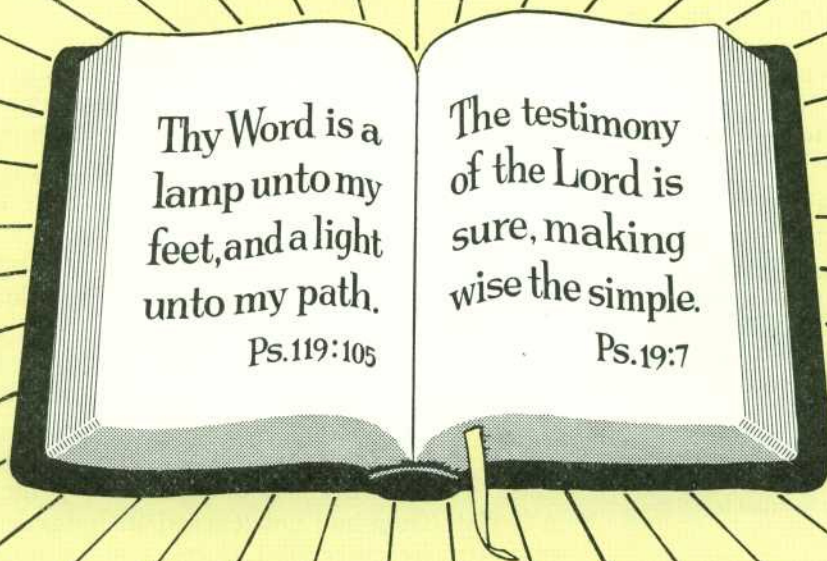


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



The Fallacy of the Scarlet Thread (Part Two)

Courting Death

EGO : Harnessed for God

The Sabbath

Megiddo Message

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A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

- Strengthen your faith in the Bible
- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God.
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Editorially Speaking . . .

Grow Up in Christ!

ONE OF the incredible oddities of human nature is how small big people can be. They have reached their growth, but they have not grown up. You look to them for adult behavior, but all you get are childish reactions. Like trees at timberline, they seem to signal, "No growth beyond this point!" They are afflicted with *grow-uplessness*.

What is the corrective? Character growth must come from within. The most that full-grown men and women can do is show us the way to grow; we ourselves must do the growing.

What is the command? That we may "grow up into him in all things"—not some things but *all* things. With all of us the spiritual life begins with the infant stage, "as newborn babes." From this frail beginning we must grow until we reach maturity.

How unseemly for the growing Christian to indulge in childish diversions. Every time we are not easily entreated, is it not childish? Every time we yield to just a little foolishness, is it not really childishness? Every time we demonstrate a feeling of jealousy or strife, we are demonstrating our immaturity; we are yet in our babyhood. When we speak harshly instead of with the quiet modesty of wisdom, we show that we lack much of Christian maturity. When our conversation is over-balanced by the fleeting happenings around us instead of fastened on heavenly virtues and the wonders of eternity, our minds are not yet mature. "The keynote of our conversation," wrote the apostle Paul, "should be a sense of all that we owe to God." Thinking too highly of ourself, then, belongs to the childish period of life.

Paul wrote to those who should have been teachers but needed yet to be taught the elementary principles of the gospel of Christ. They had not learned their lessons as they had opportunity. Hebrews 5:14 gives a general guideline for measuring Christian maturity: "Solid food is for adults—that is, for those who through constant practice have their spiritual faculties carefully trained to distinguish good from evil" (Weymouth trans.). It is by exercise that we develop either mentally or physically—and spiritually. As we wrestle with our daily problems, we develop strength and by practice we can train ourselves to discern the right attitude and action.

Let us test our maturity. Can we meet provoking situations without being provoked? Or do we indulge in the childishness of temper tantrums when we are crossed? Maturity means composure, self-control, perfect peace, that cup brimful of sweet water which can spill nothing but sweet water however hard it is jolted.

Another test of maturity is the ability to take criticism. Wrote Emerson, "The wise man throws himself on the side of his assailants; it is much more to his interests than theirs to find his weak points." Such an attitude is sure evidence of spiritual maturity. ●●

The blood of Christ—
 What is its wonder-working power—for you? for me?
 What does God say?

The Fallacy of the Scarlet Thread

In Second Timothy 4, Paul the Apostle forewarned us of a situation that should arise after his time, a general apostasy from the true religion. Into the church that Christ had founded there should be introduced a system of teachings completely foreign to the teachings and precepts of its Founder. Salvation through Christ's shed blood is one of these.

The following are Paul's words to his son-in-the-faith, Timothy: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

There is some relation between the words "fallacy" and "fable." The first definition of "fable" is, "To narrate fictitiously or falsely; compose or tell fables or myths, fabricate, lie, . . . a legendary story." "Fallacy" is defined as "anything that deceives the mind or eyes; delusive reasoning, delusion." Surely the fallacy of the scarlet thread is a fable, a lie, delusive reasoning.

In a new translation of the New Testament by William Barclay, II Tim. 4:3, 4 reads: "The time will come when they will refuse to listen to sound teaching. They will collect a motley assortment of teachers to tickle their ears by telling them the things they want to hear. They will deliberately shut their ears to the truth, and will wander down the byways of mythology."

PRAYER

Eternal Father, Thou mighty Being whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, yet who makest Thy abode in humble and contrite hearts; here would we meet with Thee, and feel for a moment in our souls the greatness of Thy power. Here

we would know the dignity of life, and learn Thy perfect law of liberty. Here we would rise to the height of Thy upward call, and deem ourselves Thy sons, the potential heirs of the world to come.

We repent that all too often we have despised Thy leading. When evil has made of us its prey, we have said, "These sins are not ours. They are a heritage of the past. Our fathers have sowed the wind, we reap the whirlwind." Thus have we sought to silence Thy voice of rebuke, and smooth over our shortcomings with a mantle of innocence. Reveal to us now the truth about our inner selves, and may we be open to conviction, no matter how unpleasant the revelation.

Father, we especially thank Thee for the understanding we have of Thy divine Word. We rejoice that it was Thy will to reveal in advance that a time would come when mankind, displeased with the simple teachings of true religion, would no longer stand wholesome teaching, but following human desire would gather around them a crowd of teachers to tickle their fancy; and they would turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned to fables. This has happened, is happening, strengthening our faith.

May we not be so foolish as to accept the fable that we can trust in Christ's righteousness, knowing that we must become perfect as Thou art perfect. Alert us that at the Day of Judgment we each shall have to stand or fall for what *we* have done.

Unite us to Thee in the bonds of love and will and purpose. Out of Thy fulness which is in Christ, give to each of us according to his need. Make us wise with His wisdom; pure with His purity; strong with His strength; that we may rise into the power and glory of a life that is life indeed, and in the end merit eternal salvation.

Hear our heartfelt humble prayer, and when Thou hearest, forgive and bless, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

DISCOURSE

WHAT IS God's way of salvation? Is it the way of the scarlet thread? Is salvation assured to everyone who believes through the death of Jesus?

In the first article in this series we searched for the scarlet thread in the records of pre-Mosaic times, and it was not. The offerings of Jacob and Isaac and Abraham were offerings of thanksgiving and praise, not sin offerings.

Then we searched in the law of Moses for a suggestion of the scarlet thread, and it did not exist. According to the God-given law of Moses, sacrifices never freed the evildoer from a penalty of death. They merely re-established a covenant relation with God which the transgressor had broken by an infraction of a lesser law.

Now we will study the scarlet thread where it *does* exist—in theology's idea of God's way of salvation. What must I do to be saved? Shall I aspire to perfect holiness in the sight of God? Impossible, they say, first of all because of that burden of original sin. We are all sinners because long, long ago our great grandfather Adam disobeyed. But no, the Bible tells us, "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins" (Prov. 5:22).

Moreover, theology teaches that once we have sinned, nothing less than the death of Christ can remove our guilt. But says the Prophet, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7).

Let us consider this cardinal point of general theological teaching: that we are morally and spiritually too deficient ever to be able to keep the law of God inviolate. For, "Remember that a man who keeps the whole Law but for a single exception is none the less a Law-breaker" (Jas. 2:10, Phillips Bible). Moral perfection, they say, is definitely beyond human capability. We simply can't do it. We cannot become perfect in the sight of God. (Doesn't that sound like a lazy man's lament?)

What say the Scriptures?

Perfection Impossible?

Let us begin with the words of Jesus. God did not depend on a single isolated prophet or apostle to deliver to us the message that we must attain to moral perfection. This divine requisite is part of the first preaching Jesus did. After discussing numerous aspects of Christian character development, He summarizes in the Sermon on the Mount:

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). If by this Jesus did not mean that it is possible to reach such an exalted plane of achievement, why did He give such a command? If He meant that we should keep striving and reaching toward a goal which we could never attain, why didn't He say just that?

What does Peter say about the completeness of our obedience? "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [conduct]; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Pet. 1:14—16). "*Be ye holy; for I am holy.*"

Do I hear our theologian saying, "You have stopped short of the most vital part of Peter's testimony. Read verses 18 and 19: 'Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.' The scarlet thread is there—why not recognize it?"

Let us see. If our means of redemption is through the death of Christ on Calvary, that is physical blood. And physical blood would be a million times more corruptible than silver or gold; hence, literal blood could not be referred to. Furthermore, nothing is said about this "blood" redeeming us from sin; it redeems us from the "vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers," or the "vain manner of life handed down" from our fathers (New Catholic Edition).

That this shed blood has not cleansed us from sin is made crystal clear in verse 22: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren. . . ." We are purified by "*obeying the truth*," not by the blood of Christ.

The Apostle says further, "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby (I Pet. 2:1, 2)—here is a process which spells out perfection in detail. We must lay aside *all* malice, and *all* guile, hypocrisies, envies and *all* evil speakings.

Paul's admonitions to the various churches proclaim clearly God's thoughts on the subject. Paul prayed that they should be "sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:10). He exhorted them to cleanse themselves "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Cor. 7:1). If Christ's shed

blood had cleansed them, why should such an exacting command be necessary?

Paul desired that they be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation" among whom they should be shining lights (Phil. 2:14, 15). Can anything short of moral perfection satisfy such far-reaching requirements?

