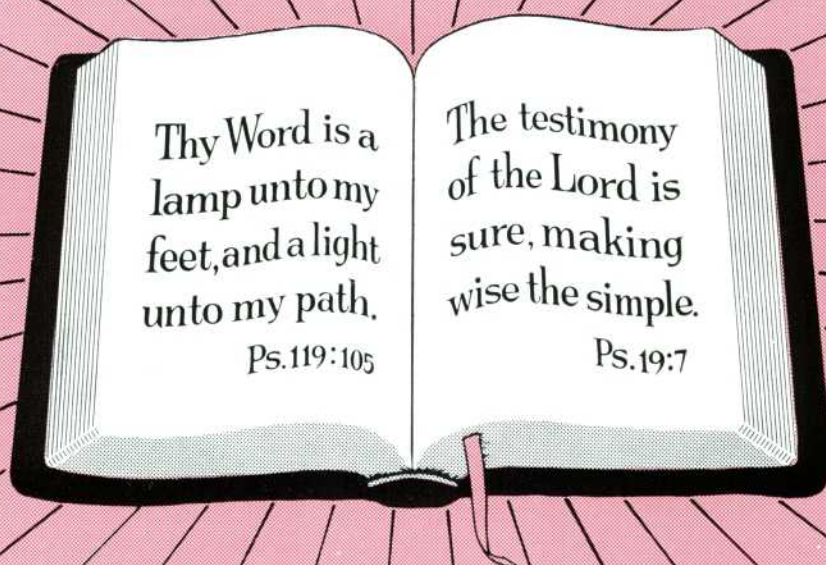


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



The Word of the Lord Is RIGHT

Pro & Con

**A Study of First Corinthians 15
In the Plains of Moab**

EDITORIAL

Who Do You Think You Are?

THIS question, asked in a tone of innocent inquiry, might lead us to tell of our occupation, our interests, our family status, or our goals. In other words, Who are you?

The same question, tossed quickly with an air of superiority, might strike us as an insult. It has in it a dagger of accusation: Who do you think you are? Or rather, You are *not* what you think you are. Our old nature immediately recoils and prepares to defend itself. Who is this that thinks we are inferior? The question seems utterly uncalled for. The person who asks does not expect us to answer, "I think I am . . ." such and such. His only intent, so far as we can see in that first moment of reaction, is to make us feel inferior, incompetent, submissive. It is as if he told us: "Nobody wants to hear what you have to say."

It is so natural to see ourselves as the most important figure in the world. Someone has estimated that the average person spends 90 percent of his waking moments thinking about himself and working to build up his ego ideal in one way or another. This may be exaggerated, but we all know that sinking self out of sight is about the most *unnatural* work we can attempt. Instinctively we plan and think around ourselves. We are the center of all that happens to us. Our wants, our needs, our likes and dislikes, our problems and pains are supremely important in our little sphere. If someone needs a really good opinion, they should by all means consult *us*. And everyone should realize that no work is quite so satisfactory as our own; if something is wrong, there is a very good reason.

And so we go through life congratulating ourselves at every opportunity, pursuing our own ideas of self-fulfillment, the meanwhile investing heavily in our opinion of ourselves. We have an ego ideal, a bright, shiny notion of whom we would like to be and what we would like others to think we are. We'll do almost anything to see how big we are. We are sold on ourselves. The problem comes when we attempt to sell ourselves to others,

who are equally sold on themselves. That is why we are insulted when someone asks us abruptly: "Who do you think you are?" It touches our ego ideal.

As Christians we must ultimately arrive at that perfect peace which no insult or injury can disturb. But before we reach that point, we will have to learn to live with ourselves without being *preoccupied* with ourselves. Our ego ideal must become lost in God and His purposes for us. If we have turned our lives over to God, to be subject to His direction and control, then we are not our own. And anything we may do is not our own. We are responsible to Him for all we have. This is not easy, but it is vital.

So we should turn the question to ourselves and, looking deeper, ask in all honesty, "Who do you think you are? What is your opinion of yourself?" If our old nature is insulted, so much the better; it must die anyway.

God has created us with an instinctive concern for ourselves. It is this inborn desire which causes us to love life and to want *more* life. It is this same desire that makes us willing to surrender present ideals for broader purposes and nobler goals, even those which God sets before us. God wants us to think of ourselves, and when we work for Him we are in reality working for ourselves—we will get all the benefit. But we have no right to be preoccupied with ourselves apart from God. "For I say through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think" (Rom. 12:3). There is reason for this warning: We need it.

How would we feel if this question came to us from the Lord Himself: "Who do you think you are?" What would be our answer? Perhaps we would be speechless, feeling too small to answer.

But wouldn't we rather be able to say, "I am thine, O Lord; use me as it pleaseth Thee"? *Now* is the time to prepare that answer. ●●

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Megiddo Means

"a place of troops"

—Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon

"a place of God"

—Young's Analytical Concordance

Geographically, Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, located at a strategic point, demanding heavy fortification; for Palestine is the age-old gateway between East and West, and the avenue connecting North and South. Supremacy there has long been the envy of aggressive nations, and the prevailing power has guarded it with jealous eye. The famous pass at Megiddo through a solid mountain range is the one means by which this avenue between continents may be traversed.

In the spiritual parallel, it is a place of troops, where soldiers are equipped for spiritual warfare against the forces of evil without and within. "The weapons we wield are not merely human but divinely potent to demolish strongholds; we demolish sophistries and all that rears its proud head against the knowledge of God; we compel every human thought to surrender in obedience to Christ" (II Cor. 10:4-5, NEB).

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The Word of the Lord Is RIGHT

IN the beginning, God”

With these words the divinely inspired author introduces the greatest Book ever compiled. It is the Book upon which we rely as our only source of knowledge about God and the future, His plan and our salvation. And it all begins with God.

Belief in God is the beginning point of all faith. It is the beginning which the author of the book of Hebrews recommended: “He that cometh to God must believe,” first of all, that “he *is*” (Heb. 11:6). Also the Psalmist: “The first thing in knowledge is reverence for the Eternal” (Ps. 111:10, Moffatt). It is He, the Almighty, to whom we exclaim in the words of the poet:

O Thou Eternal One! whose presence bright

All space doth occupy, all motion guide,
Unchanged through Time’s all-devastating flight,

Thou only God! there is no God beside!
Being above all beings! Mighty One!

Whom none can comprehend, and none explore,
Who fill’st existence with Thyself alone;
Embracing all, supporting, ruling o’er,
Being whom we call God, whom we adore!

Thou in the endless ages past and gone

Didst form and shape the earth; O Lord in Thee
Eternity had its foundation; all

Sprang forth from Thee—of light, joy, harmony—
Sole origin; all life, all beauty, Thine.

Thy hand created all, and doth create;
Thy splendor fills all space with rays divine.

Thou wert, and art, and shalt be Glorious! Great!
Life-giving, life-sustaining Potentate!

Surely we believe that such a God exists. It is impossible to see and know of the countless marvels disclosed by microscope and telescope and believe that all things just happen. “Every house is builded by some man” (Heb. 3:4). How then can we look at the universe and the creation and say there is no Master Builder? In the words of Scripture, “he that built all things is God.”

How can we imagine such perfect design, with-

out a designer? The marvelous cycles of nature all around us, the beauties of earth and sea and sky, the life that throbs within our own being—all bear immutable testimony to the existence of the Everlasting Creator.

Even beyond all this, He is “a rewarder of all them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). Herein lies our hope, our only hope of enduring life—in the reward He offers. Here is our prospect of deliverance from the limitations of mortality. Here is salvation and the key to eternity!

But how can we be sure? God is not here in person to talk to us. He does not come down and tell us what He offers and what we must do to obtain it. What, then, is the source of our confidence and faith in Him? It is the written Word He has provided us, the Bible. Everything pertaining to our eternal salvation, everything we stake our hope on, is contained in that one Book: the Bible.

This means that we have invested our whole life in what we believe to be the words of the God of heaven, delivered to us through His spokesmen and preserved for us by almost countless unknown men and women who were unwitting instruments in His hand. This we believe. Probably we don’t even stop to think of questioning it. But we are living in an age of extreme doubt and skepticism, when many people *do* question the authority of the Bible. So it is vital that we check this foundation of all true faith. We need to have at our instant command *the evidence*, if we would maintain that unshakable, rock-like conviction that our hope is sure, and if we would keep our burning zeal for the things which lie beyond the present at white-heat intensity.

