

Megiddo Message



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*Grant me purity
of heart, that I may honor You.*

—Psalm 86:11, NLT

Help for EYE-TROUBLE



Of all the senses we have, perhaps none is more precious than the ability to see.

But eyesight is more than vision. The eye is also the faculty of discrimination, discernment, perception. These abilities of the eye are referenced repeatedly in Scripture. And they have a sound spiritual application.

Spiritual blindness is ascribed by Isaiah to those who should be God's watchmen but have failed: "His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber" (Isa. 56:10).

This same spiritual blindness was an affliction suffered by false teachers such as the Pharisees of our Lord's day. Said Jesus, "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind" (Matt. 15:14).

Those who willingly rejected God in all ages have been classified as spiritually blind. Isaiah

described the condition in his day:

*"Open my eyes,
that I may see."*

*"See ye indeed,
but perceive not"*
(Isa. 6:9), and

Paul wrote: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (2 Cor. 4:4). This very serious condition still exists today.

But one does not have to be blind to have vision problems. Like our physical lives, our inner lives can be out of focus, causing us to confuse immediate advantage with eternal value, secular issues with spiritual, human values with heavenly, and our own opinions with Divine revelation.

The apostle Paul speaks of those whose spiritual lives are in focus: "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). Properly focused eyes belong to those whose hearts are set on things above, not on things on the earth (Col. 3:2), who see a city which "hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10).

Then there is the evil eye of one who judges the acts of God by human standards, even daring to criticize God. Jesus speaks of the impossibility of clear eyesight with such an eye: "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6:23). Again He speaks of the plight of those whose eyes are evil (Luke 11:34): "When thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness."

Sometimes our vision is hampered by a foreign

body in the eye. A speck of dirt, a cinder, or anything else in the eye causes discomfort and distortion of sight.

Sometimes this is actually beneficial, morally speaking. The more our faults cause us pain and irritation, the more likely we are to work to overcome them. And the less likely we are to prejudge, misjudge, criticize and slander others who have similar faults. Concerning this all too human tendency, our Lord asks, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye, and fail to notice the plank in your own?" (Matt. 7:3, Phillips).

Then there is the downcast eye, which sees only the problems and sorrows of life and refuses to look up. Peter walked safely on the water toward Jesus until he looked down and allowed the waves and the wind—the utter impossibility of what he was doing—to give him an earthly view of a heavenly experience.

The Psalmist looked up (Psalm 121:1), knowing that the Lord was his helper, the Creator of the universe. Paul tells us to set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth. We are to look to God and not to this world. Our Lord, describing conditions that would prevail near the end of the age, says to believers, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). In the same way He calls us to our responsibility to serve: "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35).

How often are our eyes selfish? Do we take after Eve in her ungodliness, who "saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and...she took of its fruit and ate"? (Gen. 3:6, RSV).

People have disobeyed God for a fancy or personal advantage, only to find in time that they had exchanged eternity for a mess of secular potage. Many of us have looked at material things and deliberately put them first. We have forgotten Christ's command: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

We live in a day when the lustful eye is a deadly spiritual disease. And people love to have it so. The apostle Peter describes it with painful accuracy: "These are the men who delight in daylight self-indulgence....Their eyes cannot look at a woman without lust" (2 Pet. 2:13-14, Phillips). It is all the lust of the heart and the pride of life.

The aged apostle John wrote that all things attached to this world, including the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, will never pass away,

(Continued on page 27)

MEGIDDO MEANS ...

"a place of troops" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon); "a place of God" (Young's Analytical Concordance). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

WE BELIEVE ...

- in God, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.
- in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- in ourselves as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.
- in the promise of God, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

The Herald and the KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: ... lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

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"Lord, What Shall Be the Sign of Thy Coming?"

Part Two

The story is told of the noted English agnostic Thomas Huxley who some years ago was in Dublin, Ireland for a series of speaking engagements. Early one morning he left his hotel in a hurry to catch a train, taking one of the city's famous horse-drawn taxis. Huxley thought that the doorman at the hotel had told the driver where to go, so he simply settled back in the cab and told the man at the reins to drive fast. The driver set off at a vigorous pace. In a few minutes Huxley realized that the cab was headed away from the station. "Don't you know where you're going?" he shouted to the driver. "No, your honor," the driver answered, and then added with obvious satisfaction—"but I'm driving FAST!"

This seems to describe the attitude of thousands today. There is much motion, activity, speed, progress, but toward what goal? In what direction? Where is the port of arrival? Few, very few, seem to know either where they are or where they are headed.

Thank God, He has not left us to aimless traveling. He has given us a definite goal, rules by which we can travel, and signboards by which we can know that we are on the way. Among the most prominent of these signboards is the prophecy of the Apostle Paul record-

FULFILLED PROPHECIES ARE SIGNBOARDS BY WHICH WE CAN KNOW WHERE WE ARE IN THE DIVINE SCHEME.

ed in 2 Tim. 3:1-4. In the first part of this series we considered some of the signs the Apostle told us to be aware of. Let us now look further at the signs he outlines for the end of the age. The next word in his long list is:

INCONTINENT. The Greek word is *akrates* (ak-rat'-ace) which means without self-control, intemperate, powerless. The incontinent include those who do not restrain their passions or appetites. We see examples of this in alcoholics, drug addicts and compulsive gamblers.

The most widespread form of being incontinent is in the form of alcohol abuse. Recent statistics show that 80% of 18-25 year olds have used alcohol and 60% use it regularly. It is estimated that there are as many as 4 million confirmed alcoholics in the nation, and another 6 million problem drinkers bordering on alcoholism. In the United States alone, "alcohol-related illnesses and accidents claim nearly 100,000 lives each year," plus thousands more worldwide, all of which can be attributed to a lack of self-control.

Another example of incontinence is the plague of illegal hard drugs, a plague that costs an estimated \$140 billion per year, and is responsible for nearly 50 percent of the million Americans who are in jail. Drugs are continually smuggled into the country, law enforcement agents often looking the other way. A certain agent on the Mexican border was known to have collected \$1 million for simply waving through all the cars for 15 minutes—while 2200 pounds of cocaine went by.

Marijuana is currently one of the largest cash crops, ranking next to corn and soybeans, in the U.S. Federal drug agents are kept busy hunting out fields of plants and incinerating them. The task is difficult, because some people grow the plants inside their houses, or in obscure areas of farmland. Another technique is the growing of drug crops in remote areas of our national parks, where growers can easily disappear if discovered because they do not own the land. The flood of drug trade is accompanied with a flood of violence. Is it not a vivid fulfillment of Paul's prophecy?

And incontinence breeds fierceness.

FIERCE. *Anemeros* (an-ay'-mer-os) means brutal, cruel, inhuman. Particularly is this seen today in crime by juveniles. In six years, murders by juveniles rose 96 percent, compared with a 21 percent rise for all ages. Most frightfully threatened are public schools, particularly those in high crime areas. A recent study of school violence reports that at least 3 million crimes now occur on or near school grounds each year, and a good many of these are not minor offenses. In two Cleveland inner-city schools, half the students said they had witnessed knife attacks at or near school grounds while more than two-thirds had seen shootings. Our government is investigating ways to control

crime and violence among youth, but should any wonder what is the source of the problem when millions of children are being raised on a daily diet of TV violence? It is said that the average school child spends 5.6 hours per week on homework and 21 hours per week in front of a TV. And by age 12, he has seen 8,000 murders on TV and 100,000 acts of violence. Is it any wonder that violence among youth is increasing?

DESPISERS OF THOSE THAT ARE GOOD. This phrase is captured in one Greek word which means "hostile to virtue." This attitude is often displayed by the media, by entertainment programs that glorify deceit, immorality and adultery and discourage and defame goodness. It is seen also in schools, where some professors openly challenge traditional values of integrity, morality and faith.

TRAITORS. The Greek word is *prodotes* (prod-ot'-ace) which means betrayers. It includes the disloyal, the untrustworthy, the treacherous, those who pursue their own interests at the expense of others. It describes producers of tobacco, who have recently had to admit to manufacturing and promoting a poisonous product as though it were harmless pleasure, who put at risk the health of the nation to make money.

And there are other traitors, in the familiar sense of the word. Until the last few decades, traitors to our Federal Government were rare, the best known being Benedict Arnold and Aaron Burr. But in recent years many within the military and higher echelons of government have been charged and found guilty of selling top-secret information to other countries. Traitors also describes those who are disloyal to their family, company or nation, who design contracts to include misleading information, "loop holes" where they can profit at the expense of the innocent.

HEADY. *Prophetes* (prop-et-ace') is the Greek word which means rash, reckless, precipitate, compulsive, uncontrolled.

Perhaps the most obvious evidence of this uncontrolled compulsiveness today is seen in the billions of dollars which Americans spend every year on gambling. Gambling is a nationally mushrooming business, now legal in some form in 48 of the 50 states, only Utah and Hawaii forbidding it. Thirty-eight states have state lotteries. It is reported that in 1996, 100 million Americans bet \$400 billion.

This "heady" trait of being uncontrolled, rash, reckless, and compulsive is seen also in the thousands of persons who spend more than they earn, and soon face bankruptcy. Last year (1996), during a time of relative prosperity, personal bankruptcies reached an all-time high of 1.1 million. According to statistics, personal debt (for credit cards, automobiles, etc.) now stands at \$3 trillion—or an average of \$12,000 for every man, woman and child in the United States.

HIGHMINDED. *Tupholoo* (toof-o'-lo) is the Greek word which means blind with pride or conceit,

beclouded or besotted. This implicates people who have become drunken on self-pride—a trait seen in politics, in social circles, and in entertainment. It is especially conspicuous in those who regard themselves as innately superior to others—some parents even teach their children that they are naturally superior and should dominate others.

LOVERS OF PLEASURE MORE THAN LOVERS OF GOD. What statement could more accurately describe the world of today—when multitudes flood the theaters, dance clubs, gambling halls, the spectator sports, the social entertainments. Add to these the widespread use of TV and video—it is said that more homes have a television than washing machines or telephones; "average" daily viewing time is said to be 5 hours. Has there ever been a more pleasure-seeking age?

A direct result of the modern pleasure-seeking craze is the widespread moral degeneration that is undermining our nation and its most sacred traditions; the philosophy that "if it feels good, it is good."

*"IF AMERICANS SAY THEY
BELIEVE IN GOD BUT BEHAVE
VIOLENTLY, THEIR 'RELIGION'
IS BLASPHEMY."*

Can we wonder that the great Apostle called these "perilous times," when men would be "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God"? Is there any question that Paul's prophecy is not abundantly fulfilled?

Then follows the final word in the prophecy:

HAVING A FORM OF GODLINESS BUT DENYING THE POWER THEREOF. Here is perhaps the most astonishing of all the facts in this Divine prophecy. Who, but by Divine vision, could have foreseen a situation so contradictory as an age of unprecedented violence, crime and immorality—and also maintaining a "form of godliness"! Yet this is precisely what we see today. Current polls tell us that 95% say they believe in God. But of what value is it? Says a current analyst, "If Americans say they believe in God but behave violently, are sexually irresponsible, abandon their children and make light of values like chastity and modesty, then their 'religion' is a mere affectation, or worse, a blasphemy."

Many churches today are concentrating more on attracting people than on teaching the gospel, and the result is a church and a gospel barely distinguishable from the world or its philosophies. In rapidly growing churches and also in what are now called "mega-churches," it is not the Word of God that attracts huge numbers but rather the social activities, the rock music, and the removal of all traditional standards of dress and appropriate reverent behavior.

The downtrend is like an avalanche. Once the avalanche starts down the mountainside and picks up speed, no power known to man can stop it. It is said that an avalanche in the Alps, once it starts to move, builds rapidly and great masses of snow and ice, earth, rocks, trees, houses, and even whole villages, slide down the mountainside together.

