



Megiddo Message

*The God of glory
thunders: ...the Lord
is over the mighty waters.*

—PSALM 29:3, NEB

What Does

GOD Think?

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord." —Jeremiah 29:11

Unfortunately, this is not the most commonly asked question in the world. More nearly qualifying for first place is, "What do you think?" But the problem with that is that you are human, just as I am, and what you think or what I think is just as inconsequential and non-authoritative as what the next human being may think.

What God thinks is a very different matter.

Why worry about what God thinks of us? Because in His hands is the ultimate destiny of every living thing. On Him we depend for every breath, every drop of water, every heartbeat.

Does God think? The Bible tells us that He does. As surely as God exists, He is a thinking being. We certainly could not conceive of a non-thinking being ordering the vast reaches of the universe, controlling and directing the course of billions of galaxies each having billions of stars. If we think our little obligations require thought, what about God's!

And His thoughts are much more than fleeting fancies or passing whims. These are His own words, recorded by His prophet Jeremiah: *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord"* (Jer. 29:11). This verse tells us two things: God thinks about us, and He knows what He thinks!

But there is something else that is remarkable about God's thoughts. *"I know,"* He says, *"the thoughts that I think toward you."* God has thoughts toward us, poor little creatures of dust that we are. He thinks, and He thinks toward us! Can we imagine what this means? Can we imagine the content of those thoughts toward us—on our behalf?

This is the question that should concern us: What are God's thoughts toward me? Are they, in the words of the Prophet, thoughts of good and not of evil, to give me a future and a hope (Jer. 29:11)? Are those thoughts planning my reward? Are they arranging what can be mine if I meet His standard? Or are they thoughts of "evil," as God had toward disobedient Israel? (Jer. 18:8).

Let us beware of blandly assuming that all God's thoughts toward us are automatically beneficent. Being realistic and knowing how far short we naturally fall of meeting God's standard, we certainly

can imagine what some of those thoughts are—and they are not all commending. Toward disobedient Israel God had thoughts of punishment and judgment. And if we are disobedient, His thoughts toward us will be of the same.

There is an ever present danger of being deceived by misreading the Divine mind, as though it were a reflection of our own. To properly perceive God's thoughts, we must be honest in our reading of His Word, open in our examining of our hearts, and sincere in our desire to get the facts. Imagining that He thinks us better than we are will not change either His mind or the facts. And believing that what He thinks does not matter will not change the consequences of His thoughts toward us.

Yes, it is comforting that God thinks toward us, that with the cares of the universes in His infinite mind, He yet has room for thoughts about us. But let us take His thoughts toward us more seriously; for whatever He thinks toward us, we ourselves are the architect of those thoughts. We ourselves have designed them by the way we live.

And God's thoughts toward us are the prelude to His actions. If we know what He thinks concerning us we know how He intends to act toward us. God's thinking is not the idle contemplation of the philosopher; it is the action plan of the commanding general. We forget this when we are so anxious about what the world will think of us and so indifferent about God's thoughts toward us.

God's thoughts are true and wise and good. If, therefore, we can know God's thoughts about anything, we shall see the thing in its true light. Our thoughts are blinded by prejudice, colored by passion, limited by our ignorance, broken, fragmented, perverted. God's only are clear and perfect as His truth.

The next time we are contemplating whether a certain thing is right or wrong, instead of speculating what others' opinions may be, let us ask ourselves in all seriousness, "What does God think?"

Because He knows. And by what He knows we will be judged and rewarded. Eternally.

Whatever God thinks toward us, we ourselves are the framers of those thoughts.



“Lord,

What Shall Be the Sign of Thy Coming?”

God is a mighty Creator. Expansion is His everlasting purpose. “Known unto him are all His works from the beginning of creation” (Acts 15:18). He formed the earth to be inhabited. But He did not plan that it should be perpetually desecrated by gangsters, drug pushers, alcoholics, criminals, and immoral, wicked people of all shades and grades. He designed it for a righteous, holy, peace-loving

the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him” (Dan. 7:27).

It is God’s purpose that irresponsible government shall cease:

“Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.” “I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders” (Isa. 32:1; 60:17–18).

The second advent of Jesus is the event that will initiate all

these wonderful changes, and that is a major part of God’s plan for the earth and mankind. Jesus said He was going away, and He promised His anxious disciples that He would return. During the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, He met with His loyal followers a number of times, as Luke tells us in the Acts of the Apostles: “In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:1–3, NIV).

On one occasion Jesus was in the temple, and as someone spoke

about the temple, “how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts,” He took occasion to reveal to His disciples what lay in the near future, and before He finished He gave a preview of what should befall earth’s inhabitants at the time of His second coming. And when He was alone with His disciples, His disciples asked Him, “Tell us, when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (Matt. 24:3). His answer, recorded in both Matthew 24 and Luke 21, is of special interest to us who are living in the last days, near the time when the final phase of His prophecy will be fulfilled.

Short Range Prophecies

As a short range prophecy, Jesus told them of the destruction of their temple. Not one stone should be left upon another that should not be thrown down (Luke 21:6). Deceivers should arise saying they were Christ; they should not go after them (v. 8). Then He mentions some events that have happened over and over in earth’s story—there should be wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes; “see that ye be not troubled,” He said. Don’t be terrified, don’t be panic-stricken, for these things will happen, but “the end is not by and by” or “the end is not yet” (Luke 21:9; Matt. 24:6). His followers would be forced to suffer persecution at the hands of their enemies for His name’s sake; and be hated of all men (Matt. 24:9). Their city Jerusalem should be compassed with armies and destroyed. There should be great distress in the land and wrath upon the people, “And they shall fall by the edge of

WHETHER WE BELIEVE OR NOT,
WHETHER WE PREPARE FOR IT OR NOT,
THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL COME.

people. The Psalmist declares: “The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever” (Ps. 37:29).

The great Creator has planned to fill the earth with His glory. That was His purpose in arranging its creation. It is not His purpose that the earth should ultimately be destroyed, or that it should forever be under the heel of tyranny, or mismanaged by irresponsible rulers. It is His purpose that our planet should be inhabited by worthy mortals with whom He can share His munificence, and upon whom He can bestow limitless blessings. “For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited” (Isa. 45:18).

The prophet Daniel projects the happy culmination of God’s plan for the earth in these words: “And

the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24).

It all happened, just as Jesus had foretold.

The Longer Range Prophecies

Then spanning many centuries He predicted some of the very things that have taken place in the world during recent years and are taking place at the moment. "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars"—the greater powers of earth and their luminaries—"and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:25-26).

This last prediction (the sea and the waves roaring) has been fulfilled in our time beyond our ability to imagine even a decade ago. Probably the greatest single cause of fear in our world today is the ever present threat of violence. Or perhaps, with the recent reports from Iraq, it is a fear of the destructive potential of biological weapons in the hands of a ruthless dictator such as Saddam Hussein, who is now reported to have sufficient quantity to destroy all life on earth. It is a danger from which no one feels totally safe.

Then there are the fears caused by the enormous power of illegal drug traffickers worldwide, which are heavily armed and utterly without scruple. The drug industry is, in the words of one reporter, introducing a level of violence never before known. And we cannot forget the horrors of civil war in many areas of the globe, along with racial tensions, terrorism, and underground crime—can anyone deny the vivid fulfillment of the prophecy that the hearts of thinking men and women are indeed "failing them for fear"?

But Jesus had one more prophecy in this passage which we must not overlook: "the powers of heaven shall be shaken." What heavens are shaken? The political powers of earth.

The Believer's Attitude: Don't Fear

In the midst of all this, what should be the attitude of the believer? Jesus followed His forecast of fear with the prediction of His personal return: "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (vs. 27-28).

"As It Was In The Days of Noah"

Let us consider some other God-given signs and predictions of His coming.

In Luke 17:26-27, Jesus foretold the state mankind would be in at His coming, and current conditions fit His prediction with astounding accuracy. This passage reads in the New Living Translation: "When the Son of Man returns, the world will be like the people were in Noah's day. In those days before the flood, the people enjoyed banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat and the flood came to destroy them all."

