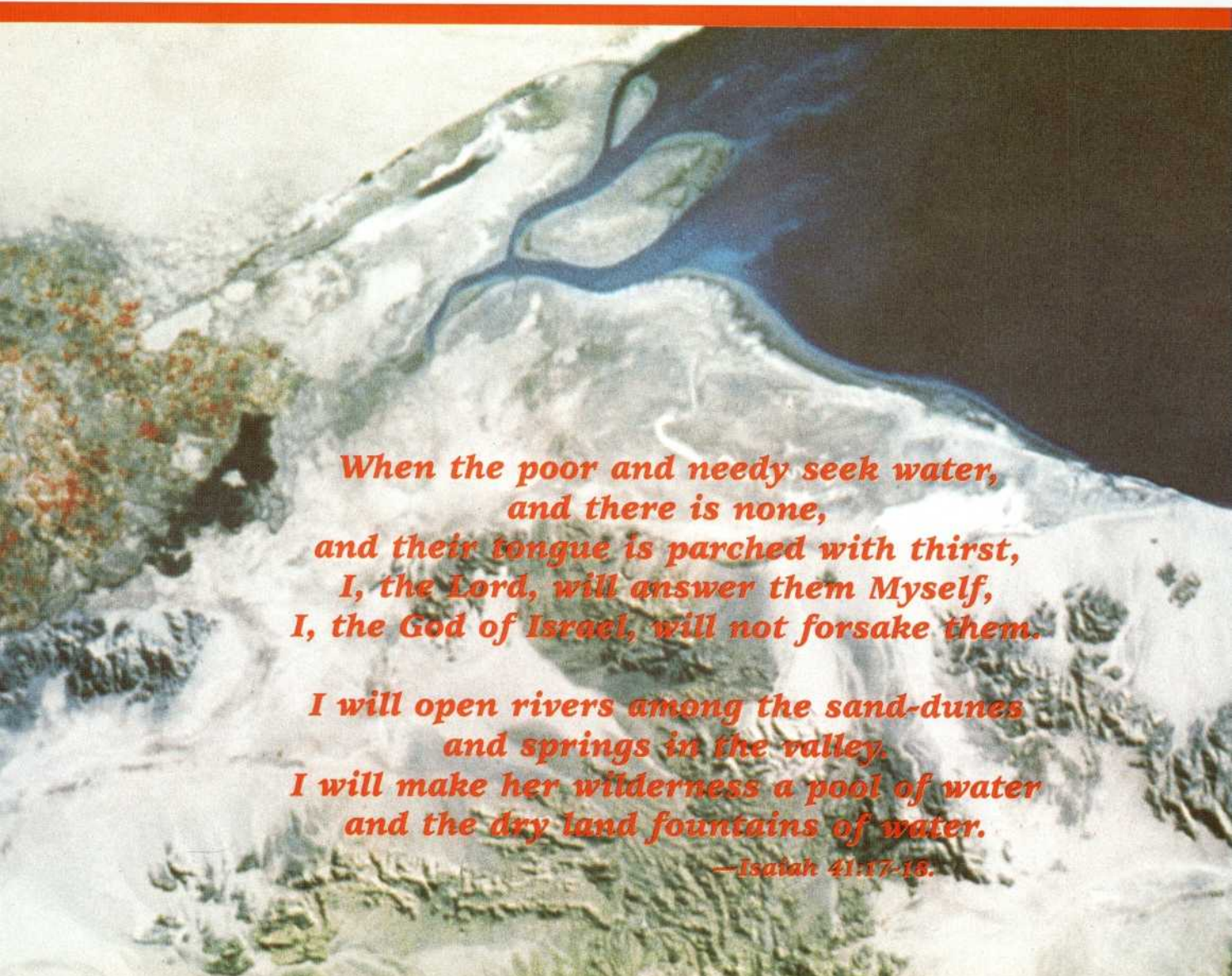


# Megiddo Message

An aerial photograph of a dry, cracked landscape. A winding river or channel of water flows through the center of the image, surrounded by parched, cracked earth. The water is a deep blue color, contrasting with the light brown and tan tones of the dry land. The cracks in the earth form a complex, web-like pattern around the water.

*When the poor and needy seek water,  
and there is none,  
and their tongue is parched with thirst,  
I, the Lord, will answer them Myself,  
I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.*

*I will open rivers among the sand-dunes  
and springs in the valley.  
I will make her wilderness a pool of water  
and the dry land fountains of water.*

*—Isaiah 41:17-18.*



**W**EEPING, my friend?  
Weeping because I faltered?

Weep not for me alone—remember, please,  
The one whom I forgot;  
Whose night was made darker  
because I closed my door;  
Whose frightened cries were muffled  
because my ears grew dull.

Weeping for me? Weep rather  
For the one who followed close,  
Who stumbled hard when I withdrew  
to let him walk alone.

And there, and there, and ever there  
Are those whose eyes were trusting  
until they saw no joy in mine.  
One reached out his hand for help,  
But mine were busy.  
Worldly things, you know,  
must be attended to.

Another soul was longing for a lift,  
Her lonely heart ached for the cheerful word  
and the warm smile I could give;  
But I was weary; said I'd go next week...  
next week her lonely race was o'er.

## If Only...

**L**ITTLE footsteps pattered close behind,  
And begged of me to show them where to go;  
While little hands reached up in search of mine;  
But I held back, preoccupied with "me";  
The footsteps turned  
and chose another road.

A soul I never knew stood closely by,  
Taking in each chapter of my life,  
Each page, each line;  
I never saw him 'till he turned away, dismayed,  
My book no longer worth his while to read.

**I**F I could but reclaim those tender hearts  
Who trusted me until I let them down,  
I'd show each one how living faith can win,  
E'en over weakness, misery and sin;  
I would not falter, not a single step,  
Held fast by Him  
whose strength will never fail;  
I would avoid the fateful, hurtful slip...  
If only, ... if...

**T**HE apostle Paul said it in these words: "No man lives to himself alone" (Rom. 14:7).  
We are bound to one another. No one rises without lifting another. And no one falls  
without dragging another down.

Who can undo the damage done by our momentary thoughtlessness, our unconcern,  
our disregard of things most precious?

**B**E FAITHFUL, friend, be faithful! Others are counting on you.

## Megiddo means . . .

"a place of troops" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon); "a place of God" (Young's Analytical Concordance). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (II Cor. 10:4-5).

### We believe

—in God, the Creator of all life, all men, and all things.

### We believe

—in the Bible as our only source of knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for the salvation of humankind.

### We believe

—in Jesus Christ the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was born of a Virgin, ministered among men, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven, and who shall shortly return to be king of the whole earth.

### We believe

—in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.

### We believe

—in humankind as providing the nucleus from which a superior, God-honoring people shall be chosen to receive the blessings of immortal life.

### We believe

—in ourselves as capable of applying the precepts and principles of the Word of God in our own lives, in this way perfecting that high quality of character which God has promised to reward with life everlasting in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

### We believe

—in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth will be filled with His glory, His people, and His will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

## Bible Quotations

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version. Other versions are identified as follows:

**NEB**—New English Bible

**NIV**—New International Version

**NASB**—New American Standard Bible

**RSV**—Revised Standard Version

**TLB**—The Living Bible

**TEV**—Today's English Version

**JB**—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

**Phillips**—The New Testament in Modern English

**Berkeley**—The Modern Language New Testament

**Weymouth**—The New Testament in Modern Speech

**Goodspeed**—The New Testament translated by

Edgar J. Goodspeed

**Moffatt**—The Bible, A New Translation

## About Our Cover

Our cover photo is a satellite view of the Salton Sea in the Sonoran Desert, in Southern California. For this photo we are indebted to Fran Biddy, Director, Strassburgh Planetarium of Rochester Museum and Science Center, Rochester, New York.

# Megiddo Message

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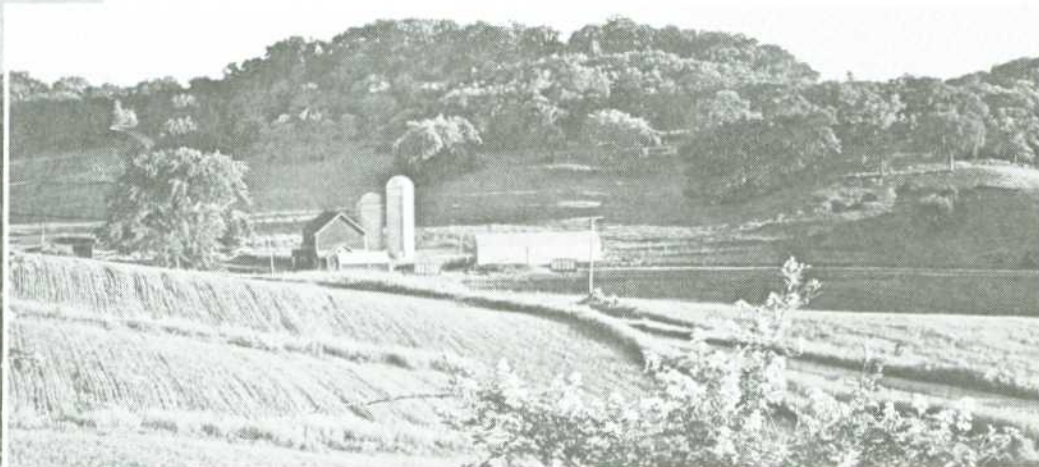
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MEGIDDO is a way of believing and living, grounded solidly in the Bible as the reliable Word of our Creator. A total view of life, the world and the universe, it sees all events, men and nations moving together toward one God-ordained climax: the Kingdom of God on earth. This has been the plan of God since the beginning. Christ will return visibly, bodily, as King, and the governments of this world will be joined to form a totally new worldwide government. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants. This is the purpose and goal of all creation.





## Water that Gives Life

**P**ICTURE a dry, arid, sandy waste. The desolate sand stretches for mile upon mile, its dusty surface hot and inhospitable in the summer sun. Nothing grows but the hard and harsh desert cacti, and nothing moves but a few lone, wandering, scrubby range cows. Mountains and valleys, rocks and ridges—all are dry, arid, desolate.