So today, morals, submission to law, the sanctity of the marriage contract, the sacredness of the home circle; values of integrity, honesty, truthfulness, modesty of dress and deportment, reverence for the Bible and the God who authorizes it—all are going down together. No one on earth is able to arrest the downtrend or stop the avalanche.

Jesus Christ Will Stop the Avalanche

But there is hope—there is help—coming soon! Christ Jesus is coming, and He will be able to stop the avalanche. Today, though "favor [is] showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of

*J*ESUS' FOLLOWERS CAN REJOICE THAT THIS IS THE DARKNESS BEFORE THE DAWN.

uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." But a change is coming. Says the inspired Prophet: "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see"; but they shall be made to see, "for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:10-11, 9).

The simile of the book sealed with seven seals, recorded in Revelation 5 and 6, bears a striking resemblance to the thought of Christ stopping the avalanche. The Revelator wept much because "no man was found worthy to open and to read the book," or to open the seals thereof—that is, to accomplish the great things the seals represented. "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof" (v. 5). The world is to grow worse and worse until Christ arrives. Only He can stop the avalanche.

It is said that in the Alps they have what is known as the avalanche blast, which is a wind storm caused by the rapidly moving mass down the mountain slope. Today that wind is blowing, and it will continue to blow stronger and stronger until at Christ's coming it will be countered by the "whirlwind of the Lord" which will go "forth in fury," falling "grievously upon the head of the wicked" (Jer. 23:19). Then and not until then will the downtrend be reversed.

We who are seeing the fulfillment of the things

written aforetime, what should be our reaction? Should we be worried, fearful, heartsick, restless, discontented? No, Jesus would have us observe, and be comforted by the signs of His coming. These are His Words: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). Not rejoice because we see sin and evil on the increase, but rejoice to know that this is the darkness before the dawn, the prelude to something infinitely better, that the Kingdom of God is near at hand. Though the darkness is still all around us, we can see ahead the glow of the approaching Day.

The Apostle Peter near the close of his Second Epistle also includes some prophecy especially for our time. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. 3:3-4). This forecast is being fulfilled in two ways. Scoffers have arisen saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" They have been saying it over the years, and they are still saying it.

But Peter's meaning goes even further. There "shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts." Men and women who know the demands of the Gospel, but do not care to apply them to their daily living, are among the scoffers. In Matthew 24 Jesus spoke of this class of individuals, listing them as "evil servants." "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (vs. 48-51). The evil servants would be saying in their hearts, "My lord delayeth his coming." We may say it in our hearts without speaking it audibly. But some have even spoken their doubts in plain words. This, too, is a sign that we are near the time of the Lord's coming.

In Second Peter 3 the Apostle is telling of the great time of trouble that must accompany the establishment of God's new and better order upon earth. Verse 10 reads: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Then Peter sounds a solemn word of warning in the following verse: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." Seeing that the present heavens and earth shall pass away—all the pomp and pride of man's incompetent system of misrule, shall pass away forever—what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?

"Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." Looking for the coming Day, and not only looking for it, but hasting to be ready for it; working for it,

preparing for it, surrendering all for it, that we may be worthy of living in it when it comes.

Then the Apostle sounds the glad note of comfort: "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." We are looking for a new heavens and earth, a new arrangement of things on the earth; sin and evil will not always be rampant as it is today. That is why we do not fear. We are looking for a new ruler, a righteous King, and for a righteous people to be taken out, over whom the King of righteousness can rule. God has given us the promise, and we have the best of reasons to believe it.

Then in verse 14 Peter admonishes us again to be faithful that the promises may become a reality to us: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." Without spot and blameless—what a standard to reach, but what an incentive to reach it. Oh, what need to "be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." Blameless, clean through and through. That is perfection of character.

Then once again before closing his Epistle, Peter, realizing how easy it is to be led away with the error of the wicked, repeats the warning to his fellow believers—and to us—to be faithful, lest relaxing our ardor we fail of the prize of immortal life: "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing that ye know these things before, beware lest ye also be led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

Peter's warning is very similar to the warning given by Jesus at the end of His temple sermon recorded in Luke 21: I would like to cite it from the New English Bible: "Keep a watch on yourselves; do not let your minds be dulled by dissipation and drunkenness and worldly cares so that the great Day closes upon you suddenly like a trap; for that day will come on all men, wherever they are, the whole world over. Be on the alert, praying at all times for strength

to pass safely through all these imminent troubles and to stand in the presence of the Son of Man" (vs. 34-36, NEB).

The warning is to us who see the signs of His coming so clearly fulfilled before our eyes. It is meant to alarm us, to alert us, to warn us to see what is clearly before our eyes. What do we see? We see history mov-

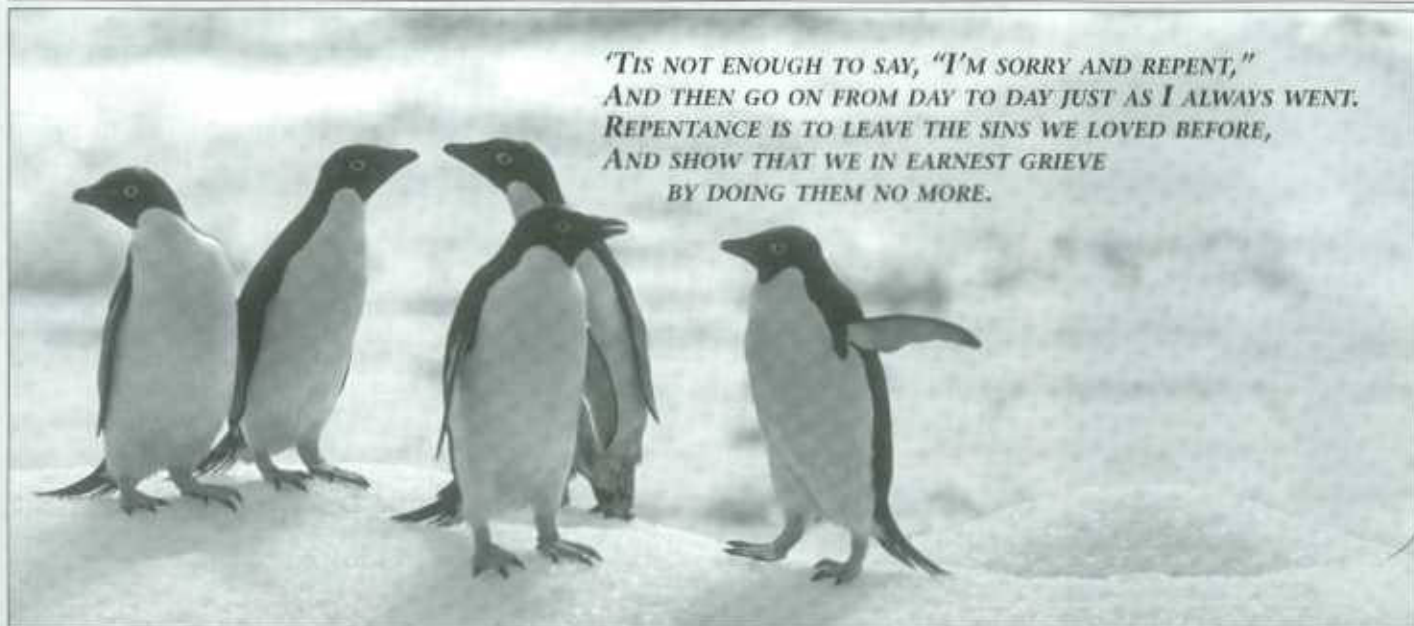
SIN AND EVIL WILL NOT ALWAYS BE RAMPANT. A NEW ORDER WILL SOON DISPLACE THE OLD.

ing forward not toward an end that is way out there someplace. We see, more vividly than any who have gone before us, that we are a people at the brink. Instead of moving along a single line to some far-off final point, we are moving rapidly toward the end of an age. At any moment, things may change.

Six thousand years of man's rule is almost at an end. It is time for each of us to enter upon a private campaign to save ourselves. Hence Jesus' warning, "Watch... be on the alert,...pray." It is absolutely impossible to do too much; it is very possible to do too little. And when the great Day comes, who of us will not wish we had done more!

O brother, be faithful! eternity's years
Shall tell for thy faithfulness now,
When bright smiles of gladness shall scatter thy tears,
A coronet gleam on thy brow.
O brother, be faithful! the promise is sure;
That waits for the faithful and tried;
To reign with the ransomed, immortal and pure,
And ever with Jesus abide.

"TIS NOT ENOUGH TO SAY, "I'M SORRY AND REPENT,"
AND THEN GO ON FROM DAY TO DAY JUST AS I ALWAYS WENT.
REPENTANCE IS TO LEAVE THE SINS WE LOVED BEFORE,
AND SHOW THAT WE IN EARNEST GRIEVE
BY DOING THEM NO MORE.



LIFTING UP JESUS

**BY FAR THE
GREATEST
IMPACT OF
JESUS'
CRUCIFIXION
WAS THE
WONDER
OF HIS
RESURRECTION.**

**JESUS'
DESTINY WAS
NOT TO BE A
CRUCIFIED
SAVIOR BUT A
GLORIFIED
KING.**

We have received this question from a friend:

"What does John 3:14 mean? It reads, 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.' Many read into it some kind of parallel between Jesus' death and the serpent's death. Mormons teach that Jesus' death was a substitutionary atonement. Jesus appeared in North America, and that He was Quezequatal, the winged serpent of the Aztecs. Gnostics taught that the serpent was the hero in the Genesis account of the fall and that Jehovah was the villain. I don't share the views of Mormons or Gnostics but am at a loss as to what John 3:14 means."

This question actually brings up three statements by Jesus that mention a "lifting up." They are the following:

- 1** John 3:14-15, *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."*
- 2** John 8:28, *"Then said Jesus unto them, when ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things."*
- 3** John 12:32-36, *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die. The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you:....While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."*

ANALYSIS

The religious world lay great stress on Jesus' statement that He would be "lifted

up," thinking that He referred solely to His death on the Roman cross. While it is a fact of history that His death was on a cross rather than by hanging or stoning or any other type of violent death that men could have inflicted upon Him, we cannot believe that this was the whole meaning of Jesus' words in each of these passages. There are several reasons for this.

1 The first reference to Jesus being lifted up gives no indication of the meaning of this action, but states only what the result of that lifting up was to be: *"That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."* If we apply this statement to Jesus' death on the Roman cross, then the natural parallel to draw from this statement would be that those who should look upon Jesus when He was on the cross (like the serpent on the pole) could expect deliverance from their physical woes (just as the people who looked up to the serpent could be saved from the devastating plague). This does not follow, however, because those who literally looked upon Jesus on the cross were not all believers, and could not by this simple act be assured of eternal life. Conclusion: something more than Jesus' being lifted up on the Roman cross must be the intended meaning.

2 Jesus' second reference to being lifted up occurs in John 8:28, and this time He described the result of this lifting up in these words: *"Then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself...."* This "lifting up" was to result in some knowing that He was indeed the Messiah (*"Then shall ye know that I am he"*), also that He spoke only the words of His Father (*"and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me"*). The earthquake and darkness at the time of Jesus' death may have partially fulfilled the first part of the statement, in that the centurion was moved to say, *"Truly this was the Son of God"*

(Matt. 27:54); but we know of nothing related to His death that caused any to believe that He spoke only the words of His Father.

3 Jesus' third mention of this lifting up is recorded in John 12, where Jesus received a special commendation from heaven to strengthen Him for the ordeal He was about to face. His statement about being lifted up is part of His response to the voice from heaven. Jesus said, "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again" (John 12:28). The reaction of the people around Him is interesting: "The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him." Then Jesus, observing their ignorance of the real purpose of His life, went on to say: "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (verses 30-32).

