

Megiddo Message

FEBRUARY, 2003

The heavens
are telling the glory
of God. —Psalm 19:1

“TAKE HEED HOW YOU HEAR”

*T*ake heed how you hear,” said Jesus, and He might have added the word “Me” and made His thought more complete. In other words, “take heed how you hear Me,” because He wasn’t talking about hearing casual conversation. He was talking about hearing Him, His teaching, His knowledge. The statement is in a serious context: *“For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light. Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him”* (Luke 8:17–18 emphasis ours).

In other words Jesus is saying, Listen carefully, with your mind focused.

We may deny His words, but we cannot escape the truths they are teaching. When Jesus says the Kingdom is coming, we know it is true, just because He said it. We may deny or defy the truth He taught, but we can’t change it. When Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life”* (John 14:6), He meant just that. His way, His truth is the way and the *only* way to life. You must go My way, He says, or you won’t find life.

That is why you need to pay attention how you hear, says Jesus; because there are consequences to careless hearing. Someday everything is going to be made known. If you have really listened and paid attention to what I said and took it to heart, you will be given more knowledge. If you have listened carelessly—if you made out your grocery list, or planned your vacation, or thought through your problems at work while you were listening to Me—you may lose even what you had seemed to gain.

In Jesus’ teachings we are accustomed to the distinction between “hearing” and “doing,” the contrast between that hearing which is only hearing and that hearing which issues in action (Matt. 7:24–27; Luke 6:47–49; Matt. 21:28–31). However, in Luke 8, the message is different. Here the critical nature of hearing is stressed **because the quality of our obedience depends on the accuracy of our hearing.**

“Take heed,” He says, because naturally we are poor listeners. Maybe our minds were already tired before we started hearing—or reading, or listening to—the Word of God as it is preached, or recited, or presented; and soon nothing is coming through to our conscience. Why? Because our ears are closed! The good message is going by us, and all we are thinking about is how tired we are, or how overstressed, or how overworked and underpaid. What can Jesus do for us when we are in that frame of mind? What can the message do for our lives? What benefit can we expect when we aren’t even hearing it!

Or maybe we hear just enough to pick up a distortion of His message. As we are listening—and wondering how we are going to get our checkbook to balance this month—one phrase from Jesus gets through to us. We hear something like *“Ask, and you shall receive,”* and immediately our mind darts off on another tangent. Does Jesus really mean what it sounds like? We can think of a good many things to ask for!

And so the meaning of His words is totally lost. Do we wonder why He said, *“Take heed how you hear”*?



*“Take heed
how you hear,”
because you
are responsible
for HOW you
hear.*

Think, too, of the consequences of that distorted hearing, how it affects our attitudes, our judgments, our beliefs, even our relationships. Soon it even spreads to others, as what we heard (or thought we heard) becomes the source for what we say.

Or maybe we hear Jesus say *“I have prayed for you,”* and without considering the context we conclude that He is praying for us—even when our hearts are in the world and the world is in our hearts. Maybe we don’t keep listening to learn that He prays only for those who have, or will have, an active interest in Him and His Father. Jesus said, in prayer to His Father, *“I pray not for the world, but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours”* (John 17:9).

Sometimes when the truth is spoken, our dull ears miss it because we hear what we want to hear and shut out what we do not want to hear. Wasn’t that the problem of the people in Ezekiel’s day, who had *“ears to hear but did not hear [because they were]...a rebellious house”*? (Ezek. 12:2).

Listening to religious truth is a serious responsibility, one requiring focus, concentration, and a willingness to think like the one we are hearing. If we hear Jesus’ words, *“Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life,”* and we go on assuming He will accept us and all our friends just as we are, we are not really hearing.

Jesus said it again in the book of Revelation: *“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

How is your hearing? ♦

The Heavenly Kingdom on Earth

BUILDING THE KINGDOM

In any type of building project, the first step is the making of a plan. All the details of the building must be spelled out in advance if the project is to proceed in an orderly manner. Materials must be procured, and transported to the building site. Coordinating the various parts of the construction is critical to the overall success of the project.

The same elements apply to the building of the Kingdom of God. From Genesis, through the Kings and Prophets, through the time of Jesus, all the way to the book of Revelation, the details are being worked out according to the plan.

When the Prophets spoke, they were teaching about the coming Kingdom. The nation of Israel was a prototype, showing that the Kingdom would be a physical entity. When Jesus taught, He focused His teaching on the Kingdom, its location, its inhabitants, its rulers, and most important, its King. On numerous occasions He made clear that He Himself was the first visible element of that Kingdom: He was the King.

