

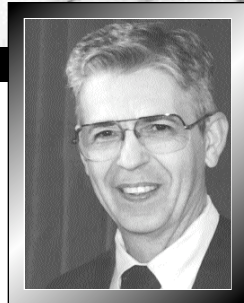
Megiddo Message

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground and middle ground, there are large, dark, layered rock formations (buttes) that are characteristic of the Monument Valley area. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. A bright sun is visible in the upper left quadrant, partially obscured by the title text. The overall mood is serene and majestic.

Lord,
BE MY ROCK OF REFUGE,
TO WHICH I CAN ALWAYS GO;

—Psalm 71:3 NIV

Vol. 88, No. 1
January, 2001



Recommended Maximum Pressure

The thin, lightweight, tubular tire of a bicycle can be inflated to at least 100 pounds per square inch (170 pounds for some three-ply tires) without tire failure. This might seem surprising when the larger automobile tires require much less pressure to inflate.

But there is a reason. Bicycle tires hold up best when kept at the maximum recommended pressure. The harder tire will roll more easily over the bumps and be less prone to "flats" caused by bruising.

Isn't there an analogy here for those seeking to live the Christ-life? Yes, pressure can have positive value. If we are always looking for the easiest way out, the safest course, the simplest answer, the least complicating circumstance, we may be cutting ourselves off from the blessings we want most.

Take the apostle Paul as an example. He did not try to avoid the pressures of life. Rather, he welcomed them. Did he have to suffer? He was sharing in the sufferings of Christ—that they "*might be glorified together*" (Rom. 8:17). Was he called to the utmost in self-sacrifice for his brothers and sisters in Christ? He only longed to share his joy with all of them (Phil. 2:17).

Reading his letters, we learn that pressure was something Paul was acquainted with on a daily basis. At one time, he wrote in his letter to the Corinthians, they (Paul and his comrades) were "*pressed beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.*" Talk about maximum pressure—Paul knew what it was. But how did he take it? As a lesson that they "*should not trust in themselves, but in God, who raises the dead*" (2 Cor. 1:8-9).

I once heard someone say that they would NEVER pray for patience again! It seems they thought their prayer had really been answered *that* time—because what is the route to patience but tribulation! (Rom. 5:3). The Greek word *thlipsis* (translated "tribulation") has *pressure* for its first definition. So the Christian who seeks patience should not scorn or complain when pressure comes.

Sometimes the pressure is from a circumstance. Sometimes it may be from a person who comes into our lives. And how do we know that God did not send that certain one for the purpose of making us stronger? That most difficult individual may be providing an opportunity for us to grow in patience, perhaps humility, even joy. If that person shows up the evil in us and we overcome it, is not that *thlipsis*, that pressure, truly a God-send?

The apostle Paul knew *thlipsis* from many direc-

tions—the pressure of persecution, the pressure of opposition, of unpopularity, probably of illness and overexertion. Yet he could say with confidence, "*We rejoice even in the midst of these pressures*" (Rom. 5:3; 2 Cor. 7:4).

How are we to triumph as Christians when we face outward pressures that seem almost too great? And what about those inward pressures—the fear of failure, or the fear of aging, or disappointment or financial concerns?

Whatever the pressures from outside, if we maintain maximum recommended pressure inside we will feel no harm. This meeting of pressure with pressure will give us the strength to endure to the end.

The Christian hope is a certain and expectant hope. Paul's triumphant, confident attitude in the midst of pressure from outside and inside was the result of a real hope. "*Not only that,*" he wrote, "*but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope*" (Rom. 5:3-4).

And so he goes, rejoicing in *thlipsis*, knowing that it is all for good, that it is all part of God's providence. Sometimes it is preventive (God uses one circumstance to *prevent* another which might be more difficult). Sometimes it is permissive (He *permits* the pressures of life because they are part of the human situation, and why should Christians be exempt?). And sometimes it is purposive (He purposes to develop character and quality in us). But always it is for good, because Paul says "*We know,*"—not we guess, or we surmise, or we think but "*We know.*" "*We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose*" (Rom. 8:28).

We know that because God is in control and working all together for our good, the pressures will also be for good.

If we are under pressure and are still rejoicing, believing and enduring, looking forward to the reality of our hope, then the pressure is working *for* us.

When will the pressure be too much? Only God knows, and He holds the controls. He knows that just-right amount that will make us able to roll over the bumps more easily, with less bruising and less flats. Only He knows the value of maximum recommended pressure, and when that just-right amount might be exceeded, He will make a "way of escape" so that we will not be harmed.

Either way, the pressure is for our good. ♦

Elijah

THE PROPHET

The Man Who Made a Difference

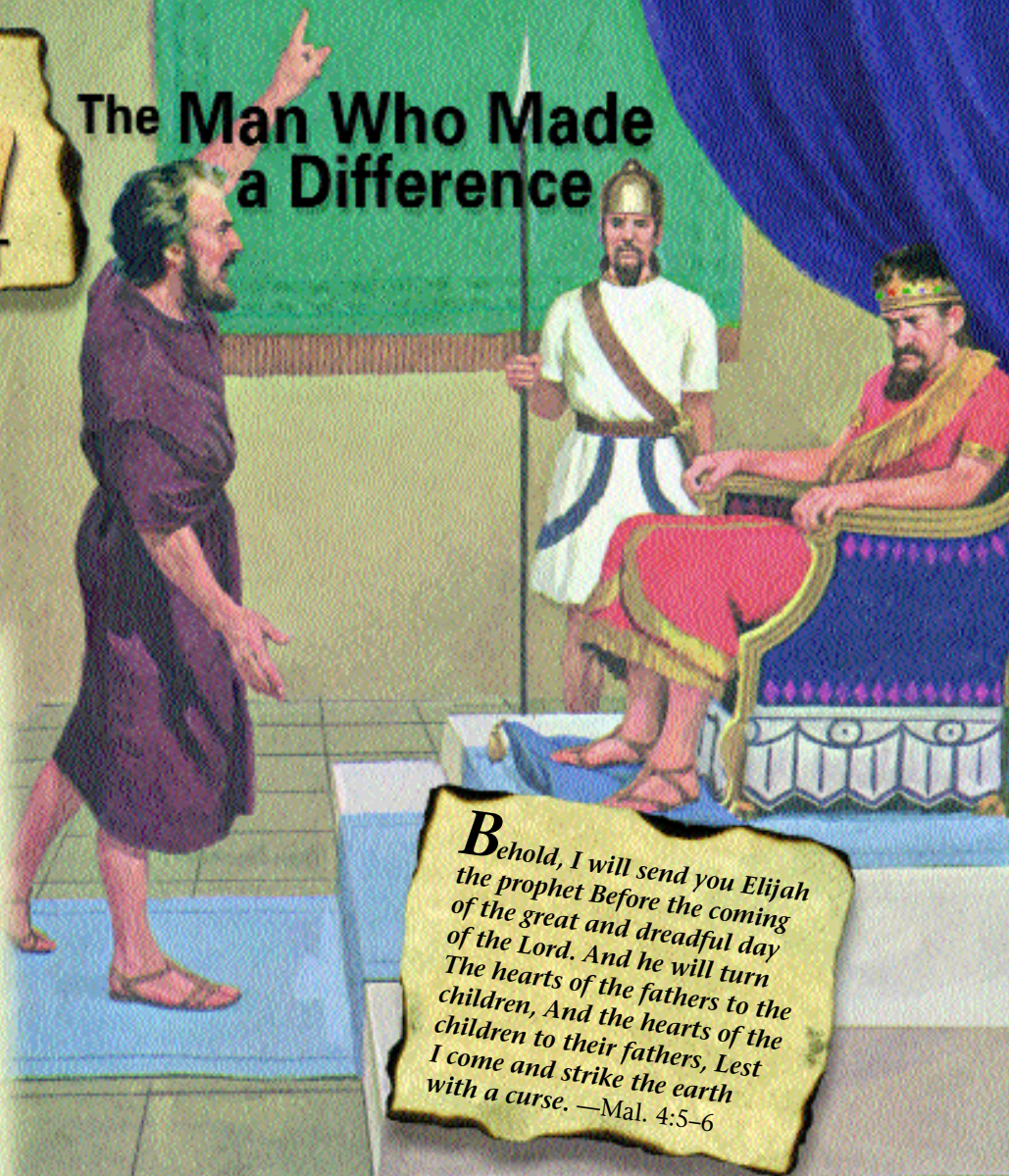
Imagine—

that you are King Ahab, sitting on the sunny peak of your own success. Life is good. You have just about everything you could ask—wealth, power, fame, a beautiful queen, lots of pleasure. The gods have been good to you.

Then suddenly one day, a ruddy, muscular man bursts into your state-room uninvited and unannounced, and stands in front of you. Before you have a chance to catch your breath or ask his name, he raises his left hand toward heaven and with his right hand gestures straight toward you, while his strong voice thunders this stormy message: *“As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word”* (1 Kings 17:1 NIV). And just as quickly as the stranger came, he is gone.

Those who worshiped Baal believed he was the god who brought the rains and bountiful harvests. So when Elijah walked into the presence of this Baal-worshipping king and told him there would be no rain for several years, Ahab was shocked. Ahab had built a strong military defense, but it would be no help against drought.

Into the idol-ridden world of the weak-willed Ahab and his abominable wife Jezebel, God sent his power-filled prophet Elijah, already a hero and a giant of faith.



Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse. —Mal. 4:5-6

Who is Elijah? Where did he come from? We know nothing of his origin, parents, or childhood. All we are told is that he was a *“Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead”* (1 Kings 17:1). Diligent as the Hebrew people were with genealogies, we are not even told from what tribe Elijah was descended. For this reason some have wondered if he was even an Israelite at all. All we know is, that he *“was a man subject to like passions as we are”* (James 5:17).

When we first meet Elijah, he is already the avowed enemy of Baalism, a sensuous, cruel and corrupt religion built on sex and power.

Many Bible names are significant, and the name Elijah means *“Jehovah is my God.”* He had a mission in his name! God had sent him, and God would be with him. His task: to bring Israel back to the true God.

The story of Elijah has special relevance to our times. Elijah was calling the people of Israel to leave a religion of excitement and sex orgies that would destroy them and come to the wholesome, inspiring and fruitful worship of the God of creation, the God who had given them their nation, their laws, their government, their very life. But the appeal of Baal was so close, so immediate, so sensual.

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MEGIDDO MEANS...

"a place of troops" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon); "a place of God" (Young's Analytical Concordance). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (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, with the help of God, of applying to 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 Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

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.

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that Elijah was truly fighting a giant.

Elijah prophesied during a time of rampant idolatry and rebellion against God. The Bible says about Jeroboam, first king of the divided kingdom, that he *"made Israel to sin"* (1 Kings 14:16). It is said of Ahab's father Omri that he *"did worse than all that were before him"* (1 Kings 16:25). Then follows this testimony to the sins of Ahab: *"Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him. He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him."* To make matters even worse, he did his best to make Baal worship easy: *"He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria"* (1 Kings 16:30–32 NIV). Baal worship was the worship of fertility, power and abundance. Much of our society today is built around the worship of modern Baals: gods of materialism, pleasure, power and wealth. And just as surely as God sent Elijah to warn Ahab of his downfall, so He will send Elijah to warn our world today of the coming one, Jesus Christ, who comes to put down evil and establish His kingdom of justice and peace worldwide.



Prophet of Destiny

Picture, if you can, this singular man of God. Rare indeed is the life that combines more nobly the heavenly graces than does the life of this great man.

One who is humble, yet he is a master of confidence.

One who is bold, yet hear him petitioning God for strength to carry on. None could be sterner in the presence of evil.

One who is undauntedly courageous, yet see him depending completely on Divine assistance. Fearless of men, yet he is filled with awe in the presence of God.

A leader, yet he is the most loyal, upright follower. He could converse in the most normal manner, yet the next minute be on his way to deliver a message of doom to proud and arrogant royalty.

So dynamic is the personality of this prophet that being with him is almost like being with an angel of God. He is unknown and yet well-known; contemplative and yet vigorous; tempestuous and yet tender. His very attitude lets you know there can be no compromise with wrong. Just being with him you sense that he doesn't care one whit about the opinion of his contempo-

raries. His whole thought is to fulfill his heavenly calling.