The apostle Peter, writing in his mature years, apparently realized as never before the need for constantly reinforcing our faith and stirring ourselves up again and again in our divine hope. I am thinking of his statements in the first chapter of his Second Epistle. The people Peter was addressing knew the gospel well. Probably many of them were well along in the narrow way to life. Yet Peter felt a need to remind them that they

should keep "these things" always in remembrance. They should remember them and take heed to them right *now*, and they should also prepare themselves against the day when he could no longer be present to remind them and they would have to remind themselves (vs. 10-15).

Read again his stirring words: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: . . . for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Is it not worth the effort, to look forward to an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord?

"Wherefore I will not be negligent," Peter continues, "to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be estab-

lished in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance" (II Pet. 1:10-15).

If Peter and his brethren, living still within the memory of Christ's ministry, and in the era when the Holy Spirit was still present to assist them, needed to keep their faith continually stirred, what of us who are separated from that time by some nineteen silent centuries?

All of God's people in all ages have had to walk by faith, but in various ages God has provided various means of confirming faith.

To Abraham God sent an angel to deliver His

Let Us Pray . . .

Eternal Creator, Thou wonderful God to whom are known the thoughts and intents of the human heart, Thou omniscient Being who knows the end from the beginning, help us to be more acutely aware of Thy greatness, Thy might, Thy power, Thy wonders. And may this knowledge bring conviction to our minds that Thou art the true and living God, and that Thy wonderful words recorded in the Bible, so in opposition to the doctrines and theories and teachings of men, have come from Thee, and Thee alone, and are *right*.

May this conviction cause our faith to increase as we see Thy Word fulfilled; may it impel us to cease walking in darkness and walk in the light. May we realize what a hope is offered to us, what glory and honor in the world to come, and what a contrast to this present life with its trials and disappointments, and death in the end.

We confess that often we have been too busy shopping for an easy way to hear Thy Word, too content contemplating things of no intrinsic value to find the beginning of wisdom in Thy Word, too pressed by the insignificant to make room for a new birth in our own hearts. As the tender tug of time reminds us of our beginning and our end, may we be moved to seek a truth that life cannot take away, a hope founded on evidence of the truthfulness of Thy Word.

May Thy Word always be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; and knowing that it is very true, may we Thy servants love it. Thy works are great, sought out of all who have pleasure in them; they are honorable and glorious, and Thy righteousness endureth forever. May we imitate Thee, that our righteousness may be such as will fit us to endure forever in the world to come.

Help us to look constantly into the perfect law of liberty; and having looked may we not go away and straightway forget what manner of persons we are, but having seen a true picture of ourselves—blemished by the spiritual sores and deformities caused by pride, stubbornness, jealousy, rebellion, by failing to rule our tongue, or by allowing impure thoughts to linger in our mind—may we go to work with a mighty determination to correct that which is lacking in our faith before it is everlastingly too late to make amends.

Grant that we may project ourselves into that auspicious day when at the Great Assize the Judge will bring to light life's inner aims and objects, revealing our true character. Help us to be strictly honest when evaluating ourselves from day to day. May we no longer try to appear better than we are, aware that then all fleshly pretension will be as transparent as clear glass, and the inner motives of our lives will be naked and open to Him who is judging us.

And may the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer.

Amen.

*Building religious faith is like
erecting any structure in this world
--the first thing you need is plenty
of concrete.*

message. To Joseph He gave visions. Moses had angelic guidance, also a priesthood under the leadership of his brother Aaron, who maintained direct contact with the will of God through the Urim and Thummim. In another age God sent His prophets, whom He inspired to write and speak His message, and reveal His laws and judgments. When God sent His Son, He gave Him special power by which He could perform miracles to convince those who heard Him. He also sent angels to guard and sustain Him through many an hour of trial. After Jesus ascended to heaven, He sent back a form of this superior power, called the Holy Spirit, to be used by His apostles and those to whom they gave it, so that the Word of God might be proclaimed and believed. This was the wonderful age Peter and the apostles knew.

Then came a time when there were no more angels seen bringing messages, no visions revealing with certainty the will of God, no Urim and Thummim dispensing divine counsel, no prophets inspired to reveal the future or to deliver warnings of approaching judgments; nor were there apostles to bring conviction by the signs and wonders they performed. But this age had a new heritage—the *written* words of the patriarchs and prophets and Jesus and His apostles. Suddenly all guidance for men had to come from one source: the written Word.

Men have always questioned the words and workings of God. Even when they saw, some doubted. Now with no open manifestations, nothing but the written Word for authority, could anyone be persuaded to depend on it? Or would everyone imagine that it was a fraud that strangers and philosophers had compiled to deceive the pious?

No! The Scriptures were the veritable Word of God. Many of the people who read them during the early centuries *knew*. They knew because the men who had written parts of them and who had been active in the narrative were part of their own glorious lineage! Many of these people enjoyed an unbroken tradition of faith in their families. Generation to generation had relayed and relived the exciting drama of the early days. Again and again these people had heard of the zeal and earnestness of the great men—their forebears—who had

known Jesus and His apostles just as we know each other. There were thrilling accounts of their struggles, their courageous witnessing, their almost unbelievable endurance in the face of persecution and trial. How could they possibly *dis*-believe their living testimonies! There was no question in their minds. The words of the apostles were words of truth!

But slowly the rising powers of darkness overcame the faith and courage of these believers as the distance between them and the first disciples widened with the passing of centuries. And finally the last believer perished. The apostasy was on.

But the written Word did not perish. Though it had no living witnesses, it was preserved—miraculously—in the hands of its worst enemies. It was preserved for those who would live and believe on the other side of the dark night of the apostasy. It was preserved in spite of the decrees of kings and rulers that every copy should be burned.

And the people for whom it was preserved would have no angels to confirm their faith; they would not have visions, or prophets, or apostles who could perform miracles among them. They would not have even the unbroken tradition handed down from generation to generation to build faith in the things that were said and done. But for these people—of which we are a part—God arranged that there should be evidence, evidence by which to know beyond all doubt that the written Word is indeed all that it claims to be, the veritable Word of God, the message of “holy men of God” who spoke as they were “moved by the Holy Spirit” (II Pet. 1:21).

How We Can KNOW

Someone has said that building religious faith is like erecting any structure in this world—the first thing you need is plenty of concrete.

So let us see what we have that we might classify as spiritual concrete.

How do we know absolutely that the Bible is what we believe it to be, the Word of God Almighty?

First, the Bible proves itself by its own unity. This is an old argument, but a solid one.

The Bible is more than just a book; it is a library. Sixty-six books by forty different authors comprise this library. And consider that these authors were not contemporary or even near contemporary. They lived at different places on three different continents and wrote over a period of some fifteen or sixteen hundred years; and there is great variety in both the style and the charac-

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Resurrection and Judgment

A Study of I Corinthians 15

THE churches which Paul fathered were a care and constant concern to him, though he rejoiced in them and gladly bore the cross for Christ. The Church at Corinth may have given him more trials than some of the others, Corinth being a center of rampant paganism. Time and again, paganism was the root of trouble in the Church. There was no escaping it. The Church was forced to exist side by side with paganism, and the pagans outnumbered the Christians many times over.

It was the teaching of the pagan philosophers that raised the question concerning the resurrection of the dead.

When Paul wrote the letter which contains the 15th chapter of First Corinthians, news had reached him that there were some in the Church who were doubting the resurrection of Jesus. We can be grateful that the question invoked such a carefully worded dissertation on the subject. Without this masterful discussion, we would have many unanswered questions.

To understand I Corinthians 15, we need to take all that the Bible says on the subject—including other writings of the Apostle himself, as well as the Old Testament scriptures he knew so well and quoted so freely. Never can we take one phrase out of context to prove a preconceived theory. The rule which Paul himself laid down is worthy of our respect: "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (I Cor. 2:13), which is to govern our study of all things "the Holy Spirit teacheth."

The resurrection was at the heart of the young Church's faith; it was the primary pillar on which it stood. Without this faith, there could have been no Christian Church, for their message centered in Christ—living, crucified, resurrected, ascended, and someday to return. Without the resurrection, the Church could not have existed.