The next statement relates this lifting up to His death: "This he said, signifying what death he should die." Were we to accept the explanation of the religious world, we could take this verse as a confirmation of His thought, that He was indeed speaking expressly of His literal death. But the next verse introduces another thought: "The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?" Jesus' reply is enlightening: He speaks not of His literal death or crucifixion but of His ascension to heaven, quoting His own words from a short time previous (John 7:33-34): "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth" (verse 35).

CONCLUSIONS

What shall we conclude? Let us look first at the Greek word translated "lifted up." It is *hupsoo*, and means "to elevate (literal or figurative)." The root word from which it is taken (*hupsos*) means: "elevation, (i.e., abstract) altitude... or (figurative, dignity):—be exalted, height, (on) high". It is used frequently

in Scripture with the meaning of exaltation, a lifting up to a position of dignity. For example, when Jesus said: "He that shall humble himself shall be exalted [hupsoo]" (Matt. 23:12). Peter used this same word when speaking of Jesus' ascension and glorification. He said of Him, "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted [hupsoo]" (Acts 2:33). Again in Acts 5:31: "Him hath God exalted [hupsoo] with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." James used it when he wrote to his brethren (4:10): "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up [hupsoo]." Each of these uses suggest a lifting up with dignity and honor.

Did Jesus experience any lifting up during His career which could be called an exaltation with honor or dignity?

Lifting Up...Resurrection

By far the greatest impact of Jesus' crucifixion was the wonder of His resurrection. The Romans could easily lift Him up on the cross, but what human power could bring a man back to life from the dead? Here was an event that changed the course of history. So important was Jesus' resurrection that it was mentioned repeatedly by the apostles, as they went out to preach. They were witnesses of Jesus, "whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead." If Christ had been crucified and had been left in the tomb, would His statement have come true: "When ye have lifted up the Son of man then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself" (John 8:28)? If he had been crucified and not raised, would anyone have known absolutely that He was different from other men? How would they know that He was indeed the Son of God, until they witnessed the miracle of the resurrection? The resurrection provided proof positive that He was of God.

Lifting Up...Ascension

Another lifting up which Jesus experienced, which had also great recognition and honor with it, was His lifting up to heaven, when He was taken to the Father. And this is the association which John gives to the statement in question (in John, chapter 12). The people who had heard Him say that "the Son of man must be lifted up" answered Him, "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever, and

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how sayest thou, the Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you" (John 12:35). Here was a repetition of what He had previously said to the Jews, "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I will go unto Him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come" (John 7:33-34). He made a similar statement to His disciples, again relative to His ascension, and this was on the night of His last passover with His disciples. Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. Little children yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you" (John 13:31-33).

Jesus knew the plan. He would be going to His Father's throne, where He would spend many centuries before returning to earth. Here was a truly glorious "lifting up."

Lifting Up...Kingship

There is yet another—even more glorious—lifting up which Jesus will experience in the future, and that lifting up will take place when He is crowned King of the earth.

When Jesus was before Pilate, Pilate questioned Him concerning His kingship, and Jesus replied: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world" (John 18:37). Jesus' destiny was not to be a crucified Savior but a glorified King.

Another prophecy of this exaltation is found in Isa. 11:10: "There shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious." In this passage is an allusion to a custom followed in ancient wars. The ancient people would carry banners displaying the colors of their commanders. These banners were often set on high places, or carried on long poles so that all could see whose side they were on. What a fitting simile of the time when Christ is raised to the highest position as King of the whole earth, exalted and honored worldwide.

The book of Revelation describes Jesus riding forth as "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16). "His eyes were

as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns" (Rev. 19:12).

Paul described this same exaltation when he said of Jesus that God hath given Him "a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,...and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11). All aspects and orders of the new creation will be under His exalted dominion.

David, king of Israel, speaking of his greater Son Christ, pictured vividly the exalted position He would fill when He is lifted up: "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment....In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. 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" (Ps. 72:1-2, 7-8, 11, 17).

When Jesus Will "Draw All Men Unto Him"

When will Christ literally draw all men to Him? What lifting up will accomplish this? Certainly His lifting up on the cross did not. It happened nearly 2000 years ago, and still today only a small part of the world recognizes Him.

But the Day will come when He shall return and be exalted as King of the whole earth, and "all dominions shall serve and obey Him" (Dan. 7:27). All shall know and worship Him, and "the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted" (Isa. 60:12).

Revelation 5:13 pictures the time when all people and all nations will have been drawn to the great King, who will use His authority to bring them blessing and peace and prosperity, as they obey and submit to His righteous laws. To Him they will accord the highest honor, saying, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." At this time, all people will be drawn to the great

King on His throne and God's declared purpose to fill the earth with His glory shall be complete.

Among the ancient prophecies of the Messiah was this promise: "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:10). Here is a picture of all people being drawn to Jesus, which will be fulfilled when He is established as King of the whole earth, when He is lifted up or exalted on His throne (Zech. 14:9).

The apostle Paul pictured this great Day when all would be gathered to Him: "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together all things in Christ" (Eph. 1:10).

SUMMARY

With the amount of information given in the Bible we do not have to accept a contradictory assumption. We have no evidence that the lifting up on the cross

is the only exaltation Jesus was to experience, far from it.

Wilson's *Emphatic Diaglott* carries the foregoing thought of His lifting up, removing it from any suggestion of a literal cross: "And I, if I be raised on high from the earth, will draw all to myself" (John 12:32). The Berkeley translation adds in a footnote on "draw everyone unto myself" this thought: "Gentile as well as Jew." No one will be able to—or will want to—resist the authority and glory of the new King. His fame shall be worldwide, and the effects of His lifting up shall be felt by all who live.

The promise is definite, and the infinite power of God Almighty is behind it. Christ will be lifted up to a position of high authority, the highest on earth, and the ideal portrayed in the angel's song at His birth will become eternal reality: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." □



Prayer

F

ather in heaven,

You who give life to all living things,

Help me this day to work faithfully and well.

Grant that I may not put off until tomorrow any task which I should do today.

Grant that I may not do with a grudge that which should be done with a smile.

May I never render to anyone that which is less than my best.

Help me always to be honest, and never seek unfair advantage over others.

May I be a good example to those who are younger, respectful to those who are older, and at all times courteous to my equals.

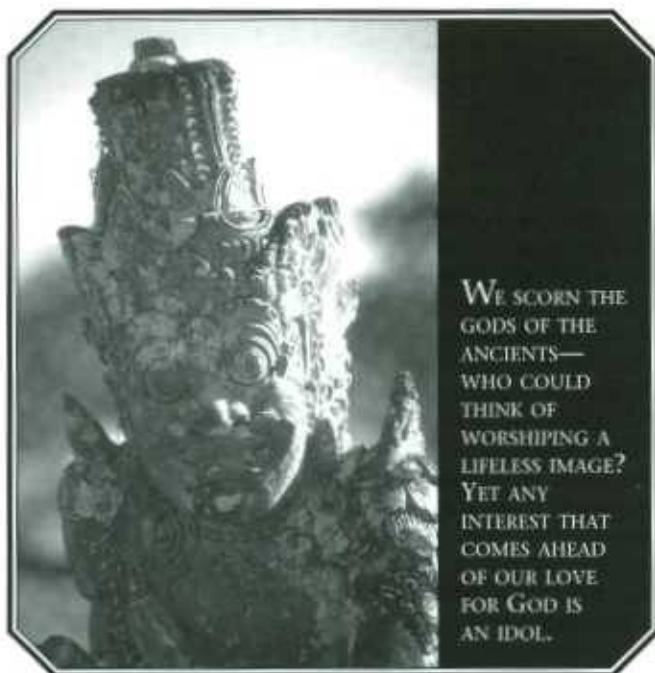
If you entrust any to my care today, may I be always just and fair and kind to them.

So make me all this day to live as did my Master and Friend, who is also my Judge and King forever. Amen.

Don't Forget!

"If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart." —Psalm 44:20-21

The first and greatest of the commandments is clear and concise: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 12:30). Being all-wise and eternal and possessing the power to bless and prosper in this life and to bestow life eternal, God is just in requiring full allegiance. As He is capable of bestowing upon His human children the ultimate—even endless life—and will delight to do so in exchange for a short life of obedient service, He has a perfect right to require of us all that we can give—a surrendered life, wholly devoted to seeking and doing His will.



WE SCORN THE GODS OF THE ANCIENTS—WHO COULD THINK OF WORSHIPING A LIFELESS IMAGE? YET ANY INTEREST THAT COMES AHEAD OF OUR LOVE FOR GOD IS AN IDOL.

Who, then, are the strange gods? or what is idolatry? We scorn the gods of ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome. We despise the idols of wood, gold, or stone in far-off lands; but how about the times we decline into lesser types of unholiness—which are no less an insult against the true and living God of heaven?

Simply defined, idolatry is undue devotion to unworthy objects. Further, it may be any pursuit in life on which our heart is set. Pleasure seeking may be idolatry. A hobby, a profession, a business enterprise may monopolize our attention and dominate our

lives. Strange gods are these, gods of our own creating. But anything that takes our attention from serving God wholeheartedly, anything we place in our affection above God or His service is an idol or strange god.

It was of religious people that the words of our text were spoken, those who knew the true God, who understood His Word and had covenanted to serve Him. To speak of "forgetting" something indicates that we once had it in mind. The words of the familiar hymn are fitting here:

*Jesus calls us from the worship
Of the vain world's golden store,
From each idol that would keep us,
Saying "Christian, love Me more."*

God demands more love from us than we have for the distracting things about us.

If we really believed that in Him we "live and move and have our being," that to Him all hearts are open, all desires known, and that from Him no secrets are hid (Heb. 4:13), we would be more concerned about giving Him a true heart of reverence. We would be more eager to welcome into our minds the inspiring thoughts about God and His attributes. In so doing we would expel any inclination to waywardness, to seeking our own pleasures or ambitions.

The tendency of double-minded humankind through the centuries has been to serve God only halfheartedly. They professed that they knew Him, but by works they denied Him. They praised Him with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him. It was "in the dark" that the ancients of the house of Israel performed their unholy rites (Ezek. 8:12). They said, "The Lord seeth us not." In this they were unmindful of the Prophet's warning long before: "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?" (Isa. 29:15). Had they served the Lord in singleness of heart, they would not have fallen into such apostasy.

God had a covenant with Israel. They were to be His people, holy and free from the defilement of the heathen nations about them. They were to be, as He pictured (Jeremiah 3), His bride, or wife, chaste and pure, having no other allegiance but to Him. His promises of blessing went with the covenant, and all He had promised had been fulfilled. They enjoyed the prosperity of the land; they were guarded from the enmity of surrounding nations. Yet in spite of all the

goodness on the part of God, they forgot. And in their forgetfulness, they sinned.

What did God do? He searched them out, and His judgments for disobedience followed.

Is the world of today very different from Israel before her downfall? Is it not more—far more—concerned with things present than things future? Material progress is decidedly in advance of spiritual progress. Business, work and pleasure crowd out true religion and genuine piety. A form is maintained, but the real lessons of godly conduct are not practiced.

But here we are principally concerned with the loyalty of those who understand the precepts of God and are striving to live by them. The prophet Ezekiel (14:2) spoke of a class who had set up idols in their hearts. As we said earlier, these "strange gods" may be anything that keeps us from serving God wholeheartedly. So let us emphasize the need for care and watchfulness. How needful that we watch the stream of thought that flows through our mind. Evil imaginations, unlawful desires seep in so subtly and in such attractive disguises that before we know it we erect an idol in our heart—and worship it. Particularly we should be watchful when our mental powers are less active and our imagination is free to run.