Who is he, this wonder of a man, this man truly called a man of God? He is none other than the prophet Elijah.

The grand Prophet Elijah himself, who lived in the land of Israel nearly three millenniums ago, will be on earth again one of these days. Is it possible? It is more than possible—it is the sure promise of God! The Lord our God has spoken through another of His prophets.

What does this voice of God say through His prophet Malachi? The words are recorded in the last two verses of the Old Testament: *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse"* (Mal. 4:5–6). Jesus Himself confirmed the prophecy of Malachi with these words: *"Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things"* (Matt. 17:11).

Elijah is coming. What will he think of our modern world? More important, what will he think of us as individuals? For Elijah was no fawning flatterer in Israel, nor will he be when he comes back.

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Elijah is one of the most remarkable figures in the history of Israel. He is living evidence that when God has a work to be done, He finds a man to do it. He finds the right man at the right time, so that when His hour strikes, His man is ready.

Elijah was a person of dynamic suddenness. Suddenly he appears in Israel as the crisis prophet, with tempest on his brow and thunder in his voice. Just as suddenly he disappears, swept skyward in a chariot of fire. And between his appearing and his final disappearing lie a succession of wonders. No one could guess what the prophet would do next, or where he would be. The very style of the narrative stamps this prophet of fire on the imagination and identifies him forever as a man of God.

The foremost task of Elijah in Israel was one of reformation. His success in this God-ordained mission is attested by these facts: 1) Elijah is mentioned by the New Testament writers more often than any other Old Testament prophet; and 2) Elijah was seen in the vision of the Transfiguration, where he appeared to represent those who will be living when Jesus returns in glory (Matt. 17:1–9). Was it not especially appropriate that the Apostles should see in vision the very one who is destined to precede Christ at the time of His Second Advent? ♦



Ministry of Miracles

On several occasions God showed his mighty power through Elijah, either to convince or to convict the unbelieving, or to carry out His own special purpose. Among these miracles are:

The miracle of the unfailing supply of meal and oil to sustain the widow and her son for a whole year. —1 Kings 17:14–16

The miracle of resurrection, restoring to life the son of the widow of Zarephath who had died. —1 Kings 17:17–24

The miracle of the rain withheld in Israel for three and a half years, then of the rain renewed after the severe drought. —1 Kings 17:1–2; 1 Kings 18:1, 45

The dramatic encounter on Mount Carmel, where Elijah challenged 850 prophets of Baal to a contest, to see who could bring rain to drought-stricken Israel. God answered by fire, consuming the sacrifice and 12 barrels of water that had been poured on the altar, along with the stones and dust of the altar. —1 Kings 18:1–39

The miracle of the Divine presence —1 Kings 19:9–18. God gave Elijah a demonstration of His guiding providence as He unleashed the forces of nature.

The miracle of fire from heaven —2 Kings 1:9–15. When Ahaziah the King sent 50 men to command Elijah to come down from a hill where he had been dwelling, Elijah called down fire on the 50 soldiers. The king sent another 50 soldiers, who met the same fate. At this time Elijah also foretold the death of King Ahaziah because he trusted in men and not in God.

The miracle of parting the Jordan River

—2 Kings 2:1–8. When Elijah and Elisha reached the Jordan, Elijah took his hairy mantle and smote the waters, and he and Elisha passed over to the other side.

The miracle of translation —2 Kings 2:9–11. Instead of dying when his career on earth was done, Elijah received a special blessing from God—it suited God's purpose to lengthen his mortal life because he wanted him for a task in the future.

Elijah was walking with his successor Elisha when suddenly Elijah was lifted by angels to another part of God's vast creation. The Bible tells us that as they were walking along and talking, suddenly a chariot of fire [angels, see Ps. 68:17] appeared, drawn by horses of fire. It drove between them, separating them, and Elijah was carried by a whirlwind into heaven, where he will remain until he returns to earth as the herald of Jesus Christ. —Malachi 4:5–6





A Man of High Character

From the bits of description given in Scripture, we can conclude that Elijah was singular. Doubtless his features and characteristics were those of the typical open country dweller. Rugged and austere in appearance, clad in a rough sheepskin, can't we picture him striding into the king's presence and lifting up a sinewy arm to heaven as he denounced the weak-willed king in tones that sounded like thunder?

But Elijah's greatest distinctions are his strong, unswerving moral character. Three of his most conspicuous virtues were courage, faith and zeal. More than once the prophet risked his life to perform the service of God. See his courage as he strides into the king's audience-chamber and in the name of the Lord God of Israel denounces the king to his face. Here is the man who was ready to challenge, single-handed, the whole priesthood of the State religion and all the people of the realm in a decisive test on Mount Carmel. And then, just as Elijah thinks the demonstration has been conclusive and that the whole nation should turn to God, there comes a bloodthirsty threat from the highest power in the land—Jezebel. Instead of having become convinced of the power

of God, the queen has been filled with fury.

Where did Elijah find his courage? It was courage born of implicit faith in the God of heaven. Think of the firm faith it required to go into Ahab's presence and say, *"there will be no dew or rain during the next few years unless I give the word!"* Dew and rain may be absent by ordinary causes for a few days or even weeks. But for dew and rain to be suspended for years, as Elijah declared they would be, needed the power of God. Such was the power of Elijah, and he believed God would certainly answer his prayer. How could he be so sure? See how he prefaced his declaration: *"As surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives"*—Elijah's God was *living*, and able to fulfill the request. He knew his word was that of the Lord! What confident, buoyant faith!

Then see Elijah's *zeal*. He expressed this overmastering passion when at the mouth of the cave on Horeb he said, *"I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty"* (1 Kings 19:10 NIV). How much can this child of the desert teach us of zeal for the Divine honor, of burning indignation at truce-breaking compromise and passionate loyalty to the God of heaven!

How we need him to teach us to feel more deeply for *God's* honor and *God's*

name than for our own! See him among the highlands of Gilead, appealing to God in prayer as bits and pieces of news make known to him the dark doings in Israel: Jezebel has destroyed the altars of God. Jezebel has removed His true priests. Jezebel has installed her abominable gods of Tyre with their hideous forms of idol worship. Jezebel is leading Israel into shameful and wholesale apostasy! Elijah can stand it no longer. He must go! The honor of his God is at stake!

Do we wonder why Elijah has been called the prophet of fire? Nothing cool, indifferent or complacent about this man. In his breast burns an intensity about godliness. Would that we might be gripped with the holy passion that was his! How quickly might we be done with all malice and ill will, all pettiness, strife and discord.



Ministries

Someone has remarked that there are two sorts of prophets: Prophets of deeds, and prophets of words. Of the latter, the greatest is doubtless Isaiah; of the former, there has not been a greater than Elijah.

Elijah was a prophet of *deeds*. So far as we know, he wrote nothing. This does not surprise us. A man from Tishbe

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A Nature Like Ours!

The Book of James (5:17) says, *"Elijah was a man with a nature like ours"* (NKJV). *"Elijah was a man just like us"* (NIV). *"Elijah was as human as we are"* (NLT). *"Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are"* (KJV). What is the Scripture telling us?

The Greek word translated *"nature like ours"* or *"man just like us"* or *"human as we are"* or *"subject to like passions as we are"* means: *"of like desires, pertaining to, being of the same quality or kind of desires (Acts 14:15; Jas. 5:17)"*—*A Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains [Greek New Testament]*; *"suffering the like with another, of like feelings or affections"*—*Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*.

According to the Englishman's Greek Concordance, the Greek word translated *"passions"* is also used in Acts 14:15, *"And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn*

from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein."

The definitions of the word seem to leave the door open to greater meaning than can be derived from the Greek word itself. For example, *"suffering the like with another, of like feelings or affections"* can include anything from the context, whether describing one's burning zeal or great passionate determination for right-doing, serving Christ, or any of the great characteristics of thought or action of the true and faithful Christian. So it seems the word *passions* is a good choice when used to its fullest meaning and taken in light of the zeal and determination of the early Church. The Word of God puts such a deep desire in our hearts that it moves us to overpower our carnal nature regardless of the sufferings.

Can't you just see Elijah serving God with a passion, giving all he had?

Let us have a *"like passion"*—to please God! ♦

Background

Where: Israel

Occupation: Mighty Prophet of God

When: 9th century BC

Contemporaries: Ahab, Jezebel, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Ahaziah, Shalmaneser III (Assyria), Elisha

Meaning of Hebrew name "Elijah": "My God is Jehovah"

Highlights:

- Mightiest, most famous and most dramatic of the Hebrew prophets
- Predicted the beginning and end of a three-year drought
- Represented God in a showdown on Mt. Carmel with the priests of Baal and Ashtaroth
- Thundered warnings to Ahab
- Defied Jezebel and predicted her downfall
- Was used by God to restore a dead child to his mother
- Was translated into heaven by a "whirlwind" so he would not see death



in Gilead, he was not the companion of books and letters. But he was not called to write; he was called to *act*. He was a man of action rather than diction. He was dynamic rather than academic. This was apparently what God needed at that time, a man of prompt action, of strong measures and explosive deeds. Someone else would do the writing. At that moment God needed the *action*. God needed *Elijah*.

Elijah's was a ministry of *miracles* as well. At every new chapter in the story, we learn of another miracle. These miracles tell us that God was with Elijah, that Elijah was God's man, and that God knew what was necessary to make the mission of Elijah a striking success. If ever there was a time in Israel's his-



The Messenger

by MARY A. LEE – ABOUT 1916

"Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts. —Mal. 3:1-2

*Do you know our heavenly King will soon be coming,
That there now remains but one more wondrous sign?
Open up to me the grand prophetic pages,
That the silver cords of truth I may combine.
There we read a full account of how Elijah
Will precede the wondrous coming of our King;
And as John the Baptist was His first forerunner,
He shall tidings of His second advent bring.*

*You may turn with me and find the very chapter—
'Tis the last one before Matthew, you will see—
Where the Prophet Malachi will tell us truly
When the coming of this mighty man shall be.
You remember—if you are a Bible student—
How, in days of old, when came the very hour,
His successor saw the angels lift Elijah,
And give him a double portion of his pow'r.*

*Now we know not where those holy angels bore him,
For God's secret things are not to us revealed;
But it must have been to some far-distant planet,
Though its name from mortals now is still concealed.
History tells us he was sternest of the Prophets;
That judicial power in him was greatly seen;
So we know his courage and his firmness will be
Well depicted in his lofty, stately mien.*

*Now, we'll turn and read the reason for his coming—
I would pow'rless be myself to tell you why—
But when God relates to us the simple story,
We can know why he is coming by and by.
He is coming lest this earth with curse be smitten;
He is coming that his children he may turn
To the fathers, that the words of truth may enter,
That their softened hearts may not the Saviour spurn.*

*Then again, if you will forward turn to Matthew,
Look, and you can read in chapter seventeen,
Where our Master plainly gives another reason
Why this Prophet great before Him shall be seen.
He will "truly first come," says our Lord and Master,
And will restoration bring of all things lost
When the Jewish Age, with many mighty wonders—
All fulfilled, into the Gentile Age had crossed.*

*But we hear some skeptic say a contradiction
In the Bible he can quickly now point out;
For Elias he can find is John the Baptist,
And his words against our teaching are most stout.
Well—you know—this blessed Bible is a wonder,
If you only have True Wisdom's golden key,
For its every page contains a revelation,
Though 'tis clothed by erring man in "mystery."*

tory when miracles were needed it was in the time of Ahab and Jezebel. Unprecedented corruption called loudly for the drastic mission of Elijah's, one so armed with signs and wonders as to bear unmistakable credentials of its Divine authority. What right have we—nearly three thousand years later—to judge otherwise?

Elijah's ministry was also one of *reformation*. God did not send him to originate anything new but to protest the apostasy of the nation and to call men back to the old ways, back to the good ways, back to God. To some this probably seemed reactionary, a regression rather than progress. But Elijah knew that going forward in the wrong way is the worst kind of regression.

