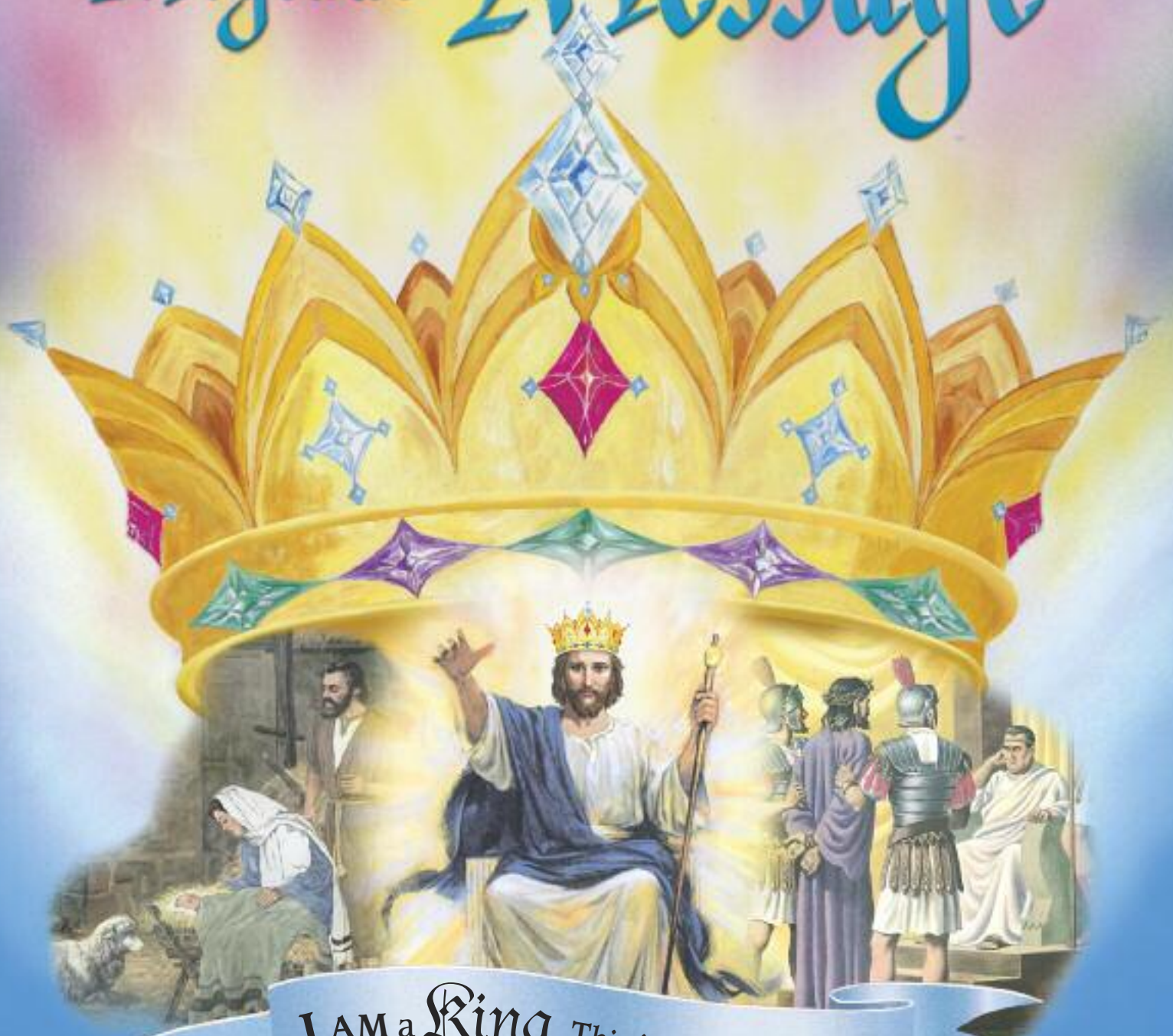


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Megiddo Message



I AM a King. This is why I was born...

John 18:37 NCV

Admit It—Correct It!

Mistakes are part of life. "To err is human." You've heard the saying that the only person who never makes a mistake is in the cemetery.

Still, we don't like to err, especially when the erring is "wrong" from God's viewpoint. And when we do, we don't like to admit it, even to ourselves. Why tell the whole world? Isn't that being negative? No. Not if I want to improve—and not if I want a place in Christ's coming Kingdom!

The culture today doesn't require an admission. I can keep my pride, put on a good front, and call it a "learning experience"—and no one will fault me for it. Consequences? If they are small, I can probably get by with a little altering of my plans, or drop an ambiguous comment here and there to infer that someone else was to blame. But deep down inside I know I did it.

If I want to grow my inner, spiritual life, if I want God's approval on my life, there is no other way than to admit it and correct it, what the Bible calls *"confess and forsake"* (Prov. 28:13). Until I do that, I am refusing the lesson God wants to teach me.

Some of our best life lessons come from our mistakes. Do you recall a certain exam you had back in your school days? If you are like me, you don't remember the questions you answered correctly. You remember the one you missed. Or the test you didn't study for. Or the paper you handed in late. The very fact you remember it says something about what you learned!

If only there were a way to void the whole thing and start over! If only I could catch that "stitch in time" and "save nine." If I were that more alert, more cautious individual that does not act so quickly. But there may be also a little carefully concealed pride in the one who deliberates, and deliberates, and deliberates to keep that "never-made-a-mistake" reputation. Remember, nothing is hidden from the eyes of Him to whom we are accountable (Heb. 4:13).

Is a mistake a sin? Not in itself, but how we handle it may be right or wrong. There is a crossover between things natural and spiritual, things temporal and eternal. In all of it we must apply those golden virtues of patience, diligence, honesty, etc. Didn't the great Apostle say, *"whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"* (1 Cor. 10:31). The one *"who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin"* (Jas. 4:17). And failing to admit it only lowers us in the esteem of God Almighty. In the words of the ancient Prophet, it is *"heaping sin upon sin"* (Isa. 30:1 TNIV).

Do we tell ourselves it isn't really all that bad? Watch out! Deception is an art the human race has been perfecting from time immemorial. The prophet Jeremiah documented it clearly: *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"* (Jer. 17:9).

When we go wrong, why not confess it and go on? What is lost? Of course, simply admitting it is not enough either. Is the boss impressed with the ever ready admission of the employee who keeps making the same mistake over and over and over again? Neither does God want those who keep making the same mistakes.

Honest recognition is the first step. Then change. It may be painful, but when the Master finally pronounces our work *"Well done,"* we shall thank God we did both! ♦

*The one who
makes a mistake
he won't admit
makes two.*

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).

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Megiddo Message

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BDAG—Arndt, W., Gingrich, F. W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (1996). A

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; **LSJ**—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; **SHG**—Strong, J. (1997). The new Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words. **THAYER**—A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1889).



I AM the Way

and the Truth
and the Life.
No one comes to
the Father except
through Me”

—John 14:6

Which Way to *LIFE*?

You are in a strange city, and you are lost. You stop to ask someone the way. He says, “I’ll tell you where to go. The street you want is the third left—no, it’s the second left—after the first right from the light. There’s a drugstore on the corner. Wait a minute, I think it’s a service station. Anyway, you can’t miss it.”

But unfortunately, you *can* miss it, and it is no surprise when you *do*.

Now suppose you ask another person. He says, “I’m going that way. Just follow me.” You get there easily, because this person is *the way*.

In our natural human condition, we are lost on the road of life, with no guide, no purpose, no direction, no goal. Some are saying, “Go here.” Others say, “Go there.” How are we to decide?

Along comes Jesus and says, “*I am the way.*” Here is no confusion, no ambiguity, no danger of getting lost. For Jesus doesn’t merely point to the way, or tell us about the way—He *is* the way. All we have to do is follow.

Who else could say with such confidence: “*I am the way*”? None. But we must remember Jesus was no ordinary man. Nor do His words bear an ordinary message. Divine in its authority, His words come from the lips of the Son of God Himself.

“*I am the way,*” says Christ. The very suggestion of a “way” implies destination. Every way leads somewhere. And every one instinctively seeks some destination, whether near or far, temporary or permanent. We are attracted to Jesus because the destination He sets before us far surpasses any we could find

What does Jesus have for those who follow Him all the way to the end?

of ourselves. Our own goals, at best, are limited to the boundaries of mortal life. What does Jesus have to offer at the end of His way?

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described the end of His way vividly by contrasting it with the end of all other ways. *"Enter by the narrow gate,"* He advised, *"for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few"* (Matt. 7:13–14 RSV).

There are only two ways, He says. All human roads form the broad way, and they lead to death. There is only one other way, and *I am that way*. And My way leads to life. It is the difference between the easy, natural way and the straight, disciplined way of the Lord. It is the difference between God's way with its limitless possibilities and our own, selfish way that is a dead end.

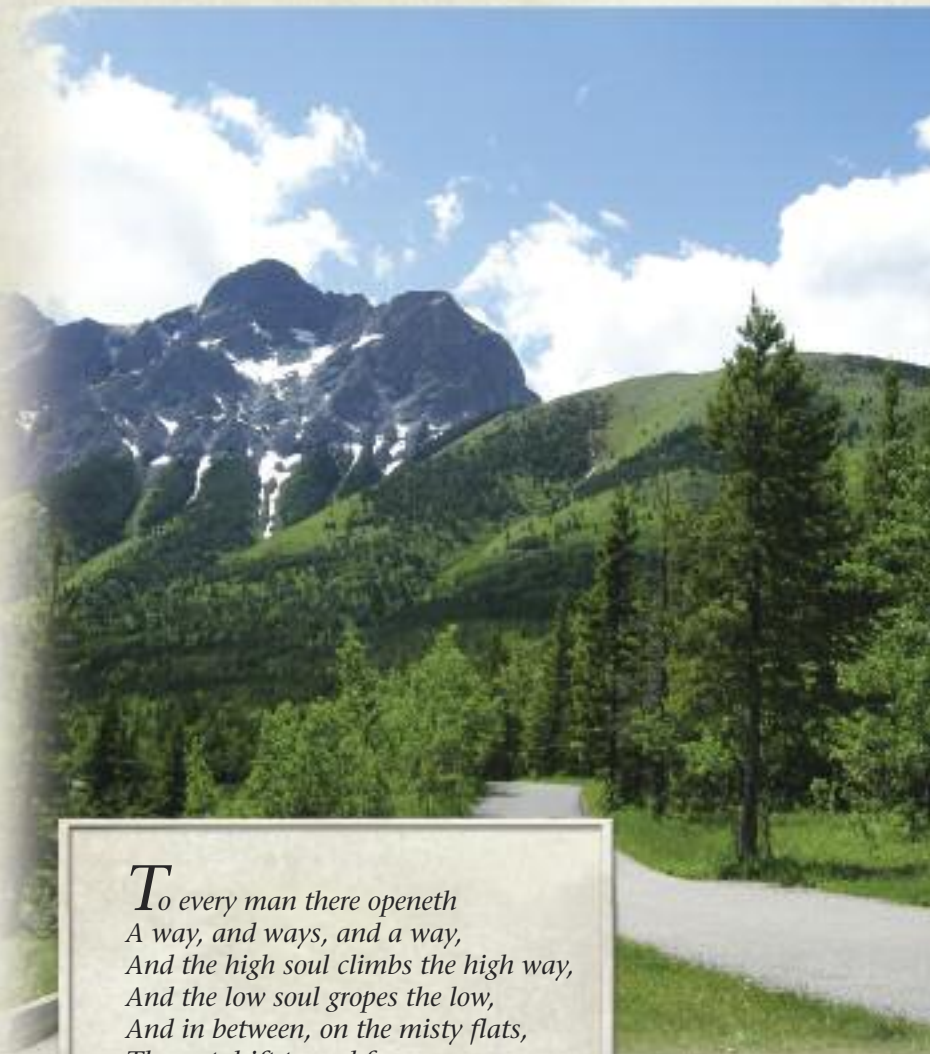
In this world we are constantly faced with the short, easy way that promises immediate rewards. The benefits of the longer, difficult way are in the far distance visible only by the eye of faith. But we must remember: Good things seldom come easy; lasting things never come soon. Christ's way is the best in the end; for it is the only way that leads to eternal life!" (John 6:63). By His words He taught men the way to life. And more—by His flawless example of holiness in an everyday flesh-and-blood existence like our own, He showed men the perfection of total dedication to God. In Him the way to life became real and visible to human eyes like yours and mine. *"When he was reviled, he reviled not again"* (1 Pet. 2:23)—of whom else could this have been written? Who else could say in the fullness of honesty, *"I do always those things that please him"*? (John 8: 29); or, *"As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do"*? (John 14:31).