Individuals and nations today go about their daily lives with no thought of Divine intervention. In the days of Noah, the antediluvian world were warned through the preaching of Noah, yet were unbelieving. For 120 years Noah warned of the approach of the flood, but they refused to be alerted or to change their course of life. Just so today God is warning through His Word, but the majority go heedlessly along, pursuing the normal course of life, with no thought of God or the future. And so they will continue until the day God's judgments descend upon them unawares.

Isaiah foretold the coming judgments of God in the following words: "Behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity" (Isa. 26:21). Daniel foretold a "time of trouble, such as never was since there

was a nation even to that same time" (Dan. 12:1). The prophet Malachi pictures the judgments upon the wicked as follows: "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Mal. 4:1). And Jesus Himself said: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36).

CAN WE DOUBT FOR A MOMENT THE DIVINE INSPIRATION BEHIND THESE PROPHECIES THAT SO ACCURATELY DESCRIBE OUR DAY?

Then Jesus continues in Luke 17:28, "And the world will be as it was in the days of Lot. People went about their daily business—eating and drinking, buying and selling, farming and building—until the morning Lot left Sodom. Then fire and burning sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. Yes, it will be 'business as usual' right up to the hour when the Son of Man returns" (vs. 28-30, NLT). The people of Sodom were also blind to approaching doom. They were unsuspecting. The warning of Lot was received with disdain; he seemed to his sons-in-law "as one that mocked." Sodom to be destroyed at the rising of the morning sun? Nonsense! The sun never set more beautiful; the evening sky was peaceful and serene. God would not overthrow such a beautiful city of homes and landscapes and gardens. The old man probably meant all right, but he was unduly frightened.

Is not this the attitude today? Only the smallest minority are aware of approaching Divine intervention, with its inevitable destruction of life, and are making a sincere effort to escape. That, too, is

"Lord, What Shall Be the Sign of Thy Coming?"

a sign of Christ's coming, for "even thus shall it be when the Son of man is revealed."

Yet another parallel exists between our modern world and Sodom: the sin of immorality. The most vivid evidence of this fact is the Aids virus, the first cases of which were identified in 1982. Now the number of cases is estimated at 10 to 20 million worldwide, and spreading in epidemic

A **AT ANY MOMENT GOD WILL BREAK INTO HUMAN HISTORY AND REVERSE ITS GODLESS FLOW.**

proportions. The U.S. News has called it a disease "devilishly molded to the times," fiercely revealing the gays, prostitutes and intravenous-drug abusers. It is estimated that 2.3 million died of AIDS in 1997, a 50% increase over 1996. And now innocent children are being born infected, all because immoral persons refuse to reform. It is a definite sign of the last days.

Now those who desire to feed on the low and vile can have the very worst in the privacy of their own home—through television, video and the internet. Uncontrolled animal nature is running wild—it is a curse for which there is no remedy—outside the coming of Christ.

Perilous Times

We find ourselves today in a most dangerous and difficult time, a time when, as the apostle wrote, "it is very difficult to be a Christian" (2 Tim. 3:1, TLB). We find ourselves in a society to which we do not belong, and we face the continual problem of remaining true to God in the midst of an unbelieving world. Is there today any word from the Lord for us at such a time as this?

Thank God, there is! God *has* spoken especially for us. He has spoken in regard to the time in which we live. Will we listen and believe,

taking God at His word, and respond accordingly?

One Scripture applicable to these last days, so accurate that it fairly screams its message, is the forecast of Paul recorded in 2 Timothy 3. (New Living Translation):

"You should also know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control; they will be cruel and have no interest in what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. You must stay away from people like that" (vs. 1-5).

A careful study of this passage will reveal it to be a source of guidance, instruction and encouragement for us as we await the soon arrival of our Lord. Let us examine it statement by statement.

YOU SHOULD ALSO KNOW THIS. Introductory words such as these emphasize the importance of the message that follows. We lose some of the affirmativeness when translating from the Greek into the English language. Our language is more casual, less demanding. "Wake up! Know this! In addition to what I have just told you, absorb this also into your minds and keep it there!" The Greek word *ginosko* here indicates that this is knowledge that affects a believer in a personal manner.

At Christ's first advent, this revelation was given through Christ to Paul regarding the character of the times and the character of men in the last days. If this revelation is a description of today, then we are living on the threshold of some nineteen hundred years of God's silence. If this be true, then earth's long dark night is almost over. The day is ready to break. We have

every reason to expect God to break into human history at any moment and reverse its godless flow.

THAT IN THE LAST DAYS. The key word here is *eschatos* (es-khat'-oce), which generally means the last of a series of events. Actually, the term "last days" was used by the apostles to apply to a period of time that began with the first advent of Jesus. As soon as Christ came, they were in the "last days" because the period of fulfillment had begun and would go on until completed at His second advent. As the author of Hebrews wrote (1:1-2, NIV), "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son."

In particular, though, the term seems to apply most especially to the final end of the "last days," the time just preceding the glorious return of Christ. As an illustration of the use of the word the lexicon gives the "last trump" of 1 Corinthians 15:52, with the following explanation: "the trumpet after which no other will sound."

The period of time described in 2 Timothy is the time just before God breaks His long silence and ushers in His new Kingdom. And what does Paul say about this time?

PERILOUS TIMES SHALL COME. The word "perilous" comes from the Greek word *chalepos* which means harsh, severe, savage, as used in 2 Timothy 3:1. "Times" is the word used to translate *chronos* (khron'-os), a plural form which denotes a particular period. A better rendering might be "Harsh, severe and savage periods shall come." Do we not see just such a time today, a world filled with peril? And it is destined to be this way until Christ returns.

From the wording, it is also quite evident that the perils of these last days are related to the godless character of men.

FOR PEOPLE WILL LOVE ONLY THEMSELVES. This phrase does not speak of an isolated few but of a widely prevailing attitude or condition during the last days. *Philautos* (fil'-ow-tos) in the Greek means self-lovers. It designates selfishness; a satisfying of one's own comforts,

pleasures and advantages while disregarding others, even at their expense. Do we not see this attitude everywhere today, in the craze for comfort, pleasure and personal advantage—often to the total disregard of others' needs or interests?

Selfishness places many marriages under extreme stress. Nor do some parents care for their children as they should, so wrapped up are they in their own selfish desires. Child abuse, even to the point of death, occurs at a rate of several per day—more than a million cases of child abuse were investigated last year.

The divorce rate is another indicator of the selfishness of our times. Very rare is the family not affected by a broken home, divorce or re-marriage. And the situation is even worse than statistics reflect because of the now socially accepted option: of living together outside the bonds of marriage. It is part of the so-called "new freedom," but the result is a frightful breakdown of family life and an unstable social environment. Recently a grade school "room mother" reported on a survey she had made of her child's second-grade class, and only 5 of the 29 children in the class were living in a traditional mother-father-child situation. Do we wonder that the young suffer from a lack of guidance and security?

Next follows this statement: **PEOPLE WILL LOVE ONLY...THEIR MONEY.** *Philarguros* (fil-ar'-goo-ros)

is the Greek word meaning money lovers. It speaks of those who have avid desires for money. Some call it drive, ambition, zeal; but it is just a cover up for what it really is—greed. Witness the money scandals uncovered almost daily in government and in business. The present day Mafia is also an example of rapacious persons who kill and maim to get money and have no feeling even if innocent victims are caught in the cross fire. The current gambling craze is also fueled by the love of money. Money is felt by many to be the ultimate good, yet those who get it are often the most dissatisfied.

THEY WILL BE

BOASTFUL. The Greek word for boastful is *alazones*, and means empty pretenders, boasters, showy. It is the spirit of "keeping up with the Joneses" which is so strong today that advertisers use it as a key selling technique. Today's generation of young people have been called the "Gimme Generation," a trait they have learned from their elders. "Get all you can while you can" is the driving instinct of multitudes.

AND PROUD. *Huperaphanoi* (hoop-er-ay'fan-oi) means appearing above others, haughty. This is defined as having "an overweening estimate of one's means or merits," even to despising others or treating

them with contempt. Compare the attitude of many of our government leaders today with that of our country's founding fathers, such as George Washington and Abraham Lincoln who gratefully and openly acknowledged their dependence on God.

