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Megiddo Message



I KNOW THAT
MY REDEEMER
lives!

Job 19:25

Hazard! Tick Sins

If you have ever lived in tick-infested country, you know what a threat they are, especially the tiny deer tick, which can transmit Lyme disease by its bite. Only about the size of the period at the end of this sentence, it attaches itself to your skin and burrows in. So small, it can go totally unnoticed until the first symptoms of Lyme disease are noticed, sometimes years later. This was my own experience.

Fortunately, I developed a rash in the early stages and received treatment. Left untreated, I might have developed disabling neurological disorders, arthritis or heart disease from this tiny invader. Isn't there a striking parallel here to the effects of the little sins we so easily overlook, yet which can be so deadly?

What was the attitude of the Apostle Paul toward "tick-sins?" Did he just say casually, "It's all right to have a few"? Or did he take the attitude, "Who will notice, they are so tiny"? Or did he say in a self-vindicating tone, "I'd never get infected with a 'tick-sin'"? None of the above. Not even a thought of the above! Paul took sin—any sin, all sin—very seriously. He even included himself, an astute and committed apostle called by Jesus Himself, among those who should take warning. When he drew a lesson from the Israelites in the wilderness who fell because of their flagrant disobedience and rebellion, did he say, "You better watch out—it could happen to you"? No, hear his conclusion (1 Cor. 10:11 NIV): "These things happened to them as examples, and they were written down as warnings for us"—what did you say, Brother Paul? "They are written down as warnings for us,"—Paul himself and everyone who would come after him. No one exempt. All of us can take the warning. All of us are in danger.

When I first noticed the rash from Lyme disease, I called the health department. The nurse asked me if I had a "bulls-eye" rash. To be sure, I described exactly what the rash looked like. Her immediate response was not casual, but carried a definite tone of urgency, "Get to your doctor immediately!" She made me feel as if I may already be too late! What should our attitude be toward these "little sins?" A realistic sense of danger is a sign of maturity; we want to take immediate action!

Do we see someone else needing help? Of course we want to help them, but again Brother Paul has a word of caution. No one is exempt. "If one of you is caught doing something wrong, those of you who are spiritual should set that person right in a spirit of gentleness; and watch yourselves that you are not put to the test in the same way" (Gal. 6:1 NJB). Yes, "watch yourselves"—the same tick could bite you!

And what about the bigger, premeditated sins? Do we think ourselves above deliberate, bald-faced sins? Don't go there, says Paul. Overconfidence has ruined more than one. Every sin starts with a single thought. None of us is beyond the need for caution. Anyone can slip. Anyone can fall.

"If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (1 Cor. 10:12 NIV).

Do you say, "I know my limits. I know what is right for me. I know how to stop before I step over the line. Just a little isn't going to hurt anything"?

Listen to this logic. Just a little cyanide poison in my food won't

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29

None of us is beyond the need for caution. Anyone can slip.

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.

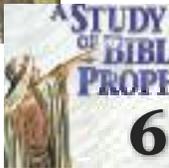
MEGIDDO MEANS...

—"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).

In this Issue...



4



6



14



13



16



21



22



24



32

2 EDITORIAL
Hazard! Tick Sins by Gerald R. Payne

4 SPECIAL FEATURE
**When Christ Was Born
Israel's King** by Liot L. Snyder
**A STUDY OF BIBLE PROPHECY
Divine Prophecy
A Look at Failed Human Predictions
The Messiah in Prophecy**
Looking Back
Looking Ahead

13 KNOW YOUR BIBLE?
**Washing and Water
New Testament Sayings**

14 POEM
As the Waters Cover the Sea by Annie Johnson Flint
Scripture set to poetry

16 **History of Megiddo Church**
CHAPTER 1, Part 3: A NATION AT WAR
CHAPTER 2, Part 1: SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

21 AWESOME DESIGNS
Mr. Gecko by Ruth E. Sisson
Amazing Little Lizard—Big Mystery

22 ARTICLE
On Measuring Time, PART ONE
A closer look at the Ancient Hebrew Calendar

24 YOUTH IN CHRIST
Are You Prejudiced?
Always Encourage by Diane Jurva

26 QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
**Do the Saints Go to Heaven at Death
and Become Angels?**
What "spirit" returns to God? —Ecc. 12:7
What about "clean" jokes?

30 LINES TO LIVE BY
Heavenly Father • Recipe for Gossip • Go Forth

32 BACK COVER POEM
Surely I Come Quickly!

Megiddo Message

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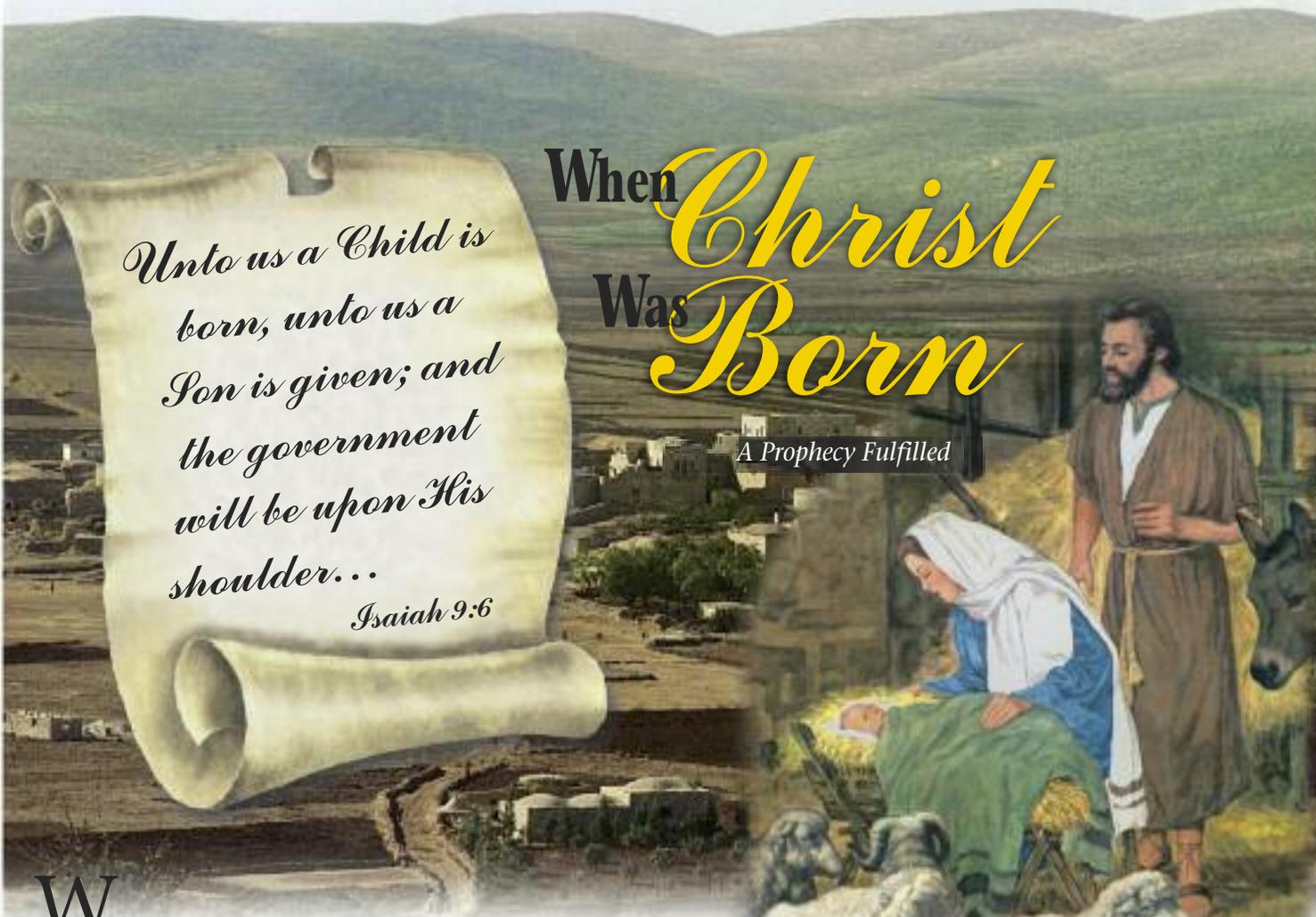
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Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature; DBL—Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains; EDNT—Balz, H. R., & Schneider, G. (1990-). Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament; GES—Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures; HAL—Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M., & Stamm, J. J. (1999). The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament; 2—Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996). A Greek-English lexicon; LN—Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains; —Strong, J. (1997). The new Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words. THAYER—A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1889).



When Christ Was Born

A Prophecy Fulfilled

We live in prophetic times. But we are not the first. In several respects, the time just before the birth of our Lord was a time very similar to our own. There were taxes, legions of soldiers, and troubles of one sort and another which occupied the minds of the multitude. And there were prophecies—prophecies pending fulfillment—on the books and parchments in the synagogues where thoughtless masses thronged each Sabbath. Week after week the prophecies were read and discussed, and people dreamed of the golden age that would arrive with the Messiah. In fact, so well known was the prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah—and so hated was the government then in power—that talk of the event was almost a national pastime. But few, very few gave serious thought to the real meaning of the prophecies, and fewer still actively anticipated the very nearness of the Messiah's birth.

But just as prophesied, so it happened, when God's time was right. And today, as we approach the second advent of the Messiah, the majority are still oblivious. The prophecies stand, plainly recorded on the pages of Scripture; but few listen. Who cares that Christ is coming to set up a worldwide kingdom? People will follow a fad, believe a lie, or worship a phantom; but reliable, factual information is only for debate. Some scoff, others ignore. But every day that passes brings the great event one day nearer.

So it was in other prophetic times before us. As the

crowds gathered in Bethlehem of Judea under the Abib moon in ancient Israel, there were doubtless scoffers aplenty. We can almost hear a voice above the sound of hoofs and sandals on the gravel, saying, "Yes, we've heard about a Messiah coming, but what changes? The Romans have everything in hand." Never did they imagine how significant the event that occurred that night! A prophecy was fulfilled, a prophecy that had been spoken some seven centuries before when "The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" So specific was the prophecy that it even pinpointed the place of the great event: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" (Mic. 5:2).

"A Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, [to] batter...and destroy... Out of Jacob One shall have dominion" (Num. 24:17, 19). Believing Israelites lived in confidence "the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver" from his line, until "Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people" (Gen. 49:10). Many of these ancient prophecies combined forecasts of His first and second advents, so much so that even the believers

could not distinguish between the two. Even so, their expectation was aroused, and they looked forward eagerly.

We today, looking back upon the prophecies and seeing what has been fulfilled, can read the writings of God's prophets with clearer understanding. The first part of Micah's forecast met its literal fulfillment; Jesus was born in Bethlehem Ephratah. But He was not at that time made "Ruler in Israel"; the fulfillment of that part of the prophecy is yet future, when the earth shall be filled with "the glory of the Lord," a faithful Israel, a people glorifying His name (Num. 14:21; Isa. 46:13; 45:17). This is our lively expectation. In the words of the angel, spoken before His birth, "He will be great, and...the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;...and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:32-33).

Some Abib will mark the beginning of the most important year in history, the year which will bring the end of all things past and the opening to all things future. Some New Year we will welcome the beginning of the year in which Jesus will return. We may be welcoming that year right now. Never before has there been so much evidence pointing to the end of the age. Never before has there been more to support our confidence that we are nearing the end. As one believer has said, "Christians never had more reasons to believe that the coming of Christ could occur any day than they have in the present prophetic crisis in the world."

One of these days the dramatic event will occur. The forecasts for the end time all fulfilled, the prophet Elijah will arrive as the herald of the great event (Mal. 4:5-6). Then—suddenly—the heavens will part and out of the azure blue will descend the King with all His retinue of shining angels (Matt. 16:27; Rev. 1:7). Then will follow the Judgment, the Coronation, the Battle of Armageddon, the Millennium, and, after all, the Eternal Age! Yes, Eternity, with everlasting expansion, everlasting happiness, everlasting joy, everlasting life. All this—and more—is the promise of our God. It is enough to overwhelm the human mind!

Incredible as it all may seem during these ordinary days, it **will** come to pass—and **right here in our world!** The ground on which we now stand will belong to the jurisdiction of the new Kingdom; so will that of every other nation today. "All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isa. 52:10). All people everywhere shall bow before the new King, for "all nations shall serve Him" (Ps. 72:9-11), for His dominion shall extend "from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8).

Are we not the most privileged of any people who ever lived? The prophets saw this great climactic event long ago. But we who live so near, see it even more clearly. Do we appreciate the privilege that is ours?

What is the impact of these prophecies on your life and mine? We see with other eyes. We hear with other ears. We have caught a glimpse of things to come, and life can never be the same again! It is the "blessed hope" of the appearing of the glory of our Saviour Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).