When we outline the life of Christ, we describe the way to life for each of His followers. He led the way, being *"in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"* (Heb. 4:15). *"Holy, innocent, unstained, far removed from sinful men"* (Heb. 7:26 Williams), Christ is indeed the way. Not only down the road of discipline

and character-building do we want to follow, but clear through to the end until He awards us a place in His kingdom and a share in His immortal crown.

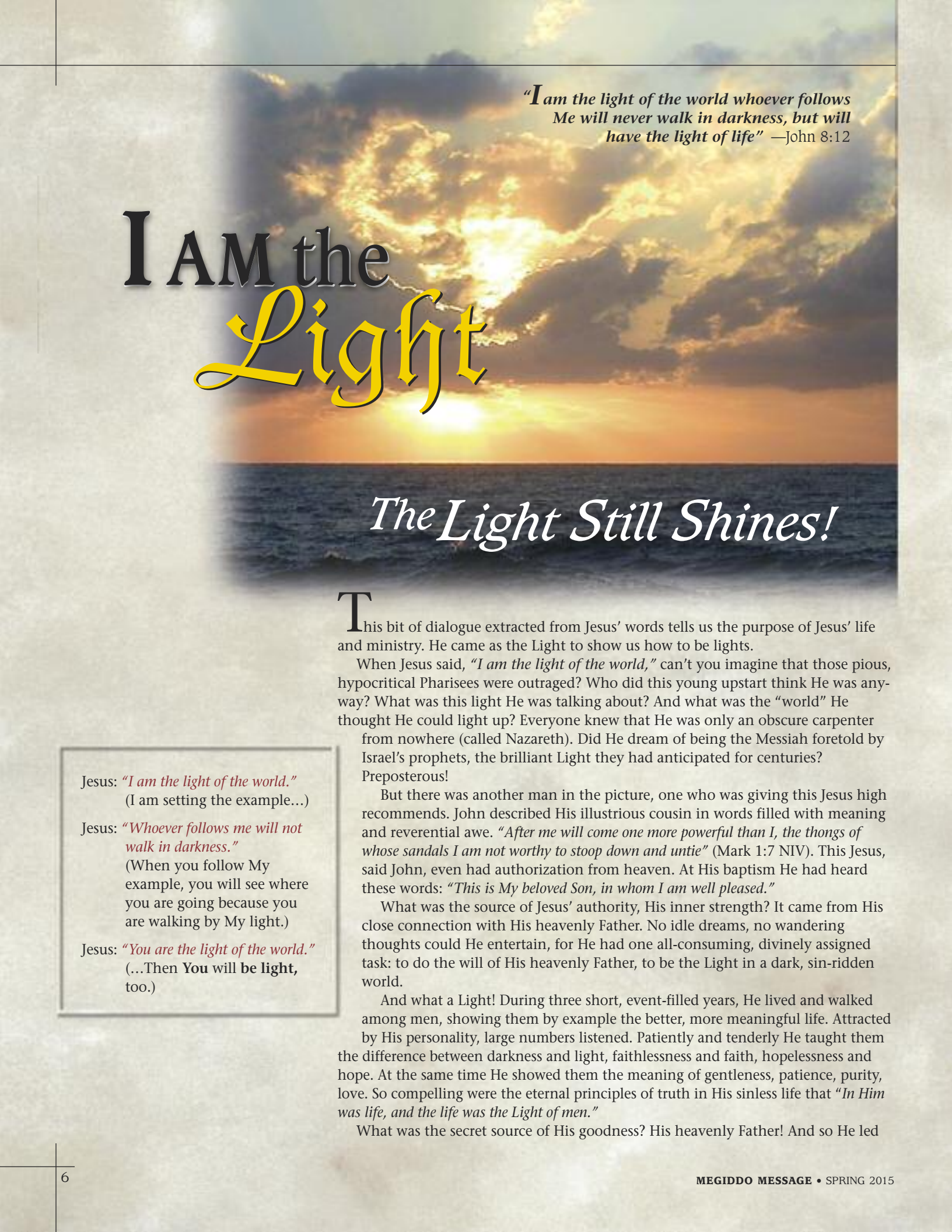
"I am the way," says Jesus. But the way is glorious, because it leads to life that is full and abundant and everlasting!"

If any man will come after me"—remember, "I am the way"—"let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Is it worth the journey? Are you ready to go with Him—all the way? ♦



*To every man there openeth
A way, and ways, and a way,
And the high soul climbs the high way,
And the low soul gropes the low,
And in between, on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A high way, and a low;
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go.*

—John Oxenham



*"I am the light of the world whoever follows
Me will never walk in darkness, but will
have the light of life" —John 8:12*

I AM the Light

The Light Still Shines!

This bit of dialogue extracted from Jesus' words tells us the purpose of Jesus' life and ministry. He came as the Light to show us how to be lights.

When Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world,"* can't you imagine that those pious, hypocritical Pharisees were outraged? Who did this young upstart think He was anyway? What was this light He was talking about? And what was the "world" He thought He could light up? Everyone knew that He was only an obscure carpenter from nowhere (called Nazareth). Did He dream of being the Messiah foretold by Israel's prophets, the brilliant Light they had anticipated for centuries? Preposterous!

But there was another man in the picture, one who was giving this Jesus high recommends. John described His illustrious cousin in words filled with meaning and reverential awe. *"After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie"* (Mark 1:7 NIV). This Jesus, said John, even had authorization from heaven. At His baptism He had heard these words: *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

What was the source of Jesus' authority, His inner strength? It came from His close connection with His heavenly Father. No idle dreams, no wandering thoughts could He entertain, for He had one all-consuming, divinely assigned task: to do the will of His heavenly Father, to be the Light in a dark, sin-ridden world.

And what a Light! During three short, event-filled years, He lived and walked among men, showing them by example the better, more meaningful life. Attracted by His personality, large numbers listened. Patiently and tenderly He taught them the difference between darkness and light, faithlessness and faith, hopelessness and hope. At the same time He showed them the meaning of gentleness, patience, purity, love. So compelling were the eternal principles of truth in His sinless life that *"In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men."*

What was the secret source of His goodness? His heavenly Father! And so He led

Jesus: *"I am the light of the world."*
(I am setting the example...)

Jesus: *"Whoever follows me will not
walk in darkness."*
(When you follow My
example, you will see where
you are going because you
are walking by My light.)

Jesus: *"You are the light of the world."*
(...Then **You** will be light,
too.)

them to the throne of grace, where they, too, could experience the thrill of closer communion.

However, a life so nobly lived will have enemies; and Jesus' was no exception. The Pharisees and chief priests, incensed by His sharp reproofs for their hypocrisy, would not rest until they had designed a dastardly plan to destroy Him. Yes, they succeeded in taking the life of this Greatest Man;

but they could not put out the Light. During a few desperate days it burned low, but just when the powers of darkness were shouting their success, the Light burst forth with new brilliance as God raised Him from the dead. Yes, resurrection! Jesus was alive! Death could not hold Him. He arose, a victor over mortality, lighting the way for any who would follow.

A short while later, this Light was

taken to heaven, escorted by celestial beings to His Father's throne. And there He waits, victorious over the darkness of sin, enjoying the glory of His eternal reward until the Day when the promise of the angels will be fulfilled: *"This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"* (Acts 1: 11). ♦

YOU BE Light

Perhaps no greater compliment could be paid an aspiring Christian than this, *"You're here to be light!"*

Jesus did not say, "You are here to *reflect* the light"—a good mirror could do that.

And He did not say, "You are here to *absorb* the light"—a piece of black cloth could do that.

Nor did He say, "You are here to *transmit* the light"—a window glass could do that. He said, *"You are the light"*—all meaningful, all inclusive, all responsible. You *be* light. In other words, "SHINE!"

What are we doing with this intense, penetrating Light? Is it visible to all with whom we come in contact?

Is our life shining brilliantly in this dark world? Do we dare to stand for right when others want to compromise? Do we insist on telling the facts when others want to distort or cover them up? Are we unmoved by the indifference, the coldness, the doubt so prevalent today? Or does our light flicker and fade?

Somewhere in the darkness a soul is searching for light. Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world."* Are we showing that light in *our* life?

Why do we want to keep our little lights burning true and bright? Because just a little further down the road of life we shall meet Him who could say, *"I am the Light of the world."* When He comes, He will not even see us unless we are lights, glowing and bright.

But what a glorious Day for all who have followed Him faithfully! Such will be given a royal welcome to the celestial city, where *"they will not need lamplight or sunlight, because the Lord God will be shining on them. They will reign for ever and ever"* (Rev. 22:5 NJB). ♦

"You're here to be light, ... Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine!"

—Matthew 5:14–16, The Message Bible



What did Jesus say to His disciples that day on the mountainside? *"You are the light of the world"* (Matt. 5:14). He did not say, "You are the light of the church" but *"You are the light of the world."*

Christians have a double assignment. Their lives were to radiate a pattern of good works *and* inspire others to live richer, fuller, more Christ-like lives.



I AM the True Vine

Ouch!—That Hurts!

by ELVA E. BYERS

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful..."

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."

—John 15:1–4 NIV

When Jesus referred to Himself as the vine, He was using a figure of speech familiar to His audience. For centuries the vine had had a place in the religious literature of the Hebrew people, and in their national life it had become strongly symbolic.

The figure of the vine emerges in Psalm 80, as David sings, *"You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it"* (80:8 NIV). He was thinking of their miraculous deliverance from bondage centuries earlier.

But the symbol of the vine is used most often in the Old Testament with an idea of degeneration. Jeremiah pictured the vineyard of the Lord as well planted but now degenerate and running wild (Jer. 2:21). Hosea cried, *"How prosperous Israel is—a luxuriant vine loaded with fruit! But"*—he stops short. Israel was not the nation they might have been. *"But the more wealth the people got, the more they poured it on the altars of their foreign gods. The richer the harvests they brought in, the more beautiful the statues and idols they built"* (Hosea 10:1 NLT)

Now Jesus stood among His disciples and declared, *"I am the vine"*—true, real, genuine. *"And you are the branches."* And what does He do with these branches? *"He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful"* (John 15:2 NIV).

Not long before, He had made use of the same figure. The twenty-first chapter of Matthew's Gospel records the parable of the Vineyard. A certain householder planted a vineyard, which he entrusted to the care of gardeners. When the time was right, the householder sent his servants into the vineyard to receive the fruits of it; but the gardeners beat, stoned and killed them. So he sent more servants, but they received the same treatment. Finally he sent his own son, but they killed him also.

The Lord's vineyard, in the hands of unfaithful Israelites, was a national failure.

So what did Jesus do with the figure of the vine and the vineyard? He took the vine, the emblem of Israel's national life, which the prophets had used to show national failure, tore it loose from the position of responsibility and privilege it had held, and said in effect, God has not failed, even if the nation has. He can still use you, but you must expect His pruning knife. Yes, you will feel the keen edge of His pruning shears, but that only tells you that you are not abandoned. He created the vine to bring forth fruit, and this is how He prepares you to bear fruit!

The figure of the vine is especially meaningful as Jesus used it when we think of how the vine lives and grows. The union between the branch of a vine and the main stem is the closest that can be imagined. Just that close is the union between Christ and every true believer. The vine is the branches' life, strength, vigor, beauty and fertility. The sap and juice that flow from the vine are the sustaining power of all its leaves, buds, blossoms, and fruit. Cut off the branch, sever it from the stem, and it soon will wither and die. The relationship between Christ and His church is just that close, just that real, just that vital.

Prune, Prune...

The symbol of the vine is particularly fitting because the vine, unlike most cultivated plants, requires relentless pruning. When Jesus compared Himself to the vine and His Father to the Gardener, He knew the arduous work, the severe pruning required. He knew the great amount of attention the vines must have if the fruit is to be harvested. A vine left to itself will grow—vigorously. But into what? A few years of neglect, and it will be an ungainly, tangled mass, choked with its own dead and worthless branches, capable of producing little or no fruit. Worse still, it will tend to revert to its original wild stock.

