



Megiddo Message

*The Potter takes His molding
clay, and with His love's rich skill,
He twists and shapes and brings
to light the object of His will.
The finished work doth not appear
At once; nor do we see
The plan He has, the finished
form this work of His shall be.*

*At times the clay beneath His
touch unwilling is to yield;
But He works on, rebuilds,
reshapes, till goodness is revealed.
This Potter molds with patient
love; perfection is His thought,
As from the ugly, barren mass
A masterpiece is wrought.*

*The task is long; the work is great;
but on He works with joy,
For in His mind He sees the
whole which nothing must destroy.*

*God is the Master Potter, yea,
My life, the clay He molds;
My twisted, shapeless, yielded will
Within His hands He holds.*

*I cannot see the finished work,
But 'neath His shaping hand
I place myself—my life shall be
The masterpiece He planned!*

Intensive Prayer

Just as the critical heart patient needs INTENSIVE CARE, so we, whose every breath and heartbeat depend on God, need INTENSIVE PRAYER.

We read of the prophet Elijah that he was a man "subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" (James 5:17). In this passage James is using Elijah as evidence of the effectiveness of prayer—intensive prayer. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (v. 16)—it is "effectual" on the divine side, because "fervent" from the human side.

Great men and women of God in all ages have been men and women of prayer: heartfelt, sincere—intensive. From all appearances they were alone in the world; but they were not, for wherever they went their lives were linked with God. They trusted God, they believed in God, they belonged to God, and they maintained an active, open communication with God through prayer.

What about us? Do we know God as they did? Are we men and women of prayer—intensive prayer?

It is natural when we are lonely, or sick, or in distress, to turn to God. When the Titanic was sinking, it was reported that everyone was praying; even those who had never prayed before. It was even said that the band that only a few hours earlier had been part of the merrymaking of the pleasure-crazed passengers, upon learning of the fate of the ship played "Nearer My God to Thee"—though one wonders where they found the music!

When we are caught in the grip of forces beyond our control, it is natural to pray. Such prayer may be fervent on the human side but it is not effectual because there is no pre-established link with God. Such is not the type of communication God is seeking. This is not praying as Elijah did. God is not part of an emergency squad, waiting for our call when trouble strikes. He wants our heart fully as much when things go well as when they are against us. He wants our yielded selves, our broken hearts, our sur-

rendered wills, our sincere love and all our heart's devotion *all the time*. After all don't we claim to *belong* to Him?

God wants us to "seek" Him, to depend on Him, to recognize our need for Him, His heavenly guidance, His heartening love, His supportive hand, His outreaching arm of promise all the time. Can we give Him all this—and not pray?

Read the Psalms of David, and see how many ring with this heartfelt sincerity. David knew how to pray intensively. Do we wonder that he could repent and turn to God even when in sore transgression? Do we not see here the heart-quality God was seeking?

Intensive, heartfelt prayer is a genuine aid in bringing us to the standard of character God requires. How can we be self-exalting—and at the same time mindful of our utter dependence on God? How can we be petty and fault-finding—and maintain a true sense of gratitude to God? How can we be unforgiving of others and at the same time, in true penitence and humility, be seeking His forgiveness for *our* manifold sins? How can we be angry or impatient—even with circumstances—and implore His blessing? How can we be harsh or critical with another, and at the same time open our hearts in His presence, He who sees and knows us through and through?

Let us never lose sight of our dependence upon God and our need to share with Him, to communicate with Him, to seek His counsel, His guidance, and His will. Not casually, not occasionally, but intensively, as though our very life depended upon it—for indeed it does! Just as the heart patient whose link with life is precarious needs *INTENSIVE CARE*, so we, whose every breath and heartbeat depend on God, need *INTENSIVE PRAYER*.

Genuine prayer, intensive prayer, is not reciting familiar phrases as part of a ritual that has little or no meaning. It is not even fulfilling an obligation to

(Continued on page 23)

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 and Sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life; in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."

We believe

—in the Bible as our only source of true and divinely inspired knowledge about God and His plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.

We believe

—in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and born of a Virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be king of the whole earth.

We believe

—in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.

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 raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.

We believe

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

We believe

—in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth shall 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

JB—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English

Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation

About Our Cover

For our cover photo we are indebted to the kindness of Jim Kozlowski of the Wizard of Clay Pottery near Honeoye, New York. A professional potter, he is seen carefully handcrafting a vessel in the ancient pottery tradition.

Megiddo Message

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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.



Fruit— Fruit— Fruit!

I would like to think about Jesus' words, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

Abide. This word may seem to indicate a passive, quiescent attitude. But the kingdom of God is "a going concern." It is not static, it is dynamic. Jesus, in effect, said the man who walks with God must keep moving. His inner life must advance, keeping step with the divine purpose for him. It is a living, moving, accomplishing Christ with whom we have to do. If you do not advance, He will go on without you. If you would abide, you must act.

Action is displayed by all God's wonderful nature wherever we look around us.

The sun says to the little earth-planet, "Abide in me—resist the temptation to fly into space; remain in the solar sphere, and I will abide in the formation of thy rocks, the verdure of thy vegetation, and all living things, baptizing them in my fire."

"Abide in me," says the ocean to the alcove, that shows symptoms of division from its waves. "Keep thy channel unsilted and open, and I will

pour my fullness up to thy farthest shores, twice in every twenty-four hours."

"Abide in me," the vine says to the branch, that it may impart the makings of life and fruit. The air says it to the lung, that it may minister ozone and oxygen to its cells; the magnet says it to the needle, that it may guide across the ocean the mighty steamer, laden with freight of human life.

If you would abide, you must act. Yes, if we are really abiding in the vine, fruit will certainly be the result, and good quality fruit means everything.

A story is told about some pear trees in a certain garden orchard that were trying to settle which of them was the finest tree, but they could not manage it, for want of a common criterion. Every tree who entered the dispute thought he was the finest.

Suddenly all the trees hushed their voices, for the gardener was coming. The gardener was telling a visitor about the various trees. He passed by the great big tree, saying, "Oh, that is left standing only because it is hardly worthwhile to plant a good tree so near to the high road. Its fruit is small and poor."

Of the tree which was so proud of

its regular shape, the gardener said, "Yes; a nice-looking tree, but a shy bearer. I mean to have a more trust-worthy tree in its place this autumn."

"What is this tree?" the visitor asked, pointing to the one at which the others had laughed. The gardener answered, "It is the white beam tree. How it came here I don't know, but the master keeps it because it bears an abundance of berries."

Then the two men looked at the pear on the quince stock. "Grows very fast," said the gardener, "but doesn't fruit well at all. It is too sappy and bush growing." "What have *you* been doing here?" inquired the visitor, standing before the tree which had spoken last in the dispute. "That tree has been doing badly of late," answered the gardener. "Nearly all its fruit has been cracked and worthless, so I have been trying what a little fresh soil, with iron in it, will do. If that does not improve things we must cut it down. But here is the gem of our collection," said the gardener, pointing out a tree which was not remarkable for great size or beauty of shape. "This tree bears fruit all season, all good and abundant."

When the gardener was gone the trees rustled softly, "Is fruit *everything*

then? are we to be judged by that alone?" And some of the trees were thoughtful and troubled for a long time.

That is the rule, for human beings, too. It is foolish to rate ourselves by our looks, or our learning, or birth or our position, our money or our accomplishments. What the great Gardener looks for is fruit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control.

—Contributed.



ABIB Is Coming

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. The first new moon following the equinox this year occurs the evening of March 26, therefore we will be observing the beginning of the month Abib on the evening of March 27, continuing through the day of March 28, 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.

Thirteen days later (Abib 13, this year on Sunday evening, April 8), we will commemorate the anniversary of our Lord's Supper, and the morning of April 11 (Abib 15) will be observed as the anniversary of Christ's triumph over death and the grave.

Pentecost falls on May 16.

"By his faith he is speaking to us still"—Heb. 11 : 4, Moffatt.

Words for the Living

Excerpts from the sermons, talks and writings
of Rev. L. T. Nichols (1844-1912).

*We cannot rejoice unless we have
none on earth beside God. The Lord
is the only one we can rejoice in.*



*We have to be the very best per-
sons on the earth if we want the Lord
to accept us.*



*If we really believe there is some-
thing better we will work for it.*



*Can we not afford to pay the pal-
try sum God requires of us?*

*We will many times have to have
courage to say No, even to ourselves.*



*We must think before we spend
our money, think before we spend
our labor. It all belongs to God.*



*Our whole heart should be bound
up with God, and we be one with
Him in all things.*



*Time is passing fast. Each day,
each hour, each minute we are near-
ing the Great Tribunal.*

*Just to be tender, just to be true,
Just to be glad the whole day through,
Just to be merciful, just to be mild,
Just to be trustful as a child,*

*Just to be gentle and kind and sweet,
Just to be helpful with willing feet,
Just to be cheery when things go wrong,
Just to drive sadness away with song,*

*Whether the hour is dark or bright,
Just to be loyal to God and right,
Just in His promises ever to rest,
Just to believe that God knows best,
Just to each day our duty see—
That is God's will for you and me.*

The Greatest Gift: *Ourselves*

By sacrificing ourselves we establish our real worth in the sight of God.

We are all born with an instinct to hold on to what we have. We see it in the very young child, who does not have to be told to tighten his grasp upon an object the moment his superiors start to take it away. There is a certain security in possessing. To part with what we have is sacrifice, and sacrifice suggests pain and loss.