Many people will still maintain that such is impossible, that perfection is a commendable and worthy ambition but certainly not a requisite for salvation. But what of the men and women who have already achieved? What of Noah who was "a just man and perfect in his generations"? What of Enoch who "walked with God"? What of Zacharias and Elisabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, who were "both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6)? What of Paul who fought a good fight, finished his course, kept the faith and was sure of the crown of righteousness (II Tim. 4:7, 8)?

No, the Bible marks out absolutely the unequivocal demand for moral perfection—not a long, perfect life without one slip, but moral perfection through growth. Our goal is to "grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ," until "we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:15, 13). We are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:20, 21).

God's program for the man He will accept is plain: As he confesses and forsakes each sin, God will pardon and forgive (Isa. 55:6, 7) until at last he can stand before God faultless, blameless, holy and undefiled.

Consider the difficulty if God should accept His material for the world to come by any yardstick short of perfection. Who could say how much less could be tolerated—13 percent, 29 percent, 37 percent, 51 percent?

Any lower standard would be no better than no standard at all. If He should usher into His kingdom one man with a little anger, another with a little pride, another with a little malice, another with a little selfishness, another with a little stubbornness, another who would occasionally tell a white lie, and many others, each with a little of one evil propensity unpurged from his heart, the inhabitants of the world to come could borrow from each other; they could buy, sell, and trade among

themselves, with the result that all existing evils in the world today would be represented in God's heavenly Kingdom.

No indeed, no standard less than perfection could reflect the wisdom of an infinite Creator!

The Wages of Sin

Does any and every transgression past, present and future make us subject to the wages of sin? Do we need some full-coverage insurance to take care of all our sins? Is a death required to save us from eternal condemnation?

We have already showed God's plan of mercy and forgiveness which extends to all who turn from their sins. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Ps. 103:17, 18). Why, then, is a death necessary to remove the consequences of our sin?

Nowhere does the Bible state that physical death is required to remove the penalty which sin inflicts. "The wages of sin is death." Sin unconfessed and unforsaken will most certainly result in eternal death. But that does not mean that because all men have transgressed the law of God, all would have to die were it not for the sacrificial death of Christ in their stead. Such conclusions may strengthen the scarlet thread, but they are theological, not Biblical.

Eternal death is the end result of sin. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:15). The wide gate and the broad way leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13). The wages of sin is death, and a just God will pay these wages to all who persist in their sinful ways. It is God's plan to "render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" (Rom. 2:6—9)—and in the end, death.

No place here for the scarlet thread!

The Gift of God

"But the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). In this verse the believers in easy and instant salvation find abundant support—so they feel. But in what sense is eternal life a gift through Jesus Christ our Lord? Does God give it to all men indiscriminately?

Certainly our reward, our salvation, our eternal life will be given by Jesus. "For our conversation

is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:20, 21). We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; and then—and not until then—will we receive the change to His glorious body, when "this corruptible shall . . . put on incorruption; and this mortal shall . . . put on immortality"; then shall "be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (I Cor. 15:53—55).

Salvation is *through Jesus Christ our Lord*. But if we do not obtain it simply by accepting the death of Jesus in our stead, how is it the "gift of God"?

Eternal life is a boon of such unfathomable magnitude as to be entirely beyond our capacity to earn, however great our sacrifice. What imaginable service could we human creatures perform in fifty, sixty or seventy years that could truly "earn" the reward of eternal life? As in the parable of Jesus, after we have done all that is required of us, we are still unprofitable servants; we have done only that which was our duty to do (Luke 17:10).

Likewise in our efforts toward the goal of life eternal: After we have sacrificed our all; after we have cleansed ourselves from all the filthiness of the flesh and mind; after through ceaseless effort at self-mastery we have succeeded in purifying ourselves even as Christ is pure; after we have banished all sin from our lives, becoming one with God mentally and morally; after we, in every detail of life, have ceased to do evil and learned to do well; after we have attained that moral perfection which in the sight of God is priceless; after we have taken up our cross of self-denial daily and borne it through to the end; after we have replaced every evil thought with a good thought, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; after we have so trained ourselves that all that we do and say is to the honor and glory of God; after we have completely changed ourselves so that our entire attitude is "none of self" and "all of God"; even then immortality and salvation is a gift—a gift which only God can bestow. But it is not a gift in the sense that anyone who asks may receive. It is a conditional gift. God does not intend to live forever with those whom He "hates" or "abhors" or those who do things which He abominates. He will utterly destroy all the wicked of the land (Ps. 101:8), not bless them with the gift of immortality.

No, salvation is a gift only to God's own, His sons and daughters, those who have showed sufficient

interest in that gift to dedicate their lives to those things which God loves—purity, holiness, virtue and faith. To all such the "gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." He is the great Paymaster who will bring us our reward at His second coming (Rev. 22:12).

Salvation vs. Reward

In an attempt to escape responsibility for the "doing" verses of the Bible, theology has established a separation between "salvation" and "rewards." Salvation, they say, comes first, and righteousness follows as a result. Salvation is the result of believing in and accepting Jesus and His atoning death for our sins. Rewards are a type of extra bonus offered to encourage our efforts in good living, missionary labor, evangelism and the like. Salvation is equal and for all; rewards are according to our works.

Let us test this theory by the Word of God. Begin by impressing once and for all time Jesus' own unequivocal statement on being saved: "But he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matt. 10:22; 24:13). Some religious teachers discount the meaning of this text as it might apply to us because it is part of Jesus' commission to the seventy. But among His instructions to the seventy are other timeless principles including the need for cross-bearing, self-sacrifice, humility, generosity, Christian discernment and the providence of God. (See Matt. 10:8, 16, 24, 26, 33, 38.) Why then should we restrict the application of the principle of endurance? The context in which Jesus' words in Matt. 24:13 occur, picture endurance to the very end of one's day of testing.

Theologians who try to make a distinction between salvation and obtaining rewards postulate that salvation is God's free gift. One needs only to believe and accept Christ as his personal Saviour and he *is*—not *shall be* but *is* saved. No matter what his later life may be, his salvation is sure.

Well, Paul didn't reason this way. As he labored for others, his constant concern was his own personal attainment. He said, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9:26, 27).

Salvation is the end result of a continued effort in right doing, not right doing the result of salvation. Said Jesus, "They that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead . . . are equal unto the angels," "neither can they die any more" (Luke 20:35, 36). Note that it

is "they that shall be accounted worthy"—we must endure *before* we can obtain salvation.

In His First Sermon, Jesus said: "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:12). Their reward for right doing was not in their possession—it was reserved in "heaven." (Jesus was not saying that heaven is to be the righteous man's reward, but that at present the reward of life and immortality is in heaven; Christ will bring it at His return—Rev. 22:12; I Pet. 5:4).

Jesus' words in Luke 6:35 presuppose that the reward will be salvation: "But love your enemies, and do good, . . . and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the highest"—how could this picture anything less than salvation?

Peter was aware that the reward Christ will bring will be salvation—a promise for the future. He said: "That the trial of your faith, . . . might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ . . . in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. . . . Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end for the grace [or reward] that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:7—9, 13). Salvation was the *end* of their faith, and it would be brought unto them *at the revelation of Jesus Christ* when He returns to establish His kingdom, and not before. Salvation comes at the *end*, not at the beginning of our walk by faith.

Hebrews 5:9 speaks of Christ as the "author of eternal salvation" to all who *obey* God. Again, eternal salvation is the reward for obedience.

Hebrews 10:34—36 links the reward with salvation: ". . . knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. . . . But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Our confidence and endurance will be recompensed with reward, and that reward will be salvation—"to the saving of the soul."

Hebrews 11:24, 26 pictures the reward at the end of the life-seeker's time of probation. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; . . . esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." The reward he sought was eternal salvation, and of this he made choice.

Revelation 11:18 pictures the reward at the end of life's journey—after Judgment Day: ". . . and the time of the dead that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name. . . ." Indeed, the reward and salvation are identical!

Colossians 3:24 suggests that the reward will be salvation: "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." Proverbs 3:35 specifies "glory" as the inheritance of the wise. Hence, when the righteous receive the reward of the inheritance—glory—they will most certainly be experiencing eternal salvation.

The Bible makes no difference between reward and final salvation. The reward will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, and He "will come and save" (Isa. 25:9).

We need have no concern lest our future reward prove to be something less than eternal salvation. Our hope is eternal life, which God that can—
(Continued on page 23)

Words to WALK By

Religion should be our steering wheel, not our spare tire.

God is glorified, not by our groans but by our thanksgivings.

We live on a moving line between past and future. That line is our lifeline.

I am an old man and have known a great many troubles, but most of them have never happened.

Man is born broken. He lives by mending. The grace of God is the glue.

The journey of a thousand miles begins with just one step.

Knowledge is proud that it knows so much, wisdom is humble that it knows no more.

Education consists in being afraid at the right time.

No man really becomes a fool until he stops asking questions.

Life's greatest tragedy is to lose God and not to miss Him.

Storms make oaks take deeper root.

Self-Denial Week

THOSE who would transform the world must first transform themselves"—here is Christian principle in need of constant exercise. The holy life is a life of change, of transformation, of self-denial, a continual renouncing of those things that the law of God forbids.

Among the assists suggested by the Word of God is fasting and self-denial. On several occasions recorded in the Divine Record, God's people proclaimed a fast in a time of trouble or perplexity. Moreover, it is a command of God that His people should fast and pray.

Therefore the week beginning February 7 has been set aside for the observance of self-denial by the Megiddo Church congregation, and for all scattered abroad who may wish to observe the week with us.

During this week we shall refrain from all meat, fish, fowl, eggs, cheese (except cottage cheese), cakes, cookies, pastries of all kinds, and partake of but three articles of food at any one meal. However, the variety may be varied with each meal as desired. Exception is made for the aged, the ill, or those on special diets.

All varieties of vegetables and fruits, fresh, frozen or canned (seasoned to taste), bread, butter, cereals and milk (no tea or coffee), are the diversity from which we will select. To be able to eat to satisfaction of three articles of staple food can scarcely be termed a hardship. But it is a restriction, and helpful to those who seek self-mastery. And it also is a reminder of how highly blest we are in having the variety to which we are accustomed.

Do you enjoy being a Christian? If not, there may be something wrong. A poem puts it this way:

If I have faltered more or less
In my great task of happiness;
If I have moved among my race
And shown no glorious morning face:
If beams from happy human eyes
Have moved me not; if morning skies,
Books, and my food, and summer rain
Knocked on my sullen heart in vain:
Lord, Thy most pointed pleasure take
And stab my spirit broad awake.