So along comes the Gardener. Clip! Trim! Snip! Break! whatever removes the worthless growth. Jesus welcomed the keen blade that removed from His life all that was worthless. When His heart's desire was denied Him by the higher demands of His Father's will, He remembered that the Gardener makes no mistakes, that nothing worthwhile will ever be removed but only that which would hinder greater yield.

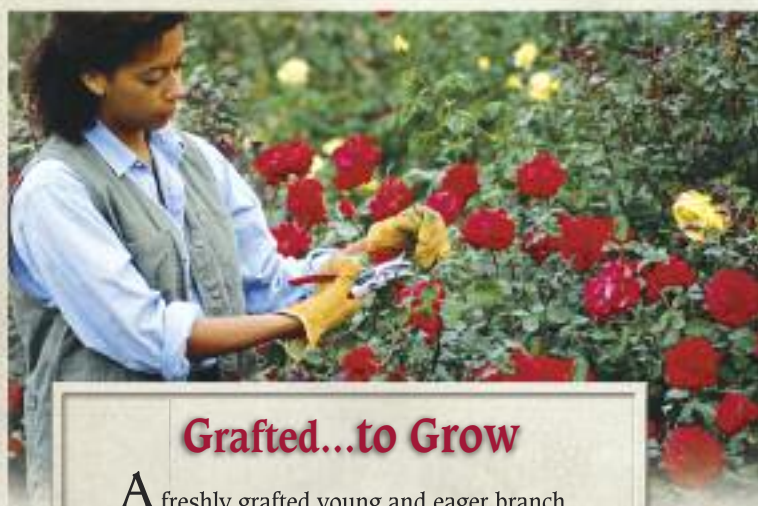
Just as the vinedresser prunes and cuts back the branches of a fruitful vine to make it still more fruitful, so God uses the circumstances and trials of life to purify and prune believers to make them pure and holy.

Fruit is the sure evidence that one is a true branch of the true vine, fruit of patience, peace, love, humility. The disciple who "abides in Christ" as the branch abides in the vine will always bear spiritual fruit. Where there is no fruit there is no life. Good fruit will always be evident in the daily conduct of those who are part of the true vine.

The Great Gardener wants fruit. And He will not spare the pruning knife when He sees it is needed. The pruning may seem severe, but in the last day we shall know and see it was done well.

Would we be fruitful true branches of the true vine? Then let us welcome the keen blade that God the Master Gardener uses to separate us from all that is low, base and selfish. Then we can be living, thriving, fruit-bearing branches that will be permitted to draw life-sustaining sap from the True Vine forever. ♦

*Choice fruits of
patience, peace, love,
humility are evidence
that one is part of the
True Vine.*



Grafted...to Grow

A freshly grafted young and eager branch,
restless, trying a new life,
yet striving to be what I dreamed I might
have been had not the graft been made;
striving to be myself, or someone great—

I felt the pruning shears.
And gone was what I longed for most!
O how I prayed that I might be free
to grow and blossom on my own.

Yet wisely, Lord,
You denied me the freedom to become
what I might have been—
a wild vine or a piece of kindling.

The graft held fast,
So I could grow, and bear fruit.
Thank you, Lord,
for saving me from myself.

— Ruth E. Sisson

I AM the Bread

Bread that Gives Life



What do these words mean to us today? First there is a speaker and a subject, “I.” This speaker deserves our attention. He is no less than the Master Himself, the Son of God, the One who could say, *“the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me”* (John 14:24). With authority like that behind the statement we need to consider what He said.

“Am” is the next word, not “was” or “should have been” or “will be” but “am” in the present tense. Jesus uses it as no one else can, for what He was then He still is because Jesus is alive. After He was crucified, buried, resurrected and taken to heaven, He sent back a message in which are these words: *“I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore”* (Rev. 1:18).

“And Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst”—John 6:35, 48

Then comes *“the bread.”* The term *“bread”* suggests sustenance, the means of survival. The presence or absence of food means the presence or absence of life, both in a physical and in a symbolic sense. Symbolic bread is to the inner, spiritual life as physical bread is to natural life. There can be no life without that which sustains it.

But when Jesus said, *“I am the bread of life”* in this context, He could not have been speaking of physical bread or physical life. Jesus was not literally a loaf of bread. He was not literally something to eat. Jesus Himself made His statement meaningful by explaining His own source of spiritual nourishment: *“As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me”* (John 6:57).

“I am the bread of life.” Here is bread that sustains life in the deeper, fuller sense of the word. Jesus is the bread that gives life to the inner man.

Jesus told about this type of life sustained by this type of bread when He said very early in His ministry, *“Man shall not live by bread alone”* (Matt. 4:4). We have deep heart longings and hungers which physical bread does not satisfy. Jesus is

offering a superior, symbolic type bread to meet the needs of the spiritually starving.

He is offering bread of *life*—bread that saves from eternal death; for spiritual starvation is just as deadly as its natural counterpart. If one is to know abundant, spiritual life, his mind must continually feed upon the right kind of food. Here is Jesus meeting the need: *“I am the bread of life.”* Jesus, His words, His teachings, His life are the symbolic bread which, eaten and assimilated, gives life.

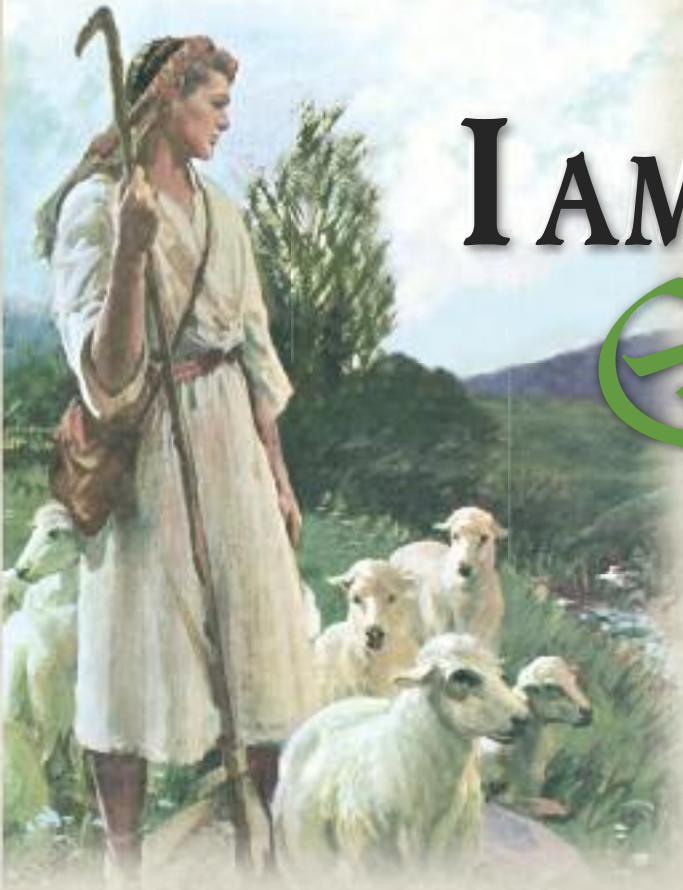
What is the life that comes from eating this bread? It is not this present life; all of Jesus’ hearers that day had natural life, and we have it also. Jesus is speaking of the vital, inner, spiritual life His words sustain. It is the life of the inner man now, and unending life in the future. It is the life that Jesus spoke of when He replied to Peter’s statement, *“See, we have left all and followed you”* (Mark 10:28). Jesus answered and said, *“Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life”* (Mark 10:29–30). It is the hundred-fold of joy, blessing and hope in this world. Then, in the world to come it opens out into days without number and pleasures forever more (Ps. 16:11). It is life that extends through time and into eternity.

How was Jesus the bread of life? By His life of matchless obedience He could identify Himself with that which gives and sustains life. He was the living image of the standard of character God is looking for in His children. In Jesus, His teaching, His message, His living example of humility, kindness, courage and every godly virtue became more visible and more available than it had ever been before. This is why He could say, *“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever”* (John 6:51).

Jesus came bringing to all that which would supply their deepest needs, if they would only recognize it.

And so He says to us today: *“I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst”* (John 6:35).

Jesus is the bread that gives life now, the life Jesus demonstrated every day, and which leads ultimately to life everlasting in His kingdom for every faithful one. ♦



I AM the Good Shepherd

"My sheep hear my voice, and...follow Me."

As with most of Jesus' teachings, the setting of the parable was familiar to those who heard it. When Jesus said, *"I am the good Shepherd,"* His hearers immediately drew a mental picture of sheep grazing contentedly under the watchful eye of a devoted shepherd.

Flocks of sheep and shepherds were a common sight in Judea. The Israelites had been an agricultural people from the beginning. Jacob went down to Egypt with flocks and herds, which he pastured in Goshen. And more than four centuries later a multitude of his descendants came out of Egypt, again with great flocks and herds.

The country of Israel is well adapted to sheep-raising, much of the land being hilly and unsuitable for anything else. The climate is ideal for producing grass. Winter rains soak the terrain while the flocks are kept in the shelter of the folds; and the warm spring sun quickly clothes the hills with a lush mantle of green. Then the shepherds lead their flocks once again upon the open pastures.

Jesus spoke knowingly of sheep and shepherds in His parable: The sheep enter the fold through the door; the sheep will not follow the voice of a stranger. Jesus said: *"He who does not enter the sheepfold by the door,... the same is a thief and a robber....I am the door of the sheep....I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own....My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me"* (John 10:1,7,10,14,27).

When the shepherds brought their sheep into the fold, as they frequently did, the sheep were let through a small door so that each might be counted and examined. There was only one way in; all other doors were closed. Hence Jesus said, *"I am the door,"* meaning, I am the way and the only way. *"No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6). Again, *"Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able"* (Luke 13:24).

The message comes to us: *"I am the door."* Only by learning of the Good Shepherd and following Him can we hope to enter His fold, His Kingdom.

The good shepherd's life is bound up in his sheep. To watch over them and care for them is his whole life. He feels the responsibility of providing the best water and the best pasture. Likewise, our Good Shepherd's whole care is for His sheep. He protects them. He knows their weaknesses and their strengths, and He gives them the best food for their spiritual nourishment now, and endless life in the future.

Good shepherds never drive the sheep; the sheep follow. If we call Christ our Good Shepherd, we likewise must be prepared to follow wherever He may lead.

Jesus said, *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me"* (John 10:27). If we do not hear, and do not follow, we are not one of His sheep.

All who are His sheep will hear His voice. Peter quoting the words of Moses, said of the Good Shepherd: *"You listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among the people"* (Acts 3: 22-23 NIV).

Jesus is the Good Shepherd—and He is more. He is the Chief Shepherd. In Palestine, the "chief shepherd" was usually the owner of the flock, or a member of his immediate family. It is to our Chief Shepherd that we look for our reward. For *"when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of glory that will never fade away"* (1 Peter 5:4 NIV). We will—if we have followed the Good Shepherd all the way. ♦

I AM the Resurrection and the Life



Jesus' Answer to **DEATH**

Imagine the living Christ meeting you this morning as you left your house, and saying to you as He did to Martha long ago at the time her brother Lazarus had died: *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."* And then those three words that penetrate the deepest recesses of our conscience: *"Do you believe this?"* (John 11:25–26).

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

—2 Corinthians 5:17

Believe what? Believe Jesus has power over death? That was what Jesus said, *"I am the resurrection and the life."* In other words, I can restore life. I have the power to give life. Really? Yes, as Martha and Mary and all their friends were soon to see, Jesus could pray to the Father, and Lazarus would come walking out of his tomb, alive and well—because Jesus was indeed *"the resurrection and the life."*

One day some months later, two believers, very much like us, were walking along a stony road that led from Jerusalem to Emmaus. The two were deep in conversation about everything that had been happening in and about their city. Things could not have been worse, it seemed. And probably the road seemed longer and stonier than ever, though they had traveled it many times.

As they trudged along, trying to make sense out of the scuttling of their hopes, a stranger joined them and wanted to know what they were talking about.

"You must be the only stranger in Jerusalem who hasn't heard the things that have happened

there recently!" said one of the two, whose name was Cleopas.

