

# Megiddo Message

JANUARY, 2003



*Those who are  
gentle and lowly will...  
live in prosperous security.*

—Psalm 37:11 NLT



# CAPTURED BY THE DREAM

**H**ave you ever wondered how to carry your zest and fervor for Christ into those days when the car won't start, or the furnace quits, or the children are sick—or your job is suddenly gone?

What is the source of the spirit that moved the prophet Jeremiah when he said the Word of the Lord was in his heart *"like a burning fire shut up in [his] bones"*? (Jer. 20:9). What made the difference between the flamingly zealous Apostle Paul and his cool-hearted helper Demas, whose fire finally went out?

How does one move from a promise to a passion? What makes the difference between one who serves with spirit, and one who only does a duty?

I'm thinking that the real issue is what draws us to God, the underlying incentive, the dream in our hearts, that bright picture in our minds of His promise of future glory and our grip on it, something you and I really want. Each one of us wants eternal life, but we need something more specific, a clear mental picture of what we want to do or be or enjoy in Eternity! This picture may be very individualized. I happen to like being with Christian friends, and even a day or two visiting with the angel Gabriel, along with an invitation to visit his celestial home, would be pure delight. Maybe you are one who likes to learn. You are ready to enroll in Zion University under the direction of the angels, and take whatever courses they offer. Or maybe you yearn to create, or design—a new flower, a new pattern, or a perfect work of art that at this time you can't even imagine. Or maybe your longing is travel—the doors to the universe are waiting to open! Yes, all this is well within the wonder of God's promise, which is *"exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think!"* (Eph. 3:20).

People in the Bible were captured by these dreams. You will recall that the old patriarchs were looking for a country, because they were aliens and pilgrims in this one. They really had no place to call home, but would have liked very much to have one. Yet they were willing to leave their place called home in search of a far better, future one. For this future home they were willing to spend everything. Abraham was among these, for we read, he looked *"for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God"* (Heb. 11:10). At the present time Abraham is sleeping. But one day soon when Jesus comes, he with all the faithful will awake, and Abraham will become the blessed inhabitant of that eternal city, and right here on earth! (see Rev. 21).

Yet we all have a tendency to dwell in the here-and-now. True, there are matters that require our immediate attention. But is this all we want? Never!

How can we dwell beyond the here-and-now? The Apostle Paul had the secret: *"Forgetting the things that are past and reaching forward."* I like that phrase, *"reaching forward."* It expresses action, a moving toward one's dream. Paul had his

mind's eye fixed on Christ and all that Christ could give him: the crown of life, glory, honor, immortality (Phil. 3:13; 2 Tim. 4:8). And he was reaching forward, reaching for that goal (Rom. 2:7).

At the same time he was forgetting the things behind, the trivia, the worthless things that ought to be forgotten. If we make a habit of dwelling on trivia, trivia is all we will have.

How do we forget it? By the displacement principle. We forget what is worthless by focusing on what lies ahead, that dream in our heart, that vision of the promises of God that can be ours.



*"Forgetting  
the...past  
and reaching  
forward..."*

—Phil. 3:13

What is your dream? What promise of God captures you? What makes your heart beat faster? Look at what inspired King David. Between all the problems and duties of the state, he was dreaming of being in the very presence of God. *"You will show me the path of life,"* he wrote. *"In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore"* (Ps. 16:11). Talk about pleasure! What dream can surpass this!

The same is true of all God's promises. Dream as far as your eye can see—the reality will exceed it. Imagine the most beautiful music you have ever heard—you haven't

heard anything to compare with the heavenly strains of the angel voices. Try to feel the joy of the most loving, most delightful, most gracious companions you have ever known—the promises of God will explode that memory!


What promise of God grips you? What are you looking forward to? Write it down. Look at it often. Dream about it! Picture yourself having it! Let it be your incentive, your reason for living and serving God, a longing only He can satisfy.

The more we learn about what God has for every faithful one, the more that dream will possess us and the more we will be inspired to reach forward. And as we keep reaching, a love for right doing will become our obsession. When it does, we will be on our way to developing the character image that pleases God. We will have captured that spirit which drives us toward God, the only One who can make that dream in our heart come true!

As it is written:

*"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,  
Nor have entered into the heart of man  
The things which God has prepared for  
those who love Him."* —1 Cor. 2:9 ♦





**What is the destiny of our world? Follow this series to learn the Bible answer.**

## YOUR KINGDOM COME...

When Jesus' disciples asked Him how to pray, what did Jesus say?

*"In this manner, therefore, pray:*

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.*

*Your **kingdom** come.*

*Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* (Matt. 6:9–10)

Have you ever wondered what this means? Every time we pray the Lord's Prayer, what are we asking for? We are asking our Father to bring His heavenly kingdom to earth. Then we will have heaven on earth! Then everything that is done here on earth will be *His will*, just as everything now done in heaven is *His will*. That means no more crime, no more violence, no more cruelty, no more selfishness, no more hatred, no more terror, no more suffering, and so on and on.

Today the daily news is dominated by trouble. Fear of war, terror, disease and violence plague every country and nation. But the promises of God are bright and growing brighter because they are getting nearer and nearer to the time when they will be fulfilled. The Bible tells us Jesus is coming to set up the heavenly Kingdom, and right here on earth.

How can we be sure? Just look at the Lord's prayer again and think about it: These are Jesus' own words. This is Jesus' own promise, a promise repeated all through the Bible. "*Your **kingdom** come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*"

That Kingdom is coming!

### PART ONE

by RUTH E. SISSON

## THE KINGDOM ON EARTH

Where will Jesus' Kingdom be? Jesus said in His prayer that heaven would come to earth. He also said in His Sermon on the Mount that the meek will "*inherit the earth*" (Matt. 5:5). Six times in Psalm 37, David said the righteous would inherit the earth (Psalm 37:9, 11, 22, 27, 29, 34). Jesus in the book of Revelation says of Christ and the saints, "*They shall reign on the earth*" (Rev. 5:9–10). Jesus will reign from "*sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth*" (Ps. 72:8).

Dozens of times in Scripture the people of God are promised the earth for their inheritance.

## WHY "THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM ON EARTH"?

The central topic of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is the Kingdom of God. We are calling it *The Heavenly Kingdom on Earth* because that is how the Bible presents it: a kingdom, located on earth, planned and authorized from heaven. It is called by both terms, Kingdom of Heaven, and Kingdom of God, occasionally the heavenly Kingdom. But always the location of the Kingdom is on earth. The Kingdom of God will be a worldwide sovereignty backed by the authority and sponsorship of the God of Heaven. Our Lord said in the prayer He taught His disciples to pray, "*Your **kingdom** come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*" (Matt. 6:10).

The heavenly Kingdom on earth is the great *why* of history. Why did God create the earth and people it? There is only one answer in Scripture: "*He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited*" (Isa. 45:18).

How can we learn about that Kingdom and the plan of God? Our only source of information is God's writ-

## WHY THE "KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"?

When God's will is done on earth as it is now done in heaven, heavenly conditions will exist right here on earth. We will literally have heaven on earth! **Earth is going to become part of heaven.** We don't have to go anywhere; heaven will come to us. This earth is going to be annexed to heaven. Just as a city grows until it takes in the suburbs, so God's kingdom of heaven is growing to take in the earth!

The Kingdom is said to be the Kingdom of heaven because Jesus is coming with authority from heaven. Jesus' kingdom will be the Kingdom of God—God is the ultimate authority behind it. Jesus said, "*Seek first the **kingdom** of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*" (Matt. 6:33).

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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.

ten Word, the Bible. God has given us His Word so that we can know the great *why* behind history, so we can know where all is headed, and what the outcome will be.

## WHAT SHALL WE PREACH?

### JESUS PREACHED THE KINGDOM

When Jesus came preaching and teaching, His subject was the Kingdom of God. His first recorded words are: “Repent, for the **kingdom** of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17).

We read in the gospel of Matthew that “Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the **kingdom**” (Matt. 4:23). Again, “Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the **kingdom**” (Matt. 9:35).

The gospel of Mark recorded the same, that “Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the **kingdom** of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the **kingdom** of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14–15).

Luke said it again: “He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the **kingdom** of God” (Luke 8:1). Again, “When the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the **kingdom** of God, and healed those who had need of healing” (Luke 9:11).

The coming Kingdom was on Jesus’ mind—else why was it the subject of His preaching wherever He went? All future life centers around it, and all future blessedness depends on being a part of it.

Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount focused on those who would be blessed in the Kingdom. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the **kingdom** of heaven....Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, For theirs is the **kingdom** of heaven” (Matthew 5:3, 10).

He speaks especially of the standard of righteousness that is the entrance requirement: “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the **kingdom** of heaven” (Matthew 5:20).