The Bible, too, is a book of joy. Christ came into the world with angels singing a hymn of joy. When He arose from the dead, His followers were too happy to utter a sound.

Let us make this week of self-denial a stimulus and a reminder of that real self-denial which we must engage in every day of our lives—that denial of our own ways, our own thoughts, our own wisdom, and our own self-directed standards of righteousness. This season can be a time of rapid spiritual growth if we will set to work with a cheerful spirit, a prayer, and a firm resolution.

My fast:

I shall abstain from petty things!
I shall abstain from hate and fear and greed.
I shall abstain from harmful thoughts,
For God has filled my every need.

My fast:

I shall abstain from unkind words
That pierce and sear the souls of those I love;
Deny the small discourtesies,
In me the law of kindness prove.

My fast:

I shall abstain from vicious dread,
Each homely, helpful task I'll gladly do.
I shall abstain from prideful things,
And humbler be in all I do.

My fast:

I shall abstain from lack of faith,
That faith and hope may stronger be in me.
I'll thank my God for promises
My inner vision now can see!

My fast:

It shall go on and on,
Until no more the face of self I see,
My will all yielded, Lord, to Thine,
From now—to all eternity!

Announcement

The annual Abib and New Year celebration of the Megiddo Church will begin this year at sundown Friday, March 26, and continue through March 27. The day will be marked by special programs and activities to welcome the New Year and to honor the life, achievement and destiny of our Saviour and King.

We extend to all our interested readers and friends our cordial invitation, in the words of the Psalmist:

"Come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. . . . For it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely."

We may never be so covetous,
headstrong or shortsighted as King Ahab,
yet we too may be . . .

Courting Death

KING Ahab came into his house in Samaria heavy and displeased. Everything was against him; what was there to live for? The sun had ceased to shine and the birds no longer sang for him; the cheers of his admiring subjects as his chariot rolled through the crowded streets fell on dull ears. All this, when things could so easily have been bright. He had just gained, with a handful of men and the help of Jehovah, his second smashing victory of the year over the hosts of Syria, and removed the menace of invasion from that quarter for a long time to come. Yet in the midst of victory he had been defeated, and that by his own wilfulness. Another failure, in a life thickly studded with failures great and small. Instead of destroying the Syrian king, he had decided to play politics and had released him, to make more trouble in the future. Of course the Prophet of Yahweh knew of it—a plague upon these sons of the prophets, who would never agree with a king!—and had administered a stinging rebuke and a pronouncement of doom. Small wonder that he came to his place chafing and sullen.

Wearing the diadem, he reflected, was a big job, much harder than anyone suspected. It was not fair to a ruler to put him through the strain of battle and then find fault with him for this little thing. Why, he had a treaty with Ben-hadad's own signature! What more could they want? What could they expect, anyway? He had won the war, hadn't he? And yet the counsel of the Prophet would persistently come to mind: "Thou shalt utterly destroy him." And he had disobeyed. At heart he knew it was all his own fault, but rather than admit it, even to himself, he strove desperately to place the blame elsewhere.

Slumped in a chair at the window, King Ahab stared moodily and unseeingly into space. What he

needed, he mused, was a change and a rest from the cares of state. Suddenly he had an idea. Ahab began to see things.

"That vineyard over there—that is a fine spot. I could landscape it and set out some shrubs and fruit trees; the east end would make an ideal vegetable garden. It already has a good stream running through it for irrigation, . . . with a new wall around it . . . it's near home. What a perfect spot in which to relax and forget all these troubles—wars and prophets and the like. After all, I'm really just a farmer at heart. I've got to have it!"

The emotionally unstable king had in a few moments risen from the depths of depression to the peak of animation. His remorse was forgotten. Impulsive as a small boy, he called,

"I say, Page, who owns that vineyard over there?"

"Naboth the Jezreelite," was the reply.

"Do you know him?"

"Yes, O king, I know him well."

"Fine! Come with me; I'm going to buy it."

"Buy it?" The page looked doubtful. "He is very much attached to that vineyard. Perhaps he won't care to sell."

"Then I'll trade. I must have that vineyard. I need it. Besides, I'm the king."

So childishly enthusiastic was the king of Israel that he had difficulty in maintaining his regal dignity as he approached Naboth.

"I have a proposition for you, Naboth. I want this vineyard. I will trade you another larger and better in its place, or I will give you the cash. What do you say?"

"This vineyard? The Lord forbid. This vineyard was given me by my father, and I expect to leave it to my son after me."

The king's face darkened with disappointment and anger.

"But I am the king, and I will give you any price you ask."

"I'm sorry, O king, but the vineyard is not for sale."

Down, down went Ahab's spirits, clear to the bottom. Earth and sky were black as he walked slowly homeward. Everything was against him again; what good was it to be king? One idea pervaded his small brain: "I want that vineyard." Never before had it seemed so desirable. He scuffed through the halls to his chamber and threw himself on the bed, to pout for all the world like a spoiled child, which in truth he was. Lacking the balancing element of a sure faith in God or even of a decent philosophy of life, he was a slave to his every desire and emotion, driven by every wind of time and chance, a pitiable condition indeed for a monarch. He wanted what he wanted when he wanted it, and he couldn't have it, so life was unbearable. He was without doubt a first-class general, but a very poor specimen of manhood, a man not big enough for the kingship.

So when Queen Jezebel came to offer sympathy and a plan whereby he could have his own way, he readily assented, even though the plan included murder and theft. In spite of past lessons, in spite of ample warnings, in spite of his own better judgment, he recklessly threw away his last shreds of decency in the impulse of the moment, for one more chance to gratify his covetousness. Courting death, with his eyes wide open!

We are all familiar with the story of how the wicked Jezebel brought about the death of Naboth in order that Ahab might have the vineyard. And again, as always, the eyes of the Lord had seen the fiendish deed, and even as the king went to claim his ill-gotten possession, he was confronted by his nemesis, the fearless prophet Elijah, who brought him up short with a definite and double curse of destruction for himself and his whole bloody family. Once again the wicked king found himself defeated in the midst of seeming victory, and again he came to his house heavy, displeased and despondent—and with ample reason.

Prompt repentance in sackcloth and ashes delayed the immediate execution of the sentence upon his house, for God is ever merciful and just. But Ahab himself was too far gone, too thoroughly hardened in his sins to make a permanent change, so that we read with a sense of relief of his violent death while again having his own way in defiance to the counsel of the Lord. He courted death until he got it.

The things written aforetime were written for our learning, and there are powerful lessons to be learned from these historical narratives. It is easy for us at this distance to see Ahab as he was, and to say that we would never be so childish, headstrong and shortsighted even under similar circumstances. Perhaps so, but how are we behaving under our own circumstances? Ahab can never stand in the Judgment and truthfully say that he never had a chance, and neither can we. To him and to us, opportunities for repentance and reformation came with outstretched hands, times without number. With him they were rejected until he himself was rejected; what of us?

We today are candidates for a kingship of far greater dominions than ever Ahab saw or dreamed of, if we will make ourselves worthy by overcoming the evils within while time and opportunity are extended. How often after a battle we have spared the life of the heathen king, the flesh, permitting him to recuperate for another day. A "devil bound" is not sufficient for salvation; only those who have completely killed the "old man" are worthy of reigning with Christ.

We must not covet our neighbor's vineyard or anything that pertains to him; above all, we must not covet any way of our own, anything of the world which is passing away with its lusts. Neither can we take counsel with the wicked to harm the innocent. If we change our taste and learn to want what God wants us to have in His own good time, instead of wanting what we want when we want it, there will be none of Ahab's ridiculous sensitiveness and blues and pouting. We might never consent to literal murder or robbery, yet if transgressing one of the least of God's commandments we are just as far from receiving the eternal blessing, for "sin is the transgression of the law," and "the wages of sin is death" (I John 3:4; Rom. 6:23). Also, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). When we behave in an unkingly manner, we are courting death just as Ahab was, and shall receive the condemnation of the Lord with just as much certainty.

To those who are overcoming all sin and evil, the advent of the Judge will be the consummation of all the past and the dawn of a new day.

"But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (Mal. 3:2, 3). ••

EGO: HARNESSSED FOR GOD

If we use our "drum-major" instinct merely to promote ourselves, we will miss true greatness.

THE ENGLISH noun "ego" customarily carries with it a distasteful inference, advancing the idea that self is the center of everything.

Webster defines egoism as the doctrine that everything is uncertain but the fact of one's existence. Ego, as we have been conditioned to think, is a sleazy product of the carnal nature, totally unbecoming in every respect to the Christian.

And this fact cannot be denied: There is in man's makeup a factor that wants to be important, whatever the price; that wants to surpass, that wants to achieve. One of the fathers of psychology called it "the dominant impulse in human nature."

This dominant impulse finds expression in many ways. We cannot deny that each one of us early in life asked to be noticed. Our first cry was for attention, and soon we learned clever ways to get ourselves in the center of the stage. Children are often little bundles of ego. They demand recognition, and children who are seen and not heard seldom make that choice themselves.

This egoistic disposition of mind, unless it is held in check, grows as one grows up. A writer once said, "The personal pronoun 'I' might well be said to be the coat of arms of some individuals." The Psalmist saw it in its true light: "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity" (39:5). Solomon, turning aside from God to gather the transitory things of life, also recognized the worthlessness of human pride: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The prophet Isaiah sounded a note of warning to the egotist in his day: "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight" (Isa. 5:21).

This ego business explains why so many people join so many things. Unimportant people feel important when they join an organization that is important. They will do almost anything to be noticed—wear a gaudy button, don a uniform, wear an outlandish hat, and even learn a secret password. This makes them feel significant. It is said that even Napoleon stooped to such pettiness, running his empire on buttons, ribbons, medals and titles.

Think, too, how ego has contributed to bigotry,

setting man against man, group against group, party against party, nation against nation. As a result of man's eagerness to be supreme, we find ourselves living in the midst of a world full of turmoil and trouble, "evil men and seducers" waxing "worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" as the days go by.

Man's insatiate desire for a place in the sun is not confined to our twentieth century; there are instances of it in the Bible—instances recorded for our learning and warning.