Hence Paul, never at a loss for words, rose to the occasion in the Corinthian Church with a bold and forthright defense of the resurrection. To him

the resurrection was fact, not fancy, and his words glow with conviction:

"And now, my brothers, I must remind you of the gospel that I preached to you.... First and foremost, I handed on to you the facts which had been imparted to me: that Christ died, ... that he was buried; that he was raised to life on the third day, ... and that he appeared to Cephas, and afterwards to the Twelve. Then he appeared to over five hundred of our brothers at once, most of whom are still alive.... In the end he appeared even to me" (I Cor. 15:1-8, NEB).

With so many witnesses and so much evidence that Jesus was raised from the dead, says Paul, "how can you doubt it?"

"How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (v. 12).

From this opening, Paul proceeds to point out the significance of the resurrection by simple but convincing logic: If there is no such thing as a resurrection, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our faith and our preaching are for nought and we are without hope beyond this life; "then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (vs. 12-19).

But Christ has been raised from the dead. And because He has been raised, there is hope that we too may share in His resurrection. "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (v. 23). The same power that raised up Christ "shall raise up us also," as Paul wrote in another letter (II Cor. 4:14), when Christ comes the second time.

Then Paul continues his reasoning: "If the dead are not raised to life at all, ... why do we face these dangers hour by hour? ... If the dead are never raised to life, 'let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die' " (vs. 30-32, NEB). If there is no such thing as a resurrection, Paul says, why do we make sacrifices for Christ, even to the point of risking our lives? Why should we not do as others, if there is nothing beyond the grave?

But no, Paul was convinced that there is a future, though it has to be earned. He continued: "Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good

character.' Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame" (vs. 33-34, NIV). He knew, and he was equally sure that his hearers knew, that his words were true. He had received his knowledge firsthand from Christ Himself, and they had learned from him (Paul) in times past. They knew; but even the best knowledge needs constant renewing.

The State of the Resurrected

Beginning with verse 35, Paul discusses a subject on which all Christendom has stumbled: the state of the resurrected body. He had been asked: "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" He answers: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die" (vs. 35-36). Paul's salutation, "Thou fool," indicates that they should have known. But Paul was writing for future generations, as well as for them.

It is at this point that theology has read into the text their own interpretation which, if accepted literally, would mean that anyone receiving immortality would first have to die—an idea not found in Scripture. ("Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die"—John 11:26.)

To understand what Paul was teaching, we must first understand the meaning of "sowing," as used in the New Testament. The Greek word translated "sowest" or "sown" is *speiro* and means "to sow, as seed; generally, to scatter like seed, strew, throw about." When grain was "sown," it was cast out upon the ground. And this is the term Paul chooses to describe the resurrection. The dead are "sown," or cast out upon the ground as seed, brought forth from the grave. This is contrary to popular theology, which thinks of the "sowing" as a body being buried in the earth.

To "quicken" is to "cause to live, make alive, give life," in this case, eternal life. The same word may be used of the giving of either mortal or immortal life. And the "quickening" may be done either by God or by one whom He authorizes, as Jesus tells us in John 5:21, "For the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will."

"Except It Die"

"Except it die." Death, as used in the Bible, also carries more than one meaning. There is natural death, as: "Abraham...died in a good old age" (Gen. 25:8); there is penal death, also called the "second death" in Revelation 20:14, to which the unfaithful servants will be subject. Then there is death to sin, as used in Romans 6:10: "For in

that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." As used here, "die" is not to die physically, but to die to sin.

It is also interesting that the original wording of the phrase translated "except it die" is a past tense conditional clause reading literally: "except it died," or "except it be dead."

Reading verse 36 with these definitions in mind, we find Paul saying: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest [that which is cast out of the grave] is not quickened [or raised to immortal life] except it die [except it have died to sin during its mortal life]."

Now let us read verse 37: "And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain." In other words, that which is cast out of the grave at the resurrection is simply restored to a state of life—not "that which shall be," but only mortal life. The reward has not yet been determined; it may "chance of wheat, or of some other grain"—the judgment will determine. The just Judge will know, and whatever He decrees will be right—and final.

After discussing the "sowing," or resurrecting, the casting out of the graves, Paul turns to the subject of the Judgment and reward. In verses 38-41 he continues the analogy, using figures of seed, of various kinds of flesh, of heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. Through these symbols he compares the achievements of those who will be brought to Judgment.

Degrees of Faithfulness and Unfaithfulness

"God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body" (v. 38). The reward received by each will be as God sees fit, but it will be "to every seed his own body," or in other words, "to every man according as his works shall be" (Rev. 22:12). Whatever God decrees will be just.

The symbol of "flesh" describes the class rejected. But all are not equal; there are various degrees of unfaithfulness, which Paul represents by different kinds of flesh: one "of men, another of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds" (v. 39).

Then he speaks of "celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial." These two terms may apply to two levels of morally perfect people, the "celestial" being those who have received their reward and been glorified (Phil. 3:20-21), and the "terrestrial" those who have attained perfection of character but have not yet (at the time of the resurrection) received the physical change to immortality.

"The glory of the celestial is one, and the glory

of the terrestrial is another." Both have glory, but the glory of those still mortal (terrestrial), though they are morally perfect, cannot compare with that of immortals, whose mortal bodies have been changed. Before the program is complete, all the "terrestrial" will be transformed into "celestial"; but Paul is discussing the time of the resurrection, when the resurrected mortals who formed perfect characters are still "terrestrial."

But even after the "terrestrial" are made "celestial," there will be various degrees of glory among them, as Paul suggests by mentioning the different glories of the sun, moon, and stars (v. 41). Each receives a "full reward," but the rewards differ in magnitude, depending on the capacity of each recipient to appreciate that reward. It is the same as Jesus illustrated in the parable of the Sower, when the seed which fell into the good and honest heart grew and yielded fruit, "some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matt. 13: 23). Each yielded its full measure of fruit unto eternal life, but the rewards differed, according to the capacity of each recipient. It is the same also as Jesus illustrated in the parable of the Pounds. To each servant the nobleman entrusted ten pounds. One servant used his ten pounds and was able to gain another ten pounds; another used his and gained five pounds. The first received the approval of the nobleman, and a reward of "authority over ten cities"; the second also received the approval of the nobleman, and "authority over five cities." Both received reward, representing eternal life, but the glory of the one was greater—each received according to his work.

So Also Is the Resurrection

Verse 42 is the key to the whole passage: "So also is the resurrection of the dead." This has been Paul's subject from the beginning of the chapter, a fact to keep in mind as we study.

Then he continues: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption." Remember he is talking about the resurrection, not death and burial. The "sowing," as in verse 36, refers to the scattering or casting out of the seed, the raising of the dead from the grave. The body is "sown in corruption," it is brought from the grave still mortal, corruptible, perishable. Only after it is judged faithful is it "raised in incorruption," to immortality. This is the "better resurrection" (Heb. 11:35), the rewarding of the faithful servants with eternal life.

Thus, the body that comes from the grave in its February, 1977

mortal, corruptible state is described as "in dishonour," "in weakness," "a natural body." The glorified body to which it will be changed is described as "endued with power," "raised in glory," "a spiritual body" (vs. 43-44). Paul is contrasting the mortal with the immortal, the natural body familiar to us with the glorified body of one made equal to the angels.

"Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual" (v. 46). The natural man is not immortal, else he would never go to the grave. We are born, live, and die in our mortal state. When resurrected we shall still be mortal. Only if judged faithful will we be given a spiritual or immortal body.

"As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly" (v.48). "Earthy" and "heavenly" may describe our physical state, as mortal and immortal; or they may be applied to our mortal accomplishments. The earthy nature tends downward to the lower, base instinct. It is morally imperfect, subject to temptation. The "heavenly" must be developed, our interests trained to reach upward to the things of God. We must learn His ways and thoughts and live on a higher plane.

"And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (v. 49). If during our mortal career we have devoted all our interests to God and His purposes; if we have overcome all evil with good, crucified the flesh with all its affections and lusts, developed a character worthy of receiving the "Well Done" of the Judge, then just as certainly as day follows night, we shall "bear the image of the heavenly"; our corruptible mortal body will be changed and made like unto the immortal body of Christ.