### ONLY GOD KNOWS THE FUTURE

All through the Old Testament, God’s prophets told about the coming Kingdom. God revealed this knowledge to His prophets, and they told it to their people, or wrote it down, and it has been preserved for us in the Bible. Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel all foretold different aspects of the coming Kingdom. These are writings we can depend on. They will come to pass just as surely as God lives. This is the promise of God Himself: “But truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord” (Num. 14:21).

### THE KINGDOM: THE THEME OF THE LORD’S PRAYER

When our Lord taught His disciples to pray, He gave them—and us—a deep insight into the Father’s plan. And He put it in simple words to remind us each time we pray that this is the plan of God and we can be part of it! of why we are here and where we are going. And each person who would repeat that prayer through the succeeding centuries could be inspired with Jesus’ most revealing description of the Kingdom.

In spite of our Lord’s design, this prayer has probably been repeated thousands of times by people who had no idea of its inspiring message: “After this manner pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your **kingdom** come. Your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.” Here is the core of Jesus’ teaching. Does He mean that we go to heaven when we die? or that He comes to take the “good people” away? That is not what He says. God’s will, He says, is going to be done *right here on earth* just as it is now being *done in heaven*.

Here is the ultimate reality God has planned. We do not have to go anywhere. Heaven will come to us. Earth is going to be taken in by heaven. Earth will become a heavenly place. Just as a city expands to take in its suburbs, so heaven is going to take in the earth.

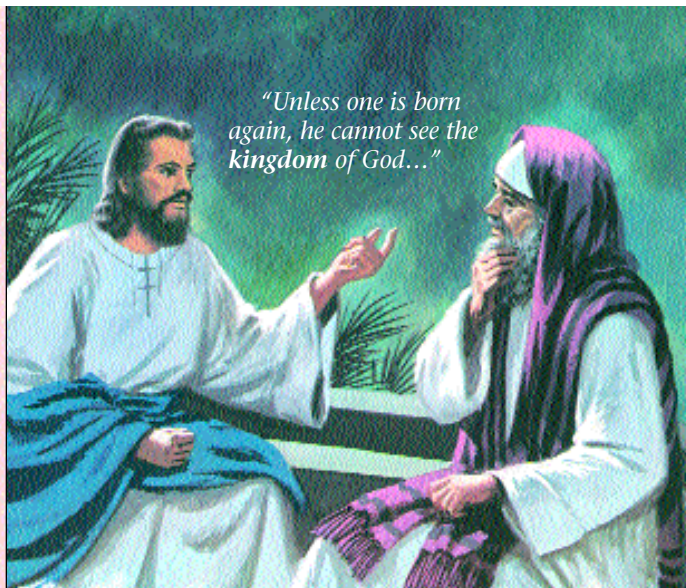
All history is moving in one direction, toward the establishing of this Heavenly Kingdom here on earth. Jesus will be the King, Jerusalem will be the capitol, and the whole world will become the eternal Kingdom of Christ, the Heavenly Kingdom on Earth.

Do we wonder why Jesus said that seeking the Kingdom should be first on our minds, everything else second? “Seek first the **kingdom** of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). Can we wait until Jesus comes and simply ask for admittance at the door, so to speak? Listen to Jesus’ warning: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the **kingdom** of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). We must do the will of the Father—and that doing means a drastic change in the way we live every day.

Jesus promised His little flock that it would be “your Father’s good pleasure to give you the **kingdom**” (Luke 12:32). Looking ahead He foresaw the time when “Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets” would be gathered “in the **kingdom** of God...They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the **kingdom** of God” (Luke 13:28–29).

After Jesus ate the Last Supper with His disciples, He said that He would not eat of it again “Until it is fulfilled in the **kingdom** of God” (Luke 22:16). It was a rite to be perpetuated until the coming of His Kingdom.





*"Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God..."*

When Jesus was before Pilate, He affirmed that He was indeed a King. But He also clarified the meaning of His statement by saying: "My **kingdom** is not of this world [the present cosmos, present arrangement]. If My **kingdom** were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My **kingdom** is not from here" (John 18:36). His Kingdom was yet future.

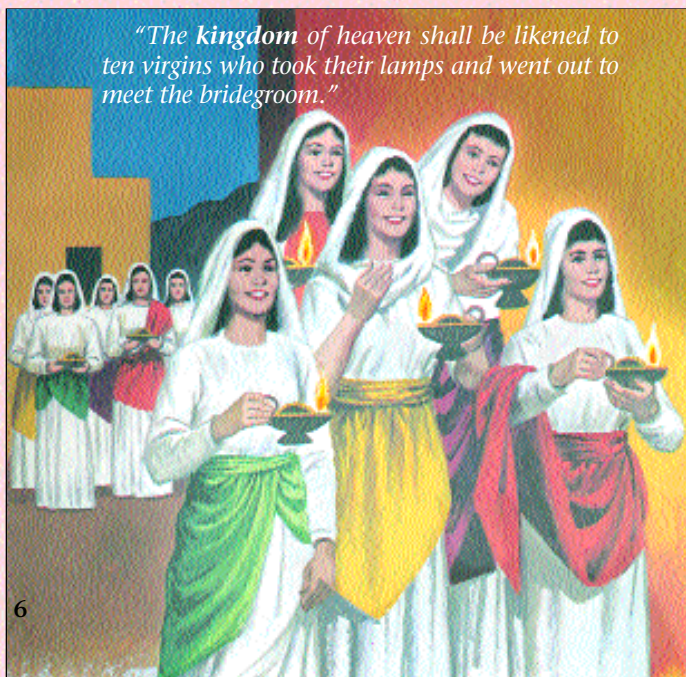
When Jesus talked to Nicodemus about being born again, He linked its meaning to the Kingdom of God. "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the **kingdom** of God...Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the **kingdom** of God" (John 3:3, 5).

Even after His resurrection, Jesus was still preaching the Kingdom. We read in Acts 1:3 that He also presented Himself alive to His disciples "by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the **kingdom** of God."

## JESUS' PARABLES TEACH ABOUT THE KINGDOM

Teaching about the Kingdom was the purpose behind the parables. The parables are invaluable to us because they tell us so much about what the Kingdom will be like, who will be there, and what we must do to be part of it.

Why did Jesus talk to the multitude in parables? Because



*"The kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom."*

we get more from a picture than from mere words. Word pictures communicate where simple words get lost. That is why Jesus said to His disciples, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the **kingdom** of God, but to the rest it is given in parables" (Luke 8:10).

The coming Kingdom was the topic of many of Jesus' parables. For example,

*"The **kingdom** of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field" (Matt. 13:24).*

*"The **kingdom** of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field" (Matt. 13:31).*

*"The **kingdom** of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened" (Matt. 13:33).*

*"The **kingdom** of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matt. 13:44).*

*"Again, the **kingdom** of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls" (Matt. 13:45).*

*"Again, the **kingdom** of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind" (Matt. 13:47).*

*"Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the **kingdom** of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old" (Matt. 13:52).*

*"The **kingdom** of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard" (Matt. 20:1).*

*"The **kingdom** of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son" (Matt. 22:2).*

*"The **kingdom** of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom" (Matt. 25:1).*

*"The **kingdom** of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them" (Matt. 25:14).*

*"The **kingdom** of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground" (Mark 4:26).*

## JESUS' DISCIPLES PREACHED THE KINGDOM

Jesus sent His disciples out to "preach the **kingdom** of God" (Luke 9:2). When a would-be disciple hesitated to follow, Jesus said "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the **kingdom** of God" (Luke 9:60).

When the disciples started preaching, we read that Philip "preached the things concerning the **kingdom** of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12).

