

Megiddo Message

You are my
Hope
O Lord God

Psalm 71:5, NNAS

ARE YOU HIS DISCIPLE?

Today when godliness has become all but extinct, perhaps we should ask ourselves some hard questions about what our life of faith is all about. What does our faith mean to us?

Many churchgoers see their church as a shrine. In this context the focus is on liturgy. "I like my church because it gives me such a spiritual feeling." In such churches, lives may seem to change during the few minutes that they are in the sacred atmosphere, then the holy bubble bursts.

Some see their church as a theater, with the focus on adventure. Something new, something exciting to see or experience is the extent of their expectations. And after the service, they gather in the foyer to grade the performance. They did not come to learn, but to be entertained; not to be changed, but to critique.

Still others see their church as a lecture hall. Their focus is on profundity. To them, being deep and vague and obtuse about one's beliefs makes them feel somehow more like the riches of Christ than simple, straight, practical words. Meanings are debated almost endlessly, while applications are ignored.

Where, oh, where is the life of faith? Where, oh, where is the faith that can break down the strongholds of sin and bring every thought into captivity to Christ? Where is the faith that has power to transfix and transform, to take up the cross and follow? Where is that sound doctrine which was the teaching of Jesus Christ, that sound doctrine without which there can be no worship, no growth, and no eternal blessing?

Someone once said that the great challenge of the Christian faith is to keep one's obedience at the level of one's light. In other words, what we *know* easily surpasses what we *do*. We run the risk of allowing our knowledge to become an end in itself. Such was the failing of the Pharisees, who took great pride in the exactness of detail and outward form, but whose hearts remained hard and unchanged.

Perhaps we like the pleasant vibrations we get from our faith, but is our religion re-making us into men and women of God? Is it prepar-

ing us to be accepted by the Judge of all the earth? There is no way short of imitating every day the Christ-like life, thought by thought, deed by deed, word by word.

Ideally, the Church is a workshop in which we learn together how to let God's Word touch and change our lives.

The Greek word for disciple means "learner." But being a learner is no elementary task. It is a position that requires mental application, modeling, experimentation, personal accountability, the right to fail and the perseverance to try again, and the determination to keep at it to the end of one's life.

What does this mean in everyday terms? The following is a four-point plan worth trying:

1. *"Put on Christ."* This is the way Paul said it in the book of Ephesians. Read chapter 4, and you will notice that the Apostle highlights ten areas of spiritual insight: calling, purpose, direction, fellowship, evangelism, spirituality, transformation, submission, prayer, commitment. As you read the chapter, find a passage that applies to each of these areas of the Christian life.

2. *Link each principle to a practical pattern.* For example, each passage that you selected in Ephesians 4 describes a spiritual principle, which you can link to something you do. In this way you are applying Paul's words to your own life. Take, for example, the word "calling." Ask yourself, how can I show my calling in my life? Or taking it one step further, how can I show *more* of my calling in my life?

Or take the word "transformation," and ask yourself, what can I do to be changed into the likeness of Christ?

All our knowledge of Christ is worthless unless we apply it to making our lives like His.

3. *Concentrate on basics.*

Becoming like Christ means a daily recommitment to basic spiritual habits. As long as we allow ourselves the liberty to think as we please, to go where we please, to read what we please, to feel as we naturally would, we are not following Christ and are not really His disciples. To follow Christ we must let His law of life become ours, and this

(Continued on page 27)

The great challenge of the Christian faith is to keep one's obedience at the level of one's light.

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 (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

WE BELIEVE ...

— in God, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."

— in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.

— in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be king of the whole earth.

— in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.

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

— in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.

— in ourselves as capable of applying in our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

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

SOON-COMING EVENTS ...

The Herald and the KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: ...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

The Bible pictures all events, all men and all nations moving together toward this one God-ordained climax, when "the kingdoms of this world" will become "the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15), a kingdom in which all who live will enjoy the blessings of peace, equity and prosperity. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants, bringing to reality the promise of our Lord in His prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

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Our cover photo was taken near Rochester New York, by David and Marie Sutton.

Megiddo Message

January 1997
Volume 84, No. 1

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*.

The Megiddo Message is available in microfilm from University Microfilms, Inc., Serials Acquisitions, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

The Megiddo Message (USPS 338-120) is published monthly (except July/August issue) by the Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619. Telephone: 716-235-4150. Periodicals Class postage paid at Rochester, New York. SUBSCRIPTION RATE: One year (eleven issues) \$5.00. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619-1697. URL: <http://www.megiddo.com>. E-mail address: megiddo@servtech.com.

Unsolicited manuscripts for publication are not accepted.

Bible Quotations: Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version. Other versions are identified as follows: NEB—New English Bible; NIV—New International Version; NASB—New American Standard Bible; RSV—Revised Standard Version; TLB—The Living Bible; JB—The Jerusalem Bible; Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English; Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation; TCNT—Twentieth Century New Testament; NRSV—New Revised Standard Version; NKJV—New King James Version; Knox—The Holy Bible authorized by the Hierarchy of England, Wales, and of Scotland, tr. by Monsignor Knox.

Note: If you wish to remove label on cover, warm with hair dryer and carefully peel off.

*Life without Christ is a hopeless end;
life with Christ is an endless hope.*

Thank God for Hope!

Someone has said that joy these days is just about as rare as the bald eagle. That is why Samuel Johnson once remarked that the human race is a vast assemblage of individuals who are continually counterfeiting happiness; he felt there was no true happiness available.

In a world short on so many things, this is perhaps the saddest lack of all: joy. Nothing, therefore, makes the Gospel of Christ so magnetic as its promise of joy. All through the New Testament, jubilant music echoes and re-echoes in a symphony of joy. When Jesus is born, the angels come bringing "good tidings of great joy," and before they depart a multitude join in singing,

"Glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:10-14).

As Jesus talks to His disciples even on the last night before He suffered crucifixion, He tells them of the fullness of peace and joy which no one can take away. The Book of the Acts describes the triumphant joy of the early Church as its hymns of praise arise even out of severe persecution. Apprehend them, beat them, and let them go, and they depart "from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they [are] counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41). Put them in prison, with bodies bruised and their feet in stocks, and they sing praises to God at midnight. What is it? What a phenomenon—a group

of ordinary people with extraordinary happiness in the midst of extraordinary hardship (Acts 16)!

Such joy was no accident; nor was it comparable to the "crackling of thorns under the pot." Neither was it the giddy laugh that often hides a load of care. There was solid reason for this spirit of joy, and that reason may be stated in one word: HOPE. The men and women of God in all ages have been men and women who rejoiced in hope.

Exactly what is this hope? Hope is expectation, but all expectation is not hope. Hope is the expectation of good. "To hope" in a Scriptural sense is "to wait for salvation with joy and full of confidence"—joy is part of hope; there can be no true hope without joy!

Hope is also defined as "joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation." It is "security with a guarantee." It is the solid prospect of life—real and abundant and full of joy—in the eternal Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Hope is vital to life. It is the motivating power behind every activity. The farmer would never sow a single grain of corn if he did not have hope that it would grow. The research doctor would soon walk out of the confines of his laboratory if he did not have hope of making some new discovery. The merchant or tradesman would not invest a single hour of work in his trade or business if he did not have hope that he—or someone else—would benefit.

Hope is the impelling power behind all human action; yet today hope seems to have made its exit, along with joy. Years ago, when visionaries drew pictures of the future, they painted the ideals, with families "happy ever after," enjoying peace and prosperity, with war a thing of the past. Most twentieth century prophets are prophets of doom and gloom.

Unfortunately, there is little in the records of the present or in the annals of history to counter this feeling. And the destructive potential of chemical and germ warfare—too horrifying to describe—only deepens the gloom. There was a time, says a current writer, "when only God had the power to end the world. Now it seems almost anyone could do it."

Hope, blessed hope, where hast thou flown?

Is it any wonder that multitudes, having no long-range hope upon which to anchor, are living only for the moment, their philosophy *"let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we shall die"*?

In the midst of the gloom, thank God for hope. Thank God for the promises of His Word, which He has caused to be written to instruct us. Thank Him for His Word, which tells us we need not live in constant fear, that we need not be troubled by the troubles of our world; that we need not worry about the future, because God is true, and God is in control, and all that He has promised will most certainly come to pass. He has given His word: *"But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord"* (Num. 14:21).

This is what Paul called the *"blessed hope."* He writes, *"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ"* (Titus 2:13). Paul did not say that this was an idea, or a speculation, that someday in the far distant future it might happen, but that this was the solid promise of God. Jesus Christ will return. Paul did not say he thought it might happen, but that he knew. His hope was sure.

Thank God, this same hope is ours today. Jesus Christ is coming, just as surely as He went away. *"This same Jesus...shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"* (Acts 1:11).

Jesus is coming to put an end to crime, war, hatred and strife; to bring in everlasting peace and righteousness. He is coming to put down evil and exalt righteousness. He will set up a new government, with new laws, new rulers, new policies, and new goals, until the prayer of our Lord is fulfilled: *"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."* (Matt. 6:10)

With such a hope in God, the Christian can look ahead with joy—joy not because he knows everything the future holds but because he knows who holds the future. The Christian hope is security with a guarantee.

Someone has truly said that life without Christ is a hopeless end; life with Christ is an endless hope. With-

out hope, without God in the world, we have nothing. With Him and the hope He offers us, we have promise of more—much more—than we can even begin to imagine or comprehend.

In this age of despair and hopelessness, we need to be continually grounding ourselves in our real, certain and abiding hope in God. Let it be in us a vital, growing thing. Let it produce in us a strength that is not our own. Indeed, the Christian hope is able to produce the world's strongest men and women. *"Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day"* (2 Cor. 4:16)—renewed in the strength of a living, growing hope.

Hope has been the central theme in the lives of all God's people in all ages. They rejoiced in hope. They lived on hope. They had caught a

Cor. 4:17, Moffatt Bible). *"These sufferings bring patience, as we know, and patience brings perseverance, and perseverance brings hope"* (Rom. 5:3-4, JB). *"We are saved by hope,"* they could say with confidence (Rom. 8:24). This being true, what else mattered.

This attitude is particularly outstanding in the Book of Acts. The history of that period is a depressing chronicle of anarchy and chaos, of rapacious government, social unrest and unemployment, of bloody insurrection and savage repression, of brigandage and terrorism. Events for several decades had been building up to the fatal rebellion that finally happened in A.D. 70, bringing the Jewish Age to a violent end. The secular history of the time would give the impression that life was so miserable and uncertain as to be well-nigh unbearable. Yet of all this, scarcely a

The apostles and their fellow-workers proved themselves strong enough to hold a true and steady course even in a stormy world.

glimpse of a better world coming, and were willing to concentrate their whole life-energy on obtaining it. Every circumstance or experience of life only served to bind them the more firmly to that hope.

Was the future of their nation uncertain? Their citizenship was in heaven.

Was the ruling power threatening to take their lives? They could only take this present one—and how little that was; real life for them was in the future, and neither Rome nor any other human power could take that from them.

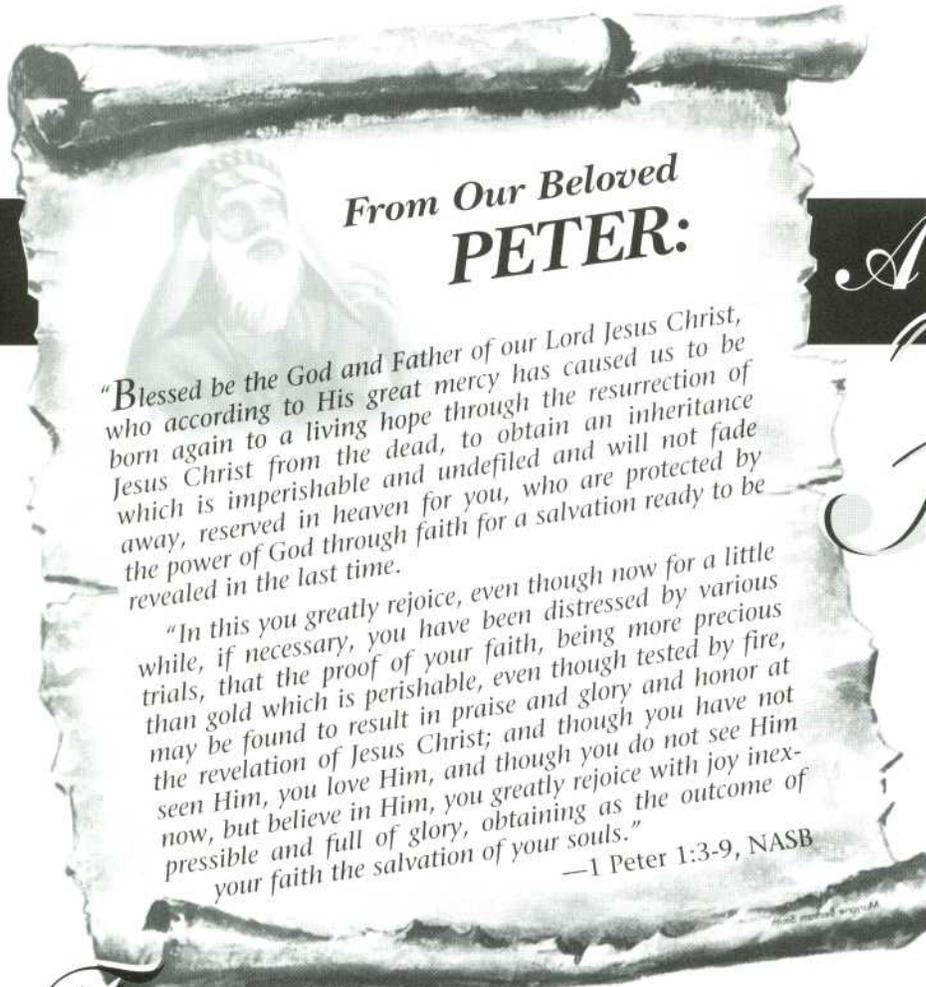
Had they lost their goods in this world? Perhaps they were better off without them; now their desire for Christ's Kingdom was the stronger.