Now picture another region, lush with trees and flowers and creeping vines. A sparkling river winds through the valley, between the verdant hills. The valley is planted to crops and dotted with places of human habitation.

What makes the difference between our two pictures? Just one word: water.

**T**HE BIBLE compares the knowledge of God to water, living water that nourishes, cleanses, cools, refreshes, and sustains life.

The first mention of this living water is in the Genesis allegory of the Garden of Eden. We read that "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; ...and a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads" (Gen. 2:8, 11). God provided this living water to feed and nourish the living plants (symbolic of men and women) growing in His "garden." At first the water is found only in the "garden"; but then it begins to divide, and spread, until it waters the whole earth.

The prophet Ezekiel had a vision in which he saw this same living water becoming more and more widespread. It originated at "the house of God," His temple, His people. The water came from under the door of the house and "issued out from under the threshold...eastward" (Ezek. 47:1, NIV). Then this water, symbolic of God's divine knowledge, began to increase, and increase, and increase. This is Ezekiel's report of his vision: "He [the man in the vision] brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was flowing from the south side" (v. 2). At this point the man measured the waters, and the "waters were to the ankles" (v. 3). A little later he measured again, and "the waters were to the knees" (v. 4). At the next measuring, "the waters were to the loins" (v. 4), until finally "the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over" (v. 5). So wide spreading were these waters that they penetrated even "into the

*The Bible compares the knowledge of God to water, living water that nourishes, cleanses, cools, refreshes, and sustains life.*

desert"—no area of the earth remained untouched.

This same condition of abundant supply was prophesied by Isaiah: "They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9, NIV).

In the vision of Ezekiel, these special waters supported vigorous, luxurious growth. "At the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other"—fruit-bearing trees, trees bearing fruits of righteousness (Gal. 5:23-24).

This is the effect that the knowledge of God will have, when Christ returns and the "everlasting gospel" is preached worldwide (Rev. 14:6-8). All who live will benefit from its healing waters.

The prophet Isaiah again foretold this time of abundance and prosperity in these words: "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel" (Isa. 44:3-5).

The Psalmist, too, spoke of the knowledge of God as water, a source of life and sustained blessing. Addressing God, he wrote, "You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it" (Ps. 65:9, NIV). Again he described it as "a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High" (Ps. 46:4).

When Jesus was resting by a well

near the city of Sychar, a woman of Samaria came to the well to draw water. Jesus asked her for a drink. She, being a Samaritan, hesitated. But she soon learned that Jesus was not *asking* but *giving*—He had *other* water to drink. "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water" (John 4:10, NIV). Still she did not understand, so Jesus explained: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13-14).

Far from supporting mere mortal life, here is living water that will spring up "into everlasting life"—the same water that issues from the "wells of salvation" (Isa. 12:3). Here is water that can support abundant spiritual life, vigor, and growth in those who drink it.

Jesus offers this same life-giving water in His final message to us. Hear His loving invitation: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

Living water from heaven! Come and drink—and live!

Let us drink so deeply that we will never thirst again, that this living water may become in us a well, springing up and bubbling over into everlasting life. MM

---

*We cannot be purer than our thoughts, higher than our ideals, or greater than our dreams. To rise to the highest planes of truth and experience, then, think correctly, and foster noble ideals.*

## Life Is Fragile: HANDLE WITH GENTLENESS

*"The fruit of the Spirit...is gentleness" (Gal. 5:22).*

**G**ENTLENESS is love overflowing with the thrust of an artesian spring. It is inherent in the nature of God, and it is inherited by those who are partakers of the divine nature. It must be ingrained in us before we can export it to others.

Gentleness is versatile, creative, and beautiful. It is loaded with expressiveness and delightfulness. Gentleness brings to its possessor a height of satisfaction, a depth of understanding, and a breadth of concern that makes him a many-splendored person.

Gentleness gives a dimension to life that makes us hard on ourselves and easy on others; it puts the best possible interpretation on what it sees and hears; it promotes the interests of others and takes sides against its personal interests.

Gentleness is marked by an absence of snobbishness, unfairness, and discrimination. It is accented by friendliness, approachableness, and helpfulness.

This array of assets places one in good favor with God and with his fellowman. It pays off in the coin of lasting friendships, satisfying relationships, and rewarding experiences. It enriches both the giver and the receiver. It does not rough up the other person when he is rough on us; it releases peace to those who bring us turbulence; it returns sweetness for shoddy treatment.

Gentleness will be ours if we cultivate the art of Christlikeness.

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# God Is Good

*Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-10*

*"O taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). God's universal purpose is a whole new, glorified creation, where nothing will hurt or destroy forever, where all will be happiness and joy world without end.*

*Step by step God is working toward His goal—to fill the earth with His glory, an upright, blessed people.*

**W**HEN we pause to realize that the great God of heaven is seeking and selecting lowly mortals like you and me to be His eternal associates, beings whom He will one day glorify with immortality and endow with the richest of blessings from His measureless storehouse, we are stunned. To think that you and I can actually be heir to such honor, such glory, such majesty, such splendor! To think that you and I can actually associate someday with the level of life we call angels, and be one with them!

To think that you and I some ten billion ages in the future may look back upon this little time we are now in and see that it was but the first moment in a career that has literally no end, that will grow more rapturous and thrilling with every passing millennium.

Yes, "exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think" only begins to describe what God has in store for His loyal, loving children. Our finite minds cannot begin to comprehend its magnitude. And to think that we, among earth's multitudes, can know and experience in ourselves the full reality of such a life! With such a prospect in sight, should we not feel highly, highly privileged that God has called us to His

kingdom and glory? Should we not be deeply grateful that He has offered us a share in His munificence?

We know that God is seeking a very select element from among the human family. He is seeking the humble, the penitent, those who are willing to acknowledge their need for Him and give Him their wholehearted attention.

We look at the overall plan of God and see how step by step He is working toward His goal—to fill the earth with His glory. Slowly but surely the plan goes forward. For nearly six thousand years now God has been seeking from among His human family a select few to fill superior positions in His new order. According to Revelation 14:1, there will be one hundred forty-four thousand of them. They are the best, choice supermen and superwomen who have the inner heart qualities He is seeking. His purpose: a whole new creation, glorified, remolded, refashioned, where nothing will hurt or destroy forever, where all will be happiness and joy world without end.

His first task is to *find* the select individuals who will be able to take charge of this very special project during the Age to come. We might call His selection method a two-step process. He

Note: *God Is Good* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00



**God invites us into a career that has literally no end,  
that will grow more rapturous and thrilling and fulfilling  
with every passing millennium.**

must first *find* them, then He must *develop* and *perfect* them, for none of His new creation comes ready-made.

### **The Selection Process**

God in His infinite wisdom sees those who will be suitable material with which He can work, those whom He knows will be receptive to the knowledge of His law. While His ways and means are beyond our fathoming, we know that He uses no trial-and-error, hit-and-miss plan. Though He does nothing to interfere with the free choice of each person, He knows in advance just how many He will find, and who, and where. Even before they have learned of Him, perhaps even before they have had opportunity to seek Him, He selects those who have the potential to become heirs of salvation and begins to arrange for their instruction.

The apostle Paul describes this phase of the process in Ephesians 2: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, . . . and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (vs. 1-5). "Dead in sin" describes their condition at this early stage, and our gracious God, seeing their potential, plans even then for their enlightenment. Often they are men and women who are dissatisfied with what this world can offer them, who have

deep inner longings for a better, lasting life. God answers this longing by providing a way for them to acquire a knowledge of His law.

In all of God's dealings with humankind, knowledge is fundamental, for "all thy children shall be taught of the Lord." No exceptions. All must be taught. Knowledge heads the list of what God requires, for "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" come "through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Peter 1:3). Wisdom is classified as "the principal thing" (Prov. 4:7). Never will God leave any prospective heir of salvation without this fundamental enlightenment.

How does God enlighten men? Through the ages God has used various means of revealing Himself. "He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel" (Ps. 103:7). This was revelation by open demonstration and direct speaking. The early fathers received some of their knowledge through "the disposition of angels" (Acts 7:53), who served as God's appointed teachers.

But all people in all ages did not have the opportunity of learning from God in this singular manner, so He arranged that His laws and plan be written. Accordingly, "He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions" (Ps. 107:20). Whatever the means, instruction was the whole purpose, as we read in Proverbs 22: "Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, that I might make thee know the certainty of the

words of truth" (22:20-21).

God also has made His knowledge available to men through human agents. The apostle Paul discussed this part of the plan: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, . . . that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:11-14).

This great Apostle saw himself as an instrument in the hand of God, a human agent especially appointed by God to dispense divine knowledge to those who would make use of it. He was "made a minister" to preach "the hope of the gospel....according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God." And Paul also states to whom he was commissioned to carry this knowledge: it was "even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:23-27). Paul preached and taught and warned with one objective: "that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." It was all for the benefit of those seeking salvation,

## **Trust God: No child of His will ever be lost because he or she did not have opportunity to learn of God or His plan of salvation.**

"that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." The standard was the ultimate—and it was inflexible.

God sees that His knowledge is available to those who will benefit from it, but we must not assume that acquiring this knowledge imparts automatic, miraculous power. There is no one dramatic moment when the knowledge of God suddenly takes hold of a man and transforms him from a sinner to a saint. Knowledge, though made accessible by God, must be acquired by one's own initiative. "Every man" who would come to Jesus must "hear" and "learn" of the Father. As "it is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God" (John 6:45). And, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

How shall we come to "know" the truth of God? Knowledge comes to those who seek it: "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God" (Prov. 2:3-5). The noble Bereans were commended for seeking knowledge in this way; it is recorded that "they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

### **Knowledge Brings Responsibility—and Accountability**

It is also part of the goodness of God that accountability comes with knowl-

edge, and that those not desiring God's knowledge and not seeking it are not accountable to Him and will not receive either His eternal blessings or punishment. All mankind are not responsible. Only those who accept the knowledge of God and agree to conform their lives to it will be amenable to Judgment; only these covenant-makers will be resurrected. This is the point of Paul's argument in Romans 2:12. We read: "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."