There is no substitute for loyalty to God. Loyalty is that quality which prompts a person to be true in his undertaking to serve God above all else. It means one has a definite destination, a fixed purpose in life and steadfastness in his pursuit. With loyalty to God

comes power, poise, purpose, and a thorough strengthening of one's character. Duties, whatever their nature, are not burdensome to the loyal. Indeed, work is a delight to the dedicated worker. And God's reward is reserved for such.

Service is raised to the highest plane when love for God and for the task is fused with the effort.

We know the reward for faithful, loyal service to God will be grand. On the other hand, the reward for evil doing or "forgetting" will be dismal. But what if we feel—yes, know—that we have done wrong in the past; that we have stretched out our hands to "strange gods," yet want to return to God and right?

As the habit was formed, so it must be broken. As we accumulated mental trash that cluttered the mind and crowded out the heavenly things, so now we must discard it. As we yielded to temptation, now we must refuse. As thread by thread strands of doubt bound us into bondage, so now thread by thread we must unwind them until we stand free. As we builded, stone by stone, a wall that separated us from God, so now we ourselves must toil and stone by stone tear down the wall until it is overthrown.

Worshiping strange gods may be pleasing for a season, but only for a very short season. To God are known all our ways, and He will recompense according to our works. Let us all examine ourselves as in His presence, see our idolatries for what they are, and humbly seek His help to remove anything that is separating us from Him—and life. □

Don't Miss the Forest for the Tree

Blessed is the man who endures temptation. —James 1:12

All of us have been so close to a temptation that we lost our perspective. It may have been something as small as a rumor that we knew shouldn't be passed along, but the urge to repeat it blocked out our sense of good judgment.

Long ago Adam and Eve, in the allegory of Genesis, faced a similar problem. They became so preoccupied with one (forbidden) plant in the garden that they couldn't see the forest for the tree.

And look at what it cost them: for the privilege of eating the fruit of that one forbidden tree they forfeited the right to eat of the tree of life.

The same temptation still plagues us. How often do we miss the whole forest of God's goodness for a single, tempting tree. The moment of temptation seems so overwhelming, the idea so irresistible, our twisted logic so justified.

But think about it:

What is the difference between a moment of gratification and pleasures for evermore (Ps. 16:11)?

What is the difference between a few years of the fame and honor of this world compared with the

honor of Jesus and a host of heavenly angels (Matt. 10:32)?

What is the difference between having all the things money can buy in this world for a few brief years and sharing the eternal riches of Christ when the whole earth is His dominion (Eph. 2:7; Rom. 8:17; Rev. 3:21)?

It is all the difference between choosing what is right versus what is tempting at the moment. There is a whole wide world of difference.

Don't look at the tree and forget the forest!



*Lord of the days that are left to me,
I give them to Your hand;
Take me and break me and mold me to
The pattern You have planned.*

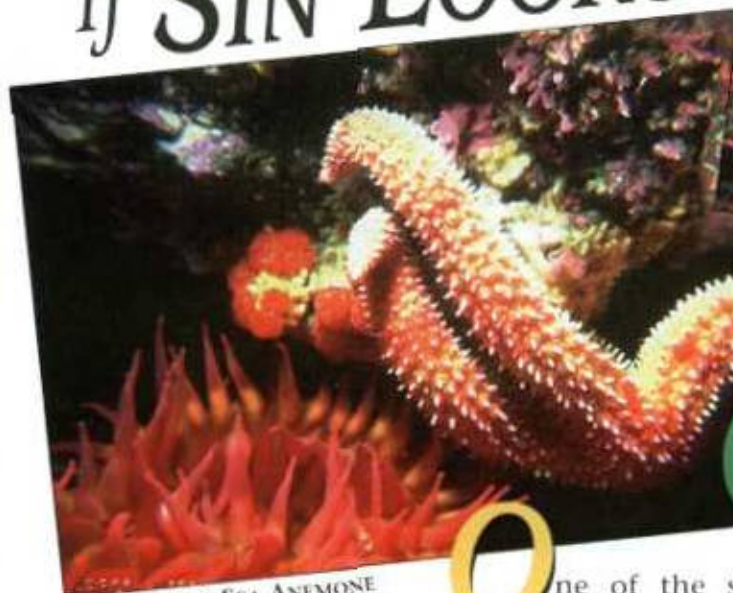


An anxious parent was speaking with a friend about his unappreciative children. "Maybe," the friend suggested, "you have given them too much to live with and not enough to live for."



We have to earn our convictions through hard study and thinking. Nothing of real worth comes easy.

If SIN LOOKS



STARFISH AND SEA ANEMONE



PINK SEA ANEMONE

CHARMING...

One of the strangest creatures of the ocean is the sea anemone.

This bewildering underwater animal actually resembles a colorful chrysanthemum. One would never guess this brilliant rose, yellow, or blue "flower" to be a treacherous animal with a deadly sting.

The sea anemone has a slit-like mouth surrounded by scores of colorful tentacles amazingly like flower petals. These petal-like tentacles have a sting that paralyzes the fish that happens to touch them. The immobilized fish is then passed through the slit-like mouth into the stomach cavity.

The sea anemone fastens its "stem" to a rock, sea shell, or wharf timber. It can move only in a slow, limited way, yet it lives solely on fish. Now how does this "flower" pursue its nimble prey?

It doesn't. The anemone is in league with a decoy fish. This fish is immune to the paralyzing sting of the terrifying tentacles. It feeds on the undigested remains discarded by its partner.

The decoy fish rolls and frolics like a child among the tentacles. Its playful antics attract other fish into the horrible trap.

As soon as a victim is stung, these two hypocrites proceed with their feast.

The deceptive anemone and its wily decoy have their counterparts on land.

I have seen attractive men and women who seemed to be immune to the fatal poison of evil. They frolicked and played in sin with the most polite and charming taste.

I watched some of my friends become enchanted by these decoy sinners. I saw fellow Christians lured by the bewitching glamour of the world.

Said the Psalmist, "As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked" (Psa. 73:2-3). It all looked so beautiful and harmless.

That is, "until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.

"Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.

"How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors" (Psa. 73:17-19).

One more thing about the decoy fish: it is usually immune to the sting of only one particular variety of sea anemone. The decoy fish can be stung and eaten by the many other varieties.

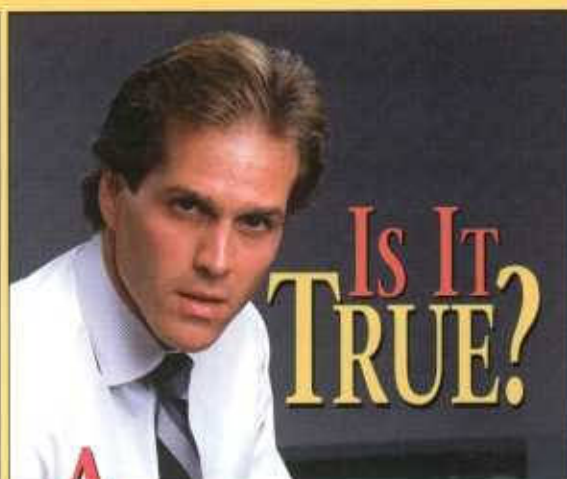
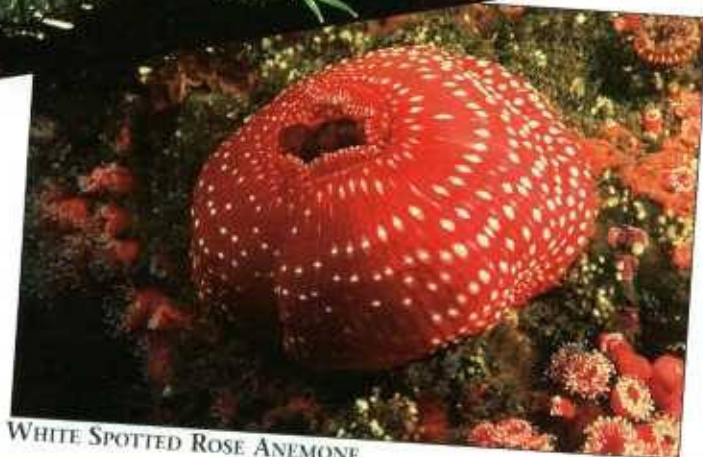
So decoy fish may perish among the beautiful hypocrites, too, while decoy souls that entice the unsuspecting to damnation will perish. Unlike the decoy fish, these people are being poisoned by the very sins they frolic in.

Another night of hilarious revelry. One more sensual thrill. A peal of laughter. And another one finds himself in the clutches of evil, mocked by its glittering beauty, trapped when it is too late to retreat.

Do we wonder that the Wise Man wrote, "Enter not into the path of the wicked...Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away" (Prov. 4:14-15).

The charm of sin is treacherous hypocrisy. For "evil shall slay the wicked" (Psa. 34:21). Resist it by following the advice of the Apostle

who said, "Fix your mind on what is true, and noble, and pure, and lovely"—it is the only safe way (Phil. 4:8). □



A traveling lecturer named Norman Cousins told of a personal experience which vividly illustrates the point of "truthfulness in telling." To supplement a modest salary Mr. Cousins was, as he described it, "traveling the lecture circuit as a book reviewer." On this particular day he was reviewing a book authored by Ernest Hemingway.

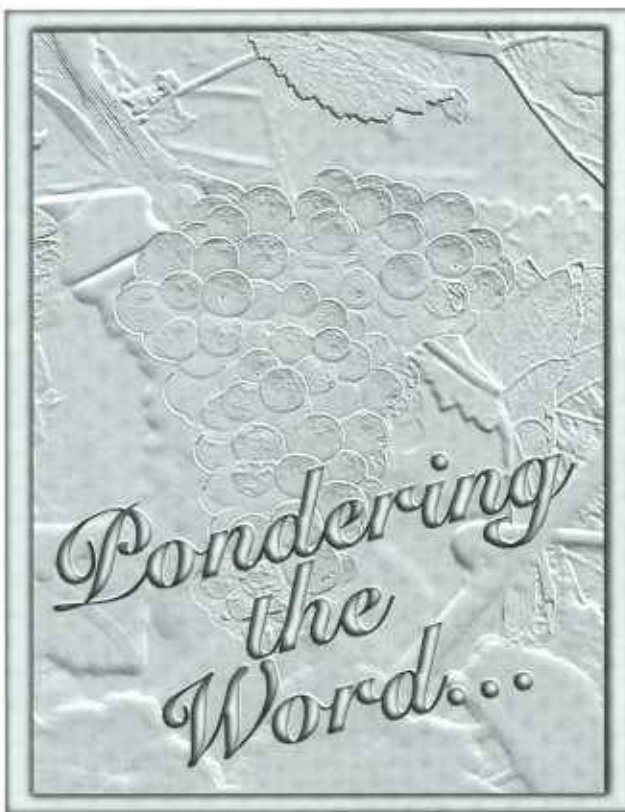
After his talk a woman in the audience approached him asking for further information about a detail he had included in his biographical sketch of Hemingway. Mr. Cousins assured her that the detail was correct, that it was a "standard item" in biographical information about the now famous writer. He even promised to dig up the source material and send it to her. Thanking him, she wrote out her name and address. To Mr. Cousin's deep chagrin, she was Hemingway's mother!

Mr. Cousins wrote, "It was one of life's more embarrassing moments. Ever since, I have been wary of retailing personal information about authors—or about anyone else, for that matter."

How much embarrassment—and worse—we could spare ourselves if we would develop a wholesome wariness about repeating unconfirmed and unsubstantiated information. How many people have suffered at the tongues of others because untruths or distortions of truth have been repeated!

A well-known commentator made this statement relative to retailing personal information. "Drawing on my fine command of language, I say nothing."