When Elijah burst upon the scene in the time of Ahab, things could hardly have been worse. After the reigns of Saul, David and Solomon, ten of the Hebrew tribes had revolted to go their own way and form the separate kingdom of Israel. Their first king had been the wicked Jeroboam, whose distinguishing epitaph reads: "*Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.*" This is the Jeroboam who put a golden calf at Dan in the north and another at Bethel in the south so that the people could follow the line of least resistance and worship idols nearby instead of the true God in Jerusalem.

About forty years passed between the death of Jeroboam and the ascent of Ahab to the throne, forty years of con-

tinued moral and religious deterioration. No less than six kings reigned, all of them evil.

Things were dark enough when Ahab took the throne, but Ahab quickly made them at least a hundred percent worse, for the inspired chronicler wrote of him, "*He did evil above all that were before him*"—Jeroboam included: "*No one else so completely sold himself to what was evil in the Lord's sight as did Ahab, for his wife, Jezebel, influenced him. He was especially guilty because he worshiped idols just as the Amorites had done—the people whom the Lord had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites....He did more to arouse the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, than any of the other kings of Israel before him...for his wife, Jezebel, influenced him*" (1 Kings 21:25–26, 33
continued on page 10

*So now turn, yes, turn to Gospel John most quickly—
In the very chapter where the book begins—
And the words of that beloved, true Apostle
In the one and twentieth verse and victory wins.
When the priests and Levites came to John the Baptist
To propound their questions to him on the spot,
They most pointedly then asked, "Are you Elijah?"
And he straightway answered truly, "I am not."*

*And, unsatisfied, they questioned still more closely
(For they wanted to know before they let him go):
"Are you not indeed that great and ancient Prophet?"
And with prompt decision came John's answer, "No."
And as still they sought for further information,
That they might establish his identity,
Again they said, "Oh, tell us then, who are you?"
We are wondering what your mission here can be."*

*"I'm the voice of one in wilderness now crying,
Oh, make straight the highway for the coming Lord!
As Isaiah, good old Prophet, in his message
Said, as plainly we can read it in the Word."
You may ask, Why did our Lord tell His disciples
That Elias had already to them come?
If Apostle John records 'twas not that prophet,
Of our argument what then can be the sum?*

*So to Luke I'll have you go, for he bare record
How the angel told John's father ere his birth,
He should come in power and spirit of Elijah,
Hail his Master's coming advent on the earth.
Not that he would be Elijah, grand old Prophet,
But his power and his spirit emulate;
For he'd have the Holy Spirit without measure;
From his very infancy it would be great.*

*Then again, if you are honest, reason rightly;
Did our Master come at first to claim His throne?
Was that day a "great and dreadful" day of Judgment,
When He came to tread the winepress all alone?
Ah, no, no! it was with cruel thorns they crowned Him,
As He hung suspended on the Roman cross;
For it was not time to every kingdom conquer,
But to be rejected and to suffer loss.*

*As a nobleman He's gone to far-off country,
To receive His precious Kingdom and return,
And Elijah goes before to warn all peoples
Lest they should the coming King in anger spurn.
He will heal the nations of their dread diseases;
He will give God's children power to do the same;
He'll restore the Holy Spirit long withholden;
Do such wondrous things abroad 'twill spread his fame.*

*All the blind, the deaf, the lame, then by the thousands
Who will listen to his message, he'll restore;
And the dead who long have sweetly slept in Jesus,
He will waken, here to dwell forevermore.
Then, all suddenly, unto His holy temple
Comes the Lord of all, His waiting saints to bless;
Promised King and Judge of earth to reign forever
On His throne of lasting peace and righteousness.*

*Oh, Elijah very soon now will be coming;
He, the mighty messenger, proclaims the King.
He will turn the hearts of all who to him hearken,
And into the light their darkened minds shall bring
When he lifts "an ensign on the mountains," see ye;
When he blows the trumpet, listen and obey!
It will turn your hearts from sorrow to rejoicing,
As you haste to meet your Saviour on the way.*

NLT). Here was the source of the trouble, and the weak-willed Ahab did little or nothing to resist it.

Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, shrewd and intriguing, led a grimly determined effort to stamp out the religion of Jehovah once and for all. The altars of the Lord were cast down, the prophets of God were murdered. In their place were erected groves and images to false gods, and hundreds of heathen priests took possession throughout the land, sustained by the revenues of the royal purse. Licentious modes of worship were introduced. Temples to Baal were built at Jezreel and Samaria. It was a dark, dark hour.

Was this the nation that *God* had founded? Were these the people He had delivered from Egypt and established in

this good land of Canaan? It seemed as though the crushed worship of God could never regain its lost prestige. Those people God had chosen had lapsed into all-out heathenism.

But just at this zero hour God's champion arises. The times called for an Elijah, and an Elijah appeared! The greatest prophet is reserved for the worst age. Israel never had so impious a king as Ahab nor so mighty a prophet as Elijah.

Isn't it fitting that God has chosen Elijah to be the prophet to reappear in *our* time? Isn't Elijah as needed in our world today, with his message of repentance and his fearless denunciations of evil, as he was in ancient Israel? Hasn't God chosen well to appoint this great man for so crucial a mission?

We find ourselves today in a world bent on doing evil with both hands earnestly. With moral values at an all-time low, with family structures deteriorated and virtue and goodness so widely maligned, with thousands and millions of men and women living without thought of God or His purposes, bent only on pursuing their comforts and pleasures, isn't the time right for God once again to send the man He has been preserving for this very mission and destiny, to shock them out of their lethargy before He smites the earth with a curse? (Mal. 4:6).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, it takes more than a little imagination to picture all nations bowing in humble submission to King Jesus. The transition from what the world is now to what it will be when Christ returns

Was John the Baptist Elijah?

Jesus' words (Matthew 17:9–12) are a source of confusion. After the disciples came down with Jesus from the Mount of Transfiguration and Jesus had said plainly that Elijah the prophet was yet to come, He continued: "*But I tell you, he has already come.*" What did He mean?

How did John the Baptist come as Elijah? He came, as was prophesied, "*with the spirit and power of Elijah*" (Luke 1:17 NLT), as the forerunner of Christ's first advent, just as had been foretold (see Isa. 40:3–4).

Now shall we acknowledge that Christ's *first* coming had a herald (no one disputes this) and that His second—and much greater coming—needs none?

Even though John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah,

he was not Elijah. "*Are you Elijah?*" they asked him, and he answered, "*No*" (John 1:19–21 NLT). Again Jesus said of Elijah, "*Elijah is indeed coming and will restore all things*" (Matt. 17:11 NRSV). These words could not possibly refer to any future "*coming*" of John, because when Jesus spoke them John the Baptist was already dead!

Notice also that Jesus said Elijah is to "*restore all things.*" What "*all things*" did John the Baptist restore at Christ's first coming, if we should apply these words to John? He did not make any great reforming work. His whole mission was accomplished in a very short time and touched only a very small area. He did not restore the power of the Holy Spirit, for it is written that John "*did no miracle*" whatever (John 10:41). Nor did he make any sweeping moral reforms—he was beheaded for making a single condemnation of immorality.

No, John the Baptist does not qualify as a fulfillment of Jesus' words.

The issue becomes even more confusing when we look at Jesus' next statement: "*but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but they did to him whatever they pleased.*" Of whom did Jesus speak? Here He is speaking of John the Baptist, the "Elijah" or messenger of Christ's first advent, as the disciples clearly understood (Matt. 17:12–13 NRSV).

There were to be two advents of Christ, and two heralds to announce them. The two events were foretold together. But just as the first coming of Christ fulfilled only *part* of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament and requires the Second Coming at the end of this age for complete fulfillment, so the coming of John the Baptist fulfilled only one part of the prophecies of the herald. The greater part await the return of the grand Prophet himself to fulfill them at the time of the Second Advent, before the coming "*of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.*" ♦

and takes the kingship will be by far the greatest transition in the history of the earth. Men will not easily set aside their cultures for a new way of life. Even in prospect of the most promising benefits they will not easily give up their dreams and goals. The change must be actually forced upon them.

God knows this. He knows His human creatures and all their human needs. He knows also that if He is to spare any, they must be pre-informed of what He is about to do. They must be given an open demonstration of evidence, followed by an open ultimatum: Turn, and live; refuse, and die.

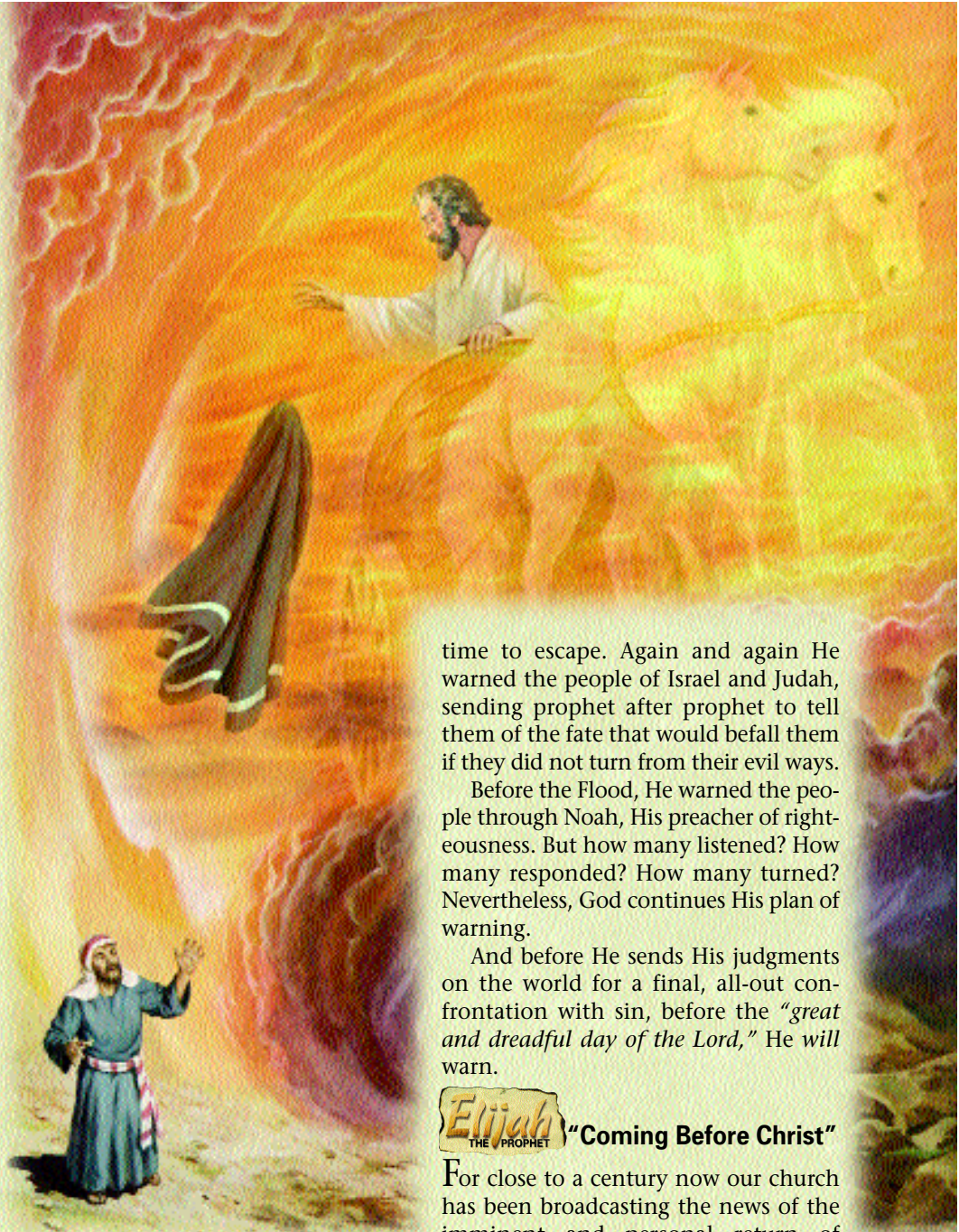


Taken to Heaven

Elijah is one of two privileged persons who were chosen by God to be *"translated"* from this world to another, never experiencing death. The account in 2 Kings reads that *"Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven"* (2 Kings 2:11). A marvelous experience to be sure! but does it seem strange that Elijah—a mortal man—could enter heaven when we read that *"No one has ever gone into heaven"* (John 3:13 NIV)?