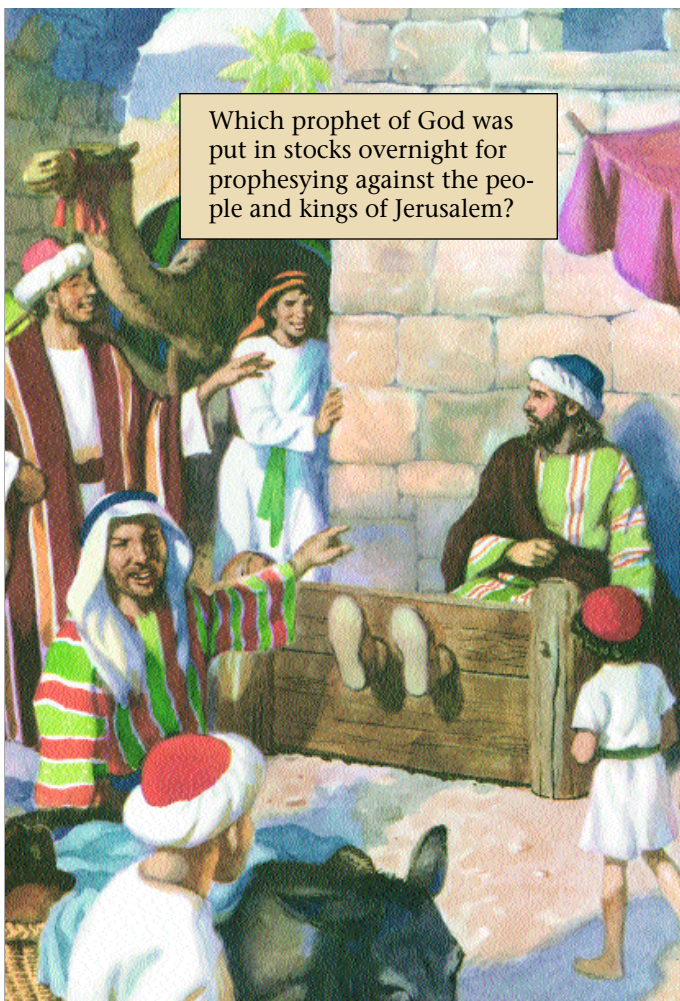
## PAUL PREACHED THE KINGDOM

After Paul and Barnabas were preaching and Paul had been stoned and dragged out of the city for dead, the next day before leaving town they strengthened "the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the **kingdom** of God'" (Acts 14:19-22).

In Acts 19, Paul was at Ephesus, and again we read that his subject was the Kingdom of God. "He went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the **kingdom** of God" (Acts 19:8). When he was leaving Ephesus and was reflecting on the work that he had done among them, he commented that he had gone among them "preaching the **kingdom** of God" (Acts 20:25). At the close of the Book of the Acts, Paul was a prisoner, confined to a rented house. He was not free to go, but people came to him to learn, and his message was still the same. We read that

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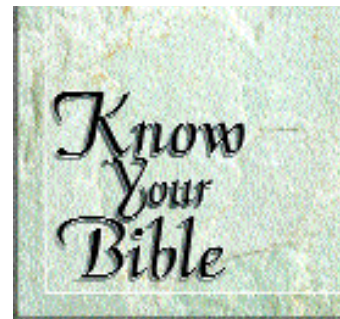




Which prophet of God was put in stocks overnight for prophesying against the people and kings of Jerusalem?

#### WHO WAS?

1. Who was the father and mother of Obed?
2. Who was the first king of the Northern Kingdom, Israel?
3. Who was Abigail?
4. Who was Manoah?
5. Who was Elymas, where did he live, and what was his other name?
6. Who was Saul's great general?
7. Who was Adoram?
8. Who was Shishak?
9. Who were Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon?
10. Who was Rhoda?



#### HOW MANY?

1. "So all the days of Methuselah were \_\_\_\_ years; and he died."
2. "Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages \_\_\_\_ times."
3. "You shall take with you \_\_\_\_ each of every clean animal, a male and his female; two each of animals that are unclean, a male and his female."
4. "And Noah did according to all that the Lord commanded him. Noah was \_\_\_\_ hundred years old when the floodwaters were on the earth."
5. "Leave \_\_\_\_ of your brothers here with me, take food for the famine of your households, and be gone."
6. "Then God made \_\_\_\_ great lights."
7. "Behold, in my dream a vine was before me, and in the vine were \_\_\_\_ branches; it was as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes."
8. "Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became \_\_\_\_ riverheads."
9. "For these \_\_\_\_ years the famine has been in the land, and there are still \_\_\_\_ years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting."
10. "Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was \_\_\_\_ days old, as God had commanded him."

#### GOD'S HEROES

1. Accompanied by only an armor bearer, he climbed into an enemy garrison and killed 20 men.
2. He dared to attack vast armies of Midianites and Amalekites with only 300 men.
3. He killed two lionlike men and a lion in a pit of snow.
4. During a terrible plague, in which thousands of people died, he bravely mingled with the stricken people to make a reconciliation with God.
5. Aware that going before a king without his summons meant death, this person disobeyed the decree in an effort to save Jews.
6. He disregarded a king's edict against petitioning God and continued praying even though it meant being thrown to lions.
7. Even though his life was threatened by Sanballat and Tobiah, he refused to hide in a temple behind bolted doors.
8. After Jesus' crucifixion he dared to ask Pilate for Jesus' body.
9. When deserted by his soldiers, he stood alone and struck down enemy Philistines.
10. He dared to face an enemy giant, armed with only a sling and stones for a weapon.

#### COMPLETE THE PROVERBS

1. "A friend loveth at all times, and \_\_\_\_."
2. "The fear of the Lord is \_\_\_\_."
3. "Where no counsel is, the people fall: \_\_\_\_."
4. "He that hath pity upon the poor \_\_\_\_."
5. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord: but \_\_\_\_."
6. "Happy is the man who finds wisdom, \_\_\_\_."
7. "He that spareth his rod \_\_\_\_."
8. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for \_\_\_\_."
9. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but \_\_\_\_."
10. "A soft answer turneth away wrath: \_\_\_\_."

ANSWERS ON PAGE 17



# Megiddo Message

JANUARY, 2003



*Those who are  
gentle and lowly will...  
live in prosperous security.*

—Psalm 37:11 NLT



# CAPTURED BY THE DREAM

**H**ave you ever wondered how to carry your zest and fervor for Christ into those days when the car won't start, or the furnace quits, or the children are sick—or your job is suddenly gone?

What is the source of the spirit that moved the prophet Jeremiah when he said the Word of the Lord was in his heart *"like a burning fire shut up in [his] bones"*? (Jer. 20:9). What made the difference between the flamingly zealous Apostle Paul and his cool-hearted helper Demas, whose fire finally went out?

How does one move from a promise to a passion? What makes the difference between one who serves with spirit, and one who only does a duty?

I'm thinking that the real issue is what draws us to God, the underlying incentive, the dream in our hearts, that bright picture in our minds of His promise of future glory and our grip on it, something you and I really want. Each one of us wants eternal life, but we need something more specific, a clear mental picture of what we want to do or be or enjoy in Eternity! This picture may be very individualized. I happen to like being with Christian friends, and even a day or two visiting with the angel Gabriel, along with an invitation to visit his celestial home, would be pure delight. Maybe you are one who likes to learn. You are ready to enroll in Zion University under the direction of the angels, and take whatever courses they offer. Or maybe you yearn to create, or design—a new flower, a new pattern, or a perfect work of art that at this time you can't even imagine. Or maybe your longing is travel—the doors to the universe are waiting to open! Yes, all this is well within the wonder of God's promise, which is *"exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think!"* (Eph. 3:20).

People in the Bible were captured by these dreams. You will recall that the old patriarchs were looking for a country, because they were aliens and pilgrims in this one. They really had no place to call home, but would have liked very much to have one. Yet they were willing to leave their place called home in search of a far better, future one. For this future home they were willing to spend everything. Abraham was among these, for we read, he looked *"for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God"* (Heb. 11:10). At the present time Abraham is sleeping. But one day soon when Jesus comes, he with all the faithful will awake, and Abraham will become the blessed inhabitant of that eternal city, and right here on earth! (see Rev. 21).

Yet we all have a tendency to dwell in the here-and-now. True, there are matters that require our immediate attention. But is this all we want? Never!

How can we dwell beyond the here-and-now? The Apostle Paul had the secret: *"Forgetting the things that are past and reaching forward."* I like that phrase, *"reaching forward."* It expresses action, a moving toward one's dream. Paul had his

mind's eye fixed on Christ and all that Christ could give him: the crown of life, glory, honor, immortality (Phil. 3:13; 2 Tim. 4:8). And he was reaching forward, reaching for that goal (Rom. 2:7).

At the same time he was forgetting the things behind, the trivia, the worthless things that ought to be forgotten. If we make a habit of dwelling on trivia, trivia is all we will have.

How do we forget it? By the displacement principle. We forget what is worthless by focusing on what lies ahead, that dream in our heart, that vision of the promises of God that can be ours.



*"Forgetting  
the...past  
and reaching  
forward..."*

—Phil. 3:13

What is your dream? What promise of God captures you? What makes your heart beat faster? Look at what inspired King David. Between all the problems and duties of the state, he was dreaming of being in the very presence of God. *"You will show me the path of life,"* he wrote. *"In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore"* (Ps. 16:11). Talk about pleasure! What dream can surpass this!

The same is true of all God's promises. Dream as far as your eye can see—the reality will exceed it. Imagine the most beautiful music you have ever heard—you haven't

heard anything to compare with the heavenly strains of the angel voices. Try to feel the joy of the most loving, most delightful, most gracious companions you have ever known—the promises of God will explode that memory!

What promise of God grips you? What are you looking forward to? Write it down. Look at it often. Dream about it! Picture yourself having it! Let it be your incentive, your reason for living and serving God, a longing only He can satisfy.