Yet it is precisely here that the human meets the Divine, and that the Divine takes notice of the human. God does not want us as we naturally are. He is looking for the remade, refashioned, reconstructed man or woman, the one who is willing to forego his or her own wishes and desires in exchange for the higher values of Christ and His kingdom. God measures our worth by our willingness to give up that which means the most to us. If we give up nothing for Him, He has nothing eternal for us.

Sacrifice was at the heart of the Mosaic system of obedience. God knew that giving up was good exercise for developing strong spiritual muscles. Sacrifice was part of the daily temple observance, and its meaning came even closer home when one had to take what was his very own and offer it up.

Around this same principle centered the teaching of the prophets. According to their reading of the divine will, the fin-

est of earth's gifts, the choicest of its riches, the noblest of its attainments could not compare in value with this one rare gift: "ourselves." The prophet Micah asked the searching question: *What can I give to God?*

"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, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?" Who could ever hope for such riches to offer to God! Then he struck even deeper: "Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

Hear the profound conclusion: "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" (Mic. 6:6-8). Not the best that we *have* but the best that we can be: *ourselves*.

Required: Self-Sacrifice

In the time of Samuel, the lesson in self-sacrifice was the part of the training that the disobedient Saul failed: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (I Sam. 15:22). What was

the sacrifice God wanted? He wanted Saul's humble, honest obedience. He wanted Saul to give up doing it *Saul's* way and do it *God's* way. God wanted the sacrifice that meant a full surrender of Saul's ways to God's. In other words, obedience.

Sacrifice is at the very heart of heroic Christian living. Giving up to gain—the lesser for the greater, the present for the future, the immediate and visible for the future and invisible, the favor of men for the honor of God—this has been the joy and delight of God's people in all ages. But we do not want to lose our perspective. When it is sacrificing for God, always the focus is on the *gain*, not the loss. Yes, there is something to give up. But the gain is infinitely greater than the loss.

"What Shall We Have Therefore?"

The apostle Peter was thinking about this when He approached the Lord one day with a question. It is a question rooted deep in his own experience. Not having many years of Christian service behind him, he was still weighing the costs—as each of us should do—to be sure he was making the right decision. After all, he, too, had only one life to live; only one life to give.

These are his words: "Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you"—listen! His answer is weighty and important. "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:28–30).

Few promises in Scripture are wider in scope, and none holding out richer encouragement. The promise is superabundant in measure: "in the world to come eternal life." But another factor

is also present, the inescapable reality of sacrifice: "with persecutions." We cannot have all of two worlds. Something has to be sacrificed. Whether house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, it represents our prospects and advantages in this world. If the world to come is to be secured, *this* world must be let go.

And what will there be to compensate? Not loss but gain! Jesus promised a hundredfold of joy and comfort and satisfaction which would more than make up for any loss. A new community of friends in the fellowship of the saints, new relations to replace the old, new companions more loving, faithful and valuable than any before—what recompense even now! And—best of all—in the world to come, life eternal. What more could one ask!

Take Up Your Cross

This is why Abraham left Haran, Ruth left Moab, and Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. 11:23–26). His eye was focused beyond this world. His treasure was all in heaven—so what on earth could he lose!

Nevertheless, the sacrifice was there. And it is still *here*, with us, today. Its reality strikes close when we realize that it is *our* opinions, *our* thoughts, *our* desires that must go, everything that combines to make us what we naturally are, that is contrary to God.

This was the message Jesus gave when He said "to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). It is a matter as ordinary as every day and as far reaching as "any man" who "will come after me." It applies to all ages,

God measures our worth by our willingness to give up that which means the most to us. If we give up nothing for Him, He has nothing eternal for us.

all classes, all ranks, without exception. No person or time is excluded. Whatever we are doing, we have every day our sacred task: to crucify each desire of our lower nature that is contrary to the law of God; to overcome the world within and without, to keep our bodies under and bring them into subjection. It is a daily battle, a daily warfare from which there is no escape. The words of the Master are clear and plain: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

What does all this mean in your life and mine? Where is *our* self-denial? What is the shape of *our* cross? Where is *our* following of Christ? Are we living so that the Christ who could say He did "always those things" that pleased His Father will be satisfied with us? How could He who was so scrupulous in His own obedience ever be satisfied with the self-willed, the self-pleasing, the self-indulging? "They that are Christ's," says the apostle Paul, "have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). All must be surrendered that conflicts with the demands of the Spirit.

Who can say he has not felt the conflict? This is why Jesus says, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:24). Self-sacrifice there must be, even to the point of losing our own life, the life of our old nature. Of

S*acrifice is at the very heart of heroic Christian living, giving up to gain—the lesser for the greater, the present for the future, the immediate and visible for the future and invisible, the momentary favor of men for the eternal honor of God.*

course we have our own opinions and our own ideas—and a definite right to them! But what says the Master? These are His searching words: "It shall not be so among you."

There are differences, vast differences between the standard of the world and the standard of Christ. Let the world exalt the individualist. Not so in Christ. Let the world exalt every man as his own commander. Not so in Christ. Here, he who would live must die. Here we have all *one head*, not many. Here we have all *one mind*, not many. Here we have all *one spirit*, not many. It is a new relationship, a new spirit, a new challenge, and a new way of life for this self-centered age. But whatever the standards of men, the law of God is unchanging. It was the message in Paul's day, and it is still our message today: "The head of every man is Christ," which is but another way of saying that we are not capable of directing ourselves.

What does this mean in everyday terms? It means that strong wills must be broken, strong dispositions must be controlled, strong heads must be severed. No head individualism can remain. "I have a head of my own," says one; but says the Law of God, "Christ must be your head." Even our Great Example, a man of will-power sufficient to enable Him never to transgress

His Father's law once He had learned it, became so dispossessed of His own will that He never pleased Himself. Humble and obedient, He was compared to a lamb led to the slaughter, obedient to the death of the cross. He made the supreme sacrifice, the sacrifice of Himself. Shall we do less?

So Much for So Little

The disciples of Christ, still young in the spiritual life, were not long in finding out the real meaning of self-surrender. Wonderful as their privileges might have seemed, this little company of fishermen and publicans were not beyond the plague of a self-seeking, self-ambitious spirit. Even on an occasion so weighty as the Last Supper with their Lord, there "was a strife among them, which should be the greatest." Another time, caught up in a vivid expectation of their Lord's kingdom, they were ready to dispute about their places and precedence in it. Each thought that whatever place was assigned to his brother, his own should be a little higher! And all this in the company of Christ Himself!

There is something instructive in this. It shows us ourselves as we are. The apostle Paul said we are all among those who incline to think more highly of themselves than they ought. This is why he spoke those words to "every one" among us, not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought (Rom. 12:3), and why he said each of us must offer our bodies a living sacrifice (vs. 1). Our instinctive love of honor is a trait to which God appeals. But it is also a trait which must be strictly disciplined and controlled. If we would receive God's honor, we must seek that and that only. And this means the sacrifice of all lesser honors.

Of all sins to which we are prone, there is none so stealthy and bold as pride, and perhaps none against which we have more need to watch and pray. It is a pestilence that walks in darkness, and a sickness that destroys at noon-

day. No sin is more deeply rooted in our nature. It cleaves to us like our skin. Said a keen observer of human nature, pride is like an onion—for every layer you peel off, there is another layer underneath. Nor is it reserved for the rich or gifted. Pride lurks deep in the natural heart and mind of "every one" who lives. How easily it can don the garb of humility, or hide under a cloak of inferiority. As has been truly said, no pope has ever received so much honor as pope "self."

What is the cure? Only a deep realizing sense of our own need for God, His help, His strength, His mercy, and His forgiveness. We need to remind ourselves again and again that we are what we are only through His grace, that without God we are nothing, only a microscopic speck among nations that weigh like dust on the balances of the Eternal.

Let our prayer for humility be part of our daily supplication. When we come to stand before the Judgment seat of Christ, we shall want to display not our old self, or our own strong opinions, or our own notions of right and wrong but only the mind that thinks like Christ and bears the impress of His seal.

How do we reach that standard? How do we become followers of Jesus, who was "meek and lowly of heart"? By letting "that same mind be in" us which was also in Christ Jesus. It is our duty to cast down "imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." We must lay aside all high thoughts and self-conceit and realize, in the words of our former pastor, "how little we are and how little we know, and the great depths of God's almighty knowledge." When we have accomplished this, we will be sacrificing ourselves and establishing our real worth in God's sight.

Self-forgetting was part of Jesus' lesson in Matthew 6, where He rebuked

the hypocritical Pharisees for their great show in making long prayers and mournful fasts. "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward," was Jesus' stern indictment, and what a puny reward it was—nothing more than the pitying gaze of their fellow men!

Let us look well to ourselves. What

are we sacrificing? What are we giving up for God and His Kingdom? Are we willing to part with that which means the most to us—ourselves? And can we even begin to imagine how small that sacrifice will seem when we stand in the presence of Christ and all the holy angels, and

the saints of other ages who finished their work with joy, when God invites us to share the glories of real LIFE in His eternal Kingdom on earth? When that day arrives, we shall not be thinking of what we gave up, but only of how much we have gained!—so much for so little!

MM

Was Jephthah's Daughter Sacrificed?

Many people believe that Jephthah sacrificed his daughter as a burnt offering to fulfill his vow, and accuse God of honoring the heinous practice of human sacrifice. Is the charge justified? Did Jephthah sacrifice his daughter? We are convinced that he did not.

In the book of Judges (chapter 11) is the account of a general named Jephthah who before going to battle made a most unusual vow. Jephthah vowed to God that "whatsoever" should come forth from the doors of his house to meet him when he should return in peace would "surely be the Lord's."