We have no reason to assume that Elijah was taken to the presence of God, or to the highest heaven. We read of Jesus that *"He...ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things"* (Eph. 4:10). Wouldn't this indicate that there are lower heavens, where one such as Elijah *might* go? Heaven is an immense realm. It includes, literally speaking, all of creation that is not the earth. In our own galaxy, the Milky Way, scientists estimate that there are more than one hundred billion stars. And surely in this vast ocean of space there are numerous habitable islands where God's work is not yet complete, areas still inhabited by lower levels of life such as we know, areas not yet glorified. The words of Amos confirm this: *"It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven,...the Lord is his name"* (Amos 9:6).

Of one fact we may also be sure: Elijah was not "picked up" supernaturally and deposited beyond the next hill; nor did he merely take a trip into the "atmospheric" heaven; these are some of the various interpretations extant, but they are not Biblical. The Word of God declares, *"Elijah went up by a whirlwind*



into heaven," and at the proper time he shall be brought back to earth.

Warnings

It has always been God's pattern to warn of approaching judgment. If Christ were to walk into our world today and begin pouring out His judgments on wickedness without any warning, who would survive? Wouldn't He be even unjust?

But God's longsuffering is unsurpassed. Before He sends judgment, He always warns. Before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain, He sent His angels with warnings. He warned the people of Nineveh before judgment arrived. He warned the people of Jerusalem while there was still

time to escape. Again and again He warned the people of Israel and Judah, sending prophet after prophet to tell them of the fate that would befall them if they did not turn from their evil ways.

Before the Flood, He warned the people through Noah, His preacher of righteousness. But how many listened? How many responded? How many turned? Nevertheless, God continues His plan of warning.

And before He sends His judgments on the world for a final, all-out confrontation with sin, before the *"great and dreadful day of the Lord,"* He will warn.



"Coming Before Christ"

For close to a century now our church has been broadcasting the news of the imminent and personal return of Christ, the "Great Day of the Lord." Jesus Christ is coming back, just as surely as He went away. The evidence of Scripture in favor of this hope is overwhelming, and today, many religious groups are teaching it. But the fact that Christ's Second Advent is to have a distinguished announcer is often overlooked. Yet the forecast is definite: *"I will send you Elijah the prophet...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse"* (Mal. 4:5-6).

Shortly after the beginning of the last century, our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, started teaching this message, and some years later our group began distributing a free booklet, "The Coming of Jesus and Elijah." Today a number of theories on the subject are extant. A very few

teach the actual return of the real Prophet himself, just as the Scriptures state. Others say "Elijah the prophet" represents a class of persons. Some expect a messenger who will be born in the western world. A few have asserted that *they themselves* are Elijah. The most say that it is "mission accomplished" because Jesus said that John the Baptist was Elijah.

Why do we continue to teach it? Because God's prophet Malachi said it, and Jesus confirmed it. Malachi said plainly, "*Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord,*" and Jesus said also "*Elias truly shall first come, and shall restore all things.*"

Is that all we read in the Bible about

the subject? Only two small verses stating the prophecy? Yes, that is all. But isn't that sufficient? How many times should God have to speak before we decide to believe?

Let us take God at His Word, and His Words at face value. "*Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet.*"

Though there were doubtless a few in Israel who took Elijah's words to heart, the first mission of Elijah ended with the nation lapsing into the sin and evil it had renounced and finally being swallowed up, just as God's prophets foretold. But Elijah's *second* mission is destined to be an overwhelming success. This time he comes as a man of destiny. The coming of Jesus will initiate

a whole set of changes: new government, new laws, new populace, new goals—a new world—until from sea to sea the kingdom is the Lord's and all nations serve and obey Him.

Don't we long with all our hearts to be found on the right side in that great dividing day? What a glorious culmination will follow the great advent of our Lord! And it is just ahead! What a privilege belongs to Elijah, to have been appointed by God to initiate the steps that will bring about a new heaven and a new earth!

Let us imitate Elijah's noble example of courage, faith and dynamic obedience, that with him we may share the everlasting blessings of the world to come. ♦

Christ Comes "Like a Thief"...Yet Announced?

How can Jesus be said to come "*suddenly*" and "*as a thief in the night*" if His coming is to be announced in advance to the whole world by the return of the ancient Prophet Elijah? A thief does not announce his coming; indeed, "*If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into*" (Matt. 24:43 NIV). How does the mission of Elijah fit into the picture?

The day of the Lord is prophesied to arrive suddenly, as without warning. But even with the advent of Elijah to warn, will not the great day of the Lord still be sudden to an unsuspecting world? In a sense the two events are one, for the coming of Elijah will break God's long silence. From that point forward, God will work openly. The majority of the prophecies of the coming of Christ, in fact, do not mention or even suggest the forerunner's coming. The whole event—the coming of Jesus and Elijah—will be sudden, a surprise to the world at large, as a thief in the night.

Christ's coming will also remain sudden even though it is announced because most of His warning words will fall on unbelieving ears, and so the day of the Lord still comes "*unawares*" (Luke 21:34, Matt. 24:50). This was true in the time of Noah, and Jesus said, "*It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed*" (Luke 17:30 NIV). The comparison seems especially appropriate. The end-time was to be history repeating itself, not only in the vast extent of lawlessness and evil, but also in the general disregard of the Divine warning. At God's bidding, Noah was a messenger with a message of warning. He preached for 120 years, warning that if they did not repent of their sins and turn to God, they would be destroyed with a great flood. But the people laughed and sneered. No doubt some believed for a time, but when years went by and nothing unusual happened, they too lost faith. But as time ran out—when the rain began to fall—then the people were ready to listen. Then they would do anything—anything—if only they could get inside that ark of safety. But it was too late. The rain came, and "*the flood,*" and "*took them all away*" (Matt. 24:39). Who was to blame because the flood came suddenly and caught them unawares? Surely not God. But suddenly it did come, not because they were not warned but because they had failed to listen. Even so will Christ's coming be sudden, despite the ministry of Elijah; for the great majority still will not listen.

This is why Jesus issued His own solemn warning: "*If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping*" (Mark 13:36 NIV). Destruction always comes suddenly. One moment, all is business as usual. The next, destruction has descended and things can never be the same again. So it will be with the day of the Lord. One moment it will be business as usual; the next will be the moment of truth when men are face to face with the consequences of their misspent lives. Oh! Let us take the warning to ourselves while there is still time to heed it! Let us get ready now, *before* the day of the Lord overtakes us. ♦

Know Your Bible?

FROM THE GOSPELS

1. Who said, *"Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"*
2. Where does it say, *"Whosoever hath, to him shall be given?"*
3. What priest became dumb as a punishment for unbelief?
4. Who said, *"The axe is laid unto the root of the trees?"*
5. Where is this verse, *"With God all things are possible?"*

FROM THE KINGS

1. What Bible heroine did king Ahasuerus promise half of his kingdom to?
2. Who said to his subjects, *"My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins?"*
3. Who asked, *"What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor?"* What man received this honor?
4. *"Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another"* was said to a mighty king by _____.
5. Who said to his subjects, *"My father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions?"*
6. Who said, *"Am I God to kill and to make alive?"*

VERSES FROM JAMES

1. Complete: *"Ye ask, and receive not, because _____"*
2. Complete: *"The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace _____"*
3. What does James say about the future of the humble?
4. Finish: *"Resist the devil, _____"*

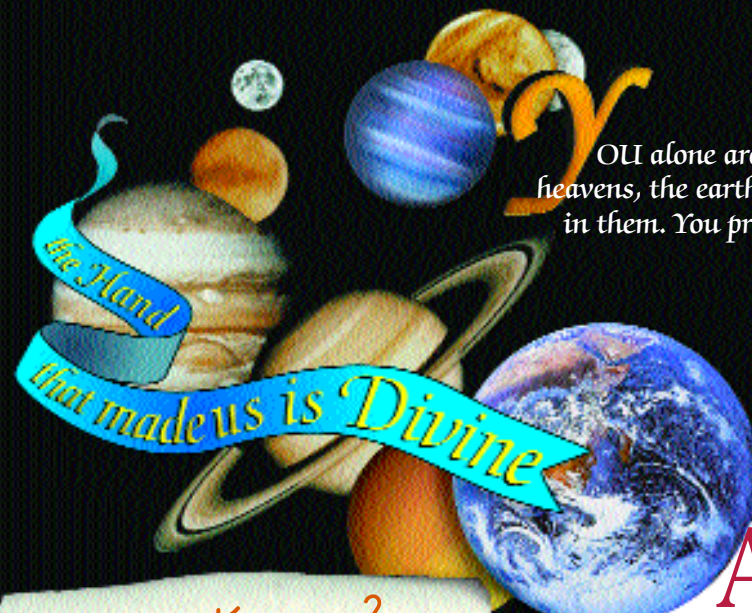
COMPLETE THESE PROVERBS

1. "A merry heart _____."
2. "The path of the just _____."
3. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, _____."
4. "Go to the ant, _____."
5. "Yet a little sleep _____."
6. "Keep thy heart _____."
7. "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, _____."

QUOTES FROM WHOM?

1. Who said, *"Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker?"*
2. Who said, *"If I perish, I perish?"*
3. Of whom was it said, *"Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?"*
4. Who was told to *"Let my people go?"*
5. Who said of death, *"There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest?"*
6. Who said, *"The half was not told me?"*
7. Who said of Moses that he was *"learned in all wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and in deeds?"*
8. Who said, *"The most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands?"*
9. Who said, to the army at Jericho, *"Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city?"*
10. Who said, *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him?"*
11. Who said, *"All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee?"*

ANSWERS ON PAGE 21



YOU alone are God. You have made...the heavens, the earth and the seas, and everything in them. You preserve it all. —Neh. 9:6 TLB

Against All Odds

Did You Know...?

- ✓ ...that all species of Pacific salmon hatch in fresh water, live much of their lives in salt water and then return to fresh water to spawn and die?
- ✓ ...that salmon can average 34 miles per day over long distances?
- ✓ ...that each female salmon deposits 3,000 to 14,000 eggs in several gravel nests?
- ✓ ...that only two to ten percent of the salmon's eggs survive to reproduce?
- ✓ ...that salmon find their way to their home-waters by smell?
- ✓ ...that salmon can smell one drop of "home" water (water from where they were hatched) in 250 gallons of water from another source?
- ✓ ...that salmon's sense of smell is hundreds of times more acute than that of dogs?
- ✓ ...that salmon, like other fish, have 300 degree vision?
- ✓ ...that salmon can hear low frequency sound waves?
- ✓ ...that salmon drift backwards when migrating to the ocean?
- ✓ ...that young salmon must undergo many changes before they can survive in the ocean?
- ✓ ...that salmon change to bright colors when migrating up fresh-water streams?
- ✓ ...that salmon can jump over water-falls more than 12 feet high?
- ✓ ...that some salmon travel for two months or more to reach their spawning grounds without taking food?

by GERALD R. PAYNE

Around the world, the changing seasons and an indefatigable determination to survive impels many creatures of air, land and water to make an all out do-and-die journey home to the place where they were born. It seems to be part of the Creator's design for a myriad species of fish, animals, birds and even insects. To observe the remarkable ability of these creatures to navigate, some thousands of miles against incredible odds, is to think about the great Designer who really is able.

Among such creatures the salmon is champion.

As with most creatures, there are various species of salmon. Most popular is, perhaps, the king salmon. An Atlantic species, this salmon has tipped the scale to as much as 126 pounds. But this is small compared to the fossil record of one which claims a weight of about 500 pounds, a length of ten feet, and is even equipped with fangs for battle. (How would you like a creature like this to swim up beside your boat?)

Change

A salmon's life is one of change. Progressing from an egg, to an "eyed egg," to an alevin, to a fry, and finally to a parr, the salmon is finally ready to begin its incredible preparation for life in the ocean. Adapted for life in fresh water, it would quickly die in the ocean. But the ocean is its destination. Depending on the species, it begins migration to the ocean about a year after hatching (chum and pink salmon begin their migration to the ocean no more than a week or so after hatching!).