Were they suffering hardship, privation, pain or ill-treatment? It was only for a moment, the *"slight trouble of the passing hour"* that would result in *"solid glory past all comparison"* (2

word appears in the Acts of the Apostles. Why? It was not that the writers did not know of these things; they simply did not matter.

The apostles and their fellow-workers proved themselves strong enough to hold a true and steady course even in a stormy world. While the Jewish world was fast catapulting to destruction, they were marching steadily on to the Kingdom of God. A turbulent world was their great opportunity to make good, and they made the most of it. Complete consecration lifted them to a stratosphere where the storms no longer mattered; minor inconveniences, *"light afflictions,"* no more.

They lived—and died—in hope. And soon they shall live again, when the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, and *"the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first"* (1 Thess. 4:16). □

A scroll with a portrait of Peter and text. The scroll is unrolled, showing a portrait of Peter on the left and text on the right. The text is written in a serif font and is partially obscured by the scroll's folds. The scroll is set against a dark, textured background.

From Our Beloved PETER:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

"In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls."

—1 Peter 1:3-9, NASB

A Message of Hope

He shared in the Transfiguration vision. Bold and adventuresome by nature, he was both determined and self-confident. "Even if it means dying with you," he said, "I will never disown you" (Matt. 26:35, Phillips).

He felt a loyalty so strong that it seemed unshakable.

Peter also had his weaknesses.

How very like us he seems at those times he speaks before he thinks, or runs before he is sent. More than once this highly impetuous nature brought him to grief. And when, contrary to all his strong confidence, he actually denied Christ—he knew the pain of failure.

Yet, looking back on it all, the aged Apostle writing his Epistle to younger brethren could see in his life the steady building of a solid, Christian hope which would carry him through to the end of his mortal career—and on into Eternity! To him, life and hope were inseparable.

Here we might do well to put the question to ourselves: How attached are we to our sublime hope? Is our hope our life, and our life our hope? Are the two bound up in us so inseparably that nothing shall ever be able to pull us apart?

Life in the first century church that Peter knew was not a settled, easy, comfortable existence. Everywhere were enemies, and one never knew which innocent-looking inquirer might be a minister of

The joyful tone of hope is noteworthy all through the Epistles of Peter. In fact, the First Epistle of Peter has been called the Epistle of Hope. So dominant is the theme that it colors the entire narrative, giving beauty to life and meaning to suffering. Men and women are called to rejoice in hope. No nebulous, wistful optimism is this hope, or a bland trust that all will turn out right in the end; but a fervent, sincere, solid abiding in the living God who made all things, and who is the rewarder of all who diligently seek Him. High and wide and deep is this sublime hope.

What makes the Epistle of First Peter even more meaningful is the man who wrote it. The Apostle had come a long way since the night he denied Christ, and the Epistle rings with the assurance that had kept him moving forward through all the intervening years. Peter, now

the aged brother and elder, is in a position to help and encourage others who aspire to the heights of holiness. All through his Epistle, his admonitions vibrate with the lessons he himself had learned, lessons of patience and trust, of carefulness and faith, of obedience and hope.

The things recorded in Scripture were recorded for our learning, and this is true of the New Testament record fully as much as of the Old. The story of Peter's life-growth is among those records. Peter had his strong points from the beginning. Always willing to sacrifice for his Lord, this youthful dynamo was one of His closest friends. He did not hesitate to give up his livelihood to follow the Master—all the way to the last fateful night before the crucifixion. Even then he ventured further than any of the others. He tried to walk on the water.

Satan. The threat of persecution loomed large on the horizon. Professing Christianity in those days was serious business, as serious as life and death. Christian living

could boast of courage, intellect, power, poetry and art. But it was a world without hope. Life was a sumptuous banquet indeed; but when it was over—? The thought of

stand out in contrast to the dreary background of this modern world, with the same striking contrast of the lives of those early believers? Or is it our first desire to be as liberal,

could easily mean a full measure of Christian giving—even to one's life. No one knew what would happen next. Already the scattered brethren were running into difficulty.

So Peter wrote them a letter. And how did he open it? Did he say, "Grace to you, my brethren, and how I wish you did not have to suffer; it makes my heart ache when I hear how much trial you are having to endure—would that God might grant you an easier way"—was this what Peter wrote? Or did he start out by telling them about *his* troubles, explaining that he was getting old now, and was not so strong as he used to be; so they could be understanding if his faith and power seemed weak? Is there any of that tone in Peter's words? There is not a trace of it. Rather, Peter opens his letter by ascribing praise and thanks to God:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). Unto what are we begotten? "*Unto a lively hope.*" And how is this hope made sure? "*By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*" The newer translations show even more of Peter's vivacious hope, as: "*Thank God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that in his great mercy we have been born again into a life full of hope, through Christ's rising again from the dead!*" (Phillips).

To Peter, this hope, confirmed by Jesus' being raised from the dead—to which he himself was a witness—was the most treasured possession. The world of ancient Greece and Rome was a world of fascination. It

the future struck chill to many a heart.

In the midst of this pallid fear stood the shining hope of the true Church. Here was a group of men and women who could look steadfastly into the future without fear. The prospect of a future, eternal life free from suffering, hardship, persecution, and strife, gave an enormous new dimension to the present. It made them able to go about their daily duties, all the time "*rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer*" (Rom. 12:12). They were living in hope.

What of us? Does not the buoyant, fearless spirit of those loyal first-century believers reprove our weak, faltering faith? We who so easily forget the great promises that are ours and are indifferent to our high calling—how well would we have stood *their* testings? Are we able to bless and praise our God and Father, uplifted by our confident, living hope, when we find ourselves in difficulties so minor compared to those they experienced?

We today must be representatives of our faith no less than they were. We, who have in our possession that same ancient faith—do we treasure it as we should? Are we willing to stake our lives on it? Does our life

as broad-minded and easy-going as possible? Have we that same zest for eternal life which captivated Peter's interest and directed every aspect of his daily conduct? Or is our interest in God's promises somewhat detached, separated, and dispirited?

We need more and more of Peter's lively hope in our lives today, we who are so close to the time when it shall become reality, we who are in such constant danger of letting slip those things which are so nearly within our grasp. Without hope, even the best of earth is worthless. If we have no hope, all our ambitions and plans for the future are but tantalizing projections of fancy. Of what value is the finest education, or the richest potential, or the most cultivated character, if all ends hopelessly in nonentity? Had the Gospel called men to a higher life without giving them a vision of hope, we would have been awakened only to be plunged the deeper into despair.

But no, Christians have hope. To the Christian belongs the reality of a sure hope, and it is full of light, and joy and every hopeful prospect. It is bright, active, cheerful; and as each Divine promise is read anew, it springs up fresh and clear. And the further we tread the narrow way, the brighter and brighter it grows.

One Pure, Abiding Hope

What can we expect from our hope in Christ? What does Peter say?

Ours is "***an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away***" (1 Pet.

1:4). It is an inheritance beyond our understanding; it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive its marvelous wonders. We can only describe it by contraries; we know more about what it is *not* than what

From our Beloved PETER
A Message of Hope



it is. It is *not corruptible*. And the gladness that accompanies it is like the inheritance and the people who receive it—all are incorruptible.

Then, *it is undefiled*. Men's hearts, lives, conversation all naturally bear the taint of evil, until they are disciplined and refined. Upon this heavenly inheritance is no earthly taint.

Then, too, *"it fadeth not away."* The lapse of time does not affect it, for it is timeless, eternal. There is no old age there, but perpetual youth. The best of this world fades into weariness; there is no weariness there. Immortal beings never grow tired or weary. *"They shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint"* (Isa. 40:31). Why? Because they have been made like their Creator, who *"fainteth not, neither is weary."*

The promised reward is a heavenly inheritance—not that it will have to be obtained in heaven, but it is now *"reserved in heaven"* for each faithful one, *"ready to be revealed in the last time."* It is the *"praise and honour and glory"* that will be dispensed at *"the appearing of Jesus Christ"* (1 Pet. 1:4–5, 7). This is the *"grace"* that is promised, and it shall *"be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"* (1 Pet. 1:13). There was no question in Peter's mind as to when this hope would be realized. It would be at the time of Christ's appearing, when *"the chief Shepherd shall appear"* (1 Pet. 5:4).

In the meantime it was *"reserved."* The fact that it is *"reserved in heaven"* shows its highest of high quality—its source is far above anything earth can bestow. Secondly, the fact that it is reserved *in heaven* shows its preciousness, and the care with which it must be kept. Special merchandise requires special storage and special handling. So does this special inheritance.

God has great and wonderful blessings in store for every loving, loyal child; they are *"exceeding great and precious promises,"* and does not the thought that they may be reserved—set aside—especially for us, give us greater impetus to complete our work?

They are promises of real and lasting value, things which have no tendency to decay, nor can they lose their bloom and freshness of joy. If our lives are becoming new, if we are truly born into this living hope, then we too may look forward to a share in that *"inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."* This is the promise of God.

The Apostle's words sparkle with joyful expectancy. Is this expectancy as real to us? Do our hearts thrill at the thought of the inheritance *we* may have? Are we doing the things each day which will certify to us this sublime hope? Are our lives becoming so transformed to the pattern of Christ that we may realistically hope to receive that inheritance? Are we so absorbed with this prospect that to secure it is our first and foremost concern each hour of each day? Do we think about it so persistently and live in such constant awareness of the Divine that we cannot be interested in things lesser? Are we so bent on getting our reservations made that we are checking every thought, motive, action, feeling or word that might prevent that heavenly hope becoming our own? Oh, the careful attention, the steady devotion, the watchfulness that come with true joyful expectancy, as we aspire to being *"kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation"* that is *"ready to be revealed in the last time"* (1 Pet. 1:5). How much does that assurance mean to us? It means *our very life!*

What is the effect of possessing this sublime hope? Peter says, ***"Wherein ye greatly rejoice."*** Anyone reading this Epistle up to this point would have no faint idea of the magnitude of his trials, or of those of his brethren. Now he mentions them in one brief comment: ***"Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations"*** (v. 6). *"Though now for a season, if need be"*—the troubles are temporary, at their worst. If we count the Apostle's words of hope up to this point, we find that he has used more than ten times as many in telling about his sublime hope as he now uses in telling about the present trials. The proportion is worth noting. Is this anything like the proportion in

our conversation? Do we have ten times as much to say about the future and our sublime hope as about the present?

Now sense the impact of Peter's reasoning. Can we overlook the present troubles as he did? Are we fully prepared for anything that might come to us in this world, because of our solid hope in the future and the God who is over it? We can be. We can be so fortified that nothing will sour us, upset us, or cause our hope to dim. Reverses will come. Temptations will come. Disappointments will come. We may be frustrated in a long-cherished ambition. Impaired health, or a change of circumstances, or unexpected responsibilities may prevent us from doing what we had once hoped to do in the Church or the community, but these things need not affect our constancy toward God. If we are rejoicing in hope, when tragedy strikes we will be so fortified by our hope that we can actually make use of it. The stock market may plummet, inflation may eat into the real value of our life's savings, our earthly goods may be damaged or stolen or burned; one near and dear may be taken from us.

But come what may, nothing can blight our hope of future success. Whatever comes, we will be able to look up and say, Yes, I have suffered a loss; but I can still carry on. The sting cannot always last; and though life may never be quite the same again, someday it will be infinitely better. And even now, I can adjust myself to the changed situation, and with a keener interest in the world to come!

This was Peter's attitude. "Blessed be God," he could say, even in the midst of "manifold temptations." All through his words there is a ring of joy. He rejoices in hope; he exults when that blessed hope lives clear and bright in the hearts of his brethren. He strives to "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6). He looks at the trials, but he knows that the heavenly Father "does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men," and that deliverance will come in due time. He knows the

Father allows trials "for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. 12:10)—and who would wish to have no trials—and miss being a "partaker of his holiness"? Trials must be felt, or they would not try us; the Christian's cross must sometimes be heavy and sharp, but remember its purpose: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7).

Temptations try the Christian's faith; but temptation resisted and overcome proves faith true and solid. Temptation refines faith. Temptation borne meekly and patiently purifies faith and helps us to overcome our pride, self-confidence and worldliness. It gives us a truer picture of ourselves and our need for God, and greatens the soul within. Abraham was greater for his trials; so was Jacob; so was Joseph; so is every patient endurer; for when the test is over, hope shines the brighter.