Many religious teachers avoid any mention of the account of Jephthah's daughter because it fills them with horror, while infidels grasp it to support their contention that the Bible is the work of men, not God. A God who would have Jephthah actually offer his daughter as a burnt offering? Yet the majority see no other explanation. Jephthah is condemned for his "rash" or "foolish" vow, and the lesson is often made that we should be careful in the vows we make lest our vows come to grief, like Jephthah's. Some have even advised that we should avoid making *any* vows to God, to avoid a calamity such as befell Jephthah!

One outstanding fact in this account is Jephthah's deep devotion to God, his solemn commitment to do whatever God wanted him to do. There was no wavering in his promise, no hesitation in his action. It was all straightforward obedience, from beginning to end. What a lesson for us!

Background

Before Jephthah went to the battle with the Ammonites, he made a vow to the Lord in anticipation of victory. These

are his words: "And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering" (Judg. 11:30-31).

Jephthah went to war and returned victorious. And who should meet him at the door upon his return but—his daughter! "And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back" (Judg. 11:35).

Human Sacrifices Always Condemned

The fact that God's law condemned human sacrifice outright is reason enough to believe that Jephthah would not have offered his daughter as a burnt offering, especially when he was working with God and acting under God's direction. Human sacrifice was sternly and repeatedly forbidden by God, and Jephthah, knowing the law of Moses, would have been familiar with these laws. In Deut. 12:30-31, Israel was told not to follow the abominations of the Canaanites, "for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods," and again we read, "There shall not be found among [Israel] any one that maketh his son or daughter pass through the fire, ... for all

God always condemned human sacrifice. Why would He accept it from Jephthah?

that do...are an abomination unto the Lord" (Deut. 18:10-12).

Human sacrifices were offered by two wicked and apostate kings of Judah, Ahaz and Manasseh, both of whom left not one good record behind them (II Kings 16:3; II Chron. 28:3). Jephthah was honorable and God-fearing, not wicked as were they. The Spirit of God was upon him and God was using him to deliver His people.

What DID Jephthah Do?

What, then, are we to conclude from the reading of Jephthah's vow, as recorded in Judges 11:30-31? Let us read the passage carefully: "And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering."

The marginal reading in the King James Version of the Bible ("or I will offer it up for a burnt offering") indicates an alternate. The Hebrew word translated "and" may mean "or," depending on the context. The context here implies the alternate rendering. According to this alternate, Jephthah's vow was: "I will consecrate it to the Lord, or I will offer it for a burnt offering." That is, if it be a thing fit for a burnt offering, it shall be made one; if fit for the service of God, it shall be consecrated to Him. By saying, "whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house," Jephthah seemed to leave it up to the Lord to determine the offering. Whatever the Lord wanted him to give up would be what came from his door when he returned from the battle. He seems to be saying "Anything, Lord, for Thee."

A Bible dictionary by Richard Watson quotes Jephthah's vow using the conjunction "or" instead of "and." He comments, "This is justified by the Hebrew idiom, there being so few connecting words available in the Hebrew language."

A similar rendering is indicated in a footnote in the Berkeley translation: "It is assumed that if an object suitable for burnt offering appeared, it would be offered; if not, it could be dedicated to, and used of God, some other way. Had an

unclean animal appeared it would not have been offered as a burnt sacrifice. Human sacrifices were also contrary to the law of God; those were pagan practices."

Had Jephthah been met by a dog, this could not have been made a burnt offering. And if his neighbor's wife, son or daughter had been returning from a visit to his family, his vow gave him no authority over them.

In the fulfilling of this vow, both Jephthah and his daughter made great sacrifices. Even though it was not a matter of death for the daughter, we can be sure the sacrifice was keenly felt by both of them. For Jephthah's daughter, a life dedicated to the Lord, perhaps at the tabernacle in Shiloh, meant that she would remain childless, that the joys of marriage, motherhood and family would never be hers. For a young Israelite woman, this was a sacrifice of no small proportion.

And for Jephthah, the consequences of this sacrifice were perhaps even greater. Among the Hebrew people at this time, children were a sign of God's blessing. Many children meant great prosperity. With his only daughter committed to celibacy, Jephthah would have no heirs and no successors. Besides, Jephthah was a person of rank, and for a man of such distinction to have no heirs to carry on the family heritage and tradition was a sacrifice, even a shame. Only a few years, and the family of Jephthah would be extinct in Israel.

But it was a sacrifice that both Jephthah and his daughter were willing to make. Why? because Jephthah had made a vow to God, and he would not dishonor his vow: "for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back."

What was his daughter's answer? "And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth." She readily accepted her father's vow as God's will for her own life! What willing obedience!

What Happened to Jephthah's Daughter?

A footnote in the Berkeley Bible explains the matter in these words: "Jephthah consecrated and devoted his daughter to God in a way consistent with his promise. She remained a virgin whose life was dedicated to God and...her girl friends went annually to her retreat, probably going along with her. Nowhere does it say that Jephthah's daughter was committed to the flames."

Jephthah's daughter (we wish we knew her name) showed love and respect for her father. She was immediately obedient; she did not hesitate to devote her life to the Lord. She was a loyal Israelite and thankful for her nation's deliverance from the Ammonites, and if her father had made such a vow, it was all right with her; it had to be fulfilled. Her father was a man of his word; not to fulfill his vow would have been criminal, and she knew it.

The daughter had one request: Give me two months with my friends that I may "bewail my virginity." Notice that she did not ask to bewail an untimely death but *her virginity*. To "bewail" means to lament, to grieve, or to sorrow. She is not suggesting that the vow be broken; she simply asks for a delay, for a short reprieve. She needed time to prepare herself for the separation, to adjust her thinking to her new style of living. What better way to adjust than to spend two months with her friends at a mountain retreat, or perhaps to visit her friends in their homes, even as Jesus sought the quietness of the mountains to pray and meditate?

The last two verses of Judges 11 offer conclusive evidence that Jephthah's daughter was not put to death. After the two months passed, "she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed; and she knew no man." Here is unmistakable evidence of the nature of her sacrifice: "she knew no man." She was willing to put loyalty to her father and his vow to God ahead of her own normal—and honorable—life desires. She was willing to change the entire pattern of her life, convinced that this was God's special will for her.

"And it was a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year" (vs. 39–40).

Had she been put to death it would have been pointless for the daughters of Israel to do anything with or for her each year, and we read that "the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah four days in a year." The marginal reading on verse 40 says instead of lament, "to talk with" the daughter of Jephthah. The Hebrew word translated "lament" carries the meaning "to give presents, to praise, to celebrate, to attribute honor, to ascribe praise." In other words, instead

of lamenting her, they went to visit her, to talk with her, to praise and honor her for her dedication and rejoice with her for the noble work she was doing. Mr. Lockyer refers to it as a four-day festival. How unthinkable that they would celebrate her "death" four days a year.

Where did the daughters of Israel go to see Jephthah's daughter? Likely they went to the national sanctuary, the tabernacle at Shiloh. This is where Elkanah and Hannah with their family went yearly to worship and to visit Samuel who ministered to the Lord under Eli the priest.

The Lesson for Us

We can derive some valuable lessons on self-sacrifice from the life of Jephthah's daughter, this young Hebrew maiden who lived during the distressing days of the Judges some 3,000 years ago. We would do well to emulate her readiness to consecrate her life to the service of God and to strengthen her faith in fellowship with her friends.

Are we keen to anticipate ways to strengthen *our* spiritual fiber?

The consecrated life is ever ready to say, "Anything, Lord, for Thee."

The consecrated life is continually seeking to please God, giving heartily of time and talents, strength and means for the work of God.

In view of the glorious reward offered by God, the consecrated person is willing to forego "anything" this world may offer in exchange for the greater promises of God.

The consecrated person is able to do an extraordinary work in a short time. God is pleased with such wholehearted devotion and will abundantly reward.

Let us be that consecrated one.

Let us make our whole life a sacrifice of praise to God. Let us lose our life in this present world that we may find it in the Kingdom of God. MM

Let Us Pray

Eternal God, whose spirit moves from pole to silent pole, whose purpose binds the starry spheres in one stupendous whole; whose life, like light, is freely poured on all beneath the sun, to Thee we lift our hearts and pray that Thou wilt make us one: one in the patient company of those who heed Thy will, and steadfastly pursue the way of Thy commandments still; one in the holy fellowship of those who challenge wrong, and lift the spirit's sword to battle fiercely 'gainst all wrong; one in the truth that makes men free, the faith that makes men brave; one in the love that suffers long to seek, and serve, and save; one in the vision of Thy peace, the kingdom soon to be, when Thou shalt be the God of all, and all be one in Thee.

Father, we are grateful for the rare and beautiful opportunity of being called into Thy service. But may we realize the responsibility that is ours, Thou art of too pure eyes to behold iniquity with any degree of tolerance.

May this awareness bring us face to face with the need for sacrifice in our own lives, knowing that the giving of ourselves is but our reasonable service. Thou dost ask only that which we can give, a willing heart, a controlled spirit, a disciplined mind, a dedicated will. May we willingly and gladly give up the things that appeal to us most when we learn that they are contrary to Thy will for us, knowing that the gain will more than outweigh the loss, and that way is as far above ours as the heavens are above the earth.

Lord, we pray Thee to accept the offering of ourselves in this worship service, that it may help us to be made perfect in Thy will. Call forth from us a wise response to Thy words; lead us to an intelligent faith, a living, growing faith that will so transform us that never again will we desire the weak and beggarly elements of this world.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Thy Kingdom come

Thy will be done on Earth

These Things Shall Be!