THEY WILL BE SCOFFING AT GOD. The equivalent in the Greek is *blasphemoi* which means speaking evil, slanderous, reproachful, railing, abusive. Other translations



THESE THINGS ARE WRITTEN TO WARN US AGAINST DESPONDENCY AND INDECISION.

render the term "abusive," "revilers." This practice is seen repeatedly in politics, also in competitive sports, where the contestant will, do almost anything to win. It is also prevalent among career men and women seeking promotions. It is visible, too, in the competitive efforts of company against company. Principle is set aside, if only one can outdo his competitor.

ABUSIVE also applies to the use—or misuse—of language. A half century ago bad language was confined primarily to the lower element of society. Swearing and the use of four-letter words was not tolerated among so-called "decent" persons. Today such language is used com-

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*Lord, we thank You for this new day which you have made, for light and dark,
for sunset and dawn.
We thank You that You have made us as we are.
We thank you for hands to work and feet to walk;
For eyes to see and ears to hear;
For minds to think and plan, for memories to remember, and hearts to love.
We thank You for those who today will teach us,
For those who will help us,
And for those on whose strength we may rely and from whose experience we
may draw to do our work and solve our problems.
We thank You for those whose lives give glory to You,
And who by their example encourage others to seek You.
Above all we thank You for the life and example of Your Son, Christ Jesus.
Grant that all through today we may never forget our duty
and bond to Him. AMEN.*

A Good Soldier

A Sunday Afternoon Talk from
"SUNDAY READING FOR THE YOUNG"—1887

Robin. 'It's kind of you, Master Frank—very kind—to come and read to me. I never was much of a scholar, and now, my eyes are getting dim.'

Frank. 'But I like to come, Mr. Robin; and what shall I read?'

Robin. 'Why, anything you please; you can't go wrong in the Lord's Book, lad. There isn't a single chapter in it that I shouldn't care to hear, unless it is some of the lists of names; and like enough there's teaching in them, too, if we only understood how to find it.'

Frank. 'Well, I like the stories best, Mr. Robin.'

Robin. 'Ay, Master Frank? Well, so the young folks do; and, indeed, I like them myself, lad. Why, there's no story-book like the Bible after all! Sisera, and Gideon, and Joshua. And what about David and Goliath!'

Frank. 'Oh, Mr. Robin, I do like those stories! And I do so want to be a soldier, and they won't let me!'

Robin. 'Won't let you, Master Frank! But didn't the Squire himself have your name put down long ago on the Captain's muster-roll?'

Frank. 'I don't think he ever did, Mr. Robin. He says I am the only son and must not go and leave him and mother.'

Robin. 'But I was there, and I heard you 'listed for one of the Lord's own soldiers. "The Lord is a Man of war," you know, lad.'

Frank. 'Oh, but I mean a *real* soldier, Mr. Robin. I want to fight, and win battles, and take towns...'

Robin. 'Ah, wait a minute, Master Frank. It's a fine thing, maybe, to take a town,—I could tell you about one I saw taken, and when I saw all the misery of the women and the poor little bairns I changed my mind a bit. But you turn over the Book, lad, and read the thirty-second verse of the sixteenth of Proverbs.'

Frank. "'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.'" But, Mr. Robin, it's grand to go to battle, and there doesn't seem anything grand about giving up one's own way.'

Robin. 'And which do you think is hardest, Master Frank?'

Frank was silent.

Robin. 'There's GENERAL SELF for you to fight. He's got a whole army of Tempters under him, and some fine officers to help him. There's CAPTAIN AFRAID-TO-BE-LAUGHED-AT, and CAPTAIN WANT-MY-OWN-WAY, and MAJOR LIKE-TO-BE-FIRST. Did you ever fight any of those gentry, lad?'

Frank. 'Indeed, I am afraid CAPTAIN WANT-MY-OWN-WAY is the best soldier of them all, Mr. Robin—the hardest to fight.'

Robin. 'Ay, I think you're not far wrong, lad. Shall I tell you how he and I had a sore battle in my young days, and how he beat me, lad, and left a wound that I'll never quite get over?'

'I was a laddie as you are now, lad, tall and strong for my age, and the one comfort of my mother's old age. Well, the sergeant came to our village, with white ribbons flying, and ready to treat any one of us at the "Blue Lion." "Here's fine food for powder!" says he, and clapped me on the back. "What, lad!" says he, "those shoulders getting round with following the plough! Follow the drum, my lad; be a man, and not a clodhopper!"'

'I didn't like to be called a clodhopper, and when the other lads jeered and said, "he go for a soldier? He's tied too firm to mammy's apron-string," the hot blood rose up in my face, Master Frank.

"Be a brave lad!" says the sergeant; and the enemy whispered, "They will all laugh at you." I was a coward, and WANT-MY-OWN-WAY and AFRAID-TO-BE-LAUGHED-AT beat me. I told myself my mother would cry for a bit, and then be proud of me, and I would come home fine with my medals and my glory! Ay, and PRIDE, that's another enemy, he whispered how *all* the people in the village would come to look up to me when I came home so grand.

'Well, I went, and in a month I was out in the Crimea. There was fighting indeed! And as I lay in the trenches before Sebastopol I had time to think, and when I dozed off I used to seem to see my mother's face, pale, and thin, and sad, as I fancied it must be when her only son had gone off and never said so much as good-bye. Ay, they called me a

brave soldier, but in my heart I knew I was a coward—I was too much of a coward to go and ask her blessing before I started!

'I was wounded, Master Frank. I was taken to the hospital at Scutari. There I lay between life and death, and when I got a bit better a kind nurse wrote home for me. Ah, but it was too late then!'

Two great tears gathered in the old soldier's dim eyes and ran down his wrinkled cheeks. 'It's many a year since I cried; but it comes back fresh-like to me now. When I was well at last and the war over and I got a furlough, I went down to the old place. She

wasn't there. An untidy woman came scolding to the door when I knocked, and said if I wanted the person I was asking for I'd better go to the churchyard. She slammed the door in my face. Well, well, I won't try to tell you how I felt.

'That, Master Frank, was instead of the glory I thought of coming back to.'

Frank. 'That was sad for you, Mr. Robin.'

Robin. 'Too late's always a sad word, lad. Well, Master Frank, don't forget this, there's no sorrow mixed with the joy of the Lord's soldiers, who have fought the good fight and won the crown of life.' □

BE ENTHUSIASTIC!

Our hope of eternal life must never be allowed to dim, or we will end up in the ranks of the unbelievers.

A true believer is one who knows the law of God and submits himself totally to it. To do this requires an enthusiasm which never slackens. The Israelites were filled with enthusiasm on the day they left Egypt, but how soon it faded! This is also what happens to most covenant-makers. Even the most trivial things can distract us enough to draw our focus away from our goal. But if we develop an enthusiastic attitude, if our desire for the Kingdom becomes so strong that we have a passion for the Kingdom, nothing will stop us from making ourselves worthy.

Millions of people today are looking for a way to extend their mortal lives for a few more years. Many are subjecting themselves to a regimen of exercise and a certain diet in hope of living a little longer. It is, therefore, amazing that so few are interested in living forever. And with few exceptions, those who are longing for eternal life are looking for it in the wrong place. And even among those who know the right way, there is great danger of not being willing to do all that is necessary to make our lives pleasing to God.

We will never accomplish the work without enthusiasm. Transforming ourselves into new creatures is a serious and difficult work. We must develop such self-control that all our thoughts, words and actions are acceptable to God. Anything less than 100 percent dedication simply cannot accomplish it, but a 100 percent effort cannot fail. —S. Kincannon

JUMPING AT CONCLUSIONS

A long time ago I read a story which illustrated the point of jumping at conclusions. The setting was at the local school, and during recess twelve-year-old Jeff happened to walk by one of the school rooms and saw Johnny, one of his young friends, fumbling around the teacher's pocketbook. Johnny fumbled and fumbled, and finally took out some money. Immediately Jeff spread the word that Johnny was stealing from the teacher. It caused no small stir among the student body, and soon everyone was talking about what Johnny had done.