After Jesus ascended to heaven, His Apostles continued preaching the same message. A Scepter suggests royal dignity and authority. The teaching of the Kingdom is the central focus of the Bible.

THE KING

What elements are needed for building the Kingdom of God?

To have a kingdom, there must be a king. As far back as the Books written by Moses, God was revealing details about this King-to-be. "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near: a Star shall come out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel" (Num. 24:17). The King would be descended from the family of Jacob.

The Prophets continued to add details about the King. There are prophecies in Psalms, in Isaiah, in Jeremiah, and Zechariah. In Isaiah 9:6-7 we read about this coming King. "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it...." There is no question about the offices Christ will fill. He is going to be the King.

Jeremiah added another prophecy of the coming King: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth" (Jer. 23:5). He would be a branch from the house of David. The family was already chosen.

Some 200 years later another Prophet foretold the extent of the authority of the same King: "And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be 'The Lord is one,' and His name one" (Zech. 14:9). In Psalm 72 king David uses colorful language to describe the dominion of his

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PART TWO
by RUTH E. SISSON

Jesus will be king

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. —Isa. 9:6-7

over the whole earth

And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be 'The Lord is one.'—Zech. 14:9

His government will bring peace and justice worldwide.

A King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. —Jer. 23:5

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URL: www.megiddo.com

E-mail address: megiddo@megiddo.com

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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.

greater Son Christ. *"In His days the righteous shall flourish, and abundance of peace, until the moon is no more. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth...Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; All nations shall serve Him....His name shall endure forever; His name shall continue as long as the sun. And men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed"* (Ps. 72:7-8, 11-12, 17).

When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would have a son, he told also the destiny of the child. *"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end"* (Luke 1:32-33). Unlike other monarchs, this King would be reigning "forever."

But when He came they did not recognize Him as a king. They did not expect a baby who would have to grow up and be one like them. So when Jesus came, they rejected Him as the Messiah. But this, too, had been prophesied (Isaiah 53).

ASSOCIATE RULERS

A kingdom needs more than just a King. One person does not do the whole job. Christ also is going to have associate rulers with whom He shares the responsibilities of government. He will not reign alone. He will be *"King of kings, and Lord of lords"* (Rev. 19:16).

Christ as King will have lesser kings under Him, each with their respective areas of authority. That is why He says to His faithful ones that they will *"sit with Me on My throne."* He will be King of kings, and Lord of lords.

The Book of Revelation makes a number of allusions to these associate kings. *"And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations"* (Rev. 2:26); *"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne"* (Rev. 3:21). They are qualified because they overcame *"as He overcame,"* and now they are seated with Him, sharing His authority.

In Revelation 14:1, we learn about this group of associates. *"I looked, and behold a Lamb standing on Mount Zion."* Jesus is called the Lamb of God, *"and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand."* These are very special people. Note the description in verse 4: *"These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes."* This description shows their faithfulness. They *"followed the Lamb"* anywhere. It is a picture of commitment, faithfulness, dedication. *"These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits to God and the Lamb."* They are the called-out ones, the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. *"And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God"* (v 5). Here is the standard by which Christ chooses.

In Revelation 5 we learn more about these chosen ones. *"And they sang a new song, saying: You...have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth"* (Rev. 5:9-10). Kings to rule and priests to teach, they are the associates of Jesus. These right-hand persons are *"called, chosen, and faithful"*—all amply qualified for their positions (Rev. 17:14).

In the Book of Daniel, the prophet revealed that the Kingdom would be given to *"the people of the saints of the Most High"* (Dan. 7:27)—Christ and His associate rulers.

The King's associate rulers are being selected during the first 6000 years of the plan.* Back at the time of Adam God began choosing those who would be the King's associates. That time is now almost complete.

*A period of 6000 years extends from Adam to the second advent of Christ. This time was typified in the creation allegory as six days, or prophetically speaking, 6000 years, using each day for a year (1 Pet. 3:8).

Jesus will reign forever

And He will reign...forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. —Luke 1:33

The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever! —Rev. 11:15

Who will reign with Jesus?