In Matthew's Gospel we read that the mother of James and John requested a place of distinction for her two sons in the Kingdom of Christ. What was Jesus' reply when, according to Mark's Gospel, James and John corroborated their mother's request? You would expect Him to rebuke them, but He didn't. Instead, He showed an awareness of man's innate craving for importance and also the potential value of such craving. He took their expressed desire for prominence and lifted it above the immediate occasion, saying in effect, You want to be important? All right, but be sure it is real greatness that you are after. Excel in goodness, meekness, moral eminence. "Whoever would be first among you must be servant of all" (Mark 10:44).

There is a marked difference between Jesus' suggested use of this instinct and the superficial, negative notion that pride is always something to be ashamed of, that it is always sinful to want to excel. Jesus expended a lot of energy telling people, common people, that they should not be content with being nobody. After all, God made us with possibilities for enduring excellence. He meant us to be great! Re-made souls are His crowning creation. He put eternity in our hearts. He made us lower than the angels, with all the capabilities of becoming morally like them, and ultimately equal to them physically.

Jesus condemned the proud and honor-seeking Pharisees. He denounced them for their hypocritical attention to paying "tithe of mint and anise and cummin" while they omitted "the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith." Their ego was not harnessed for God. He reproved their

love of human praise, their love of the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi, while they refused to do the things that would make them truly great.

When Jesus talked of goodness, He did not mean conformity to outward law alone, but to superior, inward goodness. He called men to the highest type of goodness, even moral perfection. Was it wrong to want to be good, or even better than others, in spiritual excellence? No! it was wrong not to care.

A Methodist bishop, examining a class of candidates for the ministry, asked them if they had a strong desire for preeminence in their chosen work. They all replied, with feigned humility, that such was not their desire. Said the bishop, "Then you are a sorry lot, all of you." He went on to say that Jesus fired the ambition of men more than anyone else in history. "Just be sure," He cautioned, "that it is real greatness you are after."

Jesus said to His very human disciples who wanted to be first: "You must take the road that leads to true greatness. I cannot give it to you. You must earn it. True greatness is not the result of favoritism, but fitness."

There is a vast difference between *appearing* big and *being* big. Jesus was surrounded by people with delusions of grandeur. The Romans lorded it over the weaker peoples of the world, trying to appear more important than they were. All clamored for an importance for which they were not pre-

pared. That's why so few understood Him when He said, "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Matt. 23:12).

You and I were made for greatness! God gave us all the necessary equipment to be important. Each of us has what one writer calls "a drum-major instinct," and there is no use trying to escape it. It is woven deep into the fabric of our natures. To lack it is to be powerless to rise to the high estate of a son of God. It is because we want to excel that we sing better solos, paint better pictures, preach better sermons, and live better lives.

This is not "self" as we understand the term. Self is not a worthy end. If we use our "drum-major instinct" merely to promote ourselves, we will miss true greatness, for those who exalt themselves will be abased. The truly great are those who excel in humble service. A servant can be great. Whatever his position he can strive earnestly, extravagantly to be all that he can be, to be flawless in kindness, consideration and love. These are worthy ambitions. And only the ambitious attain unto them!

You are important. God made you to be great. Now work for it. Show Him your appreciation. See how important you can be for Him. Pamper the spirit of rivalry in the service of God. Try to be first in generosity, first in kindness, first in helpfulness, first in humility, first in holiness. Make the force of your ambition the servant of high spiritual achievement! ●●

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UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Nature of Man

IN OUR last lesson we discussed man as a created, living, intelligent being. But his nature is in every respect, according to the Bible, mortal. Life is brief. Man's days are as a shadow, a vapor, a handbreadth.

And what happens when a man dies? We learned that death is nothing frightful, nothing horrifying, nothing torturous as the ancients feared. Death is simply a sleep, a state of total unconsciousness. For "there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccl. 9:10). "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (Ps. 146:4). "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything" (Eccl. 9:5).

Studying further, we learned that the Bible uses the term "soul" as an equivalent of the whole man or person, not some mysterious, immortal part of him that separates from the body at death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20).

All hope of future life depends upon a resurrection from the dead, and in this lesson we shall study the resurrection. How can we be sure of it? Who believed it? Who wrote of it? Has anyone witnessed to this fact?

We shall pursue our outline of study:

- II. The Physical Nature of Man
 - B. When a Man Dies—
 - 5. Other Uses of Death in Scripture
 - C. Hope in a Resurrection
 - 1. Old Testament Belief
 - 2. New Testament Belief
 - 3. The Significance of a Resurrection
 - 4. The Verity of the Resurrection
 - 5. The Resurrection—Who Shall Rise?
 - 6. To Mortality or Immortality?

The resurrection was the apostle Paul's fullest confidence—"if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Let us show by our lives that it is our hope also.

II. THE PHYSICAL NATURE OF MAN

B. When a Man Dies

5. Other uses of death in Scripture. While our study concerns only **physical death**, or **natural death**, it will help us to understand the subject to review briefly other uses of the word **death** in the Scriptures. Natural death, the result of mortality, is by far the most common usage. Other usages include:

a. Dead in trespasses and sins. This death describes the condition of us all before we had the knowledge of God. It is described by Paul in Eph. 2:1: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins," and again in Col. 2:13: "And you, being dead in your sins, . . . hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." In each case Paul's hearers had not been literally dead, but subject to eternal death until they were "quickened," or enlightened by the gospel, given the chance for eternal life.

b. Dead to sin. This death is the most important to the Christian. It is the death that is "blessed," that is "precious in the sight of the Lord" (Ps. 116:15). It is a death that must be suffered by all who would live with Christ eternally. It is the death that frees from sin (Rom. 6:7). **Natural death does not free one from sin**, for as "the tree falleth, there it shall be" (Eccl. 11:3). Only death to sin, a crucifixion of the old nature (Rom. 6:10), frees from sin. A covenant-maker who died a sinner will be resurrected a sinner.

Some religious groups take the position that all must die a physical death before they can come to the Judgment, citing Heb. 9:27 as proof. The verse reads: "And as it is appointed to men once to die, but after this the judgment." **The death referred to here would have to be death to sin**, since it is evident from the Scriptures that all will not die. Jesus said to Martha that "whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:26). And Paul twice referred to living believers at the Lord's coming (see I Cor. 15:51 and I Thess. 4:17).

c. Penal death, or the second death. The second death is the punishment decreed for all covenant-makers who prove unfaithful. It is for those who

persist in breaking God's law after having been enlightened, and continue in sin until overtaken by natural death. At the Judgment, they will be placed on the left (Matt. 25:32, 33) and "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (II Thess. 1:9). **Penal death is everlasting destruction, not everlasting torment. It is eternal death from which there is no recourse.**

C. HOPE IN A RESURRECTION

According to the **Encyclopedia Americana** (1966) the "resurrection, generally spoken of as the resurrection of the dead, or of the body, is the doctrine of the reunion of the soul and body of man after their separation in death." This states the general belief held by a major portion of the nominal churches of today.

However, this belief has been adopted from sources **other** than the Scriptures. Some conception of life after death has appeared in most cultures from the most primitive to the most highly educated. The way in which the future existence is conceived varies from the survival of spirits, reincarnation and transmigration of souls, to a resurrection of the body.

In many primitive religions the conception of survival goes no further than the idea of the hovering of departed spirits above the familiar scenes of their earthly life. In Egyptian religion the belief in survival is combined with an elaborate idea of the soul's pilgrimage in the afterlife, its testing and judgment by the gods. To an Egyptian, the afterlife is so real that elaborate preparations are made for the heavenly journey.

Reincarnation has its place in the belief of many savage tribes. They hold to a crude belief in the passing of the soul at death into another body either human or animal. Reincarnation is not limited to the savages. It was conceived by the American Indians, the Egyptians and eastern religions. The Babylonians and Persians believed in a resurrection.

In our previous lesson we gave Bible proof that there is nothing immortal about man in his natural state; at death **no part of him survives**. He is laid in the tomb to await the coming of the Lord. **All hope of a future life depends upon a resurrection, the restoration of life to the physical body. The common belief of a "reunion of body and soul," cannot be found in the Scriptures.**

1. **Old Testament belief in a resurrection.** Contrary to the opinion of some Bible scholars, the Hebrews early believed in a physical resurrection. These holy men of God showed their belief by their words and by their actions.

a. **Abraham.** The earliest indication of the belief is found in God's promise to Abraham. God promised him the land for an "everlasting possession," yet at the time of Sarah's death it was necessary for Abraham to buy a piece of ground for a burying place for her (Genesis 23). At the time of Abraham's death the promise was yet future. Abraham died "not yet in possession of the things promised, but [having] seen them far ahead." Abraham's belief is also shown in his willingness to offer up Isaac "for he reckoned that God had power even to raise from the dead" (Heb. 11:13, 19, NEB).

b. **Balaam**, the erstwhile spokesman of God to the children of Israel, also had knowledge of a future resurrection. He prophesied concerning Christ: "I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh" (Num. 24:17). Balaam's prophecy was for "the latter days"; he knew he would sleep in death before he would see the King.

c. **David** expressed his belief in a resurrection thus: "God will redeem my soul [me] from the power of the grave" (Ps. 49:15; 16:10).

d. **Isaiah** looked forward to being raised at a time when others would also be resurrected (Isa. 26:19).

e. **Daniel** prophesied of the resurrection of "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth" and was assured by the angel that he also would "stand . . . at the end of the days" (Dan. 12:2, 13).

f. **Hosea**, a prophet in the days of the kings, had divine foreknowledge of the resurrection. God, through Hosea, said: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death" (Hos. 13:14).

g. **Job**, an early patriarch, was confident of his own resurrection; he was sure that in the end he would in his own flesh see God (Job 19:27).

2. **New Testament belief in a resurrection.** Belief in a resurrection was being taught in New Testament times before Jesus' death and resurrection. **Jesus** was the foremost teacher of the doctrine. Each time He foretold His own death, He coupled it with the assurance that He would be "raised again the third day" (Matt. 16:21; 17:9, 23; 20:19). He also gave proof of God's ability to restore life to a dead body by raising three individuals from death: Lazarus, the son of the widow of Nain, and Jairus' daughter.

Martha, the sister of Lazarus, showed her understanding of Jesus' teaching as she talked with Jesus after Lazarus' death. When Jesus said to her: "Thy brother shall rise again," she answered, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (John 11:23, 24). His raising by Jesus at that time was only to mortal life. He is again

sleeping in the grave, awaiting the resurrection at Jesus' second coming.