Imagine the chagrin on Jeff's face when the teacher explained to him that Johnny had permission to do what he did! Jeff learned a lesson that day: Never, never say something bad about someone until you know the facts. Jeff was guilty of imagining evil against his friend, and only after sorrowful apologies was he able to regain the friendship of Johnny. —R. Cabbage

NO PLACE FOR THE DEVIL!

...nor give place to the devil. —Ephesians 4:27

A teacher of a Bible school class gave her students an hour long exam. They were to spend half their time writing about God and the other half about the devil.

One student wrote steadily for the whole hour on the first subject, and then wrote at the bottom of his manuscript, "I had no time for the devil."

That wasn't the way to get a good grade on an exam, but his comment points up the way to successfully resist and overcome evil: crowd it out. It is the principle of displacement. If we fill our minds full of good, wholesome, upbuilding thoughts, we, too, will not be able to "give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27).

Before you launch into any day, do you stop and read a Scripture and ask God to go with you? Keep your mind active all day, and you will find that you can keep evil out; you can "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one" (Eph. 6:16).

The Christian whose mind is filled with God has no place for evil.



Christian WORK ETHICS WIN

Most homeowners today have experienced the dismay of hiring a worker who proved to be incompetent. Whether the task was to fix some plumbing, or repair the roof, or install a new telephone system, all too common is the element of dissatisfaction.

What is the problem? Surely there are exceptions, but the champions of competence and service seem to be disappearing from the workaday world as more and more workers are more concerned with higher wages and benefits from the job than with thoroughness and quality of their work.

In this area, as in every other area of life, Christians have the opportunity to show their distinguished difference.

In its earliest days, Christianity brought to the world of work a new sense of significance and worth. Work was not, as the Greeks had thought, an evil that ought to be avoided in the interest of contemplating good. Nor was it to be pushed on to a slave class. The Bible has never been embarrassed that David was a shepherd, Jesus was a carpenter, the early Disciples were fishermen, and the great Apostle to the Gentiles was a tentmaker. With patient industry, these devout men so practiced their special task that they became qualified also to shepherd souls and fish for men. Historic Christianity has much to say to us today about glorifying God by doing one's work well, and that the lowliest service can be done as unto God (Col. 3:23). For the Christian, the daily job is not simply a means of economic survival, indispensable though it be. Most of all, it is the investing of one's gifts as a divine stewardship.

The workplace gives the Christian a prime opportunity to show what difference a sense of Christian responsibility makes. By performing faithfully one's work as a calling, to the limit of one's ability, the worker can show clearly the benefits of his belief in God. It makes him a better person, more dependable, more conscientious, more committed, more trustworthy, more diligent—simply because above his commitment to employer or to customers he is committed to God.

Such workmanship pays double benefits, both in this world and in the world to come. The philosophy that a fast dollar is more important than a good job is an extension of the illusion that we can get something for nothing. This scheme is not successful in the human economy, and it certainly will not succeed in the Divine economy, where every one is guaranteed to receive according to what he has done (2 Cor. 5:10).

The "something for nothing" philosophy, given enough time, will end up with nothing. □

The Destiny of the Earth

FROM ADAM TO ETERNITY

God has a plan for Planet Earth. "He created it not in vain," said the ancient Prophet (Isa. 45:18), "he formed it to be inhabited." He formed it to be ultimately a perfect and ideal world, filled with His glory (Num. 14:21), people who will eternally enjoy the blessings of health, happiness and prosperity.

It is the theme of our Lord's Prayer: "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Toward this great end God worked in ages past, and He is still working today.

The author of the book of Genesis gives in symbolic picture a long-range view of God's work on earth. His goal and purpose is a whole new heavens (new executive powers) and earth (new populace), a super-race of men and women fashioned out of the raw material of the old. The Master Mind behind the plan, the Designer and Executor of this vast creative project is God Almighty.

This plan is the subject of the entire Bible. It is a plan that reaches as far as His mercy—"from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps. 103:17-18). It is God's "eternal purpose" (Eph. 3:11).

When does this work go on, and how long does it take? The plan has three distinct periods:

1 The 6000-year period from Adam to the Second Advent of Jesus

During this time God seeks individuals to be co-rulers with His Son in His eternal, finished Kingdom on earth.

2 The 1000-year reign of Jesus Christ (the Millennial Era)

During this time God selects and develops those who will compose the populace of the earth, the millions and billions of men and women who will fill the earth with His glory. Jesus and His co-rulers will, by spreading the gospel message to the ends of the earth and by the enforcement of Divine law and worldwide programs of re-education and reform, create a totally new social order which will bring about universal peace, justice, prosperity, health and happiness.

3 The infinite period of Eternity

After the seventh day of Millennial rest, Earth will become part of God's finished creation (heaven); everyone on earth will be immortal; death, sickness, suffering and sin will be eliminated forever, and God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The ultimate goal and destiny of history is Eternity.

This, in summary form, is the message of the chart on the next page.

FIRST PHASE: 6000 YEARS

The Genesis allegory describes the first phase of God's work on earth as taking place within six days. At the close of the sixth day God stands aside to inspect the finished portion of His work and pronounces it "very good."

If we apply the Bible rule for prophetic time and allow a thousand years for each day (2 Pet. 3:8), this makes six thousand years of creating time, six thousand years during which the Creator is working. At the end of the six days, God sends His Son to take over the governing of the earth. (For a more detailed discussion of this subject, see our booklet, *God's Spiritual Creation*.)

Through the six thousand years, God selects those who will be co-rulers with His Son. The qualifications are high, and few are interested. But the Bible tells us of some outstanding individuals who answered God's call during this time.

Adam. The first to answer God's call to serve was Adam. This was nearly six thousand years ago.

Noah. A few centuries later, a God-appointed "preacher of righteousness" named Noah answered God's call. Picture Noah preaching year after year, year after year, for 100 years to hardhearted, cold, unbelieving neighbors and passersby, while he worked untiringly on the ark.

Abraham. When the time was right, God called Abraham out of the comfortable land of his birthplace (Ur of the Chaldees) to sojourn in Canaan. Abraham obeyed the voice of God, and received in return the honorary title "Father of the Believers," and the promise that his descendants would be as numberless as the grains of sand on the seashore: "... in thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed."

Moses. Great Hebrew statesman, lawgiver and leader of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to independent, religious nationhood in Canaan, Moses was one of God's great leaders.

The Kingdom of Israel

During the earliest days of the existence of the nation, God arranged that the people should be directly under His rule. When they disobeyed, He let them fall into the hands of their enemies, then raised up a deliverer, a human administrator, called a **Judge**.

Despite the errant behavior of Israel during these years, the era produced some great leaders, among them Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samuel. Then the people clamored for a King, and God granted their request.

King David. The second king of Israel, David extended the nation of Israel to its furthest boundary and made the nation strong and God-fearing.

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The Kingdom Divided: Israel and Judah

Within 100 years of its founding, the nation of Israel had divided into two kingdoms. The history of the divided kingdoms is a record of almost perpetual backsliding. At times God raised up prophets to warn the people to turn from their evil ways and serve the true and living God alone. Some of the prophets taught by drama, some by preaching, some by writing. **Elijah** was a prophet who showed openly the great power of God. But the people were for the most part unheeding.

After a few hundred years, a few revivals, many apostasies, and countless warnings, God allowed wayward Israel and Judah to be taken into captivity by a foreign power (Babylon) as a punishment for their sins and in fulfillment of the words of His prophet Jeremiah.

The Time of Captivity

The seventy years of captivity in Babylon produced some men and women of high quality, among them the noble **Daniel**. Even though living in the king's court, in Babylon itself, he kept himself undefiled and merited this high commendation from the angel Gabriel: "*Daniel, a man greatly beloved*" (Dan. 10:11).

The Time of Restoration

After the Captivity, Cyrus (ruler of Persia, which conquered Babylon) issued a decree that the captive Israelites could return to their homeland. Thousands went back, under the leadership of Zerubbabel and later Nehemiah. Life was hard, but this period yielded some notable characters, among them Ezra the scribe, Nehemiah the astute leader, and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah.

Between the Testaments

A period of 400 plus years separates the close of the Old Testament record from the birth of Christ. About these years we know nothing, except that at its end there were faithful believers waiting and ready for the Messiah.