But we must become now what we want to be when resurrected, morally speaking. Those morally imperfect at death will be morally imperfect when resurrected. Death changes nothing. "In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be," said the Wise Man (Eccl. 11:3). He that at death "is unjust, [shall] be unjust still: and he which is filthy, . . . be filthy still: and he that is righteous, . . . be righteous still: and he that is holy, . . . be holy still" (Rev. 22:11). Death and the grave change nothing. "For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" (Ps. 6:5). "The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing" (Eccl. 9:5). If not worthy, if not morally perfect before we go to the grave, we shall be forever unworthy.

The Great Change

In verse 50, Paul tells why the change from mortal to immortal, from corruptible to incorruptible, is necessary: because "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"—it cannot any more than corruption can "inherit incorruption."

Theologians have seized upon the first part of this verse attempting to prove that people rise from the grave in an immortal state, on their way to ascending to heaven to their eternal home with Christ. This all sounds beautiful, but it is not Scriptural.

The verse has also been used by some in support of a theory that resurrected people are not real beings but spirit. This theory is also in error. Just because immortals are no longer flesh and blood does not mean that they are immaterial or unreal. Immortal bodies are real bodies that have been changed, "fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21), of some superior substance that is not subject to death, something beyond our experience. The angels that appeared to men of old from the high courts of heaven were immortal beings, but they had the appearance of men and were sometimes mistaken for men, as the three that approached Abraham late in the day (Gen. 18:2); the "man Gabriel" that appeared to Daniel (9:21); and the "man of God" who appeared to the wife of Manoah (Judges 13:6). They were all immortals, but were very real beings.

"Neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." There is a physical change involved which only the power of God can perform. Mortals do not automatically become immortal at death. Nor can mortal men and women be inheritors of the Kingdom in their mortal state. Paul is stating simply that there must be a physical change before we can inhabit the New World.

We Shall Not All Sleep

He continues his thought in the next verses:

"Listen! I will unfold a mystery [something not previously revealed]: we shall not all die, but we shall all be changed" (v. 51, NEB). The "we" refers to the whole body of Christ, all the covenant-makers who prove faithful during their day of salvation. We of this age, who may be part of that body if we qualify, may not all have to sleep in death. Jesus told Martha of such a class: "Who-soever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:26). There will be some living at Christ's return that will live right through into the new age and on into eternity without having to pass through the death state.

"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." "All," both the resurrected dead that prove faithful, and the living faithful, will be changed. This statement rules out any possibility that the dead are raised from the grave already immortal, for even those who do not sleep in death must receive the change along with the resurrected.

Paul continues with the same thought: "We shall not all die, but we shall all be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet-call. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will rise immortal, and we shall be changed" (vs. 51-52, NEB). Here again we must remember that the words "the dead will rise immortal" do not refer to the initial bringing forth from the grave, for the dead come forth **mortal**, as the last phrase clearly implies: "and we"—the living are included—"shall be changed." When Paul speaks of the "dead" who will "rise immortal," he is speaking of the lifting up from the plane of the mortal to the immortal, which will follow the "Well Done" of the Judge at Judgment Day. Both the living and the resurrected dead will need this change from mortality to immortality.

This fact accounts for Paul's next statement: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (v. 53). No one can put on that which he already has on! Man as he dies is mortal, and as he comes from the grave he is still mortal. He must be changed; he must be clothed with immortality or imperishability before he can inherit the Kingdom.

This raising up to immortality is the resurrection of Revelation 20:6, which the book of Hebrews (11:35) calls the "better resurrection." We read in Revelation: "Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years" (NIV). The "first resurrection," as used here, has reference to the lifting up, or the change from mortality to immortality.

To be worthy of sharing in this "better resurrection," the Christian must have become worthy during his day of probation. Unless he has become a new creature while he lives, he will never receive the great change at the second advent of Christ.

(To Be Continued)

*Reprints of these studies available,
10 cents per copy.*

There are lessons to be drawn from this special stage of Israel's history—

In the Plains of Moab

THE children of Israel abode in the plains of Moab just across the Jordan from the Promised Land. This fortieth year after leaving Egypt had been a full one—full of stirring events, trials, and victories. Now, there were preparations to be made for their life in Canaan. Soon they would be crossing the river.

A second numbering of the people was to be taken.

The people had been numbered the first year of the Exodus, at Sinai. Now forty years later they were to be numbered again. The purpose now was to assist in dividing the land equally among them. The inheritance was to be according to the number of the tribe: to the many, more; to few, less.

There are some interesting things to be observed about this second numbering. Some of the tribes had increased, and some had decreased. In those days, multiplied seed was a part of God's reward for obedience and faithfulness. There was strength in numbers. Some tribes were strong when they started out, and they steadily increased in strength. Other tribes, who were among the strong at the beginning, decreased in strength and were now among the weakest of all; while some of the tribes who were among the weakest were now among the strongest.

This change in the strength of the tribes suggests a lesson for us. Faithfulness and obedience always make one stronger in God's sight. Unfaithfulness and disobedience make one weaker. Sometimes we observe several persons starting in the Christian life together. Some may seem weak and unpromising when they start, some bright and strong. Look at the same group a few years later, and you observe just what we noted in the second numbering of Israel. Time is the test.

It would be well for us to take a second numbering occasionally. How long since we left Egypt, since we began to live a new life with God? Have we increased or decreased in spiritual power? Are we stronger now to resist temptation than we were at the first? Are the fruits of the spirit growing in our lives—purity, longsuffering, self-control, patience, fidelity? Are they more and more beautiful and ripe with the passing of years?

How many lives have we touched through effort and prayer, helping them to seek earnestly the Kingdom of God? If in numbering ourselves we find we are decreasing in spiritual power, we may be sure we have not been as faithful and obedient as we should have been.

There was another preparation for crossing Jordan: Moses, their great leader, reviewed and elaborated the laws of Israel. We wonder at the long list of laws, and whether the people lived at all by principle or merely obeyed for fear of penalty. While Israel's history had its dark shadows, there were also some highlights of blessing and victory that resulted from faithfulness and obedience. Certainly there were some faithful people who served wholeheartedly the great God who had delivered them.

While wondering about the children of Israel and their attitude toward the law, it would be well for us to examine our own attitude. "Law" is sometimes defined as a rule of conduct which gives order and binds together a community or nation. Today, in the world around us, a great portion of the population respond to law as a despicable idea. Daily we read of students in schools deciding on their own principles and defying the rules of the administration. This rebellious condition exists in organizations the world over.

We, as children of God, should never be found in this rank. Principle is "a rule of conduct consistently directing our actions." We as Christians do not set up standards of our own but we follow the laws and principles which God in His great wisdom places before us and which, if faithfully followed, will give us eternal salvation. Principle to us should mean our conviction of the law, our integrity, our respect and honor, our interest and zeal, our deep love for the law which will cause us to discipline ourselves, so that we will hold ourselves to it throughout every trial and temptation.

The suspension of law was once illustrated by a noted educator in our city. He compared it with a game of tennis. All rules were suspended, there were no lines or boundaries. The enthusiastic players came and with great vigor and excitement they

batted the ball, anywhere and everywhere, each as they pleased. The result was unrewarding—it was disorder and dissatisfaction. If a set of rules is important in a small group of players, how much more important in the Church, among the followers of Christ!

Can we say with David that our delight is in the *law of the Lord*?

Another matter concerning which God told Moses to speak with the children of Israel was their offerings. These were to be made "unto the Lord" in their due season. Within twenty-seven verses Moses repeats the expression twelve times—"unto the Lord." Perhaps during the long wilderness journey Israel had fallen into a careless mechanical

way of making these offerings. They had to realize their true character if God was to accept them—these services were not to be gone through merely as a formality but every one must be done "unto the Lord." No doubt Israel needed to be reminded of this, but surely we too need to be warned lest by the passing of years our worship becomes indifferent and spiritless. How often are prayers said, hymns rendered or gifts collected with no special thought of Him to whom all these should be offered?

Let us test ourselves and see if we too need this reminder: "unto the Lord." When we go to church, what is our chief motive? Is it because we are accustomed to go, or do we go with joy to worship "unto the Lord"? When we open our books to sing the hymn, do we sing "unto the Lord"? Do we realize what we are saying? Do we mean it? or do we sing thoughtlessly? When we bow in prayer, do we feel we are actually addressing the great and holy God, the maker of heaven and earth? Are we really praying "unto the Lord"?