Only those who voluntarily learn God's law and agree to serve God will be judged. This fact is repeated often in Scripture. "For we (the covenant-makers) must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, . . . whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). In the Parable of the Talents, the wealthy citizen, upon his return, reckoned with his own servants only (Matt.

25:14). Those who were not His servants were not called to account for what they had done.

God gives life and breath to all. This is an act of kindness on His part. It is "of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed" (Lam. 3:22). Mortal life is not something we either deserve or that we hold any firm claim upon. Nor is God under any obligation to give it to us or to preserve it. Millions and billions of people obtain a measure of happiness from it, by grace of God, yet remain totally outside the sphere of His concern.

These individuals, who have no special interest in the plan of God, comprise the broad segment of humankind who will not be resurrected at all: Those who wander, being outside the way of understanding, shall "remain in the congregation of the dead"; "they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake"; they shall "be as though they had not been" (Prov. 21:16; Jer. 51:57; Obadiah 16).

But someone will ask, and rightly, How can we be sure that God is not letting some perish among these who might be obedient children of God if only they were enlightened? How can we know that God finds *all* who would make choice of His salvation? How can we know that all who will obey will know what law to obey?

Our minds naturally turn to the people who are born and die in remote areas of the earth without hearing so much as a whisper of God or His plan of salvation. Are these people being penalized by where

**Woe upon us  
if we parley with  
the gifts of God  
or waste the time  
so mercifully  
extended.**



they happen to live? And what about those who die in infancy, or who are born without the normal use of mind or body? Is God fair in not giving these people a chance for salvation?

To answer this apparent "need" many people believe in what they call a "second chance"—sometimes called a "first chance" or "fair chance," because it is extended to people who seem to have had no chance at all during their lifetime.

The idea of a "second chance" may be appealing, but what does the Bible say about it?

### A "Second Chance"?

A number of factors must be considered along with this subject. First we need to understand God's attitude toward the human family. Second, we need to realize that God knows the end from the beginning and can know of a certainty where we could not even guess intelligently. Third, we want to review God's promise to supply knowledge to "whosoever will," to any who will make use of it.

### All Are Not God's Children

First, from the Scriptural point of view, *all mankind are not God's children*. He is not responsible for their presence only insofar as He set in motion the laws whereby the human race is able to reproduce itself. Hence, all mankind are not His special concern. This statement may strike some as hard-hearted, a frigid indifference not becoming to a loving God. But before we allow our emotions to lead us to some premature conclusion, let us look at the facts as they are, and consider the declarations of the Word of God.

We read: "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God" (Rom. 9:8). All mankind are not God's children as a result of their natural birth into the world. The statement is straightforward and comprehensive: "They which are the children of the flesh, these are *not* the children of God." How do we become children of God? By conforming our lives to His law, by following the plan He has

laid out, by complying with His laws of adoption (Gal. 4:3-6). We have the promise: "And ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:17-18)—but only after we have met His standard of "rightness."

Outside this special "family" relationship, all humankind are only creatures of chance. The following was the observation of King Solomon: "I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all" (Eccl. 9:11). A wise Creator allows events to take their course.

Job 21 describes the man who doesn't need God, who goes his own way, getting whatever he can out of life: "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. One dieth in his full strength, ... His breasts are full of milk and his bones are moistened with marrow.

*God wants the best:  
He in the far-off ages  
Once claimed the firstling of the flock;  
The finest of the wheat;  
And still He asks His own  
with gentlest pleading  
To lay their highest hopes and  
brightest talents at His feet:  
He'll not forget the feeblest service,  
humblest love;  
He only asks that of our store we give to Him  
The best we have.*

## *Let Us Pray*

FATHER in heaven, from whom all goodness flows, both of this world and of the world to come: look upon us with mercy as we gather to worship Thee. We are Thy people, and the sheep of Thy pasture; through Thy munificence we live; in Thy promises we hope. With steadiness of attention, with resolve of heart and clarity of thought, enable us to be edified this morning by a new encounter with Thy living Word. Through Thy truth convict us of our transgressions that we may confront ourselves as we are and go to work with renewed earnestness to become clean and whole within.

Father, we confess that too often in the press of every day we have been unmindful of Thy grace to us. We have misused and treated lightly Thy goodness in revealing to us the great things of Thy law. We have been shortsighted, forgetting that the things that matter most are the things that are not seen. We pray that Thou in Thy mercy will grant us another chance to make good, to build high heaps where we have fallen and be determined that we will never fall there again.

We are deeply grateful to Thee for calling us into Thy exalted service, that Thou hast given us hearing ears and seeing eyes to comprehend Thy purpose for us; that from among the multitudes who live and die in darkness Thou hast called us to light and life. Help us to show our gratitude by a more serious commitment to Thee, a closer walk in the strait and narrow way, a surer confidence in Thy leading, and an urgent sense of our obligation to Thee. Thou wilt not always wait. If we do not make good use of the opportunity that is now ours, we shall someday awake to find ourselves outside the City Eternal. Remind us of this fact when we are tempted to go our own way or to complain about our lot in life, when we are plagued by pettiness and thrall'd by sin.

Bless us in our service to Thee this morning. Bless all Thy people everywhere who are calling on Thee in sincerity and in truth. Strengthen, sustain and encourage as Thou seest fit. And keep us all pressing earnestly for the prize which Thou hast set before us, that we may win endless life in Thy bright new world, for Thine is the Kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust..." (Job 21:13, 23-26).

Again in Ecclesiastes 3, the Preacher speaks dispassionately of the unimportance of the man who is not the child of God: "I said in

mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts;...as the one dieth, so dieth the other;...so that a man hath no preeminence above a

beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again" (vs. 18-20).

This factor of unimportance applies not only to the weak, the poor, the obscure, but also to the mighty, the wise and honorable: "Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. ...He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light" (Ps. 49:12-19).

In God's scale of values, human beings do not rank very high. In fact, "All nations [when they do not recognize His authority] before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity" (Isa. 40:17). And again: "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity" (Ps. 62:9).

A well-known religious author in an article called "Why Does a Loving God Permit Calamities?" has reasoned that it should be within the power of God to prevent these. He gives as the reason for God's not doing so the fall of Adam and Eve in Eden—a theory too devoid of justice or fairness to be the product of an all-merciful God.

Then he postulates that the only way God can redeem Himself from this apparent dilemma is to resurrect all humanity and give them another chance. But no such failure is part of the designs of an all-wise God. Such a theory may be pleasing to mortal ears, but it does not accord with the Word of God. Why should an all-wise God need a "second chance" to make His plan come out right? He who knows "the end from the beginning" (Isa. 46:10), can He not plan and execute His plan with mas-

**God judges by character and character alone.**

terful precision? Can He not know in advance what the outcome will be?

No, our gracious God has no such failures on His record. In the words of the poet, "He knows what He's about."

#### **Ample Opportunity to Those Who Use It**

God has no need to resurrect everyone who ever lived to give them a "fair" chance." He knows, judging by their conduct the first time they lived, and grants an opportunity to all who will use it.

How can we be sure? How can we know that the knowledge of God will be available to all who want it during their lifetime? How can we know that a serious seeker after life will not be claimed by death before reaching his desired goal?

The Bible provides ample evidence that God will reveal His knowledge to all who will make use of it. All who will do God's will shall learn that will while they live. Jesus made several statements that show that all who will use that knowledge will find it. He said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). Whoever would follow Him should "have the light of life," the knowledge by which to walk.

The opposite point is also clearly stated in Scripture. God does not purpose to give His knowledge equally to all. To His disciples He said: "...It is given unto you to know the mysteries [the hidden wisdom now revealed] of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matt. 13:11). On another occasion He thanked God for withholding knowledge from the "wise and prudent" of the world, who would make no use of the knowledge, and for revealing it to "babes," humble ones ready to listen and learn (Matt. 11:25).

Jesus made a statement in John

**Only "exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think" can even begin to describe what God has in store for His loyal, loving children.**

7:17 which relates to this point. He said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." This text of itself, taken in context, indicates that Jesus was proving to the Jews that His Father was behind Him in all that He taught, that He did not speak for Himself but for God. The New English Bible translates verses 16-17, "The teaching that I give is not my own; it is the teaching of him who sent me. Whoever has the will to do the will of God shall know whether my teaching comes from him or is merely my own." He who "has the will to do the will of God" will recognize the words of Jesus as the divinely inspired Word of God and will know that he has found the way to salvation.

However, in recognizing the authority behind His words they will also be acquiring knowledge through those words—which means also that they will hear the message. They shall indeed "know of the doctrine." Yes, all who *will do, shall know*.

Another text from the words of the apostle Paul also shows that the way will be pointed out to the one who is seeking. Paul had just written that he had not yet done all that was necessary to attain the prize, but that he was pressing toward that goal. Then he said, "Let us then keep to this way of thinking, those of us who are mature. If there is any point on which you think differently, this also God will make plain to you. Only let our conduct be consistent with the

level we have already reached" (Phil. 3:15-16, NEB).

If we are honestly seeking to  
(Continued on page 12)

### **Talk About Progress!**

#### **Where we start:**

"All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity" (Isa. 40:17).

#### **Where we can end:**

"I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:18, NIV).

"I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth" (Zeph. 3:20, NIV).

"The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing" (Zeph. 3:17, NIV).

"The ransomed of the Lord will return, they will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away" (Isa. 51:11, NIV).

#### **The steps between:**

**Learn...**"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord" (Isa. 54:13).

**Believe...**"Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Heb. 11:6, NIV).

**Obeys...**"Blessed are they that do his commandments" (Rev. 22:14). "If ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant..." (Ex. 19:5-6). "To those who by persistence in doing good seek for glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life" (Rom. 2:7, NIV).



know the right way, the way will be revealed—and before it is too late, for Paul also said, “Keep yourself in training for the practice of religion. The training of the body does bring limited benefit, but the benefits of religion are without limit, since it holds promise not only for this life but for the life to come” (I Tim. 4:7-8, NEB), or as it reads in the more familiar King James Version, “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” If we are earnestly seeking life, if our lives show that we are serious about pleasing God and attaining the stature of Christ, our gracious God will give us sufficient time to learn and to do what He requires. What greater promise could He have given!

