoping, intending, resolving, doubting, hesitating. All will at length be over, and you will have to stand before a holy God. Oh, that you would be wise! Oh, that you would consider your latter end!

When We Would Look Back

Yes, the deadly sin of looking back—how many have done it. They start well. Up to a certain time of their life their conduct is all that could be desired. They keep up habits of private prayer; they read their Bibles diligently; they love to talk on religious subjects; they write letters full of reli-

gious expressions. But, alas, how often they prove unstable as water, and are ruined by the love of the world; little by little they fall away and lose their first love. Little by little the things that are seen push out the things that are not seen, and, like a plague of locusts, eat up every green thing in their souls. Step by step they go back from the sure position they once took. By and by they give their affections to the world. At last they end by giving up the last remnant of their own Christianity, and becoming thoroughly children of the world, they walk in the steps of Lot's wife. They look back.

Yes, how many were at one time zealous and earnest professors, and have now become formal and cold. Time was when none seemed so alive in religion as they: none so diligent in tending to matters of religious duties; none so anxious to promote the cause of the gospel, and so ready for every good work; none so thankful for spiritual instruction; none so apparently desirous to grow in grace. But now alas, everything seems changed! The "love of other things" has taken possession of their hearts, and choked out the good seed of the Kingdom. The gratifications of the present, the honors of the world, the lust of "other things" now hold the first place in their affections. Talk to them, and you will find no response to spiritual things. Mark their daily conduct, and you will see no zeal about the Kingdom of God. The fire of the spiritual is quenched and cold: earth has put out the flame which heaven had kindled and which once burned so brightly. They have walked in the steps of Lot's wife. They have looked back.

You cannot trifle forever: a time will come when you must be serious. You cannot put off your

soul's concerns forever: a day will come when you must have a reckoning with God. And what will your end be? Will it be a hopeless one, like that of Lot's wife, or will it be one that will give you everlasting pleasure and happiness?

Remember, Remember . . .

I beseech you, by the mercies of God, to look this question squarely in the face. Every sin you harbor is that much of the world in you. And I entreat you, break it off. Come out boldly from the world; cry mightily to God in prayer: give wholly and unreservedly to God for time and eternity; lay aside every weight. Cling to nothing, however dear, which interferes with your salvation; give up everything, however precious, which comes between you and God. This old shipwrecked world is fast sinking beneath your feet: the one thing needful is to have a place in the lifeboat and get safe to shore. Give it your diligence, and do it now.

Are you careless about the second Advent of Christ?

Are you lukewarm, and cold in your Christianity?

Are you halting between two opinions, sometimes for and sometimes against?

Are you secretly cherishing some sin known only to you—and God?

Are you trifling with little sins?

Are you resting on your religious privileges to save you?

Are you trusting to your religious knowledge, your associations, your pious habits?

Are you making some profession of religion, and yet clinging to the world in your heart—trusting that you will change your disposition some time in the future?

Oh, may these solemn words of our Lord be deeply graven on all our hearts! May they awaken us when we feel sleepy—revive us when we feel dead—sharpen us when we feel dull—warm us when we feel cold! May they prove a spur to quicken us when we are falling back, and a bridle to check us when we are turning aside! May they be a shield to defend us when a subtle temptation nudges at our heart; a warning that flashes before us those words of our Lord, "REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE!"

We may close our ears to the warning, but God will not change. When the time is right He will punish the disobedient, and there will be no mercy to the impenitent and indifferent. The drowning of the old world by the flood; the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah; the overthrow of Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea; the judgment upon Korah, Dathan and Abiram, the utter destruction of the Canaanites—all teach the same truth. All are written for us, as beacons, and signs, and warnings, that we may not follow in their steps and meet their fate. They are meant to lift up the corner of the curtain which hangs over things to come, and remind us that God means what He says.

And now, I entreat you, be honest about these things. Do not listen to them and think, "That fits Brother

So-and-So." But hear and apply it to yourselves; look at it honestly and fairly and see that God does indeed punish evil, that He is indeed no respecter of persons; that unless you and I actually repent and turn from our sins, we shall all likewise perish.

And just as surely as God punishes evil, so surely He rewards righteousness. Who can fully know the blessedness and joy that will be the portion of those who are humble and obedient, who have fixed their eye on Him and eradicated every evil from their hearts? He is a God of love and goodness, a goodness that leads to repentance (Rom. 3:5). He is a God of mercy, a mercy that hearkens and forgives those who forsake their sins. Only "let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7).

Why do we linger? What is holding us back? Why do we lack faith, with all the evidence God has provided us? And what can be too hard to bear, or what too dear to give up, in exchange for endless joy, endless happiness, and eternal delight, along with eternal membership in God's eternal family! How can we even think of looking back, with such magnificent rewards ahead of us?

Oh, let us remember this message of our Lord, and act upon it while the door of mercy is still open. Let

(Continued on page 23)

**Follow Christ for His own sake,
if you follow Him at all. Be thorough, be real,
be honest, be sound, be wholehearted.**

Time

(Continued from page 5)

certain definite priorities. Have you sat down and written out the priorities you want for your life? Each day deserves careful planning. Every day ask God for guidance. Meet Him each morning alone in prayer. He does not intend that you should try to face life alone.

"Redeem the time" (Eph. 5:16). It is a warning that time is urgent; don't waste it. This minute that you are now living will never be lived again. When it is done, its record will join the history books in heaven where are recorded all your thoughts, your words, your feelings, and every secret intent of your heart. The decisions you make this minute, this hour, will all be recorded.

The fact that time is fleeting calls us to do something about it. The Scripture says, "Now is the accepted time" (II Cor. 6:2). Things you ought to do, do now. If a friend needs your help, spend time with him now. That letter that you have been going to write, do it now. The mental and spiritual enrichment that you have postponed until a more convenient day, do it now. The kind words you thought to speak, the thanks you intended to deliver, the little extras you thought to give—sometime—do them now. Every time the clock ticks, it is saying, "Now, now, now!"

"To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Heb. 3:7-8). When? "To day." Yes, and beware. Ancient Israel had no monopoly on the heart-hardening process. It has been going on ever since. Even intense, dedicated believers may, if not careful, lose the keen edge of their sensitivity to things spiritual, if they do not keep constantly revitalizing their faith in God.