"What things?" was the Stranger's curious query. As He appeared to have no idea of the subject of their conversation, Cleopas went on to explain that there was a man from the village of Nazareth, Jesus by name, who was clearly a prophet of God, but who had been executed by crucifixion. "We had hoped," said Cleopas, "that he was the one who was to redeem Israel." Like other believing Israelites, these men had confused the prophecies pertaining to the Messiah's first advent with those of His second, and so had looked for one who would be both a liberator and a savior. They had listened to His preaching, and had had grand hopes, but—

But they had given up. Now they had to express their faith in the past tense: "We had hoped," they said, indicating that now all hope was gone. Had they understood and believed the prophets, they could have added, "...and we are still hoping." But at so critical a time their faith had failed.

The words of that Stranger that day—who proved to be no less than the Master Himself—were a stinging rebuke to them and all of us who are like them: "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:25). Yes, said Jesus, everything is working out just according to prophecy. Can't you see it? Doesn't it confirm your faith? And then, we read, "beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). Oh, wouldn't we love to have heard Him expound that day!

Here we are, two millennia later, and Jesus' words still stand. Jesus is alive, and He can still say, "I am the resurrection and the life"—because Jesus is alive! He is the one and only one who could say, "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death" (Rev. 1:18). And soon He is

coming back with power to resurrect all the sleeping believers who have lived since the time of Adam (1 Thess. 4:16–18). They must be awake and ready, along with the living believers, to meet Him as He returns, to be judged and rewarded for what they did during their day of probation (2 Cor. 5:10).

It will all happen suddenly, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?'" (1 Cor. 15:52–55).

No other people have lived so near to this auspicious event. No other people have lived so near to His appearing. The day and hour of His return is not revealed, but fulfilling prophecies confirm that the time is near. No other people have so realistically hoped to live to see that appearing.

Even beyond Jesus' promise to resurrect and give life, there is yet another promise hidden in His statement to Martha. After affirming that He is the "resurrection and the life," Jesus added this phrase: "whoever lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:26). Who is Jesus speaking about? Who will be living and believing at the time He returns? Of all who have served God through six thousand years of working with His family on earth, here is a message to the believers who would be living at the time of His

Second Advent: "whoever lives and believes in Me will never die." Why? Because Jesus is coming to judge and reward His servants, and those living who are approved will go from life to life—from the mortal and corruptible life to immortal and incorruptible life, for as Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:51, even though "we" (the big family of believers in all ages) "shall not all sleep," we must all "be changed"—changed to the incorruptible and immortal likeness of Jesus (Phil. 3:20–21).

What supreme blessing for those who pass the final test of faith! It is the special blessing of which Jesus spoke when He asked Martha: "Do you believe this?"

*Being spiritually
alive here and
now is the only
route to the life
that lies beyond
the grave.*

Do you believe this? Do I? Let us answer so affirmatively that it will set our hearts pounding with expectancy, with a new resolve in our hearts to live for the coming Kingdom.

Our dedicated life and conduct will confirm our living, abounding faith as we reply: "Yes, Lord, I believe." ♦

Jesus said to her (Mary), "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God,..."

—John 11:25–27

I AM the Bright and Morning Star

*T*he heavens are telling the glory of God" (Ps. 19:1). All solemn and quiet, these brilliant luminaries shine down upon us. Indeed, if the stars should appear one night in a hundred years, how men would believe in God and worship Him, and how they would preserve for generations to come the sight of the handiwork of God.

What timeless symbols of majesty and peace! Thousands of generations have been swallowed up by time and forgotten, yet Arcturus, Orion, and the Pleiades shine on.

People who have outstanding qualities, who are preeminently successful, are sometimes referred to as stars.

Stars are also used as a symbol of light. In Scripture, some of the saints are called stars, suggesting their glory and usefulness. Jesus called the ministers of the seven churches in Asia (Revelation chapters 2 and 3) "stars" because they were servants of Christ. It was their duty to convey light, knowledge, and comfort to others. When those who labor in Christ apostatize and fall into error and sin, leading others astray, they are represented as wandering stars (Jude 13).

Daniel tells of the glory that awaits the wise and righteous, that "*they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, ... as the stars forever and ever*" (Dan. 12:2). Made immortal like the angels they will one day cause this earth to shine.

Figuratively speaking, our little earth at present is a dark and murky satellite. It is a chaotic place of sin, trouble and turmoil. But the darkness of night is far along (Rom. 13:12). The dawn is coming fast. Soon the Bright and Morning Star will appear! That is why Jesus' message is so cheering, "*I am...the bright and morning star...I am coming quickly*" (Rev. 22:16, 20).

In His life, Christ was a star surpassing all mortals in brilliance and wonder. Intent on learning and knowing His Father's will, He forged His life accordingly (John 5:30). Tempted on every point as we are, on every point He proved Himself a star of surpassing magnitude (Heb. 4:15). In Him was no deceit. When He was reviled, He did not revile back, when He suffered He uttered no threats (1 Pet. 2:22-23). Though often unappreciated, He always went about doing good (Acts 10:38). He satisfied multitudes with bread, even as He offered them living bread (John 6:1-5). Never transgressing once He knew the law, He furnished us with the ideal life pattern (Heb. 5:8-9). He is indeed the Bright

*"I am the Root and the Offspring
of David, the **Bright and
Morning Star**" (Rev. 22:16).*

and Morning Star, a star that outshines all others. And soon He will usher in a bright new Day on this dark world.

Why did Jesus claim this luminous title of *"bright and morning star"*?

The title comes to us from the last chapter of Revelations (Rev. 22:16). At this point, John was drawing to a close the words of Revelation which Jesus had commissioned him to write and send to the churches in Asia. Under the Roman power, the Christians were suffering a great trial of persecution. Their faith needed to be strengthened. They needed to be warned. They needed to be encouraged. They needed to be reminded that the true Church would triumph at last. John's message was for a time of crisis.

We, too, are living in a crisis time. John's message is for us!

The climax of John's writing was the wonderful vision of the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, emblematic of the Bride, the Lamb's wife (Rev. 21). He wanted all believers everywhere and in all ages to know that that great eternal Day is

surely coming. It is the Day when the saints triumph! The enemies of light are gone forever. War and trouble are gone. Sickness and pain are no more. Death is gone. Light and beauty, peace and prosperity are everywhere. The fountain of life is there, and the saints experience great felicity and unmeasured happiness. The King is in the midst of them. Time has merged into eternity.

John was about to close his long letter, and perhaps was looking it over from the beginning when Jesus intervened. It was as if to guarantee that all John had written was true in this revelation of Jesus Christ. Then, as it were, He who is the Light Himself confirmed it by His credentials. Jesus says: *"I am... the bright and morning star."* And just as the morning star ushers in the day, so I will usher in that glorious eternal Day. It will be a Day that will increase from glory to glory. It will be one eternal Day of everlasting increasing bliss.

What joy, what hope, what faith and courage Jesus' testimony offers to every earnest Christian. *"I am the Bright and Morning Star...I am coming soon."* ♦



Abib Means...

"spring or sprouting month" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon). God commanded Moses to *"observe the month Abib"* (see Deut. 16:1; Ex. 12:2; 13:4) as a memorial of the Israelites' departure from Egypt.

Abib (or Nisan) 1, the first day of Sacred New Year,

begins this year on Saturday evening, April 18, and continues through Sunday, April 19, Bible time being measured from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32). It was the pattern of the Hebrew People to begin the new year with the first occurrence of the new moon (this year on April 18) after the Spring Equinox (this year on March 20). Abib First is the first day of the sacred New Year, and the day on which we observe the anniversary of our Savior's birth.

The **Abib** Calendar

Abib 13, the anniversary of the night Jesus partook of the Last Supper with His disciples before He suffered,

falls this year on Thursday evening, April 30. At this time we partake of the emblems in obedience to Jesus' command, *"This do in remembrance of me"* (1 Cor. 11:24-25). By this sacred rite we symbolize the renewing of our covenant relationship with God, the bread representing the knowledge of the law of God, and the juice representing the application of that knowledge to our daily lives.

Abib 15, the anniversary of the Resurrection of Christ,

occurs this year on the morning of Sunday, May 3. In ancient Israel, this was the day of the offering of the first sheaf of the harvest to the Lord. On this morning, Christ the firstfruits from death rose triumphant over death. On this morning, even *"very early in the morning,"* devout women wanting to anoint the body of Jesus with spices, made their way to the tomb (Mark 16:1-2). Finding it empty, they heard those immortal words from the angel that still thrill and inspire us today: *"He is not here, he is risen! Come, see the place where the Lord lay"* (Matt. 28:6)...

Pentecost, fifty days after the offering of the first sheaf,

when Jesus sent the power of the Holy Spirit on His disciples, falls this year on June 21. ♦

I AM a King



This is why I was born...

The Roman world into which Jesus came was not a good world in which to live. There was a semblance of peace and order, but it was the Pax Romana, which “made a desert and called it a peace.” The vulgar fraud of Roman civilization, founded upon violence, armed conquest, pillage and human slavery, had been forcibly established in Asia Minor, North Africa, and most of Europe; but with greatness came moral decay.

The sturdy virtues of the early Republic had disappeared in a putrid welter of immorality, political corruption, and universal pauperism. A symptom of the nation’s desperate sickness was the growing popularity of the gladiatorial shows, which year by year became more elaborate and more brutal. Meanwhile, a handful of imperial favorites were bleeding the provinces for the profit of a few millionaire landlords to adorn a capitol that produced nothing and consumed all.

Behind the iron curtain of military might was discontent and rebellion. Nowhere was the spirit of revolt more chronic than in Judea, that narrow strip of land to the east that has made history out of all proportion to its size. Lacking even the protection of Roman law and justice, it was ruled in despot style by Herod the Great, a native prince who maintained his throne by collaborating with the conquerors. Human rights did not exist. Human life was cheap—even worthless—in the hands of a tyrant who murdered, tortured and robbed at will even while he restored

the Temple of Yahweh in magnificent fashion.

Does one wonder that a proud and patriotic people like the Jews constantly dreamed of deliverance? While they had never demonstrated their ability to make use of liberty, there was in them a fierce nationalism that made them a perennial problem

Pilate said, “So you are a king!” Jesus answered, “You are the one saying I am a king. **This is why I was born** and came into the world: to tell people the truth. And everyone who belongs to the truth listens to me.”(John 18:37 NCV)

to their masters. From the days when they demanded of Samuel a king so as to be like the nations around them, their desire to be big in the eyes of the world led them to forget that their real superiority and advantage lay in the realms of the spirit—in their custody of the Law and the Prophets.

Through the centuries the cord that bound the Jewish people in an incredible unity was the hope of the Messiah. Revealed through the prophets of Israel and Judah, this hope of a divinely sent deliverer and king had comforted them in captivity and supported them in persecution. What they overlooked, or forgot, or did not like to believe, was that this Messiah was to enter the world as all men, to prove Himself and develop His character and work out His salvation, His kingly power being reserved for His second advent at a time far distant, and that the blessings of His reign were not for the Jews alone but for all mankind.

Misunderstood and perverted, this hope had fallen into disrepute with those who had grown impatient and had become advocates of direct action.

Still there were those who hoped, even though it seemed a distorted and discolored hope. The priests and scribes, at least, must have known of the *"seven weeks, threescore and two weeks,"* or 483 years, which, according to the prophet Daniel began with the return from Babylon and should end with the arrival of *"Messiah the Prince"* (Dan. 9:25). Surely they realized that the time was near.

Then one spring night a few humble, honest-hearted men saw and heard that which was not believed in their day but which has grown in wonder and beauty with the passage of the centuries. The setting was simple, almost crude. A band of shepherds guarded their flocks on a lonely Judean hillside. It was the eve of the New Year, and naturally, they would have liked to be in the town with their kin, keeping the feast. But sheep had to be tended.

As they watched, or slept, or talked, or brooded in silence, suddenly a great

light shined round about them. And while they stood wondering, trembling, a mighty angel, glowing like the sun, spoke to them the deathless words:

"Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!'" (Luke 2:10-14).

Was this the King?

Those mysterious Wise Men (of whom we should like to know more) thought so, for when they came to Jerusalem inquiring, their question was, *"Where is he that is born king of the Jews?"*

Thirty years passed, thirty years of obscurity, thirty years of intense preparation and discipline and training as the King proved Himself. Then He appeared publicly among men, a Prophet, a Priest, the Messiah. He knew where He stood, and He knew what He spoke of. For three crowded years He went about doing good—healing the sick, feeding the hungry, cleansing the lepers, even raising a few from death, all the while preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Avoiding politics, and refusing worldly honors, He fled more than once from the worshiping multitudes who could not and would not realize that this was the time for repentance, not deliverance.