Whenever we give anything to the work of the Lord, are we moved by a spiritual impulse to offer ourselves "unto the Lord" in gratitude for all our many blessings?

Of the many experiences which the children of Israel had in the plains of Moab, we may well profit from these three: First, the value of an occasional numbering—summing up what we have been doing and seeing if we are growing stronger or weaker in the Lord. We must be strong to cross the swelling Jordan.

Second, it is profitable to watch our own attitude toward the laws and principles by which God is working out a holy nation for His eternal glory. The reward is only for those who "Trust and Obey."

Third, let us take to ourselves the warning and not worship God in a perfunctory manner but with interest and zeal offer ourselves heartily "unto the Lord." ••

Keep out of your life anything that keeps God out of your thoughts.

Think before you speak; silent sense is better than fluent folly.

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

The most deadly sins do not leap upon us, they creep upon us.

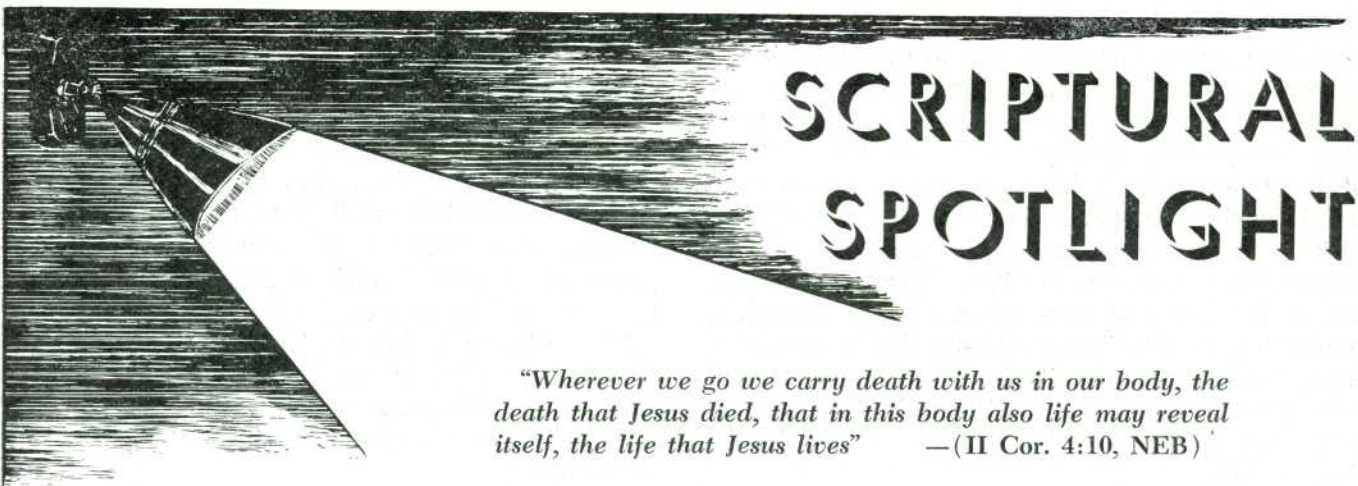
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SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

"Wherever we go we carry death with us in our body, the death that Jesus died, that in this body also life may reveal itself, the life that Jesus lives" —(II Cor. 4:10, NEB)

THE two significant words in this text are "death" and "life." To understand what the Apostle is saying we must know what meaning he attaches to these two words. Is it natural death and natural life? or does he have another meaning in mind?

Paul is very specific in stating that he is referring to the death that Jesus died and the life that Jesus lives. It is evident that in the case of "death" it is not natural death he means. Jesus died a physical death on the cross, the death suffered by many people during human history who have been crucified, executed or otherwise put to death. Now it would be impossible for us to carry that death in our body wherever we go. We could be crucified, as Christ was crucified, literally; but it would not be possible for us to be physically dead and physically alive at the same time.

In our English language there is more than one definition of the word "death." There is first the usual definition: "cessation of life, the state of having ceased to live." Then the second definition is: "total loss, destruction, as the fire was the death of their hopes of prosperity." Then there is a theological definition: "spiritual decay, loss of spiritual life."

The first definition, as we have seen, just will not apply to our text. Likewise the third definition will not apply, for we know that Jesus suffered no loss of spiritual life. The second: "total loss or destruction" seems most meaningful here. We carry "total loss" with us wherever we go, the same as Jesus did.

The Greek word *nekrosin*, translated "dying" in the King James Version and "death" in the New English Bible, means "putting to death," "killing." In other words, we carry a killing in our body wherever we go, the same as Jesus did. This kill-

ing is a putting to death of all our natural desires and inclinations which are contrary to God's law. Our physical body is alive, but our carnal nature is dead.

Two other statements of Paul help to clarify this: "our old man is crucified with him [Christ]" (Rom. 6:6). And, "that ye put off . . . the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts. . . . And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22-24). In the words of Jesus, "I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). And, "I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29).

We need all the help we can get in this warfare, but in the final battle we must do the killing ourselves. In the words of the well-known spiritual,

*Jesus walked this lonesome valley,
He had to walk it by Himself;
Oh, nobody else could walk it for Him,
He had to walk it by Himself.*

*I must walk this lonesome valley,
I have to walk it by myself.
Oh, nobody else can walk it for me,
I must walk it by myself.*

In our Christian walk, we are promised many helps. It is not a "lonesome way." But we do have to walk all the way ourselves. We should be exceedingly suspicious of any formula which promises to substitute the work of another for our own. Jesus promised to be with His followers. But He never promised to do the work for them.

Wherever we go in this world, whatever we do or say, must be done with that "death" in mind. The Christian's first and greatest task is to put

to death his own nature. We are soldiers in the Christian army; therefore, we are subject to the orders of our chief Commander.

The term "soldier," as used referring to a Christian, is especially appropriate. In the army of any state or nation, the principal task of a soldier is to kill. Likewise, the principal task of Christ's soldier is to kill—not someone else, but himself, his own lower nature. Our enemy is ourselves. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21-22). That which comes from within must be fought from within.

In Jesus' last message, given to the apostle John on the Isle of Patmos by way of vision, John was caused to see "the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, . . . neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands" (Rev. 20:4).

Jesus was dead to His own ways, and was governed solely by the will of His Father. We must become dead to our own ways and be governed solely by the will of Jesus. This is the death which Paul had in mind in our Scripture text. If we die this death with Jesus we shall live the life that Jesus lives, and reign with Him forever on this earth. ●●

From Parent to Parent—

"Just Like You!"

YOUR table is a mess!"

I looked at our children's little red table. Coloring books, crayons, papers, pencils were all in a heap. I soon had the children very busy cleaning up.

Later the same day, I passed by my own desk and was I chagrined by what I saw! The thought flashed through my mind—had the children noticed it? There it was, piled high with books and papers from a Bible study committee meeting I had attended the evening before. Feeling rather guilty, I hastily put it in order.

But that made me think. What kind of example am I setting?

I was reminded again the other day when my four-year-old daughter told me with greatest satisfaction, "Mom, I'm just like you!" *I'm* far from being what I want to be. Do I want her to be *just like me*?

There is no escaping the fact. We parents live with our children day in and day out, and they are watching us, imitating us, learning from us. Think what power we have to influence young lives for good and for God! No one else is in the position *we* are in to influence *our* children.

What we as Christian parents must do is to make a conscious effort to *be* what we want our children to be. The more I think about it, the more I realize what a tremendous job it is. But it is our responsibility before God. Wasn't that the law in Israel long ago? "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy

soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons" (Deut. 4:9).

Lately in our home, we've been checking up. What are the children learning from us about ordinary everyday living? We want our children to learn a pattern of clean, orderly living that will be an asset to them throughout life. But how can they ever learn if *our* home is a hubbub? Some people say it doesn't matter whether things are picked up and tidy, but we've decided Paul had a reason for using that little word "all" when he wrote, "Let all things be done decently, and in order" (I Cor. 14:40). He meant "all things"—including at home.