Ours is a great, grand, glowing hope. And it is as sure as the existence of the God who created us. "As truly as I live" is His signature

upon it (Num. 14:21). Can we possibly think too much upon it—when multitudes through the ages have been born only to die, and we have been offered a means of escape? Should we not "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"? To think of salvation—immortality—life, with every conceivable and inconceivable joy and comfort and pleasure—should we not thank God for any experience of life that can make that hope more real, more sure, more glorious to us? Those early Christians rejoiced because they had hope; and this same hope can bring joy into our lives today. It is a joy fed by the unfailing spring of Divine faithfulness. It is a deep, positive happiness which nothing that happens today or tomorrow can adversely affect. It is joy in the realization that the great things God has promised can actually be ours—because we see ourselves being re-made into the new creatures that God has promised to save. This is what makes hope real to us.

This is what made hope real to Peter. At the time he was writing that First Epistle, he could see it. Hear him addressing himself to his brethren: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an

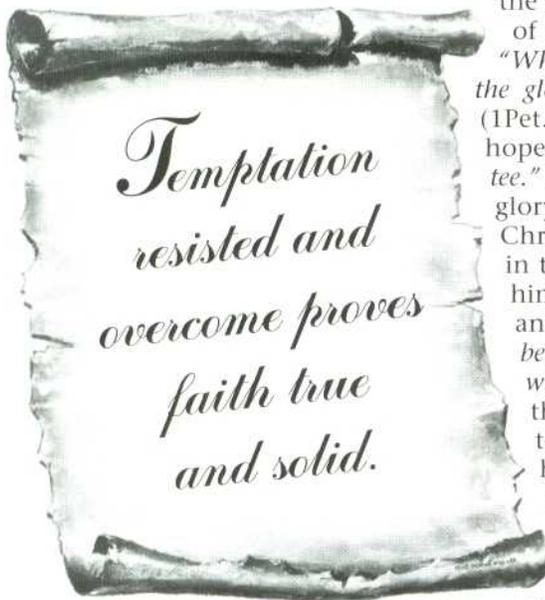
*Someday a bright new wave will break upon the shore,
And there will be no sickness, no more crying, no more war,
The saints will be immortal, none will suffer any more,
And there'll be a bright new morning over there,
There'll be a bright new world for them to share.*

*Someday there'll be an end to unkind words and cruel,
The man who said, 'There is no God' will know he was a fool;
And peace will be a way of life when Christ the earth shall rule,
And there'll be a bright new morning over there,
There'll be a bright new world for some to share.*

*Someday, we know not when, when toiling days are done,
And saints of all the ages shall be gathered in as one,
Their voices shall be ringing out the victory they have won,
And there'll be a bright new morning over there—
Shall we be there, that bright new world to share?*

—Selected

From our Beloved PETER
A Message of Hope



elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ"—Peter's was a special privilege, though doubtless he still recalled that night with a feeling of shame—"and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." Here is the surety that has grown out of a life of faithful service. "Who am...also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" (1Pet. 5:1). Here was genuine hope—"security with a guarantee." Peter knew that the future glory would be his. He knew Christ would return one day in the future, and would raise him from the sleep of death and present him "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." He knew that great Day would be his to see and experience, and he rejoiced. Oh, can we imagine the deep joy that must have surged through his being at the thought of it!

If we but grasp it, believe it and act upon it while our gracious God still gives us opportunity, this same joy can be ours. We have been called; we have been instructed. We

know the great things which are promised in the Word of God. How can we let either our fortunes or misfortunes in this world affect us unduly? Should we lose everything here, are we not still fabulously rich in the possession of the knowledge that one day we can, if faithful, be a co-inheritor of the unsearchable riches of Christ and in the ages to come be shown the exceeding riches of His grace?

This was Habakkuk's confidence long ago. He had lost everything; yet, hear his words of triumphant joy: "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:17-18).

How can we afford to do anything that might lessen our chances of having our hope a final and glorious reality to us? Oh, "happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."

Let us look ahead each new day with a deep and overflowing joy in our hope, a joy that will keep our attitude ever holy, helpful, and humble in the service of our King; for someday—someday very soon—our hope shall be changed to glad and full reality. □

Prayer

Almighty and eternal God, the same yesterday, today and forever. Our lives wax old as doth a garment, but Thou art ever the same, and Thy mercy changeth not. In the midst of these confused and shifting scenes, help us to find in Thee the constant and unfailing Friend in whom we may place our confidence, and from whom we may receive wisdom and strength, not only for these days, but for all days that are to come.

Dear Father, we pray for open minds and honest hearts, that our love may be without dissimulation, that we may be open and above board, that our lips and lives may agree, our professions and our actions tell the same story. May our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify Thee in the Day of Visitation. May we always abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good; believing only the things which Thou dost call truth, doing always the things which Thou canst call good, with Christian steadfastness.

May we always be "kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another," banishing our naturally selfish spirit. May we never be slothful in Thy business, or take any of Thy holy pre-

cepts as unimportant, or as a duty that we can take or leave at our caprice, but aware that Thou art a God of knowledge by whom actions only are weighed, may we be fervent in spirit, serving Thee.

May our hope be a real thing to us, a prospect that we will pursue with greater fervor than any other interest in life. We hope for everything beyond: for a physical body that will never grow old or be enfeebled with the passing of the years; for a mind that is keen and that will always retain every impression that is made upon it; for bodily vigor that will never wane, with every imaginable pleasure and delight to accompany us as we live through endless years.

In the hope of these fathomless blessings may we be patient in any tribulation that it may be our portion to bear. May we count the inconveniences and reversals of our mortal existence as mere light afflictions, not worthy of our notice or of special concern.

Our heavenly Father, may we value the privilege of communing with Thee in prayer as the sweetest experience of our lives, and may each such contact sharpen our sense of need for Thee and broaden our determination to live the perfect life so as to be worthy to share the greater blessings Thou hast in store for all who serve Thee worthily. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Best IS BETTER THAN Good

NOTES ON the jacket of a record featuring Pianist Van Cliburn and The Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy outline the effort made to get a perfect recording outdoors.

A dam was adjusted to silence a waterfall; orchestra seating and microphone placements were rearranged to forestall pickup of birds, rustling leaves, windblown music pages, or wind; traffic was rerouted.

When the tapes were checked, the artists listened to the opening chords of the Greig concerto. Magnificent, but not good enough. The critical ears of both soloist and conductor detected a flaw. A technician was called in to perk up one low piano note which had a slightly muted tone.

The jacket notes concluded: "Here was one of the supreme virtuosos of our day and here was a conductor and an orchestra without equal in making music sound in the grand manner....They were playing masterpieces...which they had played at least a hundred times before. They could have played them in their sleep, and it would have been great, but they chose to care to make it greater."

Paul says in Colossians 3:23, "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men." But we Christians too often prefer to settle for what is merely "good" when we might "choose to care to make it greater."

How much of our Christian resolve goes no further than intellect and emotion? We may and should be concerned about right doctrine, but concern for doctrine alone will not save us. Or we may be touched by a powerful sermon or hymn, yet never respond by sacrifice or action. This is not good enough. We must choose to do something based on sound doctrine and motivated by our hearts.

The fact that the musicians chose to care indicates more than surface emotional involvement. They readily paid a price that resulted in action and devotion to music. In opting or caring "to make it better," these musicians were striving for a goal—a perfect recording that would pass on the full scope of the composer's

genius. How much more important that Christians purpose to communicate the full message of the Master.

Paul refers to the Word of God in terms of "milk" and "meat" and admonishes us to partake and "grow" until we reach "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13-16). But many times we settle for routine devotions when we might dig deeper into Scripture and find knowledge, rebuke, and challenge. We settle for giving God a part rather than full control of our hearts and lives.

Do we apply the Word of God to each situation in our lives? Is our home just a place to eat and sleep, or is it a haven of peace and acceptance where members can find concern, fellowship, and strength, where we share our defeats and triumphs?

What about our Christian service? In First Corinthians 15:58 we are told, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." And we also are admonished to "...strive to excel in building up the church" (1 Cor. 14:12).

We must build our lives on prayer. We are told to "pray without ceasing," and in an emergency situation this comes naturally. But do we feel the same sense of urgency toward prayer in ordinary circumstances? Do we strengthen our conviction and increase our enthusiasm through prayer?

The musicians each set the highest standard for his own work rather than wasting time finding out what was wrong with another's performance. They recognized that the work of each one was important—not only the soloist and the conductor but also each orchestra member. One sour note could spoil the efforts of all.

The same is true with our own commitment and service. □

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"And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God." —Phil. 1:9-11 (NRSV)

PURE and BLAMELESS

Love overflowing with more and more knowledge, insight to determine what is best, so that you may be pure and blameless in the day of Christ, having produced the harvest of right deeds—here is a course of action that is high and elevating. God's way is always noble and high, and if we exchange our way for His way it will elevate us, removing us far from the pettiness and smallness so natural to us human creatures.

Even a casual appraisal of the traits of our carnal, untamed nature should create in us a feeling of disgust for them. The day does not go just as we would like it to, and we are unhappy and disgruntled. Someone is short, or unkind, or criticizes our work when we thought we had done our very best, and our feelings are irreparably hurt. Then we pity ourselves, thinking no one ever had it so hard as we, or that we have been denied things we should have been able to enjoy, and so on and on. Then our pride, miserable pride, prompts us to minimize our defects and magnify our virtues.

What does it mean, to be "pure and blameless"?

Let another be superior to us in successes, endowments or possessions, and jealousy, that insidious destroyer of our peace of mind, so distorts our vision that white looks black and black white. Then envy—cruel envy—moves us to cherish selfish ill-will toward another.

The first sentence in our text comes to reprove these weaknesses: *"That your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best."* For there is nothing "best" about such

traits. If approving only what is best we will learn to rule our emotions, so that when things do not go as we like them we can still keep a right spirit, adjust to a changed program, and keep perfectly calm about it.

If when we do well and suffer for it we take it patiently (1 Pet. 2:20), maintaining that great peace which nothing can offend (Ps. 119:165), then we are choosing "what is best." There will then be no room in our hearts for jealousy, envy, hatred, impatience, pride, or any time in our days for foolishness, idle-mindedness, fruitless gossip, or wasted hours.

What is the motivation of praise? It is nothing less than *"the glory and praise of God."* The Psalmist expressed his gratitude for God's goodness. *"O LORD, our Lord, how awesome is your name through all the earth! You have set your majesty above the heavens!"* (Ps. 8:2, NAB). His name is awesome—consider His glorious attributes, His power, His wisdom, His ability, His munificence even to the unworthy. Should not the lips of every human being be filled with His praise! But how little real praise He receives. If one does well in business, in retailing, in school, or in prospecting, he quite easily says to himself, in effect, Why should I thank God for what I have to work hard for? *"My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth"* (Deut. 8:17), forgetting his total dependence upon the Giver. For how much would anyone do if he were deprived of breath, or food, or water, or sunlight? Truly, *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows"*

(James 1:17, NIV); or as Paul declared to the ancient Athenians, *"God in [whom] we live, and move and have our being...[gives] to all life, and breath and all things"* (Acts 17:28, 24-25). In other words, you may worship whom you please, but God is the *only* Giver.

The Psalmist exclaimed again about God's far-reaching goodness: *"How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights. For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light"* (Ps. 36:7-8, NNAS). Here is His offer of more than this mortal life: to *"drink of the river of Your delights."* To drink of *"the fountain of life"* is to receive His blessing of endless life. How we mortals should appreciate this opportunity, and show our appreciation by doing our very best to fit ourselves for it.

He who gives life and the prospect of future life gives also good counsel and knowledge. As we read in Proverbs 22:20-21 *"Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, that I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth?"* Here the words of truth are designated as excellent—excellent because they furnish the key that will unlock to us the portals of eternal life; excellent because they have the power to make us free indeed, as said the Master (John 8:31-32); excellent because those words will sanctify (John 17:17); excellent because those words *"are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63).

In 1 Corinthians 13, St. Paul defines charity as the way that is best, more excellent than being able

Letters

to heal the sick, or prophesy, or speak in tongues. While the gifts of the Spirit could comfort, strengthen and sustain the Apostolic missionary, and convince of the genuineness of the Gospel, they could not save. Even some of the very men who had been entrusted with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, who had tasted the powers of the world to come, fell away, and could not be pardoned (Heb. 6:4-6). Charity is more excellent because it leads to life.

To be "pure and blameless" is the qualification demanded by the great God. Impurity is a perversion common to human nature, a sin for which we must be constantly on the lookout in ourselves. It is much easier to assent to a truth that may injure or condemn us individually, and still retain our own private opinion; to feign submission to the law of God, wearing "sheep's clothing" outwardly while still a wolf at heart, than to make the full surrender that the law of God demands.

If our love of eternal life is true and pure, our lips and lives will agree. We will not say "Lord, Lord," and then refuse to do what He commands. The words, "Oh, how I love Jesus," are on the tongues of millions of people, but how few demonstrate that love by obeying Him implicitly!

Jesus' parable of the two sons commanded by their father to go to work in his vineyard (Matt. 21:28-31) illustrates the difference between obedience and disobedience. The first answered, "I will not," then afterward repented and went. The second answered, "I go, sir: and went not." Obviously he did not mean what he had said.