- The Coming of Elijah
- The Second Advent of Christ
- The first Judgment
- Armageddon
- The Millennial Reign of Christ
- The Second Judgment
- Eternity

The Kingdom of God: A REAL Kingdom

What is to be the nature of the Kingdom of God, this Kingdom which Jesus preached and of which He is destined to be King?

A kingdom is a political entity having four basic elements: territory, a ruling group headed by a king, subjects, and laws. All of these are specifically defined in the Bible as component parts of the Kingdom of God.

as it is in Heaven.

Territory

The Lord's Prayer clearly defines the territory of God's Kingdom: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth." *In earth*—the Kingdom of God will be a political establishment *on the earth*.

Psalms 72:8 adds more information: the Kingdom will extend over the *whole* earth. "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." Zechariah 14:9 confirms this thought: "The Lord shall be king over all the earth."

In Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the great metallic image, interpreted by Daniel as representing the kingdoms of men, the stone hurled without human hands at the feet of this image (the last extremity of man's authority) struck such a devastating blow that those kingdoms were driven away as the chaff of the threshing floor till they could not be found. Then the "stone," representing the Kingdom of God (Dan. 2:45), grew until it filled *the whole earth* (v. 35). In Psalm 2 Christ is promised the "uttermost parts of the earth" for His possession.

Daniel 7:27 adds even more information: It is to be one universal government and *under* the heavens. We read: "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and

all dominions shall serve and obey him."

As a matter of fact, all the divine promises to humankind focus upon the earth as the home of the saved among its inhabitants. Jesus in one of the Beatitudes, Matthew 5:5, promises the earth to the meek for their eternal inheritance: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Revelation 5:9-10 identifies the location of this government by the kings and priests of the new order: "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou... hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

In the 37th Psalm, we are told six times that the righteous shall inherit the earth. Verse 29 is precise and to the point: "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever." Another Old Testament promise runs: "For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it" (Prov. 2:21). The prophet Isaiah speaks eloquently of his hope for the righteous: "Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified" (60:21).

Revelation 11:15 reveals in prophetic language the extent to which this new order will replace the old authorities of earth: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever" (RSV).

The nationalistic trend of recent years has led to the demand of Asia for the Asians, Africa for the Africans,

and the Middle East for the Arabs, and so on; and according to the Almighty's plan, the earth is for the children of men. "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men" (Ps. 115:16).

The Rulership

The governing power of this Kingdom will be vested in secure and competent hands. The Scriptures are specific. Being a kingdom, the one supreme authority will be a king. Many a philosopher and political analyst has observed the greater efficiency of one-man governments as contrasted with democracies and their debating societies. But too easily dictators have become ruthless extremists, with little or no thought for the interests of the common people.

God's Kingdom will be a dictatorship. However, Christ will be an entirely different type of dictator. God will not permit any man to rule others who has not first learned to rule himself. The God of Israel, speaking through King David, said, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (II Sam. 23:3).

In the 72nd Psalm King David in colorful language describes the noble munificence of his greater Son, Christ. "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.... Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.... His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be

continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed" (vs. 7-8, 11-12, 17).

Biblical statements leave no doubt as to the identity of the ruler of God's Kingdom. His supreme qualifications, or the extent and duration of His authority. When the angel Gabriel announced the birth of Christ to Mary he said, "Behold thou shalt...bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:31-33).

Christ will not reign alone. He is "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16), and He will have one hundred forty-four thousand of these outstanding associate rulers (Rev. 14:1). "They that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful:—all amply qualified for their positions (Rev. 17:14). Each will fulfill the divine forecast: "I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness" (Isa. 60:17).

The book of Revelation makes a number of allusions to the associate kings. "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. ...To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (Rev. 2:26; 3:21). Referring again to Revelation 5:10, the same facts are stated: "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." And this Kingdom and dominion under the whole heaven shall be given to the "people of the saints of the most High" (Dan. 7:27)—Christ the great King, and His associate rulers.

The apostle Paul was familiar with the arrangement for the rulership of God's Kingdom on earth. The saints are to be heirs and joint-heirs with Christ in His kingship on the earth

(Rom. 8:17); the saints "shall judge the world" (I Cor. 6:2). The author of the book of Hebrews, writing to the Jewish Christians, employs the term "we" in speaking of the recipients of the Kingdom: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28). Every member of the bride of Christ will share the rulership with Him.

In Jesus' parable of the Pounds (Luke 19), He likened Himself to a nobleman going into a far country, "to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." When this was spoken, Imperial Rome was at her zenith, holding sway over a vast empire around the Mediterranean and in western Europe. Judea being a part of this empire, Jesus was familiar with the formalities required of a seeker after office, such as the government of a province or tetrarchy. He must go to Rome, the seat of government, to have his credentials and qualifications examined and to receive his commission. So Jesus has gone into a "far country," into heaven itself, where He has been judged, accepted, and commissioned, and at the Father's right hand He awaits the day when He shall return with authority to rule as King over the whole earth.

Populace of the Kingdom

Those who are accepted to rule with Christ are relatively few in number. However, the population of the Kingdom will not be limited to these. Never! These alone could never fulfill the promise to fill the earth with the glory of God (Num. 14:21). Those who survive the cleansing judgments of God will multiply, and their children and their children's children will seek the Lord and form the people whom God shall bless.

An enlightening statement about the nations over whom Christ and the

saints will rule is found in Psalm 67:4, "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth."

Portions of Psalm 72 bear directly on the populace of the Kingdom. "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations....They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. ...Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him."

The "nations" over whom Christ and His chosen will rule are further described in Revelation 7:9 as "a great multitude, which no man could number"—a staggering figure not revealed. All those, according to the Revelator's vision, "stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb....And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of [after or beyond] great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them" (vs. 9-10, 13-15).

Here we find pictured the populace of the Kingdom. They stand *before* the throne, while the ruling class are seated *upon* it. They are before the throne of God, and shall *serve Him* day and night in His temple. But their serving will not be service in the sense of unpleasant servitude; it is not that they will be serfs subject to the beck

(Continued on page 22)



Chapter I, Part 2

Introducing the Great Apostle

Synopsis

The first scene of this story about Paul the apostle takes place in Milo's Tavern, at The Three Taverns, where Paul stopped on the way to Rome from Melita after the shipwreck.

This stormy night at Milo's Tavern several travelers, are gathered, among them Arbaces, a sea-captain. Arbaces, in describing a previous experience in a stormy sea, tells about the wreck of the ship on which Paul sailed as prisoner. He tells with enthusiasm about Paul's fascinating part in the voyage. The conversation leads to Christianity and its work, and Paul's part in the movement.

When the laughter subsided, Arbaces spoke with earnestness. "Well, all I can say is, you fellows haven't met the man. You should meet him. I'm certainly going to try to look him up when I get to Rome."

Milo brightened. "Oh, but I *have* met the man, Captain."

"You have?"

"Tell us about it, landlord," Philistus urged.

"That's just what I've been wanting to do. It was after this same shipwreck, when the *Castor and Pollux* had docked at Naples with the prisoners and passengers. The convoy of prisoners was kept here overnight, split up among the Three Taverns, and Paul was here. *Right here.* He sat in that very chair and talked to me."

Manlius nodded. "Very interesting. What was your impression?"

"*Impression* is the word! Whatever you may think of Paul, he impresses you. You can't ignore him. He's got

personality, if you know what I mean. You'd know there was somebody of importance in the room if he didn't say a word. You can *feel* him."

"I don't like people like that," Carbo objected. "They give me the creeps."

"Paul gives you good sound reasoning. He gives you a lift. I'll admit he can make you uncomfortable. You feel sort of naked—as though he were looking right through you."

"He didn't have much to say about his shipwreck when he was here, but he said a lot about his God, and this Jesus Christ. I had heard of this Jesus, but I never knew until I talked with Paul just where He fitted into the plan. Seems this Jesus Christ is the Son of the one true God, as Paul calls Him; He came into the world as an ordinary man, and was crucified by Pontius Pilate—but He didn't stay dead. He rose from the grave."

"Yes," Philistus agreed, "that's the core of their religion, as I understand it. That's where the Christians and the Jews part company; the Jews won't accept the man or the fact—if it is a fact—of His resurrection."

"Nonsense!" Carbo exploded. "Do you believe that? Why, things like that don't happen nowadays."

"Did they *ever* happen?" asked Manlius.

"I'm not sure that they did; I never saw it."

Curio paused to raid the bread, cheese and sausage on his employer's free lunch table.

"Ever been to Britain, Carbo?" he asked.

"No."

"Do you believe there is such a place?"

"Certainly."

"Now why do you believe that? *You* never saw it."

"I've talked to people who have, Stupid."

Carbo saw his error too late, and his audience saw it, too. A gust of laughter swept the room as Curio slapped his adversary victoriously on the back.

"So—you *do* take some things on faith, do you?" he cried.

Milo was quick to see the opening. "Well, it just happens that people *saw* this Jesus after He rose from the dead. Plenty of them, Paul says."

"Any of them you know?"—belligerently.

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Paul. He saw Jesus more than once. He told me the story of his conversion—that was the first time he saw Him. He was a bitter enemy of the Christians, persecuting and killing them, but he saw a vision on the road to Damascus and was struck blind for a time. Since then he's been a red-hot Christian—white-hot, you might say."

"Are you a Christian, landlord?" the centurion inquired.

"Well, . . . I'm afraid . . . I'm afraid . . . I can't say so. As Paul explains it, being a Christian isn't easy. It's a religion that controls everything you say or do, and even what you think."

"Not for me!" Carbo was emphatic.

"I think you're right for once, Carbo," the landlord shot back. "It takes a pretty good man to live the life of a Christian."