More than anything else, we want our children to catch a vision of God's future. We want them to make eternal life in God's Kingdom on earth the goal of their lives. For this reason we want them to sense the value of solid Christian character. We want them to see that serving God brings the only real happiness. We want them to learn to live—and *love*—the practical Christian walk that will prepare them for life in the world to come.

Will they want it? A lot depends on what they see in *us*, their parents.

How bright is *our* vision of the future? Do they get from our conversation that the Kingdom is really the most wonderful place to live and the one thing we really want?—or do they hear more about what kind of car we should drive and the high price of food?

What we say—even in casual comment—is important. Whoever thought that little ears don't listen? If someone were to come along and ask our children, they could readily find out what we think

of the Palmer's elaborate "mansion," and old Dr. Jenkin's long nose, and Mrs. Simmons' dozen outlandish wigs, and Mrs. Smith's caustic tongue, and how Bessie can spend more in a week than poor old John can bring home in a month, and, and—if *that is what they have heard at home.*

What we say is important, and also *how we say it.* Have you ever heard your children speaking harshly to one another, and realized—with shame—that that is what they heard from *you* the night before? Have you restrained their outbursts of temper, only to find yourself displaying the same when their peevishness was more than you thought you could take? We see them fuss and fret and complain—but did they never see anyone else do the same?

When we talk to them of God and the future and the kind of people God wants them to be, we can't expect them to understand it all; but they will understand *something.* And when they grow older and comprehend more, the already familiar will become much more meaningful.

We want our children to have reverence for God and His Word. But have they ever searched the house for Mother or Dad and found them bowed in silent prayer? Do they see us reading the Bible and sense the joy we find in it? Do they observe those high qualities of kindness, patience, love and unselfishness—yes, any and all of the Christian virtues—in *us*? Have they seen us apologize when *we* were wrong?

It is quite likely that our children's attitudes will be a reflection of *our* attitudes. And what do they see? When we are out shopping, or at the doctor's office, or among the crowd on the street, with those who do not share our faith, do they see our courtesy and confidence in doing what God approves, and sense that we are glad to be different? Or do they feel a certain shame and embarrassment for our modest dress and careful deportment? *They* will feel it—if *we* feel it.

And what about the atmosphere around home? Are we cheerful no matter what the weather, no matter what the change in plans, no matter *what*? Do we have a feeling of goodwill toward all? Or do the days sometimes turn blue when the children are moody—like *we* are—?

Jesus said to the Jews, "If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me" (John 10:37). Could we say that to our children?

We are trying to give these questions a lot of earnest thought. Example is so important. And after sizing up the model I'd like to be and comparing it with the model I am, well—there is a difference! I have no time to waste.

We can't accomplish the change overnight. But if we are making the effort to live by God's commands, our children will know. And as they grow older, they may try, too.

Our struggle is your struggle also. This is the time to check up: What kind of adults will your children grow up to be—if they are *just like you*? ●●

The Word of the Lord Is RIGHT

(Continued from page 9)

able to see worlds beyond.

So let us look *into* and *through* the Bible.

The Bible claims to be the word of God Himself, or the words of men speaking for Him, in many passages. Such phrases as "Thus saith the Lord," or "the Lord spake, saying," or "The word of the Lord came" occur, we are told, over thirty-eight hundred times in the Old Testament alone!

The Bible speaks its commands with weight, certainty and authority. Consider this passage from the Psalms: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether" (Ps. 19:7-9). These words are so familiar—but have we comprehended their meaning? Do we allow the Word of God this full authority in our lives?

The apostle Paul spoke of the Scriptures as "holy," and able to make us "wise unto salvation" (II Tim. 3:15). He also spoke of his own teaching as being not the "words of men," but in truth "the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (I Thess. 2:13).

Historical Evidence

Secular history and the findings of archeology abundantly confirm the Bible to us.

So much evidence exists to confirm Bible history that a noted modern Bible scholar considers it "very risky to accuse the Bible of error" in its telling of history. The various Biblical accounts mention many incidental details of history and geography which compare perfectly with secular records of history for the same periods of time. For example, the names of over forty different kings of various times in the Old Testament have been found in contemporary documents and inscriptions outside the Bible, and in all cases they

are consistent with the times and places associated with them in the Bible.

Archeology is continually confirming the Bible. At one time the Higher Critics, as they are called (men attempting to disprove the Bible), claimed positively that Moses could not have authored the Pentateuch, despite Jesus' statement that he did (John 5:46). But then archeologists uncovered a document containing detailed laws of Hammurabi—who was pre-Moses and even pre-Abraham (2000 B. C.). This document preceded Moses' writings by at least three centuries—and Moses was supposed to have been a primitive without so much as an alphabet!

In 1976, archeologists working in Syria unearthed some 15,000 tablets which date from about 2300 B. C., or between two and five centuries before the time of Abraham.

For years the critics argued that the Hittites, referred to in the Bible, were a misnomer, because there was no nation by that name; there was no secular mention of them. Well, they were wrong again. One day excavations began on a certain city in Turkey which proved to be the capital of the Hittite empire, and hundreds of references to more than 1200 years of Hittite civilization have since been uncovered.

Says a noted archeologist, commenting on the relation of their work to the teachings of Scripture, "In all my archeological investigation I have never found one artifact of antiquity that contradicts any statement of the Word of God."

Evidence from Fulfilled Prophecy

Evidence from fulfilled prophecies is another confirmation which God has provided especially for us, and it is one of the greatest.

The Bible is filled with prophecies. In fact, about twenty-five percent of the Bible is prophecy of one type or another. Some of these prophecies were made fifteen hundred years before their fulfillment, some a thousand years before, some several hundred, some only a few years or even weeks or hours. But *any* prophecy is beyond human possibility. Only God can declare "the things which are to come hereafter" (Isa. 41:23) with any certainty of fulfillment. Prophecy written and later fulfilled is absolute proof that the Bible is the Word of the God of heaven. And literally hundreds of prophecies have received minute fulfillment.

Many of the Bible's predictions concern the fortunes and misfortunes of the Israelite nation. To Abraham the Lord revealed that his descendants would sojourn in the land of Egypt, that they would be mistreated, and finally be delivered (Acts

7:6; Gen. 15:13-14). All this is long since history; every word of the prophecy was literally fulfilled.

Other prophecies concerning Israel included the prophecy of their captivity, and their return from captivity, also their eventual dispersion among all nations. All these prophecies met their accurate and literal fulfillment.

Other Bible prophecies included some against large and powerful cities, occasionally including very specific detail of fate or future prosperity. Both Babylon and Nineveh, powerful cities at the time, were condemned to desolation, and both predictions met precise fulfillment. Other predictions involved Tyre and Sidon, Capernaum and Chorazin, and others. All the fulfillments have been strikingly accurate—a sure testimony to the divinity of the Prophet.

Still other prophecies in the Bible involved the whole world picture. The prophet Daniel, by divine foresight, told of the rise and fall of four great world kingdoms when only the first was in existence. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome were each to rise and fall in succession, and each nation in the prophecy was distinguished by detail beyond human fathoming—the prophecies were of God (see Daniel, chapters 2, 7 and 8). The fulfillment of these prophecies of four world kingdoms gives us faith that the fifth kingdom—the kingdom of Christ, yet unfulfilled, shall likewise become reality.

Many prophecies of Scripture center around Jesus Christ, His birth, His lineage, His ministry, His death, His resurrection and ascension. Even details, such as the place of His birth, the exact line of His descent from Abraham through the tribe of Judah, and His parentage; also His trial, shame, betrayal, death and burial, and His triumphant resurrection—all were foretold, and with marvelous accuracy.

We must never discount the value of divine prophecy. Picture yourself trying to tell what will happen to a certain child that is to be born in the year 2476, and tell just what that person will do, where he will live, how he will die, etc., etc. Such utterances must surely be divine if they are to have any reality about them! Only God can foreknow the future.

More Evidence

There is still more evidence for the authority of the Bible in this fact: The Bible expresses God's thoughts, not man's.

A Bible scholar puts it this way: "The Bible is not such a book a man would write if he could, or could write if he would."

There are many statements in the Bible which could not conceivably be the words of uninspired men. What man would ever write that "all nations" before God are "as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity"? (Isa. 40:17).

What man would ever write: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"? (Prov. 14:12).