How will it survive when it gets to the ocean? Well, it won't—not without the masterful handiwork of the Creator.

Before reaching the estuary (where fresh and salt water mix), the fingerling undergoes a dramatic change called smolting. The fish become more streamlined, their tails become more elongated and forked, the parr marks (vertical bands on their sides) disappear and turn to a very silvery color. Simultaneously, internal changes take place. The memory and smell centers in the brain grow rapidly. (These are special features, as amazing as it may seem, that the Creator built into the salmon for a special purpose which you will later see.) Also, the salmon's kidneys convert to be able to excrete salt instead of retain it! After reaching the estuary, the young salmon remain for a short time while the final stages of smolting are completed.

Before it was a fresh-water fish which would quickly die in the ocean. Now it is fully adapted for vigorous and competitive life in the deep salt water. But its traveling days are far from over.

Migration

Traveling in schools the Pacific salmon migrate to the North Pacific Ocean where they remain for one to seven years, depending on the

species. For some, it is a long journey of 3,000 to 3,500 miles—actually much further, because salmon do not swim in a straight line. The Atlantic salmon travel to Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Labrador, and even to East and West Greenland.

Salmon swim in the ocean an average of 18 miles per day and can maintain a speed of 34 miles per day for long periods.

Salmon have a row of sensory pores called lateral lines along their sides which help them navigate. The sensory pores provide a means of hearing low frequencies which help to detect very small ocean currents. They also help to find food and avoid predators. Some Sockeye salmon also use the sun and moon for navigation.

The Atlantic salmon spend different lengths of time in the ocean before returning to their home-rivers for spawning. Some spend one winter, others two, others three winters in the ocean. Could the Master Designer have built in this feature so all the eggs would not end up in one basket?

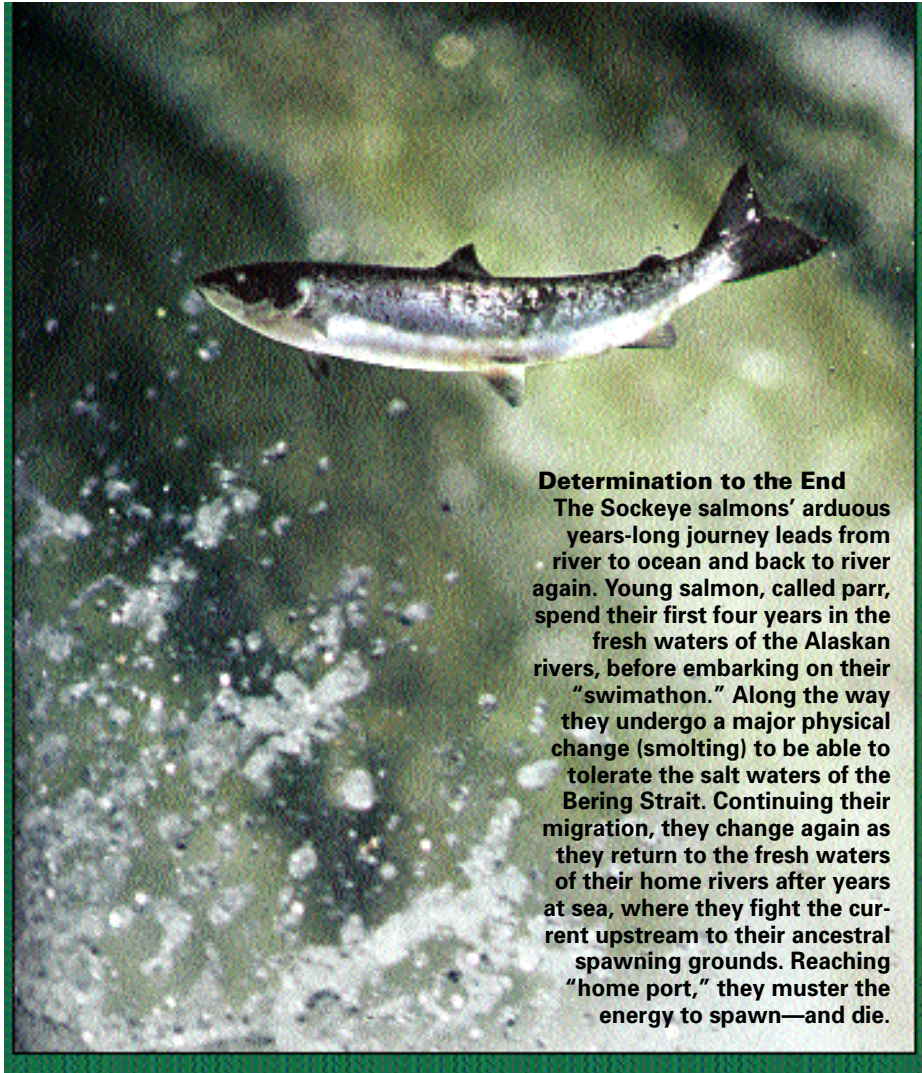
Incredible journey home

An instinct for procreation so strong that it could only be by the Creator's design, the salmon changes course and heads home.

How can they find their way to the place where they themselves were given life? Remember the rapid growth of memory and smell centers of the brain? Now they put these features to good



Budding strength shines through a ten-week-old salmon as it breaks free of its embryonic membrane. For several more weeks it lives off its yolk sac, then rises to eat microscopic plants and larvae. Turning silver two to four years later, it heads downstream, developing a tolerance for salt water as it enters the sea.



Determination to the End

The Sockeye salmon's arduous years-long journey leads from river to ocean and back to river again. Young salmon, called parr, spend their first four years in the fresh waters of the Alaskan rivers, before embarking on their "swimathon." Along the way they undergo a major physical change (smolting) to be able to tolerate the salt waters of the Bering Strait. Continuing their migration, they change again as they return to the fresh waters of their home rivers after years at sea, where they fight the current upstream to their ancestral spawning grounds. Reaching "home port," they muster the energy to spawn—and die.

use. Salmon have a sense of smell hundreds of times more acute than that of a dog. Scientific studies show that they can detect one part per million, which is the equivalent of one drop of their home waters in 250 gallons of water. The Creator not only gave them this ability but also the ability to recognize their home-waters by smell.

After traveling thousands of miles they finally pick up the scent of their birthplace, whether a hatchery or a stream, and they change direction once more. Then come the long, seemingly impossible odds of navigating the rivers upstream. Some of the chum and king salmon of the Pacific swim more than 2,000 miles up the Yukon River and its headwaters. Impelled by a built-in desire to navigate to the site where they were hatched, they fight rapids, and can leap falls more than 12 feet high! When they come to a fork in the river, they know just which one to take—they remember!

Endangered life

The life cycle of the salmon is delicate. The odds against survival from egg to the return to the spawning grounds are very high. Only two to ten percent live to make the journey.

From the time the eggs are deposited beneath the gravel of a stream they must be provided with cold, clean, swift water. Without the swift-movement of clean water the incubating eggs will suffocate due to lack of oxygen. If the water becomes too warm the salmon will become infested with disease. As the climate becomes warmer, and due to deforestation, warming water has become a concern. Many die from this cause alone, and the threat grows every year.

Another threat to salmon is that of predators. Fish and small animals are always ready to snatch a young salmon during migration. Studies indicate that about 97% of Maine salmon migrate at night to avoid predators as they swim backwards downstream seeking the safety of deep areas. The Pacific king and coho salmon are prized sports fish, and

the Maine salmon, now listed on the endangered species list, is also a favorite sports fish for fishermen. While in the ocean they are fair game for a variety of predators including seals, porpoises, birds-of-prey, and other large fish. They swim in schools in the ocean for protection, displaying their flashy silver

inland journey in fresh water. By the time they reach the spawning grounds, some of the salmon are bright red, others green, brown, striped, and even purple. These colors are most pronounced in males. One species grows large canine teeth from which it gets its name, dog salmon.



A Lesson in DETERMINATION

Is not our journey to the Kingdom against great odds? Even though we have not experienced great physical persecutions as did our first century Brother Paul, could we not express his same determination to fight against the old nature? *"We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed and broken. We are perplexed, but we don't give up and quit. We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going. Through suffering, these bodies of ours constantly share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies"* (2 Cor. 4:8–10 NLT).

While the end of the salmon's struggle is death, our determination to reach our goal of perfection of character, if successful, will bring death—death to sin. But as the salmon's death help to bring life to a new generation, our death to sin will also bring new life—eternal life!

How can we capture the "spirit" of the salmon?

- Be determined to study and obey God (Ezra 7:10)
- Determine not to sin in what I say (Ps. 17:3; 39:1; Eccl. 5:6)
- Determine to follow Christ whatever the cost (Luke 9:23, 57–62; Mark 8:34–38)
- Be determined to pray (Dan. 6:7–13)
- God helps those who are that determined (Isaiah 50:7)

sides to confuse predators. Migrating back up the rivers many are met with hungry bears anxiously awaiting their return.

Before beginning this long and difficult journey, the salmon must be prepared. Why? While making this amazing journey of two months or more and thousands of miles, it is said that they never eat a bite of food! Their one purpose is to reach home and spawn.

One last change

When in the salty waters of the ocean they are a bright silver. But when making their way up the rivers other changes takes place, varying according to the species and the inland distance traveled.

The male Pacific salmon generally develop hooked jaws, and their gills turn a bright red as they begin their

Spawning

The Pacific salmon's life ends with the process called spawning. While the Pacific salmon spawns only once and then dies, the Atlantic salmon may live to spawn three or more times before dying.

Once salmon reach the spawning grounds, the females choose a site and prepare nests (redds) for laying eggs. They lie on one side and rapidly move their tails back and forth over the gravel. Hardly touching the gravel with their tails they create water currents that wash away the gravel. (Some of the gravel can be as large as a fist!) These redds are about 6 inches deep. This process takes up to a whole day. They then deposit from 500 to 1,200 eggs while the males fertilize them. After covering the eggs, they move upstream, where the process is repeated for as many as four more times, until a total

of 2,500 to 6,000 eggs have been deposited per salmon, depending on the species. Why so many eggs? The Creator has made this provision for the benefit of many creatures, not the least of which is man. By the time the females have finished spawning, they have lost half their weight.

Through dogged determination, strength and navigational abilities that only an intelligent Creator could provide, they have accomplished their mission. With what strength is left, the adult Pacific salmon guard the site until their death as an instinctive loyal duty dictates. Interestingly, the decaying bodies of these fish form a plentiful food supply for small organisms which are the main food source for the hatching offspring.