For the first time the salesman lost his temper. He sprang to his feet and shook his fist angrily at the host.

"Why you old . . . are you insinuating that I'm not a good man?"

"You heard me, Junior. Now sit down. Children should be seen and not heard."

Carbo sputtered into silence. Manlius was next to speak. "You say he's the chief man among these Christians. What will they do, now that he's a prisoner?"

"Oh, you don't know Paul. He's not idle, by any means. I understand he governs his churches by letter—he's a very talented writer—and since he came here he has built up a large church in Rome. I've seen him once—you see, he is not in a regular prison but under house arrest. He lives in his own apartment under guard, and while he can't go out, his friends can come to see him. He's the busiest man in Rome."

"Even so, it's a long time to wait for a hearing," Philistus protested, indignantly. "Two and a half years! What are our courts coming to, anyway? Why, back in the days of Augustus—"

"I heard a report the other day," the landlord cut in, "and I hope it's true, that he had had his trial and has been released."

"Good!"—from the centurion's corner. "I don't know

why I say that, not even knowing the man, but I feel I almost know him."

"As soon as I can get to Rome," Milo promised warmly, "I'm going to find out. I want to see him again."

"Better not," Carbo sneered, "he might make a Christian of you."

"I only wish I had the courage to take the step," was the sober reply. "Maybe some day I will."

Then the scoffing salesman made another tactical error. "Did he do any tricks for you?" he asked innocently.

This was too much for Milo. He crossed the room with long strides and seized the offender by the shoulder. His tone was wrathful. "What do you mean? You speak with more respect, or out you go! Understand?"

"It's raining outside."

"All the worse for you. Here's your money back. How about it—go or stay?"

"All right, all right, I apologize. What I meant was, did he do any of these remarkable things such as the Captain says he saw?"

"Yes, sir, he did. You know my slave Theodorus? You know how badly his arm was injured—he almost lost it—when a tree fell on him years ago. His left arm was all withered and crooked. Paul came along, and you should see him now. Curio, get Theodorus in here."

Manlius leaned forward, his face a study in attention.

"To get back to this central figure, this Jesus Christ. What ever became of Him?"

"Paul says He ascended bodily to heaven, to His Father, forty days after He arose from the dead."

"Uh-huh—" from the irrepressible Carbo—"anything to get rid of the evidence. How do we know He ever lived?"

"The Christian Church is pretty good evidence, I'd say. It's here—you can't deny it. It wasn't here before. It certainly wasn't founded on a dream."

"But now that He's in heaven, or with His father," the centurion persisted, "what now? What's it all about?"

Milo's eyes glowed with enthusiasm as he replied.

"Paul says He is coming again—not now, but sometime in the future—to take over the earth and set up a Kingdom, a place where no one is sick, or hungry, or unhappy, or no one ever dies. No war. No oppression. No graft. No suffering or pain. No poverty—"

"Day dreams!"—from Carbo.

"*You* don't have to have it, young man," snapped Arbares. "As I understand their faith, that life will be only for those who have worked for it and made themselves worthy of it."

"In other words, the practicing Christians, and those like them." The officer's words came thoughtfully. "It sounds narrow—but I don't see how it could be any broader and be consistent. What it lacks in breadth, it makes up in depth. But what about those who have died?"

"They will rise, by the same power that brought Jesus Christ from the dead."

At this juncture Curio entered with Theodorus, a bearded, middle-aged slave, evidently Greek. Milo introduced him courteously to the group, and after reviewing his injury and disability, asked him to tell what happened. Theodorus was only too glad to oblige.

"When Paul, the Christian preacher, stayed here two years ago, he saw me as I went through this room. He called to me and questioned me. He asked me if I would like to be healed. Of course I did."

"What did he do to you?" Philistus inquired.

"He laid his hands on my arm, and I felt a thrill go through my whole body. I could see my arm straighten out and fill out while I watched it. I was healed! I know! You can't tell me anything different!"

He bared his arm, and the guests crowded around to see and touch. The old scars were there, but the bones were straight and the muscles firm and hard.

"Who else saw it?" someone asked.

"My wife, and my son Titus, and Curio here. There was also an officer just come from Spain. Unfortunately, my wife has gone to visit her parents tonight, and Titus is in the army, but Curio is here. How about it, Curio?"

"He's right. Every word he says is true. I don't know much, but I know what I see."

The landlord turned abruptly on the salesman. "What do you say now, Mr. Skeptic?"

The reply was prompt, confident, and a little surprising. "Magic."

This was Curio's chance again, and he seized upon it with alacrity. "Oh, you believe in magic, do you?"

"Why, sure; everybody does."

"And the evil eye, and fate, and all that sort of stuff?"

"Well, ... I'm not taking any chances."

"What a man! He doesn't believe in the gods, he doesn't believe in man, but he believes in all the silly old superstitions!"

Nettled by the resulting laughter, Carbo blurted out: "You talk like a Christian yourself, Curio."

"No, I'm not, but I'd rather be a Christian than a scoffer like you. At least they know what they want."

"One thing is sure," Milo mused, "things haven't been the same since Paul was here."

"You think his brief stay here has made some changes in your way of life, do you?" Philistus queried.

"Well, I wouldn't go *that* far—"

"Don't ask him—ask me!" the porter broke in, excitedly. "You know what happened the next week? A drove of slaves from a ship came by, going to market. They were a sorry-looking lot, sick and hungry; and what does Milo do? He set out food and water for the whole crowd, for free!

And that wasn't the only time it happened, either. That, brothers, was a change!"

As the host covered his embarrassment by silencing his outspoken servant, Manlius addressed the contractor.

"You seem to have some knowledge of their doctrine, sir. Have you had some contact with them?"

"Not much. I have, however, heard a good deal, second hand, in various parts of the world where I have done business. You'd be surprised how vigorous the movement is. Just what its appeal is I couldn't say, but they attract not only slaves and laborers, but officials, nobility, well-to-do business men—all classes of people. It seems to have a special appeal to the women, for I understand they give women a much higher position than the Roman world does. The Romans won't even admit that women have souls; the Christians give them equal status with men."

"A big step forward, I should say. Perhaps it will have a good influence even beyond its own borders."

"If you'd heard some of the stories I have—" came the loud and now familiar voice of Carbo.

Philistus made a gesture of impatience.

"Oh, I've heard them, but I don't believe everything I hear—maybe you do. All the Christians I have seen or heard of directly seem to be good, quiet, honest people, but they are different. They are people of one idea. They have convictions, and they are willing to stand up and die for their convictions. Now such people as that don't worship animals, or hate all men, or make their bread with the ashes of murdered children, as the stories have it."

"How numerous are they?" asked Manlius.

"No one knows, so far as I can learn. But you find them everywhere. There are thriving churches in Judea, of course, and in Antioch, and Ephesus, and Smyrna, and Philadelphia. Yes, and Philippi and Colosse and Thessalonica and Corinth."

How about Athens and Alexandria?"

"A few. There are small groups in Egypt and in the islands, and I understand their missionaries are pushing out into Gaul and Spain and Illyria."

For once, Carbo managed a sober, sensible question. "How do you account for this growth? Aren't there already more than enough religions?"

"I don't know that I can account for it. I've often wondered. Of course, the old gods are tired and worn out and very few really respect them any more. The world seems to be ripe for a change, but why it should be a religion so strict and difficult is hard to explain."

"I think I know the answer," said Milo, simply but with confidence.

"Yes? What is it?"

"Paul."

"Undoubtedly you are right. The movement must have merits in itself, but it takes a man like Paul to sell it to the

Roman world. I've heard his name many times as I've poked around the world, but I never thought our paths would cross at the Three Taverns."

"In your opinion, will the thing be permanent, or will it die out when its present leaders are gone?" asked the centurion.

Philistus stood with his back to the fire, his eyes thoughtful and his words measured and sincere.

"Who can tell? The study of Mediterranean religions has been a sort of hobby with me, although I'm not particularly religious myself. In fact, I don't see how an intelligent man could be, after looking into most of the cults. Christianity dares to be different, and for that reason it is pretty sure to draw persecution upon itself.

"But that is not its real danger, as I see it. Persecution only stimulates a worthy movement. The greatest danger is from within. Its standards are so very high and it is so difficult to live that it will do well to keep itself from relaxing to gain popularity. And if it should ever become official, that would certainly be its ruin. It is quite possible that it will survive, but in a very much modified form."

There was a brief silence, broken by the voice of the old sailor. "Well, we've all spoken our piece but you, Centurion. What's your opinion?"

"To tell the truth, I find it all very interesting. Like our contractor friend, I have seen a great deal of priests, and temples and cults and mysteries the world over, and I'm not exactly sold on any of them. Naturally, whatever gods there are, I'd rather have them for me than against me, so I've kept up a form of worship, but with a good many doubts and reservations.

"I know very little about these Christians, except what I have learned tonight; and I have never heard of this Paul; but if my old friend Julius Didianus liked him, I would probably like him too. Julius was always a pretty good judge of men. Paul must be a remarkable character, and I hope his ability isn't going to be wasted in a world that is always short of good men. I'm sorry I didn't know about him while I was in Rome; I would have gone to see him."

"By the way," Milo tried to be casual, but there was anxiety in his tone, "did you hear any rumors in Rome that the government may be getting ready to move against the Christians?"

"Unfortunately, yes," answered the centurion. "There is talk that the people are demanding a scapegoat for the great fire, and the Emperor is trying to place the blame on the Christians. It could be bad."

"I imagine that you, having the instincts of a gentleman, are glad to be outward bound, with this thing in the air," said Philistus.

The officer's reply came in crisp but cultured tones. He, too, evinced a grave sincerity. It had been a strange but memorable evening in his life, and he showed it.