It is a warning for all of us. Time

is fast running out. While we hesitate, and vascillate, and postpone the work we know we must do, the serious task of crucifying some desire of the flesh, time is passing. And if Christ comes this year and finds us still at this point of hesitation, still vascillating, still postponing, what shall we say for ourselves?

How long can we halt between two opinions? "If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" (I Kings 18:21).

Act NOW

Yes, act now. Do not wait, for you will never live this minute again. It is a one-time opportunity. This thought should keep us constantly in judgment upon ourselves. All I have to deal with is the experience of this minute. All I have to answer is the question put to me this minute. All I have to endure is the pressure or pain of this minute. There will be time enough to worry about the next minute when it comes. Right now, performing the obligation of *this minute* is my whole job.

I must live this minute to its maximum. I must be the very best that I can be. It is a sacred task assigned me by the God of heaven. And I must do it now, this minute, for this minute will never, never come again.

This type of thinking underlines the urgent NOW that we find so often in Scripture. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Now, not next week or even tomorrow, but now.

Whatever it brings, I must live this minute to its maximum best. For this minute, I must hold my tongue, and not say something I will regret later—I will never have another opportunity just like this one.

This minute I must be self-controlled, and not allow my feelings to run away with my good sense. I must, for this minute will never come again.

This minute I must keep a tight rein on my thoughts, and not allow them to wander where they might. Yes, who can tell how many minutes I can redeem—simply by thinking right!

What if, at the close of this day, my thoughts should be projected on the wall for all to read—would I be proud to own them as my thoughts?

For this minute, however provoking the situation, I must be calm, unruffled, composed, and not allow the bitter, resentful impulse to master me. I must, for this minute will never come again.

For this minute, I must take a realistic view of myself and not think myself better than I am.

This minute I must be long-suffering and withhold the harsh, unkind judgment. Others have their problems, too, and I must extend the same privileges I expect.

For this minute, however pressing the issue, I must be patient—the brief delay will seem like nothing at all one year from now.

For this minute, I must set aside my own interests and do something for someone else. I know that it will return to me a thousandfold.

Whatever I must do, it is only for this minute, until the next arrives. And then for that minute. One at a time. Only one.

If I am going to put something special into my life, I must do it now, for this minute will never come again.

Tomorrow will be a glorious and marvelous time, beyond anything we can think or imagine, for those who have lived within the will of God. So do not wait. Use this minute, the very minute you are now living, for this minute will never come again. MM

Is your "good" good enough?



Good On-the-Whole

MR. Adams was the owner of a large dairy farm. It was, in fact, one of the best farms in that section of the country, and Mr. Adams was looked up to as knowing the very best and latest methods for producing the very best crops.

Apart from his farming operation, Mr. Adams prided himself in being a good Christian—good, as he put it, “on the whole.” He never did anything really bad, although he did not hesitate to acknowledge, at least to himself, that he was far from perfect. Yes, he *would* do something unethical, if there was a real reason for it. His language wasn’t always what it should be, and once in awhile he would lose his patience with the animals. But, he would say, “on the whole, I’m a pretty good Christian.”

The fences on Mr. Adams’ farm were getting old, and every now and then his cattle would get out and cause great inconvenience. So he decided to have a complete new fence built around his farm. To do

the job he hired a very good fence builder, one he knew he could depend on, to whom he gave these orders: “I need new fences on my farm, and I understand that you can make good, strong ones. That’s what I want.”

Because he trusted the man he had hired to do the job, he did very little inspecting of his work, except to see that it was progressing favorably from day to day. When the job was completed, the fence builder came to tell Mr. Adams. The farmer asked, “You’re *all* done—already?”, to which the fence builder replied, “Yes, sir.”

“Is it a good, *strong* fence?” The fence builder replied, “ON THE WHOLE, Sir, it’s very strong.”

The farmer became excited. “What do you mean, ‘On the whole’ it’s very strong!! Do you mean there are places where it’s *not* strong? Do you mean to say you left some *weak* places in my fence—so my cattle can get out and we have to go find them, and then they get out

again?” Mr. Adams’ eyes were flashing with anger.

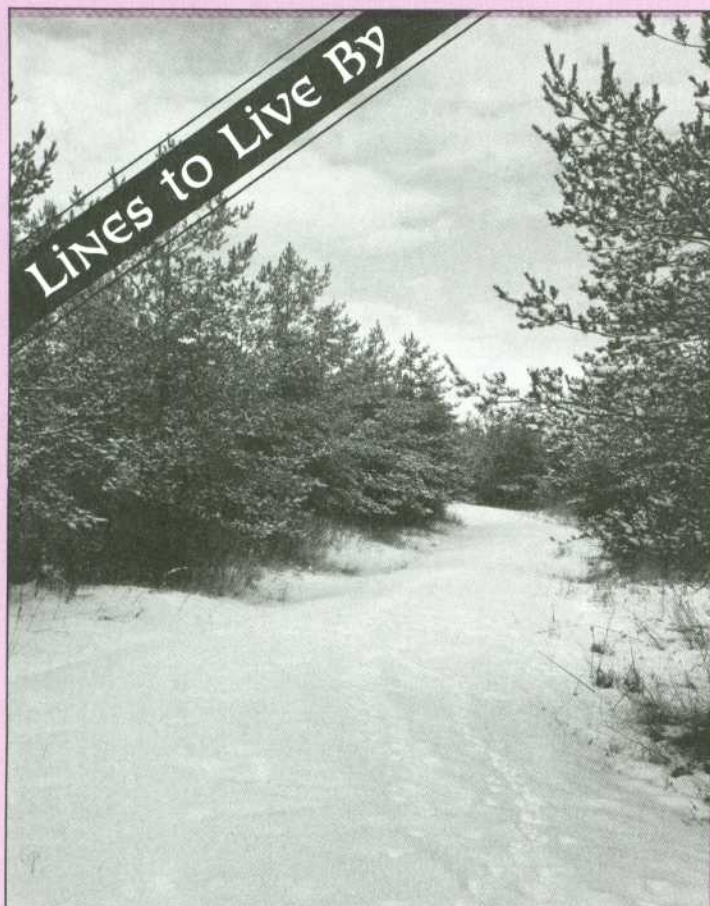
The fence builder remained calm. “Well, sir,” he replied, “you might interpret it that way, though on the whole it’s a very strong fence.”