Landmark: JESUS CHRIST

When the time was right, God fulfilled the promise He had stated repeatedly through the ancient prophets and sent His Son, Jesus Christ. His Birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension made Him the perfect pattern for all time. Everywhere He went He was revealing the plan of God for the earth and humankind. There was to be a Kingdom, and He Himself was to be the King.

Before He ascended, Jesus personally chose and trained twelve men (the Apostles) to carry on His work in His absence.

The Apostolic Age

During the time immediately after Jesus' ascension, the work of Christ's true Church was expanded from a local ministry in the area of Jerusalem and Judea to a gospel that reached to all parts of the then-known world. No age was richer in endowments, and no man was more gifted in promoting the Gospel than the great apostle **Paul**.

After the Apostles

About A.D. 70 came the end of the Apostolic era, also the end of the Jewish Age, the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews. The people of that era also

experienced the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit, that power by the help of which the early Christians had been able to make phenomenal progress in spreading the Gospel of the Kingdom. Believers must have felt the loss keenly, but it was part of the plan. At the same time, the writing of the Bible was completed so that any desiring to learn the ways of God would not be left without guidance.

Also at this time many were slowly turning away from the true teachings of Jesus and incorporating ideas from other philosophies and religions in the Empire. It was a slow transition, but within a few centuries the apostasy was total. Just as prophesied, the religion of Jesus Christ was silenced and in its place emerged a huge new monolith called Christianity which could spread through the Empire and become the instrument of its authority and political power for more than a thousand years.

Renaissance, Reformation, and Reawakening

With the growth of independent thought in the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries came also the weakening of the power of the Church, as increased trade and travel brought new and challenging ideas. The Bible, preserved through the Dark Ages in the careful custody of the Church, was now translated into the language of the people and every common man could read it. All this was in the plan of God, so that when the time was right the true teachings of the Word of God could be rediscovered and a people be prepared to meet the returning King. As Jesus explained in the parable of the Ten Virgins, "*all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.*"

THE SECOND ADVENT OF JESUS

The end of the first phase of the Divine plan will climax with the return of Jesus Christ, who comes to establish His kingdom of peace and righteousness and bring all the forces of evil into subjection to His righteous rule.

WHAT IS AHEAD?

The second advent of Jesus will open the door to many earth-transforming events, as Jesus Christ is crowned King of the earth (the Coronation), as He selects and crowns with immortality His co-rulers (the Judgment of the Saints), conquers the nations of earth (Armageddon), and sets up His new government to reign a thousand years (the Millennium).

The Millennium will be probation time for the populace of the Kingdom (the great multitude who submit to the new authority and their offspring), and they will enjoy the richest, happiest, most prosperous living ever experienced by any people on this planet. At the same time they must be disciplined, tested, developed, after which they will be judged and those who are worthy will be made immortal like their teachers, and God's will shall be done on earth as it is now done in heaven above.

At the end of the Millennium, all evildoers will be finally removed, all who live will be glorified, and the endless ages of Eternity will begin, complete with eternal expansion, eternal growth, eternal happiness, eternal life for every one who lives!

This is the Grand Plan of the Ages as described in the Bible. □

"Lord, What Shall Be the Sign of Thy Coming?"

(Continued from page 7)

monly on TV and in entertainment movies and videos, and even in children's school books. It is found also in the lyrics of popular music, and much contemporary literature is filled with indecent expressions, along with vulgar and suggestive art work.

DISOBEDIENT TO THEIR PARENTS.

Apeithes (ap-i-thace') is the Greek word for "disobedient." It means unpersuadable, resisting authority. This includes those who have no regard for the advice or teaching of

many streets wholly impassable and leaving more than 100,000 without electric service. Instead of being grateful for the many years of uninterrupted service they had received, many railed against the power company, accusing the company of neglect and delinquency because it could not immediately restore power to everyone. Was it not an example of a very widespread attitude of unthankfulness?

Examples of the most extreme ingratitude are those who shoplift—it is said that shoplifters cost retail stores billions of dollars.

It is such a problem that some merchants are now designing their displays so that shoppers take nothing from the store shelves but record the product number of the items they wish to buy, pay for the merchandise,

then collect their items at a warehouse pick-up desk. Others have installed costly security systems to "catch" any who attempt to walk out with unpaid-for merchandise. Other examples of ingratitude are those who evade income taxes, who falsify information to collect extra social security or social services from the government; and those who make out that they qualify for benefits they do not deserve.

UNHOLY. This word speaks for itself, and who can say that we do not live in an unholy society? Gods of pleasure, money and pride have displaced God. Most entertainment, even science and education, is so structured that it makes no reference to God or godliness. The widespread tolerance of pornographic literature is another evidence of the general "unholy" attitude, as are the many immoral scenes displayed by TV and video. Pornography is now an \$8 billion per year business, and the number of hardcore video rented in our country in 1996 was reported as 665 million (US News, February 10, 1997).

The word *anosios* (an-os'ee-os)

also means unkind, malicious, or malignant; disposed to do harm, inflict suffering, or cause distress. What could better fit this definition than the drug dealers, who sell products which they know will harm and ruin those who use them. And those who market cigarettes and alcohol are also at fault.

WITHOUT NATURAL AFFECTION.

These three words are included in one Greek word, *astrogos* (as'-tro-gos). This word means calloused; that is, hard; hardened insensibility, without feeling—a condition that is being brought about by the violence displayed in TV programs. If, as we are told, the average person watches TV a total of 1800 hours per year, and the average child has witnessed many thousands of murders, muggings and assaults on the TV by the time he is grown up, can we wonder that he is without feeling?

Also revealing the lack of natural affection is the frightful increase in child abuse and child abandonment.

UNFORGIVING (TRUCEBREAKERS, IRRECONCILABLE).

The Greek word *aspondos* (as'pon-dos) means implacable—i.e., relentless, without mercy or compassion, cruel—another prophecy that is vividly fulfilled. Do not the state militia members fit into this category, individuals who can inflict suffering and destruction without any feeling of guilt? Another issue is social violence. It is said that more people, even in so-called civilized society, are being beaten to death today than at any other time in the past two thousand years. Abuse of women by husbands or boyfriends is the leading cause of injuries to women between the ages of 15 and 44. More than 6000 women are murdered each year as a result of domestic violence.

FALSE ACCUSERS. *Diabolos* is a Greek word very familiar even to those who have no knowledge of Greek. It means slanderer, false accusers and is often translated as "devil". It includes those prone to slandering others, or habitually slandering others. This trait is seen between political rivals, business

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HE BIBLE IS A SOURCE OF
GUIDANCE, INSTRUCTION AND
ENCOURAGEMENT FOR US AS WE AWAIT
THE SOON ARRIVAL OF OUR LORD.

parents. There are few families in America today in which parents do not receive some type of verbal abuse. Why does this situation exist? Because parents have not demanded or commanded the respect of their children, and the educational system has promoted the attitude of disrespect. Not only do children lack respect for parents, but a growing number of parents are being beaten by their children, sometimes even killed. Truly, it is a sign of the last days.

UNTHANKFUL. The word is *acharistoi* (ach-ar'-is-toi) which means ungrateful. It speaks of those who have no proper sense of feeling for favors received and no willingness to acknowledge or repay a benefit—an attitude very widespread today. Witness the attitude of workers who, rather than appreciating their advantages, are willing to make others suffer in their selfish effort to get more.

The widespread attitude of ingratitude was especially apparent in our own city a few years ago when the severest ice storm of the century brought down trees and power and telephone lines, making

*"Lord, What Shall Be the
Sign of Thy Coming?"*

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rivals, sports rivals, even between family members and children. It is seen as ongoing diatribe between heads of rival nations such as the Jews vs. the Arab states; the Irish vs. the English; the factions in Yugoslavia; or the rivalry between African tribes which has cost millions of lives.

Can we wonder that the Lord is "coming out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity" (Isa. 26:21)?

Can we doubt for a moment the Divine inspiration behind this prophecy that so accurately describes our day? Can we think for a moment that we are not in the last days of this age?

These things have been written for our learning, to warn us that we

have no time to waste in despondency or indecision, no time even to lose sight of our high calling or the great and precious things God has set before us. Not for a single moment can we live as we might have lived without this sacred information. God has entrusted to us tremendous insights into His plans, and shall we be so ungrateful as to disregard them?