"So that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless." Any broken law standing between us and God in the Day of Christ will be an offense in His sight, and if not repented of and turned from before we stand before the Judgment seat of Christ, will act as an impassable barrier to prevent our entry through the pearly gates into the Kingdom of God (James 2:10). It has been said that the most dangerous place in the world is the tip of the tongue. The apostle James agrees perfectly with this analysis, and says, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body" (3:2). Realizing this should make us very careful of the use we make of our tongue.

If pure and blameless in word or deed, we shall be producing a harvest of the fruits of righteousness, reflecting in our own lives the character of the Lord Jesus. And if we continue in the right way, repenting of our sins and learning to do all to the glory of God, at His coming He will be pleased to bestow upon us that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" and give us a place among His faithful children forever. □

A Perfect World—Coming

I keep asking: Where will we live this everlasting life? It is unrealistic to believe that we can enter into a Kingdom that is perfect and we are not? There will be no room in that Kingdom for imperfection. We have already had too much experience with an imperfect world and a Kingdom with imperfections would not be much for us to look forward to. But a perfect world! that is a different matter and surely worth everything that we can do to obtain it.

I find that removing and repenting of my sins takes much more time and effort than it did to acquire them. But if we ask help from God with sincerity we will be given the strength we need.

E.S.

Canada

Work While It Is Today

Do we realize how easy it is

to be lost by delay? If we would endure to the end, we must study, read, meditate, and pray often, keeping our minds filled with good thoughts to root out all evil thoughts.

Much time is needed to learn God's will and all His commands pertaining to us.

We need to learn and keep them in our minds at all times. We should be thankful we have the Knowledge of God in all its purity, thankful to God for His help, thankful for His faithful servants in these last days who brought it to us. May we be living the right way and doing the right things, for we know that these are evil days, and time is passing by very fast.

God has given us this life as a free gift to work out our salvation, and we should work while it is today; soon night comes when no man can work.

B. C.

Iowa

Deceased

Mabel Sanders

It is with great sadness that I write this letter. Mabel Sanders (of Mumbles, Swansea, South Wales) passed away on November 6. She was 87 her last birthday, so I suppose we could say she had well over her allotted time of 70 years. Her two sons survive her.

Sister Mabel kept her faith to the end, even though all around her were people of disbelief. To them, death seems so final, it is no wonder so many believe in a soul that lives on after death; it is a comfort to them. True or false they care not; they don't seem to know about the resurrection or the second coming of Jesus.

In one way or another, Mabel was connected with the Sanders family for more than

50 years, and it was from the Sanders family that she learned of the Megiddo Church.

At least she is out of pain now, but she managed to bear it bravely, as all her joints were arthritic, and for the last few years she could hardly walk at all. I'm sure she could say with the Psalmist, "Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am faint; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are in agony. How long, O Lord, how long?"

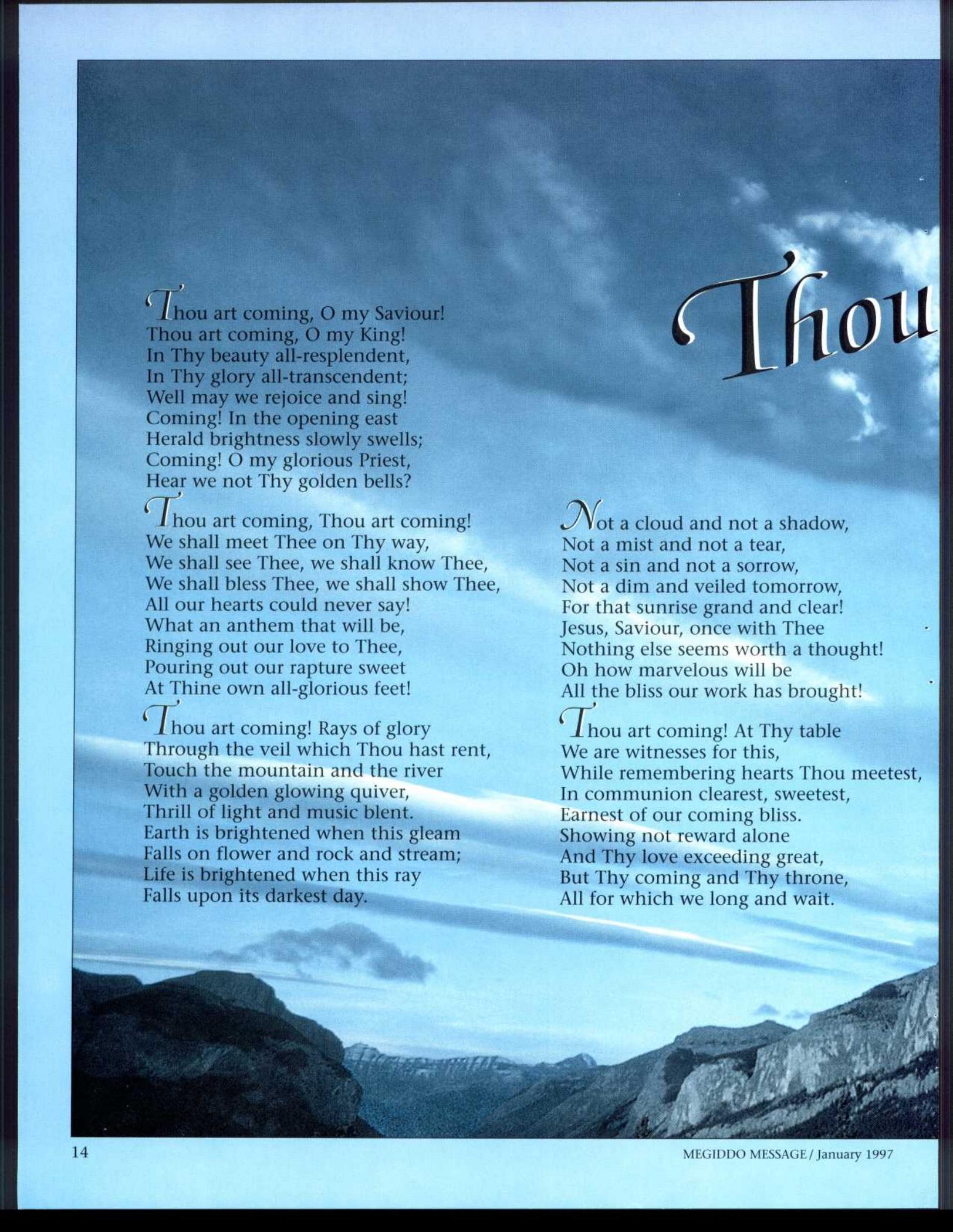
Mabel wasn't always thinking of death, in fact she really hoped she would be one of those living at Jesus' second coming, but she also believed in the resurrection, as foretold in John 5.

—Mrs. Jean (Sanders) Treharne
Banbury, Oxfordshire, England

Florence Perkins

Mrs. Judith Kyte of Anaheim, California, has just sent word of the death of her mother, Mrs. Florence Perkins, on August 31, 1996, at the age of 90. Mrs. Perkins was a long-time subscriber to the Megiddo Message and visited the Church in

Rochester on several occasions. She moved to California a number of years ago to be cared for by her daughter. She is survived by her two daughters, Judith Kyte and Gloria Love, also three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.



*T*hou art coming, O my Saviour!
Thou art coming, O my King!
In Thy beauty all-resplendent,
In Thy glory all-transcendent;
Well may we rejoice and sing!
Coming! In the opening east
Herald brightness slowly swells;
Coming! O my glorious Priest,
Hear we not Thy golden bells?

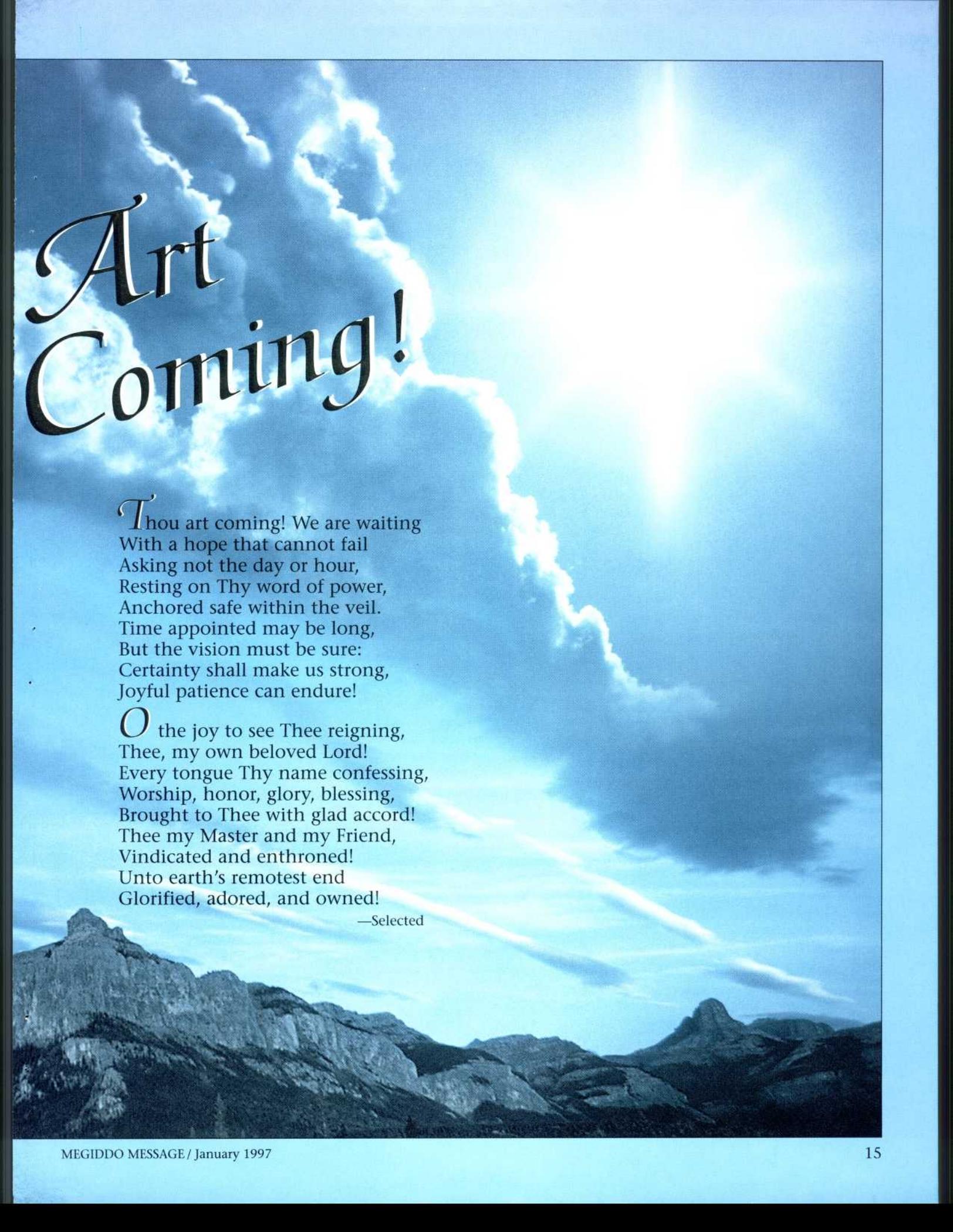
*T*hou art coming, Thou art coming!
We shall meet Thee on Thy way,
We shall see Thee, we shall know Thee,
We shall bless Thee, we shall show Thee,
All our hearts could never say!
What an anthem that will be,
Ringing out our love to Thee,
Pouring out our rapture sweet
At Thine own all-glorious feet!

*T*hou art coming! Rays of glory
Through the veil which Thou hast rent,
Touch the mountain and the river
With a golden glowing quiver,
Thrill of light and music blent.
Earth is brightened when this gleam
Falls on flower and rock and stream;
Life is brightened when this ray
Falls upon its darkest day.

Thou

*N*ot a cloud and not a shadow,
Not a mist and not a tear,
Not a sin and not a sorrow,
Not a dim and veiled tomorrow,
For that sunrise grand and clear!
Jesus, Saviour, once with Thee
Nothing else seems worth a thought!
Oh how marvelous will be
All the bliss our work has brought!

*T*hou art coming! At Thy table
We are witnesses for this,
While remembering hearts Thou meetest,
In communion clearest, sweetest,
Earnest of our coming bliss.
Showing not reward alone
And Thy love exceeding great,
But Thy coming and Thy throne,
All for which we long and wait.



Art Coming!

*T*hou art coming! We are waiting
With a hope that cannot fail
Asking not the day or hour,
Resting on Thy word of power,
Anchored safe within the veil.
Time appointed may be long,
But the vision must be sure:
Certainty shall make us strong,
Joyful patience can endure!

O the joy to see Thee reigning,
Thee, my own beloved Lord!
Every tongue Thy name confessing,
Worship, honor, glory, blessing,
Brought to Thee with glad accord!
Thee my Master and my Friend,
Vindicated and enthroned!
Unto earth's remotest end
Glorified, adored, and owned!

—Selected

IS THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES RELIABLE?

"I have been told that we cannot depend upon Ecclesiastes, because it was written by king Solomon, who turned away from God. Please comment."

King Solomon did indeed turn away from God, and Ecclesiastes may be considered his personal memoirs. The book conveys one message distinctly: that turning from God does not bring happiness.