Was this the King?

Yet all the while He constantly affirmed His future kingship. And when He faced the Roman Procurator, His life hanging upon His answer to the question, *"Are You a king?"* He reaffirmed His claim with the quiet dignity of true royalty. *"It is you who say it,"* He answered. *"Yes, I am a king. I was born for this, I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth; and*

all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice" (John 18: 37 JB).

Where now were His popular supporters—the adoring thousands who a month before would have placed a crown on His head, who a week before had shouted and spread palm branches in His path as He entered the city? There were many of those of His own nation who had consistently opposed Him, rejected Him, persecuted Him. Shortly afterward the mob was howling for His blood. *"Crucify him!...We have no king but Caesar!"*

So they crowned Him with thorns, and mocked Him and scourged Him. And at high noon of that day they crucified Him.

Was this the King?

*The great day
of Jesus' coronation
has not yet arrived.
But it is coming—
soon!*

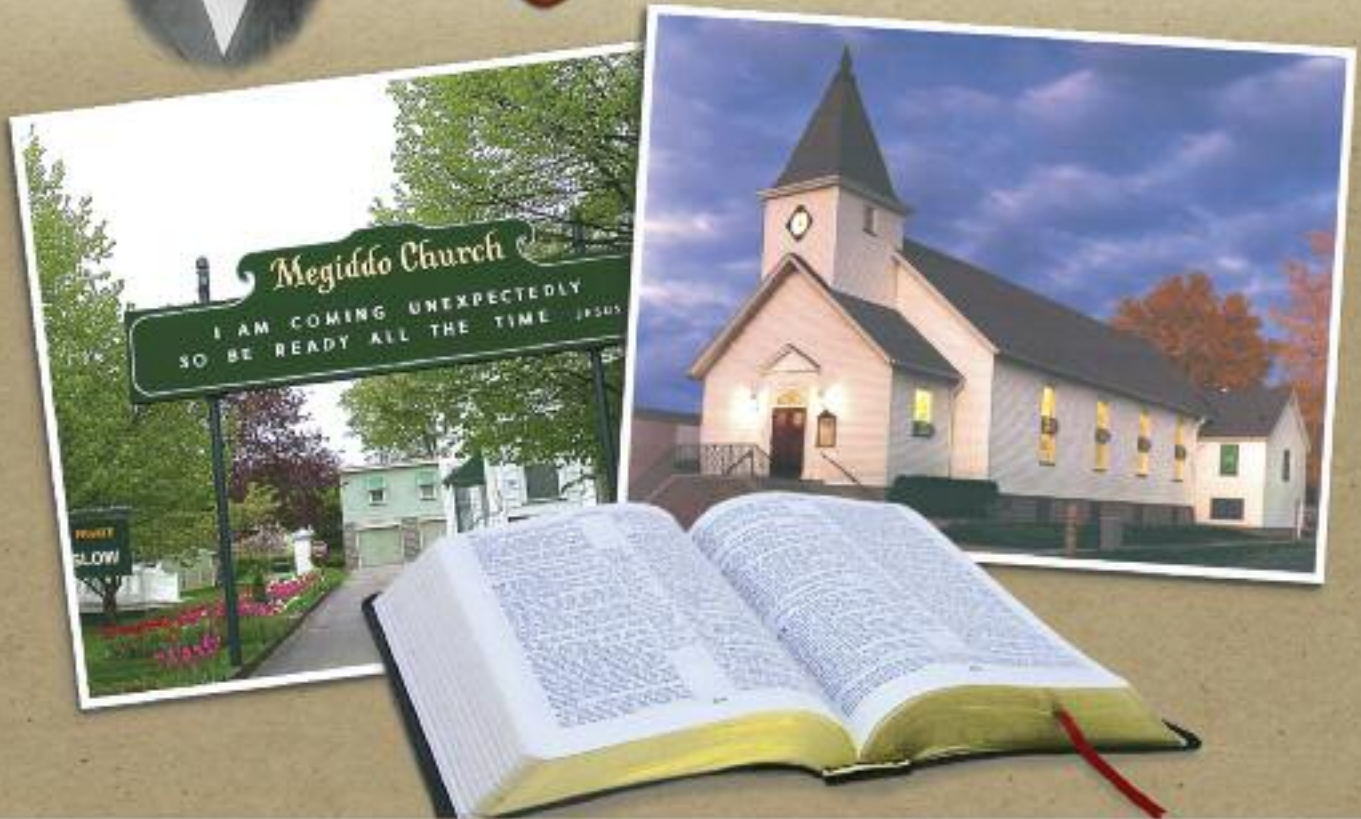
Pilate did not know, but the title He placed above Jesus' cross was a badge of glory, a testimony to an eternal truth. *"Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews"* gave no shame or scorn to true nobility. This was the King.

Centuries have passed, and the great day of coronation has not yet arrived. But it is coming. The truth of that noble statement lives on: *"I am a King."* The day when He shall take the throne of earth and execute judgment and justice worldwide is coming. It is near, very near. It is a prophecy on the verge of glorious fulfillment, for when He takes the throne He shall be *"King of kings and Lord of lords"* forever, even for ever and ever! (Rev. 19:16; 11:15). ♦

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

- 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.
- 1864–1875: Studies Bible intensely, seeking correct understanding of it
- 1868–1873: Settles in Fon du Lac, Wisconsin, circuit preacher for nearby towns
- 1869: Debates publicly in Wrightstown, Wisconsin. Subject: The resurrection
- 1870: Debates publicly at Kasson, Minnesota. Subject: The Bible is all one harmonious teaching
- 1874: Relocates to McMinnville, Oregon, for opportunity to preach
- 1876: Joins Christadelphian fellowship, and becomes an active Christadelphian ecclesia; begins to contribute to *The Christadelphian*, their official publication
- 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: Hosts first annual camp meeting in McMinnville for benefit of scattered Oregon members
- 1880: Discovers cornerstone Bible teaching: that one's salvation depends on knowing and obeying every command of Scripture, as expounded by Jesus.
- 1882: Travels east through Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio
- 1882: Returns to Oregon by way of California; purchases printing press in Sacramento
- 1883: Leaves Oregon, travels to Texas, then settles in Ellington, Minnesota
- 1883–1900: Serves several congregations in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois as traveling circuit preacher
- 1887: Holds public discussion in Owatonna, Minnesota. Subject: Is the Mosaic Law binding today?
- 1888: Establishes church at Barry, Illinois, places church under the direction of Maud Hembree
- 1891: Makes 6-month trip by ship to England and Wales in an effort to persuade Christadelphians of his convictions about the Bible and its teachings
- 1893–1894: Travels with wife to St. Augustine, Florida in an effort to help recover wife's health; while isolated from his people, writes "General Letter to all the churches"
- 1897: Makes second trip to England
- 1901: Builds and launches steamship "Megiddo" to spread the Gospel; 90 members sell property and live on board



CHAPTER 6 PART 1

THE GREAT DIVIDE

When Nichols joined the Christadelphians in 1876, he was satisfied that at last he had found his haven: a serious, committed group of believers who held the Bible in highest regard and required a solid Biblical defense of every belief. Here were people among whom he could study and grow his own faith, and satisfy his desire for a complete understanding of the Word of God, and who had the organization to teach and spread it. Dr. Thomas, whose writings had impressed Nichols, was now deceased (1871), but it was Nichols' expectation that the followers under the leadership of Robert Roberts would carry on with Dr. Thomas' work. And so Nichols became their enthusiastic promoter.

At the same time, Nichols continued—even intensified—his own study of the Bible toward a more complete understanding, as his writings and preaching soon revealed. For Nichols, *one* Bible with *one* God behind it should present *one* plan of salvation, not the thousand plus faiths extant in Christianity; and nothing short of a total knowledge of that plan would satisfy him. Furthermore, the Bible should be reasonable in what it is teaching (*"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord"*—Isa. 1:17), harmonious, and without contradiction.

That is why, for Nichols, every tenet of faith was continually open to scrutiny. If at any point it failed to pass the test of Scripture, that belief was discarded.

As Nichols traveled and preached in the new territory of Oregon, some were attracted to his teaching, and a few wanted to investigate further. If and when they were convinced that the teaching was indeed true and Biblical, the next step was for them to be baptized into the Christadelphian faith.

Observing that Nichols was baptizing new members, Robert Roberts, leader of the group and editor of *The Christadelphian*, questioned him as to whether his work was being done "upon an Apostolic foundation."¹ Was each applicant a genuine believer? Was each sufficiently informed before being immersed? Nichols replied in the affirmative.

Was Nichols slighting any vital point, or was he at variance with

¹The Christadelphians were committed to upholding the structure of the New Testament Church as practiced by the Apostles; hence their pattern for new inquirers was 1) initial instruction in the principles of true religion as set forth by the Christadelphians; 2) open agreement with each principle and a willingness to comply; 3) water baptism by immersion; and 4) willingness to fellowship with other believers for exhortation and encouragement.

From a current perspective:

THINK ABOUT IT:

Why was Nichols' synopsis, in Roberts' view "not so explicit as desirable" with reference to "the results that came by Adam's transgression"? Because Roberts was looking for Nichols to embrace the common doctrine of original sin and the so-called "Fall of man." What if these universally accepted beliefs were accepted in error—as other beliefs they had already found not to be according to the general teaching of the Bible?

Questions Nichols asked, and we still ask today:

1) *Did God condemn the whole race because Adam sinned*—when the Bible says "the Lord is righteous in all His ways" (Ps. 145:17), "his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deut. 32:4)?

2) *Did the entire race suddenly lose their "perfect" physical state and become mortal, dying creatures because Adam sinned*—when the Bible says that God "shall render to every man according to his works" (Prov. 24:12)? Note: judgment is "according to **his** works, not Adam's. See also Jer. 17:10; 25:14; Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12.

3) *Was all of Adam's unborn posterity suddenly sin-cursed and sinful by nature because Adam sinned*—when the Bible clearly states that "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father"? (Ezek. 18:20).

4) *How was Adam's own son Abel "righteous" (Heb. 11:4) if bearing the guilt of his father's sin?*

Very early in Nichols' search, he was finding that the popular beliefs in Adamic condemnation and original sin did not stand up to biblical scrutiny.

—Editor

Christadelphia on any point? To clarify his exact position and avoid any misunderstanding, Nichols submitted a printed synopsis of his beliefs to Brother Roberts. Roberts' reply in a subsequent issue of *The Christadelphian* (1877) is significant in light of events that followed. Roberts reported that Nichols' synopsis seemed "scriptural so far as it goes," then added:

"The only defect may be that it is not so explicit as desirable in its recognition of the fact that Jesus was a son of Adam, through Mary, as well as a son of God; and a fellow sufferer with us in all the results that came by Adam's transgression from which He [Jesus] was delivered by obedience, death and the resurrection."

Roberts had observed a key point of difference. On the surface it might have seemed small, but this very point underlies the whole plan of salvation, and was the beginning of the great divide between Nichols and the Christadelphians—and the rest of Christendom.

Note: The key passage under discussion was from the apostle Paul, in Romans 5:12. A surface reading of the text, as most were willing to accept, lead to the concept that if "one man" sins (usually interpreted as the literal man Adam) and "all" are condemned for Adam's sin, it follows that "one man" can be righteous (usually interpreted as Christ) and "all" are justified or made righteous. This was a concept that, for Nichols, contradicted the rest of the teaching of the Bible and therefore needed further investigation. Two points stood out: 1) that if the Bible is indeed the Word of God, it should be without contradiction when properly understood; and 2) if we are all sinners and have mortal dying bodies as a result of Adam's sin, and can be saved by Christ's righteousness, why any need for the Bible and obedience to its commands, which is clearly mandated in Scripture? This was indeed the launching point of the whole debate. —Editor.

A New Emphasis: Obedience

Due to Nichols' energetic and youthful enthusiasm in searching out the true teachings of the Bible, he continued to add new members as a Christadelphian preacher. A year later (1878) he reported their names and former affiliations in *The Christadelphian*, as was customary among the ecclesias. But the perceptive reader could also see in his report a new emphasis on the Bible demand for obedience. "Oh! Brethren in Europe and America, let us buckle on the whole armor, and with renewed vigor put forth every effort to 'crucify the flesh' (Gal. 5:25), to 'present [our] bodies a living sacrifice' (Rom. 12:1), and to make a complete separation from the godless world (2 Cor. 6:17–18).... Oh, may we be faithful in this and all other things, that when our great Judge comes we may be found without spot or wrinkle (Eph. 5:26), vessels ready 'for the Master's use' (2 Tim. 2:21)."