What man would ever say, "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God"? (I Cor. 3:19); or, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty"? (I Cor. 1:27).

What man would ever delight in that which humbled him, crossed his nature, and smothered his individuality? Who of his own volition would write: "Happy is the man whom God correcteth"? (Job 5:17).

Who, other than a man of God, could testify that the thoughts of God are as far superior to the thoughts of men as "the heavens are higher than the earth" (Isa. 55:8-9)? If the Bible were the work of men, such an idea would never be expressed, man's nature being what it is.

Furthermore, the Bible deals very frankly with the sins of its characters. Read biographies of other men, and see how they try to cover up or overlook the dark side of people. Often a great literary genius is painted as a near-saint. The Bible does not do it that way. It tells it like it is. Sin is sin, whether found in the greatest king or the humblest commoner. And it is condemned when it is found.

No, there is no question. The Bible is indeed the Word of God. And it contains the thoughts of God, not of men.

The Bible is the living Word of the living God, "supernatural in origin, eternal in duration, inexpressible in value; infinite in scope, divine in authorship, human in penmanship, regenerative in power, infallible in authority, personal in application."

Let us never forget the last—it is personal in application. Good knowledge, like good advice, is powerless by itself to make anyone good. The best soap will not make a man clean unless it is applied. The best food will not strengthen us until we eat it. Likewise the best knowledge will not assure us of life and happiness and eternal benefit unless we apply it. God has not directed the writing and preserving of His Word through all the vicissitudes of time for us to read and dismiss. It is not

(Continued on page 26)

?uestions

"I am wondering about the Biblical position on the status of women. How do you understand Genesis 3:16 in the light of such instruction as Numbers 12, where it seems Miriam and Aaron, not Aaron and Miriam, took upon themselves to be just as able to communicate God's mind as Moses was? Note that in verse 9, Miriam, the woman, had to bear the judgment of God, becoming unclean—plus the strong language of verse 14."

First let us consider what the text in Genesis 3 is saying. We cannot believe a literal snake ever conversed with a literal woman, inducing her to eat of the forbidden fruit of some tree growing in a literal garden. Genesis, chapters 1, 2, and 3, is far more meaningful when understood as an allegory, rather than as an account of a literal creation and literal events. Adam and Eve are representative of all who covenant to serve God. The voice of the serpent is the voice of their own fleshly desires; the forbidden fruit is the fruit of their own ways, the fruit of the tree of good and evil. God requires that we be all good, with no evil mixed in. The enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (v. 15) is the enmity which always exists between those who pursue their own desires and those who live by God's laws; it is the division between "him that serveth God" and "him that serveth him not" (Mal. 3:18). It is the opposition between flesh and spirit, and loyal servants striving to fulfill the will of God find that many times the flesh does get the better of the spirit. But the serpent's doom is sure. At the close of the Millennium, the serpent will strike one last time at the "heel" of the woman (Christ's faithful Bride), and the woman, striking back at the serpent's head, will crush the serpent of sin to his everlasting death. Righteousness will triumph.

Genesis 3:16 introduces another thought; the words are addressed to the "woman" of verses 6, 12, and 13, the covenant-makers who transgress God's law. It is the penalty for transgression: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." The wording of the last

phrase is plainer in the Septuagint Bible: "thy submission shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." Christ, the husband of the Church, shall have the rule over the unfaithful at Judgment Day—any further blessings she receives will be by His consent. Had this "woman" proved faithful and not partaken of the forbidden fruit, she could have enjoyed Christ's honor and blessing, and been seated with Him on His throne (Rev. 3:21) rather than receiving His severity and being "ruled" by Him.

The point you make about Miriam and Aaron speaking against Moses, and Miriam's condemnation being greater than Aaron's, may be circumstantial evidence in favor of your position. But may it not have been that Miriam was the chief spokesman, the "ring leader" in the rebellion against Moses? God always judges by one's actions (I Sam. 2:3); he is just and fair (Ps. 89:14-15); and it is quite possible we are not told all the details of the incident. However, both Miriam and her brother were condemned. The Lord called them before Him, and said, "Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them." Both were condemned.

"It seems to me that women in the Old Testament are always used as a symbol of evil and idolatry. This is why the woman is always supposed to be subject to her husband, whatever she may think of him. Did not Sarah submit to Abraham her husband, as in their experience with Abimelech, even though Sarah knew Abraham was wrong? Paul said that women should 'keep silence' (I Cor. 14:33-35), that the husband is the head of the wife (Eph. 5:22-23) and that wives should submit to their husbands (Col. 3:18-19; I Pet. 3:1-6; I Tim. 2:9-15). Don't you agree?"

Your statement that the woman is *always* used in the Old Testament as a symbol of evil and idolatry is too broad. There are exceptions. Read Genesis 17, Psalm 45, Proverbs 12:4; all of Proverbs 31; Isaiah 66:8-11, and Jeremiah 6:2. And in the New Testament, the Church, composed of the pure and righteous, the "firstfruits to God and the Lamb," are described as feminine: "the bride, the Lamb's wife" (see Revelation, chapters 19 and 21).

The point you make about the woman being in subjection to her husband whether he be right or wrong in her point of view is not entirely the truth of the matter. You bring up the case of Abraham and Sarah in their experience with Abimelech as proof that Sarah submitted to her husband when she knew he was in the wrong and

failed to put his trust in God. But as a matter of fact, the narrative does not say what Sarah's reactions were. However, she did not acquiesce to Abraham's way of thinking in the case of Hagar and Ishmael. When on the day that Isaac was weaned Sarah saw the son of Hagar mocking, she said to her husband, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son . . . Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son." But the Lord upheld Sarah's point of view against Abraham's wish, saying, "In all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice" (Gen. 21:18-21).

The first text you refer to, I Corinthians 14:33-35, is not relevant to the subject. This order for women to keep silent in the church was in the matter of speaking with tongues, and even the men were commanded to be silent unless there was an interpreter present (v. 28). Philip the evangelist had four daughters which prophesied (Acts 21:9). To prophesy is to teach, to speak out authoritatively in the name of the Lord. Would the Lord have permitted this arrangement if it were wholly against His principles to permit a woman to speak?

Ephesians 5:22 to end of chapter is a combination of directives, referring in part to the relation between a man and his wife, and also to the relation between Christ and the Church. Verse 21 introduces the subject comprehensively: the submission was to be mutual. "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Verses 22 and 23 require that wives submit themselves to their own husbands as unto the Lord, "for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. . . . Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." That is the principle, but this does not say there are no exceptions. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ also loved the Church. But where the husband would lead the wife in the wrong way, into evil, obedience to God must come first. Verses 28 and 33 repeat the command for the husband to love the wife even as himself. Such a husband is worthy of the wife's reverence and honor.

Colossians 3:18-19 commands wives to submit themselves to their own husbands "even as it is fit in the Lord," which is followed by the command to the husbands to love their wives and "be not bitter against them." A wife would surely be safe in obeying such a husband "in the Lord." Unfortunately, many husbands today do not qualify as being "in the Lord."

First Timothy 2:9-15 fits into the general teach-

ing regarding the duty of a man and his wife if the text is kept within its context. Paul addresses first men in general, then women in general, then he addresses both together as "the" woman, or the church, the bride who will be the Lamb's wife. Verse 8 is directly to men: "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." Such a man would be a safe guide as head of the household, and the spiritual guide of his wife and children. But here again many men would not qualify.

Verses 9 and 10 are directed to women and their inborn tendency to vanity and self-adornment.

Then verses 11 and 12 refer to "the woman" which is composed of both men and women, the bride, the Church, of whom Christ is the husband. "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection [to Christ, her husband]. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." She must never speak words of her own, but must obey her husband, Christ, just as He obeyed God. This spiritual application of verses 11 and 12 is confirmed by Paul's next statement, in which he brings up Adam and Eve as an example of the point. To be consistent we must compare "spiritual things with spiritual"; Adam and Eve being representative persons in the Genesis narrative, the "woman" and "man" which Paul mentions must also be representative.

Peter's admonition in I Peter 3 also fits into the general scheme of Biblical teaching. Husbands who are worthy of obedience should be obeyed. "For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. . . . Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life." Then Peter continues: "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." Again the subjection is to be mutual.