But just because Solomon himself was not faithful to God, does this mean that we cannot rely upon his words as true words of Scripture? Sometimes we get our best lessons from those who failed to apply them to themselves.

The book of Ecclesiastes is part of the canon of Scripture just as much as Proverbs (which he also wrote), or the Psalms (authored by his father David), or any other book. David committed some very great sins—does this mean that what he wrote cannot be depended upon?

We have not space here to go into the details of the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, but a study of the evidence is very convincing that the Bible is without error in the original form in which it was delivered, and when we speak of the Bible we refer to the sixty-six letters of the present canon. If the Bible is not wholly the Word of God; if we must be continually sorting out portions which may not be reliable, what kind of guide do we have for our lives?

The various books of the Bible were written by a variety of peo-

ple, who represented many different walks of life, lived on three continents, and spanned some 1500 years of time. Though we know that most of the writers were faithful servants of God, (*"holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"*—2 Pet. 1:21), we do not know that all were, and we are nowhere told that the reliability of their words depended upon the upright character of the writer. God supplied, or guided, or directed, or inspired the words, and the human pen did the writing. If God was superintending—and we know He was—He was surely capable of seeing that no erroneous teaching was incorporated. The apostle Paul used the term "God breathed" to describe how the Words of Scripture related to God: *"All scripture...given by inspiration of God [God-breathed] is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Since the time the Bible was written, it has been copied many times and a small amount of error has resulted; but scholars assure us that the amount of error is minimal, considering the time, and no doctrine or teaching of Scripture is compromised or in question because of any error in the text of Scripture.

What about the book of Ecclesiastes? The book being part of the canon of Scripture, and part of the Scriptures as they existed in the time of Jesus and the apostles, we have no reason to question its reliability or authenticity. Furthermore we find nothing taught in

Ecclesiastes that is contradicted anywhere else in Scripture. In fact, many specific teachings of Ecclesiastes are confirmed elsewhere. For example, Ecclesiastes points up the brevity of life (Eccl. 11:8; 8:13); so does James (4:14). Ecclesiastes condemns anger (7:9); so does the Psalmist (37:8-9). Ecclesiastes teaches that we must pay the vows we make to God (Eccl. 5:4-5); the Psalmist agrees (Ps. 50:14). Ecclesiastes teaches that there is no consciousness in death (Eccl. 9:5, 10); so does the Psalmist (Psalm 6:5; 49:14; 147:3-4). Ecclesiastes teaches that we will be judged according to what we do (Eccl. 11:9; 12:13-14). So does the apostle Paul (2 Cor. 5:10); and Jeremiah (Jer. 17:10); and Jesus (Rev. 22:12).

God allowed the book of Ecclesiastes to become part of the canon of Scripture, and those who were much nearer than we did not question it; even those who had direct knowledge from God (Jesus and His apostles). Why should we? Solomon was its author, and Solomon wrote the wisdom which God gave him (1 Kings 4:29), which apparently God wanted written for our learning (Rom. 15:4). And that wisdom included three thousand proverbs and one thousand and five songs (1 Kings 4:32).

Ecclesiastes has much to teach us—about the mortal nature of the human race, and the end of all earthly pursuits; of the worthlessness and futility of life apart from God; and our personal accountability to God.

Though God usually spoke through His own servants, who

were faithful to Him, He did not always. Recall the time God spoke through Balaam. Balaam was not serving God, but God used him to deliver His message (Num. 24). He even spoke through a dumb ass (Num. 22:25-29). A man, such as Solomon, who turned away from God and failed to use his opportunities is perhaps one of the best instructors we could have, for as important as it is to know the benefits of serving God, it is also vital to know the fruits of unfaithfulness; the frustration, unhappiness, and bitter end of turning away from God and disobeying His laws.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, it is obvious that Solomon is telling his own life story, of his own waywardness and fruitless pursuit of pleasure. But he never recommends it as the way to eternal life, nor does he say anything good about it, even for the present. No one reading his book can miss the central point: that life without God is *"vanity of vanities,"* a lesson all of us need to learn.

◆ Second Chance for the Jews?

"Romans 11:28 says that God's gifts and His call are irrevocable—He never withdraws them once they are given, and He does not change. Then read verses 30 through 32. It seems like the Jews will get another chance, especially verse 31: 'Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.' Doesn't this contradict the rest of the teachings of Scripture with regards to obtaining salvation?"

There is nothing unscriptural about the proposition of living people getting a second chance. The way is open to the most wicked sinner as long as he lives. This has been God's appeal again and again: *"Wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye"* (Ezek. 18:32). During one's lifetime, one may be given many chances, even when he is sinning willfully and knows

better. However, death is the end of such opportunities; there is no second chance after one's death (Eccl. 11:3).

Verses 30-32 are clearer as translated in the New English Bible, *"For the gracious gifts of God and his calling are irrevocable. Just as formerly you [Gentiles] were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy in the time of their [the Jews] disobedience, so now, when you received mercy, they have proved disobedient, but only in order that they too may receive mercy. For in making all mankind prisoners to disobedience, God's purpose was to show mercy to all mankind."* In this way the Apostle reaffirms God's justice in giving opportunity to both Jews and Gentiles; He is no respecter of persons—He judges only by character.

"Why then did Paul say in verse 32: 'For God hath concluded them all [shut them all up together, margin], in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all?'"

In His fairness, He is giving equal opportunity to all. All are by nature disobedient, all are unbelieving (for *"all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"*—Romans 3:23), and all are in need of God's mercy so that they can repent and reform. When they do, He promises to forgive abundantly (Isa. 55:6-9). *"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not"* (Lam. 3:22).

"What does it mean that 'blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in' (Rom. 11:25)?"

In Romans 11, Paul is discussing the fact that the Jews as a nation were temporarily out of favor with God, and in that way making place for the Gentiles to come into God's plan. Paul describes this condition using several similes, one being *"partial blindness"* in the

text in question. Other translations give us a better picture of Paul's meaning: *"For blindness of heart has to some degree befallen Israel"* (Lamsa Bible); or *"a partial insensibility that is come over Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in"* (Moffatt Bible); *"This partial blindness has come upon Israel only until the Gentiles have been admitted in full strength"* (NEB). In other words, Paul was saying that the Jews' rejection of the gospel had opened the door for the Gentiles to share in the promises on an equal basis with the Jews.

Up to this point, Paul has been discussing the place of natural Jews and natural Gentiles in the plan of God. But in the next verse, as he draws the conclusion, *"And so all Israel shall be saved"* (verse 26), it seems he must be referring not to the natural Jews but to those who are Jews inwardly, as he did in Rom. 2:28-29. For if God were to save all natural Israelites, irrespective of character, and not save all Gentiles on the same basis, He would violate His whole compact, which is based on character and not on blood relationship. As Paul wrote in Romans 9, *"They are not all [true, spiritual] Israel, which are of Israel [natural-born]"* (Rom. 9:6).

"We are told that the Jews are the enemies of God, which is to the apostles' advantage and benefit. But from the point of view of God's choice—of election, of Divine selection—they are still beloved or dear to Him for the sake of their fathers. Read verse 28."

In Romans 11:28, Paul says, *"As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes."* Other translations are helpful in understanding Paul's thought. For example, Knox translates: *"God rejects them, to make room for you [Gentiles]."* Goodspeed phrases it, *"They are treated as enemies of God on your account."* It seems that Paul was using the back-

(Continued on page 26)

Excerpts from the talks and writings of Rev. L. T. Nichols, founder of the Megiddo Church.

☞ Heaven Coming to

Earth

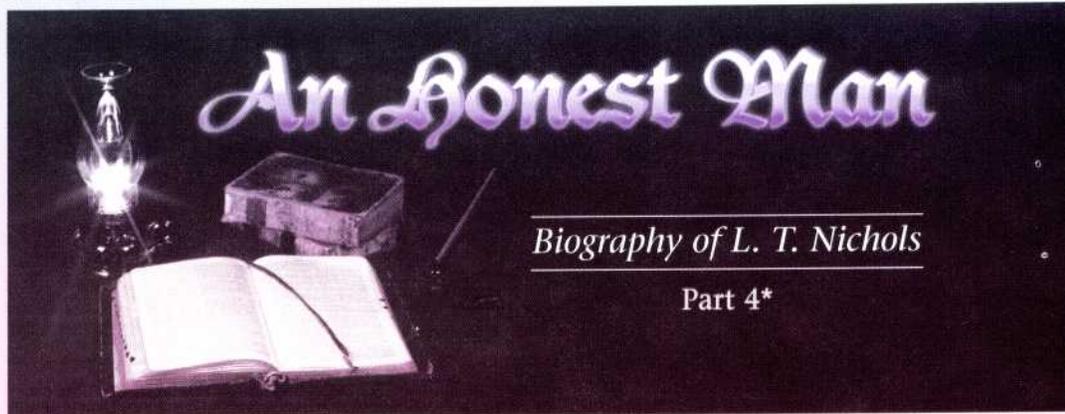
I would not take a million dollars for the chance of roaming the evergreen shore with you, and basking in the sunshine of eternal bliss forevermore, joining in glad anthems of praise to our Maker. We can then go and come with the freedom of the wind. We will go off some day, when our earth becomes part of Heaven—I take great pleasure in the thought—and see some of the great worlds on high. Our earth will be annexed to Heaven some day. We have heard of annexes in our large cities, small places are annexed to them. So by and by Heaven is going to take in the earth, and we are going to become a part of it; and this is the only way we shall ever get to Heaven. Some people think they go there when they die; but they do not get such thoughts from the Bible.

☞ Wonderful Family

I cannot get my mind off these wonderful things. I lie awake at night and wonder how many of our band will be ready? how many are working with all their mind, might, and strength—not think they are working, but are really working? They are deceived if they expect to enter the portals of everlasting rest without performing the work.

A number of people have said to me, "I'd like to be a part of your family." One man said, "You have a miniature city of God out there." I overheard one man say to another the other day, "You ought to go out and see where those people live." He said it was wonderful. Well, we are grateful to have such a home.

We are the happiest people on earth. I am glad I am with a happy type of people. I could not stand to be with long faces, I want to see some happiness. The Bible says, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." Some call it pleasure to walk after



An Honest Man

Biography of L. T. Nichols

Part 4*

THE GREAT DISCOVERY

On the far Pacific coast, near the town of McMinnville, Oregon, the young evangelist settled in 1874 on a large farm. Being the sort of man he was, it was soon a prosperous farm; he would have nothing seedy or shabby around him, no scrub animals or lazy people. The farm at the beginning lacked a house, but that was quickly and easily taken care of. Mr. Nichols was also a sewing machine salesman, and in that timber-rich country he had no difficulty trading a sewing machine—just one—for enough lumber to build a house!

Nearby gathered the best of his old Wisconsin flock—his own parents, who were now firm believers in their son's mission; his sister Ella, the Skeels family, his wife's parents, her sister and brother-in-law, Seraph and William Pickering, and others. New converts were made from time to time, and the "Christadelphian" ecclesia, pioneers of the faith in this part of Oregon, became a healthy, growing church.

Meetings were held in the spacious Nichols farmhouse or the homes of other believers. Later a church was built on the premises of Elijah Millican, father of Maggie Millican, a blind sister and zealous member endeared by her gentle manners and the patience with which she bore her affliction. Communicants, other than the home group of fifty or so, were widely scattered and the annual camp meeting, which lasted for several days, was the great event of the year.

In 1877 came a great sorrow and also a great victory. During the summer Lemuel Truesdale Nichols fell asleep at the age of 64, and was buried in a consecrated plot on his son's farm. In this year also a notable convert was made.

Maud Hembree, nee Galloway, was born in Amity, Oregon, April 5, 1853. Reared a devout Roman Catholic, she received her education in the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Salem, and at one time seriously considered becoming a religious. Naturally she was suspicious of the new preacher who had come into her valley, first as a non-Catholic, and secondly as a far more dangerous man than an orthodox Protestant, for he was reported to be striking at the very foundations of the doctrines shared without question by Catholics and Protestants alike. He definitely should not be allowed to preach!

One Christmas Eve (so-called) in the village of Carlton, she passed the schoolhouse in which she had formerly taught. Tonight this "false prophet" was holding a meeting inside. With her head high, she passed by on the other side, looking away as if in fear of contamination. Prejudiced does not begin to describe her feeling toward him.

But Maud Hembree was too fine and able a woman, too noble and too honest at heart for the Lord to lose, and He employed unusual means to draw her to Him. A discussion was arranged between L. T. Nichols, "Christadelphian," and Professor Campbell, President of the Christian College, a minister of the

*An Honest Man is available in printed book form. Write: Megiddo Press, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, NY 14619. Price: \$2.00.

Disciples faith, a lawyer, and a linguist. Prof. Campbell was to prove that we possess an immortal soul and go to heaven at death, also that the Kingdom of God is the Church and was set up on the Day of Pentecost with Christ as a spiritual King. Mr. Nichols was to defend the opposite view, that man is mortal and sleeps in death until the Resurrection, that the Kingdom of God is a real, tangible Kingdom, which will be established on this earth after Christ comes to conquer all nations.

Maud Hembree had never attended non-Catholic services, but this case was so extreme. She would go for the specific purpose of hearing this newcomer so thoroughly beaten that he would never again dare to disturb the religious peace of the Willamette Valley.