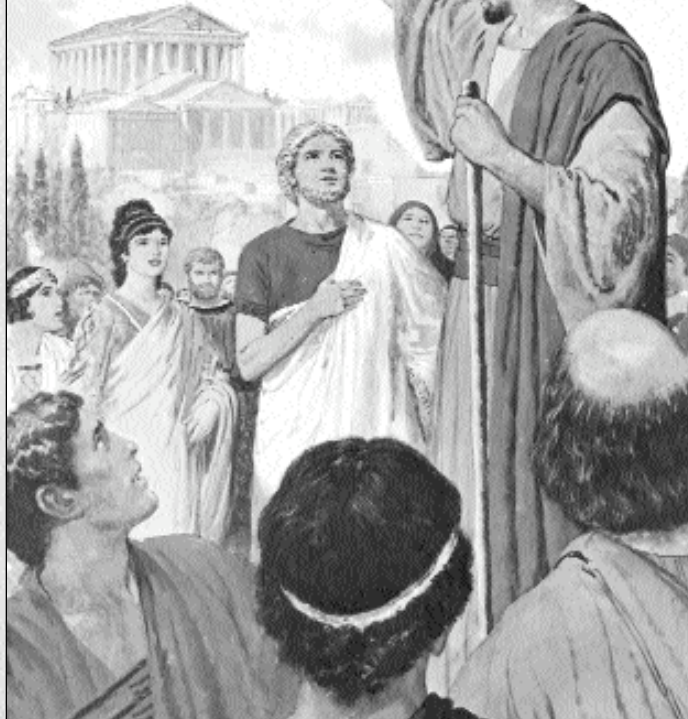
The more we learn about what God has for every faithful one, the more that dream will possess us and the more we will be inspired to reach forward. And as we keep reaching, a love for right doing will become our obsession. When it does, we will be on our way to developing the character image that pleases God. We will have captured that spirit which drives us toward God, the only One who can make that dream in our heart come true!

As it is written:

*"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,  
Nor have entered into the heart of man  
The things which God has prepared for  
those who love Him."* —1 Cor. 2:9 ♦



The **Kingdom** of God was the focal point of all the Apostle Paul's preaching.



many "came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the **kingdom** of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening" (Acts 28:23). This went on for a period of "two whole years" during which he "received all who came to him, preaching the **kingdom** of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him" (Acts 28:30-31).

If we look at Paul's Epistles, we find that the Kingdom of God is the focal point: to enter it, inherit it, receive it, be counted worthy of it, suffer for it, be preserved for it. "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the **kingdom** of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the **kingdom** of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10). At the end of his discourse about the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, he tells how our mortal bodies must be changed before we can "inherit the **kingdom** of God" (1 Cor. 15:50).

In his letter to the Galatians Paul mentions every kind of evil, and says "those who practice such things will not inherit the **kingdom** of God" (Galatians 5:19-21). He writes the same message to the Ephesians, that "no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the **kingdom** of Christ and God" (Eph. 5:5). In his letter to the Colossians, he commends his "fellow workers for the **kingdom** of God" (Col. 4:11). In his letter to the Thessalonians, he appeals to them to "walk worthy of God who calls you into His own **kingdom** and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12), and in his second letter he pleads that they may be "counted worthy of the **kingdom** of God, for which you also suffer" (2 Thess. 1:5).

In his letters to Timothy, he speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, "who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His **kingdom**" (2 Tim. 4:1). And at the close of his letter he

appeals that the Lord will "deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly **kingdom**" (2 Tim. 4:18).

## JAMES PREACHED THE KINGDOM

In the book of James, the author again focuses on those who will inherit the Kingdom. "Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the **kingdom** which He promised to those who love Him?" (James 2:5).

## THE KINGDOM IN: PETER, HEBREWS AND REVELATION

The Apostle Peter also makes the Kingdom the goal of all Christian living and service. Believers must keep diligently adding to their store of virtue, adding faith, courage, knowledge, endurance, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness. Why? "For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting **kingdom** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:5-11).

The author of Hebrews tells about the Second Advent of Jesus and the authority He will claim, comparing it with the giving of the law on Sinai. Spectacular as that event was, it is nothing beside the future time when the voice of God will "shake not only the earth but also heaven" (political powers of earth). Then he comments: "Therefore, since we are receiving a **kingdom** that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe" (Heb. 12:26, 28 NIV).

Much of the book of Revelation is focused on the events that will bring in the Heavenly Kingdom, when Jesus and His co-rulers set up their new government with headquarters at Jerusalem, and all the nations of earth hand their sovereignty over to Him. And the Bible closes, looking forward to the arrival of the King: "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

Introduced in the creation allegory in Genesis, the Kingdom of God is the focus of Bible prophecy. The Kingdom of Israel was a miniature replica of it. David used it as the theme of many of his psalms. Isaiah's prophecies reveal countless facts about its people, its territory, and its government. The prophet Daniel, interpreting the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2) and his own dream (Daniel 7) tells us where the Kingdom fits into the picture of history. After the rise and fall of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, it will be the fifth and final world Kingdom.

The Kingdom was the theme of Jesus' ministry and the main teaching of His Apostles. And finally, in the message which Jesus sent back to earth after He had gone to heaven, He told us even more of how the Kingdom will come into being.

This Kingdom is not a vision, it is not a dream. It will be a real, tangible, political entity on earth, extending from sea to sea, over every continent, affecting every person in every country on earth. And this Kingdom will "stand forever" (Dan. 2:44).

When God has arranged that such a large part of His Book should focus on the plan for this Kingdom, shall we occupy ourselves with our mundane interests and pay no attention? Or shall we take the opportunity God is holding out, to be part of that coming Kingdom, and find out what we must do to be there!

Study and compare, and you will be amazed at what the Bible tells about the future of our world: the heavenly Kingdom on earth! ♦ (to be continued next issue)



# What Will There Be For US?

by RUSSELL HAMBY

In Matt. 19:23–30 Jesus defines the rewards of surrender to the ways of God. The Gospel, says Jesus, calls for complete surrender. Peter responds: *“Behold, we have left everything and followed you; what then will there be for us?”* (Matt. 19:27 NASB). In other words, what is our reward for surrender?

Now we ought not place the Apostles alongside those shady characters whom we suspect are using religion for personal gain, for theirs was an honest question: “Lord, what effect will our surrender have on us? What are its rewards?”

The first reward of surrender is a measure of authority. Here are Jesus’ words: *“Truly I say to you, that you who have followed me,...you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel”* (Matt. 19:28 NASB). Because of their fidelity, these men would become persons of proven credibility. Not that they would literally be judging the twelve tribes of Israel, which had largely lost their identity by Jesus’ time. He was using the term collectively of believers, much as did James when he addressed his letter to *“the twelve tribes scattered abroad”* (Jas. 1:1).

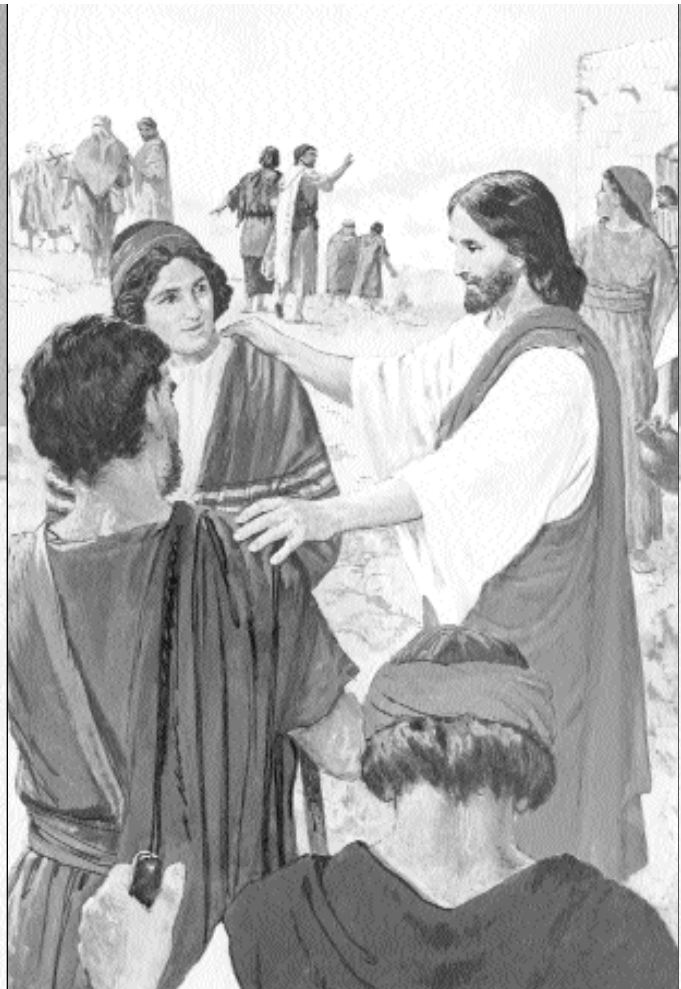
Notice what Jesus said they were going to become: judges. Not appointed judges granted a position of authority because of political patronage but judges chosen on the quality of their character. Their positions would be earned. It was as if he said, “You who have followed me will assume these roles.”