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne. —Rev. 3:21

He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful. —Rev. 17:14

MULTITUDES FOR THE KINGDOM

Our next building block for the Kingdom is the populace, the vast multitudes who will fill the earth with the glory of God. This very large group is described in Revelation 7, after the description of the associate rulers. We read in Rev. 7:9–10, “*After these things*”—after the associate kings are picked—“*I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’*”

What are the qualifications of these people? We read more about them in verses 13 and 14. “*One of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?’ And I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’ So he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of [after, beyond] the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood [word] of the Lamb.’*” (For an understanding of the symbolic use of blood in the Bible see article on page 9, this issue.)

Notice that these individuals are all dressed in white. White robes symbolize moral purity. They are prepared, ready to serve. They have all been tested and approved. They have washed their robes (of character) by applying the commandments in the Word (blood).

In Zechariah 13 we learn more about this group. The details are sprinkled all through the Bible, and here the Prophet is telling us about some proportions. We read in Zech. 13:8: “*And it shall come to pass in all the land, says the Lord, that two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but one-third shall be left in it.*” Can it be? Will people risk their lives to keep their own way? The sad answer is, Yes. When the Lord comes, He will not find everybody willing to accept Him. All will be given an opportunity, but many will resist Him and as a result will die in the battle of Armageddon. The Lord will

not work with those who will not submit to Him. He will have a cooperative, happy people who are willing to accept His law as authority in their lives.

Those who submit will not be instantly ready to be part of His eternal Kingdom. They have to be developed, tested, and refined through trial. The Prophet describes it this way: “*I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘This is My people’; and each one will say, ‘The Lord is my God’*” (Zech. 13:9).

Can you imagine one out of every three persons joining the Lord’s side? And that is only the beginning. Those who submit will multiply. Isaiah says a nation shall be “*born at once*” (Isa. 66:8), and within a few generations their families will meet the description of God’s prophets: “*numberless,*” “*boundless,*” like “*the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered*” (Jer. 30:19; Gen. 22:17;



Jer. 33:22; Hos. 1:10).

The prophet Isaiah describes this happy, blessed, peace-loving, prosperous people as filling the earth as water fills the ocean: *"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea"* (Isa. 11:9).

TERRITORY OF THE KINGDOM

We have three building blocks for the Kingdom: a King, His associate rulers, and a vast populace. Now we need territory.

What will be the territory of the Kingdom of God?

"On earth"

Jesus stated it in His prayer that He taught His disciples: *"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"* (Matt. 6:10).

"The land...the earth"

In Psalm 37, six times the righteous are described as inheriting the earth, the land (Ps. 37:3, 9, 11, 22, 27, 29, 34).

Even the book of Proverbs has a promise in it: *"For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it"* (Prov. 2:21). If they remain, and are not taken away, they must be on the earth.

Jesus identified the earth as the eternal inheritance of the blessed. *"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth"* (Matt. 5:5). And Revelation 5:9–10 further identifies the location of the government of the associate kings and priests of the new order: *"We shall reign on the earth."*

"From sea to sea...to the ends of the earth"

In Psalm 72, the Psalmist says that Christ *"shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends..."* of heaven? No, *"to the ends of the earth."* The Kingdom will be right here on earth (v. 8).

"Under the whole heavens"

The prophet Daniel was informed of the territory of the Kingdom. He was divinely inspired to say that it would be *"under the whole heaven"* (Dan. 7:27). In Revelation 11:15, the Revelator states in prophetic language the extent to which the new government will replace the old authorities: *"The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever."*

The Psalmist said it very simply: *"The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth He has given to the children of men"* (Ps. 115:16).

Not a suitable place? You are right. Much work must be done—clean up, renovation, preparation, transformation. But when the prep work is done, it will be beautiful, glorious, and all new! It will be the same earth but with new rulers, and a whole new populace. It will be heaven on earth!

LAWS FOR THE KINGDOM

One last essential for the building of Christ's Kingdom is laws. No government can function without laws, and the Heavenly Kingdom of God is no exception.

All Natural Born Jews?

Some who read Revelation 7:4–8 have concluded that Christ's associate rulers (the 144,000) will be all natural born Jews because they are said to be 12 thousand from each tribe of the children of Israel. However, one must remember that the book of Revelation is filled with symbolic language, and the number from each tribe is not necessarily intended to be a literal number. If we look closely at the names of the tribes given in Revelation 7, we see that they are not exactly the same as the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Apparently that issue wasn't important.

How can we know the chosen ones are not all natural Jews? Look at Revelation 5:9: They are *"out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation."* The Apostle Peter said the same after learning that God was working with both Jews and Gentiles. *"...God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears him and works righteousness is accepted by him"* (Acts 10:34–35). He is taking people from *"every nation."*

The Lord does not respect color or race, but only character. He does not care what tribe we come from or what language we speak, or what the color of our skin happens to be. His kings and priests will be redeemed out of *"every tribe and people,"* and they will all be chosen, all faithful.