Whether we believe or not, whether we prepare for it or not, the day of the Lord will come. When the time is right, God will act. And, in the words of the Apostle, "what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

How the warning should move us to a more serious effort toward God and holiness. How can we let a single hour go by without being conscious of our high calling?

How can we risk giving in to our pettiness and pride? how can we indulge in the petty satisfactions of our lower nature, the impatience, the jealousies, the selfishness so instinctive to us? How can we allow ourselves to do or say anything or show any attitude that we will not want to own when Jesus comes?

Every hour is sacred; every moment is a precious, loving gift from our loving God who is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Every test that comes is His provision to help us, the means by which we can prepare our escape from the time of trouble that is coming upon the earth. Let us make the very most of each test as it comes, lest the day of the Lord arrive and find us unprepared. □

The CHRISTIAN and HIS(((ECHO)))

True faith producing love to God and man,
Say, Echo, is not this the Gospel plan?

The Gospel Plan.

the Gospel Plan.

Must I my faith and love to Jesus show,
By ev'ry word and deed, toward friend and foe?

Toward friend and foe.

Toward friend and foe.

But if a brother hates and treats me ill,
Must I return him good, and love him still?

Love him still.

Love him still.

If he my failing watches to reveal,
Must I as carefully no sin conceal?

No sin conceal.

No sin conceal.

But if my name and character he blast,
And cruel malice, too, a long time last;
And if grave sorrow and affliction too
He loves to add unto my cup of woe;
In this uncommon, this peculiar case,
Sweet Echo, say must I still love and bless?

Still love and bless.

Still love and bless.

And if mistreatment sore I shall receive,
Must I be patient still, and still forgive?

Be patient still, and still forgive.

Be patient still, and still forgive.

Why, Echo, how is this? Thou art a dove!
Thy voice will teach me nothing else but love!

Nothing else but love.

Nothing else but love.

Amen! with all my heart be it then so;
And now to practice I'll directly go.

Directly go.

Directly go.

Things being so, what though all me reject,
My gracious God me surely will protect.

Surely will protect.

Surely will protect.

Henceforth I'll roll on Him my every care,
And then both friend and foe embrace in prayer.

Embrace in prayer.

Embrace in prayer.

And after all these duties I have done,
Shall I be worthy of the Lord's "Well done"?

Worthy of the Lord's "Well done."

Worthy of the Lord's "Well done."

Echo, enough! thy counsels to mine ear
Are sweeter than the dewdrop to the flower;
Thy wise instructive lessons please me well:
I'll go to practice them. Farewell, farewell!

Practice them. Farewell, farewell.

Practice them. Farewell, farewell.



***Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.*—James 5:9**

It is wrong to fret and grumble against one another, to build up grudges and feelings. It is wrong at any time. But James is looking at a special time, a time when "the Judge standeth before the door." His hand is on the latch, He is ready to open and enter. Let us think carefully of what we say. By our words we are either building up or tearing down ourselves and others. For the Judge is at the door. We shall soon hear His verdict, for good or for ill.

May He find us without any grudges.

***I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.*—John 9:4**

In this text Jesus spoke for Himself and all of us. Most translations read, "We must work the works of Him...." The day is so short and so swiftly over. Scarcely have we begun to correct a few of our blunderings, and to gather some small smatterings of experience, when darkness begins to fall, and we must lay down our tools.

The time for work is "the day." To the length of this day we cannot add, just as we cannot add a cubit to our stature. It is for us to walk and keep

walking, to work and keep working while the daylight lasts.

There is in Jesus' words a divinely impelled "I must." We are under obligation to serve. We are not our own. Our day is not our own. The duty that binds us to service is indeed a duty sweetened by love, but duty it remains. We must work the works of Him who sends us.

This short day of life is given us not for pleasure but for progress; not for ease but for toil. It is another way of saying, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Eccl. 9:10).

***Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*—Revelation 3:20**

The word translated "sup" is *deipnein*, and its corresponding noun is *deipnon*. The word is very significant. The ancient Greeks had three meals a day. There was *akratisma*, breakfast, which was no more than a piece of dried bread dipped in wine. There was *ariston*, the midday meal. The working man did not go home for it; it was simply a picnic snack eaten by the side of the pavement or in some colonnade or in the city square, a meal eaten in the passing.

Then there was *deipnon*, the evening meal and main meal of the day. People gathered and lingered and sat long and talked over it, for the day's work was done. There was time then for unlimited and unhurried fellowship.

It was *deipnon* that Christ would share with the man who answered His knock. This was no hurried meal, no visit in the passing, no hasty, conventional call. It was the meal where people lingered in fellowship together.

The promise is of intimate friendship. If a man will open the door, Jesus Christ will come in and linger long with him.

***Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.*—Psalm 17:5**

"Hold up my goings in thy paths." In other words, help me to go straight ahead. Let me not swerve aside.

The Psalmist is saying: I have made it my habit to obey you. It is a path I have followed so diligently that it has become a holy rut, worn deep through the years. Now, hold my feet in that blessed rut, right through to the end.

There is great value in developing holy habits, in choosing the right so consistently that it becomes second nature. Such is David's determination. He wants to wear those holy ruts deeper and deeper, so that in a crisis he will not falter nor stray.

May this be our prayer: "Hold my going in Thy paths." Help me to go straight ahead! □

DOES RELIGION MAKE GOOD CITIZENS?

This question was received by e-mail from a young reader in China

Before answering this question we need to define "a good citizen." I'm sure definitions will vary, especially from one country to another. But for our purposes let us say that a good citizen is one who promotes the common good, who is law abiding, peacemaking, and who does nothing to harm his fellowmen.

What is "religion"? In its basic form, it is any system of beliefs, practices, ethical values, etc. But all religions cannot help equally in developing good citizens. For example, a religion that is involved in a mass suicide or an uprising against the government could not develop good citizens. To aid in developing a good citizen, a religion must promote the building of an upright character and restrain the lower instincts of one's nature.

We believe a religion founded on the Bible is the very best religion for this purpose.

How the Bible Develops Good Citizens

Application of Bible principles develops good conduct both by the characteristics it promotes and those it restrains. Let us first mention characteristics it promotes:

◆ **A right attitude toward one's fellowmen.** "Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31-32, NRSV).

◆ **Self-control and upright living.** "[The grace or Gospel of God] teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age" (Titus 2:12, NIV).

◆ **Follow good (godly) examples.** "Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God" (3 John 11, NIV).

◆ **Clean, moral behavior at all times.** "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Rom. 13:13-14, NIV).

◆ **Promote an attitude of peacemaking.** "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14, NIV).

**ONLY THOSE WHOM
GOD CALLS "GOOD
CITIZENS" WILL BE
ALLOWED TO LIVE IN
HIS KINGDOM.**

◆ **Grow in humility, gentleness, patience, and love.** "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Eph. 4:2, NIV).

◆ **Practice outgoing goodness.** "...Do to others what you would have them do to you..." (Matt. 7:12, NIV).

◆ **Be loving and faithful to others.** "Let love¹ and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart" (Prov. 3:3, NIV).

◆ **Help and encourage others.** "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24, NIV). Think of the impact this would have if we went about it in the right way!

◆ **Show loyalty and respect to your government.** Jesus was asked this question: "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" (Mark 12:14, NIV). His answer was, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's..." (Mark 12:17, NRSV).

◆ **Obey the laws of your nation,** as long as they do not contradict the Laws of God. "Therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach" (Mat. 23:3, NRSV). As Peter said, "We must obey God rather than any human authority" (Acts 5:29, NRSV). In this country our Constitution guarantees freedom of worship to all, for which we are very thankful.

◆ **Practice wholesome, constructive thinking.** "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Phil. 4:8, NIV).

◆ **True, upright, blameless living.** "O LORD, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill? Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right, and speak the truth from their heart; who do not slander with their tongue, and do no evil to their friends, nor take up a reproach against their neighbors" (Ps. 15:1-3, NRSV).

There are also qualities—some as natural as breathing—which we must restrain:

◆ **Don't complain or argue.** "Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world" (Phil. 2:14-15, KJV).