The role of a judge is an important one. For example, Moses was called a judge. David was called a judge. They were not leaders because of appointment but because they earned it. They were persons of proven credibility, the kind of persons whose words you can trust.

Since credibility is a concern for many of us today, questions like these sometimes haunt us: Are we really who we say we are? Are we followers of Christ who have surrendered all? Because what we say about love, forgiveness, justice, mercy, and the host of qualities that exemplify the life of faith have but little impact unless we are translating these qualities into living practice.

Credible Christianity was not designated to the first century only. Full surrender of our lives to God will make us credible persons, to whom God has promised a great future.

Look at the second part of Jesus’ reply. Not only would the Apostles be recognized for their credibility and authority, they would also be repaid abundantly for their sacrifice. Here are Jesus’ words: *“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for my name’s sake,*



*will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life”* (Matt. 19:29 NASB). Jesus promised that our emotional and spiritual investments will reap bountiful results.

The words *“many times as much,”* or *“hundredfold”* as in the King James Version, are agricultural terms. They describe the farmer planting a single seed and, after tending its growth, reaping a hundred times the effort he put into it. In other words, Jesus was saying that the Apostles’ efforts would not be in vain. Their labor would be exceedingly productive. Their small investment here would pay eternal dividends.

All of us want our lives to count for something special and to make the world a better place. Some of us may feel that our area of influence is too limited to count. But by working with God, our limited efforts can count eternally.

Even now, each of us has an arena of witness, a sphere of influence. It may be large, or it may be small. It may extend to a countless number of people. Or it may include only a small number of people. It may catch the attention of the news media, or it may not. The size or significance of our influence according to the world’s standards does not matter. What matters is that we understand that God puts us where we are. Whatever our influence is, let us thank God for it and be faithful in it. If your place is small, thank God for putting you there, and make the most of it. And remember that if you prove faithful all the way, whatever you give up now you will be repaid a hundred—yes, a thousand fold—as God measures out the riches of His goodness in the eternal Kingdom of Christ. ♦



# Mr. Gecko:

## Little Lizard, Big Mystery

I'm just a harmless little lizard, between one and six inches long. You surely don't think I have much to boast about. We are a colorful lot, some of us gray, some green, some orange. But that doesn't surprise you. I'm talking to you today not to boast about myself but about my Creator. You see, I want to tell you about some very special abilities my very wonderful Creator has given me so that you can give glory to Him also!

I can't fly, and I'm not much good at jumping. But one thing I can do is *run*! It doesn't matter if the surface is flat or vertical, or rough or smooth. I can scurry up a wall, or across a ceiling in a flick—without suction, or glue, or friction, or any Velcro-like material on the surface.

few of my unusual abilities.

You see, my Creator made me with some very singular designs. One of these is my feet. Like many lizards in my family, I have four legs. Each leg extends into a foot, and each foot has five toes, just as you have. But—and here I must again mention my wonderful Creator—my toes are no ordinary creation. Each toe has many tiny hairs attached to it—on my 20 toes I probably have a total of more than two million toe hairs (nobody has counted them exactly!). These toe hairs are so tiny that the scientists can see them only when they magnify them more than 30,000 times!

And they aren't plain, simple hairs either. Each hair is tipped with thousands of tiny pads, each measuring some ten millionths of an inch across. These pads act like tiny suction cups, so powerful that I can actually hang from the ceiling by a single toe!

I feel like shouting "Marvelous!" But the scientists are even more per-

plexed because I not only know how to make my hairy toes stick but I can also make them release. Instantly. Otherwise—well, I'd still be hanging by my toe up there on the ceiling.

Just how do I pry my toes loose fast enough to keep running? That is a secret between my Creator and me, and I think we'll keep it that way for now. You just need to praise Him for His wonderful designs!

"When a gecko runs, he has to attach and detach himself 15 times a second," says one researcher. That surprises you? It's very ordinary to me, because that is the way my Creator designed me to do it!

But do you know, I heard a very strange comment recently. It sounded something like this: "The gecko has developed an amazing way of walking..." Did you ever hear the equal of that? They make it sound like *I did it! Or that my ancestors had something to do with my design*. Well, you and I know better! This is the way my Creator made me. My Creator gets ALL the credit.

Yes, ALL of it, because He designed me! All glory to my Creator, "*who does great things, and unsearchable, marvelous things without number*" (Job 5:9). He made me! ♦

**Sources of Information:** For the information in this article we are indebted to the *National Wildlife Magazine*, October, 2000, page 8; also *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th Edition, Vol. 5, p. 160.







*In this concluding scrapbook section are described a number of situations that developed during the years immediately following the settling of the group in Rochester. The reader will observe a world picture very different from today's, one hundred years later. —Editor.*

September 27, 1904

## IS NOT AFTER MONEY

LEADER OF BAND TELLS OF ITS AIMS

MEGIDDO TENT PITCHED AT  
CHARLOTTE

The Captain of the Mission Band, Rev. L. T. Nichols, told last night of the work the band has done since it started out, and explained its objects and aims. To do good was its only object and to make people better its only aim, he said. If he could get a dozen persons in Charlotte to put away anger and impatience and evil speaking, he should be better paid than if all the wealth of the Klondike were given to him.

The company wanted to make Christians of those who were in the church, said Mr. Nichols. To be a Christian meant a great deal more than just attending church on Sunday. Referring to the Bible illustration of Christ being over His people as a refiner of silver straining off the scum, which rose to the top till the refiner saw his own image reflected in it, he said a man must reflect the image of Christ before he was a Christian.

"I would give a thousand dollars—

and a great deal more," Mr. Nichols, declared, "for a photograph of Jesus Christ. It is a vastly greater thing, though, to have Christ's likeness shining out through our life in every action than it would be to carry Christ's picture in our pocket. And to be a Christian means to be like Christ, and Jesus lived by every word of God, His Father. The Megiddo people have come to stir up more interest in the Bible, that blessed volume which contains no contradictions, absurdities or impossibilities on its pages.

"The Bible declares that Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, and were He to descend, His command would be to 'search the Scriptures,' for 'man should not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.' The indwelling of God's Word is absolutely necessary for a man or a woman to be a true Christian, full of good fruits.

"It is wrong to murder, it is wrong to

steal, but to get angry will just as surely shut us out of God's kingdom as to murder or steal. 'Without holiness,' says the Bible, 'no man'—not one—'shall see God'; and I should be a false teacher if I said anything different from what the Bible says."

## CAPTAIN NICHOLS SCORES SALOON

The Genesee Baptist Church was well filled last evening when the second meeting of the course arranged by the Prohibition Alliance was held, with Captain Nichols of the Megiddo Mission Band as speaker. Captain L. T. Nichols is very radical in his views and denounces the liquor traffic and all its supporters unsparingly.

He said that with all the prohibition and temperance movements in existence the drink traffic was increasing still and at a fearful rate, and this he attributed to



The Megiddo band wagon, with its 24-piece band and Captain Nichols, in Rochester, New York, about 1906. The wagon required the services of four horses.



the half-hearted and weak-kneed support given to the temperance cause by professedly Christian people who were not Christian at all. To be Christian means, said the Captain, to follow in Christ's footsteps, to do as Christ did. Fancy, he continued, Jesus Christ opening a Subway Tavern and asking God's blessing on the "beer tub"—such a man was not a Christian. He was a child of the devil and doing the works of his father.

He arraigned the Christian ministers for their lukewarm attitude toward the prohibition movement and declared that if they did their duty there would soon be a mighty onward move. It was a gigantic evil that called for greater devotion and greater patriotism than our fathers displayed at Bunker Hill.

The speaker concluded a very remarkable address by beseeching the audience never to vote for any man for office who would license a man to sell liquor; and to the young woman never to marry a man who touched liquor; and to mothers and fathers to daily instruct their children on the subject.

March 24, 1906

## A UNIQUE CELEBRATION

### MEGIDDO BAND'S REMARKABLE CHRISTMAS OBSERVANCE

The captain of the Megiddo Mission Band continues his mission work among the churches, claiming that they are still

holding to many things that are relics of paganism. The Captain is very energetic in the promulgation of his new ideas, and has now surprised the people of Rochester by declaring that the time commonly celebrated as Christmas and New Year's is not Bible but pagan time. He also claims that both events should be celebrated in the spring of the year, this year March 25.