When we are about to tell something about someone, let us first *be sure* that it is true; and if it isn't, how much better to have sufficient command of language to remain silent! □



***T**hou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy."*
—Revelation 3:4

Here are words of generous praise, and they are genuine because they come from Jesus Himself. It would seem that nothing is less possible than to walk through this world without defiling one's garments. But a few members of the church at Sardis were doing it: "They have not defiled their garments."

Jesus is commending these people whose sheer goodness gives happiness, moral assurance and hope to all who know them. And what shall be the reward for their moral purity and uprightness? "They shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy."

Moving simply and quietly in a seemingly very ordinary life, we can be among them.

The consecrated life is the blessed life.

***I** thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." —Psalm 119:59*

In this passage are four aspects of obedience. The first is **deliberation**. The Psalmist says, "I thought." In almost any activity of life, thoughtlessness is dangerous. Picture a driver on the highway who doesn't think. Or a construction worker high on a scaffolding

who doesn't think. Or a nurse administering medications to patients, who doesn't think. Just as dangerous is our position as Christian believers if we pursue our life course without thinking.

There are a thousand diversions which prevent us from thinking. Take, for instance, our word *amusement*. To muse means "to think." Add the letter "a" and it becomes *amuse*, which means "don't think." Amusement is literally an escape from thinking, a dangerous activity.

Second, the Psalmist thought about his **destination**: "I thought on my ways..." He sat down to think about the way he was living. Where was he headed? What would he have when it was all over? Which way was he traveling?

Next, he took **action**. "I turned my feet." His deliberations revealed that a correction of his course was needed, and he did it. His feet had been going the wrong way, and needed a new routing. So he "turned" them. Just so we need to keep turning our course—from evil and toward good. How many times God's prophets said to wayward Israel, "Turn you...return unto me...turn you at my reproof." A wrong course needs to be corrected, the sooner, the better.

Next there was **direction**: The Psalmist turned "unto thy testimonies." He did not consult some man-made philosophy, or even his own thoughts. He turned to God's Word for his direction. All through the Psalms we see his love for God's Word, His testimonies, His precepts, His statutes.

When we have questions, problems, or need a new direction, God's Word is the place to turn. It is a "thorough furnisher unto all good works." It is God's way of giving us light and hope in the darkness of this world.

***T**he angel of the Lord spoke very solemnly to Joshua and said, This is what the Lord almighty says: If you follow my ways and obey my requirements, then you will be given authority over my Temple and its courtyards. I will let you walk in and out of my presence along with these others standing here." —Zechariah 3:6-7, NLT*

Notice the conditions: God says "follow MY ways...obey MY requirements." We can always rationalize and tell ourselves that our way is better, but God says "follow MY ways." This means we must ask in every situation, What is God's thought (not mine) about this? What does He think of my plan? Is my attitude pleasing to Him? Blessings only follow obedience.

And what blessings they are! Says the Lord, "...I will let you walk in and out of my presence along with these others standing here." To go and come in the presence of the King was an honorary privilege. Think of going and coming in the presence of the King of kings! And who are the attendants standing by? They are angels, shining ones who share in the glory of their King.

God has high honor reserved for every obedient one. □

STAYING ON TOP

Do you remember the old fable about the two frogs that had the misfortune of falling into a bucket of cream? One frog promptly panicked, gave up struggling and drowned. The other "never say die" little frog kept on struggling and kicking. And what happened? Its vigorous efforts changed the cream into butter, and the little frog found safety on the freshly churned curds.

The lesson of the fable is universal. Staying on top is not automatic. Attaining and maintaining a favorable position in the difficult and often stress-filled situations of life requires effort, determined, unrelenting effort.

And even more important is the lesson to the aspiring Christian. Staying on top becomes an ever new challenge as we confront the many, many besetting sins inherent in our nature. At times when, upon sober reflection, there appears very little good we can say of ourselves, we feel like the frog in the bucket of cream. Defeated. We are like the people in Ezekiel's day who moaned, *"If our transgressions and our sins be upon us and we pine away in them, how shall we then live?"* Our confidence in our ability to overcome wanes and our spiritual vitality sinks to low ebb. If allowed to remain, this attitude will prove disastrous! True, we cannot go blustering through life with a cock sure attitude, but it is equally devastating to think we can't do it—when we know well enough that if we would only put our heart, mind and soul into the effort, we could!

On the other hand, we have all experienced those occasions when nothing seemed too difficult to accomplish, nothing too closely cherished to relinquish. We were more than just on top, we were riding the crest. Then, for no obvious reason, suddenly everything changed. A feeling of lethargy,

almost an "I don't care attitude" descended upon us and our spiritual progress ground to a sudden standstill.

What can we do about it? What course of action is open to us by which we can thwart this debilitating condition? First of all, don't give up to it. Keep struggling to stay on top. And second, take it to the Lord in prayer. Plead for a discerning heart to see the lessons in every situation and for strength to carry through. Perhaps an honest evaluation will even reveal that we have become forgetful of God in the everyday settings of our lives, and have allowed mundane duties to absorb time we should have spent in the faith-building exercises of prayer, meditation and study. Consequently, faith has grown weak.

Whatever the cause, whenever these feelings grip us (and they will come), we can—we must—renew the struggle to stay on top. A little more effort, a sterner self discipline, and the spirits will lift. Once more the heights of faith will beckon us, and greater victories over self and sin will again become glorious reality.

There is still another area where vigilance must be our constant watchword if we are to stay on top spiritually, and that concerns our dealings with the world about us. Perhaps nowhere is there greater temptation to tread water, so to speak, than when we are in the company of those not interested in the high calling to which we aspire. And yet, don't forget, they

are watching us and judging us by what they see and hear. We may be the only Bible they ever read. Can we afford to compromise our high standard to win their approval, or to be classed as a good fellow in their eyes? Didn't our Perfect Example commission us long ago with a responsibility to shine as lights in this present world? Isn't this another way of saying, "You must stay on top"?

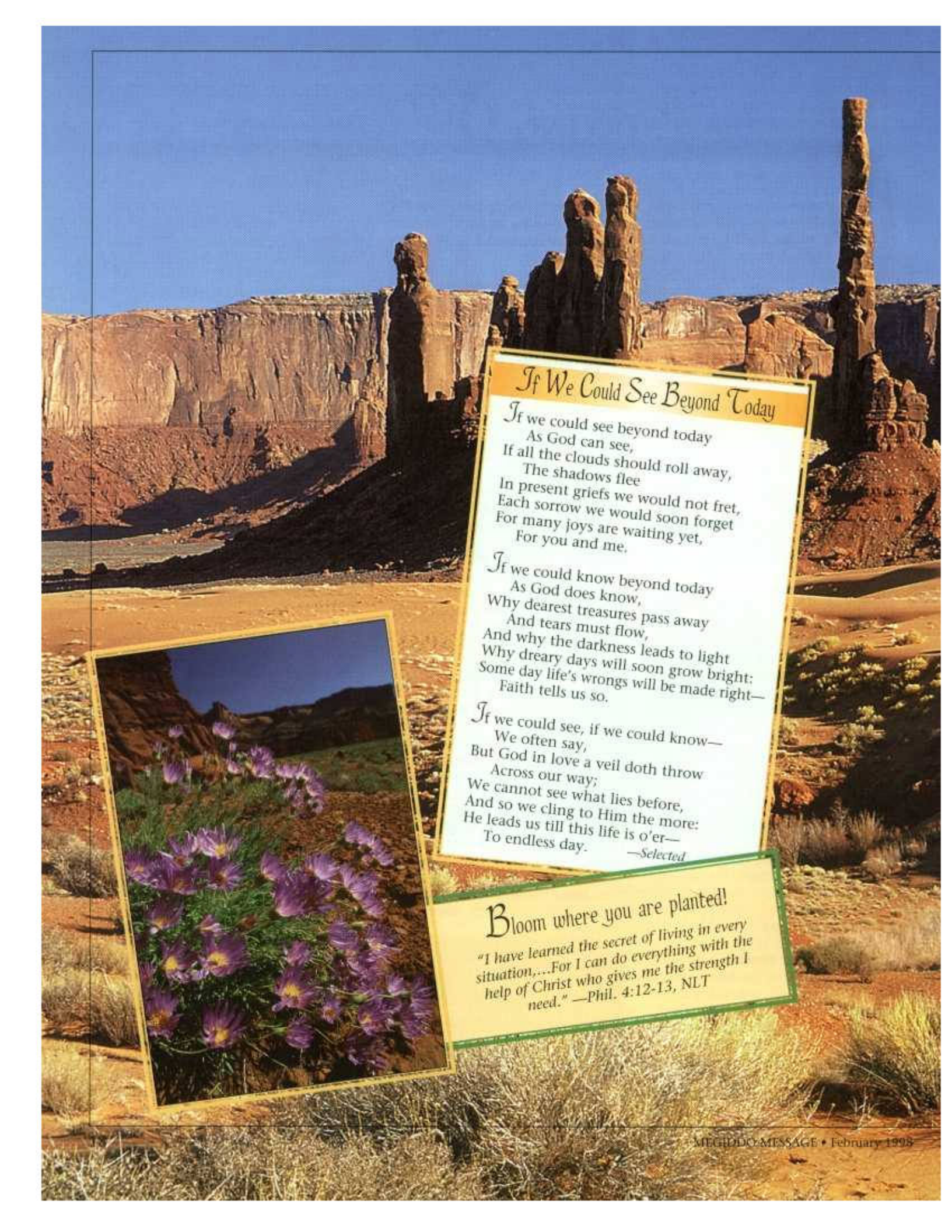
How do we react under the pressure of difficult and trying circumstances? Sometimes, through no fault of our own, we find ourselves in a situation which does not lend itself to a happy life. Perhaps it is a conflict of personalities within the home, where one individual is a constant source of aggravation and frustration, and our efforts to please are seldom if ever appreciated. And...and...and...we could go on and on with our list of grievances.

The point, however, is not the number or the severity of the grievances, but rather our attitude when dealing with them. Are we on top of the situation, in command, so to speak, or are we drowning in a mud puddle of self-pity? Only we ourselves can answer that question. But it lies within the power of each of us, by vigorous, full-time effort and concentration, to rise above this human pettiness. We can grow so spiritually mature as to be unaffected and undisturbed by these slights and aggravations.

There is yet another aspect of the desirability of staying on top we would do well to consider. It may be possible for us to conceal some of the embarrassing "downs" from those around us—sometimes we even succeed in deceiving ourselves! But what about the angels who watch over us and keep an impartial record of our failures and our victories? Can't we just see them shake their heads in dismay as they see us playing with the same old temptations and falling

(Continued on page 26)

HOW DO I REACT
UNDER THE PRESSURE OF
DIFFICULT AND TRYING
CIRCUMSTANCES?



If We Could See Beyond Today

*If we could see beyond today
As God can see,
If all the clouds should roll away,
The shadows flee
In present griefs we would not fret,
Each sorrow we would soon forget
For many joys are waiting yet,
For you and me,*

*If we could know beyond today
As God does know,
Why dearest treasures pass away
And tears must flow,
And why the darkness leads to light
Why dreary days will soon grow bright:
Some day life's wrongs will be made right—
Faith tells us so.*

*If we could see, if we could know—
We often say,
But God in love a veil doth throw
Across our way;
We cannot see what lies before,
And so we cling to Him the more:
He leads us till this life is o'er—
To endless day.*

—Selected

Bloom where you are planted!

"I have learned the secret of living in every situation,...For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need." —Phil. 4:12-13, NLT

Know Your Bible?