Our Lord may not come in this year that is now dawning. On the other hand—**He may!**

ISRAEL'S King



*Abib moon is hanging low
O'er the town of Bethlehem,
Faintly shining, but a glow
Like that of a diadem
Lightens up a manger bare,
Where a new-born babe is laid;
And the Christ-child, passing fair,
Gently slumbers, unafraid.*

*Shepherds watching on the slopes
Through the passing hours of night
To each other voice their hopes
Of the end of Israel's plight.
Then, astonished, they behold
As celestial beings sing,
"Unto you the thing is told,
Lo! tonight is born a King!"*

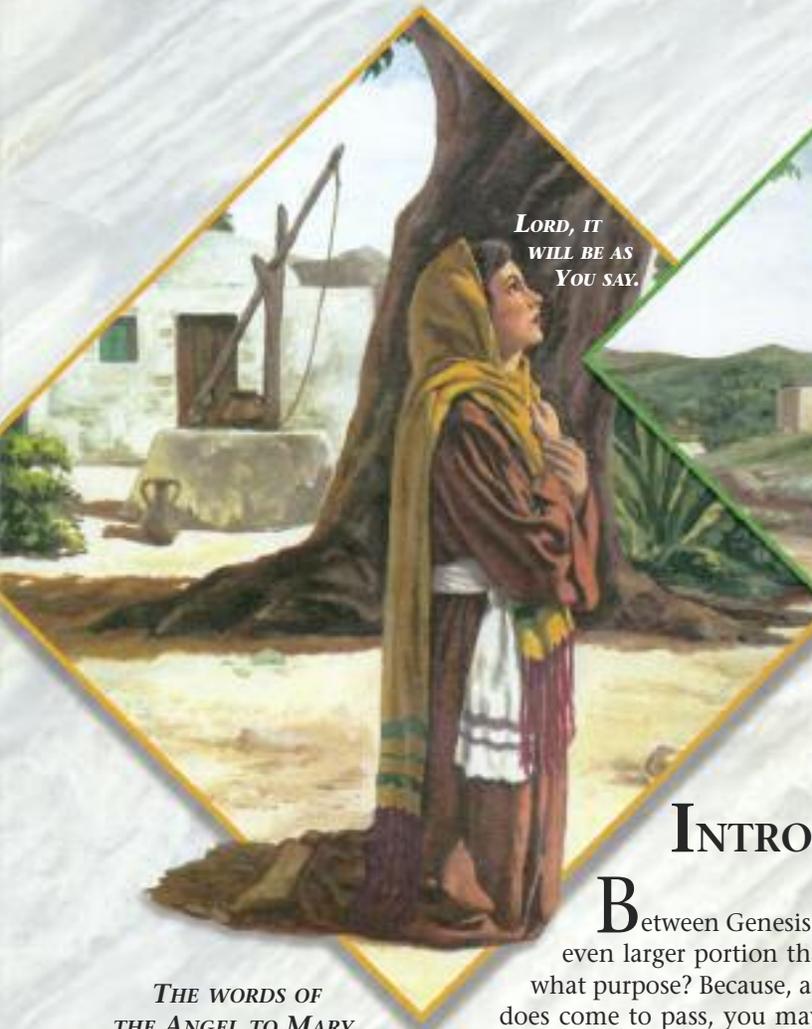
*Infant Jesus! Who could tell
That the baby born that night
Would some day rule Israel,
Guiding all in paths of right?
Yet of Him sounds the decree,
"Haughty nations low shall bend
At Thy bidding. There shall be
Of Thy government no end."*

*Who could tell? Not mortal man,
With his tiny, finite mind;
But God could make known His plan,
That all who would seek might find.
And of Him in manger born
Plainly does the Word declare
That in coming glorious Morn
He the Monarch's crown shall wear.*

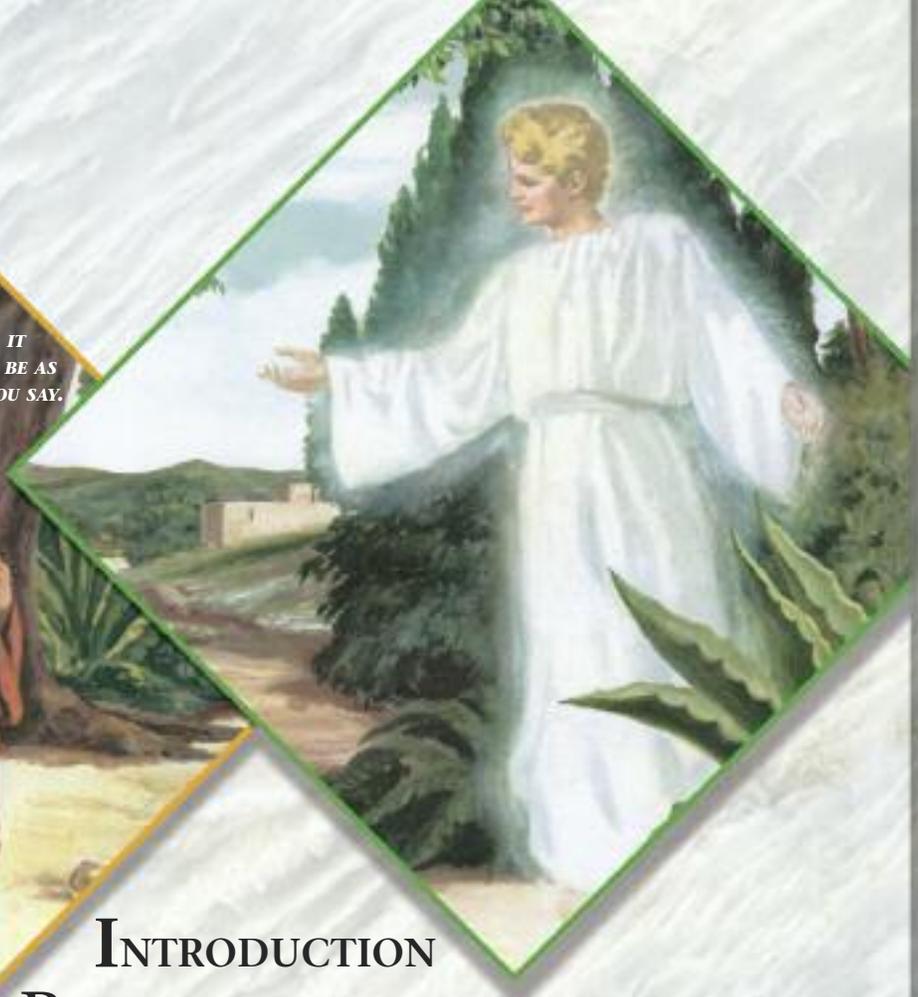
*The fairest of ten thousand, He
Soon shall ride to meet His foes;
Of Judah's tribe the Lion be,
Conqu'ring all who dare oppose.
Rose of Sharon, claim Thy bride,
To the world as yet unknown.
Come, with Thy beloved abide;
Take Thy place on David's throne.*

*We have waited, nor in vain,
For the coming Prince of Peace;
Meanwhile cleansing every stain,
Till from sin we find release.
Soon shall end this dreary night—
Then the ransomed host shall sing
"Faith has given place to sight;
He has come, our glorious King."*

—L.L.Snyder



*LORD, IT
WILL BE AS
YOU SAY.*



*THE WORDS OF
THE ANGEL TO MARY
TELLING HER THAT SHE
WOULD BE THE MOTHER OF
JESUS WERE A PROPHECY
WITH A NEAR-AND SURE-
FULFILLMENT.*

INTRODUCTION

Between Genesis and Revelation, a large portion is prophetic—probably an even larger portion than we, lacking Holy Spirit power, can recognize. And for what purpose? Because, as Jesus said, “I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe” (John 14:29). This tells us the true reason for prophetic Scripture: to give us faith in the Author. When we see how precisely its prophecies have been fulfilled, we have every reason to believe that those not yet fulfilled will as surely come to pass when the time is right.

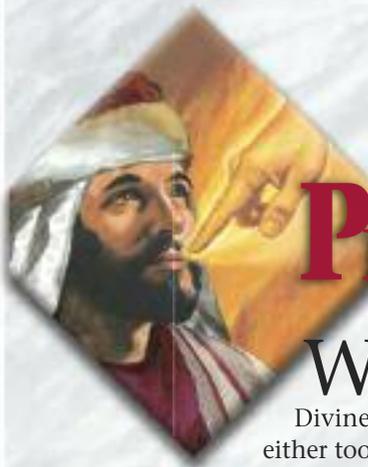
Among the most common predictions today are those purporting to be “prophetic,” end-of-the-world predictions, but which are really only the old, familiar hype, revised and warmed over. Again and again they have failed—because God has not revealed His timeline. But if they accomplish anything at all, they draw attention to a subject which is now more important than ever before, when the Second Advent of Jesus is imminent! Yes, Jesus Christ is coming back—soon!

When? We cannot set any dates, because Jesus said plainly that it has not been revealed (Mark 13:32), but one statement can be made with absolute surety: Never in the history of the earth was the coming of Jesus nearer than it is this very moment!

What is prophecy? In everyday terms, prophecy is a window through which one can peer into the future. Technically, the word comes from two Greek words, *pro* which means “for,” “in front of,” “on behalf of,” and *phanai*, which means “to speak,” so it is literally to “speak in front of,” to “speak for” (as an agent), or to “speak before” (in time).

The prophet of God had two primary responsibilities: 1) to speak out in front of, or “in behalf of” God, delivering His messages and 2) to speak beforehand, in advance, of coming events. The prophet was, in the first sense, the mouthpiece of God. In earlier Old Testament times, the prophets were known as “seers” (literally, one who “sees”). As related in 1 Sam. 9:9 NIV, “Formerly in Israel, if a man went to inquire of God, he would say, ‘Come, let us go to the seer,’ because the prophet of today used to be called a seer.”

In a broader sense, the word “prophet” can refer to anyone who speaks the word or will of God, whether revealed through dream, vision, or spoken message.



DIVINE PROPHECY

What is a suitable subject for a Divine prophecy? Nothing seems either too small or too great. Whether a prophecy be of the future destiny of the earth or only something that will happen tomorrow, it is a clear demonstration of Divine power, for who of us can know what will happen one hour from now?

Someone has said that the best way to predict the future is to not state any time with a prediction—almost anything can happen eventually! This is surely the only way to “predict” successfully if the mind behind the prophecy is human, but no such need for uncertainty accompanies the prophesying when the Omniscient God is behind it. *“My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips,”* is His own testimony (Ps. 89:34). The test of the ancient prophet was just this: *“If the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him”* (Deut. 18:22). King Saul’s servant could testify about the Lord’s “seer” Samuel, *“All that he saith cometh surely to pass”* (1 Sam. 9:6)—even if it is only a matter of locating lost animals! (1 Sam. 9:20; 10:16).

God Knows

When God makes a prophecy, *He really knows*. When He looks ahead, He sees the future as clearly as we can see the past.

The fullest beauty of true religion is in its forward look. Truth is not static, complacent, or backward looking. It is the Word of God for today and tomorrow. And taken seriously, it affects us personally, making our life before God more careful, more considered, more upright.

In many religious circles, the study of prophecy is neglected—on the assumption that no sure information is available. Truly many false, foolish, and heretical statements have been made about Bible prophecy. But these do not condemn the prophecies themselves, only the erroneous thinking of those who interpreted them. The Divine Word still stands.

It may even be said that we today owe more to the teaching of the great prophets than to any other part of the Old Testament.

But by no means is Bible prophecy confined to the Old Testament. It is found in every book of the New Testament as well. Not only does the New Testament quote many of the Old Testament prophecies, but there are new prophecies as well. The entire Book of Revelation is a Book of Prophecy pertaining to things *“soon to come.”* In other words, things that had not occurred before the Book was written. Some of these are yet future, and, we can be sure, they will be fulfilled right on schedule. ♦

A LOOK AT FAILED

If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

—Deut. 18:22 NIV

You say prophecy can’t be depended on, that all prophecy is just so many words? Maybe that is because you have been listening to human, self-appointed prophets.

Every January, newspaper headlines feature the predictions made by leading psychics and world figures. The front page stories contain amazing forecasts of major disasters and key world events, as well as medical and scientific breakthroughs. They also contain a lot of speculative trivia about political, film, and TV celebrities. “Counterfeit prophets,” someone has commented, “annually fire prophetic buckshot into tomorrow’s clouds, hoping to bag an occasional stray duck as it passes overhead.” But what is it worth? Do their predictions rival the prophecies of Scripture? Occasionally when an event occurs that someone has predicted, great publicity is given to the fact. But what about the other side of the story publicized—the thousands of predictions that are erroneous and fall by the way like withered leaves? A few years ago someone did a tally of 250 published predictions that were supposed to happen within the year. At the end of the year, less than 3% (i.e., 6) could be listed as reasonably fulfilled. The remaining 97% (244) missed the mark completely.

A well-known financial analyst once made a forecast of 10 “events” which he projected had a “50% or better” chance of happening. Looking back on his projections, one could see that his “crystal ball” was faulty (among other things, he predicted the winner of the upcoming presidential election—and didn’t even have one correct candidate on the ballot!).

Many hundreds of prophecies were made at the dawn of the new millennium. Among those obviously “failed” are the following:

Marion Derlette, a religious historian, predicted that doomsday would occur on **January 16, 2000**.

Thomas Chase predicted that on **January 1, 2000**, the Y2K bug would cause a worldwide electrical failure, trigger a world economic depression, and bring on the Antichrist.

Human PREDICTIONS

Nostradamus predicted that a giant asteroid would hit the earth in late **November 2000**. This would start a fire that would burn up the planet.