Jesus' answer to the Sadducees also proves that the resurrection was being taught before Jesus' death. The teaching caused a division between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the Pharisees believing and the Sadducees rejecting the teaching of the resurrection. Jesus answered them: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29), showing both that the doctrine of the resurrection was taught in the Scriptures and that raising the dead was within God's power.

The Sadducees were apparently unconvinced even after Jesus' resurrection. The controversy is again brought to light when Paul appeared before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem (Acts 23:6—8).

3. The significance of a resurrection. The resurrection is of the utmost importance to the Christian believer. It holds his only hope of a future life. Because man is powerless to raise himself, this hope rests with God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

The resurrection is an integral part of God's plan for this earth. In no other way could all the covenant-makers of all ages, both faithful and unfaithful, be brought together to Judgment. Said Paul: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). Without a resurrection this would not be possible.

4. The verity of the resurrection. With the resurrection of Jesus, hope in a future life became a reality, and as a result the apostles went out preaching the message of the resurrected Christ. Luke recorded that Jesus showed Himself alive "by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3). We will review some of these proofs.

a. Proof from the angels. The first announcement of the resurrection of Jesus was spoken to the women at the tomb by an angel: "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said" (Matt. 28:6). A similar instance is recorded in each of the Gospels.

b. Proof from Jesus Himself. Jesus had told His disciples that He would be raised the third day, but His words had fallen on deaf ears. When it became a fact, it was still hard for them to believe. Jesus upbraided them with those immortal words, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe," and proceeded to expound the Scriptures to them. Later as He met with the Eleven He offered as evidence the print of the nails in His hands and feet. And in His revelation delivered to John, He gave us the strongest proof possible—His own testimony: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. 1:18).

c. Proof from the apostles. Immediately after Jesus' ascension, the apostles went out and "preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:2). They were convinced, and their teaching was convincing so that as many as five thousand were added to the church at one time (Acts 4:4). Peter testified that "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32).

d. Proof from Paul. In his defense before King Agrippa, Paul said that he spoke nothing but what was foretold by the prophets and Moses and among these things was that "Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead" (Acts 26:22, 23). In his letter to the Corinthian brethren Paul also told of others who saw Jesus after His resurrection: "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (I Cor. 15:5—8). **Paul had seen for himself; he knew what he was talking about.**

e. The testimony of Peter. Peter spoke of the resurrection of Christ as the source of their lively hope: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Pet. 1:3). Peter had been an eye witness also, and he said in his Second Epistle that "we have not followed cunningly devised fables" (II Pet. 1:16). He knew Christ had died and had been raised and testified to the fact many times in his preaching (see Acts 2:24, 31, 32; 3:15; 4:2, 10, 33; 5:32; I Pet. 1:21). The resurrection provided a living hope for the apostles and for us.

5. The resurrection—who will rise? The divine plan is stated clearly: "**The dead in Christ shall rise.**" All who during their lifetime made it their choice to serve God have the promise of a resurrection should they be sleeping at His second coming. **The resurrection will not include all who ever lived on this earth. Such a teaching is not Scriptural.**

Those who have never known God or His law will never be raised to stand in Judgment. All such "shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake," and "shall be as though they had not been" (Jer. 51:57; Obadiah 16). We learn from Paul that "as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law, . . . sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. 2:12; 5:13). They are the ones who

in death have "no preeminence above a beast" (Eccl. 3:19). They are well described by the Psalmist: "Man with all his pomp but without insight is like the animals that perish . . . he shall go to the generations of his fathers, who shall see the light no more forever" (49:20, 19, Berkeley). The Bible gives no hint of a resurrection for animals.

Knowledge brings responsibility. Everyone who has ever learned God's will and agreed to serve Him will be brought to Judgment. Jesus said, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin" (John 15:22). Before they knew the law they had a cloak of ignorance; after they knew the law they were amenable to Judgment. In Jesus' parable He calls His "own servants" and "reckoneth with them." All who have agreed to serve Him comprise the "all" who shall stand before Him at Judgment (Rom. 14:10; II Cor. 5:10).

6. The resurrection—to mortality or immortality? Since both the living and the resurrected dead must appear before the Judgment seat of Christ, they must be resurrected mortal. **The resurrection merely restores the dead to mortal life in fleshly bodies.** The "wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23), hence resurrected sinners must die a second death after Judgment. Were they to be resurrected immortal this would not be possible, as both faithful and unfaithful would be in possession of eternal life.

In Paul's long discourse on the resurrection in I Corinthians 15, he pictures the dead being raised to mortal life and afterwards those worthy exalted to immortal life. In verse 36 where he uses the simile of a seed being placed in the ground, he is not picturing the placing of a dead body in the earth as generally believed. The age-old plan of sowing grain was to sow or cast it out on the surface of the ground. Handfuls of grain were taken from the sack and broadcast on the plowed field. Hence, the dead are "sown" when the graves are opened and they are cast out upon the open ground, merely restored to the level of the living, later to be judged and, if worthy, raised to immortality.

Paul uses this simile in verse 42: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown [cast out of the grave onto the surface of the ground] in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (vs. 42—44). The subjects of the resurrection will be released from their graves mortal, in "dishonour," in "weakness," "natural bodies." Then after receiving the

approval of the Judge, they will receive the "better resurrection," (Heb. 11:35), exalted to the heights of immortality "in incorruption"; "in glory"; in "power"; "a spiritual body."

In verse 45, Paul continues to compare the condition of the faithful servants before and after they have experienced the raising to immortality. "The first man Adam was made a living soul," an "animate being," the "last Adam a life-giving spirit" (Moffatt). "It was not the principle of spiritual life that came first; natural life came first, then spiritual life" (verse 46, Knox). In the resurrection of the dead, the mortal, natural life will come first, then the immortal life, the lifting to a higher plane of physical life, the change from mortality to immortality.

Then verse 50 fits perfectly into this picture; "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." Though both mortal and immortal beings are alike real and tangible, there is a vast difference between the two natures. Physical corruption cannot inherit physical incorruption, nor can immortal perfection be adversely affected by physical corruption. We cannot inherit the Kingdom of God in our mortal state; we must be changed, made immortal, before we can share in the Kingdom.

To be a messenger you must know the message.

TEST YOURSELF

1. What does it mean to be "dead in trespasses and sins"?
2. What death is precious in the sight of the Lord?
3. What death is "appointed unto men once to die"?
4. Define "resurrection" as the term is used in the Bible.
5. Name three Old Testament prophets who personally expected to be resurrected. State each prophet's hope briefly.
6. Why is the resurrection of special significance to the Christian believer?
7. Who was able to testify to the certainty of His own resurrection? What did He say?
8. Explain briefly in your own words what Paul meant when he wrote, "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption."
9. Who will be resurrected when Christ returns?

Reprints of these studies are available upon request.

Problems!



problems...

problems...

WANDA stared blankly at the multitude of snowflakes that swirled and twirled in the howling wind outside the window. It was still algebra class, and these problems were to be finished before the bell rang. But Wanda just couldn't keep her mind on them. She couldn't forget those words—tender words, shocking words, awful words she had overheard between Mother and Father earlier that morning. Mother would have to have an *operation* soon.

An operation—surgery—a serious operation—and her Mother—her very own Mother. These were ugly words, and Wanda blinked rapidly to keep back the tears that forced themselves into her eyes. In all her thirteen years she had never known of anyone in her family being really sick. And now—Mother—and an operation! She had never thought of being faced with any such situation. What would she do? Where would she turn? Why did this have to happen to her happy home?

Her eyes fell on Vickie, the slender, blond-haired girl sitting next to the window. What an unusual girl she was! always so pleasant and happy, always so neatly dressed. And she made good grades. Wanda envied Vickie. Why, Vickie didn't seem to have any problems!

Miss Porter's stalwart figure suddenly came between Wanda and the window, and her eye caught Wanda's. Miss Porter knew how to be quite gentle, but at this moment her look was fixed and firm, and it meant for Wanda to get back to the algebra! Wanda heaved a heavy sigh, shifted her position in her chair and looked down at the paper on her desk. She was scarcely half done, and class was almost over. But really, she couldn't care less. With all of *her* problems, what imaginable difference did a few algebra problems make?

When school was over, she avoided her usual friends. They could never understand her problems, and she certainly didn't want them to ask her any

questions. But soon she heard Vickie's quick step fall in line with hers, and in spite of herself, she was relieved. There was something unusual, very unusual about Vickie, something very settled and calm. Life to Wanda had become so turbulent that it made her feel much better just to have Vickie at her side.

The girls chatted briefly about the history test that was coming next Thursday, and the outrageous expectations of the new gym teacher, and the new books that the elderly Mr. Fuller had donated to the library. Then their conversation led into deeper subjects, of creation and destiny, and life and death. Wanda soon found out that Vickie held a deep and reverential respect for the Bible.

"That's why we're here," confided Vickie, her eyes beaming with happiness. "Because God has a better life planned for us in His kingdom, and He wants us to get ready for it."

Almost before they realized it, they were in front of Wanda's home.

"But won't you come this evening to our church meeting? It starts about seven o'clock. And it doesn't last very long. I know you will enjoy it. Your younger sister has come a few times."

"Yes, yes. I know, but—" Wanda had a hard time with the lump in her throat. "I just never thought such things were meant for me. But I think I can manage it tonight." Wanda smiled warmly at Vickie. Maybe this would help fill the miserable ache she felt deep within her.

That evening at the meeting, Wanda hardly heard the speaker. She was too busy looking over the unusual interior of the assembly room and its more unusual—though very sparse—attendants. The walls of the room were decorated with Scripture texts, printed in large colorful letters on the panels in the walls. In the center at the front of the room was a huge replica of the world, on which were inscribed the words, "As truly as I live, all the earth

shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." What did that mean? She would have to ask Vickie sometime.

Everyone at the meeting—except herself—seemed so intent on what the speaker was saying. Bibles open, and notebooks and pencils in steady use, she soon realized why Vickie loved her Bible. And the heart and voice they each gave to their singing—it was like being in another world! Surely such people had no problems. They could afford to be thankful!

But Wanda, her heart was heavy. Father had told her that very evening about Mother. It was sad news. He had tried to be very gentle in telling her the news, but she knew how her daddy could cover up his troubles. Wanda wanted to be a source of strength to him, and to her younger sisters, especially little Irene, the baby in the family. She couldn't begin to let them know how mixed up and confused she felt.