One remarkable coincidence that he refers to is that Dionysus, the learned monk who first began to compute our time, began the civil year March 25. Even St. Augustine said that "Christmas was neither derived from apostolic usage or sanctioned by any general council." In harmony with its belief the Megiddo band has been busily engaged for the past two months in preparing to properly celebrate the day. The band holds its regular services in Plymouth Avenue Church, one of the largest in the city; and already the walls and grand columns of the lofty church are adorned with 10,000 flowers which the women and children of the band have made.

As you enter the main entrance a picture of rare beauty meets the eye. Flowers everywhere, so perfect that it is difficult to realize that they are but imitations of nature's loveliness. Wreaths of carnations and lilies intermingled with various other decorations and festooned with delicate green adorn the main entrance. As you move up the aisle the scene becomes more lovely. Sprays—wreaths and bouquets of roses, wreaths and sprays of lilies, etc. ornament both sides, and as you glance under the gallery, eight brilliant stars are seen, bearing the

words, "Sing and Rejoice," "Our God Is Love," "Our God is Wisdom," "Our God is Just," "Our God Is Merciful," "Our God is Powerful," "Our God Will Save," "When Jesus Comes." On each side of every star there is a pot of lovely tulips, looking as natural as though growing in your own garden at home. On an arch 30 feet above the platform embellished with lilies, carnations and roses, are inscribed the words, "Christmas Greeting to All." Below the arch is a miniature earth surrounded by glittering stars. On the earth we read the Bible quotation, "As truly as I live all the earth shall be filled with My glory."

The Megiddo Band believes that at Christ's second coming this earth will be made most beautiful. "The desert will blossom as the rose," and earth's troubles be hushed in the calm of universal peace, God's will be done on earth as in heaven, and thus the earth become a part of heaven. Wreaths of roses and lilies extend almost to the platform. Around the posts supporting the lofty chandeliers are twined climbing rose vines, with their clusters of delicate flowers.

Sunday, in this beautiful place, amid the flowers, with the triumphant tones of the grand organ and the band pealing through the lofty dome, the band will celebrate the birth of Jesus, who was greater than all earthly rulers and to them the coming King of all the earth. Sunday will be not only Christmas day but also New Year's for Capt. Nichols holds that Christ's birth does not come a week before. It is in the spring that the Bible year begins, when all nature is aglow with life and freshness, as it is now in Palestine. The vernal sun lights up the landscape with a thousand forms of beauty. In all the glens, on all the plains are flowers blooming, daisies, hyacinths, tulips, lilies, roses, etc., growing in unbounded profusion, transforming the land into a garden of flowers—a fitting season for the birth of Jesus and the beginning of the new year.

The Megiddo band is a rather unique organization. The mission derived its name "Megiddo" from the name of their large ship, built in 1901. The word is from the Hebrew and literally translated means, "God is in this place." It has a settlement on the Thurston Road just southwest of the city. While the members of the band hold ideas a little in advance of the time, and somewhat radical in their nature, yet they seem a cool headed, intelligent and quiet class of people, whom any community would welcome in their midst. Besides Capt. Nichols himself there are a number of active lieutenants.



Plymouth Church decorated with 10,000 flowers to celebrate Christ's birthday and the New Year on March 25, 1905.



## WORSHIP IN NEW BUILDING

MEGIDDO MISSION BAND HELD  
DEDICATION CEREMONIES

SERVICES VERY SIMPLE

For the first time in its history in Rochester, the Megiddo Mission Band worshiped in a church of its own yesterday morning when the congregation gathered in the new building and with impressive ceremonies dedicated the edifice to the service of God.

Two hundred and fifty people attended the service, which was led by Rev. L. T. Nichols, captain of the band. The dedication sermon was preached by Captain Nichols and instrumental music was fur-



The Megiddo Church was built and dedicated in 1908.

nished by the mission band of eighteen pieces. The feature of the service was the singing by the children, happy and healthy little boys and girls for whom life seems to hold nothing but smiles in a community where happiness marks the tenor of simple lives.

Captain Nichols' sermon was simple, dealing with the three considerations why the congregation was called to worship in the church—that they might direct their lives so that they might live longer, live happier, and obtain the assurance of the great future. He told how the mission people had already erected 42 houses in the area and intended to go on building more. It is his goal that each family own three houses—one to live in, and two to rent for income, and the Captain himself is willing to help them to that end. A certain sister of the band



Interior of the Megiddo Church as decorated for Abib celebration, March 1908.

came to him two years ago and said, "I'd like to own a house myself but I have only \$30." "The money doesn't matter," replied the mission leader. "I'll put you up a house." He did so. She has it all paid for today, and has a savings account in a Rochester bank besides. Not a single member of the band is in debt. They are thrifty, industrious and pleasant people.

Captain Nichols told also what reasons had led to the erection of the church: first, the meeting room in the home was far too small for their own needs, and second, the community growing up around them needed a church. And no one outside the Megiddo Mission had been asked to subscribe one cent to help defray the expenses, and the church was all paid for.

*Democrat & Chronicle*  
April 6, 1911

## THE MILLENNIUM

MEGIDDO PASTOR DRAWS SPIRITED  
PICTURE OF EARTHLY CONDITIONS  
WHEN CHRIST SHALL COME AGAIN

"Earth's Great Jubilee" was the subject of the discourse at the Megiddo Church last evening. Captain L.T. Nichols, the pastor, said in part:

"Men are continually seeking to look into the future, and the best of men endeavor by means of legislation and other ways to make provision for the betterment of mankind. Nevertheless, the only sure knowledge of what the future will disclose is overlooked. That knowledge is contained in the Bible.

The Bible is most explicit in declaring that divine intervention is the sole and only remedy for the dreadful evils that everywhere exist. It declares that the great and eternal God will 'send Jesus Christ'; that Jesus Christ will return to this earth, armed with all power to break in pieces and destroy human society as at present constituted; to replace the conglomerate

tion of incapable authorities who now misrule the earth, by the unerring righteous rule of Jesus Christ and His associates, His associates who through the long dark ages have fitted themselves for the task by obedience to His truth, and who are now sleeping in the dust, awaiting Christ's return."

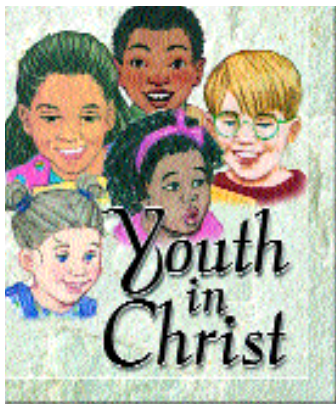
Captain Nichols drew a glowing picture of the glorious and lovely scene the earth would present when the all powerful rule of Christ and the saints had been fully established; how from childhood the population would be instructed in the science of correct living, so that in that age not one would die under 100 years old; how, under just laws rigorously enforced, a few hours' work per day might be sufficient to support a joyful and glad existence, and poverty and crime would be a thing unknown.

This, what might be called the "millennium idea," continued Captain Nichols, is not an isolated, detached hope; it is the very pith, and runs through the whole Bible teaching, permeating branch, trunk and root. Moses and the prophets had declared how that the whole earth should be "filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord."

All this and much more the Bible clearly revealed, and the evidence that we were within a short while of the beginning of this wonderful time was conclusive. The world would be startled out of its stupor of unbelief and indifference by the appearance of Christ upon the scene, not this time as the Lamb of God, but as the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

*This was the message of the Megiddo Church at the turn of the century, and now, a century later, it is still their message of hope, a hope which is now a century nearer fruition. It is a hope that shines brighter and surer as the days go by, for as surely as God has promised it shall be fulfilled. "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37). ♦*





# TRUE OR FALSE?

Mr. Dixon was collecting the quiz papers from his seventh grade class. He was noted for his unexpected quizzes, and this Thursday afternoon's was, from all

appearances, the standard kind: twenty questions, true or false, covering the material the class had been discussing during the week. Just as he placed the papers in his notebook, the bell rang.

"Class dismissed," he called out in his usual, matter-of-fact manner. Then he added, "Tomorrow we'll see how well you did."

But this was not the typical test. Mr. Dixon had a special plan for this quiz. He had designed this quiz to point out the importance of honesty, not to test one's knowledge of the subject matter.

That evening at home, he carefully graded each paper, and recorded the score in his grade book. But he left no marks on the individual papers. When the class assembled the next morning, he passed the papers back to the class and asked that each grade his or her own paper. "I will read the answers, and you can mark yourselves. Count five off for each one you miss, subtract the total from 100, and write your score at the top of the paper. Then I will ask you to read me your scores."

As soon as he had finished reading the answers, he began asking for each student's score, and entered each in his book. "John?"

"Eighty-five," John responded.