All About Figs

1. What very practical writer said, "Can a fig tree bear olives? Or a vine, figs?"
2. What was the point of Jesus' parable about the fig tree?
3. Who made aprons of fig leaves?
4. What prophet saw a vision from God in which were two baskets of figs, one very good and one very bad? What did it mean?
5. Complete the verse: "Do men gather _____ from thornbushes, or figs from _____?" Who said it?
6. To whom was Jesus speaking when he said, "When you were under the fig tree, I saw you"?
7. What woman whom David later married brought offerings of food, including figs to him and his men because her husband had insulted them?
8. For what King did the prophet Isaiah order a poultice of figs to heal a boil?
9. What was the lesson in Jesus' parable of the fig tree that did not bear fruit for three years?
10. How is the peace and security of the new age pictured in an agricultural setting?

Mountaintop Happenings

1. Who was tempted on a high mountain?
2. What three men were seen in vision on the Mount of Transfiguration?
3. On what mountain did Moses receive the Ten Commandments?
4. From what mountain did God allow Moses to view the promised land before he died?
5. From what mountain did Jesus ascend into heaven?
6. From the top of what mountain did Elijah's servant see a cloud the size of a man's hand?
7. On what mountain did Noah's ark come to rest?
8. On what mountain was Aaron stripped of his garments, which were given to his son?
9. On what mountain did Elijah prove to King Ahab and the people that the Lord, only, was God?
10. What comparison did the Psalmist make to the mountains surrounding Jerusalem?

Find the Intruder

1. Which of these is not a king: *Asa, Ahab, Ahaz, Ahijah*
2. Which of these is not a queen: *Esther, Vashti, Ruth, Athaliah*
3. Which of these is not a prophet: *Jeremiah, Saul, Micah, Ezekiel*
4. Which of these is not a prophetess: *Deborah, Huldah, Rhoda, Noadiah*
5. Which of these is not an apostle: *Levi, Simon, Mark, John*
6. Which of these is not a Hebrew: *Miriam, Hannah, Ruth, Esther*
7. Which of these is not a patriarch: *Abraham, Noah, Isaiah, Jacob*
8. Which of these is not a warrior: *Joshua, Joseph, Caleb, Gideon*
9. Which of these is not a New Testament character: *Jude, Joel, John, James*
10. Which of these is not an Old Testament character: *Samuel, Joseph, Bartholemew, Josiah, Joshua*

(Answers to Questions on page 26)

THE GREAT APOSTASY

a-pos-ta-sy *n. pl. a-pos-ta-sies* 1. Abandonment of one's religious faith, a political party, one's principles, or a cause. [Middle English *apostasie* from Old French from Late Latin *apostasia* defection from Late Greek from Greek *apostasis* revolt from *aphistanai* to revolt *apo-* *apo-* *histanai* to stand, place.]
—The American Heritage Dictionary

apostasy: an abandonment of what one has voluntarily professed; a total desertion or departure from one's faith, principles, or party.
—Webster's New International Dictionary

apostasy: a term generally employed to describe a complete renunciation of the Christian faith, or even an exchange of one form of it for another, especially if the motive be unworthy. In the first centuries of the Christian era, apostasy was most commonly induced by persecution, and was indicated by some outward act, such as offering incense to a heathen deity or blaspheming the name of Christ.
—Encyclopaedia Britannica

Part Four

"The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but...they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." —2 Timothy 4:3-4, King James Version

"A time is coming when people will no longer listen to right teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever they want to hear. They will reject the truth and follow strange myths."
—2 Timothy 4:3-4, New Living Translation

How Long, O Lord?

THE DIVINE writers foresaw the coming of the long dark night of sin and evil, when true religion would be totally extinct upon earth. They also foretold the duration of this night.

In at least five separate chapters of the Bible specific mention is made of the length of this period of apostasy: Daniel 7 and 12, and Revelation, chapters 11, 12 and 13.

The prophecy of Daniel 7:25, which we have already studied, reveals that this power should "speak great words against the most High" and "wear out," or cause to fail wholly, "the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they [should] be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time."

To start unveiling this enigma, let us assume a "time" equals one year; on that basis "times" could be two years, and the "dividing of time," or "half" time, one half year,

which would aggregate three and one half years.⁴

If our knowledge of this mathematical problem were confined to this one statement by Daniel, it would be difficult to prove correct. However, the book of Revelation forecasts the same period using more specific units. The following periods are given: "time, times and a half a time"; "three days and a half"; "forty and two months"; "a thousand two hundred and three score days."⁵ Obviously the "forty and two months" and the "thousand two hundred and three score days" are identical, and careful analysis reveals the other periods cover the same time.

Students of prophecy agree that in Scripture,

FOUR DIFFERENT WAYS THE BIBLE SHOWS THE SAME LENGTH OF TIME.

- ¹THREE DAYS AND A HALF (Rev. 11:9; 11:11)

1	1 day (yr)	360 days in year 1
	2 days (yr)	720 days in years 2 & 3
	1/2 day (yr)	180 days in year 4
	3 1/2 days (yr)	1260 days or 1260 years
- ²FORTY AND TWO MONTHS (Rev. 11:2; 13:5)

2	12 months	
	24 months	
	6 months	
	42 months	x 30 days per month = 1260 days or 1260 yrs
- ³A THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND THREESCORE DAYS (Rev. 11:3; 12:6)

3	360 days	
	720 days	(2 x 360 days)
	180 days	
	1260 days	= 1260 yrs "each day for a year" (Ezek. 4:6; Num. 14:34)
- ⁴A TIME, TIMES, AND A HALF (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14)

4	a time	1 yr. or 360 days
	times	2 yrs. or 720 days
	half time	half yr. or 180 days
	3.5 times	3.5 yrs = 1260 days or years

KEY

ONE DAY (Prophetic time) = One year of 360 days (Ezek. 4:6)
 HERREW MONTH = 30 days (5 mos.=150 days, Gen. 7:11, 24)
 A TIME = 1 year or 360 days (12 mos x 30 days per mo)
 A time (360 days) + times (2 x 360 days)
 + half time (180 days) = 1260 days

prophetic periods are figured from the basis of a thirty-day month, a three-hundred-sixty-day year. We are provided an example of this in Genesis 7:11; 8:4; and 7:24. Hence, forty-two thirty-day months would equal 1260 days.² The "time and times and the dividing of time," also the "time, times and a half," covering as they do the same set of events, must of necessity be a period of the same length, or three and a half years.⁴ And it is reasonable to believe that the three and a half days, employing the shorter unit of time, refers to the same period. In this way the length of Daniel's "time, times and the dividing of time," also becomes obvious. The reading of Revelation 11:9, 11, as translated in the King James Version is "three days and a half"; however, according to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, the original word for "days," *hemera*, may mean "years" when used figuratively (*hemera* is rendered "years" in Luke 1:7, 18). Thus we again have "three and a half years."

What do the different time intervals signify?

The "time and times and the dividing of time,"⁴ of Daniel 7:25, the "time, times, and half a time"⁴ of Revelation 12:14; the "time, times and an half"⁴ of Daniel 12:7; the "forty and two months"² of Revelation 11:2 and 13:5; the "thousand two hundred and threescore days"³ of Revelation 11:3 and 12:6; and the "three days and an half"¹ of Revelation 11:9 and 11, all could refer to the same time, the dark Medieval Age.

Now it is obvious that the 1260 days represent 1260 years, as we know of no event in the history of God's people lasting only three and a half years, or 1260 twenty-four-hour days, of sufficient importance to merit the position in prophecy given to the 1260-day period. In two instances in Holy Writ we are authorized to count a year for a day. The first instance is in Numbers 14:34, where Moses told Israel they would have to wander forty years in the wilderness because of their disobedience and rebellion. "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days,

each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years."

The other instance where this rule was employed is recorded in Ezekiel 4:6, "...Thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year." Applying this rule to the 1260 days we have 1260 years.

Another evidence that a "time" is a year is a statement in the Hebrew Lexicon: "Specially in prophetic style of a year...Specially a year, Daniel 7:25, during three years and a half."

In Revelation 11:2 is another statement of the duration of the apostasy: "And the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months." The "holy city" is the city of true believers, those professing and living by the true teachings of Jesus Christ. Jesus addressed His disciples as "the light of the world" and compared them to a "city that is set on a hill" (Matt. 5:14). The faithful administrators of the New Order to be set up on the earth are to be called "The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 60:14).

In Revelation 11:3 is another mention of its duration: "And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth."

First, what are the two witnesses?

The Two Witnesses

Many interpreters have supposed them to be literally two persons, such as Enoch and Elijah, or Moses and Elijah. But the whole setting of the chapter is spiritual, and how can we have literal men in a spiritual situation?

Verses 5 and 6 definitely allude to Elijah and Moses, and those who sponsor the theory that the two witnesses are two men will use these verses as support: "If any man will hurt them he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy [a definite allusion to the time of Elijah]; and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will [as Moses did]." But the application is not wholly consis-

tent. If the men are literal, their power must likewise be literally fulfilled; and can we imagine human beings with live flames spurring from their mouths, as we read: "If any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies" (11:5)?

No, the prophecy of the two witnesses aims higher and reaches further than the person and existence of any child of man. It is dignity, divine; universal in duration and extent. Neither Moses and Elijah, nor Elijah and Elisha, nor Enoch and Elijah can exhaust the significance of the two witnesses who "prophesy...clothed in sackcloth" during 1260 days.

In Revelation 11:4 is a suggestion as to the identity of these two witnesses. We read: "These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth." The meaning of the candlesticks and the olive trees of Zechariah's vision is implied in the two witnesses. And what are they?

The simile is original with Zechariah 4. The Prophet saw in vision a candlestick all of gold, seven lamps with seven golden pipes supplying the lamps with the golden oil, and two olive trees which were providing the oil.

The question was asked: "What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?" (v. 12). The description is meaningful. These two olive branches empty the golden oil out of themselves. They contain the oil of Divine truth. Hence, can the symbol of the two witnesses represent anything less than the entire Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments?

But why are these two witnesses "clothed in sackcloth" during the 1260 days?

Sackcloth as used in the Bible frequently suggests a state of distress, anguish, mourning, lament. The witnesses, the written Testaments or Word of God, do indeed contain the prophecy during this interval of 1260 days (or years), as much as at any other time; but they are clothed in "sackcloth," garments of distress and mourning. The apostasy is, for the time, supreme—they "all slum-

bered and slept" (Matt. 25:5)—while everything beautiful and sacred in Christianity was as if clothed in the sackcloth of humiliation and lament. It is God preserving His Word in a clothed, sackcloth-covered state, while paganism prevails. The preserved testimony of the words of loyal adherents is continuous through all the ages.

The Revelator then uses another picture to describe the silenced state of the witnesses: they are killed. We read: *"And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them"* (v. 7).

As long as God needed living witnesses He had them; so long as anyone would listen to His Word and respond to it, God made sure that that Word was proclaimed. Only when their mission was for the time being accomplished, when there were no good and honest hearts to hear them, when "they shall have finished their testimony," did God permit them to be silenced.

If we apply verse 7 as another representation of the prophecy of verse 3, where the two witnesses are clothed in sackcloth, we have a picture in harmony with Sacred Scripture. The two witnesses were seemingly dead, perished, inactive with the death or desertion of the last true Christian in the centuries immediately following the Apostolic Age. The Bible was left without a single defender or advocate. Then is repeated the symbolic representa-

tion of the time interval involved: *"And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves"* (vs.8-9). Three days (or years) and a half, prophetic time, equals 1260 years.

We must remember that we are dealing with symbols and imagery in a passage such as this, and that the death of the witnesses is described as it seemed to those who accomplished it. Therefore, in one sense, the dead bodies lying in the streets is only a vivid picture of the conviction that their enemies held—a mistaken one, as the event proved; for in reality the witnesses were not dead as their enemies had imagined.