Well known "Failed Predictions"

- ◆ The end of the world as we know it
- ◆ Prosperity will never end
- ◆ Technology? What's that?
- ◆ Y2K fears
- ◆ The Titanic is unsinkable
- ◆ On-line shopping will fail
- ◆ The end of history is near
- ◆ Heart and brain surgery—impossible

Evangelist Harold Camping predicted that the world would end Friday, Oct. 21, 2011. **Obviously failed.** This was not his first failed prediction. In 1992, he had published a book called *1994?*, in which he stated his forecast that sometime in mid-September 1994, Christ would return and the world would end. He based his calculations on numbers and dates found in the Bible and, at the time, said he was "99.9% certain" that his math was correct. When the world did not end in 1994, Camping recalculated and provided another date—**March 31, 1995**—**which also passed without incident.**

The last century and a half has seen many widely publicized and **obviously failed predictions.** For example:

- "This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us." —A Western Union internal memo sent in 1876
- "Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible." — Lord Kelvin, renowned scientist and President of The Royal Society, in 1895

□ "TV will never be a serious competitor for radio because people must sit and keep their eyes glued on a screen; the average American family hasn't time for it." —A 1939 editorial in The New York Times

□ "Somehow, the microcomputer industry has assumed that everyone would love to have a keyboard grafted on as an extension of their fingers. It just is not so ... Because no matter how inexpensive the machines become, and no matter how sophisticated their software, I still can't imagine the average user taking one along when going fishing." —Journalist Erik Sandberg-Diment, December 8, 1985, in The New York Times

□ "No online database will replace your daily newspaper, no CD-ROM can take the place of a competent teacher and no computer network will change the way government works." —a writer in Newsweek magazine, 1995.

□ "Try reading a book on disc. At best, it's an unpleasant chore: the myopic glow of a clunky computer replaces the friendly pages of a book. And you can't tote that laptop to the beach. Yet [some are predicting] that we'll soon buy books and newspapers straight over the Internet. Uh, sure." —a writer in Newsweek magazine, 1995.

□ "There's no chance that the iPhone is going to get any significant market share. No chance." —Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer.

Predictions continue, despite consistent shortfall. Predicting by psychics is said to be \$2 billion a year business in the US. (If psychics have divine powers, why don't they solve difficult crimes, or prevent terrorist attacks, or win the lottery?) Those who follow the predictions of psychics have

noted numerous predictions for 2013 that didn't happen. For example:

- ◆ A fire and explosion at a subway in New York City that would kill many—**didn't happen.**
- ◆ A chemical attack on the United States—**didn't happen.**
- ◆ A cruise ship would break in half—didn't happen.
- ◆ Another Super Storm like Sandy would strike the USA, Canada and Europe—**didn't happen.**
- ◆ A nuclear attack on New York—**didn't happen.**
- ◆ Cuba and Puerto Rico would become part of the USA—**didn't happen.**
- ◆ A weather satellite would crash into a building—**didn't happen.**
- ◆ There would be an attack on the Vatican and Pope—didn't happen.
- ◆ An earthquake of great magnitude would wipe out Mexico City—**didn't happen.**

Enough!

Are you shouting to yourself, "Enough! enough!?" That is how I feel, too.

Yet the human record is well established. "We have noted over 6 dozen **past** predictions of the end of the world," says one observer, "which have one factor in common: **none ever came true.**"

What a contrast to the prophecies of Scripture, where prophecy after prophecy has been fulfilled *just as foretold!* ◆

So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. — Isaiah 55:11

The Messiah IN PROPHECY

PROPHECIES CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST

Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension

One of the most central topics of prophecy in the Bible is the subject of the Messiah. The prophecies focus on two comings, a first and a second. And since all the prophecies of His first coming were fulfilled just as predicted (see chart, “Looking Back”), we can trust that the prophecies of His second coming will also prove 100% accurate.

The Old Testament records some 300 prophecies about the Messiah that were fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Does this seem incredible? It would be, except for the Divine Mind behind these predictions. God doesn’t guess, He knows. When His prophets spoke, they revealed the future with certainty.

Could this be by chance? Could 300 predictions about one person who was to be born hundreds or thousands of years in the future just happen to come out right?

To comprehend this amazing fact, an illustration is helpful. Suppose you take not 300 predictions but only 8. What are the odds that these predictions might all be fulfilled in one person? The likelihood is said to be that of one in 10 to the 17th power (1 in 1,000,000,000,000,000,000)! To make this statement more meaningful, Josh McDowell put this into the form of a picture. Imagine, he said, that you cover the state of Texas with silver dollars to a depth of 2 feet, and on one of those silver dollars you place a mark. Now blindfold a man and tell him to pick up just one silver dollar—how likely is he to pick up the one that you marked? That is parallel to all eight prophecies being fulfilled in one man! (Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, vol. 1, pp. 144, 167).

Below is a chart of some of the prophecies of Christ’s first coming that were fulfilled, along with the record (Bible reference) of their fulfillments.

Looking Back

| Prophecy | Reference | Century of Prophecy | Century of Fulfillment | Reference |
|---|----------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| Called Emmanuel (God with us) | Isa. 7:14 | 8th c. BC | 1st c. AD | Matt. 1:23 |
| Born of a virgin | Isa. 7:14 | 8th c. BC | 1st c. AD | Matt. 1:23 |
| Born in Bethlehem | Mic. 5:2 | 8th c. BC | 1st c. AD | Luke 2:4–5, 7 |
| Descendant of Abraham | Gen. 22:18 | 19th c. BC | 1st c. AD | Matt. 1:1 |
| Descendant of Isaac | Gen. 21:12 | 19th c. BC | 1st c. AD | Matt. 1:2–16 |
| Descendant of Jacob | Obad. 1:17 | 6th c. BC | 1st c. AD | Matt. 1:1–2 |
| Descendant of Judah | Gen. 49:10 | 17th c. BC | 1st c. AD | Luke 3:23–33 |
| To be given the throne of David | 2 Sam. 7:12–17 | 11th c. BC | 1st c. AD | Luke 1:32–33 |
| Joseph and Mary flee to Egypt | Hos. 11:1 | 8th c. BC | 1st c. AD | Matt. 2:14–15 |
| Herod tries to kill Jesus | Jer. 31:15 | 7th c. BC | 1st c. AD | Matt. 2:16–18 |
| Christ a prophet raised up among the Jews | Deut. 18:15 | 15th c. BC | 1st c. AD | Acts 3:20, 22 |



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).

- ★ **Christ will come during a time of rampant wickedness.** Conditions will parallel those that existed during the time of Noah, when only 8 persons were saved while multitudes drowned (Matt. 24:37–39; 1 Pet 3:20). Or they will be like they were when Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed in fire, when only Lot and his two daughters were saved (Luke 17:28).
- ★ **It will be a time of international distress, with fear gripping the hearts of men.** As Jesus predicted, there will be “distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and

the waves roaring, men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken” (Luke 21:25–26).

- It will be a time of fear and dread for the unbelievers, but not for the righteous. God has promised, “When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:28).
- ★ **There will not be another one-government world until after Christ returns** (Daniel 2:35–45).
- ★ **It will be a time of rampant unbelief.** Scoffers will be saying, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything

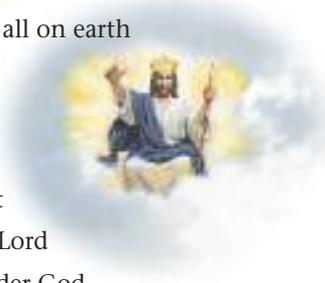
goes on as it has since the beginning of creation” (2 Pet. 3:4 NIV).

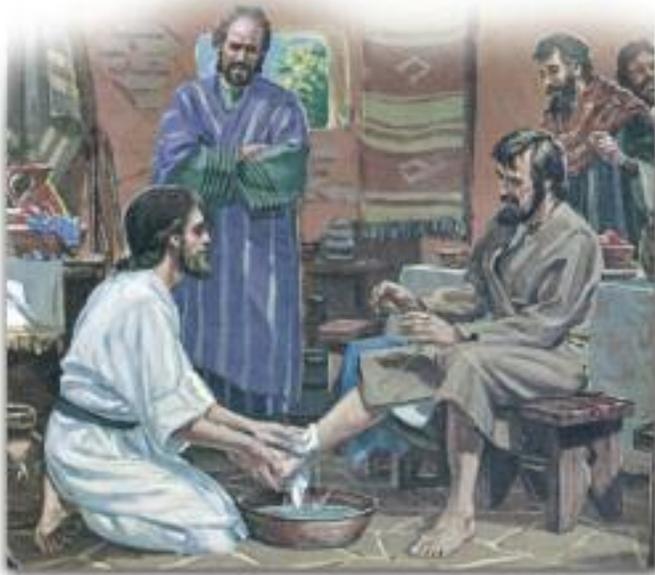
- ★ **It will be a time of unprecedented violence, danger and peril.** “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come” (2 Tim. 3:1).
 - ★ **It will be a time of “business as usual”** (Luke 17:30 NLT). Life will seem to proceed as usual, “people... eating, drinking, marrying, and giving their children to be married” (Luke 17:27 NCV), when suddenly the great change will come!
- Some will be eagerly expecting Jesus’ return and will be ready to receive Him (Matt. 25:1–13).
Will that number include you?
Will it include me? ♦

Looking Ahead

| Prophecy | Reference | Century of Prophecy | Fulfillment |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Christ comes unexpectedly | Matt. 24:44; Rev. 16:15 | 1st c. AD | Future |
| Elijah precedes second coming | Mal. 4:5–6; Matt. 17:11 | 4th c. BC | Future |
| Dead resurrected | Dan. 12:2; Rev. 20:5 | 6th c. BC | Future |
| Rapture | 1 Thess. 4:17 | 1st c. AD | Future |
| Judgment | Dan. 7:9–10; Rev. 19:11 | 6th c. AD | Future |
| Reward righteous | Isa. 40:10; Rev. 22:12 | 8th c. BC | Future |
| Stand on Mount Zion | Ps. 2:6; Rev. 14:1 | 11th c. BC | Future |
| Stand on Mount of Olives | Zech. 14:4 | 5th c. BC | Future |
| Come as Lion of Tribe of Judah | Rev. 5:5 | 1st c. AD | Future |
| Nations fight against Christ | Rev. 19:19 | 1st c. AD | Future |
| Conqueror | Rev. 6:2 | 1st c. AD | Future |
| New heavens (rulers) earth (subjects) | Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1 | 7th c. BC | Future |
| Law goes forth from Zion | Isa. 2:3 | 8th c. BC | Future |
| Everlasting Gospel taught to all on earth | Rev. 14:6 | 1st c. AD | Future |
| To reign forever | Ps. 45:6–7; Heb. 1:8–12 | 11th c. BC | Future |
| Priest forever | Ps. 110:4 | 11th c. BC | Future |
| Rule earth in righteousness | Isa 32:1; Rev. 19:2 | 8th c. BC | Future |
| Righteous to rule with Christ | Dan. 7:22, 27; Rev. 20:4 | 6th c. BC | Future |
| All nations will worship the Lord | Isa. 66:23; Rev. 15:4 | 7th c. BC | Future |
| One worldwide kingdom under God after the Millennium | 1 Cor. 15:28 | 1st c. AD | Future |
| No more sorrow, pain, death | Isa. 25:8; Rev. 21:4 | 8th c. BC | Future |
| No more immorality, crime, evil of any sort | Rev. 21:8 | 1st c. AD | Future |

All dates are estimate/approximate.





WASHING AND WATER

1. Who found a baby in the river?
2. Who washed his face after an emotional meeting with his young brother?
3. Which governor washed his hands before a crowd to prevent a riot?
4. Who had to wash their hands and feet in a wash basin at the entrance to the tabernacle whenever they neared the altar?
5. Who invited two angels to spend the night at his house and gave them water to wash their feet?
6. Who, before starting a journey to Bethel with his family, had them destroy their idols, bathe, and put on fresh clothing?
7. Who gave a traveling servant and the men accompanying him water to wash their feet?
8. Who was told to wash seven times in the Jordan river and he would be healed of his leprosy?
9. Who mentioned washing with snow?
10. Who instructed a blind man to go and wash in the pool at Siloam, which resulted in the man regaining his sight?

NEW TESTAMENT SAYINGS (from KJV)

1. "Pray without ceasing. _____."
2. "With good will doing service, as to the _____, and _____."
3. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall _____."
4. "_____ the temple of God."
5. "We have _____ in earthen vessels."
6. "Fight the good fight of faith, _____."
7. "Follow peace with all men _____."
8. "Bodily exercise profits a little but _____."
9. "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but _____."
10. "See that none render evil _____."
11. "Great is the mystery of _____."
12. "A little leaven _____."
13. "Christ is the son over his own house, _____."
14. "For whom the Lord loveth he _____."
15. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ _____."

FILL IN THE BLANKS (from NKJV)

1. [The prosperity of the wicked was too painful] until I went into the _____ of _____; Then I understood their end.
2. I am the Lord your God, Who brought you out of the land of _____; Open your _____ and I will _____ it.
3. There remains therefore a _____ for the _____ of God.
4. At _____ I will rise to give _____ to You, Because of your _____.
5. Apply your _____ to _____, and your _____ to words of knowledge.
6. Now the purpose of the commandment is _____ from a pure _____, from a good _____ and from sincere _____.

ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

WASHING AND WATER

1. Pharaoh's daughter (Ex. 2:5-6)
2. Joseph (Gen. 43:29-31)
3. Pilate (Matt. 27:24)
4. Aaron and his sons (Ex. 40:30-32)
5. Lot (Gen. 19:1-2)
6. Jacob (Gen. 35:1-3)
7. Laban (Gen. 24:29-32)
8. Naaman (2 Kings 5:9-14)
9. Job (Job 9:1, 30)
10. Jesus (John 9:1, 7-11)

NEW TESTAMENT SAYINGS

1. "In everything give thanks" (1 Thess. 5:17-18)
2. "Lord, ...not to men." (Eph. 6:7)
3. "not fulfill the lust of the flesh." (Gal. 5:16)
4. "Ye are" (1 Cor. 3:16)
5. "this treasure" (2 Cor. 4:7)
6. "lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:12)
7. "and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14)
8. "godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. 4:8)
9. "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4)

10. "for evil unto any man" (1 Thess. 5:15)
11. "godliness." (1 Tim. 3:16)
12. "leaveneth the whole lump." (Gal. 5:9)
13. "whose house are we" (Heb. 3:6)
14. "chasteneth" (Heb. 12:6)
15. "hath made us free." (Gal. 5:1)

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. "sanctuary," "God" (Ps. 73:17)
2. "Egypt", "mouth wide", "fill" (Ps. 81:10)
3. "rest", "people" (Heb. 4:9)
4. "midnight", "thanks", "righteous judgments" (Ps. 119:62)
5. "heart", "instruction", "ears" (Prov. 23:12)
6. "love", "heart", "conscience", "faith" (1Tim. 1:5)

AS THE WATERS

*The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord,
as the waters cover the sea. –Habakkuk 2:14*

*There is wrath and rue in the world today, there is merciless hate and woe,
And cruel mistrust and suffering and fear of the unknown foe;
There is death on the land and death on the wave and death in the clouds on high,
As man 'gainst man takes up the sword, and the dead unburied lie,
For the kings of the world are all at strife and the strong men fight or flee,
And violence covers the face of the earth as the waters cover the sea.*

*Take heed, ye tyrants of the earth, for your doom is near at hand,
Take heed, ye merchants who deal in vice and rob the poor of the land:¹
Though you bolt the doors and bar your gates and strengthen your outer wall,
Your gold shall all corrupted be,² and your kingdom, it shall fall;
For the Ruler Supreme shall set His King upon His holy hill,³
And your counsels all shall come to naught⁴ and your wrath shall work His will.*

*He will sweep your refuge of lies away,⁵ discover your hiding place,
And your hearts shall melt⁶ and your spirits fail at the lightning of His face,⁷
He will shatter your shiny weapons of war,⁸ and rob you of your prey;
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it⁹ and who shall tell Him nay?
He will reign in justice and rule in love¹⁰ and wars shall cease to be,¹¹
And the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.¹²*

*Awake, arise, O Israel,¹³ and tune your harps anew¹⁴
For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it,¹⁵ and the Word of the Lord is true:¹⁶
The Sun of Righteousness shall rise with healing in His wings;¹⁷
Like the chaff of the summer threshing floor¹⁸ shall be the pride of kings.
From the ends of the earth He will gather you and bring your sons from far,¹⁹
From the desert place He will lead you out²⁰ where the rivers of waters are.²¹
He is casting up the highway now where His redeemed shall tread,²²
And you will come with songs of joy and garlands on your head.²³
You will enter into your land with peace,²⁴ and your foes subdued shall be²⁵
And the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.²⁶*

COVER THE SEA

*Break forth in song, you mountains,²⁷ and shout for joy O earth;²⁸
Be joyful all you little hills²⁹ and clap your hands in mirth,
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it, and it shall come to pass;³⁰
There shall be rain in his season and the fields be clothed with grass.³¹
The cedar tree and the fir³² shall spring where now the brier grows,
The waste and desolate wilderness shall blossom as the rose;³³
There shall be pools where the parched ground lies,³⁴ for the day of redemption nears.³⁵
And past the seemingly endless strife of the seemingly endless years
There shines the vision of peace to come in the age that is yet to be,³⁶
When the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.³⁷*

*Look up, O Church of the living Christ, for the coming One draws nigh,³⁸
Watch for the gleam of the Morning Star³⁹ in the dark of the eastern sky.
Hark to His voice: "Behold I come"⁴⁰ and answer: "Even so,"
Till your pulses thrill to the joy⁴¹ of it amid this world of woe.
Lift up your head, for the Blessed Hope,⁴² like a bow in the cloud appears,
Comfort your hearts, for the Lord will come,⁴³ and His hand shall dry your tears.⁴⁴
Sorrow and sighing shall flee away and sin no more shall be,⁴⁵
When the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.⁴⁶*

—Annie Johnson Flint

¹ Isa. 10:2
² Jas. 5:3
³ Ps. 2:6
⁴ Isa. 8:10; Ps. 33:10
⁵ Isa. 28;17
⁶ Isa 13:7
⁷ Isa. 57:16; 19:3
⁸ Jer. 21:4
⁹ Mic. 4:4
¹⁰ Isa. 32:1
¹¹ Ps. 46:9
¹² Hab. 2:14

¹³ Isa. 51:9
¹⁴ Ps. 43:4
¹⁵ Isa. 55:10–11
¹⁶ Ps. 119:160
¹⁷ Mal. 4:2
¹⁸ Dan. 2:35
¹⁹ Isa. 43:6
²⁰ Isa. 49:10
²¹ Jer. 31:9
²² Isa. 35:9
²³ Isa. 51:11
²⁴ Isa. 32:17–18; Isa. 57:2

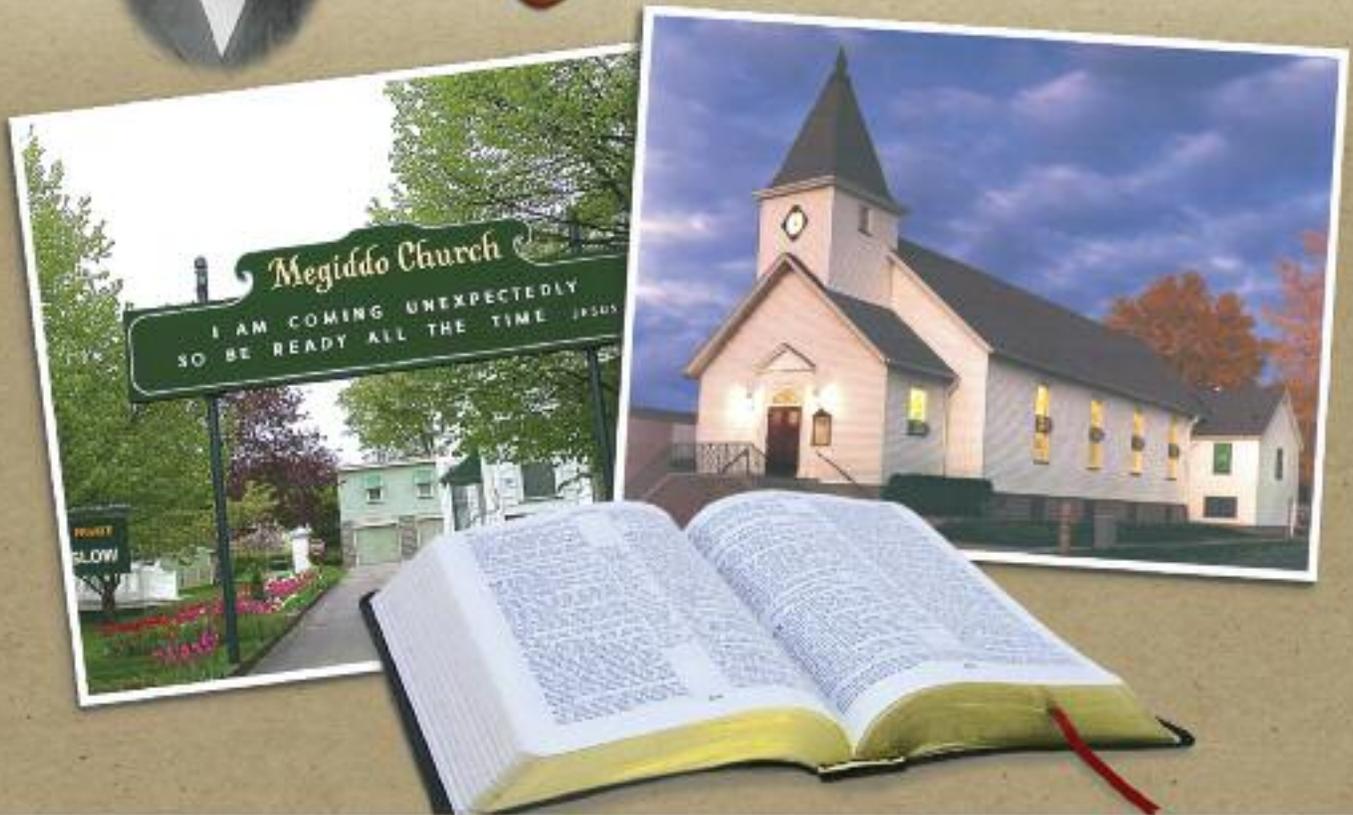
²⁵ Ps. 81:14; Ps. 2:1–4
²⁶ Hab. 2:14
²⁷ Isa. 49:13
²⁸ Ps. 32:11; 35:27
²⁹ Isa. 55:12
³⁰ Isa. 55:11
³¹ Deut. 28:12
³² Isa. 41:19
³³ Isa. 35:1
³⁴ Isa. 35:7
³⁵ Luke 21:28
³⁶ Isa. 66:12

³⁷ Hab. 2:14; Isa. 11:9
³⁸ Jas. 5:7–8
³⁹ Rev. 22:16
⁴⁰ Rev. 22:12,16
⁴¹ 1 Pet. 1:8
⁴² Titus 2:13–14
⁴³ Isa. 25:9
⁴⁴ Rev. 21:3–4
⁴⁵ Isa. 51:11
⁴⁶ Hab. 2:14

HISTORY OF



Megiddo Church



The Megiddo Church Is ...

The Megiddo Church is a small group of people deeply dedicated to a biblical world view and to the Bible as a way of life. We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of our Creator and our only source of knowledge about God and His plan of salvation for the earth.

A philosophy of life...

Because of our view of the plan of God, our first concern is not to achieve success in this world but to develop a character acceptable to God, so as to receive the eternal salvation He has offered in the Bible.

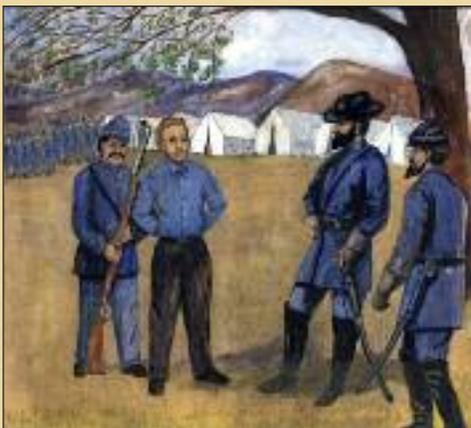
Our name "Megiddo"...

Our name "Megiddo" is taken from the name of a town in ancient Palestine. Its history spans more than 3500 years, being destroyed and rebuilt more than twenty times on the same spot. Located on a main route for travel between Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia, Megiddo has seen more battles than perhaps any other location on earth, and is to be the staging ground for the final battle of Armageddon at the return of Christ (Rev. 16:16).

In our context, Megiddo means literally "a place of troops" where dedicated soldiers of God fight the spiritual enemies of doubt, sin, and evil in themselves, using the "sword of the Spirit which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17).

Key Dates in the life of L. T. Nichols, founder of the Megiddo Church

- 1844:** Born in Elkhart, Indiana
- 1849:** Nichols family relocates to frontier state of Wisconsin, where life was rugged and difficult.
- 1854:** Young L. T. (age 10) attends Christmas party, where Santa Claus' false face falls off, revealing Deacon Graves—starts him questioning fundamentals of religious beliefs.
- 1855:** L. T. is carrying a Bible to school, studies and talks to classmates during recess. Vows that he will never lie or steal, or take the name of God in vain, or use tobacco or alcoholic beverages
- 1861:** Was offered an annual salary of \$1500 if he would fill the pulpit of a local church.
- 1864:** Is married to Harriet Griffis
- 1864:** Is drafted into the army only weeks after marriage; refuses to kill his fellowmen based on convictions of Bible teaching; when his life is threatened for his stand, he appeals to President Lincoln and is allowed to serve in the military hospital.
- 1865–1875:** Studies Bible intensely, seeking correct understanding of it
- 1869:** Debates publicly in Wrightstown, Wisconsin. Subject: The resurrection
- 1868–1874:** Settles in Fon du Lac, Wisconsin, circuit preacher for nearby towns
- 1870:** Debates publicly at Kasson, Minnesota. Subject: The Bible is all one harmonious teaching
- 1874:** Relocates to McMinnville, Oregon, for opportunity to preach; holds annual camp meetings for followers
- 1877:** Debates with Professor Campbell at Salem, Oregon. Subjects: Is man mortal or immortal by nature? Is the resurrection physical? Will there be a literal kingdom on earth? Maud Hembree (his successor-to-be) is converted.
- 1878:** Publicly debates at Salem, Oregon. Subject: Is the sabbath observance binding now?
- 1880:** Discovers cornerstone Bible teaching: that one's salvation depends on knowing and obeying every command of Scripture, as expounded by Jesus.