Wanda sat nervously in her chair, twisting and turning as she looked about. And the faster she thought about her problems, the longer the meeting grew. Vickie stood up to say her verse—she quoted it from memory—it was Ps. 31:24. "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord."

"Courage . . . strength . . . *problems!*" thought Wanda disdainfully. "Vickie doesn't know what real problems are! And sometime I'm going to tell her about them. She can afford to look so poised and serene. What would she do if she had *my* problems? What if *her* Mother had to have an operation, and be sick and suffer for weeks? Wanda felt her anger rising to the boiling point, and right in the middle of the verses they each were reciting, she left. It was enough. She flew out of the side door, almost catching her coat sleeve on the door knob, and bounded through the fresh new snow toward home—where else was there to go?

Her younger sister Gloria was trying to put some supper on the table as Irene tagged close behind.

"Wanda." Gloria spoke abruptly, without expression. "Mother and Father just left for the hospital. They wondered when you would be home." Wanda could see the anxiety in Gloria's eyes.

"But come, Wanda, let's have some warm soup and we will both feel better. At a time like this, we must trust God." Gloria trying to comfort Wanda! It was enough! Gloria was only eleven and a half—and she was taking the responsibility of caring for the family! What a fool Wanda had made of herself! The problems of her younger sister were every bit as big as her own! But here was Gloria, trying to make the best of the situation.

In a flash her full senses returned, and she wanted to know and learn more of Vickie and her unusual faith. How foolish she had been! How rude and impolite to leave such an uplifting meeting. How much good help and courage she herself could have gained, if—if—

The next day was Saturday, and Wanda's first duty, she knew, was to see Vickie. It couldn't wait until Monday, when she would see her again in school. Such urgent, unfinished business had to be settled. She tried hard to remember Vickie's address—21105 Hugh Drive, she thought.

As she walked down the street, Wanda was somewhat puzzled. The numbers took her farther and farther into a poorer and crowded section of the neighborhood. Had she forgotten the address? The homes were less than attractive—did Vickie live here? But in spite of all her misgivings, she decided to ring the doorbell, and to her surprise—and relief—Vickie answered the door!

Vickie invited Wanda in, and Wanda followed numbly out to the tiny kitchen, where she was offered a chair. But Wanda couldn't avoid seeing the young boy lying on the davenport. He looked very pale and unnatural. Yes, now Wanda remembered; Vickie had a little brother afflicted with some dreadful disease—she couldn't remember what. He looked as though he required much care.

"I was just preparing breakfast," she said as she stirred a small kettle of steaming porridge. "My mother must work odd hours to support the family, Wanda, and we take turns taking care of Brother. Father has been gone three years now. As soon as I get out of school, I will be able to help her more." She turned the toast that was browning in the oven.

"Vickie," Wanda finally found her voice. "Things are rough for you, too. . . . You have . . . problems . . . too! But to look at you—"

Vickie laughed. "Why, I guess I do. Wanda, everyone has problems. But do you know that Bible verse that tells us something very wonderful about our problems? It is in I Cor. 10:13. God will never let us have any problem greater than we are able to endure. Just think, Wanda, He measures our endurance and tempers our trials to meet our strength!"

"Do you mean it, Vickie? Is that right?"

"That is right, Wanda, and you should memorize that verse. Then when everything seems to go wrong for you, you can know that God is allowing it for your good. Wanda, I really believe problems are good for us. Just like those algebra problems we had yesterday, they make us learn."

"You know, Vickie, I've been so discouraged

lately. And you seem so happy—Vickie, it made me feel envious. But—” Wanda was so glad to be able to talk so freely to Vickie. She was a girl that she had always admired, but Wanda had never realized that Vickie’s happiness came from her

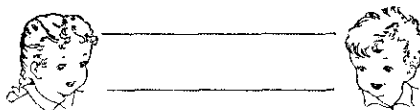
faith in God and its influence on her life.

Vickie threw a loving arm around Wanda’s shoulders. “Wanda, we both need God to give us strength and teach us what is right. Then we can thank Him for our problems!” ●●

Learn by heart:

Every word of God is pure:
he is a shield unto them
that put their trust in him.

—Proverbs 30:5



Unscramble the Verses

1. Thy word unto my path is unto my feet a lamp and a light
2. The Lord I shall not want is my shepherd
3. Are the meek blessed for inherit the earth they shall
4. Love me if ye keep my commandments
5. That we keep His commandments for this is the love of God and grievous are not his commandments
6. Can two be agreed except they walk together
7. Obey your parents children for this is right in the Lord
8. A child even by his doing is known whether his work be right and whether it be pure
9. If these things ye know if ye do them ye are happy
10. Our daily bread this day give us
11. Talk no more so exceeding proudly for the Lord is a God of knowledge and let not arrogancy come out of your mouth by him actions are weighed
12. Even as he is pure that hath this hope in him every man purifieth himself

True or False

- | | |
|---|--|
| _____1. David played a harp. | _____7. Samuel killed Goliath. |
| _____2. Aaron made a golden calf. | _____8. Paul was a great missionary. |
| _____3. Nehemiah built an ark. | _____9. Jesus was born in a palace. |
| _____4. Jesus walked on the water. | _____10. Stephen was stoned. |
| _____5. Baby Moses was killed by Pharaoh. | _____11. Esther was a queen. |
| _____6. Joseph was sold by his brothers. | _____12. Abraham was the father of Joseph. |

THE SABBATH

WHEN WAS IT GIVEN?
TO WHOM WAS IT GIVEN?
WHY WAS IT GIVEN?
WAS IT TO LAST FOREVER?
IF NOT, WHEN WAS IT TO CEASE?
WHAT LAW ARE WE NOW UNDER?

The Sabbath Given to Israel

TO WHOM was the Sabbath law given? The book of Exodus gives one positive answer: "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you." The law was given to "the children of Israel" for "a sign between *me* and *you* throughout *your* generations." "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant" (Ex. 31:13, 16).

The Sabbath was to serve as a sign between God and the Israelite nation. "*It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever*" (Ex. 31:17). It was a command given strictly to Israel and whoever was under her civil government, and there is not a single place in the entire Bible where God ever commanded anyone but Israel to keep the Sabbath.

We read again in Ex. 31:13: "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily, my sabbaths ye shall keep." To whom was this directed? To the *children of Israel*. It is a "sign between me and the children of Israel." "The children of Israel shall keep the sabbath . . . throughout their generations" (vs. 16, 17).

A Comment in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Ninth Edition) says of the observance of the Sabbath: It was "a very peculiar institution, and formed one of the most marked distinctions between the Hebrews and the other nations, as appears in a striking way from the fact that on this account alone the Romans found themselves compelled to exempt the Jews from all military service."

The apostle Paul also states plainly that the law

was given to Israel: "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law" (Rom. 9:4). The Sabbath was part of the Law of Israel—it was a mark of distinction.

The law was given to Israel only. Moses states this specifically in Deut. 4: "The Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: . . . and he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone" (vs. 12, 13). "This is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel" (v. 44). Then follows the enumeration of the Ten Commandments in Deut. 5, addressed to the Israelites and to them only. And the Sabbath was one of these Ten.

Why Was the Sabbath Given?

The Sabbath was a sign, a memorial, to Israel. It was a sign of their redemption from Egyptian bondage. Deuteronomy 5:15 reveals this purpose of the law. After the repetition of the command to keep the seventh day, we read, "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day." The Sabbath was given as a remembrancer to the Jews, a monument to their deliverance from a land of bondage.

Nehemiah 9:9—14 couples the Sabbath with the deliverance of the Israelites: Thou "didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea; . . . and thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; . . . thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, . . . and madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts,

statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant."

Ezekiel 20:10, 12 proves again that the Sabbath was a sign of Israel's redemption: "Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. . . . Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." "I gave *them* my sabbaths."

Parallel with the sign of the Sabbath was the sign of the Passover, another monument of their redemption from Egypt: "And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt" (Ex. 13:7-9). Just as the Passover was instituted for a "sign," a "memorial" of deliverance from Egypt, so the Sabbath was given for expressly the same object and to the same people, to be observed "throughout their generations." Therefore, if the Passover feast belonged only to the Jewish people, so did the Sabbath.

The Sabbath was a social law. This purpose of the Sabbath is stated in Deut. 5:13, 14: "Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt."

Here was a social requirement of Israel's covenant with their God. On the Sabbath the Israelite was to reflect that he himself had been a slave, that he should treat his slaves as he himself had wished to be treated when in Egyptian bondage.

The reference to Egypt and to God's vengeance on the oppressors of Israel (as in Ex. 22:21; 23:9) is intended to emphasize the seriousness of the injunction that the Israelite should not oppress his slaves.

The Sabbath was a humanitarian command. The "Sabbath was made for man." "Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in eaving time and in harvest thou shalt rest" (Ex. 34:21).

God was bestowing on Israel a mark of unique distinction. Among the nations of the day, only to Israel was given a sabbath to be observed week by week. This Sabbath and the seven-day week had supreme importance in their covenant and rich

significance in the divine plan of salvation. The Sabbath was God's special gift to Israel, the sign of "God's covenant loyalty."

Why Was the Sabbath Not Given To All Men?

Why was the law restricted to Israel? Why could it not have applied to all nations?

First of all, the Sabbath as given to Israel was intended for a small nation in a limited geographic area. It was and is a physical impossibility for peoples all over the world to keep the Sabbath as it was given in the Mosaic law. Why?

The Sabbath was from "sunset to sunset," according to Lev. 23:32 (Moffatt). When would the Sabbath begin in an Antarctic winter when the sun does not come above the horizon at all for two months? Or what about the summer days in northern Norway when the sun never sets for 62 days? * Would there be two months with no sabbath?

The Sabbath was to be kept by all the people at the same time—and should still be, according to the Sabbatarians. But on a round earth this is a physical impossibility. Saturday in Japan begins nearly eighteen hours earlier than it does in San Francisco. And there is a three-hour difference of time even on our own continent. Exactly when, then, should the Sabbath begin? Who can determine when the sun "sets" for all men?

Under these circumstances, all the people on earth could not possibly keep the same day from sundown to sundown. Yet some seventh-day advocates say that God and the angels keep this Sabbath day, beginning at a particular time and ending at a particular time, and that that is why it is so important for us to keep it precisely.