"How right you are. If it comes to persecution, I want no part of it. The soldier has enough dirty work to do at best. I hope it doesn't spread to Syria; naturally, I want to be as far away as possible.... And still, I would feel more noble to be one of them, staying and dying for something I could really believe in."

It is well known that most people have a vein of decency in their nature, if it but can be uncovered; and this proved to be Carbo's finest moment. His mask of cynicism fell away and his better self came through. "Don't blame you. I'm against that sort of thing myself."

"What! *You?*" Arbaces affected a great astonishment.

"Yes, me! I'm no saint, and I know it. I like the games as well as the next one. I like to see the fights. I like to watch the lions pounce. I like to hear the bones crack and see the blood run. But when it comes to killing innocent people—women and children—for what they believe—well, it's not my style. I don't like this man Paul, but I hope nothing bad happens to him."

"So do I. So do we all," Curio echoed soberly.

The depressing prospect seemed to affect the entire group. Conversation slowed and died. The hour was growing late. Arbaces rose from his bench by the dying fire, stretched himself, and sauntered to the buffet table to cut himself another piece of cheese.

"So Nero says the Christians burned Rome!" There was scathing irony in his tone. "Now what possible object could they have in doing such a thing as that?"

Milo laughed, a short, mirthless laugh. "I wonder if he expects sensible people to believe—"

He broke off suddenly, conscious of the presence of Caesar's officer. One by one the guests rose uneasily to their feet, all eyes on the representative of Imperial law and order. Such words bordered on treason, and the consequences could be terrible. Milo's Tavern might be a bad place to spend the night, storm or no storm.

Manlius surveyed the tense and apprehensive group with a slow, stern gaze. Slowly he rose to his full height, his polished insignia glittering in the lamplight. After what seemed an eternity, he spoke, gravely and firmly, with long, shattering pauses between his sentences.

"Gentlemen, I am an officer of the Imperial Roman Army. As such, I am under the command of the Emperor, whoever and whatever he may be. Naturally, I could not be expected to sit and hear him criticized.... I'm not saying what *I* think.... but I know very well what you are all thinking.... and some things need to be said.... So—I shall just step outside and let you say them!"

Next Issue: The Problem of Ambition and Personal Sacrifice

Keep praying; delay is denial.

Continue With Me

"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations" (Luke 22:28)

Among the many comforting words which our Lord spoke to His disciples during the Last Supper are the above lines. It was an acknowledgment of their loyalty to Him in the face of constant criticism and opposition. Crucial as the moment was and perilous as had been Jesus' ministry thus far, this commendation must have been a source of true encouragement to the disciples. In fact, a greater commendation could not be extended to anyone than those words, "You are the men who have stood by me in all that I have gone through" (Phillips).

When these men were chosen to be apostles, they had responded immediately to His call, but it would be wrong to think that there were no periods of testing for them. When Jesus first began His ministry, crowds followed Him. Then His hearers began to dwindle away. On one occasion, as recorded in John 6, many left—right in the middle of the sermon!—and "walked no more with Him." The reason: Jesus did not preach the kind of sermon they wanted to hear. They wanted to hear how they could become a great nation; how they could drive the Romans out of their land; how they could destroy all their enemies round about them; and how they would acquire great wealth and power.

But though the apostles did not fully understand, they stayed with Jesus. They were interested in the words of eternal life which He taught, and which they knew He alone possessed.

They followed Him through those brief years of His ministry. They were His companions, His friends, to whom He could confide the great truths He possessed. They were learners at the moment, afterward to become preachers of the gospel He taught. Often they were slow to comprehend the deep spiritual truths He taught, and Jesus was many times pained by their all-too-carnal behavior. But He taught them as one would teach little children, gently and with understanding.

We can understand to a degree the comfort Jesus must have felt in the fellowship of His apostles when we our-

selves pass through periods of testing. When we are hard pressed, and someone stands with us to help in whatever way possible, sacrificing his own comforts or interests, just to assist us, there is a devotion we appreciate. The feeling we experience in those hours is somewhat akin to what Jesus experienced in the fellowship of His disciples, or what Paul later wrote of the fellow-laborers with him in the gospel.

But beyond our human need of one "standing by," our text has a timely message for us. It is intended first of all as an encouragement for what we have already done. It is also an indirect command to continue our efforts for the cause of Christ in spite of the difficulties that beset us.

As professors of the way of Christ, we are all companions of His cross. Jesus truly said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). It is the height of spiritual attainment to be able to bear what comes upon us in this life, and to bear it in the spirit of Him who never faltered, never turned back, never complained that life's burdens were too heavy to bear.

It is true that Jesus' disciples had made many mistakes during their association with Jesus, and even after that eventful evening they forsook Him, or denied Him in the hour of need. But they were still the best of those who heard Him. In the end they would triumph.

Our careers in the way of Christ are not too different from theirs. Change a few words, substitute a few phrases, transpose a few sentences and you have the description of many others. Not only in errors are our lives similar but also in endurance for the Master's sake. If you have stood against opposition and have not yielded, or if you have fallen in the struggle but have risen up more determined to stand for the right, be encouraged. If you have fought "with the beasts," as it were, to master a habit and can see progress, even though it seems slow, be encouraged, and keep up the effort.

It is no small work you have undertaken, and it takes

time. Success in all enterprises comes by perseverance. And if, for all your efforts, you seem to feel you are growing worse than you were when you began the work—still, do not despair. It is entirely possible that you are really just beginning to see yourself in your true condition. Keep up the good work, remembering Jesus' words, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

By the words of our text Jesus encourages us to "continue in the faith," to "endure to the end," to be not "weary in well doing," to "be faithful unto death." We may deserve commendation for what we have already done, but there is yet much to do. Endurance is essential. Many a young person sets out in life with

enthusiasm and much energy. He is going to conquer the world in short order, he thinks. Like a race horse, he makes a terrific speed for a short distance; but for extended travel the "old gray mare" would cover the same distance with relative ease.

Enthusiasm is apt to evaporate in the heat of the day, and discouragement may set in when there is a long hill to climb. The Christian life, like all other interests and activities, can soon lose its novelty. The life which must be lived and the work which must be done are very much a repetition of the same things. We bear the same message to the world, we keep the same commandments, and we work under the same commission. Ever present is the danger of carelessness

and over-familiarity with holy things to the extent that we come to consider them common.

When that Day of final account dawns and we stand before our King to receive our reward, no more welcome words could strike our ears than to hear Him say, in effect, "You are the ones who have labored for My cause. You have carried My message to all who would hear; your lives have been true examples of what My way of life can do to humanity. In all that I have commanded you to do and to teach, you have not failed in the least. Continue, now, to labor in my cause through all eternity."

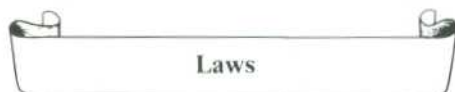
Let us here rededicate ourselves to continue our work until it is finished. MM

The Kingdom of God

(Continued from page 16)

and call of the overlords. One group will not be dominated by another group. The dominion of Christ and His saints will be holy, benevolent, loving. The great multitude will serve out of love, all one congenial happy family, all working for the good of each other. We can be sure there will be nothing less than bliss and rapture about the lot of the immortal subjects in God's Kingdom. Perhaps the service will be such as even now angels are sent forth to minister to us mortals.

At the close of the Millennium, all who live—whether rulers or ruled over—will be immortal. So shall the earth be filled with the glory of the Lord.



Laws

The last factor needed for a kingdom is laws. No government can function efficiently without laws, and God's heavenly Kingdom is no exception. Isaiah 2 identifies the high au-

thority of these laws which will govern the mortal nations during the Millennial Age: "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:2-3; also Micah 4:1-4).

No one anywhere will be able to plead ignorance of these laws, for such a mighty campaign of education will be waged that all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest (Jer. 31:34). There will be no dark spots or backward areas anywhere, for "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14).

The law will be everywhere and always present in the form of immortal watchmen and overseers, who will be able to check delinquency before it starts. "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isa. 30:21).

A law unenforced or unenforceable, is worthless. In the Kingdom of God there will be, for the first time in history, perfect enforcement of righteous law; stern, impartial, for the benefit of

all and not a favored class. No overt disobedience will be tolerated. "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted" (Isa. 60:12).

Obtaining the blessings in that bright new world will depend upon obedience to the laws of its government. "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain" (Zech. 14:16-17).

Only the righteous enforcement of righteous laws can transform humankind into fit material for God's new world and prepare a populace to live beyond the Millennium, the eternally blessed inhabitants of the glorified earth.

(Next Issue: Step by Step to Eternity)

In the Hands of the Potter

(Continued from page 5)

aspect. "Self" is no longer the main orbit. Our self-centered lives begin to revolve around the Creator and our whole life becomes God-centered.

We may have taken our place in the Potter's workshop; we may even have made a good start; but are we really submitting to the divine shaping process? Are we taking His impressions deeper and deeper into our hearts? Are we becoming more and more like Christ?

God is making us over for Himself and is waiting patiently to see what we will become, what shape of vessel will be formed out of our lifetime. But human nature dislikes the idea that God uses human help to carry out His will. He used the prophet Jeremiah as His mouthpiece. Shall we despise the chastening of the Lord because it comes through human instruments?

Let the message Jeremiah received that day from the Lord ring in our ears: "Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand." Remember it when the "going" is hard and trying; for, is the Potter to blame? Realize that, more than likely, it is the impurities in ourselves that are causing much of the trouble. And when the Potter presses harder, don't draw back. Don't pull away, but yield in humble submission.