God is a God of knowledge and understanding, and He would never establish such an unworkable rule as that wives should always be subject to their own husbands, whether such husband be a drunkard, a simpleton, or a beast in human garb. We must remember also that both Peter and Paul were writing their words to people of their church congregations, their own brethren, and the husbands and wives they were addressing and discussing were professing the Christian faith. Those not making such a profession were beyond the reach of their admintions. ●●

February, 1977

The Used-To Be's

*I've heard so many people tell
Of all they used to be,
I wish I'd known them years ago—
Such men I'd like to see.*

*They rose up with the morning sun,
And thanked God for the day,
And then they tried to use each hour
In such a noble way.*

*When evening came, they used to long
To share a feast sublime
Of morsels from the Word of God—
It helped them every time.*

*And oh, they watched those words with care
And checked each wayward thought;
Their first concern was every hour
To serve God as they ought.*

*They used to love to talk about
The things that God will do,
And how they must prepare each day
To be among His few.*

*I've heard them tell of how they sat
All silent round the board,
And no one thought to touch the meal
Before they'd thanked the Lord.*

*They offered God their very best
And sacrificed in love,
For oh, they knew that discipline
Brings blessings from above.*

*I'd better be that "used-to" NOW,
And meditate and grow,
Or when He comes, the Lord will say,
"He's one I used to know."*

"Stick It Out"

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent cannot; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education cannot; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan of the apostle Paul—"I'm pressing on"—is the only solution to the problems that confront us.

From A Reader--

Who Is Man?

We are living in a world of unbelievers. With man's accomplishments, his technical and scientific achievements, most people feel God is unnecessary. Also, many people, seeing the terrible condition in the world, feel that they can get along without a God who would allow these things to exist.

In many parts of the world, the average person lives better than some kings of ancient times. Modern man feels he can get along without God.

But is man alone to be given credit for his achievements?

Where did man get his wonderful brain to figure out how to do things? and where did he obtain the material with which to make these many things? Did man create them?

Though man has accomplished remarkable things in the fields of science and technology, why has he been such a failure in bringing lasting peace in human affairs?

All we have to do is look around us today. There are increasing divorce rates, broken homes, immorality, and the crime and violence in the streets make it dangerous to walk to the corner grocery alone at night.

Do these conditions really indicate that we do not need God? Could it be that God has permitted these troubles for a time to show man that he actually *does* need God?

Mrs. E. S., Wausau, Wisconsin

From A Reader--

The Sculptor's Stone

The story is told of a farmer who was plowing his field. A stranger came by and shouted to him, "Mr. Farmer, I see a great rock in your field. Would you mind if I had it?"

"If you can get it out, you can have it, Lad. But you will have to get your own help to move it."

So the man and his friends started to work around the rock, and soon they had it free. They loaded it onto a truck and brought it to the man's house.

The first thing the man did was to make the stone into a shape he could work upon. So out came the big hammer; a bump here, a hit here, until the man—he was a sculptor—was satisfied that

the stone was the right shape. Then out came the hammer and the chisel, and with great care and lots of skill slowly he fashioned the stone into a likeness that he desired.

The stone now had to have its final polishing, a rub here and there with a rasp to get rid of just the little bits that weren't quite right. Often he would step back to view his workmanship, until at last he could see the perfection of beauty in it.

He invited the farmer one day to his house, and with great pleasure showed the farmer his creation. "This is the stone you thought was no good," he told the farmer. "But you see, I could see in it a thing of beauty. I could see what could be made of it."

Isn't that the way God uses us? We have to admit that we were rough stones before the Lord started to fashion us, and it has taken many years of hard work for Him and still there are little pieces here and there in our lives which need straightening or smoothing out. God's Word says, "Spare the rod and spoil the child." We do not want Him to spare us. Christ had to learn His Father's ways. So how can we grumble if we are chastised by the Lord? He is only trying to make something better of us. He is the Sculptor; we are the stone.

Mr. L., Nottinghamshire, England

The Word of the Lord Is RIGHT

(Continued from page 23)

like a pleasant melody, to be heard and forgotten. The Bible contains knowledge to be searched for as a man would search for hidden treasure, or as he would seek for choicest silver. The price of its wisdom is above rubies—it is above anything this world can offer. "She [wisdom] is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her" (Prov. 3:18).

What happens to the men and women who, in spite of all the evidence, reject the Word of God? They live their little lives and soon are gone.

What happens to those who believe it and let it live in their lives? They grow—and grow—and grow! They grow taller and cleaner and stronger in every Christian grace. And if they continue to live by its transforming power, they develop into characters so noble and so pure as to attract the attention of the Almighty One Himself! They become His jewels, His special treasure, His choicest gems, and ultimately His own sons and daughters. This we *know*, because the Word of the Lord is *right*. ●●

Attitudes

There is very little difference in people, writes a well-known philosopher, but the little difference is attitude. The big difference is attitude. Attitude makes all the difference.

Two men look out from the prison bars,

One sees the mud, the other sees the stars.

There are individuals who possess a certain something that carries them through every plight successfully. An avalanche of trouble leaves them with courage and cheerfulness undisturbed. All enthused with the prospects of success, they are confident the trial of their faith will surely work in their favor.

There are other individuals who instinctively assume that everything is against them. When confronted by a new situation, their first question is, "What is there in it for me?" Disadvantages are many; advantages they cannot see; everything and everyone is against them. Soured, feeling lonely and left out, they stagger through life afraid to venture into the stream of things for fear they might get caught by the worst.

It is not the nature of our troubles that determines what we will get out of them, but the manner in which we approach them. Attitude makes all the difference. Daily, hourly, momentarily we are manifesting the attitudes that combine to make us what we are toward our God, our family, and our friends. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

We may not be able to break the prison bars that restrict our field of activity and influence, but we have no excuse for staring at the mud when God has offered us a full view of the stars. Attitude makes all the difference. ●●

February, 1977

Last Thoughts

We Stand in Awe

How wonderful is your creation, O God!

We stand in awe before

The vastness of the universe,
whose magnitude and wonder grow in men's minds
with every new scientific insight.

The miracle of man,
whose staggering achievements are only meager
scratchings of the fullest potential you intended for him,

The marvel of creation itself,
which causes us to ask: "How did it all start?
Why are we here?"

The orderliness of life
as seen in the natural laws governing atoms and
humans, the remotest stars and the smallest blades
of grass.

Give us faith to see your purpose through it all,

To know that over all is your almighty hand

Guiding

Directing

Recreating until Earth is made over new.

Guide us, Father, until we are part of that new Earth! Amen.

"Prove the Sincerity of Your Love"

THE love of God is a practical thing. In other words, "Actions speak louder than words." It is not enough to declare our devotion to God. Our declaration must be reinforced by deeds which prove it. Otherwise, our words are empty and worthless.

This is true in our human relations. We may say we love our brother, but if our acts and attitudes toward him are contrary our avowed love is meaningless. And if this is true in our relationship with one another, how much more is it true in our relationship with God.

In Second Corinthians 8, Paul was commending the Corinthian Christians for their living faith, their knowledge, their diligence, and the personal love they had shown toward himself and toward Titus (II Cor. 8:7). But they were not to neglect the grace of giving—this would further prove the sincerity of their love. Paul set up the Macedonian Christians as an example—they had given abundantly of their penury to help the needy Christians in Jerusalem. More than this, they had given themselves to the work of the Lord; indeed, they had proved the sincerity of their love.

Are we willing to give as much? How sincere is *our* love? ●●

*Awake, my soul, and with the sun
Thy daily stage of duty run;
Shake off dull sloth, and joyful rise
To pay thy morning sacrifice.*

*Redeem thy misspent moments past,
And live this day as if thy last:
Improve thy talent with due care,
For the great Day thyself prepare.*

*Let all thy converse be sincere,
Thy conscience as the noonday clear;
Think how all-seeing God thy ways
And all thy secret thoughts surveys.*

*Lord, I my vows to Thee renew;
Disperse my sins as morning dew:
Guard my first springs of thought and will,
And with Thyself my spirit fill.*

*Direct, control, suggest this day
All I design, or do, or say;
That all my powers, with all their might,
In Thy sole glory may unite.*

*Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow!
Praise Him, all creatures here below!
From star to star, from sea to sea
All praise to God the Father be!*

-Selected

Awake--

AWAKE!

Awake--