The conclusion of the story is told by Mr. Nichols in these words: "How well I remember her at the first meeting—she sat in the very back seat in that great building. But she had reverence for God's Word, and although she did not know Genesis from Revelation she saw the evidence was on our side and she was astonished as someone near her showed her a Bible and she saw how it read. She said to herself, 'I have been hating the very thing the Bible said, and I thought it was Mr. Nichols.' She heard only the eight sessions, but before they were over she was on the front seat, on the 'anxious bench,' as they say. She said, 'If this Bible is true, Mr. Nichols has the truth; and I am going to buy a Bible and investigate for myself.'

"It was some weeks after that I saw her at our blind sister's home. It was the first time I had spoken to her. She said, 'I have changed my mind.' And, oh, I was glad I had had that discussion!"

She was twenty-four years old then, and that debate was the turning point of her life. She secured her first Bible. The rosary and other idols were discarded, and never again did she return to her former fold. In the words of her teacher, her life thereafter was "one constant onward progress toward perfection." Always, no matter what the circumstances, he could rely on her as his right hand helper in the Gospel, and never did a Moses have a more faithful Aaron.

It was also in 1877 that his sister, Ella Nichols, was married to Henry E. Skeels, a Wisconsin convert who had been one of his most stalwart supporters. Together they were a tower of strength and a source of comfort to their leader, sharing his perils, his labors, his joys; lifting, not leaning.

These more mature years were important years of exploration and discovery in the world of spiritual realities. Once on the right end of the string, the web tangled and fouled by human theology unraveled at an accelerated pace and things took form as component parts of the nascent Truth, a saving gospel of the Scriptures buried for nearly thirteen centuries under the "senseless mass of superstitions" but now unmistakably raising its head. The doctrines L. T. Nichols had preached in his boyhood and youth were an improvement upon the commonly accepted theories of his day—he was always ahead of his time—but they were not truth, for truth is absolute, incapable of modification. They contained elements of truth, but also elements of error. But from the day of his awakening and dedication to God, his whole life was a persistent and consistent elimination of error and illumination of truth. With every discovery the admixture of falsehood grew less, all tending toward the day of final liberation.

Of his struggles with his problem and with himself during these years a volume might be written. Many were the dark tunnels through which he must crawl, painfully and laboriously, hampered by the debris of a millennium and a half of bad theology. More than one night he wrestled with his task until the dawn of another day of earnest toil. And like every human being he passed through his sloughs of despond, when an unappreciative world scarcely seemed worth saving. Sometimes he barely avoided shipwreck as his explorations led him to a place where things were not what they seemed. But above the storm and stress his ear was constantly attuned to the promise of the Eter-

(Continued from page 18)

their lusts, but it is no pleasure for a Christian. The Christian will always be joyful in the Lord. Their affections will be on things above, not on things on the earth.

Will not that be a lovely family of saved ones to live with through eternity, where there is no sin, no sickness, and no one pursuing the lusts of the flesh?

Immortal Soul?

A Discussion

When we were on our boat we stopped at a place one time to hold some meetings. In one of my sermons I preached that the soul is not immortal. There was a minister in the city by the name of Shepherd, and others carried word to him of what I had said. He told them, "I can prove the soul is immortal; and if Captain Nichols will come down and meet me, I will show him up." So we put a notice in the paper that we would answer him on a certain evening.

I said to my brethren, "We will go up and take shorthand notes of his sermon." But I did not need them; I knew what his line of argument would be.

At the close of his meeting I arose and asked the privilege of speaking, and announced that on such a night I would hold a meeting and answer Brother Shepherd. So we got out of the church and went home and waited for the time to come to answer him. To our surprise Brother Shepherd came and brought his congregation with him. We had a large tent over two hundred feet long, all lighted with acetylene lamps. And there was a crowd! The tent was full to capacity. Just about time for the service to commence, in came Brother Shepherd. He was about to take a seat away in the back, but I said, "I am glad to see you, Brother Shepherd. Come right up here and take a seat with me in the pulpit." He declined, but sat down in front of me, in a chair in the front row. I believe I made him tremble. His old theory could not stand against the evidence!

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Well, it was a lesson to him. He told Brother Pickering, who happened to meet him several years later in St. Louis, that the sermon Captain Nichols had preached that night was too much for him. He said that he could not get up and preach their old church doctrines any more. "I was convinced," he said, "that we were all wrong and that that man had the Bible on his side; so I just resigned my ministerial career. I could not be an honest man and preach their immortal soul, hell-fire, and literal devil any more."

Never in Debt

I want to get a complete title to a lasting home, one clear of debt; and I want you to obtain it also.

I said to Father, "I am not going to get a musical instrument until I am out of debt."

I never went in debt, always saved, and have always enjoyed myself. We may get a pleasant home now, but a sadness comes over us, for by and by we will have to leave it and our pleasant surroundings.

This life is a great blessing, but oh, it is so short in duration! If it would always last I would be satisfied. I could fix up our home so it would be beautiful; would have flowers the year round. I would bring the sunny South right here. I am one who enjoys life. I am of a happy nature and could take great comfort. But sooner or later Death will place its clutches upon some one in our midst and take him to the cold and silent tomb, there to remain until Elijah comes to raise him from death's slumber.

Here we are with life ebbing out, and sooner or later it will cease. Are we really going to get our title clear for the eternal home? How can we obtain it? Only as we eat this bread which came down from heaven, that is the only way we can obtain it.

Learn in Youth

My only regret is that I could not have known more of this blessed truth even earlier in life. Although I started out young, I would like
(Continued on page 21)

nal, "I will be with thee...I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Life was a battle, but a glorious one, because he was on the winning side and remained there. The secret of his success, he often said, was "simple, childlike faith in God." He trusted his God, and his trust was rewarded. He succeeded because he had no idea of failure. It would not be true to say he could not have failed in his mission; as a free moral agent it was within his power to fail, and the Almighty would have found another to do his work; but he would not fail, so he did not.

Another quality which carried him through was his enthusiasm, which in his case comprehended the meaning concealed in the root of the word—en-theos, God within. A study or even a casual reading of his sermons, from the earliest record until the latest, reveals an enthusiasm for life and the cause he held dear which puts the best efforts of most of us to shame. It was not the enthusiasm of a fanatic but of a man who is doing a good work and doing it well, who finds life thrilling and to whom the prize of life eternal at the end of the way is so real that nothing can dim the vision. It was the unchanging, increasing enthusiasm of a busy man, too busy helping others to become depressed or world-weary.

The year 1880 is one long to be remembered, for in it occurred one of the principal acts of the drama. He had in the past believed and preached many things which were largely truth, always ahead of his contemporaries; but every principle was thus far beclouded by some admixture of error. The most vital question in a religion whose highest goal is salvation must always be, "What must I do to be saved?" But there were defects in every answer he had yet been able to give. To be sure, he had for more than twenty years been convinced that the commandments of God were given to be observed. What was more, he preached, practiced and enforced a religion of doing, so that the standard of conduct in his ecclesia was always in marked contrast with the more lax behavior of other Christadelphian groups. Yet there was always an undercurrent fouled by paganism: there was some efficacy in water baptism to wash away past sins; some vague, mysterious virtue in the sacrifice of Calvary, some loophole in the wall of salvation to let in the well-intentioned but imperfect believer. If a man believed and was baptized, should Christ come the next day or he die that night, he would be ready, regardless of his past life.

This had been L. T. Nichols' gospel, and he had long believed it with all his heart. But he was an honest man, a man willing to face the facts and even to look for them. It was this inherent honesty which led him to face his people on that memorable day in 1880 with a confession of past error and the most stupendous proposition offered to men since the Seventh Century when true religion perished in the street and the mark of the Beast became the universal symbol of religion. When Jesus said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," He meant just that and no less: the perfect ordering of every aspect of one's moral life and conduct. Sin being the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4), perfection consists of keeping the law.

The conclusion: No one can be saved apart from knowing and keeping every commandment of God.

It was a colossal proposition, but the testimony of the whole Bible added up to it, no more and no less. It was not his prerogative or theirs to dispute with God. The sensible thing to do was to accept it and begin at once to work out a character acceptable to Him, coming out from the world, crucifying the old nature with all its affections and lusts.

It was, as he had feared, too big a pill for many to swallow. Scores of his followers, fearful of the stark proposition, melted away. Sorrowful but no less determined to stand with the Bible—alone, if need be— he propounded to the handful of survivors the great question put by his Master in a similar crisis: "Will ye also go away?"

The response of this loyal little band must have thrilled and strengthened him: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."



There had been a tremendous elimination of error and of those who loved darkness more than light, but not a grain of wheat had fallen to the ground in the sifting. With the great foundation stone laid bare and swept clean, the temple could now grow in an orderly manner.

Having but limited means of spreading this new light, he appealed to the publisher of a Christadelphian magazine in London, England, but he would have none of it. Sometime later Dr. Thomas, founder of the sect, was in his vicinity and Mr. Nichols visited him, but found him so pompous, cold and unapproachable that no help was to be hoped for from that quarter.

No matter. There would be a way.

In the winter of 1881-2, a call for light and help was heard from the Midwest. Literature had been sent out to names appearing in religious periodicals, and in the town of Barry, Illinois, the seed had germinated. "If you come this way," someone had written, "be sure to call on us and teach us more of these things." He did not wait, but went as soon as it could be arranged, at his own expense, as always. The inquirers were established in the faith, after which missionary work was done in Indiana and Ohio as well. On the return trip he stopped over in San Francisco and purchased a printing press and type, which was installed in an addition to his house. He was henceforth a writer and publisher of pamphlets and tracts, which were sent out gratis. The light had to be carried, and his new acquisition made him independent of the Christadelphian organization, which he was daily leaving further and further behind both in doctrine and practice, although he still bore its name, with the modifying adjective "true." The non-progressive ecclesias were termed "pseudo-Christadelphians." The final rupture was yet to come.

Any man worth his salt is bound to make enemies, the world being what it is; and the greater the man and the more public his mission, the more enemies he will make. Mr. Nichols, with his radically different gospel, inevitably had his detractors and persecutors. The opposition, which began with such puerile tricks as posting "Soul-sleeper" signs, grew more bitter. Threats of violence were common, and in 1883 the persecution culminated in a vicious and cowardly assault on his person which endangered his life. So determined were his enemies to finish their foul work and eliminate this arch-heretic once and for all that it became necessary for him to obey the command of his Lord: "When they shall persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." Oregon, too, had proved unworthy and suffered, without knowing it, a most grievous loss.

Making his way secretly over the mountains to California, accompanied by his wife and Mr. and Mrs. Skeels, he rested until his health was restored, then set about finding a new home for himself and his band. His first leaning was toward the South, and he investigated the possibilities of Texas. There was much that was favorable, but he was not long in discovering that the ointment contained a fly—or several of them. In one place he was looking over the country with his host, who had land to sell and was anxious to impress his visitor with the virtues and advantages of his district.

"We mind our business down hyar," he said. "Once we had a feller hyar who dedn't mind his own business, and one mornin' they found him hangin' on that tree over thar."

A little farther along the road he reminisced again.

"Yes, and we had 'nother feller hyar who dedn't mind his own business, and they found him hangin' over thar!"

Good-bye, Texas!

The search was continued through Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kentucky and Tennessee, his steps turning ever northward. At last the desired haven was found in Minnesota, where the climate was bracing, the location central, and the people law-abiding. Land was purchased at the tiny hamlet of Ellington, in Dodge County, some sixty miles south of St. Paul. A group of loyal followers sold their homes in ungrateful Oregon and settled nearby. His helper, Maud

(Continued next page)

(Continued from page 20)

to have been like Timothy of old, taught from my youth.

The more I have studied the blessed pages of this Bible, the more it grows in wonderment to my soul.

No Cross Words

I would not take all the wealth of the world for the peace we enjoy. In our house, seven women are cooking upon one stove. They have mishaps; but we have yet to hear the first cross word. I have seen the frying pan tipped over, the mush go on the floor, and the other day they were making bread and that went on the floor; and not long ago some one tipped over the gravy dish. But one sister said, "I have more gravy than I want," and another said, "I have more than I want," and another, and so on until she ended up with more gravy than she had in the first place. Here are sisters right here before you cooking on the same stove and eating in the same room, and we have yet to see a cross look or hear a cross word.

Be Honest

I said to a man in our city the other day, "Don't you know that is false, to advertise and then not live up to what you advertise?" But he said, "We have to do it in order to keep up with the times, we have to make a show." They know it is false, but "we have to do it," he said.

Some years ago an agent came around with samples—they happened to be brooms. They looked so nice he took a good many orders; but when he came to deliver, the goods were not as good as the samples. Now isn't that lying? They said they had to do it; but I said, "You go to work and make some brooms, and take your samples out of them, then tell the people that the samples were taken out of the brooms that will be delivered, and if they are not as good as represented they can send them back." The man did so, and his business thrived.

You can do better by being honest than by being dishonest. □

Know Your Bible?

How Are They Alike?

Choose the best answer.