Not only is acquaintance with God’s knowledge promised to the earnest seeker, but *full* knowledge is assured: “...if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you” (Phil. 3:15). No prospective child of God will ever be lost because he or she did not have opportunity to know the way of God. Nor can we imagine that a merciful and loving God will allow any to give a lifetime of faithful service and fail because of some small point of which they were unaware. When He seeks—and finds—we can be sure He will see such a one through to a successful finish.

But woe upon us if we parley with the gifts of God or waste the time so mercifully extended. Lifetime is working time: “Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (II Cor. 6:2).

As the tree falleth, so shall it be (Eccl. 11:3). No second chance. As Jesus clearly revealed in His post ascension message: “And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still” (Rev. 22:10-11). The resurrection is for a calling to account, for judgment, not for further opportunity.

### **How God Works**

God is gracious. Even the giving of mortal life to all the human family is part of His abundant grace. But to those in whom He sees potential for His kingdom He extends special grace. God’s pattern through the ages has been to work with a select group of people in whom He saw exceptional promise. This was true of the Israelite nation, who enjoyed special advantages for many years. And surely God’s choice of this family cannot be downrated—from its ranks came many a notable personage: Samuel, David, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Haggai, even Peter and Paul were all from this noble family.

What were the privileges they enjoyed? They had direct contact with angels and divine revelation. No small privileges these! They saw with their own eyes and knew from their own experience that God was with them, guiding, directing, molding for His eternal purposes. And even if a certain generation did not see an angel or receive a revelation from God or see His power demonstrated, they were not very far removed from

those who had had this privilege.

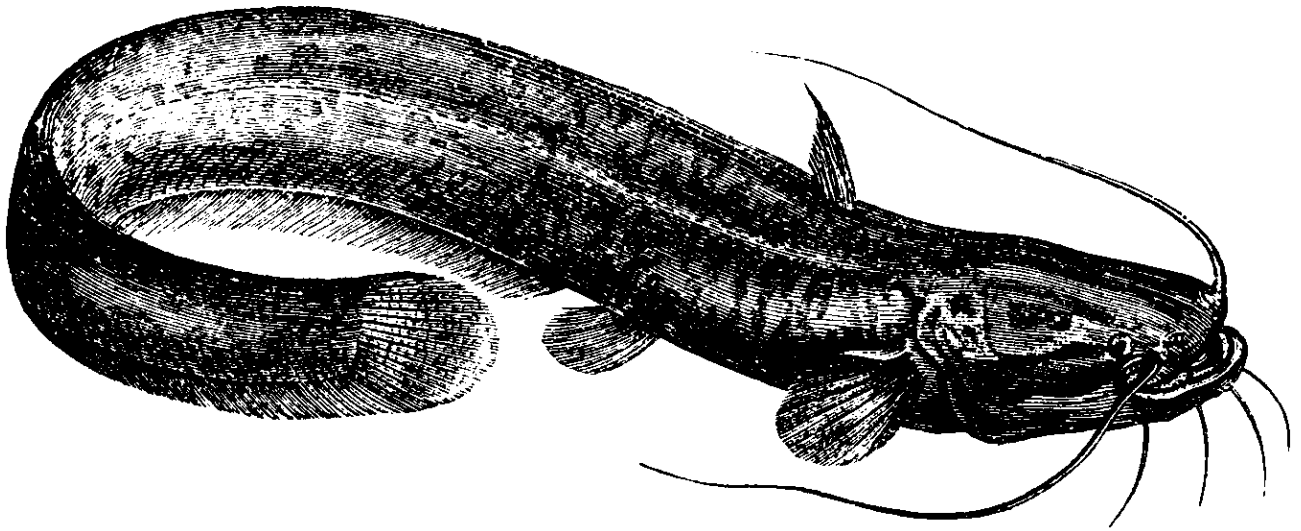
But did the Israelite people as a nation prove worthy of their high calling? We know they did not, and God removed them from the rank of special privilege. But He was fair. Never did He condemn the few for the transgression of the many, nor did He ever refuse one who wanted to serve Him. God knew in advance that only a few would obey. These He chose, like the fishermen in the parable of Jesus, and “cast the bad away” (Matt. 13:47-48).

The Apostle described this process of God’s choosing in Romans 11: “I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin”—surely Paul was not rejected because of the transgressions of his Jewish brethren! No, “God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel...? Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom. 11:1-5). Never did God allow any usable material to perish.

But God takes no steps without turning all to good purpose. The rejecting of the Jews was but the opening of the door of special opportunity to the Gentiles. And Paul goes on to say even this change could be an opportunity for the Jews, if they would take heed. He writes: “I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy” (Rom. 11:11, 14).

*(Continued on page 16)*

**God’s testing may be rigid, but never  
will He allow it to destroy any good material.**



## Any Catfish In Your Life?

**T**HE COD fishermen of Maine have found a unique solution to a serious problem. The difficulty is that after the cod are caught and placed in the holding tanks aboard ship, they just lay in the bottom and don't move. Consequently, their flesh becomes soft and flabby and they are of little value to the buyer.

The fishermen, however, have an ingenious way to keep them swimming and strong. They keep a large catfish in the holding tank. Catfish and cod are natural enemies. Therefore, its presence keeps the cod swimming to stay away from its stings and jabs. As a result, the cod remain active and strong, and are suitable for the marketplace.

All too often we are like the cod. We're content to take it easy and do as little as we can. We accept what is, we are content with ourselves as we are. We do not feel the urgent need to change to what God wants us to be. As time goes by, we become spiritually flabby and ineffective in the cause of Christ.

To keep us active and strong, God may allow a "catfish" into our lives. It may be one of the children, someone we work with, or a fellow member of our church. They don't agree with our opinions. Their words and actions are a constant irritation. They try our patience and test our self-control. But it's all for our good, if we take it in the right way. It makes us strong, mature.

If you have a "catfish" in your life, thank God for him or her. Without them you wouldn't be as spiritually strong as you are. And you would have missed many a valuable lesson.

Perhaps—perhaps you even need another catfish. If so, count on one appearing!

Every experience in life isn't pleasant, but when the growing days are done, we shall be more than grateful for every "help" that brought us to the measure of the stature of Christ, when He says to us, "Well done!"

# The Runaway's Return

## Part II

### Scene 2 The Flight

#### Characters:

*Onesimus* . . . . young household servant of Philemon  
*Androcles* . . . . . middle-aged servant of Philemon

#### Setting:

*Onesimus leaving home. Androcles pleads, trying to persuade him to change his mind, but Onesimus will not listen. This action continues slowly across the stage. After Onesimus disappears, Androcles watches helplessly for a while, shakes his head sadly, then droops in abject despair.*

### Scene 3 A Street in Rome

#### Characters:

*Marius* . . . . . underworld "gang" leader in Rome  
*Onesimus* . . . . . runaway servant of Philemon  
 2 Crooks  
 4 Bearers  
 2 Mourners  
 1 Beggar

#### Setting:

*A street in Rome. Onesimus, shabbily dressed, is talking to a disreputable-looking character named Marius. The latter is bearded, has a patch over one eye, and wears a conspicuous dagger.*

*Marius:* But I tell you, Onesimus, you can't run out on us this way. What's the matter with you, anyway?

*Onesimus:* Marius, I've told you, and I mean it. I'm through. I can't do it.

*Marius:* What do you mean, you can't? You're learning fast. I never saw a young fellow learn faster. Why, with those delicate hands of yours, you could be one of the best pickpockets in Rome.

*Onesimus:* That's just the trouble. I've been learning the wrong things. I've told you a hundred times, I'm not interested in your way of life. There must be a way to earn an honest living, and I'm going to find it. I never thought I'd come to living with thieves and extortioners.

*Marius:* Say, don't set yourself above us. Why don't you go back to Colosse? Answer that one.

*Onesimus:* Never mind that; I'm going to make a new start. I was honest once, and I can be again.

*Marius:* Who'd hire you, a runaway slave?

*Onesimus:* I can try. I'd rather dig ditches than go on like this.

*Marius:* Ditch digging is for slaves. Only fools work.

*Onesimus:* Maybe so, but I'd rather do it.

*Marius:* (disgustedly) You can't change 'em. Once a slave, always a slave. It's a state of mind.

*Onesimus:* Is that so? You've got an earring mark yourself. How did you get your freedom? Answer that one.

*Marius:* (ignoring the question) Look, Onesimus, isn't this an easy living?

*Onesimus:* It isn't living. I've got to live with myself. I've got to make a change, Marius. It's no use for you to talk.

*Marius:* (stealthily) Now see here, lad, we need you. Everybody can't read and write, and some of the boys are pretty stupid. You're bright. You've got



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education. You can figure things out. Now we've got a job planned that will be just your kind. Nobody's going to be hurt, it's just a matter of signing a few names, and that's what we need you for. What do you care whose names you sign? These people can afford to lose it. You see, we take from the rich and give it to the poor—we're the poor!

*Onesimus:* No.

*Marius:* What's the matter? It's better than digging ditches, ain't it? We'll cut you in for a full share, and it won't be a small sum, neither.

*Onesimus:* No, I'm not interested. There are things more important than money. You can get someone else to do your dirty work.

*Marius:* But I can't trust anyone else.

*Onesimus:* I don't want you to trust me. I want *out*. I have enough on my conscience now, thanks to you and my own weakness. I wish I'd never met you, Marius.

*Marius:* I know what's the matter with you. You've been talking to that old Jew down the street, that Paul. Must be you like to associate with convicts, even if you do think you're better than we are.

*Onesimus:* Paul is all right. Yes, I've been listening to him, and I'm glad of it. And he's no convict. He hasn't been convicted of any crime, or even had a trial. He's done nothing wrong.