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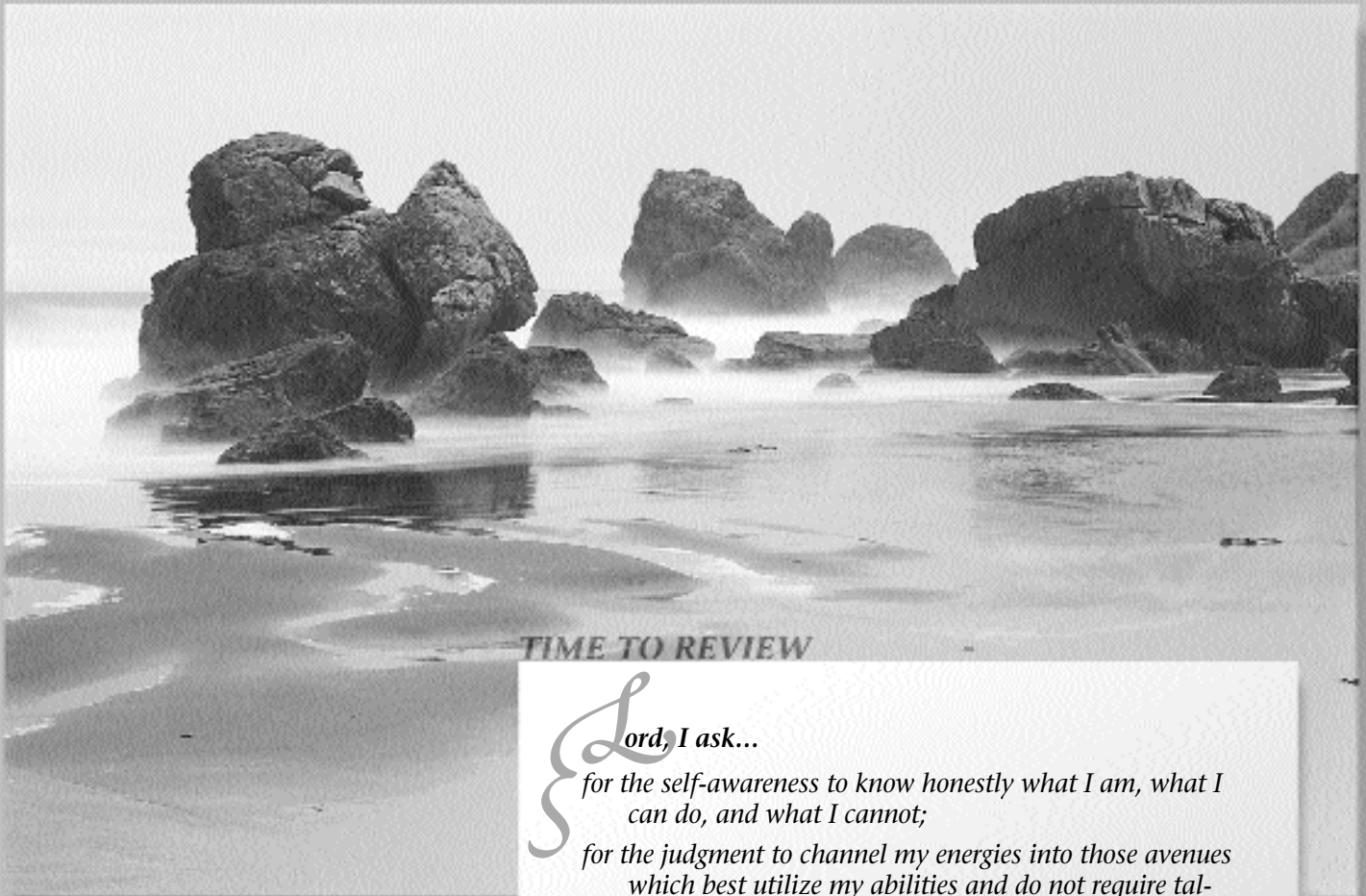
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TIME TO REVIEW

Lord, I ask...

for the self-awareness to know honestly what I am, what I can do, and what I cannot;

for the judgment to channel my energies into those avenues which best utilize my abilities and do not require talents which I do not possess;

for the wisdom to admit error cheerfully and learn from my experiences, that I may grow and develop and avoid repetition of mistakes;

for the humility to learn from others even though they be younger, less experienced, or of humbler station than I;

for the courage to make decisions whenever they are necessary and to avoid rashness when they are not;

for the consideration to recognize the worth of each individual, and to respect all those with whom I have contact, neither stifling them nor exalting myself at their expense;

for the tolerance to recognize mistakes as a cost of true learning;

for the insight to develop a personal philosophy, that my life may have more meaning and satisfaction and that I may avoid capricious action under the pressures of expediency;

for patience to live realistically with my circumstances, striving always for the better but recognizing the perils of ill-considered change;

for all these things, dear Lord, that I may live a more useful life, through serving my fellowmen and You.

FAITH in Action



by RUTH E. SISSON

Bible Text: Acts 5:1–11 NIV

1 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property.

2 With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?

4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."

5 When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened.

6 Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

8 Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price."

9 Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

10 At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

11 Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

TROUBLE IN THE CHURCH



Read Acts 5:1–11

No one likes a hypocrite. We want people to be frank, honest, on a level with us. We want to live and work with people who are genuine. We want to do business with those we can trust.

This is especially true in the Church. There is something especially repelling about one who pretends to be a Christian but whose actions belie his profession.

Hypocrisy is repugnant to God, too. A God of truth, He hates all pretense and sham. And because He can read our minds and know what moves us to act, He will not be fooled by our hypocrisy.

How did hypocrisy work its way into the early Church? When so many new believers were joining during its earliest days, we can be sure that all were not 100% sincere. Time would sift their numbers. But at this point, the whole movement was fresh and new, and God, who was watching over His Church, saw that an impressive—unforgettable—lesson was needed.

Triumph, BUT...

Chapter 5 opens with the little word "but." This word tells us we have come to a decisive turn in the story. Chapter 4 ended on a strong, triumphant note, with a rapidly growing Church feeling concern and devotion to one another, even to the point of sacrificing for one another. Typical of the times, there was a very small group of people with adequate means, and a very large number of poor commoners. But within the Church community, those who had more were willing to share with those who had less. Perhaps it was a reflection of the character of Jesus among them.

No doubt Ananias and Sapphira had seen the recognition given to Barnabas, who had made a generous gift to the Church community, and wanted some of that recognition for themselves. They too had property, and they too could sell it. Why not? But then came that fateful family conference, when they decided to keep part of the proceeds for themselves. Perhaps they were thinking of their own security, and wanted some insurance against the future.

Or perhaps there were children, or elderly parents who needed to be thought of, or any one of a hundred different issues.

The real problem was not that they kept back part of the money, but they decided to do it *while appearing to give all*. They wanted the community to think they were giving all when they were not. They *planned* to deceive.

When Ananias came in and presented the money to the Apostles, he did not say anything untrue, but he acted a lie. He intended to give the impression that he had brought the total proceeds of the sale of the property. When Sapphira came in, she told a deliberate lie. Both were equally sinful.

THE HIGH PRICE OF DECEPTION

Sentence was executed swiftly because the Apostle Peter had power to know what was in Ananias' mind. Said Peter, "*Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God,*" (Acts 5:3-4). Ananias collapsed, and breathed his last. Three hours later, his wife came in and met the same fate, for the same sin.

1. How could Peter know that Ananias was not bringing the entire value of the sale, as he appeared to be doing? _____

Why was there no need of trial by jury? _____

2. Who else could read the thoughts of the people around him? (see John 2:25). _____

3. What is God's attitude toward deceit? (see Prov. 20:17; Psalm 101:6-7). _____

4. Who was the instigator of this transgression? Who owned the land?
Who received the proceeds of the sale? _____

5. How could Ananias and Sapphira have kept part of the money and not been guilty of sin? _____

Even after they had made the sale, Ananias and Sapphira could have saved the situation. They could have come to Peter explaining, "Peter, this is just a percentage of the proceeds. We did not feel able to give it all." And there would have been no question, no judgment, and no wrong. By deception they tried to claim honor they did not deserve.

God accepts our gifts, not according to their size, but according to the spirit in which we give them and according to our ability to give. But He will not be party to any pretense. The ancient law in Israel was, "*Ye shall be holy; for I am holy*" (Lev. 11:44), and that standard of holiness does not allow for any deceit. It seems very possible that when Peter was writing His First Epistle and quoting these words from Leviticus, he could still see in his mind's eye the memory of Ananias and Sapphira.

What was the effect on the young Church of the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira? "*Great fear came upon all the Church and upon all who heard these things*" (Acts 5:11).



A closer look

"He Kept Back Part"

The Greek word translated "kept back part" suggests that one selfishly appropriates something that is held in trust. Lake and Cadbury translate: "embezzled part of the price." The same word is used in Joshua 7:1 of Achan, who "*took of the accursed thing,*" or "*retained part of the consecrated spoil.*" As Luke wrote this account, he may have been comparing the sin of Ananias with that of Achan, a sin which affected the whole community, (see Joshua 7).

“THE LOVE OF
MONEY IS THE ROOT OF
ALL EVIL.”



Insight

Severity...as well as Goodness

Ananias and Sapphira were tempted by a sin which has tempted many people—the desire to live behind a deceptive facade. It was the sin of appearing to be something that they were not. This couple wanted to appear to be zealous supporters of the Church, when in reality they were only supporters of themselves. Their duplicity, was their undoing.

Luke does not add many details. There is no sentimental sympathy for them. They both dropped dead. It was a shocking lesson, and no further explanation was needed of their terrible ending.

Does such severity offend our modern sense of tolerance? Not if we stand by God's law. Does it violate the mercy and love of God? Not at all.

God is a God of love, but in order to be a God of love He must hate evil and evil doers. If He treats all alike, whatever their character, He has no character of His own.

Many a modern mind has been tempted to omit the severity of the Gospels. Have we lauded the sheep and forgotten the goats, and neglected to mention their fearful fate? Life is not like that, nor is Christianity like that. Facts are facts, and God in His holiness must be true to His Word. Whatever the modern day tolerance, God will punish wrong doing. Sooner or later, the wages of sin will be paid to every transgressor who persists in his sin.

There are some things that you cannot do and live. The penalties must be paid.



A closer look

Why did Ananias and Sapphira pay with their lives?

"You...lied...to God!" These are the last words Ananias heard. As Peter spoke them, Ananias dropped dead where he stood. Not one penny of the money he had kept back did he ever spend.

What a heart searching must have followed in that Christian community, what inner conviction, what deep self-examination. If God looks so seriously at sin, who can escape?

Why were Ananias and Sapphira singled out for their sin when any one of the believers in the community could recall numerous sins on their record? Why had Ananias and Sapphira been instantly struck down? It was a warning. It was one of those occasions when God chose to make an example in order to impress others.

For the same reason He brought fire on Sodom and Gomorrah.

For the same reason He smote Uzzah, when he had only touched the ark in disobedience. For the same reason He smote king Uzziah, and king Jeroboam, and David's young son.

We should thank God for His mercy, that He does not smite in every case, or none of us would survive. God is patient, longsuffering and gracious, but from time to time He makes a lesson, to remind us that He is holy, that He is just, and that He means what He says—it is His way of impressing us with the seriousness of His commands.



Take heed

Sin Is Deadly

The story of Ananias and Sapphira tells us how serious sin is. It tells us also that every sin is a sin against a holy God, every failure in virtue is an open assault on His standard. Also, every virtue that is practiced acknowledges His holiness.

Every attentive believer heard the message that joining this Church was serious business. Being a Christian believer was not the same as belonging to a mystery cult, or any of the popular religions of the day. Behind this movement, keeping it straight, keeping it true, keeping it honorable, was the power of God, so that people would not join carelessly or insincerely.

6. Give a few examples of how we today might become guilty of the same sin Ananias and Sapphira committed. _____

7. What did the Apostle John say would not be allowed in the Holy City? (Rev. 21:27) _____

8. Why are we today not punished as were Ananias and Sapphira? _____

Who Sinned—Ananias or Satan?

What moved Ananias and Sapphira to lie about the sale of their property and the amount of money they received? Did some super power of evil beyond their control corrupt their thinking and force them to deceive?

No, when the Apostle Peter was questioning Ananias, he said first, "*Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?*" Then Peter went on to explain: "*While it remained was it not your own, and after it was sold, was it not in your own control?*"

Ananias himself—not Satan—was in control of the situation. Peter is very explicit: "*Why have you conceived this thing **in your heart?***" This is exactly what Jesus said, that the human heart is the source of all evil. "*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts,*" and all the other evils that beset humankind (Mark 7:21–23). Ananias and Sapphira were themselves the instigators and perpetrators of the lie, and they suffered the consequences.

Why then does it say that "*Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit*"? Because the Bible uses the term "*Satan*" as a personification of the evil desires in our minds. As James said, "*Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death*" (James 1:14–15).

Ananias and Sapphira both designed and executed the plan of deception, and they paid with their lives.

Now there was a new note of caution. The half believers, those who wanted only the fringe benefits of believing, would keep their distance. Those who did not care about making any real commitment would be frightened away.

The account of Ananias and Sapphira demonstrates the almost stubborn honesty of the Bible. We are grateful that Luke included the story of these two traitors to the cause. It increases our confidence in him as a historian. If his purpose had been to make the early Church look as good as possible, the story of Ananias and Sapphira should have been omitted. But the Bible presents the facts as they are, and the early Church was like the Church in every age, a mixture of good and bad.

And these facts help to give us faith today. They tell us that the Christian society is not perfect, that there have been and there are varying levels of devotion in the Church. Every society, even the Christian, has its black sheep.

In this particular case, the black sheep seem even blacker because they stand so close to the perfect record of Jesus and to His Apostles, whom people recognized as having been with Jesus.