Mr. Adams was indignant: “And here I hired you because I thought I could depend on you to build a really *good* fence. You might as well not have built the fence at all, if you’re leaving weak spots. You know how the cattle are—*just one weak spot*, and they’ll find it!”

The fence builder could resist no longer. “Well, sir, he replied “I’ve heard that being good ‘on the whole’ is quite all right when it comes to Christianity, and so I thought I would try it on your fence.”

Mr. Adams settled with the fence builder and said no more.

A Christian must be good through and through. No halfway work is enough. Being good “on the whole” is not enough. The command from the Lord is, “Walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Gen. 17:1). MM



Enter each day with God, and live always as under His eye. Be patient in little things; learn to bear the trials and annoyances of life quietly and calmly. then when unforeseen troubles or calamity comes, God will not forsake you.

Instead of trying always to *get* the best of a bargain, why not try *giving* the best of a bargain?

"It may be just a little thing The Lord asks you to do, But if you do it faithfully, He can depend on you."

A Swarm of Good "B'S"

B patient, **B** prayerful, **B** modest, **B** mild,
B wise as a Solomon, **B** meek as a child,
B studious, **B** thoughtful, **B** loving, **B** kind,
B sure you always keep others in mind.
B cautious, **B** thoughtful, **B** trustful, **B** true,
B courteous to all men, **B** friendly with few,
B temperate in argument, **B** hateful of crime,
B careful of conduct, of money, of time.
B cheerful, **B** grateful, **B** hopeful, **B** firm,
B peaceful, benevolent, willing to learn.
B courageous, **B** gentle, **B** liberal, **B** just,
B aspiring, **B** humble, because thou art dust.
B honest, **B** holy, transparent, and pure,
B dependent, **B** Christlike, and you'll be secure.
B penitent, circumspect, sound in the faith,
B active, devoted, **B** faithful to death.

O Lord God, our Governor, we beseech Thee that the turmoil of this world may be seen by us to be bring-ing forth the sweet peace of Eternity, and that in all the troubles and sorrows of our own hearts we may behold good; and so, with quiet mind and inward peace, care-less of outward storm, we may do the duty of life which brings to us a perfect heart, ever trusting in Thee. We pray for Thy guidance in all things, and Thy glory in the world to come. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

A Choice

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve."

To every man there openeth
A high way and a low,
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go.

I choose the high way. I choose the high way through the thoughts of my mind, through the attitudes of my heart, through the way in which I meet the affairs of everyday life.

It is one thing to choose the high way; it is another thing to follow it. But I know that through the help promised me by God I am capable of following the high way, the narrow way that leads to life.

I choose the high way, and I follow it step by step, day by day. I choose the high way of faith, of patience, of temperance, of godliness, of brotherly kindness. And in my choice of the high way, I know that if I keep my feet on the path of Truth I shall be blessed.

*Ye call me Master and obey me not,
Ye call me Light and see me not,
Ye call me Way and walk me not,
Ye call me Life and desire me not,
Ye call me Wise and follow me not,
Ye call me Fair and love me not,
Ye call me Rich and ask me not,
Ye call me Eternal and seek me not,
Ye call me Gracious and trust me not,
Ye call me Noble and serve me not,
Ye call me Mighty and honor me not,
Ye call me Just and fear me not;
If I condemn you, blame me not.*

POINTS FOR THE MONTH

- Week 1:** Character is not something you *develop* in a crisis; it is something you *exhibit* in a crisis.
Week 2: Deliberate with caution, then act with decision.
Week 3: Low grade effort brings no high grade success.
Week 4: Today is the best day of the year to serve God.

The End of the Age

From the Days of Noah

Characters:

Jubal husband
 Derka Jubal's wife
 Eber Jubal's son
 Dinah Jubal's sister

Narrator:

"Time that takes a survey of the world must have a stop." So wrote a playwright of yesteryear, an age-old truth which we need to remember: Time as we know it will have an end. Indeed, the end of an age is even now upon us. God has spoken, and what He has foretold will most certainly come to pass. Prophets of automatic progress proclaim loudly that all things continue as they were from the beginning, but the Word of the Lord shouts louder: All things do NOT continue as they were. We are approaching an end, the end of this age.

This is not the first such end in history. There have been others, lesser in significance perhaps, but no less final to the people living at the time.

Many an age has ended, but not without warning. God never sends a great destruction without first sending a warning. And when God warns, He means for us to listen. If we do not, if we disregard His warning, we do so at our own peril.

Let's go back to the time of Noah, the end of an early age, and see what happened, for there is a lesson there for us: "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man."

First, we hear the warning, as God spoke to Noah: (sound of thunder, visible lightning, followed by loud, booming voice)

Voice:

"My spirit shall not always strive with man. . . . The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them. And behold, I will destroy them.

"Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And behold, I even I do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark."

Narrator:

Days came, and days passed. Decades came, and decades passed. Suns rose, and suns set, just as they always had. Meanwhile, Noah was building, building, day after day, day after day (sound effects of hammers on wood in distance), for we read that Noah "did according to all that the Lord commanded him." One hundred twenty long years he labored, delivering God's message of warning to all who would listen. But as we might expect, he had little success.

Let's go now to the Land of the Two Rivers and visit a family who had heard Noah preaching years earlier. In this family is Jubal, his wife Derka, and a young son Eber. When Jubal heard Noah preaching years earlier, he had dismissed it casually. Now it is raining—and raining—and raining, and Jubal is having second thoughts. Could Noah possibly have been right?

This is no ordinary downpour. For seven days and seven nights now torrents of water have cascaded from the blackened skies, and there is no sign of abatement.