Major Brown to the rescue



CHAPTER 1 Part 3

A NATION AT WAR

While L. T. and Harriet Nichols were busy planning their new life together, the Civil War was raging. And only two short weeks into their marriage, L. T. received orders to report for military duty.

At that time, the Civil War was at a standoff; troops were badly needed to replace the dead, wounded and those whose time had expired. Without a decisive victory, many had long ago grown weary and were petitioning for peace. Lincoln knew that such an ending would amount to many lives lost and nothing gained. To use his own words, “Suppose you go to war, you cannot fight always; and when, after much loss on both sides, and no gain on either, you cease fighting, the identical old questions, as to terms of intercourse, are again upon you.” President Lincoln was determined to see it through to victory, if at all possible.

At an early age Nichols had the conviction that, according to the Bible, to take another's life without a command from God was wrong. “Do violence to no man” (Luke 3:14) was John the Baptist's advice to the soldiers, men whose lives were dedicated to violence. And Jesus said, “All who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matt. 26:52). He would not have entered the army by choice, but the draft was in force; and when Nichols was drafted in October of 1864, he had no choice but to report for duty.

How would the military receive this young man of faith and vision? If his life was threatened, would his convictions hold?

Were there any alternatives? The law provided that one could be exempted from military service if they paid a fee of \$300, but when Nichols offered to pay the fee, he was refused. When he explained his convictions to the commanding officer, it was to no avail.¹

Nichols explained his position that he would not kill another person even if ordered to do so, but the commanding officers refused to accept it. A hated conscientious objector, he was immediately branded a coward, a traitor, and unfit to live. More than once a certain “Major Brown” came to his rescue and

¹ It seems evident that Mr. Nichols was unaware that on July, 1864 (3-1/2 months prior to his being drafted) the Conscription Act was replaced with a different sort of exemption. The new rule was that if you were drafted, you could only be exempted from service if you could pay someone else to serve in your place (they expected the change in the law to considerably reduce the number of exemptions). This probably explains why the military refused his \$300. Some areas were having difficulty finding enough eligible men to fill their draft quota. Also, hustlers had entered the business of finding substitutes...at a price: \$600, \$1,200 and as high as \$1,500—a clear indication that substitutes were difficult to find.



President Lincoln granted Nichols' request to do civil service instead of killing his fellowman.

stopped someone who was pointing a rifle to his head. But Nichols would not back down. Finally, he was placed before a firing squad. It was Major Brown who rescued him from execution—again.

At this, he appealed to President Lincoln who, after hearing his situation, granted his request, and Nichols was assigned to work in a military hospital. Describing his war experience years later, Nichols said that before the end of the war, he was made “superintendent” of a hospital.*

At the Military Hospital

During the Civil War, there were more deaths from disease than from combat, and measles was a major problem. The disease usually ran its course in three or four weeks, and under normal circumstances, the patient would recover with no lasting ill effects. But in army camps the childhood disease often proved fatal because improper care and poor sanitation led to complications such as pneumonia. The disease was so common and disruptive that new units were held back from active service until they had been “put through the measles.”

While Nichols was not a doctor, it is said that in an epidemic of measles he devised improved methods of treatment for the sick so effective that not a single life was lost among those under his care. We are not told what this change in treatment may have been, but knowing his familiarity with the Bible and the strict sanitation laws given to the Hebrews, it seems likely that his main weapon against disease was better sanitary conditions.²

While Nichols was tending to the soldiers' physical ailments, he did not slacken his zeal for their spiritual needs. Gathering his comrades around him, he

*Some discount his claim that he was superintendent of a hospital. Was it even a possibility?

Consider the following: the War began in April of 1861, Nichols was drafted in October of 1864, and the war ended the following April—approximately 6 months after he was drafted. A draftee's obligation for military service was three years. Evaluating the data that can be substantiated, it seems that the troops drafted during the beginning of the war were leaving for home in droves about that time because their military obligation had expired.

So, when Nichols was drafted there would be a period of time when the new draftees were “put through the measles,” and it was during this time that, according to Nichols' statements, not one life was lost where he was serving.

Something of this magnitude would not go unnoticed. Also, the patients trusted their belongings to Nichols more than to others. No doubt this was observed.

Nichols described his hospital position as superintendent. Though he may not have been given the title officially, the military officers, recognizing his natural leadership ability and level of responsibility, may easily have given him some of their work, especially the administrative duties. It is reported that in the military hospitals at the time, there was a large turnover of doctors, and it is mentioned that “medical officers did not know how to requisition drugs and medical supplies.” (<http://www.civilwarhome.com/medicinehistory.htm>). If Nichols was a mainstay at the hospital, he could easily have known how

to go about requisitioning drugs and medical supplies. With the war over, it is also likely the officers were anxious to get home, or perhaps some just wanted a bit of leisure, and turned responsibility over to one willing to take it.

One must also bear in mind that the hospital of his day was nothing to compare to today's hospital. The science of medicine was woefully, incredibly imperfect, so that the combat soldier got the worst of it in two ways: when he fought because of the precision weapons (some were also rapid fire), he was likely to be hurt pretty badly; when he stayed in camp, he lived under conditions that were very likely to make him sick. In either case he had almost no chance to get the kind of medical treatment which a generation or so later would be routine.

²See <http://www.wtv-zone.com/civilwar/measles.html>

This website gives some insight regarding the improved care methods that Nichols may have provided. It also affirms the deadly impact of measles on the Civil War. Numerous reports confirm that disease claimed more lives than the war itself for several reasons:

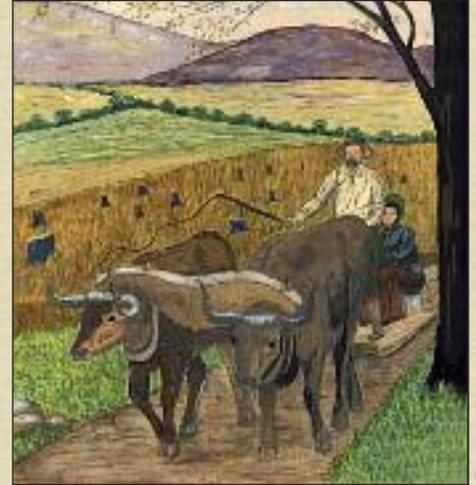
1. Men being drafted from rural areas had little resistance to disease.
2. Inadequate and unsanitary conditions caused complications such as pneumonia.
3. Living in close quarters.
4. Little or no knowledge of how disease was transmitted.



taught them from the Bible, urging them to turn to God and prepare to meet Him. Many challenging meetings were held on the parade field and in barracks 54. Some lively discussions arose when “orthodox” chaplains disapproved of this “strange gospel.”

Sometime after the war ended, Nichols was honorably discharged and returned to the rigors of farming, which he shared with his wife in the frontier state of Wisconsin. But times were very difficult. He was in poverty, and the nation was unsettled, depressed and in the grip of inflation. But, as he said later, “I lived better than those around me because I never wanted things I could not have.”

At the age of 24, we find him on a farm of his own near Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, spending all the time he could spare from his work preaching. He had many interested at this time and made a circuit of several towns, with occasional trips to other districts and distant States. He was not a man to waste precious time. While doing his farm chores, he was studying and writing; and late into the night his studies continued. Sometimes the sun would rise, and he would still be studying.



A stoneboat served as a carriage until the Nichols could afford to buy one.



CHAPTER 2

Part 1

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

At an early age L. T. Nichols was shocked to discover that in many so-called Christian circles, error was knowingly taught for truth. Didn't old Deacon Graves prove that point? And early in Nichols' studies he discovered that there was a broad diversity of beliefs—a thousand plus faiths all professing to be built on the Bible. Why should that be? If there was one God, and the Bible declared that this is true, then there should be only one faith, with all believing and teaching the same. Nichols reasoned that in its original writing either the Bible is all true, or none of it is reliable. It does not matter what you think, or what I think. What our Creator, the author of the Bible, has stated is true, and you and I have no power to change it. We may reject it, or we may read into it what we want it to say, but God's Word does not change. Facts remain facts. Such was the reasoning that young L. T. Nichols followed as he avidly pursued his study of Scripture.

He quickly met opposition and charges against the Bible for which he had no answers. The great teachers of the day, those trained in the theological seminaries, could not meet the challenges of the infidels. The time honored creeds had no defense against the infidels. “If all others failed, what could I do? I trembled at the magnitude of the undertaking,” he wrote in later years.

Through anxious days and weeks of study, to use his own words, “I prayed to God for light upon bended knees and with falling tears.” The example of others who encountered opposition gave Nichols the courage and the resolve to put heart and soul into his studies. Sir Isaac Newton, for example, ascribed his success, not to superior genius but to superior industry. Newton developed the habit of holding his mind steady for long periods of time to an involved and difficult subject. His reason for success? “Earnest devotion to a cause held dear.”

Nichols later wrote of these early years:

“One day while carefully reading, my eye caught a striking testimony in Prov. 2:3–5, *‘Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou*



Before accepting any doctrine or teaching, Mr. Nichols' one criteria was, What does the Bible say?

Let us believe the Bible. If it comes against our ideas, we must throw them away.

Show by your life that you believe what Jesus says.

I would rather have one year in the Kingdom than a thousand here.

If you can't read it in the Bible, don't believe it.

There must be no compromise with error.

I want you to read your Bibles more. You need more meditation, more sweet communion with God.

Don't think, 'What can I do for my own pleasure?' but 'How can I love someone as I have been loved?'

I lift up my heart in thankfulness to God...

—L. T. Nichols

understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.' How the reading of these testimonies impressed my mind! I must search as for hid treasures to ever find the knowledge of God. If that were so, what had covered it up? I sought for the answer, and found it in the sayings of Paul:

"...the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables' (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Man-made fables had obscured true religion, sound doctrine; and Paul told us of it over eighteen hundred years ago, that we might be able to dig beneath the rubbish and find the hidden truth. How mighty seemed the undertaking, to dig deep beneath the rubbish of centuries and find the gold!"

The ability to read and an honest heart were all he needed to uncover the treasures of knowledge. And Paul, in Eph. 3:4 said, "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." Understanding would come through reading. "But what must I read? Would this knowledge come from catechisms, prayer books, commentaries, the writings of the church Fathers, or could I obtain it by reading the decrees of the councils, or the formulated creeds of men?" The 5th verse (Eph. 3) tells to whom this knowledge was revealed. "Which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

Here was the answer: this knowledge of God was revealed to His holy Apostles and Prophets, and by reading, one could understand. Nichols was reminded of the scathing words of Jesus, "Woe unto you, lawyers! For ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered" (Luke 11:52). False teachers of the day had taken away the key of knowledge, and Nichols was determined to find it. As he devoted his full attention to studying the Scriptures in Hebrew and Greek, as well as English, his focus was forward.

The Bible Only

Nichols' point of departure was the Bible. Either the Bible was the work of men, and thus false and unreliable, or it was the veritable, inspired Word of God, and should be understood and followed completely. There was no half-way ground.

He decided upon the latter, and set out to discover its teaching. He did not claim any supernatural power, nor any direct communication from God, nor any divinely given Holy Spirit. All he had was the Bible itself, the lexicons and dictionaries available to him, and his God-given powers of reason, coupled with a solid confidence that God would hear and help every honest, sincere, whole-hearted seeker (Jer. 29:13). When the Bible said, "Come, let us reason together, saith the Lord" (Isa. 1:18), he listened.

He also made a serious effort not to be influenced by "knowledge falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6:20), and neither sought nor accepted affiliation with any school of theology, or any source of human philosophy. The Bible and the Bible only would be his guide.

Even so, the true teaching of God's Word did not come in a dazzling burst of light. It came by the travail of a mind wrestling with problems which seemed overwhelming. It came by sleepless nights and days of study, analysis and research; by the single-minded efforts of one groping and praying for the light, and accepting it as it came.

His one aim was to be totally honest with the Scriptures, to believe only what he could see was the intended meaning of the Author, and not any idea superimposed upon them by teachers wanting to please (2 Tim. 4:3-4). The idea of being completely honest in today's culture may seem strange and unachievable. But honesty is at the heart of Biblical teaching. Without it one cannot hope for salvation. The apostle Paul believed it is possible not to lie (Col. 3:9). And Jesus said those who lie will not be admitted to the Kingdom (Rev. 21:1-8, 27; 22:12, 15). ♦

TO BE CONTINUED

Mr. Gecko:

Amazing Little Lizard—Big Mystery



TIM VICKERS

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 as glass. 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, and without any fear of falling.

I've had the scientists really puzzled for a long time. Only recently have they been able to figure out a few of my unusual abilities.