*Marius:* Then why is he locked up? Answer that!

*Onesimus:* Because the Jews in Jerusalem are jealous of him. He used to be one of them—a leader—but he changed his religion, and they don't like it. To save his own life, he appealed to Nero and was sent here a year ago. You ought to hear him, Marius. It might do you good—even you.

*Marius:* Ah-h-h, nonsense! Religion may be all right in

its way, but you've got to make a living somehow or be a slave. You can have it if you want to, but not for me. It's making a fool out of you. The priests are a lot of crooks. They steal one way, and we steal another—what's the difference?

*Onesimus:* Paul has helped me in *many* ways. He may yet make a man out of me. I know I am weak by nature. If I were not, I wouldn't have stayed with you as long as I have. Ever since I left home I have gone down, down, down. Now Paul has showed me the way back, and I'm going to take it.

*Marius:* Do you think religion will put food in your stomach or clothes on your back? Be sensible, boy.

*Onesimus:* I believe that will be taken care of if I do my part. Paul has given me hope in this life, when I had just about lost my hope along with my self-respect. And not only that, but the truth he teaches offers hope of life beyond death, and that's what I want. Come and hear him, Marius.

*Marius:* (with a gesture of disgust) Go on, you're not talking to me! Look, boy, that's what you're asking for. (He points north, where the sounds of a whip striking viciously are heard, followed by moans, and a rough voice.)

Voices offstage: Come on, get up! Get up, I tell you, and get that load on your back. Think I'm going to carry it myself? Come on, move! (more blows, outcries; fading out.)

*Marius:* That's the life of a slave for you. That's what you'd rather have. (scornfully) Rather dig ditches! Look over there, boy; that's what happens when you have money. (He points south, where a noisy procession is heard approaching. Cries of "Julius! Hurrah for Julius! Good old Julius! He's our boy!")

Now those fellows are really living. They go to the games, and to the baths. And work? Not much! And

what does it? Money. That's all the difference—money. And you say you don't want it!

*Onesimus:* I didn't say (Enter an old beggar dressed in rags, and limps on a crude crutch. Approaching Marius, he extends his hand for alms.)

*Beggar:* Please, sir, a penny for a piece of bread. I haven't eaten today.

*Marius:* (roughly, giving him a shove) Go on, get out of here! (The beggar pauses in front of Onesimus, who pulls a small bag from his belt and shakes out two coins—his last. One of them he gives to the beggar, who thanks him profusely.)

*Onesimus:* I've been hungry, too, but how about it my friend—were you always like this?

*Beggar:* Oh, no, young man. I've had money. I've been popular. I've had them singing my praises, just like Julius that just went by. Oh, I had lots of friends then. But the money went, and my health went, and my friends went, and now here I am, old and sick and just waiting for the end. (exits)

*Marius:* (Triumphantly) There! What did I tell you? It's money that makes the difference, nothing else.

*Onesimus:* Yes, and there's your answer. Money takes wings and flies away, and then where are you. By the way, where's all your money? Where's all you made on the last job? I don't want the kind of friends or the kind of pleasure that depends on anything as uncertain as money, especially your kind of money.

(A funeral approaches. Four men silently carry a bier on which rests a shrouded corpse. Two mourners walk behind with bowed heads and folded hands. When they have passed, Onesimus turns on Marius with decision.)

*Onesimus:* And there's your final answer, Marius. That's the end of all men—rich or poor, great or small. And it's not what I want.

*Marius:* Well, what are you going to do about it? Death comes to everybody. You can't beat it.

*Onesimus:* You *can* beat it. There *is* a way out—the resurrection of the dead and eternal life in the Kingdom of God. *That's* my choice. I wish it were yours, too.

*Marius:* Don't preach to me, fellow! That Paul certainly has got you wound up. But let me tell you one thing: if you go with him you can't stay with us. You can take your things and get out of our lodgings, right now! You can go your way and we'll go ours. And let me tell you, if you ever say anything to the police, don't forget that your life won't be worth much. Forget that you ever knew us.

*Onesimus:* That's just what I want to do, forget the past and build a new future. And I'm going to do it. My things are already out; I moved this morning, in case you want to know.

*Marius:* (mockingly) You'll be back. I've seen your kind before. I've seen 'em go up, and I've seen 'em come down. When you get hungry enough we'll see you coming around begging for bread. You'll find your Jew friend won't help you—and I don't know if we will either!

MM

(Continued next issue)

## God Is Good

(Continued from page 12)

All privilege and all calling come with a full measure of responsibility. God is seeking character and character alone. This is the Apostle's point as he compares the Jews to a branch lopped off an olive tree, and the Gentiles to a new branch grafted on. He says, addressing the Gentiles: "If some of the branches of the tree have been lopped off, while you, a shoot of wild-olive, have been grafted in, and share like a natural branch the rich nour-

*Watch the little things. It takes only a  
sting of pride to corrupt our love...a twinge  
of jealousy to mar our joy...a whisper  
of unbelief to ruffle our peace.*

ishment of the root, don't let yourself feel superior to the former branches. If you feel inclined that way, remind yourself that you do not support the root, the root supports you. You may make the natural retort, 'But the branches were lopped off to make room for my grafting!' Very well, then. They lost their position because they failed to believe; you only maintain yours because you do believe. The situation does not call for conceit but for a certain wholesome fear. If God removed the natural branches for a good reason, take care that you don't give him the same reason for removing you" (Rom. 11:17-21, Phillips).

Whether Jews or Gentiles, all stand or fall by their own merit, not the favor of God alone.

God is seeking, but never will He choose less than the best. And never will He let any of the "best" fruit of the earth perish for want of proper nurturing. The testing may be rigid, but never will He allow it to destroy *any* good material. The prophet Amos illustrated this point vividly in relation to Israel in the book bearing his name. We read as he records the words of the Lord: "For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth" (Amos 9:9). Not the least grain shall fall! Not a single kernel!

Oh, how we should value the love and long-suffering of our gracious God in calling us into His service and giving us this priceless opportunity. Let us make use of it to its maximum, that His work in our behalf may not be in vain but that we may be selected as His choicest fruit to abide in His house of glory forever. MM

## Joy Is...

*There is too little joy in this world. You can find plenty of gaiety, even hilarity, but little real joy. The reason is that joy is not a product that can be manufactured, nor can it be induced with amplified sound and psychedelic lights. It is not something to be found by searching. Joy is not a product but a condition, a state of being that issues from the deep springs of a noble character.*

*Joy is not mere pleasure. Joy is the satisfaction that comes as a by-product of a contented life, of knowing beyond all shadow of uncertainty that we are traveling the road that leads to our desired destination. Jesus knew such joy, and He promised it to His followers. That confidence enabled Him to say the night before His crucifixion: "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete" (John 15:11, NIV).*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### ABIB and NEW YEAR

The New Year is coming—the sacred New Year, as God commanded Moses to measure time.

According to Biblical records, the ancient Hebrews began their sacred year with the new moon of Abib, or Nisan (see Ex. 12:2, 13:4). Abib is the first new moon following the spring equinox. This year the equinox occurs on March 20, and the next new moon falls on the morning of April 16. For this reason, we are observing the beginning of the month Abib on the evening of April 16, continuing through the day of April 17, Bible time being counted from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32).

The Megiddo Church observes the day with double significance—as the beginning of the sacred New Year and also as the anniversary of the birth of Christ. Members and friends set aside the day to reconsecrate themselves to God for the new year, and also to honor Christ, our coming King and Ruler. The heavenly Father chose to honor Christ at the time of His birth by sending angels to the shepherds—shouldn't we do our part?

Thirteen days later (Abib 13, this year on Thursday evening, April 28) we will commemorate the anniversary of our Lord's Supper, and the morning of May 1 (Abib 15) the anniversary of Christ's triumph over death and the grave. MM

### Self-Denial Week

This year, the week beginning Sunday, February 7, will be the annual observance of self-denial week for the Megiddo Church congregation and all scattered members and friends who wish to observe it with us.

During this week we will limit ourselves to three articles of food at each meal. Selection will be made from simple, plain, common foods, varied each meal as desired. We shall refrain from all specialties, all cookies, pastries, desserts, and fancy foods.

In observing this week, we will be following the pattern set by God's people in all ages. The Christian life is a life of discipline and self-control, and if we cannot deny ourselves in things material, how can we perform the real, inner denials that will bring us to the stature of Christ?

The entire obligation of the sincere Christian centers around self-control. There is no other way to make our lives pleasing to God, except through the exercise of control. We must learn to control our words, our thoughts, our feelings, our desires. This is the only way we can follow our perfect Example, who could say, "I do always those things that please Him." MM



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# A B S O L U T E L Y P U R E

## WITH NOTHING BAD MIXED IN

**D**ONALD was a poor little orphan boy who had been taken to a big orphan home. At the time of this story he was in the hospital getting over an attack of mumps or something of the kind. He was just well enough to look at picture books and took great delight in looking through some big magazines that kind friends had brought for the orphans.

Being only just able to read, he preferred to look at the advertisements where most of the words were printed in large, plain letters. Now and then he would call the nurse in charge of the ward to come over to his cot to explain what they meant.

"Nurse," he called on one occasion, "what does this mean?" Slowly he spelled it out: "F-R-Y'S C-O-C-O-A A-B-S-O-L-U-T-E-L-Y P-U-R-E. What does that mean?"

"Absolutely pure," said the nurse kindly, "means pure all the way through, that there is nothing bad in it at all, that, well—that all the bad things have been taken out of it."

"I see," said Donald, evidently satisfied and proceeding to turn over the pages to look at something else.

The nurse thought he would soon forget all about it—but he didn't.

Night time came, and with it Donald's turn to say his prayers. The nurse stood by with bowed head, and listened.

"Dear God," Donald began, "thank you for bringing me here. Thank you for a good bed and nice things to eat. Bless the kind people who look after this hospital. Bless my good nurse, and bless all the other sick children here and make them better. Bless me and make me a good boy. Bless me and—and—and—"

"Go on," whispered his nurse.