Jubal and his family lived near a small tributary of the great Euphrates which is usually nothing to fear, being a dry bed of sand and stones the greater part of the year. But now it is a raging, frothing, turbulent, yellow monster spreading wider and wider over the fertile valley and already lapping hungrily at the low mound on which Jubal's house is built. Another cubit upward, and the floor will be awash. Indeed, it is time for Jubal to have second thoughts about Noah and his message.

On the fourth day of the rain, Jubal had rounded up all his cattle, sheep and goats and crowded them into

the rear of his none-too-large dwelling. Now the thick walls of sun-dried brick are steadily growing thinner. And to make matters worse, the roof is leaking. The outlook is growing steadily worse. Overnight the rising waters have reached the plain behind their ridge and as far as the eye can see stretches a vast shallow lake. Yesterday, Jubal's sister arrived, cold and drenched, flooded out of her lowland home. Wet, miserable, and more than half frightened they are, no mistake. But there is nothing to do but wait. And worry. And wish for what they might have done weeks and months and years ago.

(Curtain opens, Jubal and Derka, and son Eber, and Jubal's sister Dinah. Setting: Living quarters of Jubal's home, crowded, damp. Floor and furniture are wet, water everywhere.)

Eber: O god of the rivers, have mercy. Have mercy on us! (kneels in prayer and lifts hands) O ever-shining sun-god, shine! Shine on us. We have had enough rain. Shine, O sun god. Shine—

Jubal: Be quiet, Eber! (sharply) Do you want to bring us more bad luck? The more you pray, the harder it rains.

Dinah: And the higher the river gets.

Derka: And the more the roof leaks.

Jubal: Well,—

Derka: Well, what are you going to do about it? That's what I'd like to know.

Jubal: Me? What can I do? I didn't start this rain.

Derka: No, but you built the roof.

Jubal: You know well enough what I wanted to do a long time ago. If we'd done as I said, we'd be dry and safe now. So there!

Derka: Yes, I know, and it *was* a long time ago. You know why I wouldn't do it. Do you think I wanted to be a laughingstock in the neighborhood?

Jubal: All right, all right, but we'd better be careful.

Eber: Old Noah will be laughing at us if this keeps up. (Eber goes over and looks out window, picks up an old coat, holds it up and watches the water drip from it.)

Dinah: No sense quarreling now. It won't do any good anyway. Take a look at the river now, Jubal.

(Jubal slips and slides across the muddy, cluttered floor toward a single window and peers out.)

Dinah: Maybe we're right, and maybe not. If anybody

is right, I'd guess it's the man in that ark up there (jerks a thumb toward the higher ground to the north).

Jubal: That's what I say. You know, at one time, I believed in his God—more or less.

Derka: Yes, I know you did. You were all for joining his band of fanatics and turning your back on the rest of the world. As though he had a monopoly on God. Lucky you didn't stick to it and disgrace the family.

Jubal: Well, I couldn't just see everything his way, but now I admit he had good judgment, to say the least. It's a good ark—

Derka: With a good roof.

Jubal: When I first heard old Noah preach, it made quite an impression on me, I even got rid of some of my household images. I well remember the first time it clouded up for a rain after that. I threw the rest of my gods into the fire and started for the ark. But on the way it cleared up, and I turned around and went home.

Eber: And made you a new set of gods!

Jubal: Yes, but I didn't have much faith in them. Noah did that much for me anyway.

Derka: The results of his work show he's using the wrong method. Here he's preached over a hundred years, and not one of the people of this whole valley could he get to stand by him very long. Only his wife and his sons and their wives! A miserably small showing, after all these years of preaching. Now if I were doing it—

Jubal: (dryly) Yes, yes, but don't forget this; right or wrong, he's *in* and we're *out*. And —

Eber: And the river is still rising. So—
(long silence)

Dinah: Trouble with this ark business has been the false alarms. People used to get a little excited when it started to flood, but the lowlands have been flooded probably forty times since he's been preaching. How can he expect anyone to take him seriously after all these years? The river has always gone down—

Derka: And it will go down again.

Jubal: Did Noah ever say any of these floods was the big one he was preparing for?

Derka: Well, no-o-o—

Dinah: He would have been in bad trouble if they *had* been, because it's just in the last month or so that he's gotten the ark finished.

Jubal: That's what worries me. This is the first time that Noah has gone into the ark and shut the door. It looks like he really believes something is coming. Maybe he really *has* some message from God now.

Derka: Nonsense! Who is *he* that God should favor *him* with a warning? There are smarter men than old Noah in this valley—and good people with-out number. Why should *he* be saved and *they* lost?

Jubal: Never mind *why*; they are probably drowning now, while he is safe for some time to come.

Dinah: As for his believing something is coming, no doubt he does.

Derka: He has preached it for so long he surely must believe it by now—it has gone to his head. He's just a simple-minded old fanatic—with some practical ideas, I admit, but away behind the times. Our race has *always* lived in this valley.

Dinah: And it always will. (silence again, while Jubal goes to window and peers through the driving rain to watch Noah's strange craft. Watches as flood swirls perilously near his walls. Eber comes over to his side, watches also.)

Eber: Oh! this water—what if our house slides into the current!

Jubal: (springing suddenly) Come on, folks. Let's get over to the ark while there is still time. Why should we stay here and drown!

Eber: Yes! Let's go! I don't want to die yet.

Jubal: Noah will let us in, I'm sure.

Dinah: (dubious) You think so? You know, last month he warned you of this, and you laughed at him.

Jubal: I know, but he won't turn a good neighbor down. I'm going. Nothing to lose! (starts for the door)

Derka: (grabs Jubal by the arm) Don't be a fool, Jubal! You know what it means to go into that ark. It is to admit that *he is right* and *all the rest of us are wrong*! It's out of the question.

Jubal: But what good is it to argue about right and wrong while we drown?

Derka: We're not going to drown. This is just an unusually wet spell of weather. It has rained before, the river has risen before. We'll be all right. (long silence) If we leave here, don't go in with Noah. They think they're so much better than the rest of us. Why can't we wade across the plain to the next ridge?

Jubal: Not a chance in the world. We'd be washed away in less than a furlong. You should have thought of that *yesterday*.

Derka: Well, I didn't see any of the neighbors going, so I wasn't going to be the first to run.