◆ **Don't be angry.** "You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow

¹ The word "love" has many shades and grades of meaning in the English language. We are interested in only one kind of love, the love which the Scriptures teach: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Cor. 13:4-7, NIV).

**CAN RELIGION
DEVELOP A GOOD
CITIZEN? POSITIVELY, IF
IT IS BACKED BY
THE GOD OF HEAVEN.**

to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness" (James 1:19-20, NRSV).

◆ **Don't retaliate.** "Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else" (1 Thess. 5:15, NIV).

◆ **Restrain covetousness.** "Keep your lives free from the love of money ...the root of all evil..." (Heb. 13:5, NIV; 1 Tim. 6:10, KJV). Nor should we unnecessarily go in debt, but rather "...be content with what you have..." (Heb. 13:5, NRSV). There are many people today that live far above their means. They go in debt beyond their means to meet obligations. The Bible principle is: "Owe no man anything but to love one another" (Rom. 13:8, KJV).

◆ **Avoid dissension and gossip.** "A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends" (Prov. 16:28, NIV).

◆ **Restrain evil and deceitful speech.** "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech" (1 Pet. 3:10, NIV).

◆ **Restrain deceit.** "No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence" (Ps. 101:7, NIV).

Why all the emphasis on upright character and virtue? Because we believe that Christ will soon return and establish a Kingdom that will never end. Only those whom He calls good citizens will be allowed to live in His Kingdom. Life in that Kingdom will be wonderful beyond anything we can imagine. For the first time in the history of the earth there will be universal peace, universal goodwill and universal health and justice. Every individual who lives in that world will benefit, for "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away. No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (Rev. 21:4, NRSV, 1 Cor. 2:9, NIV). Who could ask for more?!!

Can religion develop a good citizen? Positively, if it is the right religion. And what makes the right religion? One that is Bible-centered and backed by the God of heaven. □

Know Your Bible?

Joy and Rejoicing

1. What prophet described the word of God as "the joy and rejoicing" of his heart?
2. The Sabbaths and the various feasts which Israel was instructed to keep, were all to be accompanied by what type of spirit?
3. Who said, and upon what occasion, "My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD"?
4. An occasion of great joy in Israel was accompanied with psalteries, harps, cymbals, trumpets, instruments of music, singers, and a procession. What was the occasion, and who had instigated it?
5. Who said, "Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?" What was the occasion, and what was being offered to the Lord?
6. What occasion of joy was mingled with sadness by two different groups who witnessed it?
7. What joy is but for a moment?
8. Of whom did David say, "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope"?
9. Complete the verse: "Let thy _____ be clothed with _____; and let thy _____ shout for _____".
10. Complete the verse: "they shall obtain _____ and _____, and _____ and _____ shall flee away."
11. Who spoke of the joyful time when "the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands" for joy?

Knowledge Comes First

1. What did a certain minor prophet say about God's people failing because they failed to learn?
2. Who first said, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord"? Who quoted it?
3. What was Jesus' reply to the high priest who asked him about his doctrine?
4. "All things that pertain unto life and godliness" come "through _____."
5. "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue _____."
6. Paul condemned those who "having a form of godliness" deny its force. He said also that they were "ever learning" but what was the problem?
7. Complete the verse: "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all _____ and _____."
8. How did Paul say we understand the knowledge of God?
9. Paul said of himself that he was rude in one faculty but not in another.
10. In order to fight victoriously against sin we must cast down every _____ that rears its head against the _____.
11. Why should we wake up to righteousness and stop sinning?
12. Paul said that if he had "all faith" and "all knowledge," he would still be poor if lacking a certain substance. What was that substance?
13. Complete the verse: "_____ puffeth up, but _____ edifieth."
14. How did Paul describe the unfathomable depths of God's knowledge?
15. Complete the verse: "For the earth shall be filled with the _____ of the _____ of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."
16. A prophecy relating to knowledge at the time of the end _____.
17. Who said and of whom, "they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge"?
18. How did God promise to meet the spiritual needs of His people?
19. What does the prophet Isaiah say about the availability of knowledge in the new age?
20. It was prophesied of Christ that six kinds of spirits would rest upon Him. What are they?

(Answers on page 22)

Why More Trouble?

"Why are we going to have more trouble when Christ returns? Will you please explain the Scripture, Daniel 12:1?"

The prophet Daniel reveals that "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation" will happen simultaneously with the time when "Michael [stands] up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people." From the context, we identify this standing up of Michael as the second advent of Christ, for the Prophet says that it is the time of the resurrection (verse 2), also the time when the righteous shall be rewarded with deliverance and immortality and the wicked will be condemned to "shame and everlasting contempt" (verse 2). From other passages of Scripture we learn that the time of Jesus' second advent is the time when He comes to recompense His servants (Isa. 40:10, 1 Peter 5:4, 2 Timothy 4:8), which is also the time of the resurrection (Luke 14:14, John 5:28-29; 1 Thess. 4:16-17).

Why will the coming of Christ precipitate "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation"? There are several reasons.

1) The ruling authorities will not willingly relinquish their power and authority to another, even to One who is backed by Divine authority. From the book of Revelation we learn that they will take up arms against Him. "These shall make war with the Lamb [Jesus Christ the King]" (Rev. 17:14; see also Rev. 19:19).

2) The merchants of the world will be ready to fight to save their lucrative (and illicit) money interests. Just think of the billions of dollars worth of business being done today that will be immediately outlawed under Christ's new order. Think of the money being spent for alcoholic beverages, cigarettes and cigars, useless toys, cosmetics and high fashion interests. Add the vast revenues generated by amusement and entertainment centers, professional sports and entertainment media (TV, video, motion-picture and stage). Add the multiplied revenues from casinos and gambling establishments, illicit drug trafficking, pornography and organized crime. When all these industries are immediately forced to halt operations, imagine the worldwide howl that will be heard! The Revelator pictured all of this merchandising as "Babylon," and describes her fall prophetically in these words: "And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more" (Rev. 18:11).

3) Another reason for the time of trouble will be widespread resistance to the new laws. These laws will affect every aspect of personal, social, economic and religious life for everyone on earth. And the law will be universally known and universally enforced. We read: "the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Mic. 4:2). No error, sin, immorality, indecency, dishonesty or any type of misconduct will escape notice at any level. Best of all, the administration of jus-

tice will be swift and always right; for those in authority will be able to read the heart.

The new government will "rule them with a rod of iron," and to people accustomed to democracy and free thought, this type of authority will not be popular. "Let us break their chains," they cry, "and free ourselves from this slavery" (Ps. 2:3, NLT). They will be ready to fight for their "rights." But they will quickly learn that the law is stronger than their resistance. They will be faced with an ultimatum: submit, or perish (Rev. 14:7).

The result will be the battle of Armageddon, but its outcome is predetermined: "The Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev. 17:14). Will any escape the fierceness of this conflict? All who turn to God will be delivered, as the prophet Joel forecast: "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call" (Joel 2:32).

The prophet Joel describes this time when "the Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake." But he, too, assures the safety of those serving God: "But the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel" (Joel 3:16).

◆ Every Eye Shall See Him?

"I've been wondering: When Jesus comes and all eyes see Him, why will so many refuse to believe it is He or believe in Him? Then this thought came to mind. During these days of high technology and science fiction, it is no wonder that when Jesus does come down from heaven, people will still not believe what they see. They will think (just because really down deep the evil is in control of them) that His appearance is some kind of scientific put-on or experiment. They believe more in men's knowledge and technology than in the Bible."

You have made several valid observations. Human nature is human nature in every age and in every situation, and people are people. And just about all of them have some traits in common: They do not like to acknowledge a higher authority that can tell them what to do, they do not like to submit to law, even though it may be for their own good; and they do not like to change their pattern of life. Add to this natural dislike for authority the present situation, where most people have knowledge of some kind of science fiction, or "scientific put-on," as you call it, and it really is not strange that when Jesus comes people will not believe what they see. They have seen so much which appeared to be real but which they knew to be false, and they will likely conclude that Jesus is just another hero of fiction.

There is another fact here, to which you allude: that it is easier for the human race to trust their own technology and their own knowledge than to trust God and His written Word. So the fact that God, or His representatives, or angels, testify that something is true will do little to impress most people.