It was a new dimension. Even though Nichols was baptizing new members (he now had about 70) who had been "fully instructed" in the Word, the need to change one's personal life and habits to be saved was unexpected—and often unaccepted.

Nichols knew he was taking a risk. This was not according to standard Christadelphian teaching, yet he was convinced the Word of God demanded it. Being committed to total honesty, he could not compromise. "When God commands," he wrote, "let us not hesitate to obey, although it bring trouble, persecution, bonds, or imprisonments. If we can only remember that our light afflictions work out



BEYOND McMINNVILLE IN 1879

Preaching the “truth” was foremost in Nichols’ heart. And in the new territory of Oregon, he had no intention of limiting his work to McMinnville. In February 1879, he and his wife traveled north to Portland. Taking a boat for Eagle Cliff (see map), they reached the residence of Brother Conyers, who was “waiting with his little steamer to convey [them] to Marshland and thence to his place.” According to Nichols’ report in *The Christadelphian*, “we arrived just at dark, and went immediately to the schoolhouse where we found a houseful to hear the Word expounded. We held meetings every day and night while there, and not withstanding it rained all the time, the little schoolhouse was filled to overflowing. On Sunday, the 2nd of March, it rained hard, and I spoke six hours without stopping.”

Brother Conyers of Eagle Cliff confirmed the success of the meetings by submitting his own report in *The Christadelphian*, in which he said that an additional “five persons associated themselves with the truth” as a result of the meetings, and he hoped “[God willing] that about twelve or thirteen more” were at that time “like the noble Bereans, examining the Word of God carefully to see if these things be so or not. It makes my heart to rejoice,” he added, “when I see and read of persons giving heed to the truth.”

After a stay of twelve days, Nichols and his wife started for home.

But here again, all was not glowing success. Returning to Portland, Nichols found that the enemy had been at work “trying to devour the seed we had sown on our way down.” Staying in Portland three days, they watered the seed, “trusting God to give increase.” And there was deep sorrow. “A terrible scourge of diphtheria” had struck among the brethren at Clatskanie. Brother Lee lost one little boy, Brother Blood lost one boy and one little girl, Brother O. Bryant two, and Brother Elliott two. It was a severe trial of their faith—a trial for which the true Word of God could be the only solace.

for us a ‘far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory’ (2 Cor. 4:17), and believe that God will do just as He has promised, we can then (like Paul) take ‘joyfully the spoiling of goods’ (Heb. 10:34), and [be] ‘as sorrowful yet always rejoicing’ (2 Cor. 6:10).”

Did he want new members? Of course he did. But the limiting factor was the Word of God to which he was committed. Of one meeting he wrote that he could have baptized many more if he were not adhering so strictly to the Bible standard and “would just allow that infants would be saved.” Another time he said: “I am very certain that I could have immersed fifty at one time if it had not been that I taught that there was no hope outside of Christ and a strict obedience after getting into Him.”

More Dissension

Early the next year (1879), more dissension was showing, this time with three Restitution preachers whom Nichols had baptized the previous year. Nichols reported in *The Christadelphian*, “Three Restitution preachers who promised to obey the truth and were helping to proclaim the whole truth... are sowing discord and trouble.... one of the preachers and several others ... have been agitating crotchets subversive of the truth. When they were immersed, they professed to have given up their crotchets.” [A crotchet is “a perverse or unfounded notion”—*Webster*.]

When Nichols reported what he called their “corruption in doctrine and practice” to Brother Roberts, Nichols was appealing to the leader to take a stand against the “corruption.” Apparently Roberts felt it not in the general interest to encourage debate or discussion, because he declined to publish details. Nichols interpreted this as Roberts being more interested in keeping the favor of the preachers and their sympathizers than in maintaining the purity of Bible teaching. It was a severe disappointment. At the same time, Roberts was upholding, without discussion, what he himself believed in and what his group supported: the common belief that we all die because Adam sinned. Was the Bible teaching secondary?



The distance between Nichols and Christadelphia was widening.

1880: One Condition for Salvation: Obedience

Along with the points Nichols was finding in his very serious study of the Bible was this core issue: What must I do to be saved? What are the conditions?

For an extended time Nichols' had realized that God required more of those who would be saved than was being commonly taught, but he was still studying, still bringing together the evidence he found in the Bible.

By the year 1880, he was ready to present what he was convinced was the core of God's plan of salvation. It would not be popular, but he was committed to uphold the Bible and the God of the Bible, whatever the cost.

Nichols had been saying for years that God wanted obedience.

Among his followers he had always required a high standard of morality. But there had always been some vague, mysterious virtue in the sacrifice of Christ, some way for the well intending though not fully committed believer to be saved; that if one believed and was baptized and should die that night, he could be saved, regardless of the record of his life. But now Nichols saw one unvarying standard set by the prophets, apostles and Jesus Himself: that no one can be saved apart from knowing and obeying every command of God. The only way to salvation is the way of total commitment. It was the culminating statement in Jesus' first sermon: *"Be perfect, even as Your Father in heaven is perfect"* (Matt. 5:48). The whole Bible added up to it: moral perfection through growth.

Wherever he turned, he found all the Biblical writers and teachers speaking alike:

Jesus: *"Strive to enter through the narrow [difficult] gate ..."* (Luke 13:24).

Or Jesus' restatement of the two greatest commandments in the law: Love *"the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength...and your neighbor as yourself"* (Mark 12:30-31).

Or the Psalmist: *"Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart"* (Ps. 15:1-2).

Or the book of Proverbs: *"The upright will dwell in the land, and the blameless will remain in it"* (Prov. 2:21).

Or the apostle Paul: *"Having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from*



Beautiful waterfall near Clatskanie, Oregon



Swift River Reservoir, Oregon

all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). Eternal life is reserved for those "who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality" (Rom. 2:7).

Or Hebrews: *"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).*

Or Jesus' final message in Revelation: *"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14).*

Impossible? Not when God requires it. Who could know better what we are capable of? (Ps. 103:15). He would be defeating His own cause if He asked what we cannot do. He is not asking for physical perfection. And He is not asking for a total life of perfect moral obedience without one slip. He is only asking that we become like Christ, who came as our perfect example (Eph. 4:11–13; Heb. 5:8–9). All He asks is that we practice daily the virtues Christ set forth. God's demand is moral perfection through growth. There is "mercy" and abundant pardon as one turns from wrong conduct (Isa. 55:6–7); there is total forgiveness for one who repents and reforms (Ezek. 33:18–19). The bottom line is always *"confess and forsake"* (Prov. 28:13).

Reaction

The "new" teaching—that the commands of Scripture had to be actually learned and obeyed for one to be approved for salvation when Jesus comes—was a shock, both to Nichols' immediate ecclesias and to those in Christadelphia. And, not surprising, the majority response was the 1880 equivalent of "No way!" More than half of his immediate group deserted. But Nichols held firm. It was the teaching of the entire Bible, and there could be no deviating. Since no one had any inherited guilt from Adam, there was no sin that could not be overcome by applying the mandates of Scripture with the help God promised to provide.

Not some strange or new teaching but the clear demand of Jesus, *"Blessed are they that do his commandments"* Rev. 22:14) was what would bring about the great divide.

TO BE CONTINUED

From a current perspective:

Why not believe that "one man" (Adam) brought death into the world?

Underlying the whole discussion was Nichols' approach to Bible study: that when there appears to be disharmony within the Bible, something is wrong—not with the Bible text but with *our understanding* of the text.

Mr. Nichols believed that Adam and Eve were historical people, but he was already thinking that there was more in the first of Genesis than a simple account of the creation; and that the primary function of Adam and Eve in the first of Genesis was not as individuals but as **representatives of a class or group of humanity**.

Applying this approach to Romans 5:12, if "one man" Adam represents a class of individuals who are under covenant with God, and this representative "he" transgresses, the death that results is not immediate physical death at the cell level—remember that Adam lived to age 950. Rather, the death that resulted from Adam's transgression was a **penalty of death resting on the entire group** because of their accountability—which is what the verse states: they all die *"for that all have sinned."* The meaning of the word "Adam" is "humanity," "mankind," which immediately suggests a group of individuals not literally "one man." And if Adam represents a group, so would one man (usually assumed to be "Christ") represent a group in the same passage. He also observed that the apostle Paul himself used both Adam and Christ in this representative way (see 1 Cor. 15:22).

To explain this type of death, Nichols used the term "penal death," or death penalty, to avoid confusion. Simply by observing the world, he already believed that there was death at the cell level long before the so called "Fall"—plants, animals, humans, etc., are all subject to death, that God did not change the architecture of life because Adam sinned.

—Editor



WHO WERE THE SONS OF GOD WHO MARRIED DAUGHTERS OF MEN?

Who were the sons of God who married daughters of men? I'm thinking of those people who lived before the flood, in Genesis 6:1-2, "Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose."

Modern interpreters present a multitude of ideas. A footnote in the New Catholic Bible suggests that the "sons of God" may have referred to "descendants of Seth and Enos, who should have been close to God because of their virtuous ancestors; or it may refer to men in general." A footnote in the Berkeley Version comments, "We believe that the sons of Seth's family married daughters of Cain's family; that the home thus became ungodly and children grew up without relating life to God."

Taking the passage literally by surface reading, many see it describing the idea common among ancient worshipers that the gods made love with human women. In Egypt, the Pharaohs were believed to be the offspring of such a union.

Such ideas have no place in the inspired wisdom of God.

What might the passage be saying as it would harmonize with the revealed plan of God and the general teaching of the Bible?

Who are the "sons of God"? First, we must recognize that from a biblical perspective no one is naturally a child of God. "Those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God" (Rom. 9:8). To come into God's family we must be adopted. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'" (Rom. 8:14-15). Jesus identified the spirit as His words: "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). By believing and conforming our lives to His words, His teachings, we become adopted into God's family. "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of

truth"—we are brought forth "by the word of truth" (Jas. 1:18).

Jesus identifies prospective sons of God as those who receive Him, and to these are given "the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). These are the same sons of God to whom Paul writes, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling... that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:12, 15). The sons of God must work out their salvation in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.

Even now believers may be called "sons of God": "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1-2). But to remain permanently in the family these prospective "sons" must become like Christ in character, as John says further: "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He [Christ] is pure" (1 John 3:1; see also 2 Cor. 6:17-18).

Then at the coming of Christ, those who prove faithful to God will be made His immortal sons (Phil. 3:20-21).

Who are the "daughters of men"? Notice that they are daughters "of men"—they belong to the world at large, the world for which Jesus did not pray (John 17:9).

Now let us read our text again: "Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose" (Gen. 6:1-2). What was God's attitude toward this type of marriage? He condemned it: "And the Lord said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh... And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth'" (Gen. 6:3-7).

The "sons of God," dedicated believers who professed to be part of His family, have always been tempted to unite with the children of earth, the "daughters of men," but all such associ-

ation was strictly forbidden. When the Israelites were about to enter the promised land of Canaan, He repeated the command. *"You shall make no covenant with them...Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the Lord will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly"* (Deut. 7:1–4). Why did God command the Israelites not to marry the daughters of men? Because *"they will turn your sons away from following Me."*

The same command is repeated in Joshua 23:11–13: *"Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the Lord your God. Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations—these that remain among you—and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the Lord your God has given you."*

The command was not always strictly observed, to the ruination of the offender. Of King Solomon we read: *"But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, 'You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods. 'Solomon clung to these in love' (1 Kings 11:1–2). And just as the Lord had said, 'For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David...Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord...and sacrificed to their gods' (1 Kings 11:4–8).*

The same principle of separation was still in force in New Testament times. *"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?"* (2 Cor. 6:14).

The apostle Paul stated the rule for Christian marriage: *"A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord"* (1 Cor. 7:39). Christians were to marry *"only in the Lord."*

This is why God was displeased when *"sons of God,"* those who had pledged themselves to obey the law of God, married *"daughters of men,"* i.e., those who worshipped gods other than the mighty Creator of heaven and earth.*

"Sons of God" marrying "daughters of men" is not about angels marrying mortals because...