And just ahead of this story is Barnabas, generous, holding back nothing, clear and clean all the way through. Beside him, the calculating Ananias and Sapphira look all the worse.

MIRACLES, MIRACLES

 Read Acts 5:12–16

At this time there were more miracles, more healings, and more conviction. The work of the Apostles was spreading. The account reads that crowds gathered from the neighboring towns, all bringing their sick, and “*all of them were healed*” (5:16 NIV).

What modern faith healer can attest to a record like this? Who today heals everyone who comes? Doesn’t it show that the Apostles had true power from God—which today’s professing healers do not have?

And there was progress, abundant progress. The word of the Lord gained in power and influence. More believers were added to the Church, multitudes both of men and women.

to be continued



Take heed

Beware...of the LOVE of Money

Money is useful. Everyone needs it to live. Money itself is not evil, but beware of the *love* of money.

The love of money inspired Simon Magus to make his wicked overture to Peter.

The love of money moved Elymas the sorcerer to resist the teaching of Paul and Barnabas.

The love of money stirred up the silver-smiths in Ephesus, that resulted in the persecuting of the missionaries.

The love of money kept Felix from doing justice to an innocent prisoner, the apostle Paul.

The love of money turned Judas into a traitor, and Gehazi into a leper, and Achan into a remembrance of death in Israel.

Let us beware, lest we be ruined by the love of money. After all, not a cent that we have is really ours. All belongs to God.

Announcement

Abib First, the beginning of another sacred New Year as God directed Moses to measure time, is approaching.

According to Biblical records, the ancient Hebrews began their sacred year with the new moon of Abib (see Ex. 12:2, 13:4; Abib is the first new moon following the spring equinox).

The equinox this year occurring on March 20, and the first new moon following on March 23, the Megiddo Church will observe the beginning of the month Abib on Sunday evening, March 25, continuing Monday, March 26, Bible time being counted from evening to

evening (Lev. 23:32). The day will be observed in recognition of its double significance—as the beginning of the sacred **New Year** and also as the **anniversary of the birth of Christ**. Our foremost purpose is to give honor to Jesus Christ, our coming King and Ruler.

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

Thirteen days later (Abib 13, this year on Tuesday evening, April 6), we will commemorate the anniversary of our **Lord’s Supper**, and the morning of April 9 (Abib 15) will be the anniversary of Christ’s triumph over death and the grave.

Fifty days later (May 28) will be the anniversary of the day of **Pentecost**, when the power of the Holy Spirit descended upon the assembled disciples.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 13

FROM THE GOSPELS

1. The Rich man (Mark 10:17, 22)
2. Matt. 13:12
3. Zacharias (Luke 1:20)
4. John the Baptist (Matt. 3:10)
5. Mark 10:27; Matt. 19:26

FROM THE KINGS

1. Esther (Esther 5:6)
2. King Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:6, 10; 2 Chron. 10:10)
3. King Ahasuerus, Mordecai (Esther 6:2, 6)
4. Daniel to Belshazzar (Dan. 5:12, 17)
5. King Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:6, 11)
6. The king of Israel to Naaman (2 Kings 5:6–7)

COMPLETE THESE PROVERBS

1. “doeth good like a medicine” (Prov. 17:22)
2. “is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18)
3. “beholding the evil and the good” (Prov. 15:3)
4. “thou sluggard: consider her ways, and be wise” (Prov. 6:6)
5. “a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.” Prov. 6:10–11; 24:33–34
6. “with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23)
7. “is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding” (Prov. 17:28)

QUOTES FROM WHOM

1. Isaiah (Isa. 45:9)
2. Esther (Esther 4:15–16)
3. David of Abner (2 Sam. 3:35, 38)
4. Pharaoh (Ex. 9:1)
5. Job (Job 3:1, 17)
6. Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:4, 7)
7. Stephen (Acts 7:22)
8. Stephen (Acts 6:8; 7:48)
9. Joshua (Josh. 6:16)
10. Job (Job 12:1; 13:15)
11. David (1 Chron 29:10, 14)

VERSES FROM JAMES

1. “ye ask amiss” (James 4:3)
2. “of them that make peace” (James 3:18)
3. “God...giveth grace unto the humble” (Jas. 4:6)
4. “and he will flee from you” (Jas. 4:7)

Did the Sun and Moon “Stand Still”?

“I can’t believe that Joshua commanded the literal sun and moon to stand still. Do you have any explanation?”

The statement in Joshua 10:13, that *“the sun stood still in the midst of heaven”* has troubled many people. Atheists and agnostics have taken the opportunity to throw ridicule at the Bible. For of course the sun does not move in reference to the earth, and the effects of the earth ceasing to rotate would be beyond reason.

However, does the passage have to refer to a physical interference with the literal sun and moon? It seems that there are at least two possibilities for understanding it in harmony with the rest of the teaching of Scripture.

- 1) *Poetic language.* The Bible frequently uses the literary device by which an event is described in the language of poetry or drama, especially at points where God is being extolled, praised, or exalted for what He has done.
- 2) *Overruled perception.* God has the power to overrule (either to limit or expand) our powers of perception so that we “see” or “hear” what God wants us to “see” and “hear.”

Background

First let us recall the events leading up to the time when Joshua made this statement.

After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites have crossed into Canaan and are conquering its inhabitants. Jericho has been conquered, also Ai. At this point the Gibeonites, fearing for their lives, devise a scheme by which they deceive Joshua and persuade him to make peace with them and to guarantee their safety (Joshua 9).

Almost immediately (in chapter 10) these Gibeonites are threatened by neighboring Amorite kings, who also

fear the Israelites and who are aroused upon learning that the Gibeonites have made a league with Israel. They agree together to attack Gibeon.

The Gibeonites are frightened, and appeal to Joshua who, according to the terms of the new pact, is obligated to protect them from the invaders. Joshua turns to the Lord, and the Lord says to Joshua, *“Fear them not: for I have delivered them [the Amorites] into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee”* (Josh. 10:8).

The enemies attack, and the Lord fights the battle. Using the forces of nature, He *“discomfited them,” “slew them,” “chased them,”* and *“they fled from before Israel.”* Then He *“cast down great stones [hailstones] from heaven upon them...and they died”* (vs. 10–11).

The manner in which the Lord worked for them is especially clear as translated in the Revised Standard Version. Apparently the Lord used the forces of nature to bring about the victory. We read: *“So the Lord routed them before Israel, killed them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, chased them along the road that goes to Beth Horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah. And it happened, as they fled before Israel and were on the descent of Beth Horon, that the Lord cast down large hailstones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword”* (vs. 10–11).

The next verse is the text in question. It reads, *“Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: ‘Sun, stand still over Gibeon; And Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.’ So the sun stood still, And the moon stopped, till the people had revenge upon their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jasher? So*

the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. And there has been no day like that, before it or after it, that the Lord, heeded the voice of a man; for the Lord, fought for Israel.” (vs. 12–15). Notice that Joshua addresses the sun *“over Gibeon”* and the moon *“in the valley of Aijalon”*. The very wording suggests that he is speaking not to the literal sun and moon but to the sun and moon in a certain location.

Possible explanation:

Poetic Language

Can’t we allow the Biblical writers the same privilege we allow to secular authors: that of using poetic language?

Biblical scholars have pointed out that the Eastern mode of thinking is built around metaphors and symbols. It was their way of communicating. For example, if you said that God was a Rock, they knew exactly what you meant. They would relate this idea to the many times in the desert during some terrible sandstorm when they had taken refuge under a rock, otherwise the sand would have pounded their faces and would have ripped at their clothes and made it difficult to breathe.

This type of poetic language is common in Scripture, and often the meaning is obvious. For example,

Judges 5:20, *“Stars in their courses fought against Sisera”*; or

Judges 5:5, *“The mountains melted from before the Lord”*; or

Isaiah 49:13, *“Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains”*; or

Psalms 98:8–9, *“Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together before the Lord”*; or

Psalms 96:11–13, *“Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein:*

continued on page 24



Counting THE TROOPS

by RUSSELL HAMBY

"Suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."

—Jesus (Luke 14:31-33 NIV)

W

hen we read Luke 14:25-33, we could title the message "Counting the troops;" or perhaps we ought to title the message "Counting the stones." Actually we are looking for a concept such as counting the stones in building the church. But a battle? We might have expected Jesus to use a more peaceful analogy for His work.

Can you imagine a builder beginning to build a large structure and after laying the foundation discovering that he could not finish it? Many of us have seen buildings like that.

Perhaps, also, it is difficult to imagine a general leading his troops against a force twice their size. What sort of strategy is that?

Let us study the message that Luke has given us. For example, what did he mean by "assessing the volunteers"? We all know that volunteers are an unproved factor. With enthusiasm they step forth and enlist, but when the going gets rough they may cool off a bit. Scripture tells us that large crowds were following Jesus on His way to Jerusalem. Did they expect some triumphant entry into the capital city? They enjoyed His teaching, they admired His healings, and they were satisfied with His food. But what kind of fighters would they be in the heat of battle—could He count on them? Were they willing to leave any and all—persons, causes, investments, father, mother, wife, husband, children, brothers, sisters—for His cause? In other words, He was saying, Do you know what you are volunteering for?

Could they know? Can we know?

Furthermore, He was asking: "Are you willing to come after Me?"—to leave the comforts of home, the community of respectability, and face the rigors of rejection, arrest, judgment? In other words, do you know what you are volunteering for?

Not only do volunteers need to be assessed, but volunteers need to assess themselves.

In this little parable, Jesus was concerned not only with a decision but with an attitude. He was seeking followers, but He wanted COMMITTED followers. There was the possibility that the followers might be disappointed and fail Him. And so He dealt forthrightly with these volunteers. He was telling them not to count on His being more foolish than they. He needed to know that those who started were ready to go with Him ALL THE WAY! A builder must know about the quantity and quality of his materials, otherwise he would not be able to finish the task.

Jesus wants solid citizens—solid as rocks—in His building.

In studying this Scripture, we find Jesus facing reality. It's a rough world. It was then, and it still is. Jesus asked His prospective troops in the second parable, "Do you expect me to compromise? Do you want me to face defeat because of you? After all, a general must know about both the quantity and the quality of his materials, lest he lose the battle.

A building...a battle...wait! Jesus sounds serious—and we had thought it a lark!

But the message concludes by setting the standard for us. Jesus ends the parables with "*so therefore...whoever does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.*"

It is as if He were saying to us: "If you want to follow, I want you to follow, but don't take following lightly." Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to build the tower—to lead the troops.

He was counting the troops, counting the stones.

Can He "count" on you? ♦

Did the Sun and Moon “Stand Still”?

continued from page 22

then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord.”

David, hiding in the rocks from Saul and his army, said “*God is my rock.*” In this way he was acknowledging his mighty Protector in time of need, his God who was dependable like a rock, unmovable against the terrible forces of nature and the mighty armies of men.

Several students of Scripture point out that the Biblical account of this battle against the Amorites seems to be told twice. First the account of the battle is related in prose (verses 7–11), then it is repeated in poetry (verses. 12–14).

The victory of Israel comes as a surprise (v. 8) brought about by great hailstones that the Lord cast down. The hailstorm (v. 11) was not a happenstance but a providential phenomenon. (The Bible tells of numerous times that the Lord used the forces of nature to accomplish His purpose—see 1 Sam. 12:17–18; 1 Kings 18:41–46; Judg. 4:15).

Verses 12–14 are a poetic repetition of the same facts or a song in which the author uses poetic imagery to describe the same victory. This song is an independent literary entity which should be understood as poetic. The text (v. 13) even says, “*Is this not written in the book of Jasher?...*” The book of Jasher was a collection of ancient heroic songs.

If we allow that the “sun” and “moon” may be figures of speech, what might the passage mean?

Using poetic language, Joshua may have been speaking directly of the threatened city, i.e., Gibeon and calling it the “sun”¹ due to its chief position among the cities of that area. The context in Joshua 10 shows that Gibeon was a recognized city. The opposing kings “*feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities*” (v. 2). Also, the word translated “royal” means “dominion, rule, chief of rulers.” In this sense Gibeon was a

“sun” city; it was a city that might well be described as a “sun” in the political heavens of that time.