There is much in the natural make-up of humanity that can easily mar and spoil a seemingly perfect vessel. The outward appearance may be perfect, but what of the heart and mind? It does not take much, only a streak of anger, a bubble of foolishness, a grain of jealousy, or a root of bitterness; any of these can spoil the smooth surface the divine Potter is trying to make upon us.

It is something to keep turning in the right direction, never losing sight of the divine Hand upon us. It is something to learn what is right and what is wrong; what is fair and just

and what is mean and low; what is elevating and what is degrading; when to say "yes" and when to say "no."

We do not get to be a perfect vessel at the first attempt, or even the second. How often we can fail! But let us not be discouraged. If we put forth the effort, if we sincerely desire His help, the Heavenly Potter will not give us up in our failures. Time and time again He will sprinkle us with the water of life and continue to work with us.

Though our life may seem at times to be crushed and crumbled and broken, let us arise, and get back into the struggle! Try again and again and again! Each good impression will make the next easier. Submit wholeheartedly, and realize that God is guiding still.

Does the weight of the Potter's hand seem heavy? Remember that it takes more time and pressure to make an exquisite vase than it does to make an earthen jug.

Above all, we want in the final Day to be a finished product; for there will come a time when the Potter will cease to work. Probation day will be ended. Will our cry be that of joy that the work upon us is complete, or will it be a wail of sorrow: "Woe unto me, for I am spoiled!"

When the roughness of self-aggrandizement is effaced and the contours of the flesh-man are dissolved, we will then take on the perfect symmetry of righteousness; we will turn whithersoever He wills; we will be able to smile through adversity; we will not chafe or gall though shackled to an unpleasant duty; we will even be able to bear unkind words without bitterness and will take criticism without retaliation. We can do all this—and more—if we remember God's promise of strength equal to our every need.

And then, can we take the burnings? Can we go through the furnace of affliction to make us firm and steadfast in every holy purpose?

*Have Thine own way, Lord,
Have Thine own way;
Thou art the Potter,
I am the clay;
Mold me and make me
after Thy will,
While I am waiting,
yielded and still.*

As the beauty of our character is burned in by fiery trials and tribulations, shall we come through without a flaw or defect, without a murmur or complaint?

Let us submit to the divine Potter until our vessel bears the stamp of God, that "new name" etched in colors of heavenly splendor and luminous with celestial sublimity, a chosen vessel unto the Lord.

MM

Intensive Prayer

(Continued from page 2)

communicate with God. It is the heart voicing its inner longings, needs and aspirations to its Creator, to the God of heaven. It is the grateful heart responding to God's goodness. It is the soul overflowing with gratitude to God for the sheer gift of life. It is the heart saying, "I need You, even more than I can realize. I need You every moment, every day. I need You to show me what I am, and what I can become. I need You to walk with me every step through this dark world. And then, when the time is right, I need You to grant me that greater, immortal life that You alone can give, world without end. Yes, God, I need You!"

God forbid that we should sever ourselves from this lifeline by neglecting our need for prayer.

Intensive prayer.

MM

Prophet Against Pride

"What are the 'crisping pins' in Isa. 3:22? Are they the same as hair curlers used by women today? And what about the other items mentioned? Is there anything here that pertains to us today?"

The prophets of Israel and Judah had a dual mission. They were sent to warn the people of immediate judgments upon them. At the same time they were delivering a message which was for the far future, when God's judgments would come upon all the world and all people everywhere would be forced to bow to God's standards.

In Isaiah 3, the Prophet is opposing moral laxity. His message actually begins in chapter 2, where Isaiah attacks the pride of men (vs. 15-17), which was seen in their building great towers and tall ships, while forgetting God. The same pride showed itself in the luxury and ostentation which had become the standard of fashionable women in Jerusalem who, contemptuous of others and indifferent to the human cost of the privileges they enjoyed, were flaunting even the basic restraints of human decency. If the prophecies of pending judgment seemed almost brutal, the prophets were only echoing the message they had received from God. God hates pride and all human show and ostentation.

Why the prophets' excoriating denunciation of the pride of women? Because they knew the extent of their influence. It is widely recognized that the moral quality of womanhood determines the character of society. The mothers of men set the ideals of the nation; by what they are they either inspire or corrupt their sons. By their tastes, their standards, their character, they determine whether the ideals of purity, integrity, unselfishness and faith will prevail or fall.

Even more than this, the prophets of God were concerned about the personal responsibility of a people highly favored by God. Even more than humankind in general, they were responsible.

Hence the condemnation in Isaiah 3.

In Isaiah 3, the Prophet does not speak in general terms but describes with realism both the sin and the fate of the sinner. The Prophet spoke both of the immediate judgments

which would fall upon their nation, and also of the day when all the vanity and pride of men and women will be brought down, when "the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day" (Isa. 2:17).

The details of description in Isaiah 3 identify various items of feminine finery, many of which are unknown to us today.

The "jingling of anklets" is connected with a manner of walking, "with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet," all intended to attract attention. Some have suggested that the wearing of ornamental ankle chains necessitated walking with short, quick footsteps.

Some of the newer translations suggest what they may have been, much more than does the King James alone. For example, the **"tinkling ornaments about their feet"** are translated as "the beauty of their anklets," "the finery of their anklets," "the luxury of the anklets," "the ankle ornaments." **"Their caul"** are translated "headbands," "nutbands," "little suns," "their sun-jewels," "sun bursts," "and their round tires like the moon." **"The crescents"** are "the little moons," "moon charms," "moon ornaments." **"The chains"** are translated as "drops," "eardrops," "earrings," "locket and collar," "pendants." **"The bracelets"** are "arm chains," "chains," "necklace and bracelet," "banglers." **"The mufflers"** are "veils," "scarves," "gauze veils," "delicate clothing," "spangled face veils and scarves," "veils of shimmering gauze." **"The bonnets"** are "chaplets," "head tires," "head ornaments," "gorgeous reed tiara." **"The tablets"** are "perfume boxes," "scent cases," "scent bottles," "scent box," "lockets." **"The earrings"** are "amulets," "jewels," "charms." Besides all this are "rings," "nose jewels," and "changeable suits of apparel," also "festival robes," "costly apparel," "court dresses," "feast day dresses," "party dresses."

The **"crisping pins"** are "satchels," "purses," "handbags," "flounce skirts" (see ASV, YLT, BAS, NEB). **"The glasses"** are translated as "hand mirrors," "gauze," "garments of gauze," "scarves of gauze," "revealing clothes." **"The fine linen"** is translated as "linen wraps," "linen vest," "kerchiefs

of linen," "lingerie," "shawls." "The veils" are "cloaks," "wraps," "mantles," "mantillas," "outdoor veils," "flowing veils," "whole body enveloping veils." Notice that nearly every item mentioned is something that was worn to show off the human form, for pride, not needful clothing.

The judgment upon all of this is severe, in keeping with a just God who hates human pride and show and ostentation. Instead of sweetness there will be "stench," instead of a girdle "a rent," instead of "well set hair," "baldness," "burning, instead of beauty" "Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war" (Isa. 3:24-25).

The whole passage is describing the final outcome of human pride. God will have the last word. The haughtiness of men and women will be brought down, "and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."

We see no connection between "the crimping pins" and modern hair curlers, although modern hair curling is another method of satisfying the same human desire for pride which the prophet Isaiah was denouncing. Means and methods of expressing feminine pride have changed, but the underlying vice remains the same.

The lesson to us is that anything used for pride and adornment, to attract attention, to parade the human form, is abominable to the Lord. He wants His people to have their attention fixed on pleasing Him, on living uprightly; doing justly, loving mercy and walking humbly before Him.

• Concerning Hair Coloring

"I don't know if I'm doing right by doing the following, but I cut my hair short and use a rinse on my hair to cover up the gray. Is this wrong? I had my children late in life and turned gray early. I don't like to embarrass my children by looking like their grandmother. Also, it is depressing to me to see so much gray. It is not that anyone sees me because we never go anywhere much, but it's just when you look in the mirror, it's depressing. Using a hair rinse is not mentioned in the Bible, I guess, as there was no such thing in those days. But since we are born with dark hair, why is it wrong to try to hang on to the color we were born with? As long as you are not trying to make a showhorse of yourself, like some do, going from a redhead to a blonde. It seems to me it would not be wrong to try to keep the color you were born with. I think what you do with your hair is right or wrong depending on the motive behind it. If you honestly only want to appear neat and tidy, with no thought of style in your mind, or trying to attract attention, then why would it be wrong?"

"It seems that the big things in life are so easy to determine which is right and which is wrong, however with the little things like hairdos it is hard to decide. Any help you can give me will be greatly appreciated."

You are correct that certain issues which concern us today are not mentioned in the Bible. However, very often the principle behind them *is* mentioned.

You are also correct in your statement that the motive behind one's action may very often determine whether something is right or wrong. But the real motive behind our own actions is often very difficult to evaluate, at least honestly. It is very hard to be totally objective with ourselves.

It seems impossible to disassociate hair-coloring from a motive of being seen or judged by others. It certainly is not a matter of health, or of practical service. If we were never seen by anyone there would be no issue to consider. Whether the color of our hair is important to the members of our family or to people on the street, the motive is the same.

Since we do not have any direct Biblical command, we have to be governed by principle. What about coloring one's hair might bring it under the jurisdiction of God's law as given us in the Bible?

1) That it is a practice very common among people of the world, and we as Christians must not conform to the world (Rom. 12:2).

2) That it appeals to "the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," which is of the world and passing away (I John 2:15-17), therefore is forbidden the Christian.