Jubal: And where are your neighbors now?

Derka: You didn't see any trying to get into the ark, did you?

Jubal: They may be *glad* to get in before this is over (Jubal edges toward door).

Derka: Jubal, sit down! You're not going out of this house. If the river comes up to the door we can take to the housetop. If we ever went into that ark, and the rain stopped, how would we ever face the neighbors? I tell you, I'm not going to make a fool of myself.

Dinah: Let's leave it like this: We are reasonably safe here until night, and if the river is up to the door by that time, we will go over to the ark and ask to be taken in. No use doing anything rashly.

(Jubal sits down resignedly)

Jubal: I guess that's the best plan. (strains eyes again to see the ark) It does (very slowly) seem to be getting a little bit lighter, perhaps. Maybe—maybe it is only a hard rain after all. And if worst comes to worst, Noah will let us in.

Dinah: Yes, Noah will let us in.

Eber: I sure hope so!

MM

(To Be Continued Next Issue)

When God looks at us, He sees not what we are, but what we can become in His plan. Without this Divine insight, there would be no plan and no future; for as we are in our natural, unregenerate state, we are of no use to God and could never be part of His perfect creation.

What about the “Dry Season”?

We have been asked by one of our subscribers:

“You say in your literature (I refer to the Holy Spirit booklet) that between the early rain and the latter rain there is a long dry spell when no rain falls.

“Now in Palestine, between the early rain (in the fall) and the latter rain (in the spring) there is actually a cool wet winter season. The dry season follows after the latter or spring rain, before the harvest, as I understand it, which comes in late summer.

“How do you harmonize these actual weather conditions in Palestine with what you say about the dry spell between the two rains?”

In Joel 2:23-32, the Prophet with vivid description pictures a refreshing time that is coming. It would seem that the weight of Joel's prophecy is the assurance that this wonderful refreshing time *is coming*, not the parallel with actual weather conditions. The reality of the prophecy and its fulfillment was not dependent on conditions in Palestine, though this is the source of the simile. The real point of Joel's prophecy is that there are to be two *separate* rains—two rains separated by a period of *no rain*. He spoke of the “former rain” which falls, we are told, from mid-October to mid-December, and the “latter

rain” which comes in March or April. The time between is called “dry” because the “former rain” ceased and the “latter rain” had not yet arrived (explanation from Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon). The use of the term “dry” is not intended to describe a weather condition but only to note a period of contrasting condition during a distinct interval of time. Joel spoke of one “early” or “former” rain, and one “latter” rain; and that abundant latter rain, once it starts, will continue and increase through all the years that follow.

You mention the fact that in Palestine after the former rain in the autumn comes the cool and wet winter season, and that this does not harmonize with the withdrawing of the Holy Spirit and the “dry” season. However, it is often true in Scripture that a parable or prophecy or allegory need not parallel the literal pattern in every particular. A parable is spoken to teach one important lesson; some of the details, insofar as we are able to understand, serve only to complete the “story” or “picture.”

The same may be true of a prophecy. The important point of Joel's prophecy was that the refreshing latter rain *would come*. Prophecies often do not include all aspects of a situation or event.

The people of Joel's time—and ours also—understood how the pro-

duction of the land depended upon the regular and abundant rains. Two rains were needed, both early and latter. And so Joel says, “Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things” (v. 21). He was assuring them that just as in the natural, God would supply; He would send the spiritual rains needed; no one should fear.

The spiritual application of this prophecy is certified by the testimony of the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit actually came upon them: “This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel.” The outpouring that day was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.

But Joel had said more. His language is beautifully descriptive. It reads, as paraphrased in the Living Bible, “After I have poured out my rains again, I will pour out my Spirit upon all of you! Your sons and daughters will prophesy; your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions” (Joel 2:23-24, 28, TLB).

Peter quoted Joel's prophecy on the day of Pentecost and noted its partial fulfillment. Then he said, as rendered in our Common Version, “And it shall come to pass in the last days”—he was referring to a still future outpouring beyond what they were experiencing—“I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17). “All flesh” did not

benefit from the first outpouring. But in "the last days" there should be a great rain that would produce a great harvest. At that time all the people of God would be blest and never again be put to shame (Joel 2:26-27).

Peter's words, as recorded in Acts 2, indicate that the first part of Joel's prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when Christ sent the power of the Holy Spirit upon His disciples. And the remainder of the prophecy awaits fulfillment at the time of Christ's second advent, when God will "pour out his spirit upon all flesh." All who live will experience this power. No one can possibly think this has already occurred. The Holy Spirit given at Pentecost was a sample, a foretaste, a "sprinkling rain," to show the power of God and confirm the surety of His promises.

In the imagery of the prophecy, after the sprinkling rain at Pentecost, there has to be a "dry" time or period of no power. The reality of this fact is clearly declared by the apostle Paul: that "whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge [by supernatural power], it shall vanish away" (I Cor. 13:8). This was all to happen at a predetermined time: "when that which is perfect is come" (v. 10).

There is other evidence in the Bible of this "dry" period, this time when God is not working openly and visibly on earth. Jesus foretold that Elijah the prophet would come to "restore" all things (Matt. 17:11), and something could hardly be "restored" which was existing at the time. Though we are not specifically told what he will restore, it would seem that among the "all things" will be the power of the Holy Spirit.

The word "dry" aptly describes the condition we see today, where despite claims to the contrary, no one is able to perform miracles as did Jesus and His apostles.

We are told in Psalm 50 that our "God shall come, and shall not keep silence" (Ps. 50:3), indicating that there is a time when He *does keep silent*. After that time, He will again manifest Himself through great wonders and miracles, when "the Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem" (Joel 3:16). When this happens, God will not be silent, and the earth will not be "dry." All who live shall know that He is the living, working God. He is not doing this now; we must walk by faith; but we look forward to the time when faith shall be turned to sight and the abundant latter rain will fall. The Bible promise is clear that such a time is coming.