"Laura?"

"Ninety-five."

"Andrew?"

"Eighty."

"Lindsay?"

"Ninety."

"Bret?"

"Ninety-five."

"Julia?"

Her voice could barely be heard: "Sixty."

Mr. Dixon made no response but continued on around the room until he had all the grades carefully entered in his book. What the students didn't know was that each now had two grades in the book.

Then Mr. Dixon explained his plan. "This quiz has been a little different from the norm," he began. "Each of you now has two grades in my book, one which I recorded last night from your paper, and one which you gave me orally just now."

A hushed silence fell on the room.

"This true or false test was not the standard quiz. This was a test of you. Were you true, or were you false?"

No one moved.

"Julia," said Mr. Dixon. "Would you please stand up? I want all in the class to know that in my book, Julia achieved the perfect score on this test. Julia, you make me feel very proud."

All eyes turned toward Julia, who looked up rather timidly. Her eyes glistened as she broke into a shy smile and rose to her feet. "Thank you, Mr. Dixon," she said. "I always want to be true."

"I want to say just one thing more," continued Mr. Dixon, addressing the class. "Whatever you do in life, always remember that anything you *gain* by cheating is always outweighed by what you *lose*. Just remember that, and this little test will be worth it." ♦

## PRAYER:

*My Father, thank You for everything you send into my life, for the activities of the day and the rest of the night; for my home, my family, my friends, my teachers and my school.*

*Help me today to let Your light shine in my life, so that I may bring credit to You and others will be led to know You. I want above all to be Your loving, obedient child. Amen.*

## BIBLE VERSE:

*A good person is known by his truthfulness. A false person is known by his cheating and lies. (Proverbs 12:17)*

## LESSON:

*When you cheat, you lose more than you gain.*





## "May I Come In?"

by MELVA WALTON

*Jesus stands at the door and knocks  
Won't you invite Him in?  
He will not open up the door  
For it is locked within.*

*The door He knocks at is your heart,  
He pleads to share your life.  
He will not come to visit you  
If there is hate or strife.*

*His burdens are so light to bear,  
His precepts are so good,  
Our lives will be so very blessed,  
If we live just as we should.*

## Reflections

## Grateful, Grateful

by PATRICIA A. FLEMING

What a long list of things we have to be thankful for! The Lord has indeed been good to us. Our garden has provided a bountiful harvest, our home has remained a safe haven, our work has provided meaningful occupation and compensation, and the Angel of the Lord has encamped about us. The most wonderful blessing we have is the Word of God. It gives a sure hope for the future and tells us how we can be worthy of all that God has promised.

In these last days when so much is happening that is frightening, knowing that God is in control and nothing will happen to those who are working to please Him gives a peace that is sure. At the same time it stirs in us an urgency to get right with God now. We don't have much time left before we see Elijah arrive. In spite of the fact that prophecy

is being fulfilled every day, it is easy to have the attitude that things will go on and on and we have plenty of time to perfect our characters. But there will come an end to our day of probation, either by the arrival of Christ or by our death.

There are so many ideas out there about what heaven is and what happens to us when we die that I think many people just believe whatever makes them feel good. They don't try to study to be sure it is really what the Bible teaches. What a wonderful blessing it is to know what we believe and to have a solid foundation to support it. Our founder Brother Nichols did a great work, and for it I am grateful! The only person honest enough to search the Scriptures for the truth, he would not be influenced by what he had been taught or what he wanted to think the

Bible taught. We also must have that same honesty of heart to be worthy of Christ's approval.

We are also grateful for all the spiritual help we get from the *Message*, the letters, the thoughts sent so faithfully every day, for the tapes sent so regularly and the visit we have had from the brothers. The arrival of all these keeps us reminded that we must feed our minds with the bread of heaven every day or we will not be strong enough to withstand the temptations that we encounter. We thank each one of you who have a part in delivering this Bread to our door.

May God be with each of you as you strive to do His work and to develop the character image of Christ. That is the most challenging and most enduring work any human can do. But with God's help it can and will be done! ♦



# THE WITHERED FIG TREE

by GERALD R. PAYNE

**"Why did Jesus curse the fig tree because it had no fruit, when it was not even the season for fruit?" (Mark 11:12-14).**

As Jesus and His disciples were traveling from Bethany to Jerusalem (Matt. 21:19), the abundant foliage of this particular fig tree apparently caught Jesus' attention. The words "if haply" suggest an unlikely possibility of finding figs. And as you say, it was not the season for fruit.

But understanding how fig trees in Palestine grow tells us something else: The fruit (figs) appeared on the tree *before* the leaves. So a fully leaved tree without fruit had no possibility of bearing fruit that year. It could and would provide nothing but foliage. So Jesus cursed the fig tree, and it immediately withered.

What was the lesson? Jesus may have been issuing a formal warning against empty profession, which He despised. The fact that the tree was not bearing fruit indicated that it had once borne fruit. The fruitless tree symbolizes the empty pretense that Jesus forcefully condemned many times (see Matt. 6:1-14).

Was it possibly a prophetic warning against what was to happen to Israel? The nation of Israel had been portrayed as a fig tree (see Hosea 9:10; Nahum 3:12). And the tree had borne good fruit. Names like Abraham, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Daniel were all part of the useful yield of this fig tree. But now Israel as a nation was rejecting Him. Their religion was all leaves and no fruit, i.e., empty profession and display. Among the Israelites, there was plenty of activity but no fruit of holiness. And soon they would experience ruin.

We know from Matthew 21:20-22 that the Apostles took the lesson to heart. The next morning as they walked they observed the formerly lush fig tree completely withered.

Now it was not only fruitless but also lifeless.

Then Jesus takes the opportunity to teach the power of prayer and faith, a living, working faith. As hopeless as the withered fig tree looked, it was not beyond reclaim, but those same people would have to accept and believe and apply Christ's message. They would need to have the same kind of faith in God that Jesus had, and then that faith could "move mountains," i.e., do what would be otherwise impossible.

How could this be done? "What things soever" puts no limit on the request, but clearly it had to be in line with God's purposes. "Therefore I say unto you: what things soever ye desire, when ye pray: believe that ye receive them: and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24).

The promise of answered prayer is virtually unqualified except for one condition: faith. But what a meaningful condition! For true faith involves several elements: a sincere heart without hypocrisy (Matt. 6:5); an attitude of determination to persevere (Matt. 7:7; Luke 18:1-8); the proper motives (James 4:3), a childlike trust in God (Matt. 18:3-4); and above all a complete submitting to the will of God (Matt. 6:10; James 4:15).

In the next verse Jesus adds even one more condition: prayer is ineffective unless accompanied by forgiveness of one's debts toward others. "You must forgive anything that you are holding against anyone else" (Mark 11:25 Phillips). The one who cannot forgive cannot be forgiven. And the prayer without this essential heart quality will not be heard. Even though the Israelites were hard and unyielding, the believers could not hold grudges against them; they must bear the fruit of forgiveness if they expected to survive. Otherwise they would be cursed like the fig tree, i.e., rejected. They must be willing to forgive before they could experience the power of a living, working faith.

## A New Creature

**"What are your thoughts about becoming a new creature in Christ? From what I read, you have a works religion based on doing and not on admitting you are a sinner and can't get any better. Nothing wrong with studying the Bible. But if you don't give your heart to the Lord you are still lost in your sins."**

Paul did indeed say, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). But did he mean that the making of this "new creation" is a process begun and completed in a moment? Do we in a moment of decision change from the old nature to the new? Do we in a moment give up old habits and make new ones? Does God change us inside so that we automatically do right from that point forward, i.e., make right decisions, think right thoughts, and lay off all bad habits of the old life?

I believe any who have sincerely tried to live the "new life" in Christ have found that it is not a change that happens in a moment. We are not suddenly a "new creation." There is a point of decision, a point of beginning, but from that point we must little by little make the change from the old creature to the new.

This process of change is described in the Scriptures using a number of similes, one being growth. Paul says that we must "grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ" (Eph. 4:15), and growth takes time. We must "Put off, concerning [our] former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of [our] mind, and...put on the new man which was created according to God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:22-24). This word "put on" is the same word (*enduo*) used of clothing oneself,



which might be thought of as an instant process, but the verses that follow show that there is much more to it. *"Therefore, putting away lying, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor...let him who stole steal no longer...let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification...let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another"* (Eph. 4:25-32). Again, anyone who has tried to live totally by this code finds it is a process of growth, not an all-at-once change from the old way to the new.

All through his Epistles, Paul indicates that Christian faith is a life to be lived. He says, *"Be...followers of God, as dear children"* (Eph. 5:1). The verses that follow indicate it is a "walk" to take (v. 2), that we must not allow *"unclean-ness...neither filthiness"* to *"even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; ...nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks"* (Eph. 5:3-4). Every part of our life is drastically altered.