Jesus illustrated our inborn tendency to reject authority in His parable of the nobleman who went into a far country "to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." Before he departed, he divided his goods among his ten servants, with the command, "Occupy till I come." The immediate reaction of the servants was, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:11-14).

Jesus described the same human resistance when He said of Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would

not!" (Luke 13:34). "Ye would not"—they turned away the help they could have had.

The prophet Jeremiah saw the same trait in the Israelite people. The Lord commanded, "Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." But what was their response? "We will not walk therein" (Jer. 6:16-17). When the Lord said, "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people," we read of the Israelites that "they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but...went backward, and not forward" (Jer. 7:23-26).

With such an attitude when there is no outside aggressor, can we imagine how people will feel to see someone taking control of them right before their eyes? Surely there will be resistance, severe resistance, that will lead quickly to the battle of Armageddon. In their view, the solution is to conquer the new usurper. But they will quickly learn that such tactics are impossible, that God knows what He is doing, and that His agents will win. □

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Plan now to join us!

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 20

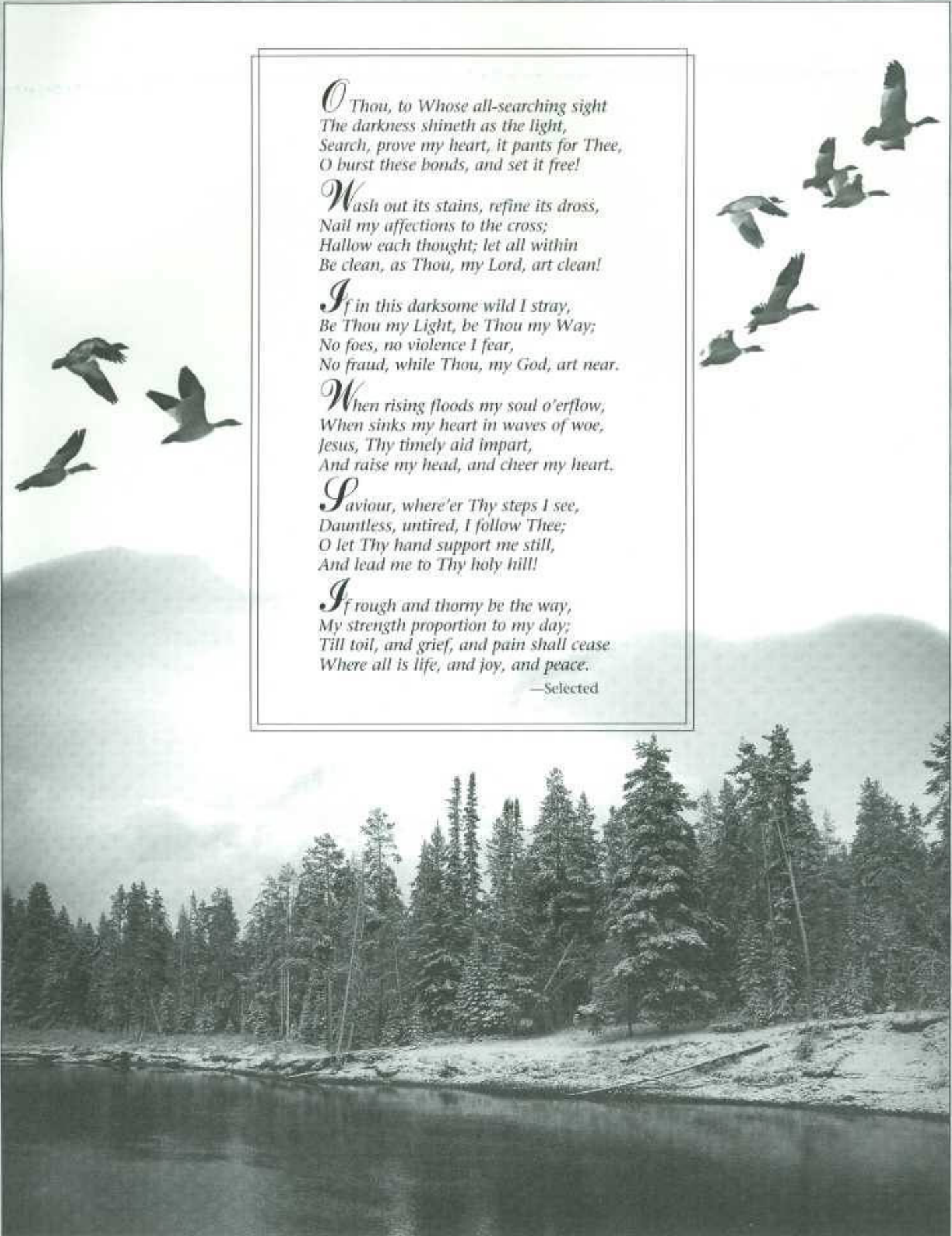
Joy and Rejoicing

1. Jeremiah (chap. 15:16).
2. A spirit of joy and rejoicing before the Lord (Deut. 16:10-11).
3. Hannah, when she lent young Samuel to the Lord "for as long as he liveth" (1 Sam. 1:28; 2:1).
4. "So they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it" (1 Chron. 16:1).
5. King David when he gave Solomon the plans for building the temple. They gave gold, silver, brass, iron, and precious stones (1 Chron. 29).
6. The laying of the foundation of the temple after the captivity (Ezra 3:11-12). The older people who had known the glory of the first temple were sad, the younger people rejoiced.
7. "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment" (Job 20:5).
8. Of Jesus (Ps. 16:9).
9. "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy" (Ps. 132:9).
10. "And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35:10).
11. Isaiah (Isa. 55:12).

Knowledge Comes First

1. Hosea (4:6): "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."
2. Isaiah said it first (54:13), Jesus quoted it (John 6:45).

3. Jesus replied, "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple" (John 18:19-20).
4. 2 Pet. 1:3, "all things that pertain unto life and godliness [come] through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."
5. 2 Pet. 1:5, "knowledge."
6. They were never able to come "to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7).
7. wisdom, and spiritual understanding (Col. 1:9).
8. By reading (Eph. 3:4).
9. He was "rude in speech, yet not in knowledge" (2 Cor. 11:6).
10. imagination, knowledge of God (2 Cor. 10:4-5).
11. Because some do not have the knowledge of God (1 Cor. 15:34).
12. Charity, or love (1 Cor. 13:2).
13. "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth" (1 Cor. 8:1).
14. Rom. 11:33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"
15. "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14).
16. "Knowledge shall be increased" (Dan. 12:4).
17. Jeremiah said it of disobedient Israel (Jer. 4:22).
18. "I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding," (Jer. 3:15).
19. "And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation" (Isa. 33:6).
20. "The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD" (Isa. 11:2).



*O Thou, to Whose all-searching sight
The darkness shineth as the light,
Search, prove my heart, it pants for Thee,
O burst these bonds, and set it free!*

*Wash out its stains, refine its dross,
Nail my affections to the cross;
Hallow each thought; let all within
Be clean, as Thou, my Lord, art clean!*

*If in this darksome wild I stray,
Be Thou my Light, be Thou my Way;
No foes, no violence I fear,
No fraud, while Thou, my God, art near.*

*When rising floods my soul o'erflow,
When sinks my heart in waves of woe,
Jesus, Thy timely aid impart,
And raise my head, and cheer my heart.*

*Saviour, where'er Thy steps I see,
Dauntless, untired, I follow Thee;
O let Thy hand support me still,
And lead me to Thy holy hill!*

*If rough and thorny be the way,
My strength proportion to my day;
Till toil, and grief, and pain shall cease
Where all is life, and joy, and peace.*

—Selected

Well Composed...

God writes the music of our lives,
But we must learn the time,
So all our life the melody
Will match the perfect rhyme.

God writes the music of our lives,
And now and then says "Rest."
He marks the measure and the bar.
We play at His behest.

God writes the music of our lives,
'Tis not without design:
The breaks, the pause, the beat, the tune,
Each is for us a sign.

We need to follow close His beat,
To stop and start "in time."
So we can learn how faith, hope, peace
All blend with love sublime.

—Author Unknown