In our literature we do use Joel's prophecy to point up the dry season, as it would be impossible to have two rains without a period of time between them (or it would be all *one* rain). We do this because it is a fact in harmony with other Bible texts on the subject. We would not be justified in making such a point if it contradicted other plain statements. This was the practice of our founder: first to determine the overall teaching of the Bible, by studying texts which were plain and more obvious; then to seek to harmonize the more difficult passages with the overall truth. In the case of Joel's prophecy, the order of former rain, latter rain, dry season, does harmonize. The whole application of the prophecy being spiritual, however, we see no serious need for it exactly to parallel conditions in Palestine.

There are other examples in Scripture where the spiritual application of a metaphor does not correspond in every detail to reality. For example, Joel's prophecy in chapter 1. Joel represents Israel's enemies from the North as a "swarm of locusts." It is said that these devastating locusts always came from the south. But the "evil from the north" had become a fixed term, a symbol of the agency of divine judgment, without any reference to geography. Joel used these locusts to represent Israel's enemy from the north. The detail of the direction "north" was apparently unimportant.

We are looking forward to the wonderful refreshing time to come, when the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon all people. This corrupt world will have a change. And the great rain before the harvest will be needed to begin the change, to resurrect the dead in Christ and rid the earth of wickedness before the new order can be set up. MM

**Someday all who live shall know the one
eternal, living, working, saving God.
"They shall all know Me, from the least
of them unto the greatest." —Jer. 31:34**

Every Day, Every Day

A Gentle Person Is Tenderhearted

"Be ye kind (gentle) one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

The planting of divine grace within gives us a tender heart that manifests itself in gentleness.

Even the physical heart is deeply involved in everything we do. All of our emotions, reactions, and feelings affect the heart. When we are frightened, the heart beats faster; when we are excited with happiness the heartbeat accelerates. When we are disappointed the heart drags slower and slower.

When we are tenderhearted, we put so much of our heart into life that personalities are classified accordingly. The person who is generous is referred to as bighearted; he who is stingy is smallhearted. The person who is courageous is stouthearted; he who is afraid of everything is fainthearted. The person

who is happy is lighthearted; the one who is discouraged is downhearted.

The heart will be full of something. It will be full of joy or sadness, peace or restlessness, love or hate, good or evil, purity or impurity, righteousness or unrighteousness, affection or resentment, satisfaction or boredom, serenity or restlessness, hope or despair, grace or guilt.

God wants us to repair or replace every evil element in our hearts. He Himself, as the Great Physician, is the world's best heart transplant specialist. Secondary complications never develop, and He has never lost a case that follows His instructions. He can show us how to have hearts that are tender and overflowing with gentleness.

Give us a tender heart like Thine, filled with all goodness.

"Everyday with Paul," by Mendell Taylor. Copyright 1978 by Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City; used by permission.

Be Silent Before the Lord

"Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation" (Zechariah 2:13).

THESE words form a summing up, a finale to the statements just preceding them. Taken by itself the meaning of this verse would not be clear, as it seems to picture unfulfilled events as being already consummated. Obviously the words were spoken prophetically, foreshowing that the Lord will ultimately rise out of His holy habitation.

The narrative begins with verse 10, "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord." Future tense, "lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee." It is an event yet unrealized. In this way the Prophet advances the eschatological viewpoint. Things are not always to continue as they are, man is nearing the end of his time. There is to be an end of the present regime. The present social and political order is to be replaced by the Kingdom of God, which, as the "stone" of Nebuchadnezzar's vision (Dan. 2:34), is to grow and expand until it fills the whole earth. These are good tidings for the "daughter of Zion," the individuals who are longing and preparing for that better day, living such lives as will make them fit associates for the great King.

Zechariah 2:11 reveals another fact of that better age: "Many nations

shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people." God's great plan is destined to succeed. Contrary to the trend of the ages, right shall then prevail and evil be forced to retreat. And whereas up to the present time only a small minority, variously defined as the "handful of corn in the top of the mountain," "a very small remnant," "the fewest of all people," have come over on the Lord's side, when that day arrives, "many nations shall be joined to the Lord." A great reversal of the trend!

Jesus also foretold this change in authority in His post-ascension message, the book of Revelation, "And there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever" (11:15).

"Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day." And in this forecast Jesus' area of authority is revealed to be the earth: "And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again." This also agrees with Jesus' First Sermon, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. . . . Swear not . . . by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King" (Matt. 5:5, 34-35).

It is assuring to know that God will not always be silent, that evi-

dences of His existence and authority will not always be limited to the words of the Bible and our observations of nature and the visible universe. At last the Lord shall rise up out of His holy habitation. Immortal men from other portions of the habitable heavens will be seen on earth. Christ is coming with an "innumerable company of angels." God's power shall be known firsthand, His authority felt in a manner that the most skeptical person cannot fail to understand. It will be a cause that demands submission—or else. The day of human drifting will be past. All who survive then must render outward obedience, no open manifestation of evil will be tolerated.

However, this plan, then universal, will not be entirely new. God-fearing souls, living at different periods during 6,000 years of human history, have voluntarily developed such characters that they were completely silent in the presence of Divine Authority. True Christians of today are in this category. If reckoned among these we shall have surrendered our right to act, speak, or think as our natural inclinations dictate. Isaiah 58:13 pictures this extraordinary accomplishment: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a

delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words. . . ." The holy day or sabbath here indicated is our day of life, our day of probation, a day which must be spent wholly to God's glory.

Ecclesiastes 5:2 describes the same silence that is advised in our text, and a golden silence it is. The text reads: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few." Jesus also emphasized the importance of controlled speech when He said: "But I say unto you, That every idle [injurious] word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:36-37).

To be silent before God is not to be mute or voiceless; it is rather to restrict our speaking to the framework of divine law. This thought is contained in Matt. 12:35, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things." God's law does not condemn that kind of talking. Again the apostle Peter reveals this type of speaking which is acceptable with God: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (I Pet. 4:11). And both the Psalmist and the author of the book of James speak of keeping our tongue with a bridle, so our speech will at all times be under rein.

The ruling group in God's future arrangement of things upon earth when Christ has become King, must all be individuals of merit. Three millenniums ago King David defined God's standard of excellence for all His administrators of law: "The God of Israel said, . . . He that ruleth

over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." No man or woman will be given authority over others in that new Government of the righteous, by the righteous, for the righteous, but those who have learned to rule themselves, those who during their lifetime became silent in the presence of Divine law.