"Make me," went on Donald, "make me like Fry's Cocoa—"

"Donald," whispered the nurse, wondering what was coming next.

"Make me like Fry's Cocoa," went on Donald, ignoring the gentle admonition, "*absolutely pure*, so that there's nuffin' bad in me at all. Amen."

A child's story? True—but with a moral for the old as well as for the young. Absolute purity is the very core of true religion. It was the doctrine taught by the prophets of old, it was the foundation of the teachings of Jesus, it was the theme echoed by the apostles, and it is the very principle that is being forced home today by all of God's loyal spokesmen.

Absolutely pure with nothing bad in it at all. What better definition could be given than this of what true religion really demands, or of the standard we must attain. Only two simple words, "*absolutely pure*," but how often we fail to keep this in mind. It is human nature to try to stretch it just a bit and say, "*Absolutely pure*, but just a *speck* of self left in."

Is this what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount? No indeed! His proclamation was "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Neither did the apostle Paul stretch this principle, for he said: "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." This is the standard, and we know it will never be changed. If we do not "*fit*" this standard, it is high time we were about changing ourselves to "*fit*" it. And this is no simple task.

There is one thing only that will produce this absolute purity in us, and that is washing, daily washing in the Word. Jesus explains what this washing is in John 15:10: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." Yes, that is the washing; keeping the Father's commandments is what will make us absolutely pure!

Oh, let us not grow weary of this washing. It is a "*must*" if we are to obtain the future reward from God.

If not washed, if not absolutely pure, we can have no part with the future body of Christ.

For most of us it is not so hard to get the so-called "great dirt" washed away, the lying, or the stealing; but we are so inclined to think that the "little things" like jesting and foolish talking are unimportant, that to wash and be clean on "such little things" is being *too particular*. When the command comes, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate," the tendency is to think that is not necessary.

Everybody has certain besetments harder to overcome than others. In one it is pride, in another stubbornness, in another sensitiveness, or in still another it may be bitterness; but all must be scoured and scrubbed until we come clean, absolutely clean. Some dirt comes out easily, and some requires constant washing.

We know it does not take much poison to contaminate the entire physical system; just so the poison of sin will contaminate the whole spiritual man and eventually will take our eternal life if we do not take vigorous action against it now.

The days are slipping rapidly by. We are becoming pushed for time. None too often can we be reminded of that standard we must attain. Let us each morning pray to our Heavenly Father to help us to be like Christ today, "*absolutely pure*." And as we encounter the trials and temptations through the day, may this be the prayer that ever flows from our lips:

*So wash Thou me, without, within,  
Or purge with fire if that must be,  
No matter how, if only sin  
Die out in me, die out in me.*

**O God, give me all through today**

*Grace to say a willing "Yes" to any good that I may do;  
Strength to resolutely say "No" when I am tempted to do wrong;  
Patience to say to myself "Wait" when I am too much in a hurry;  
Resolution to say "Now" when I am inclined to put off until some  
future time what should be done today;*

*O God my Father, help me to do the things which I know I must do;  
To be obedient, when I would rather have my own way;  
To persevere, when I am tired and discouraged, and would like to  
give up;  
To forgive when I am tempted to feel hurt or sore or bitter;  
At all times help me to find my happiness in obeying You.*

*Don't let me miss any opportunities today—*

*To learn something new,  
To show kindness to one in need,  
To make myself a little better and a little wiser than I am.*

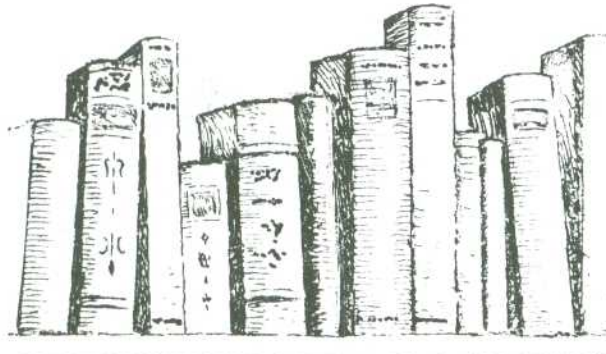
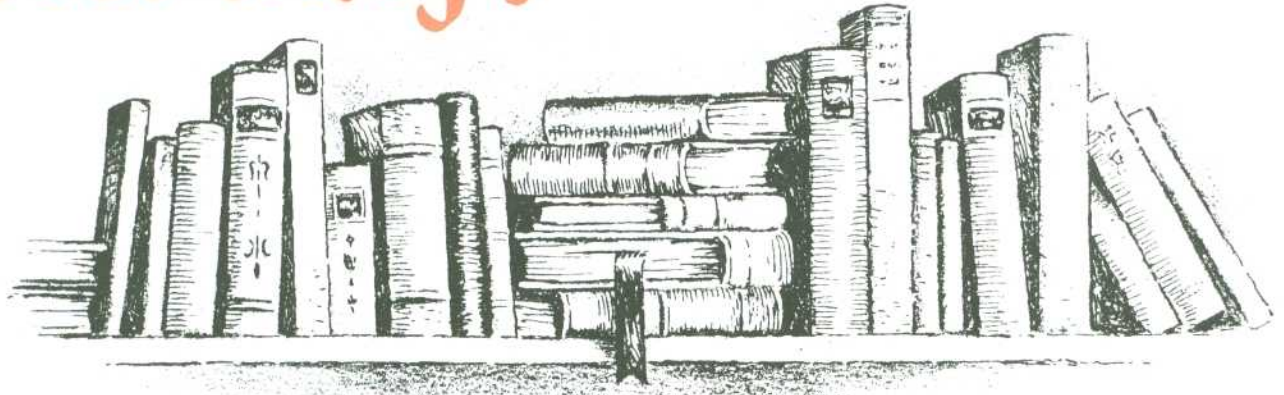
*Don't let me quarrel with anyone today.*

*No matter what happens, help me to  
Be calm.*

*Don't let me let myself down today. Amen.*

---

# Reading?



*“Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.*

*“Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

*“Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates” —Deut. 11:18-19, NIV*

## Let Your EDUCATED CONSCIENCE Be Your Guide

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The Christian reader must be highly selective.  
Not everything in print is fit to read.

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“Oh forget your conscience, Kathy!” fumed Susie impatiently. “You’re too old-fashioned. Your conscience needs to be reeducated!”

“But my parents...”

“You’ll have to learn to stand on your *own feet* sometime,” Susie argued as she turned the rack slowly around, her eyes searching for the just-right book. “And you ought to read *this* one sometime—it’s really spine-tingling, Kathy,” she continued, as if Kathy had not objected.

“Mother would not approve of such...” Kathy began lamely.

“Your mother will never know! How old are you, anyway! And how are you going to find out what the world is like if you don’t *read* these things!” Susie shook her head as Kathy backed slowly away.

Kathy’s head swam. Susie certainly knew her vulnerable spot: reading. If only she didn’t have that insatiable desire to read, read, read...anything she could lay hands upon.

“Here’s the one!” exclaimed Susie, triumphantly placing the book in Kathy’s hands. “Once you start to read *this* book, Kathy, you won’t be able to lay it down until you’ve finished it. *This* will make those religious books really seem dry and tame.”

Kathy turned the pages slowly...yes, they looked inviting. Those eye-catching headings—she could almost pick up the drift of the story. What should she do? Should she hand the book back to Susie, or?...The old battle raged within her.

Something inside her seemed to shout “No, no, no!” again and again as she tried vainly to silence it. At the same time she was saying to herself, “I’m old enough to decide for myself. Just *once* won’t hurt me.”

Susie watched the perplexed Kathy with satisfaction. If she could get just *one* of these books into Kathy’s hands, Kathy’s thirst for reading would take care of the rest.

Beads of perspiration stood out on Kathy’s forehead; her hands shook. Wearily she closed the book and looked up. “Well,” she began, absent-minded, nervous, moistening her lips with the tip of her tongue, “maybe...maybe this once I’ll...”

“Good afternoon, Kathy,” came a cheerful voice from behind her.

Quickly Kathy placed the book in the rack and whirled around to give her Sunday School teacher a shamefaced but grateful smile. Kathy’s cheeks were scarlet. “Good afternoon, Miss Reed. I...I was just...” she stopped, not knowing what to say.

Miss Reed glanced from Kathy to her companion. What had been going on? she wondered to herself as she caught Kathy’s beseeching glance.

Miss Reed spoke. “I have just a small purchase to make and then I planned to call on your mother. Kathy, may I have the pleasure of your company?”

Susie frowned at the unexpected turn of events and started for another

*What you READ,  
you THINK...and  
what you THINK,  
you BECOME...*

*...be sure that  
what you READ  
is what you  
want to BE.*

part of the store where she quickly disappeared behind the racks and racks of books.

"Mother is helping my grandmother this afternoon and will not be back until evening," confided Kathy. "But I would like to talk with you, Miss Reed."

Her Sunday School teacher looked at her thoughtfully. *Something* was troubling Kathy.

In just a few minutes the two were traveling in silence down the broad expressway toward Kathy's home. Then Kathy spoke.

"Miss Reed," began Kathy drawing a quivering breath, "I want to thank you with all my heart for appearing when you did. You saved me from yielding to a terrible temptation. Against my better judgment I allowed Susie to persuade me to read a book which would not be edifying nor fit for any Christian to read. I...I also realized today that Susie is not a girl I should associate with."

"You are right, Kathy. Anyone who would try to lead you from God's way is not good company."

### Reading Pointers:

- Keep harmful reading out of reach (if in doubt, *don't*)
- Keep helpful reading within reach—scatter it throughout the house

Kathy studied the pattern in her dress for a moment as if to find courage to go on.

"Miss Reed, you probably don't understand, but I have such a passion for reading that when I get a book in my hands, I *can't* put it down. I am so weak. My conscience warns me, but the desire is stronger."

Miss Reed placed a warm, sympathetic hand over Kathy's. "I know the battle you're fighting," she said tenderly. "Reading was also my big temptation."