"We infer that the higher orders of his intelligences keep the Sabbath also. . . . The Sabbath of each of his creatures will be the Sabbath of all the rest so that all will observe the same period together for the same purpose"—so says an Adventist publication by Elder V. Smith (Biblical Institute, page 145). Obviously, such a situation is unreasonable and impossible.

On the Sabbath day no one was to kindle a fire. "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day" (Ex. 35:3). This was part of the Sabbath observance; and if it were applied in all parts of the earth, the results in less temperate climates might be disastrous. But God was not so unreasonable. He gave the law for the benefit—not for the deprivation—of His human family. And

(Continued on page 26)

* Gordon Lindsay, *The Facts About the Seventh Day*.



Meditations

On the Word

IT MIGHT fairly be argued that love of life is nothing exceptional; that nearly everyone loves life, deeply and fervently. A relatively insignificant few find life unendurable to the point of self-destruction, but the average human being clings to life with a tenacity which is nothing short of amazing. This urge is by no means confined to the human species, but runs through all animate nature as a basic principle of survival.

A healthy degree of this instinct is valuable and even essential in the quest for the better life, for the individual who lives out his days in a half-dead, vegetable condition, with no more interest in survival than a day-old chick, will never be attracted to the ideal of an eternal existence, at least to the extent of working for it. It is certain that the Almighty will never force eternal life upon anyone who does not want it.

But this physical joy in existence as such, natural and necessary though it be, is not the love of life which assures us "good days" in the Kingdom of Jehovah. This life is good, but not good enough. And even if it were good enough, there is not enough of it. Granted that most of us experience occasional golden moments when we feel that this would be good enough if it would only last, it is lamentably true that the average thinking person more often feels dissatisfaction and frustration as he contemplates an uneven past, an unsatisfactory present, and an uncertain future. Granted that a few individuals appear to live zestfully with no thought of God or a future, let us not envy them. They do not love life. They are infantile in their judgment. Their choice is to rejoice for a moment in the cheap tinsel of this present existence, then "like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on

them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning."

The thing which can and will lift us above the morass of negative thought and out of the treadmill of meaningless daily routine is a deep and all-pervading love of life, a love which is not naturally born in us but which requires teaching. The law of God, operating upon human reason, takes the old, inherent, unreasoning craving for existence and ennobles it by attaching it to a worthy object—immortal life as a reward for right doing. The present is then seen as an insignificant thing, unworthy of the name of life, much less of so noble an emotion as love, while at the same time it becomes infinitely more valuable, not as an end in itself but as an opportunity.

When we understand the Scriptural principle that death is not the Great Adventure but the Great Nothingness, the extinction of all consciousness and personality, the end of all activity, we realize that life is everything. While we have it, we have hope. This life is not to be despised or trifled with or thrown away recklessly—that is, if we really love life, the life to come. It is our only day of probation; when it is gone, there is no more. For this reason the Christian is forbidden to tempt the Lord by taking needless physical risks. Life is too short, too precious, not for what we can get out of it for today but for what we can put into it for the great Tomorrow.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." "Behold now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

And in the last hours of "now," what we do must be done quickly.

"For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile" (1 Peter 3:10).

It is often said that self-preservation is the first law of nature. Fortunately for our temporal liberties, there have been patriots who did not live by this rule, which has so often been the refuge of cowards. They, or at least the more idealistic among them, loved life as it should be, more than life as it was or threatened to be, and were willing to lay down their lives if upon their sacrifice might arise a better society for those who should follow after.

So it has been with the fathers of our spiritual country, the authors and defenders of our spiritual liberties. More than once in the past, the heroes of faith have been called upon to choose between this present life and the life to come. On the part of the faithful there has been no wavering; spirit was stronger than flesh.

Paul, the greatest of the apostles, viewing dimly the persecutions and sufferings which awaited him in his last perilous journey to Jerusalem, said without hesitation, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy." Here was a man who loved life more than mere existence.

If we really love this better life, we will show it by taking fast hold of the divine wisdom which teaches us to control our tongue and the thoughts which move it, the wisdom which cries to the sons of men, "For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." ●●

The Fallacy of the Scarlet Thread

(Continued from page 7)

not lie promised before the world began. Our only concern need be fear lest we fail to qualify to receive that unspeakable boon. God has set apart him that is righteous for Himself; to be thus set apart we must be righteous. The pure in heart shall see God. To be privileged to look upon His face we must be pure of heart. God is of too pure eyes to look upon evil with any degree of tolerance. It is for us to clean ourselves up so that upon our glistening garment of character can be seen neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing. We must be holy and without blemish. The favored number seen with Christ on Mt. Zion were without fault, in their mouth was found no guile. Let us be up and doing lest we fail of the great reward offered us through our own negligence!

Propitiation, or . . . ?

Believers in the scarlet thread hold strongly to the word "propitiation" which occurs three times in the New Testament. Propitiation, according to Webster, means, "To appease and render favorable; . . . to conciliate." Theologically it has come to picture a God filled with violent wrath and ill-temper against His erring, earthborn children, wrath that can be appeased only by the richest of sacrifice, i. e. the death of Christ. Nothing less, they say, could effect a reconciliation between God and man.

Such an understanding of propitiation is not Bible teaching, nor is it an attitude befitting an All-wise, All-merciful Creator, who is "gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy," a Lord who is "good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works" (Ps. 145:8, 9). A God who "pardoneth iniquity," who "retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy" (Mic. 7:18) is surely not consistent if He requires the crucifixion of His well-beloved Son to appease His divine wrath.

As we observed in the first sermon of this series, human sacrifice is abominable to God; it is among the practices of the heathen which He abhorred, and which He repeatedly warned His people against. "Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" The answer is a resounding *no*—"He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God"—here is the sacrifice God acknowledges (Mic. 6:7, 8). Nowhere in the Bible does God practice, permit, or even condone human sacrifice. How, then, could He send His innocent Son to be a propitiatory offering?

Propitiation is a term closely connected with reconciliation and at-one-ment, terms used more frequently in the New Testament.

As used in Romans 5:11, the word "atonement," more properly, "at-one-ment," means, "A change from enmity to friendship, reconciliation, . . . reconciliation through change, . . . a thorough change." These definitions suggest an understanding in harmony with Scripture: Only by reconciling our ways to God do we become at one with Him. The effort must be ours: "Be ye reconciled to God" (II Cor. 5:20).

The three texts in which the word propitiation occurs in the New Testament are Romans 3:25, I John 2:2, and I John 4:10. Let us ascertain what Paul and John were saying by observing the meaning of the original Greek words employed, and by

considering the context in which the word occurs.

We discussed the meaning of Rom. 3:24, 25 in the first of this series, but for the sake of clarity let us consider the three texts together. Romans 3:24, 25 reads: "Being justified freely by his [God's] grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood [or life, "the life is in the blood"], to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." We should observe that the remission of sins is not the result of Christ's death, but of "the forbearance of God."

Wilson's *Emphatic Diaglott* translates these verses: "Being justified freely by His Favor, through that redemption which is by Christ Jesus; Whom God has set forth to be a Mercy-seat, by his own Blood [or life], through the Faith; for an Exhibition of his righteousness in passing by the sins formerly committed, during the forbearance of God." And in a footnote the author says, "The word *hilasteerion* never signifies 'propitiation,' as it is translated in the common version; but it is always used wherever it occurs, both in the Old Testament and the New, to express the mercy-seat; which was the golden lid of the ark upon which the Shechina or cloud of glory rested, and from which oracles were dispensed." Hence, Paul is saying that God set forth Christ to be a "mercy-seat," a mediator or point of contact, between God and man (I Tim. 2:5). Young's *Analytical Concordance* gives the meaning of *hilasteerion* as "place of propitiation."

Young's Concordance gives the meaning of the Greek word *hilasmos*, translated "propitiation" in I John 2:2 and 4:10, as "what appeases, propitiates."

First John 2:2 reads: "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." But before we conclude that Christ through His death on Calvary appeased God for the sins of His true church as well as the sins of the whole world, let us consider the context. John's words are very demanding of the true follower of Christ.

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (vs. 3—6). Whatever Christ may have accomplished as the propitiation for our past sins, it still remains for us to walk even

as He walked if we would obtain God's favor. There is no trace of the scarlet thread here.

The Concordant Version words I John 2:1, 2: "And if anyone should be sinning, we have an Entreater with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Just. And He is the propitiatory shelter concerned with our sins, yet not concerned with ours only, but concerned with the whole world also." Christ is *concerned with* our sins; He is not a sacrificial offering for them. An "advocate" or "Entreater" could not at the same time be a propitiation, at least not within the meaning of a sacrificial victim. And if He were a propitiation, and had already made the propitiatory sacrifice for our sins before He ascended to the Father, what need for an advocate? Here is another expression of God's mercy in overlooking the sins that are past, in "sending his Son as the remedy for the defilement of our sins" (NEB). First John 4:9 reads: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." These words do not say or even infer that Christ died for us, but simply that God sent Christ into the world "that we might live through him."

Verse 10 might be construed to mean propitiation as it is commonly understood, but in view of the many plain statements describing individual responsibility, this doesn't seem possible. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he first loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." The wages of sin is death, but in Christ is our hope and assurance of immortality. His teachings, His life and His perfect example are the remedy for the defilement of our sins, if we follow in His footsteps. Because He lives, we too have hope of life.

Peter explains the purpose of Christ's life and death, pointing out that it was an example and not a propitiation: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps. . . . Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin: that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles" (I Pet. 2:21; 4:1—3). Let us restate this important fact: Propitiation is a term closely connected with reconciliation and at-one-ment.

Christ is our propitiation in the sense that He is our mediator, our intercessor, our means of access.

to God (I Tim. 2:5). Again, He is our propitiation in the sense that He became our perfect example and showed us how to live holy, just and blameless lives, how that we can become at one with God and merit His eternal favor—the whole world can do likewise, for He is not “willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Pet. 3:9).

Note again verse 3 of I John 2: “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” Of what efficacy is a blood sacrifice, if we cannot even “know” God unless we “keep his commandments”?