Paul also compared the Christian life to running (and winning) a race, which again is not an instant action. One who competes in a race must undergo extensive training, then run the actual race, and the prize is at the end of the race—a perfect parallel of the Christian life (see 1 Cor. 9:24-27). One significant dif-

ference is the fact which Paul pointed out: in the literal race, only one receives the prize. In the Christian race, every one who runs can win if he puts enough consistent effort into the race and abides by the rules.

Paul also compared the Christian life to fighting a battle, even mentioning the weapons God provides: The shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, the sandals of peace, the belt of truth, and the breastplate of righteousness. All are essential to being victorious in the battle against *"the wiles of the devil,"* our own evil nature (Eph. 6:10-17).

Your closing statement is exactly right: *"If you don't give your heart to the Lord, you are still lost in your sins."* But giving our heart to the Lord is again a process requiring time. Jesus defined it as loving the Lord with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, all our strength (Mark 12:30-31)—a total life commitment. Jesus said this was the first and greatest commandment in the law, and everyone of us is under obligation to obey it if we want to be His followers.

What does it mean to follow Jesus? *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me"* (Luke 9:23). Here again is a day-to-day process of following, not a single action done once and for all. ♦

#### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 7

Picture: Jeremiah in stocks (Jer. 20:2)

#### GOD'S HEROES

1. Jonathan – (1 Sam. 14:13-14)
2. Gideon – (Judges 7:7-22)
3. Benaiah – (2 Sam. 23:20)
4. Aaron – (Num. 16:46-49)
5. Esther – (Esther 4:11-16)
6. Daniel – (Dan. 6:6-13)
7. Nehemiah – (Neh. 6:10-11)
8. Joseph of Arimathea – (Mark 15:43)
9. Shammah – (2 Sam. 23:11-12)
10. David – (1 Sam. 17:4, 49)


#### WHO WAS?

1. Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 4:13, 17)
2. Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:20)
3. The widow of Nabal who became David's wife (1 Sam. 25:39-42)
4. The father of Samson (Judges 13:2, 24)
5. He was the sorcerer, of Paphos in Cyprus, who was blinded because he opposed Paul. His other name was Bar-jesus (Acts 13:6-11)
6. Abner (1 Sam. 17:55)

7. The officer in charge of the king's taxes, sent by Rehoboam to the rebellious tribes and by them stoned to death (1 Kings 12:18)
8. The king of Egypt who defeated Rehoboam and despoiled the temple and the royal palace (2 Chron. 12:1-9)
9. Judges of Israel (Judges 12:8-15)
10. The damsel who went to the door of Mary's house to admit Peter, just released from prison (Acts 12:12-15)

#### HOW MANY?

1. 969 (Gen. 5:27)
2. 10 (Gen. 31:41)
3. 7 (Gen. 7:2)
4. 6 (Gen. 7:5-6)
5. 1 (Gen. 42:33)
6. 2 (Gen. 1:16)
7. 3 (Gen. 40:9-10)
8. 4 (Gen. 2:10)
9. 2, 5 (Gen. 45:6)
10. 8 (Gen. 21:4)



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#### COMPLETE THE PROVERBS

1. *"a brother is born for adversity"* (Prov. 17:17).
2. *"the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction"* (Prov. 1:7).
3. *"but in the multitude of counselors there is safety"* (Prov. 11:14).
4. *"lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again"* (Prov. 19:17).
5. *"they that deal truly are his delight"* (Prov. 12:22).
6. *"and the man who gains understanding"* (Prov. 3:13).
7. *"hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes"* (Prov. 13:24).
8. *"out of it are the issues of life"* (Prov. 4:23).
9. *"sin is a reproach to any people"* (Prov. 14:34).
10. *"but grievous words stir up anger"* (Prov. 15:1).



## He Is Watching!

*Whatever you think, both in joy and in woe,  
Think nothing you would not like Jesus to know.  
Whatever you say, in a whisper or clear,  
Say nothing you would not like Jesus to hear.  
Whatever you read, though the page may allure,  
Read nothing unless you are perfectly sure  
Not the least consternation would show in your look  
If God should say solemnly,  
"Show Me that book!"*

*Whatever you write, if with haste or with heed,  
Write nothing you would not like Jesus to read;  
Whatever you sing, in the midst of your glees,  
Sing nothing that God's list'ning ear could displease;  
Wherever you go, never go where you'd fear  
God's question put to you:  
"What doest thou here?"*



## Abib Announcement

This year the members and friends of the Megiddo Church will welcome the beginning of the sacred New Year on Thursday, April 3. The holiday begins with the evening of April 2, the new moon occurring during the evening of April 1, and Bible time being measured from "evening to evening" (Lev. 23:32). The ancient Hebrews, according to the law God gave to Moses, marked the beginning of the sacred New Year with the month Abib, which is the month beginning with the first new moon following the spring equinox (March 21 this year).

This day has double significance as we commemorate the beginning of the sacred year and also the birth of our great coming King.

Members and friends, plan now to join us for this sacred season. New Year services and programs will be held on Thursday, April 3 and also on the following Sunday, April 6. The anniversary of the Lord's Supper will be on Monday evening, April 14, and Resurrection on April 17.



## WHAT KIND OF TRAILS DO YOU LEAVE?

The beautiful winter day was crisp, and the sky was clear and cloudless—except for a long white vapor trail that told everyone that a jetliner had gone by.

Like the jetliner, all of us leave our own trails. These trails bless or bother, inspire or infect.

I have a special friend who always leaves a trail of faith. She has Bible pearls she delights to share. Only a few moments with her, and God seems nearer, my determination stronger, and my hope more sure.

I have another friend who leaves a trail of enthusiasm. Hours after a telephone call from him I still feel the lift.

Then there are trails of selfishness and unthankfulness, or cynicism and pessimism. These don't lead to happiness or contentment. The trails that lead to a full life now and eternal life in the Kingdom of God are trails of gratitude and hope, of generosity and consideration.

Why leave trails of gloom; when we can leave trails of joy? We certainly don't want to leave trails of hate and bitterness. Life is so much smoother when we leave trails of love and harmony.

What kind of trails do you leave?

*"Happy are all who perfectly follow the laws of God. Happy are all who...always do his will, rejecting compromise with evil, and walking only in his paths" (Ps. 119:1-3 TLB).*

There's always a good crop of food for thought.  
What we need is enough enthusiasm to harvest it.

*Not only is it difficult to say the right thing in the right place but, more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.*

Circumstances are the raw material out of which we make character,...develop strength and virtue.

*It seems the natural urge of each to do something outstanding. But usually it is the little things done well that, added together, make life significant.*

Speak kindly today and when tomorrow comes you will be in better practice.

*Make a success of living by seeing the goal and aiming for it unswervingly.*

*The art of remembering is the art of taking an interest.*

He who can suppress a moment of anger can prevent a day of sorrow.

*Think twice before you speak or act—you will speak or act more wisely.*

### FORGET AND REMEMBER

*Forget each kindness that you do  
As soon as you have done it,  
Forget the praise that falls on you  
The moment you have won it;  
Forget the slander that you hear  
Before you can repeat it,  
Forget each slight, each spite, each sneer,  
Wherever you may meet it.  
Remember every kindness done  
To you, what e'er its measure;  
Remember praise by others won  
And pass it on with pleasure;  
Remember those who lend you aid  
And be a grateful debtor;  
Remember every promise made  
And keep it to the letter.*



# My God and I

*My God and I begin the day together;  
And strengthened by such fellowship divine,  
I set my will and heart in earnest effort  
To make the passing hours with goodness shine.*

*My God and I, we tread the path together;  
He leads me by His hand, and by and by  
If I but follow on in meek submission,  
He'll show me where the streams of Eden lie.*

*My God and I—how much can be accomplished,  
Yoked in with such Divine Assistance I  
Must never fear to climb the path before me,  
Though it should scale a mountain steep and high!*

*My God and I, we plow my field together,  
With Him to guide I make my furrow straight;  
And with assurance of abundant harvest,  
With buoyant heart my row I cultivate.*

*My God and I face all my foes together,  
He gives me strength to fight without retreat;  
If I but claim His armor's full protection  
My God and I will ev'ry foe defeat.*

*My God and I—I give Him first place always,  
Above, before, beside me He abides;  
His law my stay, His Word my meat and manna  
His Voice my Comforter when ill betides.*

*My God and I, we tread the path together,  
He talks of higher realms where I may dwell,  
Of planes of holiness and true endeavor  
Where truth and light the mists of sin dispel.*

*My God and I—oh, what a precious friendship!  
'Tis holy joy combined with heav'nly bliss;  
And if I do my part, 'twill last forever!  
Pray, what on earth could e'er compare to this?*

—Contributed