—angels do not marry see Luke 20:35–36, *"they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."*

—angels cannot sin *"So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?' The sting of death is sin"* (1 Cor. 15:54–56, NKJV)

—angels are not flesh and blood because *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption"* (1 Cor. 15:50)

—we must always compare spiritual with spiritual when studying inspired Scriptures (1 Cor 2:13), and both terms: ***"sons of God"*** and ***"daughters of men"*** refer to groups of individuals

—there are no so-called "fallen angels," i.e., no heavenly beings who lose their exalted status taught in the Bible.

The word translated *"angels"* in the Bible simply means *"messengers,"* and the context determines its meaning, whether it is referring to ordinary human messengers or angels of God. Angels of God *"never die"* (Luke 20:35–36). Example: 2 Kings 1:3, *"The angel (malak) of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers (malak) of the king of Samaria..."* The first *"angel"* in this text is a heavenly messenger of God, the context shows that the second messengers are the very human messengers of the king of Samaria.

The Hebrew lexicon gives the following:

mal âk, mal-awk; from an unused root meaning to *despatch* as a deputy; a messenger; spec. of God, i.e. an angel (also a prophet, priest or teacher):—ambassador, angel, king, messenger. (SHG) — *one sent, a messenger*, whether from a private person, Job 1:14, or of a king, 1 Sam. 16:19; 19:11, 14, 20; 1 Ki. 19:2, etc. (GES).

*The thought is confirmed by the definitions of the original words used in Genesis 6, as given in Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar. The comment on Gen. 6:1–4 reads, *"Sons of God; His worshippers..."* (Not angels—an opinion based on a false theory of the passage)... *Daughters of men, is the appropriate designation for the females of the other race, who were not worshippers of the true God."*

AWESOME DESIGNS

"Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God!" - Job 37:14

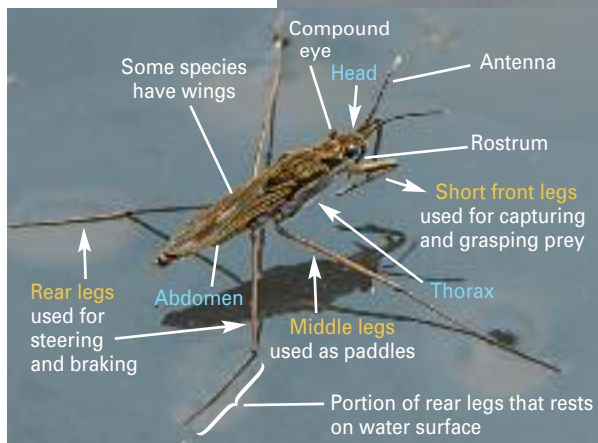
Water striders have three pairs of legs, each with a different function.

They use their strong **front legs** to grab insects that fall onto the water's surface, or to get away quickly from danger. Their **middle legs** are designed as tiny oars to propel the insect across the water. Their **hind legs** act as rudders and brakes.

The water striders' legs are covered with tiny microhairs—more than one thousand per square millimeter! These hairs repel water and also trap tiny amounts of air that keep the insect buoyant on the water's surface.

WATER STRIDERS

Also, called WATER SKIMMERS, POND SKATERS OR WATER SKIPPERS.



Water striders do not bite people.



Water striders have a sharp mouthpart called a rostrum, to suck juices from their prey. They are considered beneficial insects because they eat mosquito larvae, also other insects on the surface of the water such as butterflies and beetles. Injured dragonflies are a favorite, as are worms that fall into the water.

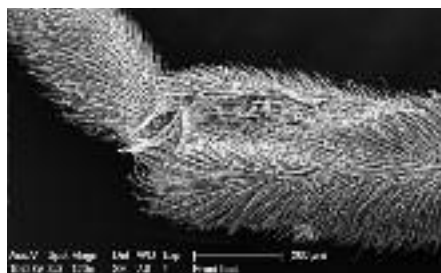
Water striders use the sensitive hairs on their legs to "hear." When an insect falls into the water, the vibrations and ripples it makes tell the water strider exactly where the insect is, and the water strider will dart across the surface of the water to catch its prey.



The fine hairs at the ends of its legs spread its weight over a large area, allowing the insect to be supported by the surface tension of the water.



Water striders communicate by sending ripples to each other on the surface of the water. They keep moving so they don't become prey to fish or other predators.



(Above) Photo of Water Strider's leg covered with microhairs. The tiny hairs covered in small grooves are hydrophobic (water-repelling) in nature. A comb-like structure, seen near the joint, is used to comb/clean the hairs and keep the water striders afloat. This photo was taken with a scanning electron microscope at 120x magnification.



Scientists are studying the legs of water striders hoping to learn how to make materials that easily repel water and help objects move faster over water.

Source: <http://www.fcps.k12.va.us>.
http://www.cirrusimage.com/bugs_water_strider.htm
https://www.flickr.com/photos/matthias_lenke/7175674848/in/photostream/
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerridae>



LAST WORDS

Name the books of the Bible which end with the following words:

1. *"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!"*
2. *"Thus I cleansed them of everything pagan. I also assigned duties to the priests and the Levites, each to his service, and to bringing the wood offering and the firstfruits at appointed times. Remember me, O my God, for good!"*
3. *"And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen."*
4. *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen."*
5. *"He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."*
6. *"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."*
7. *"Now the acts of King David, first and last, indeed they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer, with all his reign and his might, and the events that happened to him, to Israel, and to all the kingdoms of the lands."*
8. *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen."*
9. *"So Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."*
10. *"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."*

7. Who rebelled against Moses and were punished when the earth *"opened" and swallowed them up?*
8. Name the two women who were looking at a sepulcher when an earthquake occurred, and an angel descended from heaven and rolled back the stone from the door.
9. Who, when God delivered him from his enemies, composed a song that described an earthquake; *"That the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved and shook"*?
10. In the days of which king did people flee from an earthquake?

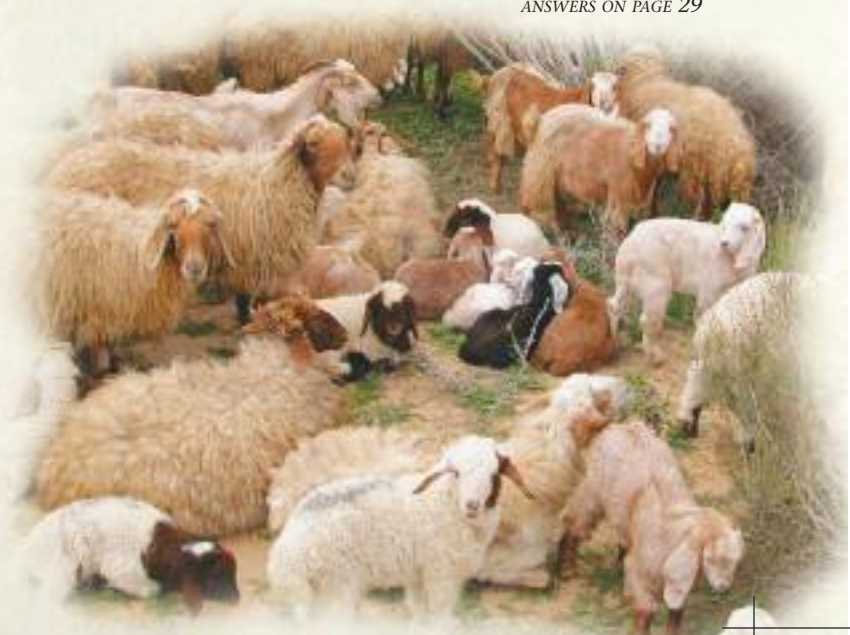
SHEEP AND GOATS

1. Were the Israelites permitted to eat goats?
2. After the resurrection, whom did Jesus tell to *"Feed my sheep"*?
3. *"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat..."* What will the lion eat?
4. Who *"come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves"*?
5. While David was looking after the sheep, why was Samuel with his father and seven brothers?
6. Who told King David a parable about a rich man who took away a poor man's only lamb?
7. Aaron was told to take two young goats and cast lots. One of the goats would be sacrificed as a sin offering. The other would be sent into the wilderness. Which was the *"scapegoat"*?
8. *"Abel was a keeper of sheep."* What was Cain's occupation?
9. After Jesus answered, *"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,"* which was the next animal to be mentioned in the conversation?

ANSWERS ON PAGE 29

QUAKES

1. Who, in company with the Israelites, met with God and the *"whole mount quaked greatly"*?
2. During whose attack on a garrison, *"the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling"*?
3. Which prophet experienced an earthquake while he was standing on a mountain top?
4. Who had a vision of an earthquake that leveled a tenth part of a city, killing seven thousand?
5. Who, at his death cried and then the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent?
6. Which two men, while prisoners, felt a great earthquake shake the prison foundations and had their cell door open?





WHAT YOU PLANT WILL GROW

One bright spring day, Peter went over to the neighbor's farm looking for work. He wanted to earn some money.

"Peter, you are a bit small to be hiring out, aren't you?" Farmer Jackson replied to Peter's eager request for work. "But I believe I can find something you can do. There is always lots to do on a farm." So Mr. Jackson set Peter to planting pumpkins. Carefully Mr. Jackson showed Peter just how to do it. "Drop three seeds every four feet down each row." He handed Peter a small pail of seeds. "When you get that pail empty, you'll find me in the shop."

Eagerly Peter started down the row. Three seeds, four feet. Three seeds, four feet. It was fun planting the pumpkin seeds, and the first row went fast. Then Peter looked across the field. "I'm hardly started!" he thought. By the end of the third row his back was getting tired. The creek down at the end of the field looked so inviting.

Peter kept on planting, but the pail seemed to be getting heavier. It looked just as full as ever. "I don't think Mr. Jackson would mind if I put four seeds in a hill," he thought.

HEAVENLY FATHER, help me to remember that I will reap what I plant. I want to reap Your blessings, so help me plant your Word in my heart so I will reap an abundant harvest in Your Kingdom. Amen.

So Peter went on. Four seeds, four feet. Four seeds, four feet.

But the sun was getting hotter, and still the pail was not half empty. The distance between the hills was getting less now, too, as Peter's steps grew slower and shorter. It was more like three feet now.

"I'm so hot! Wonder how the fish are biting down in the creek?"

The very idea of fishing made his feet move faster once again, and so did his hands. "Why bother to count the seeds anyway?" he told himself. "I'll save time if I just drop a few together in each hill." Now he was guessing, and you can be sure he was generous. Finally Peter decided he was too tired to go another step. Quickly he dumped the rest of the seeds and covered them up.

Feeling satisfied that his job was done, he went to find Mr. Jackson.

"Done so soon, my boy?" exclaimed Mr. Jackson in surprise.

"Yes, Sir," replied Peter, handing him the empty pail.

"Sure enough, it's empty," Mr. Jackson smiled. "What do I owe you?" he asked as he reached into his pocket and pulled out a dusty, worn billfold. "How about this?" To Peter's delight Mr. Jackson handed him two five-dollar bills.

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Jackson! Thank you!" Peter beamed as he took the money and ran off toward home to show Mother.

Mr. Jackson's eyes followed young Peter down the lane. "Time will tell how he did his work. Pretty quick, seems to me, he finished pretty quick."

You can imagine what Mr. Jackson thought of Peter's work when he went out to look at the pumpkin field a week later. The job looked all right the day Peter did it, but when the seeds began to sprout—!

It is an old lesson, but it impresses me. We reap just as we sow. It is true in the pumpkin field, and it is true in our Christian lives. I think of this story at times and wonder, Are there areas in my life where I am doing what Peter did? Do I want to take shortcuts in my spiritual



*Sooner or later the seeds
we plant will sprout!
We reap what we sow.*

work, stubbornly going my own way, and then cover it up, hoping nothing will ever come of it?

But sooner or later the seeds we plant will sprout! We reap what we sow.

There is a Bible proverb which says, *“Be sure your sin will find you out”* (Num. 32:23). It is just as true now as it was three thousand years ago. If we are thinking or doing things we would be ashamed to have others know about, we should remember that God knows and some day all our deeds will come to light. Everything may look good at the moment, but what about the revealing time?

We cannot expect a great harvest from our lives if we get weary in doing what we know is right and go an easier way. If we want a good crop, we have to give diligence to the work and carefully sow each seed of thought, so it will grow right. Even when the day gets long and the sun hot, we have to keep sowing, remembering that just as we sow we will reap (Gal. 6:7).