- Josiah — Hezekiah — Asa — Joash**
 - kings of Israel
 - kings of Judah
 - herdsmen
 - God-fearing kings
 - all of the above
- Jael — Deborah — Miriam — Huldah**
 - prophetesses of God
 - women who worked for God
 - ministers of the gospel
 - rulers of nations
 - all of the above
- Samuel — Samson — Othniel — Shamgar — Ehud**
 - prophets
 - shepherds
 - kings
 - judges
- Peter — Andrew — James — John**
 - fishermen
 - men who followed Jesus
 - men who received the Holy Spirit power
 - all of the above
 - two of the above
- Elijah — Elisha — Nathan — Jeremiah**
 - men who spoke for God
 - men who prophesied the future
 - men who were faithful servants of God
 - all of the above
 - two of the above
- Joseph — Daniel — Ezekiel — Nehemiah**
 - men who demonstrated God's power
 - men who spoke for God
 - men who served God in captivity
 - men who served God in adversity
 - all of the above
 - three of the above
- Ruth — Jael — Caleb** were all
 - strangers to God
 - non-Israelites who served God
 - natural born Israelites
 - prophets of God
- Barak — Gehazi — Joshua** were all
 - assistants to prophets
 - prophets of God
 - foreigners who served God
- Ahaz — Jehoram — Manasseh — Zedekiah**
 - good kings of Israel and Judah
 - wicked kings that reformed
 - good kings who went astray
 - wicked kings of Judah and Israel

Answers on Page 26

Hembree, with her blind companion, Maggie Millican, relocated to Barry, Illinois, where there were brethren of like faith.

An incident of the home-seeking journey confirmed his belief that he was under Divine protection as an instrument chosen for some special work or mission. Near Texarkana, on the Texas-Arkansas line, his train collided head-on with another. Coaches were reduced to kindling wood, and casualties were numerous. He himself was not scratched; and born leader that he was, he took charge of the situation in what was left of his coach and succeeded in quelling the panic by assuring the passengers that the danger was now past and rescue work was in order. This conviction of angelic protection followed him through life and was often confirmed.

Is this, perhaps, the story of an ordinary man of some ability, moving in a small circle? *"The servant is not above his Lord."* Jesus of Nazareth, as we remember the account, was considered ordinary by His own generation, and all His work was done in a territory no larger than our State of New Hampshire. "Great oaks from tiny acorns grow"; and the story of the life of L. T. Nichols is but the prelude to a story of incredible magnitude, yet to be lived and destined to be told through eternity future.

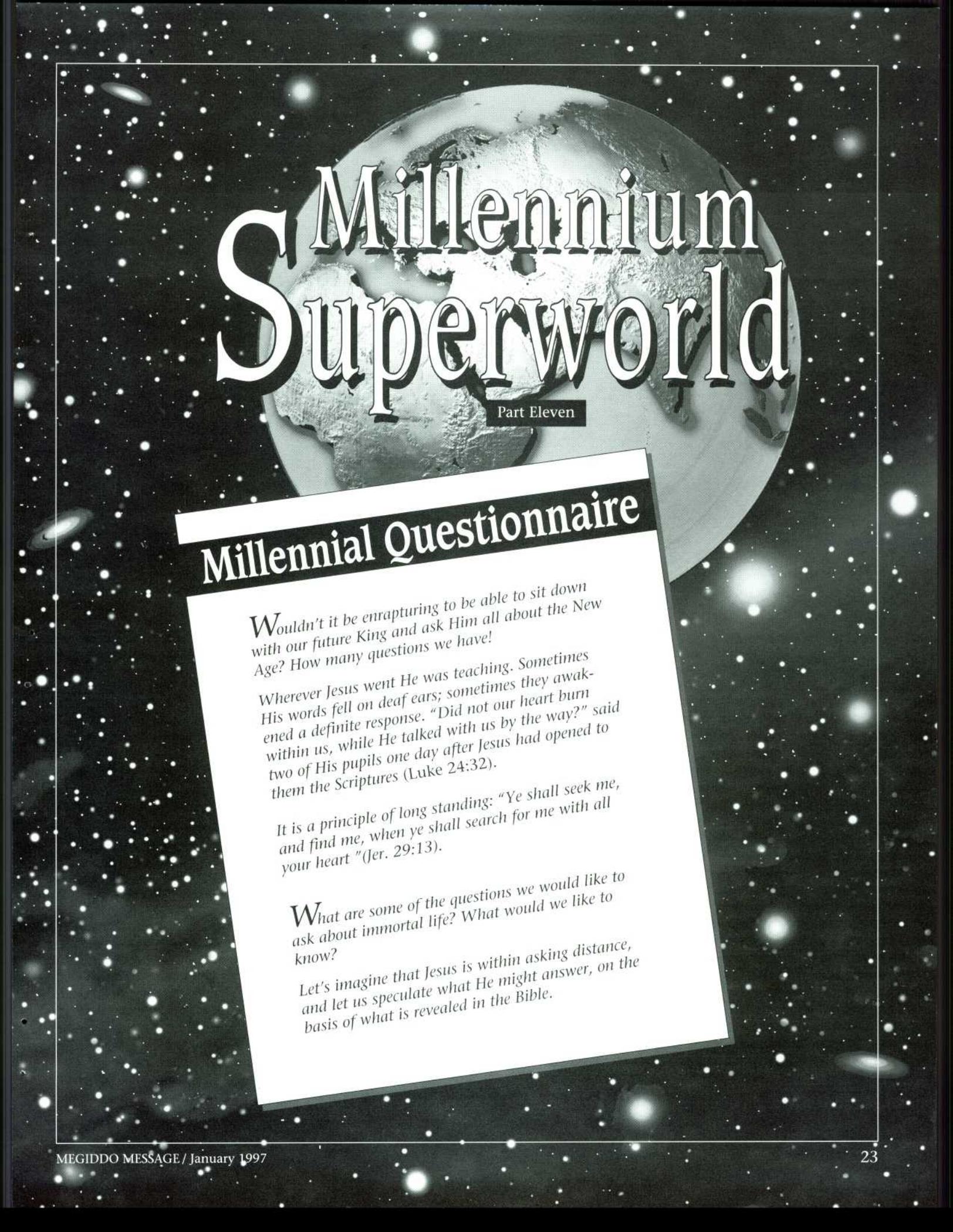
Oh, blessed be God, to think that we can prepare ourselves so as to be worthy to hear these wonderful gracious words, "His wife hath made herself ready." I would rather have this one pleasure than all the pleasures of this world combined. The pleasures of this world will soon, yes, very soon, come to an end; but the pleasures we gain by obedience to the truth will never end. They will not only last for eternity but will be on the increase, multiplying continually, until we will be able to testify from experience that they are indeed "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." —L. T. N.

- Athaliah and Jezebel** were noted for being
 - promoters of evil
 - worshippers of false gods
 - strong leaders
 - very beautiful
 - all of the above
 - three of the above

Where In the Word Do You Find It?

Name the book — and chapter, too, if you can.

- The rebuilding of the temple after the captivity _____
- The ascension of Jesus _____
- Moses striking the rock instead of speaking to it _____
- The vision of the dry bones coming together and standing on their feet _____
- Jesus' words to John on Patmos _____
- Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal _____
- The apostles preaching about Jesus after His ascension _____
- Specific qualifications for a bishop in the early Church _____
- Jeremiah taken to Egypt against his will _____
- Downfall of King Saul _____



Millennium Superworld

Part Eleven

Millennial Questionnaire

Wouldn't it be enrapturing to be able to sit down with our future King and ask Him all about the New Age? How many questions we have!

Wherever Jesus went He was teaching. Sometimes His words fell on deaf ears; sometimes they awakened a definite response. "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way?" said two of His pupils one day after Jesus had opened to them the Scriptures (Luke 24:32).

It is a principle of long standing: "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

What are some of the questions we would like to ask about immortal life? What would we like to know?

Let's imagine that Jesus is within asking distance, and let us speculate what He might answer, on the basis of what is revealed in the Bible.

Millennium Superworld

QUESTION: What will our bodies be like when changed? What will we look like? Will we be completely different?

Answer: Everything that can hurt, harm, or cause suffering will be gone (Isa. 11:9). So you yourself will be changed. You will become a material substance that is incorruptible, for "*flesh and blood*" as you know it will not be permitted in My Kingdom (1 Cor. 15:50-51). You will be changed into a substance superior to flesh and blood; your body will be fashioned like My body now is (Phil. 3:20-21). You will still be you, but you will be a much better "you," a glorified, immortal, incorruptible "you."

QUESTION: Will we be recognizable to our friends?

Answer: Yes, you will see and know each other as you are known (1 Cor. 13:12). You have read the account of the Transfiguration as Matthew recorded it, how that Peter instantly recognized Me, even though there was a supernatural glow, a heavenly radiance emanating from My transfigured Being. All the glorified saints will be like this. That is the promise, "You will be like Me" (1 John 3:2). The righteous will "*shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*" (Matt. 13:43).

QUESTION: Will we be recognized by old marks or features peculiar to us like scars and deformities, or will all immortals look generally alike?

Answer: In the process of the change from mortality to immortality, all physical flaws will be erased. I will have only perfect beings in My Kingdom. No need to worry about marks from aging or physical imperfections or birth defects, or scars from injury or sickness. These are only temporary.

When glorified, you will be created in the image of God physically—that means you will be perfected into a new state that will endure forever.

Each of you will be a perfect and unique individual in the family of God. You will not all look alike. Variety in all God's creation is beyond human fathoming. Every snowflake is different, every fingerprint, every person, even in the mortal realm. God has no duplicates, no redundancies, and He will have none in His perfected work. If you are there, there will be but one *you*.

Have no fear. When God's work with you is finished, you will be perfect. God will have no imperfect or flawed beings in His finished creation. Each immortal saint will be strikingly beautiful and perfect.

QUESTION: What kind of clothes will we be wearing during the Millennium?

Answer: The saints will be easily distinguishable from the non-glorified Millennial people, by their clothing as well as by their bodies. The shining white of the saints will be their distinctive privilege. "White" is representative of purity, and the "shining" is the immortal glow. Immortals will be clean and spotless in character.

But do not imagine a world all white and without color. Immortal eyes can see a much broader spectrum of color than can be seen by mortals. There will be color every where—mixed and blended to immortal taste.

QUESTION: Will we be able to see the angels?

Answer: Yes, you will see the angels. Angels will be on the scene assisting at every level. Angels will come with Me when I return, myriads of them (Matt. 13:27, Dan. 7:10). Many are already invited and are eagerly looking forward to the event. Others are already on your planet, around you even now, but in your present state your eyes are holden and you cannot see them. But your vision when glorified will be changed and you will be able to see far more than you can now imagine.

There have been times in the past when mortals were allowed to see angels. I myself saw angels several times when I was mortal. In your age there have been no open visions, no openly visible manifestations of Divine power. But mortals living during the Millennium will delight in seeing their angel-teachers, angel-helpers and angel-guardians (Isa. 30:20). If you are immortal then, you will be physically like the angels—you will have been changed to the incorruptible state, made equal to them (Luke 20:35-36).

QUESTION: Will everyone be the same age in the Millennium?

Answer: No. Among the mortal citizens will be great differences in age. Some will be living who were born before the Millennium began, before My return; they will be people who submitted to the New Order and gave it their active support, and so will be permitted to live in the Millennium. Then there will be people, billions of people, born during the Millennium, especially during the early years when the population of the world will be multiplying rapidly. These mortals will be very much like mortals you know, only they will all enjoy excellent health and a much longer life-span (Isa. 65:19-22; 33:21). In the absence of sickness and degeneracy, aging will not affect people as it does now. The old and the young will be able to enjoy life together. Life in the Millennium will depend much more on one's moral character than on one's physical advantages, for all will enjoy physical well-being; those who sin openly will not be permitted to live at all.

This new state of mortal life should not seem too strange to you if you recall what the Almighty did centuries ago. During the forty-year trek of the Israelites in the wilderness, He caused their clothing and even their shoes never to wear out. This is an example of God's ability to control deterioration. Surely He can do for living bodies what He did for inanimate shoes!

The built-in capacity of the human body to replace itself is utterly fascinating. This automatic cellular replacement which operates even now in your bodies to keep them self-repaired will be perfected in the mortal bodies of the Millenarians, so that a nine-hundred-year-old will still be able to enjoy life and glowing health.

But My glorified family will enjoy perpetual youth and vigor, with no fear of sickness, aging or death (Isa. 40:31). And they will be able to use it all, for in the ages beyond the Millennium there will be countless worlds to visit and a limitless "forever" in which to explore and enjoy!

QUESTION: This may seem like a strange question, but this world is so noisy. I wonder what sounds will be heard in the Millennium.

Answer: Your world now is filled with many raucous, distressing, grating sounds. Noisy motorcycles, blaring horns, screeching tires, screaming jets will also be things of the past. Screams, arguments and sounds of gunshot and firearms are also sounds that will never be heard in My Kingdom. When you hear sound in the Millennium, it will be pleasing harmony and melody that will transcend the finest melody you have ever heard. All around will be joy and tranquillity (Isa. 32:17-18). There will be nothing to offend, nothing to hurt, destroy, disturb (Isa. 11:9; Mic. 4:4).

QUESTION: Do immortals enjoy warm and loving friendships?

Answer: Can you imagine a God of love having His children unloving to each other? Glorified beings are never cold or unloving. Where there is no jealousy, or hatred, or ill feelings, every grace of goodness abounds. Among them is love and affection such as mortals have never known. Among the glorified, all emotions are pure, holy and heavenly. The association between one person and another, whether man or woman, will be as pure and wholesome and happy as only the angels can describe to you. Those who have been Christian companions during your present lives will be especially close in the new world. Be assured, there will be "fullness of joy" and "pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11).