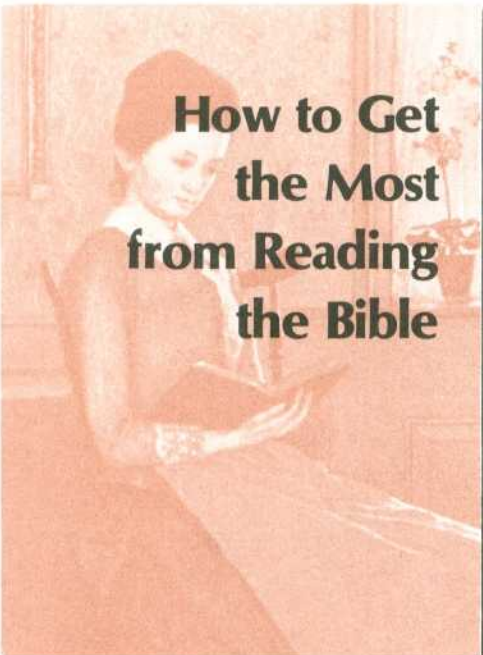
"You mean...you mean that it

doesn't bother you any more?"

"It isn't the trial that it once was."

Kathy looked in astonishment at Miss Reed. Could it be possible? Could it be possible that this godly woman had once had the same terrible struggles that she was now passing through? If Miss Reed could have been tested so strongly and could now look back upon it and say, 'it is not the trial it once was' then there *was* hope for her!

Miss Reed went on. "Yes, dear, I foresee the time when you also will look back upon these struggles and thank God for the testings that made a Christian out of you. Kathy, a Christian's choice of books has a profound influence upon his character, for character is formed not so much by command or decree as by unconscious suggestion such as we get from reading. Tell me, Kathy, can anything good come from feeding on lightness and foolishness? Can novels elevate the mind or add to our spiritual stature? If our choice of reading does not enrich our mind or



## How to Get the Most from Reading the Bible

When you read the Bible, do not just read a passage and move on. Stop and ask yourself these questions:

In this passage, is there

- any sin for me to avoid?
- any promise I can obtain?
- any command I should obey?
- any victory I can gain?
- any lesson I need to learn?
- any lofty thought I can ponder—about God, or His plan for our planet?

*"Each line has a treasure, each promise a pearl  
Which all, if they will, may secure."*

build up our faith, it is merely a waste of time."

"But, Miss Reed, many of the books I read are perfectly innocent and harmless," said Kathy shifting uneasily in her seat.

They arrived at Kathy's house, but neither stirred to get out of the car.

Miss Reed looked squarely into Kathy's face. "They may *appear* perfectly innocent and harmless, but are they positively helpful? In reality much of the so-called *harmless* reading matter is *harmful* because of the very fact that it is not helpful. It consumes quantities of time and interest

and brain room without giving eternal quality in return."

"I see," admitted Kathy thoughtfully. "I can see the point. Time not used to the very best advantage is time *wasted*."

"That is it exactly, my dear. Here are a few questions that helped me greatly. Whenever I picked up a book or newspaper I asked myself: Is this strengthening my character, or slowly, subtly undermining it? Does it raise my ideals? In choosing to read this am I exhibiting high, Christian standards or just average? Will this reading really condition my mind

for the serious thinking necessary to forming the high ideals I have chosen to pursue? Does it increase my relish for the holy and good, solid reading of the Bible, or does it dull that relish so that I fail to get the real exhilarating substance from the highest and best? Is this the best, the very *best* kind of reading I could do at this moment?"

There was a long silence.

Kathy was the first to speak. "My conscience gives me no peace."

"Be thankful, dear, that it does not. You have a wonderful ally—a  
(Continued on page 27)

Lord, let me never slight  
the meaning or moral of anything I read.  
Make me respect my mind so much  
that I dare not read what has no meaning nor moral.  
Help me choose with equal care my friends and my books,  
because they are both for life.  
Show me that as in a river, so in reading,  
the depths hold more of strength and beauty  
than the shallows.  
Teach me to value what is truly beautiful and right.  
Help me to never be blind to thought.  
Keep me from caring more for much reading  
than for careful reading;  
for books than for the Book.  
Give me an ideal that will let me read  
only the very best,  
and when that is done, stop me.  
Repay me with power to apply what I read  
to my own life,  
then to teach others.  
And then help me to say, from a disciplined mind,  
a grateful "Amen."

—Author Unknown.



## Who Are the Cherubim?

*"I was reading your article on 'Who The Angels Are' (December, 1987, Megiddo Message). You stated that 'No mention is made of any bizarre shapes or even the traditional "wings."'"*

*"I would suggest that you read or review Ezekiel 10:5, 12, 16, 19, 22. Thank you."*

The passages cited all speak of "cherub" and "cherubims," rather than angels.

What is the relationship between cherubim and angels?

First, what are cherubim? According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, a cherubim is "a cherub or imaginary figure." The Hebrew Lexicon repeats this and adds the following: "a figure compounded of that of a man, an ox, a lion, and an eagle (3 animals which come together with man, symbolize power and wisdom, see Ezekiel 1 and 10)."

The cherubim are mentioned many times in the Old Testament, once in the New. Each time they are figures, or objects, not living beings. In no case are they said to perform any activities, as living beings. They do not minister, or walk, or talk, or eat with humans as the angels did. In no case do they deliver a divine message or do any work in behalf of God. On the contrary, they are described as having been "made," or "carved," or "engraved" (see I Kings 6:23, 35, 36; Ex. 26:1, 37:7-9).

The cherubim which were carved for a place in the temple of King Solomon were elaborate pieces of artwork, each being ten cubits (fifteen feet) high and having a wingspread of fifteen feet "from wing tip to wing tip" (I Kings 6:23-24).

The cherubim are mentioned often along with the Tabernacle, or with the Temple. Here they seemed to serve as a representation of the Divine power and presence. From anything we are able to find in Scripture, they are used wholly in this representative capacity. If they have any counterpart in the celestial realm, we are not told.

What about the cherubim seen by Ezekiel in vision?

The fact that cherubim were seen as moving, talking, etc., in vision, is not evidence that they were animate

beings. A vision was a type of dream given by God to reveal information or knowledge. In a vision, inanimate objects may be seen as having living or human properties; for example, in the dream of Joseph, twelve sheaves bowed down to him. At other times animals or creatures were used to represent nations or classes of people, as in Daniel's vision of the four beasts (Daniel 7).

Cherubim were part of the imagery in Ezekiel's visions, and were seen as flying, speaking, etc. We are not told the meaning of the visions, but the imagery seems to have been drawn from settings familiar to the Israelites, i.e., the Temple, and its appurtenances. From this may come Ezekiel's references to the cherubim, especially as they relate to the Divine presence.

Both in the Tabernacle and in the Temple, the cherubim were positioned with their wings touching overshadowing the mercy seat. The cherubim in this position symbolized the providential power and protection of God over His people. God was said to be with His people via the mercy seat; it was a point of meeting. This imagery is used in Psalms, where the Psalmist speaks of God "coming down" or "dwelling...between the cherubim." "The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved" (Ps. 99:1). "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth" (Ps. 80:1). "O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth" (Isa. 37:16). Each of these suggests God's presence with His people, using the imagery drawn from the Tabernacle or the Temple.

Ezekiel's visions use this same imagery. In them the cherubim are given living properties, i.e., they are said to move and fly, walk and talk, just as did the other living creatures he saw, the wheels, and other symbols.

We cannot find any evidence in Scripture that cherubim were living, animate, created beings like the angels, or that they are a different "level" or "order" of angels.

Much as we might like to know more of the heavenly realm, we are limited to what has been recorded in the Bible for our learning.

### • Advice from Caiaphas?

*"What about the words of Caiaphas in John 11:49-52, 'Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not'? And in this 'he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only,' etc.?"*

As you rightly observe, this text is part of a statement made by the high priest Caiaphas at a time when the Jews were seeking occasion to condemn Christ to death. It reads: "It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (vs. 50-52). This member of the Jewish hierarchy was expounding a principle often followed in that day—"that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." But He was expressing a principle of the Greco-Roman world, *not a policy of God*.

From the earliest time, God condemned human sacrifice. He would not permit it among the Hebrew people (see Deut. 12:31), among the Israelite kings (II Kings 16:3), or among any people who claimed Him as their God. Speaking through the prophet Micah He said, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams?...shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 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" (6:6-8). These were not the sacrifices God required. How could a God who condemned the sacrificing of ordinary earthborn sons authorize the sacrifice of His own perfect, sinless Son? Is this part of the mercy and justice of an All-wise God (Ps. 89:14)?

No, we have no obligation to accept a statement by Caiaphas as having the same authority as a statement by God or by Jesus or any of the inspired writers.

The displeasure of Jesus' enemies with His unequivocal teachings was so great that they demanded His life; and His Father did not see fit to intervene and alter their plans, even though it was within His power. But that is no evidence that God demanded Jesus' death on the cross as a sacrifice to atone for the sins of humanity.

By submitting to death on the cross Christ completed His life of full surrender to His Father's will. Others of

the household of faith before Christ had given their physical life in performing their duty of loyalty to God, and others after Him would have to do the same. Hence, Christ being the "head" of the body, the "king of kings," the perfect example of a fully consecrated life, it is not strange that He should be permitted to experience the utmost in trial and testing.

### • Does God Create Evil?

*"God is supposed to be the 'God of truth and without iniquity, just and right' in Deut. 32:4. Why then does the Bible say of the Lord, 'I make peace, and create evil'?"*

The text you cite is found in Isaiah 45:7, which reads: "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things."

You are right, that God is holy, a God of light, of holiness of purity. "In him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). It seems inconsistent that He would at the same time "create evil."

As in other situations where a text does not harmonize with the overall teaching of the Bible, we must try to harmonize the isolated text with the overall teaching.

One approach to this might be another look at the definitions of the word "create." In Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon the word has four definitions. The first is "to cut out, to cut or pare down, to plane and polish (as to the notion of breaking, cutting, separating)." The second definition is the one usually applied: "to create, to produce."