If you are ever tempted to do what Peter did, in a spiritual way, remember that the seeds are going to sprout. And what will the Master Farmer think then? We want Him to say to us “Well done.”

Now is the time to work carefully and diligently! ♦

From Parent to Parent



“Oh, no!” cried eleven-year old Sheri as she pulled a pan of burnt cookies out of the oven. She had put the cookies in with such anticipation, and now, look at them!

Her mother, hearing her cry, came to the kitchen. “What happened, Dear?”

“I burned the cookies,” Sheri answered unhappily.

“I can see that, but what went wrong?” her mother asked kindly as she put her arm around the distressed girl. “I know you didn’t do it on purpose. Let’s look at the recipe and see what might have happened.”

Sheri and her mother read over the recipe, line by line until they came to the oven temperature.

“I see what I did” said Sheri with a sigh. “I set the temperature too high.”

“Now that we know what went wrong,” said mother, “let’s wash the dishes and you can try again. Then we’ll have nice fresh cookies for dinner tonight.”

Sheri’s mother turned a discouraging situation into a positive learning experience by helping her daughter discover what went wrong and how to correct it. Instead of scolding her for burning the cookies, she shared her daughter’s distress, helped her find the problem, and encouraged her to try again. This helped Sheri to feel confident and eager to learn.

How we respond to our children affects the way they learn and mature. ♦

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 27

LAST WORDS

1. Psalms (Ps. 150:6)
2. Nehemiah (Neh. 13:30–31)
3. Mark (Mark 16:20)
4. Matthew (Matt. 28:19–20)
5. Revelation (Rev. 22:20–21)
6. 1 John (1 John 5:21)
7. 1 Chronicles (1 Chron. 29:29–30)
8. 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. 13:14)
9. Genesis (Gen. 50:26)
10. Judges (Judg. 21:25)

SHEEP AND GOATS

1. Yes (Deut. 14:4)
2. Simon Peter (John 21:17)
3. Straw (Isa. 11:6–7)
4. False prophets (Matt. 7:15)
5. He was trying to find the Lord’s anointed, Saul’s successor (1 Sam. 16:1–13)
6. Nathan (2 Sam. 12:1–4)
7. The one sent into the wilderness (Lev. 16:5–10; see also verse 22)
8. A tiller of the ground (Gen. 4:2)
9. Dogs (Matt. 15:24–26)

QUAKES

1. Moses (Ex. 19:17–18)
2. Jonathan (1 Sam. 14:14–15)
3. Elijah (1 Kings 19:11–13)
4. John (Rev. 1:1; 11:13)
5. Jesus (Matt. 27:50–51)
6. Paul and Silas (Acts 16:25–26)
7. Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Num. 16:1, 3, 31–32)
8. Mary and Mary Magdalene (Matt. 28:1–2)
9. David (2 Sam. 22:1, 8)
10. Uzziah (Zech. 14:5)

*Sometimes in our blindness we sort of abuse,
The good that we find 'long the way,
Thus making the journey a little bit rough,
By the things that we do and we say.*

*But each day's a new blessing and another new chance
To correct what was wrong yesterday,
And the privilege to start all over again—
Praise God for this gift of Today!*

Your only real limitation is that which you set up in your own mind or accept as insurmountable.

*Look for the good in each trial.
When trials come big end first and pile up,
could it be the Lord is giving us extra opportunity to
strengthen our spiritual muscles?*

The kindness planned for tomorrow doesn't count for today.

Material riches have no inherent value in the perspective of eternity—only how we use them counts.

Use Today!

Microsoft Outlook, Day-Timers, dry erase boards and "to do" lists all belong to the modern way of getting things done. A plan is helpful, but the real issue is not the work but time. Too much to do and not enough time to do it. What is it called? Life. *"For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away"* (James 4:14).

The apostle Paul had the same thought when he advised the believers in Ephesus, *"Make the very most of your time"* (Eph. 5:16 Moffatt). Are we already doing that? Paul would say, "You can do better." He wasn't trying to add anything to our already full schedule. Instead he wanted us to see what fills our time. What should be our priorities? What are we doing with those many hours each day?

The Christians at Ephesus could understand Paul's point. Their small port had few ships visiting. So on those infrequent occasions when a ship docked, it was not time to be on vacation.

When Paul was telling these people at Ephesus about making the most of opportunity, it clicked. If someone contracts with you to do a job by the end of June and it doesn't fit into your schedule until July, forget it—you won't get paid.

Too often opportunity knocks, and is gone.

You hear people talking about doing something the day "my ship comes in." Check the shipping schedule—your ship may be already at dock. Use the time that you have *today*.

Now is the time to make the right choices with what you do with your time. ♦

*Too often opportunity
knocks, and is gone.*

*You can't recover
lost time!*



“Teach us to number our days”

Is the thought intended to depress us? Never! These words are to alert and warn us. There is grace in this warning. There is love in this warning. “Teach us,” he says, “to make the most of our time”—for very good reason: “that we may grow in wisdom.” Recognizing that our days are numbered gives us the possibility of days without number!

The value of a warning lies in the use we make of it. This warning should wake us up. Fear is good, if it moves us to escape to safety.

This warning should help us grow in wisdom. How can we find wisdom in counting our days? By making our days count! By remembering that in the end the things that count are the things you can't count.

This warning should help us keep a balance in our lives. It should alert us to put eternal things first and let temporal things come second. For the only real benefit of the temporal is in using it for eternal purposes.

This warning should help us use the time, literally grab hold of it. Only those who know Christ really know how to own their days.

“Teach us to number our days...” Why not give your time to God, and turn that count-down into a count-up? Doesn't the Bible tell us that “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pet. 3:8)? Here is something ultra-important. Here is a mathematical formula assuring us that each day is a chance to invest in a thousand years worth of eternity. God gives us a twenty-four-hour slice of time in which to make the most of every opportunity, opportunities that will have eternal repercussions.

If a single day to us is equivalent to a thousand years on God's scale, just think how that adds UP. Every day we spend working for God is laying up a thousand years of days of eternal investment. Every month we've added another 10 million years of life in Christ's Kingdom—years which will lengthen out into eternity. This puts an eternal dimension on our earthly hours.

Can we even begin to fathom the value of these numbered days? ♦

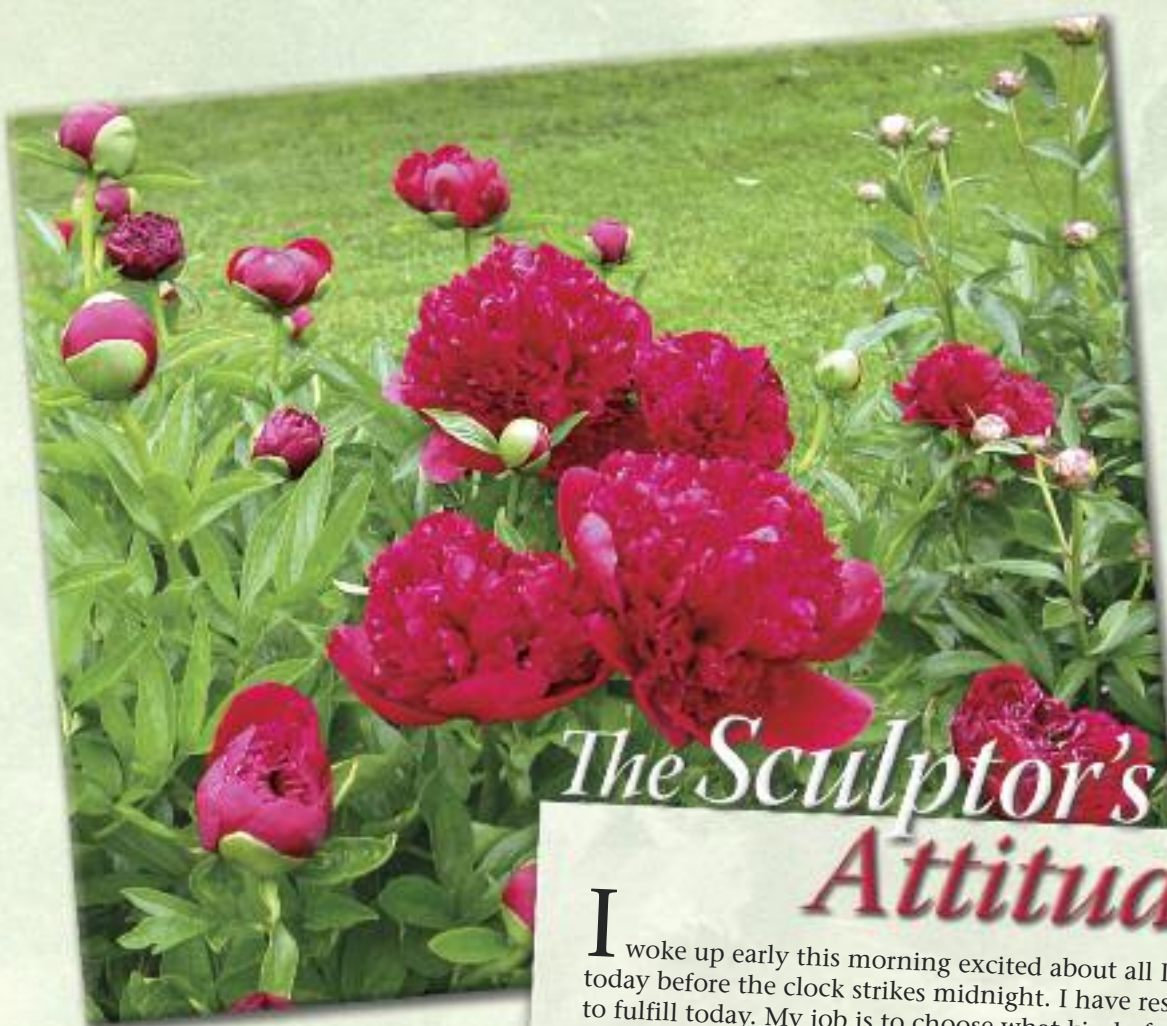
Can you imagine how you would feel if every morning when you woke up there was a large number on the wall of your bedroom, and every day the value of that number would be one less? If that number represented the remaining number of days you had to live, wouldn't you be aware of it? Wouldn't you be thinking, What can I do with this day?

The fact is that our days are numbered. The only problem, we do not see those numbers posted anywhere, nor do we hear the countdown. The days just keep coming, one at a time, and we forget that they are numbered at all. That is why the Psalmist prayed, “Teach us to number our days... teach us to make the most of our time, that we may grow in wisdom.”

God would have you and me conscious of the realities of life and death, because making good judgments depends on good information. He thinks that when you and I are old enough to exercise mature judgment, we ought to realize our days are pre-counted, and this fact should make us say our prayers a little more carefully, and spend our hours a little more wisely.

The Psalmist says it many ways. He compares our days to God's eternity, saying that a thousand years to Him are like one day to us. He says we are like desert grass, which springs up each morning green and fresh in the dew, only to dry and wither in the afternoon sun. We are like that dream we can't quite remember. “You sweep people away like dreams that disappear” (Ps. 90:5 NLT). “Seventy years are given to us! Some may even reach eighty. But even the best of these years are filled with pain and trouble; soon they disappear, and we are gone” (verse 10).

What counts is not the number of hours you put in, but how much you put in the hours.



The Sculptor's Attitude

I woke up early this morning excited about all I could get done today before the clock strikes midnight. I have responsibilities to fulfill today. My job is to choose what kind of day I am going to have.

- ✓ Today I can complain because the weather is rainy—
or I can be thankful that the earth is getting watered for free.
- ✓ Today I can grumble about my health problems—
or I can rejoice that I am alive and thank God for the health I have.
- ✓ Today I can fret that I don't have more money—
or I can be glad that my finances encourage me to plan my purchases wisely and guide me away from waste.
- ✓ Today I can bemoan my small circle of friends—
or I can truly appreciate the friends I have.
- ✓ Today I can whine because I have to go to work—
or I can praise God because I have work I can do.
- ✓ Today I can long to travel and see fascinating places and different cultures—or I can look for interesting and beautiful things about me.
- ✓ Today I can murmur dejectedly because my paths are so ordinary—or I can feel privileged because God has shown me how I can use ordinary things to gain that which is eternal.

Today stretches ahead of me waiting to be shaped. Here I am the sculptor. God has given me the tools I need. What I make of **TODAY** is up to me.