Only as we make our own garments clean and white by overcoming every evil with good can we be assured of eternal salvation. As Jesus promised, “Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. . . . Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:12, 13). ●●

(To be continued)

LETTERS

First Things First

In these trying times when we see trouble on every hand, it is of the utmost importance that we use all the time we have left to bring self under complete control of God's holy will, if we expect to meet with divine approval in that soon coming day.

It is so easy to become all absorbed in the things of this life and to forget what we are really working for.

We are now living in the cool of the day. Maybe if we had a little more pressure, we would be more on our toes, so to speak. But people do not care what you believe, they are satisfied with what they have in the way of religion. Let us press on as never before with determination to gain the full reward at all cost.

Front Royal, Virginia

C. R. T.

Searching Rewarded

First in my interests are the matters of Christianity. I have been living in this way for several years, although blind to the true teachings of the Scriptures, and in my search for truth, I found a small ad in an eastern, or rather midwestern, newspaper—the Megiddo Church.

I took them to task by letter, questioning some of their doctrinal viewpoints, but found to my chagrin that they are correct. At least, I have studied their works quite thoroughly

and find that all fits in with the Scriptures, where modern theology does not.

Truly we are living in troublous times, and I find it very difficult to find someone with whom I can talk or commune for spiritual strength. This has been one of my secret desires for the past few years, and were it not for the hope of a “more perfect way” my spiritual house might collapse under the strain.

Thermopolis, Wyoming

H. A.

Forget the Past

All our mistakes and neglected opportunities of 1970 are beyond recall, so with the eye of faith, may we “be wise now therefore,” before it is too late, for God requires sacrifices of righteousness.

That which defiles comes from the heart, so our worst enemy is self. However, “to our Lord belong mercies and forgiveness,” and if we have rebelled against Him, may we be “zealous and repent.” Keep awake, be sober, and watch unto prayer.

Peter exhorts us to “be eager to be found of him unspotted and unblemished in serene assurance, and consider that the long-suffering of our Lord means salvation.” Being forewarned we must see that we “are not carried away by the error of the lawless and so lose our proper footing,” but must go on growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We must not indulge in the pagan customs of the people around us, especially in the way which they celebrate Christ's birth, and that, too, at the wrong time of the year. Though they might think us strange that we do not “rush with them to the same excess of riot,” we will continue to remember Christ in a fitting manner.

Seeing that this present order will pass away, “what manner of persons ought [we] to be in all holy conversation and godliness”? In answer, let us add to our faith the beauty of every virtue.

Swansea, South Wales

R. B.

In Appreciation

Your instructive booklets are of tremendous import in clarifying many of the Bible lessons which so many Christians, seeking the deeper meanings, entirely miss.

I must not forget to add that the *Megiddo Message* is opening many new channels, educationally, in our search for spiritual growth through interpretation of Biblical truths. Aside from some new thoughts I have found in your informative messages, your basic teachings are 100% for eternal salvation. “An open mind” availeth much.

Hemet, California

A. J.

Repeated “No's”

We have so many blessings to be thankful for, and the greatest blessing is knowing the way of salvation. But knowing the way is not enough. We must be like the faithful ones of old, making themselves worthy by repeated “no's.”

Noah refused to be swayed by the unbelievers.

Moses refused the pleasures of sin.

Ruth refused to return to her homeland, choosing rather to serve God in a strange land. These are only a few of the faithful who said “no.”

God never asks us to forsake an evil without putting something better in its place. When He commands, “Cease to do evil,” He adds, “Learn to do well.” Paul also lists first the evils to flee from, then the virtues to follow.

We must fight the good fight of faith to lay hold on eternal life. Any fight against any sin and evil is a good fight. We have to be fighting for the right, fighting to win all the time. We must “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

Union Lake, Michigan

E. H.

THE SABBATH

(Continued from page 21)

therefore it was meant to apply only to a limited geographic area, where the command could be observed with profit.

If God had intended all nations to observe the Sabbath, He would have provided laws applicable in all nations. He would also have given specific commands for the time of its observance and located the dateline beyond dispute. But the Bible is silent on this part of the subject. Remember, there is not even a single command in the Bible that directs anyone but Israel to keep the Sabbath holy.

Next Month: WHEN IS THE SABBATH—SATURDAY OR SUNDAY?

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"I believe that you say somewhere in your literature that all living on earth at Christ's coming will be given a chance to do right.

"Now wouldn't this be unfair to all the wicked or unsaved who have died prior to our Lord's return? Perhaps if they were given the same chance and enlightened when Christ returns, they too would conform and have everlasting life. Why should it be only for the people living at the time Christ returns to have a special chance to be saved?"

Your question is logical, and has been asked many times. According to Zech. 13:8, one third of earth's inhabitants will submit and be spared during Armageddon. Quite naturally we ask, would not the same proportion of those who had lived in the years just prior to that event surrender to Christ if they had the same chance?

Well, there is nothing in the Word of God to lead one to suppose that it is His purpose to raise any of the sleeping dead to give them another chance. On the contrary, it teaches that only the covenant-makers will be resurrected; all others shall sleep a perpetual sleep and never wake (see Jer. 51:57; Obadiah 16; Ps. 49:14—20). The only dead to be resurrected will be those who are amenable to judgment. These two classes are described in Rom. 2:12: "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have

sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." Those who sin without coming into covenant with God shall perish without a knowledge of that law. And they will never be resurrected.

First Thessalonians 4:16 pictures those to be resurrected as "the dead in Christ," that is, those who have covenanted to serve God. By saying that they shall "rise first," Paul didn't mean they would rise before some other group of the dead to be resurrected. The following verse explains: "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds. . . ." The sleeping dead are to be raised before the living are caught away to meet the Lord in the air. The resurrection merely brings the dead to the level of the living.

"The rest of the dead" of Rev. 20:5 who will be raised at the close of the Millennium are the dead of those who have had opportunity to serve God during the thousand years.

The belief in a universal resurrection may be appealing, but it is not Biblical. And certainly we should not charge God with unfairness. With Abraham we can query: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25).

"I have recently read an author who tried to prove that it was the expectation of the Church of the first century that Christ would return during that century. What do you think?"

It is possible that some Christians during the first century maintained that idea, but it was not justified. When Jesus foretold His departure to heaven (Matthew 25), picturing it in parable as a man traveling into a far country, He said that "after a long time" the lord of those servants would come to reckon with them.

Just before the ascension, the disciples asked Jesus if the time had come for Him to establish His kingdom. They said, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" In answer Jesus said that it was not for them to know the time then, but they would know after the Holy Spirit had come upon them. After the Holy Spirit came upon them, Peter, addressing the crowds who gathered to see the lame man who had been healed, said, "And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of the restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:20, 21).

In II Thessalonians 2, Paul warned against believing that the day of Christ was at hand, declaring that it could not come until there should come a general falling away from the truth and a

sinister power should arise that would destroy true religion.

No, the whole New Testament church did not expect Jesus to return in that day.

"I wish you would explain to me Rom. 3:10: As it is written, 'There is none righteous, no, not one.'

"The reason I am asking is this. I am well acquainted with a fine gentleman, but his interpretations are not always to my thinkings. For instance, I made the remark that the only way I could be saved was by my righteousness. He quoted Rom. 3:10 and said that no man had righteousness. Jesus was the only one who had righteousness. This contradicts Titus 2:12 and Matt. 5:20.

"I would like to know how anyone can live a sober, righteous and godly life in this present world, as Titus 2:12 tells us we should, without being righteous. How can a person live a Christian life without being a Christian? It would seem as impossible as an alcoholic living without the excessive use of alcohol."

You are correct in thinking that we must be righteous ourselves if we would be saved. This is the teaching of the entire Bible.

The religious world, convinced that salvation can come only through the merits of Jesus, are quick to make use of this saying of Paul's, believing that no one can become righteous. But their position is not Scriptural. The Bible teaches that Christ was righteous, and that we must be righteous as He was.

Paul's words in Romans chapters 3 through 5 are quite difficult to decipher. They are, as Peter said, "hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest . . . to their own destruction." But when we take what Paul said later on in the book of Romans, also what he said in his other epistles, it is plain to see that he did not mean for us to take some of his statements in the early chapters of Romans too literally.

Paul's theme in the book of Romans was to assure the Jewish Christians, who thought he had deserted them in favor of Gentile believers. Hence, he seemed to be saying that righteousness comes through faith, and no works are necessary. His statements in Romans 6 paint the very opposite picture. Hence, either Paul contradicted himself in the book of Romans, or his meaning is different than would seem upon surface reading. Romans, chapters 12 and 13, also are very practical, demanding personal effort and right doing.

Let us begin reading Romans 3 at verse 7: "For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also

judged a sinner?" To the Jewish Christians Paul's acceptance of the Gentiles was a "lie." They were God's own people and should not be replaced by the Gentiles, nor should the Gentiles be counted as equal with them in God's scheme.

Verse 8 continues: "And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just." The Jews making this charge were deserving of damnation; their words were prompted by a fleshly motive.

Verse 9 continues: "What then, are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." The position of the natural Jew with God is no different and no better than that of the natural Gentile. They are all under sin.

Then to reinforce his point Paul quotes Psalm 14:3, "There is none righteous, no, not one." But to try to make out that these words indicate there are no righteous people on earth, and never can be, is to make the Word of God contradict itself.

Noah was righteous in his generation; Abraham was commanded to walk before God and become perfect. Zacharias and Elizabeth were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless. And we are commanded to become holy, even as God is holy; to become perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect.

To get the context in which the words of Romans 3:10 occur, we must go to Psalm 14. The Psalmist is speaking of the fool who says in his heart, "There is no God." Of this segment of humanity he said, "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, [this division of the children of men], to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no not one" (vs. 1-3).

There is not one among this group of people of whom Paul was speaking who is seeking God, but that is not saying that no one on earth is seeking Him, or that none will be found seeking God when Christ returns to earth to call His own servants to judgment. There will be a "remnant": "Except the Lord of hosts had left us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah" (Isa. 1:9).

No, definitely Paul never intended to say to us that there is not—nor can be—one righteous person without the righteousness of Christ. To make him say this we have to take his words out of there connection. ●●

Results and Roses

*The man who wants a garden fair,
Or small or very big,
With flowers growing here and there,
Must bend his back and dig.*

*The things are mighty few on earth
That wishes can attain.
Whate'er we want of any worth
We've got to work to gain.*

*It matters not what goal you seek,
It's secret here reposes:
You've got to dig from week to week
To get Results or Roses.*