If we apply the first definition to our text in question, we get an entirely different thought, and one which does not conflict with God's wisdom or nature.

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance also offers this among its definitions. The original word is *bara* and means "to create; (qualified) to cut down (a wood), select, feed (as formative processes); choose, create."

God in the process of forming or creating "cuts down" evil and darkness, He "separates" evil, "breaks" or "cuts"; "planes" or "polishes"—this is all part of His creative process. Rather than *making* evil, He is reducing it.

No, God is not engaged in a contradictory business, working against Himself. God is not the author of evil. Jesus tells the true source of evil: not God but the human heart. "For from within out of the heart of man proceed..." all the evils to which flesh is heir (Mark 7:21-23). And James affirms: "...every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:14-15).

MM



# An Enlarged Printing Facility

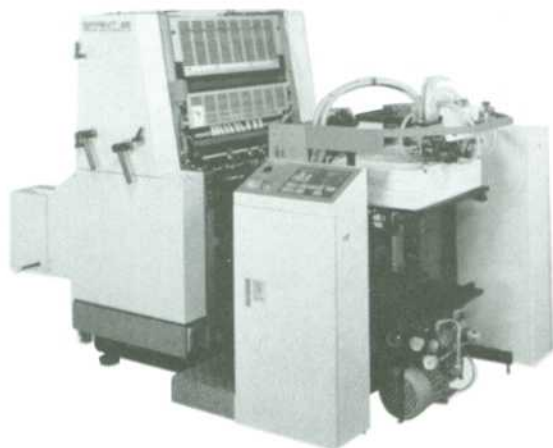


**T**HE YEAR 1987 began with a major reconstruction of our printing facility and closed with the installing of a new offset printing press. Altogether this represents progress and the ability to get more done more easily, more economically, more efficiently, and with improved quality.

## A Remodelled, Enlarged Facility

Since the changeover in 1980 from linotype and letterpress to phototype and offset printing, our printing operations had felt the pinch of limited space, but our long-suffering production team, David and Marie Sutton, did not complain.

However, a significant increase in the volume of materials being printed during 1986 caused the problem to become acute. Several alternatives were discussed, and it was decided that a major addition to the printing facility was the answer. In this way additional space could be given to our order processing and mailing departments, as well as to allow adequate space for prepress, printing and finishing operations.



*A new high speed offset printing press (KOMORI, Sprint 26) was purchased and installed in the Megiddo Printing Department in December, 1987, under the direction of Production Manager Margaret Tremblay.*

*Upper: Megiddo Printing Facility before the remodelling.  
Below: Exterior view of enlarged printing facility completed February, 1987. Facility houses all Megiddo printing and mailing operations.*

Of course, the project had to be done without interrupting the publishing schedule. This was a major challenge; but the project, begun during December 1986, was successfully completed in February, 1987. The result: approximately 600 additional square feet of working space. This allowed us to rearrange the equipment so that all printing and finishing is in one room, and typesetting, done by Marie Sutton, and other prepress operations, have their own area. (Previous to this, our typesetting department had been cramped in a small-as-possible corner of the printing room, only a few feet from the noisy printing press.) Another benefit of the remodelling was the enlarging of the darkroom and the adding of a darkroom annex, so that platemaker and camera can be operated simultaneously.

## ...And A New Press Installed



## A New Offset Press

Then, during the month of August, another major decision was made: to purchase a new offset printing press.

The new press is a single color, sheet-fed Komori Sprint 26, equipped with the latest in printing technology—a real asset to our department and greatly appreciated.

You have already seen what it can do—the press arrived the first of December and was installed in time to print the January 1988 issue, though too late for us to tell you what was happening.

The new press should make it possible for us to do more printing in the same amount of time—it is considerably faster to operate. For every hour this new press runs, it should produce 60 or 70% more than the equipment it replaced. It is also equipped with a feature only recently available on single-color presses, an alcohol dampening system. Perhaps most appreciated of all are the press's many built-in features to protect the safety of the operator.

The new press, with its highly accurate registration, should also be a major help in the printing of our four-color covers. Four-color printing had always been considered beyond the capability of our small shop, until it was bravely—and successfully—introduced by the Sutton's during 1986. But "unwilling" equipment can be a formidable obstacle—we hope that the new press will be more cooperative.

The new press should also alleviate some of the more "normal" stresses and strains caused by deadlines, downtime and costly delays (if you haven't worked in a printing department, you may not know how much patience it is possible to have!).

We are grateful to the Lord that we have been able to support our own printing department for the last more than 70 years. We also thank Him for our dedicated workers and volunteers who give so liberally of their time and skills to keep the department functioning. The advantage is twofold: because the work is being done "in house" by members of our organization, we are able to control the quality of our product. We are also able to produce and circulate much more literature than would be possible if these services had to be purchased. The cost savings are substantial in manpower, time, and materials.

It is a privilege to be able to participate in the work of our King during His absence, and as long as the Day of the Lord tarries we will continue to spread the message of His coming, and to alert readers near and far to the time in which we are living and the urgent need to prepare for that Day.

MM

## Reading?

(Continued from page 23)

conscience educated by God's Word. Remember the old adage, "If in doubt, *don't!*" When you have the least doubt about something, never go into it. Far safer it is to go to extremes on the right side than to touch the wrong. Kathy, when I was quite young, I learned a valuable lesson from an old man who had been a trapper in the far north, whose feet had been amputated. Father told us of the trapper's experience.

"In a bad storm he was caught out in the bitter cold of the far north. He struggled on toward a place of safety; his feet were painful. It seemed he would never arrive there. Then, after awhile all the pain in his feet ceased. 'How good to be free of pain,' I ventured to say. But my father corrected me quickly. So long as his feet pained him he was happy. When the pain began to leave, he knew that he was doomed; the pain diminished as the feet froze.

"My father, seeing how concerned I was, made the spiritual lesson. He said, 'It is the same with us and our conscience. Better to have to deal with it from day to day in active remorse than to get to that stage where it no longer bothers us; for then we are in trouble, sure enough!'"

"My father's understanding of my problem and his kind direction proved invaluable to me. Conscience properly trained is the Christian's most treasured director. And like the freezing feet, it is safest when it hurts.

"Pity the day when there is no after-sting when a lie is told, or a shady deal pulled. And Kathy, pity the day when we can read literature not befitting the child of God and our conscience not trouble us. Pity the day, for we are nearing the very death of our soul!"

Unable to speak because of the large lump in her throat, or even to raise her eyes to those of her mentor, Kathy pressed tightly Miss Reed's hands between her own. And Miss Reed, reading the deep and sincere gratitude in her penitent face, returned the warm grasp.

"Please call me any time, Kathy, that you feel you want to talk over any problem. I shall be most happy to come over, or you can come to my house. But whatever it is, *hold your ground* and when it comes to reading, cautiously choose your company and *watch* your choice! *Never* will you regret it, for the benefits are for now *and* *hereafter*."

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*To know the Bible is to love it; to love it is to obey it; to obey it means life eternal.*

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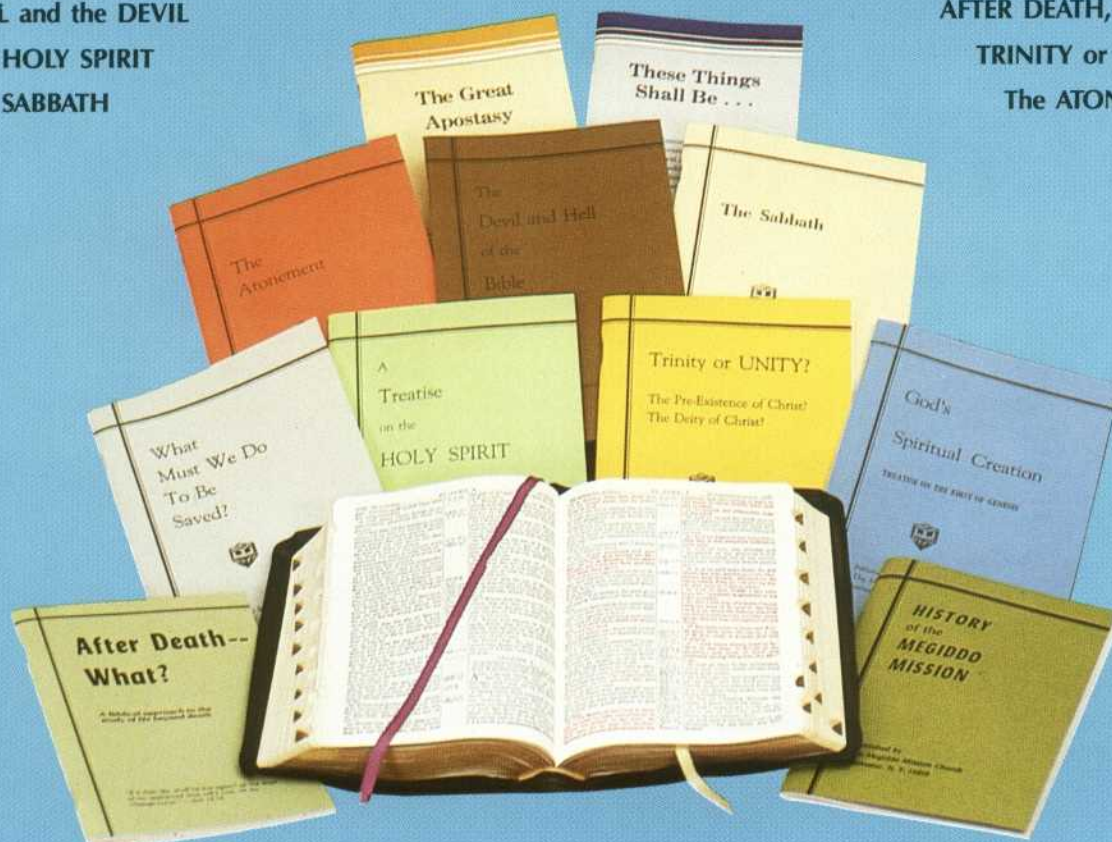
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