When God rises up out of His holy habitation and sends His Son

to earth to take the next step in the process for which the great Plan was designed, there shall stand with Christ on Mount Zion one hundred forty and four thousand associate rulers (Rev. 14:1) who have become silent to the extent that they never speak a word of their own. Of them it is said in v. 5, "And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." MM

Open Door Closed

(Continued from page 2)

sold all that he had, and bought it."

There was no delay.

The same was true of the man finding the treasure hid in the field. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field" (Matt. 13:44). His action was immediate, *when* he had found it.

Scripture calls us again and again to decide, and to act immediately upon our decision. God promises no sure tomorrow, only a sure NOW. "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2). God calls us to act with decision. It is now or never.

The road marked TOMORROW usually leads to the town called NEVER.

The only sure moment is *now*, now while the door is still open. Says Jesus, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). He will not stand there knocking forever.

Unused opportunities, like unused muscles, atrophy. The unwound clock stops. Open doors, unentered, close.

Simple neglect can destroy us.

MM

"Remember Lot's Wife"

(Continued from page 11)

us fix our eyes on the goal ahead with a firmness that will tolerate no back-looking. Let us say with the prophet Isaiah, "I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." With this rock-like determination in our hearts, and the shining vision of future glory before our eyes, and Jesus' warning echoing in our ears, let us reach out and grasp the hand of the angel and run!—run for our life—flee to the mountains and safety. Our reward is prepared, the table is spread; the banquet is ready, and Christ and the angels are waiting with the warmest of welcomes for every faithful one: "for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." MM

"The Kingdom of God Cometh"—How?

• The Kingdom cometh "not with observation"

"Luke 17, verse 20 says to me that Jesus will be invisible when He returns. 'The kingdom of God cometh imperceptibly.'"

We are not sure which translation you are citing, however the King James Version is not too different. It reads: "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation."

A literal translation of the words translated "with observation" could be, according to the Greek-English Lexicon, "without inspection," without "ocular evidence," not able to be observed. However if we take Jesus' words in this passage as a statement that His coming Kingdom will not be visible, what are we to do with the passage three verses later in the same context which compares the visibility of His coming to that of "lightning"? Verse 24 reads: "For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day."

It seems certain that Jesus was not commenting on the physical visibility of His coming in verse 20. We might note first of all that He was answering a question of the Pharisees as to "when the kingdom of God should come." The question

concerned the *time*, not the visibility—or invisibility—of His coming. We might note also that the very phrasing of their question suggests that they were assuming it would be visible. They inquired as to when the Kingdom should "come." The original word translated "come" means, literally, "to appear, bring, come, enter" and is used of that which is visible.

In answering the Pharisees' question as to "when the kingdom of God should come," it seems much more likely that Jesus was speaking against a belief popular at the time, i.e., the popular teaching of the Jewish rabbis that the coming of the Messiah would be preceded by great natural disasters and a break up of the cosmic order; storms, strifes, and any wild and lurid events that their minds could conjure up. They thought of the coming of the Messiah as a deliverance from the worst catastrophies that their imaginations could portray; hence Jesus' comment that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation"; or, in other words, not with the type of signs they were looking for. Its appearance would not be accompanied with the types of signs they had been talking about.

This is the thought in the next verse, as Jesus continues: "Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (v. 21). When He spoke of the "kingdom of God" in this passage, He was referring not to

the physical kingdom but to the presence of Himself as the King of that kingdom. The Greek word used is *basileia*, a term which may refer either to the "king," "royalty," or His kingdom. The word "within" comes from a common Greek word *entos*, which may be translated by any number of prepositions, including "among." It seems possible that Jesus was alluding to His own visible presence among them right at the time. They should not be deceived by anyone who should say "Lo here! or, lo there!" He Himself was the Messiah and the coming King, though they failed to acknowledge this fact.

And someday, in the near future, He says, you will more than acknowledge Me—you will *long* to see Me. It is a thoughtful statement, perhaps foreseeing some intense persecution they would experience, and from which they would long to escape. "And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them (vs. 22-23)."

Then comes the climax of the whole, a statement of the blinding visibility of His appearing: "For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day (v. 24)."

Far from His coming "impercep-

tibly," His coming will be as visible as lightning that shines from one part of heaven to the other. In the words of the ancient prophet Isaiah, "All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isa. 52:10). In the words of the prophet Joel, "The Lord also shall roar out of Zion"—hardly an "imperceptible" arrival (Joel 3:16). In the words of the Revelator, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him" (Rev. 1:7).

The disciples were to pay no attention to any rumors about any local advent of the Son of man. His coming would be as universal and unmistakable as lightning.

• Concerning Melchisedec

"I have been having discussions with my daughter and son-in-law, and they think that Melchisedec was the pre-existent Christ. What do you believe about this?"

Philo, a Jewish religious philosopher of the first century identified Melchisedec as "a manifestation of the Logos," and he pictured the Logos as a real being, Christ Himself, whom he believed pre-existed. Philo's explanation has been widely

accepted by theology, but the meaning of the word Logos does not yield to this explanation. Logos means "a word, speech, utterance, saying or communication." It can in no way be construed to mean a person.

From the evidence given in the Bible, we cannot believe Christ existed before He was born. His birth was prophesied, and His lineage. It is even foretold that He would come "of the seed of David," and that He would be "raised up" from "among his brethren" (Deut. 18:15, 18).

Psalms 110:4, quoted in Hebrews 7:17, speaks prophetically of Christ that He would be "a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." This proves conclusively that Melchisedec could not be Christ Himself, because He was a Priest "after the order of Melchisedec."

Who, then, is Melchisedec? The Book of Hebrews describes him as "king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end

of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually" (Heb. 7:1-3). Certainly this description does not fit Christ, for He could not be said to be "without father, without mother, without descent," for his genealogy was carefully recorded.

Since no son of man can answer to the description of Melchisedec, it seems to be a symbolic term personifying the entire system of divine truth, much as wisdom is termed "she," a woman, in the book of Proverbs (see chapter 8).