Here again is a point showing that the two witnesses cannot possibly be two literal persons. Their dead bodies lie in the streets of a city *"which spiritually is called Egypt."* How could dead bodies literally lie in the streets of a figurative city?

The Revelator tells further; *"And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth"* (v. 10).

The cause of the joy, we should note, was not so much the death of the Witnesses as the relief which accompanied the cessation of their

testimony: *"These two prophets tormented"* or *"tortured"* their hearers. As long as the truth of God's Word was being proclaimed, as long as there was a living soul to testify to its unyielding demands for moral purity and perfection, that Bible was a torment to mankind's lower nature. Therefore, the death of the last loyal Christian, which brought to an end the testimony of the Two Witnesses (equivalent to their death, v. 7) was an occasion for great rejoicing. People were no longer harassed with the plain truth which they had neither desire to know nor inclination to follow.

But their "death" was only temporary. The "dead bodies" were not even put into tombs (11:9). The triumph of evil seemed complete, but God would not allow His Word to perish.

The Wonder in Heaven

Revelation 12 again projects the duration of the time of the apostasy, using another set of symbols and more symbolic description. The chapter begins by describing the appearance of a wonder in heaven, *"a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars"* (vs. 1). This suggests *"Jerusalem which is above,...the mother of us all"* (Gal. 4:26), God's saving knowledge and its sponsors. She is in the process of bringing forth a "man-child" who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron (v. 5)—the man-child represents Christ and His saints. He is a man

My life is but the weaving
Between my God and me,
I only choose the colors,
He weaveth steadily.
Sometimes He weaveth sorrow
And I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper,
And I the under side.

—Author unknown

because fully grown, character-wise; and a child because he is just beginning an immortal life.

The "dragon," or powers of darkness, stand ready to devour this "child" of our "mother," the truth, as soon as it is born. Revelation 17:14 describes this sinister action on the part of the powers of darkness at Christ's second coming, with the words: *"These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called and chosen and faithful."*

Now Revelation 12:6 refers back again to the time during the dark night of the apostasy when divine truth would have been destroyed by the powers of darkness were it not for some provision having been made for its preservation. Here was the plan: *"And the woman [divine truth and its sponsors] fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand, two hundred and threescore days."* Here again is pictured the duration of the apostasy.

The woman is *"given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, ... where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time,"* from the face of the destructive forces that wore out the saints of the Most High, and *"cast the truth to the ground"* (Rev. 12:14). The work of this wretched power and the duration of its tenure is identical with that of the "little horn" power of Daniel 7 and 8.

Then a "beast" is seen rising out of the sea, *"having seven heads and ten horns"* (Rev. 13:1). This description is much the same as that of the "beast" of Daniel 7 and 9. And his work and the period of his activity are also identical: *"And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months"*—again the length of the apostasy is mentioned (Rev. 13:5).

The Bible leaves no question as to the limit of the apostasy. Its end was fixed. God would not allow His truth to perish forever. The termination of the night of darkness was as sure as its beginning. □

"I Won't Be There"

Sometimes it's hard to say no. Something in us doesn't like to disappoint others. Even if we know their expectations are not in our best physical or spiritual interests, we still dislike saying no. To take the positive side is so much more gracious, pleasant, and satisfying.

But there are times when we have no other choice, when "no" is the only answer we can give—and receive the favor of God.

A variety of situations confront us. Perhaps it is an invitation from a friend. Our first instinct would tell us to accept, but our commitment to Christ will not allow us to follow our instincts. Can we decline—and hold no feeling of envy, no touch of sensitiveness, no whimper of hurt?

Or it may be our sense of duty tells us to decline. When we are serving Christ, we simply do not have time for all the diversions of this world. Nor do we "fit" in all circles. Though a certain activity was once a highlight on our schedule, now we must decline. We planned on it, around it and for it. The same might still be true—if we had no higher interests. But all things considered now, we must decline.

This is painful enough, but when the kindly reminder comes, perhaps in an indirect manner, we have to say it again, in one way or another: "I won't be there."

Can we do it bravely, kindly, shamelessly, knowing that we have other and better interests? Does our tone convey the message that we are glad to be missing, that absence is a privilege because better things now absorb us? Too easily we feel ashamed. Too often we cower from the facts we know we must face. We hesitate, and our "I won't be there" carries an apology of "...but I wish I could be."

Have we registered the message of the Master when He spoke those warning words: *"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels?"* (Mark 8:38).

There are many times and places in the world from which Christians are honored to be absent. They have nothing in common with those who give no thought or concern to His interests. At such times they can say it proudly, for all to hear, that such were they in former times, but a change has come into their lives and consequently they "won't be there." It is a sign of spiritual progress, achievement, growth. The Word is plain: *"Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge"* (Prov. 14:7). *"Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go: lest thou learn his ways and get a snare to thy soul"* (Prov. 22:24-25).

What will I do when the question comes up again? The answer will still be the same: I won't be there. Why? Because I have accepted an invitation to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and I am busy getting my clothing ready (Rev. 19:7-8). And of all the engagements in the world, this is one I don't want to miss! □

The Christian is not one who never goes wrong. He is one who can pick himself up after he stumbles and go on.

SERAPHIM AND CHERUBIM: What Are They?

"Please illumine my mind. Are cherubims and seraphims angels? What about Ps. 104:4? So many Hebrew or Jewish teachings indicate that angels can assume any form according to what God wants them to do and perform, such as parting the Red Sea during the exodus of the Hebrews. Your help will be appreciated. Thank you."

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance defines seraphim as "a seraph, or symbolic creature (from their copper color), fiery (serpent)." The term occurs only twice in Scripture, and both occurrences are in Isaiah 6. In this chapter, the prophet recounts his vision at the time God called him. Describing the vision Isaiah says, "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6:1-3). The contemporary English Version calls the seraphim "flaming creatures," each with six wings "flying over Him. They covered their faces with two of their wings and their bodies with two more. They used the other two wings for flying, as they shouted, 'Holy, holy, holy....'" The New Century Version translates seraphim as "heavenly creatures of fire." The Moffatt Bible says "seraphim hovered round him." Knox Bible reads, "Above it rose the figures of the seraphim."

It would seem both from the usage and from the definition in *Strong's Concordance* that the seraphim are symbolic representations only and not living beings as are the angels.

What about cherubims?

We also have very little information about cherubims, but from all indications they are also not live beings as angels are, but only representative beings or figures used in symbolic language. All references to them occur either in visions or dreams, or as God instructed for the making of the cherubims on top of the mercy seat, both in the tabernacle and in the temple (see Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1 and 10, Ex. 25:18-20; 25:22; 37:7-9; 1 Kings 6:27-29; 2 Chron 3:7; Isa. 37:16).

According to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, the word cherubim comes from the Hebrew *keruw*, and means "a cherub or imaginary figure." The Hebrew Lexicon repeats this and adds the following: "A figure compounded of that of a man, an ox, a lion, and an

eagle (three animals which come together with man, symbolized power and wisdom. See Ezekiel 1 and 10)." The cherubims are mentioned many times in the Old Testament, once in the New. In no case are they said to perform any activities as living beings. They do not minister, or walk, or talk, or eat with humans as the angels did. Nor do they deliver a Divine Message or do any work in behalf of God. On the contrary, they are described as having been "made," "carved," "engraved" (see 1 Kings 6:23, 35, 36; Ex. 26:1, 37:7-9). Most references to them are referring to the cherubim figures that were upon the mercy seat, even in the days of the tabernacle in the wilderness (see Exodus 25:18-22; 26:1). God was said to dwell "between the cherubim" because the mercy seat was Israel's symbolic point of contact with God. Here they confessed their sins and offered their prayers and offerings.

The cherubims which were carved for a place in the Temple of King Solomon were elaborate pieces of artwork, each being 10 cubits (15 feet) high and having a wingspread of 15 feet (from wingtip to wingtip) (1 Kings 6:23-24).

The cherubims are mentioned often along with the Tabernacle or Temple worship, where they served in this special capacity as a point of contact with God's holy presence. From anything we are able to find in Scripture they are used solely and only in this representative capacity. If they have any counterpart in the celestial realm we are not told.

Both in the Tabernacle and Temple the cherubims were positioned with their wings touching overshadowing the mercy seat. The cherubim in this position symbolized the providential power and protection of God over His people. God was said to be with His people at the mercy seat; it was a point of meeting. This imagery is used in Psalms, where the Psalmist speaks of God "coming down" or "dwelling...between the cherubim." "The Lord reigneth; let the earth tremble: He sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved" (Ps. 99:1). "Give ear, O shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth" (Ps. 80:1). "O Lord of hosts, God of Israel that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth" (Isa. 37:16). Each of these suggests God's presence with His people, using the imagery drawn from the Temple or the Tabernacle, but again the seraphim are not living beings.

We cannot find any evidence in Scripture that cherubim were living, animate, created beings like the angels, or that they are a different order or level of the angels. Much as we might like to know more of the Heavenly realm, we are limited to what has been recorded in the Bible for our learning.

By contrast, the angels are living beings who move about, who travel from heaven to earth and back, and perform different services.

And you are correct, the Bible does indeed indicate that angels can assume different forms. Sometimes they were seen as men in shining white garments, at other times they looked so much like men that they were not distinguishable from ordinary travelers. And you are right, they did what God commanded. At times angels brought messages from God to specific persons, such as the prophets (Jeremiah, Elijah, Daniel). No doubt they were present at the parting of the Red Sea during the exodus, though we are not told that they parted it. They were surely present in the cloud that guided the Israelites by day and in the fiery pillar by night. We read, *"And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face and stood behind them"* (Ex. 14:19)—this text tells us that the pillar of the cloud was the angel of God. We also read the Lord's words to Moses, *"Behold, I send an angel before thee to keep thee in the way and to bring thee into the place I have prepared"* (Ex. 23:20), indicating again that the cloud preceding them was an angel. This cloud did indeed determine whether they journeyed or whether they stayed: *"When the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys; but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not until the day that it was taken up"* (Ex. 40:36-37).

As for the text you cite (Ps. 104:4), I am uncertain what you are questioning. The text reads, *"Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire."* This verse seems to be a poetic description of God's angels, who travel at His bidding and do His work. We would like to meet some of these glorious Divine messengers, and all who live to see Jesus return will see them, for Jesus said that He is coming with hosts of angels (Matt. 16:27; Mark 8:38).

• Who Suffers for Sin?

"Exodus 20:5 calls God 'a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.' How can we reconcile this verse with the many others which teach that it is the should that sins which shall die?"

You are correct, God's principle has always been that of punishing *the one who sins*, or rewarding *the one who is obedient*. *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die"*—it and not some other (Ezek. 18:20). And *"His own iniquity shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins"* (Prov. 5:22). God promises to

reward every man *"according as his work shall be"* (Rev. 22:12; see also Jer. 17:10; Jer. 5:25; 32:19; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eccl. 12:14; Job 34:11; Ps. 62:11; Prov. 24:12, 29; Ezek. 18:30; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6).

How can we reconcile this thought with the text you cite from Exodus, where God says He is *"a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me"*? (Ex. 20:5). Notice that the Lord is *"visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children"* to the third and fourth generation *"of them that hate me."* If the children of the third and fourth generation (or any other) were righteous and obedient, the text would have to be reworded; God would not punish them. Those who receive punishment are those who also hate Him, just as their fathers did. In other words, like father, like son. Both exhibit the same misconduct, and both deserve the same punishment on this account. This thought also is expressed in Psalm 78, where the Psalmist, referring to backsliding Israel, says: *"They turned back and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers."* Because their iniquity was like their fathers', their punishment would be like that their fathers received.