3) That it is the way "other Gentiles walk" and "vanity" (Eph. 4:17). As Christians we must "walk not" in this way. We are not trying to meet the standards of this world or to attract the world.

It is part of the fashion of our world today that everyone wants to look "young." Our modern culture has exalted the youthful look to such an extent that it has come to be desired by persons of all ages. Cosmetic companies play upon human vanity, especially that of women, and promote an almost limitless array of products which are designed to help older person appear young and "beautiful."

The Bible—and the God behind it—have a very different view of beauty. "The Lord looketh on the heart" (I Sam. 16:7). He does not notice whether our hair is dark brown, or gray, or somewhere in between. In fact, we even read that "the hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness" (Prov. 16:31). The important word here is "if." A "hoary head" that is set in its own way is just as condemned as one that is black or brown or blonde. God judges by character and character alone.

The youthful idea of our modern world is displayed in almost every shop and seen in almost every catalog, but it is not godlike. In fact, if the Bible favors any age group, it is not youth, for "childhood and youth are vanity" (Eccl. 11:10). God is looking for "full-grown," mature men and women in Christ, and growth takes time; and time for mortals means the advancing stages of life, from youth, to

maturity, to middle age, to advanced age.

By trying to keep the color of hair with which we were born, we are bowing to the standard of a world where one is "supposed" to look young. Aging is a normal life process which God fully understands and does not hold against us in any way. And it is nothing to be depressed about. Actually, seeing our hair change color as we get older can serve as a reminder to us that life is getting away from us and we need to be making use of it.

The prophet Hosea spoke severely of "Ephraim" (representing God's people), that "gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not." Here is real danger: that we are showing signs of spiritual weakness and decay and are not alert to our true condition.

It would seem difficult to find reason for keeping our hair in the color we were born with, unless it were to conform to the fashion of the world, or to look like something we are not—both of which are strictly forbidden. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof" (1 John 2:16-17).

If we are wholly bent on pleasing God and attaining the life He has offered us, the color of our hair will not concern us. Rather, we will want to avoid every possible contamination of the world in our lives, because "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof"; only he who does "the will of God" will abide forever (1 John 2:17).

God abhors human pride, and any attempt to appear what we are not is hard to define by any other term.

We may deceive ourselves and convince ourselves that certain things we like or feel comfortable with are necessary in our situation, but God does not regard these human judgments. He

is looking for a pure heart and a righteous life. Outward vanities only lower us in His esteem and in the esteem of those who are godlike.

• The Custom of Tree-Decorating

"I read somewhere in the Bible a verse that goes something like this: 'They even put silver on trees. Do not follow the custom of the heathen.' However I cannot find it again. Could you please tell me where I can find this?"

The passage to which you refer is found in Jeremiah, chapter 10. It reads: "Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven;... For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not" (vs. 2-4).

This passage has been noted as a

surprisingly accurate description of the modern "Christmas tree," though in the context in Jeremiah it was a tree cut and decorated as an idol for worship. But the parallel is not unjustified. The modern-day "Christmas tree" many times comes close to being an object of worship, being much closer to the center of the December 25 celebration than is Christ.

As a decoration, the "Christmas tree" might be innocent were it not for the Saturnalia and pagan worship from which the custom has come. The decorating of the evergreen tree in conjunction with the Saturnalia in December was a custom practiced long before it had any association with Christianity. The adopting of the practice along with celebrating the birth of Christ was a case of placing a "Christian" nametag on a thoroughly pagan custom.

What is wrong with cutting a tree and decorating it? There is nothing in the Bible to uphold it, and its association with the worship of idols certainly condemns it.

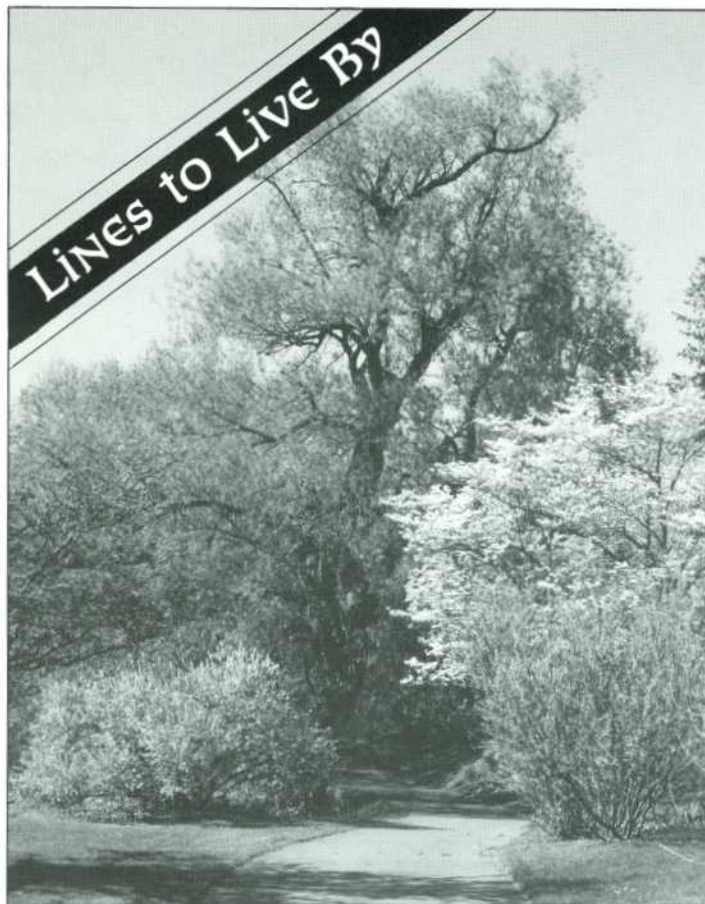
Self-Denial Week

This year, the week of February 4 will be the annual observance of Self-Denial Week for the Megiddo Church congregation and all 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.

While observing this week, let us make it another opportunity to practice discipline for Christ's sake. Let us strive harder to be like Him in *all* things, even in denying ourselves and taking up our cross daily, and following Him (Luke 9:23). Let it be a reminder to us, that we must be daily giving up the things we cannot keep, that we may lay hold on that which is our very own, which no one shall ever take from us, even the eternal life God has offered us.

*Now where thou treadest trod
The greatest of the saints of God;
To show thee where their feet were set
The light which led them shineth yet.*



*To add to the joy of another,
To subtract a thorn from his path,
Will multiply blessings around you
And divide your own burden by half.*

Perfection is attained by constant faithfulness in all the minor details of life, consecrating one's daily efforts to the highest good.

*Let nothing make thee sad or fretful,
Or too regretful;
Be still;
What God has ordered must be right,
Then find in it thine own delight:
My will.*

The Bible is meant to be bread for our daily use, not cake for special occasions.

Brighten YOUR Corner

*We cannot all be famous or be listed in "Who's Who,"
But every person great or small has important work to do.
For it's not the big celebrity in a world of fame and praise,
But it's doing unpretentiously in undistinguished ways
The work that God assigned to us, unimportant as it seems,
That makes our task outstanding and brings reality to dreams.*

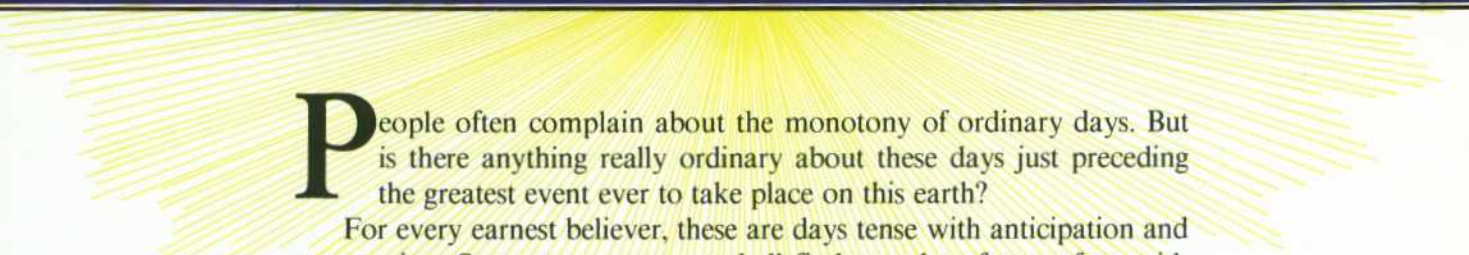
*So at the spot God placed you begin at once to do
Little things to brighten up the lives surrounding you.
For if everybody brightened up the spot on which they're standing
By being more considerate and a little less demanding,
This dark old world would very soon eclipse the 'Evening Star'
If everybody brightened up the corner where they are!*

The practice of putting God first in our lives should be our primary concern in every area of life, secular or spiritual. He will not take second place.



Coming Soon—

IMMORTALS!



People often complain about the monotony of ordinary days. But is there anything really ordinary about these days just preceding the greatest event ever to take place on this earth?

For every earnest believer, these are days tense with anticipation and preparation. Soon, very soon, we shall find ourselves face to face with immortal beings from other planets. Meeting these extraordinary persons will be an experience far surpassing anything we have yet known. Standing before them, we shall realize that to them the thoughts of our heart are as visible as the lines on our faces. They are able to judge and evaluate us, not only by our utterances and outward appearances, but by our true, inner, moral character.

The greeting and the handshake we receive from them will be according to what our life has been. If we feigned spirituality when we felt none, if we listened to counsel from the Word of God and then went our own way, privately retaining our own opinion, we shall then realize that such fruitless dissembling is no longer possible. Our lives before them are an open book.

Let us so live now that we may be able to welcome these immortal visitors with open arms, and they will be able to receive us with abounding joy, as members of their own dear—heavenly—family.