You see, my Creator designed me with some very singular equipment. One is my feet. Like many lizards in my family, I have four feet. Each foot has five toes, just as you have. But—and here I must again mention my wonderful Creator—my toes are nothing ordinary. They are very hairy. Yes, each toe, I've heard, has some 100 thousand hairs on it. And these aren't plain, simple hairs. Each of these 100 thousand hairs on each of my toes divides into hundreds of projections, and each projection terminates in a structure shaped like a triangular spatula. Your researchers are concluding that this huge collective area of contact creates an adhesive force many times greater than is needed to support my weight each time I put my foot down (or up). Do you see why I am able to hang from the ceiling by a single toe?

I feel like shouting “Marvelous!” The scientists, inspired by their discovery of the large force generated by my toes, are searching for ways to duplicate it using synthetic materials. Interest in the devel-

opment of gecko-type adhesives is booming. They are also trying to learn how they can turn this adhesive force “on” or “off” like I do. Yes, being able to let go is as important as clinging, otherwise—well, I'd still be hanging by my toe up there on the ceiling.

“When a gecko runs, he has to attach and detach himself 15 times a second,” says one researcher. Yes, that is the way my Creator designed me to do it!

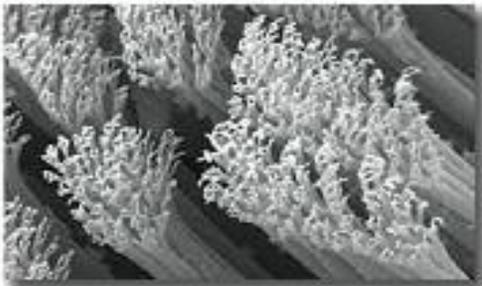
But do you know, I heard a very strange comment. It was something like this: “The gecko has developed an amazing way of walking.” Did you ever hear the equal of that? They make it sound like *I did it!* Or that my ancestors had something to do with my design. Well, you and I know better! This is the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

Yes, ALL of it, and if my abilities baffle the scientists, so be it! If only they would glorify my Creator. Let me say it again, 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 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th Edition, Vol. 5, p. 160. Also nanolab.me.cmu.edu/projects/geckohair/ and nature.com/natural/journal/v405/n6787. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/tschoppm/8190658345/in/potostream/>



Gecko foot hairs. Scanning electron micrograph (SEM) of hairs, or setae (6000X), on the foot of a gecko. These hairs enable the gecko to cling to smooth surfaces by taking advantage of weak intermolecular forces, known as Van der Waals forces.



ON MEASURING TIME

A closer look at the Ancient Hebrew Calendar

PART ONE

What is time? We cannot label it as we would a book, or count it as we would count apples. Yet if human life is to be seen in perspective, in relation to events; if it is to be chronicled for the benefit of present or future generations, time must be counted in a uniform and intelligible manner.

Through the centuries different methods of measuring time have been attempted. Some people today wonder why the dates of sacred calendar festivals (e.g., New Year, Passover, Pentecost) vary so much from year to year when national events such as the Fourth of July always occur on the same calendar date (unless physically moved, as in recent years). The reason is the method of time measurement used by the people who established the date of the festival.

How are points in time determined and marked? The most common method is by observing a recurring natural event and establishing it as a basic time measurement unit, then subdividing that unit in an orderly manner into smaller periods of time; in other words, a calendar. The basis of most calendars in use today is the solar year, the time required for the earth to complete one circuit of the sun.

The solar year has been the most commonly used primary basis for time counting among all civilizations and governments. Many of the ancient people—including the Hebrews—counted time in smaller units also. The Hebrews were instructed to use as their basis the length of time that the moon required to complete its cycle from new through full and back to new. They also recognized the New Year (solar) as a proper division of time. As an agricultural people, the seasons by which they planted their crops were determined by the solar year.

Today we are so accustomed to our calendar that we tend to think it has always existed and that all people everywhere follow it. But our calendar, too, developed; and in developing, it underwent many changes. Some of these changes

were to correct inaccuracies in methods of measuring time. Many were the direct result of advances in the science of astronomy. Other changes were the ideas of certain individuals or governments who wished to adopt their own means and measures.

Over the years, many calendar systems have been devised by various civilizations and governments to record specific points in time. In this study we will concern ourselves primarily with the Hebrew calendar, which was directed by God and practiced in some form through more than fifteen centuries of Israelite history. We will also see our modern calendar in relation to the Hebrew.

We are especially interested in the beginning of the sacred New Year in ancient Israel; how the dates of religious festivals were determined; and what God wants us to do in remembering these sacred occasions.

UNITS OF TIME

Let us think about the units by which we measure time. Some are units of measurement built into the created order; others are arbitrary.

Our basic unit of time is the year. A year is not an arbitrary unit. It is established by the time that is required for the earth to complete one circuit around the sun. Almost all calendars, ancient and modern, have established the year as a basic unit of time measurement.

A second unit of time measurement is the month. Our months today are arbitrary. We begin our months by the date on our calendar, not by any built-in natural occurrence such as the new moon. The ancient Hebrews determined the beginning of their months, especially the first month of the year, by the new moon.

What about the unit of time we call a day? Our day begins at midnight. The Hebrews started their day at sundown. They

counted time “from evening to evening” (Lev. 23:32). Later on, to be more precise, they started it at 6 o’clock.

ABIB, THE SACRED NEW YEAR

How did the ancient people determine the beginning of a new year? Before the days of astronomy, they did it by observing recurring events in nature (i.e., the trees budding, barley maturing). The Egyptians started their year at the time the Nile flooded each spring.

God gave Moses specific instructions for the Israelites as to when they should begin their year. The first month on that calendar was the month Abib, which according to God’s direction was to be the beginning of the new year, as we read in Exodus 12:2 and 13:4. *“This month shall be your beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.”* Abib was to be observed as the *“first month of the year.”*

Abib, the time God appointed for the beginning of the sacred new year, was known in Palestine as the “spring or sprouting month,” “month of green ears,” month of flowers, month of ripening barley, according to the climate of Egypt and Palestine in this month. It began with the new moon of April or March.

The Abib season was not to be taken lightly or overlooked by any loyal Israelites. Among the Hebrew festivities it was doubtless the most significant, and its remembrance was directly commanded. As we read in Deuteronomy 16:1, *“Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the Lord your God: for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night.”*

A passage recorded in Psalm 81 very possibly had reference to this same primary feast day: *“Blow up the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, at the full moon, on our solemn feast day. For this is a statute for Israel, a law of the God of Jacob”* (vs. 3–4).

The observance of Abib was in exactly this category. It was not something that they could do or that they could refrain from doing at their caprice, for it was *“a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob.”*

Abib marked the beginning of the year; it was important also for another reason: the annual anniversary of Passover fell in the month Abib (Abib 14), *“for in the month of Abib, the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night”* (Deut. 16:1). In Exodus 12, the Lord is instructing Moses in the observance of the Passover on the 14th of the first month. In the 23rd chapter of Exodus, 15th verse, the command is repeated: *“You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread:...at the time appointed in the month of Abib.”*

DETERMINED BY THE MOON

We are particularly interested in how the Hebrews originally determined the time for beginning this sacred new year and how they counted the days and the months following.

Several passages in the Bible suggest that the beginning of the months of the Hebrew year were recognized. We read in Numbers 10:10: *“Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sac-*

rifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I am the Lord your God.”

The occurrence of the new moon was a major factor in determining the beginnings of these months, particularly the first month of the year.

How did they know when the moon was new? Originally the Hebrews determined it by stationing observers on the hills to watch for the new moon. In the “Biblical Critical Interpretation of the Bible,” in a discussion of the history of the Jewish calendar, we find the following:

“The month was dated from the time when the earliest visible appearance of the new moon was announced to the Sanhedrin. That is, if this happened on the 30th day of the current month that month was considered to have ended on the preceding 29th day and was called deficient. But if no announcement was made on the 30th day, that day was reckoned to the current month which was in this case called full and the ensuing day was at once considered to be the first of the next month.”

We know of no Biblical evidence that the beginning of each month of the year was adjusted to coincide with the occurrence of the new moon. However, as we shall see later, the Bible does indicate that the first day of the year was also the first day of the month, as well as the first day of the week.

How did the ancient people determine when the moon was new? During a large part of their history—which includes Bible history—watchers and observers set the time. Among the Jews, the watchers would announce to the Sanhedrin, who would in turn announce the beginning of the year. In modern times this is done by calculation. Astronomers can tell within a fraction of a second when the sun crosses the line and when the moon is new.

THE USE OF “MONTHS”

The Hebrew marking of Abib as the first month of the year at the time of the Exodus was not the beginning of counting time by months, for notice the reading of Exodus 12:2, *“This month shall be your beginning of months”*—they already had months, of which Abib was to be known as the *“beginning.”*

In Noah’s time, when the flood was receding, people were measuring time in months, and this was approximately 2400 years before Christ.

Genesis 7:11 records the beginning of the flood: *“In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.”* Genesis 8:4 records that *“in the seventh month, the seventeenth day, the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat,”* and verse 3 says that it was at the end of a *“hundred and fifty days.”* This defines a period of five months, showing that the length of a month was 30 days.

In the time of King David, about 1060 B.C., the plan for maintaining the military used months as a measurement of time (see 1 Chron. 27:1–2). There were 12 captains, one for each month of the year, a fact which shows that they were counting 12 months to the year. ♦

TO BE CONTINUED



Are You Prejudiced?

But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” -1 Sam. 16:7 NIV

Tim shuffled slowly toward home, his thoughts and feelings a jumble. Now he knew why he couldn't make friends in the new school. They thought him retarded.

Mother greeted Chris cheerily as he entered the kitchen. “How was school today, son?”

“I wish I could run away and never show my face in school again,” answered Chris emphatically.

“Why, Chris! Whatever happened?” Mother responded in surprise.

“They think I'm retarded,” Chris blurted out.

“Retarded? You're sure they're not teasing?”

“Absolutely sure. I heard it with my own ears.” Chris went on to explain. “You know the history test I studied so hard for? Well, I got 100 on it. Mr. Dexter complimented me for my good grade and then read my report to the class. At first I was happy, but then I felt something was wrong—the whole class seemed to be staring at me. I heard Tracy whisper to somebody, ‘Isn't Chris supposed to be retarded?’ I felt like dropping through the floor!”



There was silence for a moment. Mother spoke first.

“Thank God, Chris, you have an excellent mind, but I know how you must feel.”

“Why did I have to inherit your eye problem?” Chris said bitterly.

“I'm sorry, Chris, that you did. I, too, was teased about my thick glasses and at first it really hurt. But I had to have glasses to be able to see, so I made up my mind to concentrate on being thankful for them instead of being hurt. You know, what people think isn't nearly as important as what God thinks. He doesn't care how we look on the outside—He's looking for a good and honest heart. Chris, anywhere you live you will meet people with prejudices.”

“Is that kind of a disease?” asked Chris.

“Well not exactly,” chuckled Mother. “Prejudices are opinions people form before they learn the facts. Often it is a dislike of people who are different in some way,” Mother explained. “God doesn't want us to be prejudiced, because it isn't being kind and He says, ‘Be kind to one another.’ Can you tell me about some in your class?”

“They're mostly just ordinary,” answered Chris. “There's one boy, though, his name is Zak, he's different. I think he's from—from—Turkey?”

“There is a country called Turkey,” Mother volunteered.

“Nobody likes him much. He doesn't eat with the rest of us in the cafeteria, and he doesn't dress like the others. And his mother picks him up right after school every day so he doesn't have to ride the bus. He's a snob!”

“Chris!” exclaimed Mother. “You shouldn't say that.”

“Well, it's true, Mother. He is,” Chris insisted.

“Chris, you don't know the reason why Zak is different. You are being prejudiced against him just like you said the others were against you.”

“But, Mother—” insisted Chris.

“Does he speak English?” asked Mother.

“I think, a little.” Chris answered. “He doesn't say much.”

“Maybe he is just shy. Why don't you try to make friends with him,” suggested Mother. “He may need a friend as much as you do. He could turn out to be a wonderful friend. You know, Son, prejudices do a lot of harm. There are many kinds of prejudices,” Mother continued, “and all prejudices are wrong in the Lord's sight. Aren't you glad God doesn't care *where* we come from, or *how* we look, or *how much money* we have? He looks at the motives of our heart. We can't read the heart, so we want to be very careful how we judge, don't we?” ♦

Christians must learn to be kind to everyone. We don't always know the situation or difficulty another person is experiencing. “Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another” (Ephesians 4:32).

Watch how you judge. Always be kind.

Always Encourage

(A Mother's Experience)



My young son Bryan had been trying to reach his cap in the front closet. He wasn't quite tall enough. So, typically boy, he decided a nice big jump with the help of the clothes bar and he could get it down. Well, the jump pulled it down all right, but the cap wasn't the only thing that came down. The entire bar, with its array of coats, jackets, and sweaters, collapsed in a heap on the closet floor.

"Mom, help!" came the cry of distress.

I hurried to the rescue. "You should have known better than that," was my first response. It was the end of a long, busy day, but my tongue wasn't too tired for a scolding.

But suddenly I stopped myself. A picture came to my mind. I saw a little boy, arms full of tools, going outdoors that afternoon, hoeing the garden, mowing the lawn with all the strength a seven-year-old can muster, and taking up the sticks that collect so quickly under the big old maple tree in our back yard. And all without even being told!