How, then, did Abraham meet and pay tithes to "wisdom" or God's divine system of knowledge?

We cannot say that we know, but through the ages God has selected men to be His visible, acting agents or representatives. May this also be true in the matter of Melchisedec? Rather than try to identify the Melchisedec Abraham met with any known individual, it seems more reasonable to understand him as a representative of God. The fact that Abraham paid tithes to a "priest of the most high God," shows some person must have been present to act as a personal representative of "the most high God," but that person is identified only by his relation to God and his vast system of truth rather than by any personal characteristics or features. MM

**Be like the bicycle tires.
Be sure to maintain "maximum recommended pressure"
on the inside and you will be able to take
the bumps and bruises of life and
avoid spiritual "flat tires."**

Preparation

We must try harder than ever before because we have less time to prepare ourselves. Let us stop and think: Am I gaining strength, or am I drifting back?

We dare not let ourselves drift along because it gives evil a chance to crowd in. If we let evil crowd in, it will bring us to eternal death.

Georgia

S. J.

Keep Growing

The Lord has blessed us in the past and will continue to do so if we take Him into our plans. If whatever we do is done to His honor and glory and not for our own honor and pleasure, He will help us and our lives will please Him.

We must be constantly making new growth in our lives. We can reaffirm our determination to get rid of the drabness of sin from our lives and let the fruits of the Spirit flower and grow in our lives. Nature is constantly renewing itself and so must we as long as we live; when we stop growing we begin to die. We need to nurture and fertilize the seed of divine Truth in our minds so it may grow and bring forth fruits fit to offer our Lord.

Texas

P. F.

Watch!

I believe it won't be long until Christ will send Elijah back to this old sinful earth. Jesus tells us in Matthew 25:13 to "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

West Virginia

W. W.

The Fight Within

Back when I was a young child I always had a yearning inside me; I was looking for something that I could never find. Now I know what I was yearning and looking for. It took me so long to find it. What kept me dragging my feet and always looking in the wrong places when all the time it was as close to me as my Bible? How the "old man" in me in those days must have been jumping for joy. But, now he is not joyous for now he has a daily struggle on his hands with my pulling away. It is a fight, for I am determined that he will not win. But only by constant struggle can I ever hope to succeed.

It is much better to be told of our faults and sins now than to find out about them when it is too late to correct them.

I sometimes look over the past and think of the time I have wasted and feel so unworthy. Then, I think of what Paul said that one should forget the past and press on to "bigger and better" things.

Maine

R. D.

That Inner Rebellion

REBELLION! We hear of it on every side, and the very word brings a mental image of violence.

Yet man's deepest rebellion against God often has no hint of physical violence, no outward demonstration of bitterness or rejection.

King Saul lost his throne and his life because of rebellion against God—a rebellion that consisted of *failure to obey* when he was told to destroy the Amalekites and all their possessions. Greediness for material possessions led him to disobedience. Refusal to confess his sin barred him from forgiveness. By lying to the prophet Samuel and seeking to minimize his own failure he weakly blamed others for his disobedience.

God said, "Obedience is better than sacrifice." Either Christ is *the Way* or He is *in the way* of our stubborn pursuit of our own way. Each man must make his choice. Eventually we all will either be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, or will eternally feed upon the bitter herbs of disobedience.

The book of Judges, is a record of continued disobedience, and it ends with a nation shattered. The last verse of that book tells us exactly why:

"In those days there was no king of Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes." There was no central authority, no one to enforce the law. Each *did his own thing* without regard to any law except his own idea of right and wrong. "Situation ethics" controlled the reasoning.

We hear an echo of those words today: "I didn't make that law; I don't approve of it, so I don't have to obey it." But the apostle Paul says that no man can live and die unto himself alone. Each of us is responsible for our influence upon others, and each of us is responsible to God.

ORDER NOW!

Final Notice

To be sure you get your copy of the *Megiddo Message* 1986, all eleven issues in one hardcover volume, *order now*. Price: \$8.00, Postpaid. Your order will be acknowledged when it is received; volume will be mailed to you as soon as it is available.

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“I Will Come— Suddenly!”

JESUS would have us constantly mindful of the fact that our primary dealings are with God, from whom we come, and to whom we are accountable.

He taught this lesson vividly by comparing His second coming with the arrival of judgment in the days of Noah. His words highlight the most ordinary drama of everyday life. “When I return the world will be as indifferent to the things of God as the people were in Noah’s day. They ate and drank and married—everything just as usual right up to the day when Noah went into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all.” (Luke 17:26-27 TLB). The wording suggests that apocalypse and divine judgment came at the most unlikely moment of ordinary life. Literally translated, “They were eating and drinking,” The same is told of the judgment in the days of Lot. “People went about their daily business—eating and drinking, buying and selling, farming and building—until the morning Lot left Sodom. Then fire and brimstone rained down from heaven and destroyed them all” (Luke 17:28-29). Then the solemn warning: “Yes, it will be ‘business as usual’ right up to the hour of my return” (Luke 17:30).

There is no hint that it was wrong for the people in Lot’s time to eat and drink and plant and build. The wrong was in their carelessness, their disregard of spiritual values, their total absorption with the things at hand. They misread life: they thought it would always go on as it was. They misread God: His opinion of what they were doing caused not the least concern. Indeed, they seemed to say by their actions, a man would have to be either morbid or queer to be so unduly concerned with his eternal destiny!

Do we wonder that the New Testament writers kept impressing the imminence of Christ’s return?

We are so inclined to delay, to disregard, to live in our own small circle and forget that God is watching. It is a fact that each of us must confront, and heed its warning lest we be caught unprepared.

The fact that life goes on from day to day with little change gives us no right to treat history as unending. Gray days are not unending; neither are sunny days. Daylight does not endure; neither does night.

So echoes this shocking truth in Jesus’ message: “Be ready, for suddenly I will arrive!”

Suddenly some day, some ordinary day, while you eat and drink, while you plant your garden and harvest your crop. Everything will seem very ordinary, everything very normal. The beginning of the final hour will look just like the beginning of every other has looked for centuries. And then suddenly—suddenly—“Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed” (v. 30). MM

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