QUESTION: Will glorified beings living right along with the mortal populace present any problem?

Answer: There will be no problem. Glorified saints, having been changed to the perfect, immortal state, will be like My heavenly Father, who cannot be tempted with evil (Jas. 1:13). Living among mortals who are subject to sin will present no problem. And mortals, who will then be experiencing the challenges of struggle and achievement, will not be hindered by the immortals around them. Rather, the immortals will be able to offer invaluable guidance, direction and support, along with firm and stable government. The Millennial society will be ideal.

QUESTION: I understand there will be differences in rewards among those who will be made immortal when You return. I suppose the highest rewards will go to the great Bible heroes of the past. What will be given to "ordinary" Christians?

Answer: There will be differences in the rewards dispensed, because the Father's righteous policy has always been to reward each according to his works (Rev. 22:12; Jer. 17:10; Rom. 2:6-7). But no man or woman who attains to perfection of character can be called "ordinary." All are *extraordinary*, worthy of special blessing and honor, and all will receive eternal life (Rom. 2:7)—which is no ordinary reward. Some will receive more honor than others; some will have larger cups to fill than others. But all cups will be filled and overflowing with blessing and happiness. There will be fullness of joy for all.

Since the reward of each will depend on each person's spiritual performance in this present life, there will be some surprises. Some whom you might judge barely noticeable may be found near the front in the reward line. One may have served quietly and faithfully for years even when stricken with pain and forced into inactivity.

Others may be singled out for heavenly acclaim who have allowed the Word of God to work within them and develop in them a fragrant and beautiful character during an earthly life beset with all kinds of adversities. Some may have labored with faith aglow through many years, though linked to an unbelieving and abusive mate. Others may have had to labor alone.

Heroes will be discovered among all walks of life. Many who never knew acclaim will be highly honored for their faithfulness in small things (Matt. 25:21).

CROWNING DAY will be joyous for *all* the winners, and its echoes will ring throughout Eternity! □

(Continued from page 17)

sliding of the Jewish people as a reason for God bringing in the Gentiles, and at the same time to make the Jews jealous of what had been their natural heritage. He spoke as though the temporary disfavor upon the Jews was making opportunity for the Gentiles. This was not actually true, as the door had never been closed to the Gentiles. The Lord said through Moses: "And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the passover unto the Lord; according to the ordinance of the passover, and according to the manner thereof, so shall he do: ye shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land" (Num. 9:14).

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In the book of Romans (chapter 9), Paul seems to stress God's right to choose His raw material from any source He wishes, though we must realize He is always choosing by the quality of the material itself, and not by such factors as nationality; else He would be a respecter of persons. The promise is that all who will do His will shall know of the doctrine (John 7:17), and it would be impossible for such to be limited to one particular race. The promise is that "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35).

"Why does it say that part of God's agreement is to 'take away their sins' (Rom. 11:27)?"

There will be no sin in God's finished handiwork, and nothing to hurt nor destroy (Ezek. 34:25; Isa. 11:9). There will be no sickness, sorrow or death (Rev. 21:3-4). He will destroy "the sinners thereof out of it" (Isa. 13:9). All wicked doers will be removed by the cleansing fire of God's judgments, and only the upright will remain (Prov. 2:21-22; Isa. 32:17-18).

As for the records of His own people, God has promised to take away their sins by forgiveness, so that there is no stain left to even be mentioned against them (Ezek. 33:14-15), and nothing shall enter

the "eternal city" which in any way defiles or is defiled (Rev. 21:27).

It seems also that God will remove all tendency to sin from those who are glorified. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36)—free from everything that can harm or defile. But God's plan is that this freedom from sin will be given only to those who have met His highest standard of excellence, who have become "pure in heart" (Matt. 5:8); pure even as Christ is pure (1 John 3:3), who have purified their souls by "obeying the truth" (1 Pet. 1:22). We cannot picture the angels struggling against evil dispositions or temptations to sin. God's finished creation will not be battling evil through all eternity. We do not know just how this will be done, but the result will be individuals that are pure and clean through and through for all eternity. □

Making Plans?

We will observe the Sacred New Year beginning Monday evening, April 7, and continue through Tuesday, April 8. Plan now to spend the holidays with us, as we meet to honor our coming King and to welcome the time of beginning again.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 22

How Are They Alike?

1. d. God-fearing kings
2. b. women who worked for God
3. d. judges
4. d. all of the above
5. d. all of the above
6. e. all of the above
7. b. non-Israelites who served God
8. a. assistants to prophets
9. d. wicked kings of Judah and Israel
10. f. three of the above (a., b., c.)

Where In the Word Do You Find It?

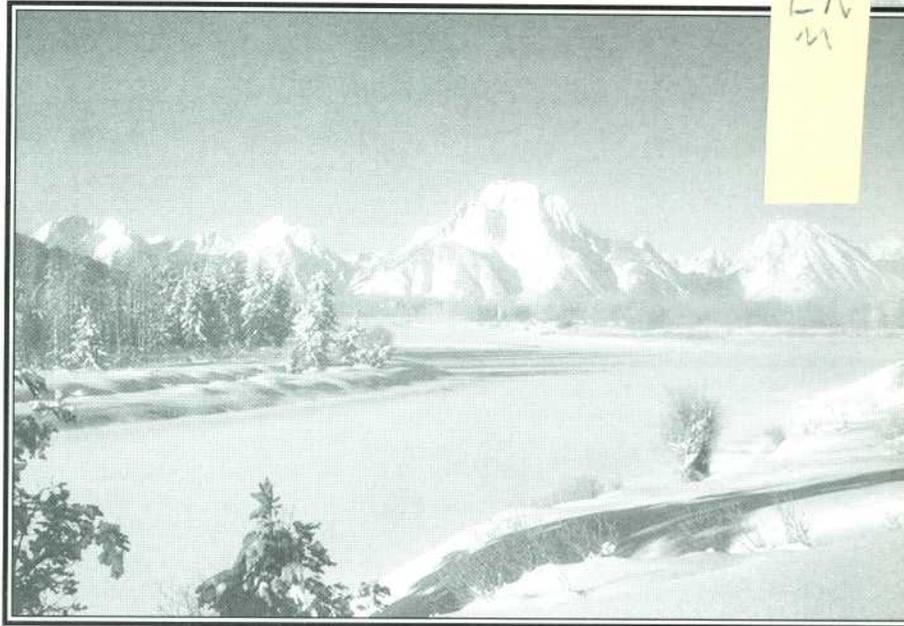
1. The rebuilding of the temple after the captivity — *Ezra*
2. The ascension of Jesus — *Acts and/or Luke*
3. Moses striking the rock — *Numbers 20*
4. The vision of the dry bones — *Ezekiel 37*
5. Jesus' words to John on Patmos — *Revelation*
6. Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal — *1 Kings 18*
7. The apostles preaching Jesus after His ascension *Acts 2*
8. Specific qualifications for a bishop in the early Church — *Titus 1 and/or 1 Timothy 3*
9. Jeremiah taken to Egypt — *Jeremiah 43*
10. Downfall of King Saul — *1 Samuel 15*

God's Hilltops

*I will lift mine eyes to the hills today,
My help cometh from Him who opened
the way;
He will not suffer thy foot to stray
So lift thine eyes to the hills and pray.
He never slumbers, nor yet will He sleep
But over us always His watch will keep.
The sun shall not smite with burning ray,
The moon cannot drive thy sleep away.
The Lord shall save thee from evil quite,
His love protect thee by day and night.
Even when thou goest out or in thy door
His love will preserve thee for evermore.*

Do not waste your emotions. HATE what is really hateful—disease, poverty, war, bad influence, and every evil. LOVE all that is truly lovely—especially, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” Then WORK to show how you feel. Emotions and motions go together.

Don't be self-righteous. Get the log out of your own eye before you try to extract the splinter you think you see in the other fellow's eye.



*Do what you can,
being what your are;
Shine like a glow worm,
if you can't be a star.
Work like a pulley,
if you can't be a crane,
Be a wheel greaser,
if you can't drive the train.*

When you stop to think, don't forget to start again!

ARE YOU HIS DISCIPLE?

(Continued from page 2)

means changing until, as Paul said it, we can walk in “newness of life” and live in “newness of spirit” (Rom 6:4; 7:6). But it will not happen by instinct. It will take conscious, daily effort to put these basic characteristics of Christ to work in our lives.

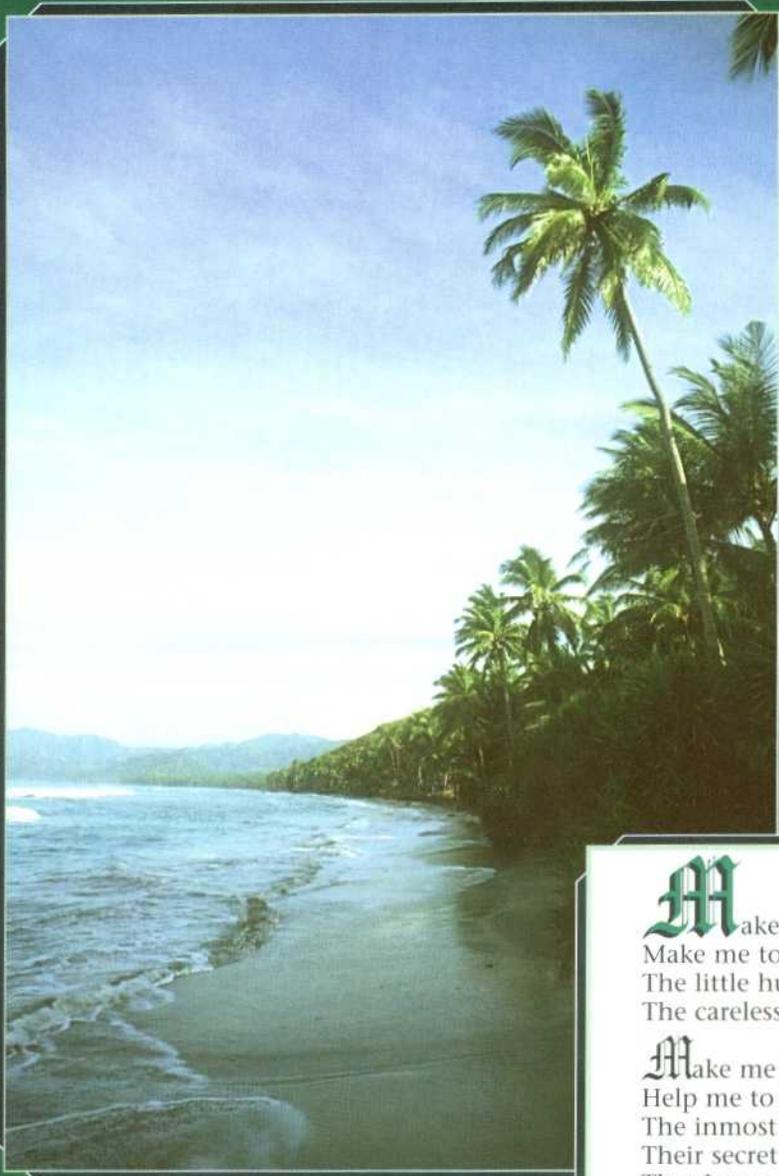
4. *Encourage others to apply the Word of God to their lives.* What is the most effective method of encouraging others? It is by showing in our own lives the power of the Gospel to make us more like Christ. A single shady action, a halfhearted stand against wrong, an unforgiving spirit, a word tainted with malice can do more harm than the finest, most polished sermon can rectify. There is much truth in the cliché, “What you are shouts so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.”

Genuine Bible faith has power. It has power to change our lives, but not automatically. And not through theater, or liturgy, or lecture, or entertain-

ment. There is no easy, comfortable way to become like Christ. There is no way but the way of discipline and duty, of obedience and personal self-sacrifice, the way which Jesus described when He said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me...And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 9:23; 14:27).

But can we even faintly imagine the rewards Jesus has reserved for His disciples? Recall His reply to Peter, when Peter asked, “We have left everything to follow you!” What could they expect in return? Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth,...no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life” (Mark 10:28-30, NIV).

Can any sacrifice be too much, compared with the promise of “a hundred times as much in this present age....and in the age to come, eternal life”? □



Make me too brave to lie or be unkind.
Make me too understanding, too, to mind
The little hurts companions give, and friends,
The careless hurts that no one quite intends.

Make me too thoughtful to hurt others so;
Help me to know
The inmost hearts of those for whom I care,
Their secret wishes, all the loads they bear,
That I may add my courage to their own
And make some lonely hearts feel less alone
And happy ones a little happier yet.
May I forget
What ought to be forgotten; and recall,
Unfailing, all
That ought to be recalled, each kindly thing,
Forgetting wrongs that sting.

To all upon my way,
Day after day,
Let me be joy, be hope! Let my life sing!
With praises let it ring;
More, let it shine with radiance bright,
Reflecting, Lord, Thy light:
Those brilliant beams that scatter joy and peace,
And make all weariness to cease.

May Thy clear light shine through me day by day.
And as these steps of mine pursue Thy way,
Lord, may that journey be
An ever shortening walk toward Thee!

—Contributed