Had I been as anxious to praise and thank him for all the work he had done that day as I was now to scold him for his childish mistake? After all, that bar had been bending under the weight of the coats and jackets for some time now; we needed a stronger one anyway.

I turned to him kindly. "From now on, Son, when you can't reach something, I think you will use the stepstool. But Bryan, I haven't thanked you yet for all the very nice things you did to help us this afternoon—making the backyard so clean and tidy. It's a real help, I should have thanked you before."

When Daddy came home

from work I made sure he heard about all the jobs his Bryan had done, instead of confronting him immediately with the one mistake.

Why is it so much easier to criticize than to appreci-



Mother's willing helper

ate and thank and encourage? The children are sure to hear about it when they do something naughty, or aggravating, or even when they make a simple mistake. Shouldn't we be just as anxious to let them know when they are helpful and good and their effort is appreciated? The good won't take care of itself; it must be cultivated.

Of course we want to develop as much good Christian character in our children as we possibly can. To do this, we need to correct them by word and by discipline. But there is a difference between training in good habits and just plain criticizing.

The Bible gives some very good advice to parents:

"Fathers, don't scold your children so much that they become discouraged and quit trying" (Col. 3:21 TLB).

"And now a word to you parents. Don't keep on scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful" (Eph. 6:4. TLB).

"Don't overcorrect your children or make it difficult for them to obey the commandments" (Eph. 6:4, Phillips). And the New English Bible says, *"You fathers, again, must not goad your children to resentment, but give them the instruction, and the correction, which belong to a Christian upbringing."*

Encouragement and tolerance have definite places in the Christian home. Cultivating these traits will rid our homes of unnecessary strife.

I try to ask myself these questions: Am I expecting too much of my children? Am I allowing myself more leniency than I allow them? Would I want others, or God, to deal with me in the same manner that I deal with my children?

Yes, God demands obedience, and He promises to punish for wrong-doing; but He is a very merciful Father, not giving up on us though we may make the same mistake again and again.

Discipline and encouragement must go hand in hand. I, for one, am going to try harder to give them out in equal parts. ♦



Do Saints Become Angels?

□ DO THE SAINTS GO TO HEAVEN AT DEATH AND BECOME ANGELS?

“I have read your booklets on Bible topics, and found them quite interesting, containing a lot of truth but also containing much about which I am unsure as yet. There is one point about which I am quite confused, and that is your belief as to the state of the faithful dead and their ultimate reward.

“In your booklets you indicate that you believe that the dead are unconscious and that the unfaithful simply will not be resurrected. You also indicate you believe in a physical resurrection of the faithful to take place at Christ’s return, where they will live eternally on earth as their reward.

“But I also read that you believe the saints who died go to heaven and become angels. Could you please clarify this point for me?”

To answer your question, we first need to understand God’s view of the human family as revealed in the Bible. God looks upon His human creation as divided into two classes: 1) those who live and die without knowing God or His plan; and 2) those who become acquainted with Him and His plan, and agree to be subject to it.

The first group, those who have no knowledge of God, spend their lives as they choose, without any obligation to God. When their life ends, they have nothing future. God does not promise them anything eternal. Jesus described this class in Matt. 5:45, *“...for he makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.”* At death, this very large class go to the grave, to a sleep from which they do not awaken. Their state is described by the Psalmist (Ps. 49:12, 14): *“Nevertheless man, though in honor, does not remain; he is like the beasts that perish. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall be consumed in the grave far from their dwelling.”* We read also of them in Jeremiah 51:57, that *“They shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, says the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts.”*

The second group might be assigned the general title of “covenant makers” because they learn of God and agree to serve Him. Those in this group are further divided into two subclasses, faithful and unfaithful, based on their loyalty to their covenant. However, this subdivision will not be visible until these individuals are judged and rewarded at Christ’s return (see John 5:28, 29; Eccl. 12:13–14; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Because they must be judged, all in this group who are sleeping in death at the time Christ returns must be resurrected. As Jesus said, *“You shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just”* (Luke 14:14). This resurrection is described by the prophet Daniel, *“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those that are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars for ever and ever”* (Dan. 12:2–3). At the judgment, the faithful among the covenant makers will be rewarded with eternal life in Christ’s Kingdom on earth (Matt. 5:5; 6:10; Rev. 5:9–10); and the unfaithful will die a penal or “second” death (Rev. 21:8; Rom. 6:23).

To summarize:

The Bible projects two classes, one who live and die without knowing God or His law or agreeing to serve Him; and a second class who agree to live by the law of God, and who will be resurrected, judged and rewarded for their compliance with that law. The apostle Paul pictured both groups in Rom. 2:12, *“For as many as have sinned without law [those outside the plan of God, who make no effort to serve Him] will also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law [those under covenant to serve God, both faithful and unfaithful] will be judged by the law.”*

Heaven for the Saints?

The Bible does not make any promise that the saints go to heaven at death. This is a pagan concept which crept into church doctrine in the early centuries after Christ, but it is not Biblical. It may be comforting to those who do not know otherwise, but of what benefit is any belief if it is not true?

But the Bible does promise that the loyal servants of God will become angels. These are the words of Jesus: *“But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection”* (Luke 20:35–36). The faithful servants of God are to be “equal to the angels”—they will be angels!

Supporting the thought that mortals will be changed physically to the angel state are Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 15, that *“flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God”* (1 Cor. 15:50). *“Flesh and blood”* describes our present mortal state, but Paul says further in 1 Corinthians 15 that *“this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality,”* and that then *“shall be brought to pass*

the saying that is written, *Death is swallowed up in victory*" (1 Cor. 15:52–54). When "this corruptible" puts on "incorruptibility" and "this mortal" puts on "immortality," the result will be life as experienced by the angels of God. And these changed individuals will be living right here on the earth. This was the promise of Jesus in His prayer, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

Paul also spoke of the change from the mortal state to the immortal when he wrote about the coming of Jesus Christ, who "will transform our lowly [corruptible, mortal] body, that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Phil. 3:20–21)—again he is describing the life enjoyed by the angels.

Those being changed to be like the angels may have slept in death for many years between the end of their natural life and the time of Christ's return. When Christ returns, they will be resurrected and if judged faithful will receive the change to the state of the angels, and live forever—not as residents of heaven but of the earth. Jesus said plainly, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). It is written in Revelation that they shall "reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9–10). Six times in the 37th Psalm it is stated that the righteous shall inherit the earth (or land) and dwell there for ever (37:9, 11, 22, 29, 34).

Being made like the angels does not in any way presuppose that these individuals go to heaven, or that they are living in heaven. Jesus prayed, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Heaven will come to earth. Whatever state now exists in heaven will one day exist right here on earth.

□ WHAT "SPIRIT" RETURNS TO GOD?

"Doesn't Ecclesiastes 12:7 promise us heaven when our bodies die? The spirit that God originally breathed into Adam is our immortal soul, and when we die, it returns to God the Judge of all, who passes sentence on them and orders those who are good to mansions of bliss, and those that are bad to hell and destruction."

You allude to Genesis 2:7, where we read that God breathed into Adam "the breath of life," and Adam became "a living soul." Notice it does not say that Adam possessed a living soul but that Adam himself became a living being, which is what "soul" [Hebrew, *nephesh*] means. The soul was not an entity separate from the body but *the whole living being*.

Does Ecclesiastes 12:7 support the idea that we have an immortal soul that goes to God when we die? If you or anyone could read this passage without any prior belief in the immortality of the soul, you would not find it in the passage. But if you read this verse thinking that something about us goes to heaven at death, this verse will doubtless confirm you in your belief.

The same thought is found in Psalm 104:29–30: "You take

away their breath, they die and return to their dust. You send forth Your spirit [breath], they are created."

When we die, God takes away our breath; in other words, our breath goes back into the reservoir that surrounds the earth. While we live, God gives the breath. "All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils" (Job 27:3)—this passage states the same fact twice. "My breath is in me" is just another way of saying "the spirit of God is in my nostrils." Breath is vital to life according to God's design, and He provides it.

Notice that Ecclesiastes 12:7 does not say anything about the quality or type of "spirit" that returns to God, whether it is "good" or "bad" or somewhere in between. If this verse guarantees that "good" people go to heaven at death, it says also that the wicked go there because they also have "breathing" souls—which is not a common belief even among those who expect to go to heaven at death.

But God has no such plan, and the text says no such thing. It simply says that when a man stops breathing, his breath goes into the vast reservoir of atmosphere surrounding the earth, which is the property of God. We do not have any permanent claim upon our breath.

James 2:26 uses the same term "spirit" in the same way: "For as the body without the spirit [margin "breath"] is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

It is always important to consider the context of a passage. The context of Ecc. 12:7 confirms that the author was not anticipating going to some delightful place called heaven. In this chapter Solomon is analyzing his pursuit of everything "good" this world could offer. And what is his conclusion? Does he see it all building up to a happy reunion in heaven? Far from it. Read verse 5, "That man goes to his eternal home and the mourners go about the streets." Then verse 7 follows: "Then the dust will return to earth as it was and the spirit will return to God who gave it" (Ecc. 12:7). What was his conclusion? "Vanity of vanities," says the preacher, "all is vanity" (Ecc. 12:8). Why? Because he knew he was accountable for his wrong choices, and that God would "bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Ecc. 12:14).

This was the inglorious end of Solomon's quest for pleasure and profit, and he was disillusioned with everything. If he believed heaven was everyone's happy ending, he should have rejoiced, saying that we go to heaven anyway so there is no cause for concern here.

No, Solomon was not expecting to go to heaven. He knew that all ended in the silence of the grave (see Ecc. 3:19–20). He knew he had nothing good in the future, or he would not have called himself "an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more" (Ecc. 4:13). Unlike Job and others of God's faithful servants, he could not look forward to meeting His Redeemer on Resurrection Day with joy (Job 19:25–27), nor could he share the Psalmist's happy expectation: "As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness" (Ps. 17:15).

□ WHAT ABOUT “CLEAN” JOKES?

“This morning I heard a minister on a radio program speaking on religious themes. He was joking along with his crew, not at God or Christ, but I felt their understanding was completely wrong. Would you please comment.”

The majority of people who call themselves Christians feel there is nothing wrong in what they call “good” or “clean” jokes. After all, doesn’t the Bible tell us to “*Rejoice in the Lord always*”? (Phil. 4:4). What kind of representation for the Christian faith is a gloomy, sour face?

Truly a long faced “Christian” is a contradiction of terms. True believers have every reason to be the happiest people in the world. One of the fruits of the Christ-like life is joy (Gal. 5:22–23). Aren’t we to upbuild one another “*with songs, and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in [our] hearts to the Lord*”? (Col. 3:16). The Psalms are filled with praise and joy. When the Israelites had rebuilt the wall after the captivity the people “*offered great sacrifices and rejoiced... with great joy*” (Neh. 12:43).

But joking is not rejoicing in the Lord. Joking is directed to man, not to God. The dictionary gives three definitions for joking. The first is “a humorous anecdote or remark intended to provoke laughter.” The second is “a ludicrous or grotesque act done for fun or amusement.” The final definition is “a triviality not to be taken seriously.” What do these definitions tell us? Mainly that the purpose of a joke is to amuse, entertain, and make laughter or lightness. This is what Jesus called foolishness in His list of thirteen evils (Mark 7:21–23). Ministers often use this technique to “engage” (and entertain) their congregations, so that their message will not appear dry and boring to people accustomed to lightness and jokes.

Proverbs 24:9 says, “*The thought of foolishness is sin.*” The Bible also calls foolishness “*the crackling of thorns under the pot*” (Ecc. 7:6). Burning thorns would provide quick flames, little heat, and a lot of noise, just like sudden outbursts of laughter. In other words there would be noise, but very little substance.

Joking is not thanking or praising God for His goodness. It does not have a spirit of reverence or humility, which are vital Christian virtues (1 Peter 4:11; Prov. 22: 4). It is not magnifying or exalting God, or showing respect to Him or His creatures. Joking may also be intentionally demeaning, instead of obeying the command of the apostle Peter to “*Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king*” (1 Peter 2:17). Sometimes a joke is used to conceal a hurtful statement when the speaker wants to make a point to someone but lacks the courage to tell that individual to his face. Here is a double wrong, both in making the joke, and in failing to follow the plan stated by Jesus, which is to

go to that one directly and address the issue (Matt. 18:15).

Besides all the Biblical warnings against foolishness, the apostle Paul wrote very directly to the Ephesian Church, and one kind of language they were to avoid was foolishness and jesting. “*But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks*” (Eph. 5:3–4). “*Coarse jesting*” comes from the Greek word *ētrapēlia*. It is defined, in a bad sense, as “scurrility, ribaldry, low jesting (in which there is some acuteness).” Ribaldry is “vulgar, lewdly humorous language or joking or an instance of it” (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

What is wrong with such talk? The apostle Paul says filthy talk, foolish talk, jesting, and joking are “*not fitting*”; they are inappropriate, out of place for serious Christians. What should we rather be doing? “*Giving thanks.*” In Paul’s mind it was not possible to be jesting, joking, and talking foolishly—and at the same time giving thanks.