God is just. He says clearly the son will not be punished for the iniquity of his father, nor would the father receive credit for the righteousness of his son: *"The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him"* (Ezek. 18:20). And so He admonishes, *"Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"* (Ezek. 18:30-31).

• A New Perspective?

When you say a 'new perspective' on the Bible it sends up a red flag for me because the Bible is not a new Book."

When we speak of a "new perspective," we are not using the word to suggest something before unknown; but rather something unorthodox or non-traditional in contrast to nominal Christianity. Our first concern is to be faithful to the God behind the Bible, promoting His words and His thoughts, which means that we cannot agree with traditional teachings about the Bible. I realize this is an open-ended statement and needs support, but please refer to our published literature on the various subjects, and I think you understand.

Is it reasonable to accept a doctrine just because it has been taught for a thousand years by thousands of people—if that doctrine is not solidly grounded in the Word of God? Just because a position has been taken by thousands of people before us does not make it true. Our continual question is, What says the Lord? What says the Book? For all the voices in the world combined do not have the weight of one word from God. □

STAYING ON TOP

(Continued from page 17)

again and again into the same old mud puddles?—instead of staying on top? What must they think when they see our half-hearted efforts, and our weak, vacillating faith? Remember, they know our possibilities, they know we have the ability to conquer, they know we have what it takes to rise successfully to any challenge and stand at last on the crest.

So just what are we waiting for? Surely there is no better time to

start than right now and right where we are.

And remember, we will reap all the benefits. And what are the benefits? If we maintain our position on top, if we stay in command of ourselves in every situation, we will soon discover negative attitudes giving way to decisive action. The old mud puddle of doubt and the resultant despair will give way to a vibrant working faith. And—happy thought—those miserable old stumbling blocks which were so often our undoing will become stepping-stones to the top, even to the very

crest of real, genuine dedicated Christian living!

And the greatest blessing will be the recognition we shall receive from our heavenly Father and all His sons and daughters, when we become a permanent part of His eternal family. Yes, we shall be welcomed "abundantly" into the "everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." What a welcome! What a reward!

And all for staying on top.

Let's make the effort, meet the challenge, stay on top. We can, if we will. □

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 19

Mountaintop Happenings

1. Jesus
2. Moses, Elijah, Jesus (Matt. 17)
3. Mt. Sinai
4. Mt. Pisgah or Nebo
5. Mt. Olivet
6. Mt. Carmel
7. Mt. Ararat
8. Mt. Hor
9. Mt. Carmel
10. "So the Lord is round about his people" (Ps. 125:2).

All About Figs

1. James (3:12)
2. As the fig tree shows the approach of summer, so the signs He was speaking of would show when the Kingdom of God is near. (Luke 21:29-31)
3. Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:7)
4. Jeremiah (24). The vision of the figs

depicted the results of the captivity. The good figs were those captives who were carried to Babylon who would be allowed to return. The bad ("naughty") figs represented "King Zedekiah of Judah, his officials, all the people left in Jerusalem, and those who live in Egypt. I will treat them like spoiled figs, too rotten to eat" (Jer. 24:1-8, NLT).

5. "By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?" (Matt. 7:16, NIV). Jesus.
6. Nathanael (John 1:48)
7. Abigail (1 Sam. 25:18)
8. Hezekiah (Isa. 38:21)
9. Be merciful. The owner wanted to cut down the tree when it didn't bear fruit, but the gardener asked that he might fertilize the tree and give it one more year, "then if it

doesn't bear fruit, cut it down" (Luke 13:6-9).

10. "They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it." (Mic. 4:4)

Find the Intruder

- | | |
|-----------|-----------------|
| 1. Ahijah | 6. Ruth |
| 2. Ruth | 7. Isaiah |
| 3. Saul | 8. Joseph |
| 4. Rhoda | 9. Joel |
| 5. Mark | 10. Bartholemew |

Correction

Sorry! In our December issue, we missed the answer to question 3 on page 12: "Who was the first martyr?" The correct answer should be Stephen (Acts 7).

TO CLIMB OR NOT TO CLIMB

Most everyone must be fascinated with mountains. So majestic, colossal and beautiful, they are indeed one of the many beautiful creations of God. They seem ever to challenge people to come and climb them. However, mountaineering can be a very dangerous sport, and many risk their lives in attempting to climb them and to go—they think—where no one has been before. But even if they are successful in safely reaching the top, the honor, praise and glory they receive will soon be forgotten.

However, there is one most beautiful and most important mountain which we are privileged to climb, the Mountain of Holiness. The

choice is ours: to climb it, or not to climb it. May we choose to be an active climber and not just an observer to stand at the bottom of the mountain but seek the Lord with all our heart and soul. The higher we climb, the more we can see, and everything becomes clearer and clearer as we make progress.

God has promised abundantly more than we can ask or even imagine, if now we do what is good and right in His sight.

God called Moses up, saying: "Come up to me into this mountain"; also, "Gather me the people together and I will make them hear my words," so they came near and stood under the mountain. Out of

heaven they heard the great voice of the Lord speaking, to instruct them, and they said: "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." But how quickly they turned aside, were disobedient and rebelled against the Lord, so when they cried to Him He would not hear them.

God through His Word is still speaking to us out of heaven today. He is still calling, calling! May we take heed to His great voice, respond to His call, and keep on climbing, for to all who reach the summit of the hill (perfection of character), Jesus has promised a share in His victory, and that will be honor, praise, and glory for evermore!

—Contributed by R. Balsdon

RED GILLED NUDIBRANCH



GARIBALDI FISH



BLACK ANGELFISH



*Each day that sees some vict'ry won
Will glisten in the setting sun:
And bright will glow the hour that knows
A weaker brother stronger grows,
Encouraged by your voice.*

Don't flatter yourself being someone's friend authorizes you to say disagreeable things to him. The more you appreciate a person, the more courteous and kindly you become.

God's work must be done GOD's way.

No one is so insignificant that his example can do no hurt.

What You Are

*You tell on yourself by the friends you seek
By the very manner in which you speak,
By the way you employ your leisure time,
By the use you make of dollar and dime;*

*You tell what you are by the things you wear,
By the spirit in which your burdens you bear,
By the type of things at which you smile,
And whether you go that "second mile."*

*You tell what you are by the way you walk,
By the things of which you delight to talk,
By the way in which you can face defeat,
By so simple a thing as how you eat;*

*By the books you choose from the well-filled shelf.
In these ways—and more—you tell on yourself.
So there really isn't a grain of sense
In trying to keep up a false pretense.*



He who expects to find lasting happiness in the world is seeking honey in wallpaper flowers.

Help for EYE-TROUBLE

(Continued from page 2)

"but he that doeth the will of God shall abide forever."

Do we believe it? Do we believe it so strongly that we will not allow the lust of our eyes to lead us into sin, so that our eye-gate is closed to anything that would weaken us in the conflict against our old nature?

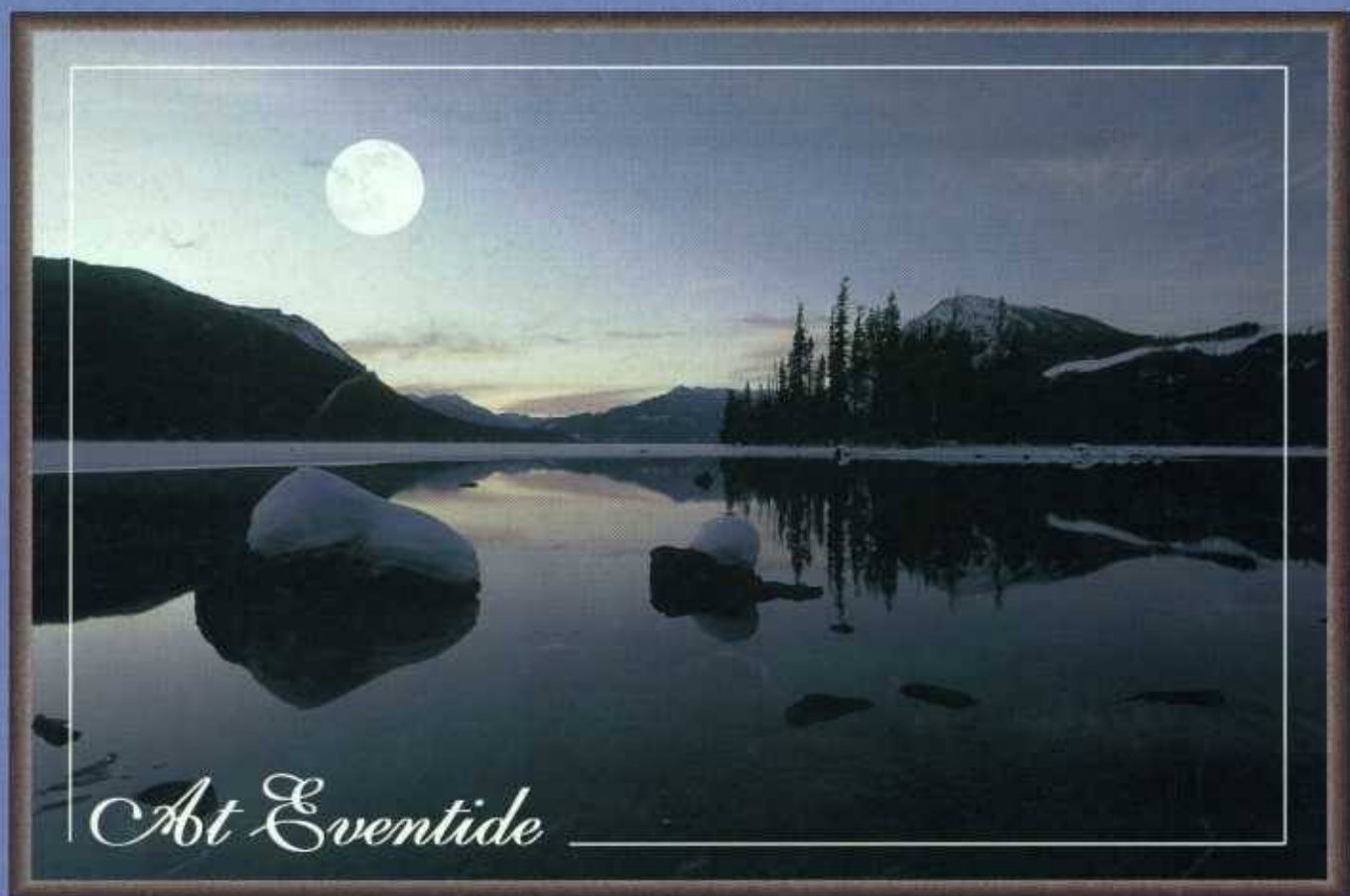
Strange to say, we easily close our eyes when we should keep them open—to blessings of mercy, justice, faith and obedience; and we open them when we should keep them closed—because of prejudice, presupposition, unbelief. Jesus wept over the people of Jerusalem because they had closed their minds

and eyes to spiritual insights—which could have saved them.

Some eyes are closed because of laziness, some because of fear, some because of deadly indifference, some because of lack of faith. But the net result is the same: they cannot see.

Our Lord came giving physical sight to many who were blind, but spiritual eyesight to many more, as many as would believe Him. Today He is still offering spiritual eyesight for the taking, but so few are interested. They would rather continue on in their blindness, for "men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

How earnestly we should pray, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Ps. 119:18). □



At Eventide

*Is anybody happier
Because you passed his way?
Does anyone remember that
You spoke to him today?
This day that's almost over,
Did you use its moments well
Or will the angel's record
A tale of trouble tell?*

*Did you waste the day, or save it,
Was it well, or poorly spent?
Did you leave a trail of kindness,
Or a scar of discontent?
As you close your eyes in slumber,
Do you hear the angel say,
"You have earned one more tomorrow
By the way you lived today"?*