“Stand Still”

What is the meaning of the command to “stand still”?² Again as a poetic figure, it may be reflecting the fact that those people did not have to fight for themselves because we read from the account that “*the Lord fought for Israel.*” The Lord assured Joshua in advance, “*Fear them [the opposing kings] not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee*” (Josh. 10:8).

The word translated “stand still”² also has an alternate translation in the margin, “be silent.” The Hebrew word is *damam* and is defined as “to be silent, still, die, be struck dumb” (*Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*). Something pertaining to Gibeon and the valley of Aijalon was to be silent, still, struck dumb. Perhaps Joshua was exalting God because Gibeon and the valley of Aijalon did not have to be involved in the conflict. The Lord did the fighting for Israel. The cities had only to wait for Joshua’s help, who in turn waited upon the Lord.

²The wording of Joshua 11:13, as translated in the King James Version, might lead one to associate its statement with the words of Joshua about the sun and moon standing still. It reads, “As for the cities that stood still in their strength...” However, the newer translations give a different thought. They suggest that Joshua did not burn any of these cities, with the exception of Hazor. The words “stood still in their strength” seem to be a mistranslation. The Hebrew word translated “still in their strength” is *‘tel’*. A *tel* is an elevated place formed from the remains of previous cities. It seems that the inhabitants threw unwanted articles into the alleyways so that the streets quite quickly built up and those going into their homes actually went down, because the street passages were elevated above the floors of their homes. When these cities were destroyed, another was built on top of the last rubbish. In this way, *tels* became quite high. The definition of *tel* is “mound, heap, heap of ruins; mound, hill” (of elevation on which cities stood).—*Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*. Alternate translations of Joshua 11:13 read, “Towns standing on their own mounds of earth” (Moffatt); “Israel did not destroy by fire any of the cities built on raised sites” (NEB); “As for the towns made on hills of earth, not one was burned” (NAV); “As for the towns made on hills of earth, not one was burned” (BB).

At the time Moses was delivering the children of Israel from the land of Egypt and the Egyptians were pursuing, Moses gave a similar command. The Israelite people were trapped, and Moses, relying on the Lord for deliverance, gave this directive: “*Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace*” (Ex. 14:13–14). The battle was to be the Lord’s, and Israel did not have to fear or fight. When Joshua told the people of his time to “stand still,” he was giving the same directions, and trusting God for the deliverance.

Many years later the prophet Habakkuk, reflecting on God’s means of delivering His people, wrote, also using language highly poetic: “*The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear*” (Hab. 3:10–11). Here again the “sun and moon” refer not to the literal sun and moon in the heavens but to the inhabitants of cities who were unharmed by the dangers. (The original Hebrew word translated “stood still in their habitation” is a word used to describe people, not inanimate objects like the sun and moon.)

Another explanation of this passage has been offered by a Bible scholar named Joseph Kudasiewicz, who suggests that the words translated “stand still” and “stayed” may be terms used to signify atmospheric obscurity caused by some kind of storm. Whether or not this is true, we know from the historic account (vs. 10–11) that the Lord did use a storm to bring about the victory.

The same scholar suggests that the passage should be taken as a “*hyperbolic expression used to highly accent the extraordinary nature of the victory,*” not to say that the literal sun and moon in the heavens stood still. “*We violate the meaning of the passage,*” he says, “*if we try to take literally the poetic expression and the metaphor contained in the song about Joshua’s victory.*”

Another point in favor of under-

¹According to the Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains (Old Testament), Sun (Hebrew-shemesh) can refer to a city, ex. Beth Shemesh (Josh. 19:38, Judges 1:33).

standing this passage as poetic language is the use of the “sun” and “moon” together. If the day was to be lengthened, it would make no sense to include the “moon” standing still in broad daylight. It seems much more likely that Joshua was voicing his faith in and gratitude to the God who was able to grant them a mighty deliverance from their enemies.

Possible explanation:

Overruled Perception

There is another possible explanation to the statement of Joshua: that his words are an example of an overruled perception; that, in other words, the Lord overruled the natural perception of the people so that the sun appeared to change its normal pattern without actually any change occurring in the movements of the heavenly bodies themselves.

There are a number of times in Scripture when God overruled the perception of people, and they thought they heard or saw what was not really there. One instance was with the Israelites in Egypt, when the plague of darkness put the Egyptians in total darkness, yet the Israelites saw “light.” It was not that there was no sun shining on the Egyptians but that their eyes were blinded so they did not see it, while the Israelites saw normal light.

Another instance of overruled perception was with the two disciples who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus, who did not recognize Him. They were personally acquainted with Jesus, yet, as it is phrased in the KJV, “*their eyes were holden that they should not know him*” (Luke 24:16). The newer versions are similar: “*they were kept from recognizing him*” (NIV), or “*they didn't know who he was, because God kept them from recognizing him*” (NLT).

On one occasion when the Lord promised to win a victory for Israel in the time of David, the Lord told them that they would hear the sound of marching feet in the tops of the balsam trees, and that would indicate the victory over the Philistines (2 Samuel 5). On another occasion the Lord brought victory for His people by making water look like “blood,” which the enemy Moabites

(mis)interpreted as the result of a massive slaying, and allowed the enemy to directly play into the hands of the Israelites, who were given an easy victory (2 Kings 3:21–24).



THEMES of **HEBREW POETRY**

Much of the poetry of the ancient Hebrews was religious, but secular poetry was also composed. In fact, within the Bible Canon itself there are numerous poems or snatches of poems reflecting the everyday life of the people (i.e., the songs of Canticles, a wedding song (Ps. 45), a harvest song (Ps. 65),

parts of songs sung upon discovering a new well (Num. 21:17f). There are also several war songs, and a note in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* includes the passage in question (Joshua 10:13) among these.

If Joshua's statement about the sun and moon standing still is indeed part of a war song, we have ample justification for not taking it literally. Joshua, speaking symbolically, used the words “sun” and “moon,” indicating that the ruler and his commanders remain “still” (that is, not engage in battle) until the enemy was completely subdued. The Bible text also tells us that Jasher (a book of songs), in symbolic language describes in song the complete overthrow of the enemy while they (Joshua and those Joshua was protecting) remained still.

Some other examples of a war song might include Deborah's war song using symbols to describe their great victory—God's help. For example, see 2 Samuel 22, where God is said to be “*a rock*.” Notice especially verses 9–18 where we find highly symbolic language; “*Smoke went up out of His nostrils, Fire from His mouth devoured; Coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down with thick darkness under His feet. And He rode on a cherub and flew; And He appeared on the wings of the wind. And He made darkness canopies around Him, A mass of waters, thick clouds of the sky. From the brightness before Him Coals of fire were kindled. The Lord thundered from heaven, And the Most High uttered His voice. And He sent out arrows, and scattered them, Lightning, and routed them. Then the channels of the sea appeared, The foundations of the world were laid bare By the rebuke of the Lord, At the blast of the breath of His nostrils. He sent from on high, He took me; He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, From those who hated me, for they were too strong for me*” (NASB). Such speech reinforces the extreme agony of the distress and the magnitude of the deliverance, for which the songwriter is grateful.

In either case, we see no reason to believe that the Lord had to interrupt or interfere with the courses of His heavenly bodies to effect a victory for Joshua. His ways of working are beyond our fathoming, but He also works by fixed and established laws. Everything about His creation and His work is orderly. ♦



A Century Nearer

1901...2001...?

Many comparisons have been made between the present and the world as it was a century ago. Here is another, by Randy Evans, as published in the Rockdale Citizen, January 13, 2000.

"[What is common to us today] is a world that no one could have imagined standing in the streets of Rome or Athens 2000 years ago. In fact, it is a world that no one could have imagined standing anywhere in the United States just 100 years ago.

"In 1900 there were only 10 miles of paved road in the United States. As the clock struck midnight on New Year's Eve, (2000), there were more than 4,000,000 miles, of paved roads in the U.S. On these paved roads, 130,000,000 automobiles drive, as compared to only 8,000 in 1900. Carmakers produced a mere 5,000 cars in 1900. This year, carmakers in the U.S. alone will produce more than 5 million cars. Never mind airplanes. Who in 1900 would have imagined air travel today?

"In 1900, only 2 percent of homes in the U.S. were equipped with electricity. Now, electricity is available to every home and is in the vast majority of homes in the country. Indeed, many homes have multiple televisions, a VCR and a microwave. Forget the issue of "indoor plumbing" (in 1900 only 10% had flush toilets).

"In 1900, the average man lived 46.3 years. Now, the life expectancy for men has reached an impressive 73.6 years. For women, the news has gotten even better. In 2000, the average woman can expect to live to the ripe old age of 79.7 years, as compared to her counterpart that lived to the age of 48.3 years in 1900.

"Now, over 80 percent of adults complete high school. In 1910, the number was only 13 percent."

Average hourly pay in manufacturing has increased from a modest \$3.80 (adjusted dollars) in 1900 to more than \$13.90 in 2000 (*U.S. News & World Report* of December 18, 2000, page 56).

"The average workweek has declined from more than 60 hours per week in 1900 to just over 40 per week in 2000. The Dow Jones Industrial Average has gone from a comprehensible 68.13 in 1900 to an incomprehensible 11,000 in 2000.

"Add computers to the mix and we are experiencing an even more amazing ride."

Meanwhile, the most significant change of the century goes unnoticed. It is the fact that we are now *one hundred years nearer* to the great climax foretold in Scripture, *one hundred years nearer* the return of Jesus Christ, *one hundred years nearer* the end of war and cruelty, poverty and suffering, oppression and injustice, *one hundred years nearer* the time when Jesus Christ will return and "the dwelling of God [will be] with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself [Jesus, Emanuel, God with us—Matt. 1:23] will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev. 21:3-4).

The promise stands, and as surely as God lives it shall be fulfilled. The climax of the ages has never been so near. ♦

Whatever chore you may have to do, think of doing it as for God, and it will become easier.

The best time to hold on is when you reach the place where the average person would let go.

Do not judge another until you stand in his place.

*Happy are they, and only they
Who from Thy precepts never stray;
Who know what's right, nor only so,
But always practice what they know.*

Never repeat anything bad about anybody unless you know it is absolutely necessary—and that God is listening while you tell it.

Too many of us have the truth on ice instead of on fire!

We die by living to ourselves; we live by dying to ourselves.

It is not enough to say our prayers; we must live them too.

Admitting you need help is the first sign of spiritual strength.

To pray for help when in temptation is like thrusting your fingers into the fire and then praying that they might not be burned.

*These are the true luxuries of life:
inward peace,
ordered thoughts,
generous feelings,
disciplined desires.*

Gossip is like an egg, when it is hatched it has wings.



How to Change a FLAT ATTITUDE

A wrong attitude is like a flat tire; it needs to be changed before you can get anywhere.

Step One: Pull over and stop. Stop and admit that your attitude is wrong and needs changing. As you do this, try to specifically pinpoint what about your attitude is wrong and why you have it.

Step Two: Jack it up off the ground. Lift that attitude to God in prayer. Let Him help you set up some reasonable goals for yourself in changing your attitude. The more you trust and depend on Him to keep you from falling into the same old patterns, the sooner you will be able to make the change.

Step Three: Remove it and replace it with a new one. Replace the wrong attitude with a right attitude. Right attitudes come from thinking on things that are true, honest, just, pure, upright and lovely (Phil. 4:8).

Step Four: Lower it back in place. Get ready to put that good attitude into practice. Try to imagine all the different areas of your life that your "new" attitude will change. Do a Bible study on the new attitude and seek specific guidelines for using it.

Step Five: Now start the engine and take off! But be sure that you are headed the right direction. And avoid places that could give you another flat attitude.

Continue on to your destination. Do not be hearers of the word only, but doers also (James 1:22), and "Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass" (Ps. 37:5).



*With every rising of the sun
Think of your life as just begun.*

*The past has canceled and buried deep
All yesterdays. There let them sleep.*

*Concern yourself with but Today
Grasp it, and teach it to obey*

*Your will and plan. Since time began,
Today has been the friend of man.*

*You and Today—a bond sublime,
Yours the great heritage of time:*

*With God Himself to bind the twain,
Go forth, brave heart! Attain! Attain!*