If someone is offended by a joke, the common comment is often, “I didn’t mean it,” to which one could reply, “Then why did you say it?” If it was not meant, to express it was

really to lie, which is another violation of a clear mandate of Scripture: “*Do not lie to one another*” (Col. 3:9). And if the speaker did mean what the joke conveyed, he is lying when he takes it back and says “I didn’t mean it.” No wonder Jesus said, “*Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is ... evil...*” (Matt. 5:33–37). In other words, we should say what we mean, and mean what we say.

What is wrong with joking from a Biblical point of view?

- The joker is usually self-serving. He or she is saying something witty or facetious to be either recognized, liked, approved, or to draw attention to self by provoking laughter in others. Jesus said we should not be seeking honor from one another (John 5:44).

- Joking is usually foolish, meaningless, or senseless talk intended to amuse or entertain, or in a negative sense to aggravate or devalue another. The Bible tells us that our words must be all “*edifying*,” which means upbuilding, instructive, with good purpose. The apostle Paul again tells us what not to say: “*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers*” (Eph. 4:29). “*Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification*” (Rom 15:2).

- Joking kills a spirit of reverence, and reverence for the Eternal is the first step toward seeking God and the eternal life He has offered us. “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever*” (Ps. 111:10).

How can one joke and give sincere thanks to God at the

*Removing
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true joy.*

same time? It is impossible. Paul says we should be *"Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Eph. 5:20).

Paul tells us also to *"Pray without ceasing"* (1 Thess. 5:17). How can one be joking, light and frivolous, and at the same time praying?

What About Laughter?

Does this mean that it is wrong to laugh? No.

Laughter has a cheerful and healthy place in a Christian's life. But healthy laughter is not silliness, or in response to a joke. Proverbs says *"A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance"* (Prov. 15:13). Again, *"He who has a merry heart has a continual feast"* (Prov. 15:15). Again, *"A merry heart does good, like medicine"* (Prov. 17:22).

What makes such a *"merry heart"*? Not lightness, silliness, or joking; and not a remark intended to reveal, embarrass, or demean another. The Greek lexicon defines *"merry"* as being *"filled with joy, glad, rejoicing, delighting, pertaining to a feeling or attitude of joy, happiness or contentment"* (DBL). Another statement in Proverbs 15 is pertinent: *"the heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge but the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness"* (Prov. 15:14).

The apostles Paul and Peter, and Jesus Christ were happy, filled with joy. How many times Paul, writing to his brothers and sisters in the faith, spoke of his inner joy and happiness. To the Philippians: *"I am glad and rejoice with you all"* (Phil. 2:17). To the Thessalonians: *"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?"* (1 Thess. 2:19). To the Corinthians: *"I am exceeding joyful"* even in sufferings (2 Cor. 7:4). They were filled with joy. But can we picture Paul, or Peter, or Jesus Christ telling jokes? Never! The difference was in the source of their joy. They were not taking pleasure in saying something witty that was a play on words. Their joy was in the Lord, and the wonderful hope they shared with their brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Laughter may be a spontaneous reaction when something innocent—and unexpected—happens. This also is very different from someone making an intentionally witty or silly remark for the purpose of drawing laughter, or to focus attention on themselves.

Jesus himself used colorful, dramatic language which might draw laughter, but He had a purpose in it. For example, to make a lesson on the human tendency to see the wrong in our brother much more clearly than in ourselves, He said, *"Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye and do not consider the plank in your own eye?"* (Matt. 7:3). He was using an exaggerated statement (a hyperbole) to make His lesson. The picture is comical but it is not a joke, and it is not foolish; it is a vivid picture that is serious and instructive (edifying).

True believers have a source of joy that far surpasses anything this world can offer. The Hebrew scholars who translated the Old Testament into Greek (the Septuagint) in the second century B.C. recognized this and made a *"new"* word to communicate it—because it was something unknown in the ancient Greek world. The New Testament writers continued to use it to describe the supreme joy of those anticipating life in God's coming new world. The word is *agalliao*, and describes a super-abounding joy of heart, for which our language also lacks an equivalent.

Removing joking from our vocabulary does not remove any true joy. In fact, as the apostle Peter says, we can rejoice even now *"with joy that is inexpressible [agalliao] and filled with glory"* in prospect of the great reward Christ will bring each faithful one when He returns (1 Pet 1:5-8). The source of our joy is our hope of eternal, future life, even *"glory, honor and immortality"* (Rom. 2:7). Isaiah the prophet describes the people of God coming to Zion *"with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads"* (Isa. 35:10)—nothing in this world can even begin to compare! ♦

Hazard! Tick Sins

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

hurt anything? Just a little cocaine in my body won't make any difference? Just a little Lyme disease bacteria (*Borrelia burgdoferi*) won't hurt me? No need to worry about a little tick bite that I don't even feel...? This is NOT the way we think when our physical health and welfare is at stake! How much more our spiritual health and welfare!

Look at David. He only wanted to know how much the nation had grown under his leadership. But it was a sin with serious consequences (2 Samuel 24).

Look at Uzzah. He only wanted to make sure the ark was safe—so he put his hand on it. Such a small infraction, but it was not small to God. Uzzah died for it (2 Sam. 6:3-8).

We may not have committed what we call a great sin,

but just read the New Testament rosters of sins deserving death, and notice that the little sins—the tick-sins—are listed right along with the cobra sins! Listen as Paul lists these *"acts of the sinful nature"* (Gal. 5:19-21 NIV). He starts out with *"sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft,"* then continues with the rest: *"hatred, discord, jealousy,... selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy."* These last sins don't seem so bad, but any or all such, says Paul, will bar us from entering the Kingdom of God. They are all deadly in God's eyes: *"The man who keeps the whole Law but for a single exception is none the less a Law-breaker"* (Jas. 2:10 Phillips), because any sin will keep us from life!

Yes, small sins, like the tiny tick, can make big trouble. Keep watch for those deadly *"tick sins,"* and get rid of them before they have a chance to dig in.

One day, it will be too late, too late! ♦

We make our decisions and then
our decisions make us.



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A man who is willing to follow Jesus
may not always do what is popular
or convenient, but he will do
what is right and good.
Then he will have no regrets if others
choose to follow his example.

If anything is more precious to you
than God, spell it I-D-O-L.

A wise man learns by the experience
of others.

*An ordinary man learns by his
own experience.*

A fool learns by nobody's experience.

Begin where you are but
don't stay there.

Heavenly Father,

*I want my words today to be honest,
my heart pure,
and my actions fit for You to see.*

Help me not to do anything today that I would wish
to keep from You,
or that I would be ashamed to have others know about.

Lord, keep me humble.

*Help me to think not of how much I know
but of how much I need to learn;
not of what I have done, but of what I have yet to do;
not of what I am but of what I can become.*

Whatever happens today, help me keep cheerful,
a beam of sunlight to those near me.

I am resolved:

*never to grumble when things go wrong;
never to be discouraged when things are hard,
or annoyed when I cannot have my way.*

Help me today, O God,
to keep my temper and control my tongue.

Come hail, or rain, or shine, I would look up in faith
knowing You are watching,
and that if I stay with You I cannot be lost.

Amen.

RECIPE FOR GOSSIP

It works every time.

- Take a harmless event.
- Add an ugly motive or hurt feelings—either works well.
- Stir in your own opinion.
- Add a suspicious tone.
- Put in a generous measure of “they say.”
Any variety will work.
- Gather fresh imaginary details to heighten the taste.
These juicy details are plentiful after storms.
- Sprinkle well with spice of rumor.
Its source doesn’t matter.
- Heat slowly over the flame of envy—stirring frequently.
- Serve secretly and as often as possible to any takers.

—Selected



*The ONE who seeks our highest good,
He knows when things annoy,
We would not long for Zion
If earth held only joy.*



GO FORTH

*Go forth you servants of the King,
Proclaim His Kingdom soon to come;
The waiting time will soon be past,
He will appear, God’s Royal Son!*

*His second coming has been told
To even those that scoff and sneer;
But though they mock and live in scorn,
The coming of the King is near!*

*When He shall come the second time,
He’ll come as KING and not as LAMB.
Yet most men will resist His ways;
They’ll say, “We will not have this man!”*

*But evil, it will not succeed
When Jesus Christ returns as KING.
He’ll come to teach the upright way
And blessed peace to earth He’ll bring.*

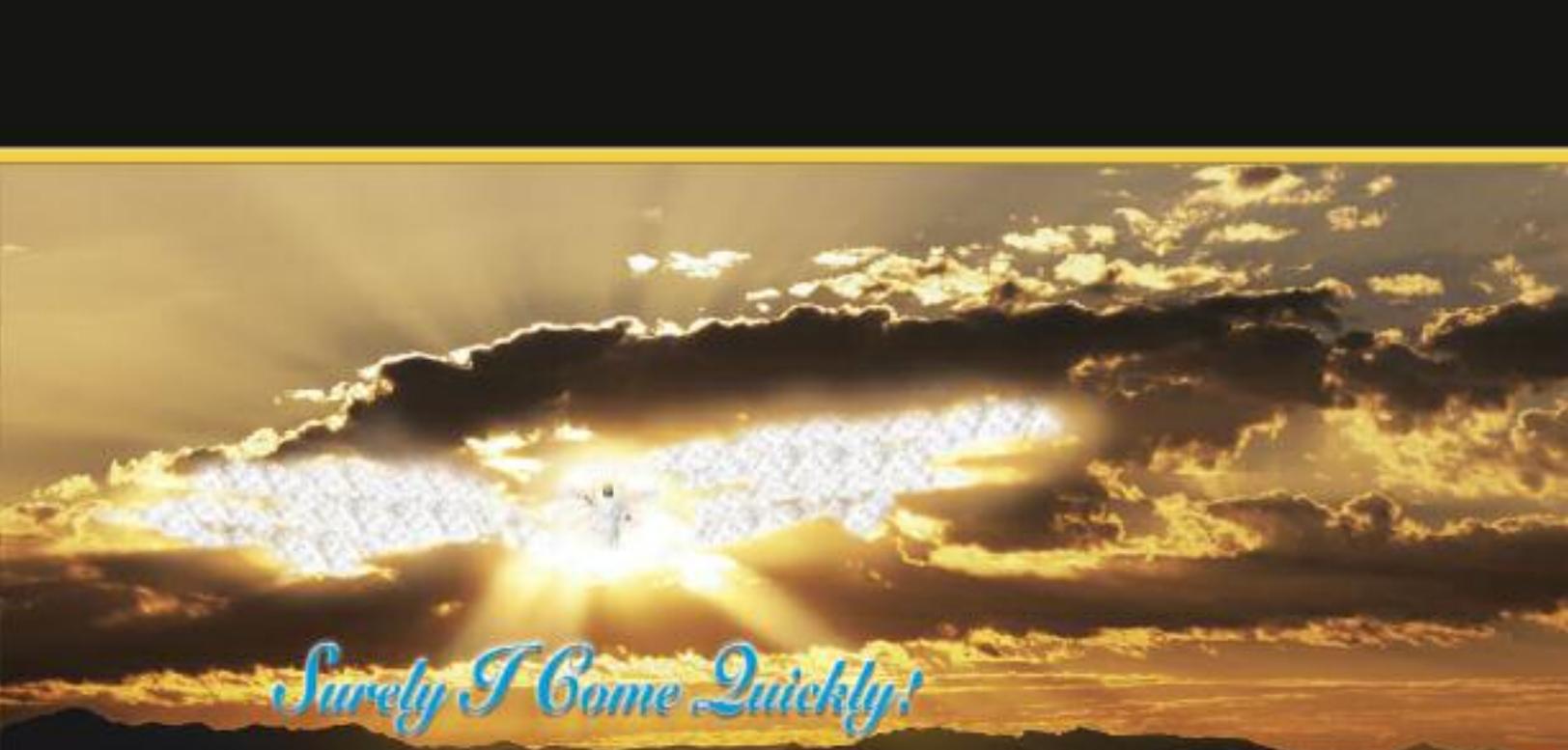
*And none against Him will prevail,
No sinful men His cause will own
When He, the Prince of Peace, comes back,
To take the Kingdom and the throne.*

—Selected.

*If you don’t climb the mountain,
you can’t see the view.*

Conversation is an exercise
of the mind, but gossiping is merely
an exercise of the tongue.

*He who provides for this
life but takes no care for eternity
is wise for a moment but
a fool forever.*



Surely I Come Quickly!

*I*n the crimson blush of morning,
In the glitter of the noon,
In the Midnight's gloomy darkness,
Or the gleaming of the moon;
In the stillness of the twilight,
As it shimmers in the sky,
We are watching, we are waiting
For the end now drawing nigh.

*W*e shall see our Lord in splendor,
And amid a countless throng,
On the clouds to earth descending
With a movement swift and strong;
And the angels round about Him,
In their dazzling white array,
While before Him sounds the summons,
For the final Judgment Day,

*H*e will welcome all His people;
He will diadem His own;
He will show to them His glory,
And will share with them His throne;
And for ever in His presence,
They shall see Him face to face,
While they magnify His wisdom,
And extol His matchless grace.

*H*e is coming, surely coming,
For His promise cannot fail;
Those who doubted will behold Him,
Those who scoffed Him, they will quail!
He is coming, quickly coming!
Yes! His coming we shall greet.
We have waited for His advent
And have listened for His feet.

*Behold, I am
coming quickly!
and My reward is
with Me, to give
to every one
according to
his work.*

—Rev. 22:12