Why does Revelation 7 speak of them as all coming from the tribes of Israel? The term "Israel" refers to God's chosen ones. He has chosen *"Israel,"* meaning those who serve Him. In the big picture, God calls all who are willing to serve Him, and these are thought of as a nation. Out of this nation He chooses those who serve faithfully. In a spiritual sense, each is an Israelite, a *"Jew inwardly"* to use Paul's terminology (Rom. 2:28–29).

The Lord is looking for those who are Israelites in heart, whatever their nationality or race. The Apostle Paul explained it in his letter to the Romans, that *"They are not all Israel [chosen ones] who are of Israel [natural born], nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham"* (Rom. 9:6–7). That is why we have to be adopted into His family, by taking on the family's character likenesses. ♦

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Blood:

MIRACLE OF LIFE

Physical Blood

Do we ever stop to think about the wonderment of God's creation and the complexity of the life God has given us—and offer heartfelt thanks to our Creator?

We work and eat and sleep with scarcely a thought of the intricate processes that are happening every second in our bodies just to keep us alive! Our bodies are wonder-working "machines," displaying a marvel of design far beyond our ability to comprehend, a continual testimony to the workmanship of our Creator. Medical doctors and scientists have labored for decades even to discover the secrets of life. They are learning constantly, and there is still more to learn.

One of the complex designs within us is the miracle of blood. This veritable river of life flows constantly in our blood vessels as long as we live, whether we are awake or asleep, without a conscious thought or direction from us. We didn't design it, we cannot duplicate it, we can scarcely discover what makes it work. Yet every one of the more than 6 billion persons on the earth is blessed with a supply of this miraculous, life-sustaining substance.

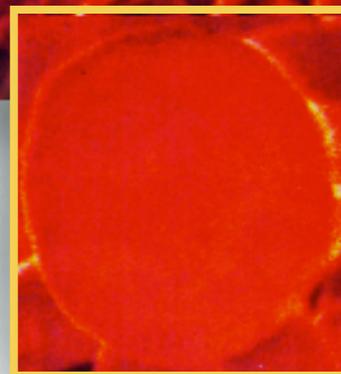
The *"life of the body is in the blood,"* said the ancient inspired writer (Lev. 17:11 NCV). Modern Science confirms that this is true. God knew, long before we humans figured it out, that blood is the sustainer of the body's life. Every second, every hour, this crimson stream courses through the vessels of our bodies, completing a route of some 60,000 miles every day, nourishing, cleansing, carrying food and oxygen to every cell in our body—can we not honor the Creator that designed all this?

Let's look just a little closer at this miracle substance. Our bodies contain about 100 trillion cells, all doing their various God-designed jobs. (How much is a trillion? A trillion seconds would take us forward in time from the year 2003 to the year 3403!)

Of the 100 trillion cells in our bodies, about 25 trillion are the red blood cells that float in our blood. So many red blood cells crowd our blood stream that if these red cells could be laid tightly one against another, they would make a string that would reach all the way around the

Magnification: 3,300 times

Each of us has some 25,000,000,000,000 (25 trillion) red blood cells in our body. In a tiny droplet of blood are some 5 million red blood cells.

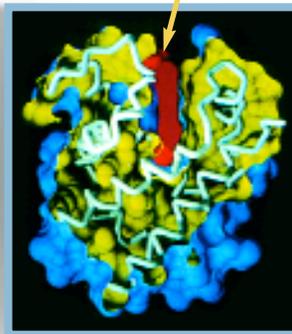


Magnification: 6,000 times

RED BLOOD CELL

HEME

Computer-simulated image



HEMOGLOBIN MOLECULE

Each red blood cell contains some 265,000,000 hemoglobin molecules

Each hemoglobin molecule consists of 4 elaborately entwined strands of a protein substance (composed of about 570 amino acids). In the middle of each strand is a heme, a tiny disk in the middle of which is a single iron atom which carries oxygen by "piggyback" to the needy tissues.

Scientific data is from <http://www4.atpgi.com.au/users/amcgann/body/circulatory-facts.htm>, <http://www.rose.edu/faculty/gjackson/cir-sys.htm>, also *The Incredible Machine*. copyright 1986 by the National Geographic Society, Washington, DC 20036.

earth and six thousand miles besides!

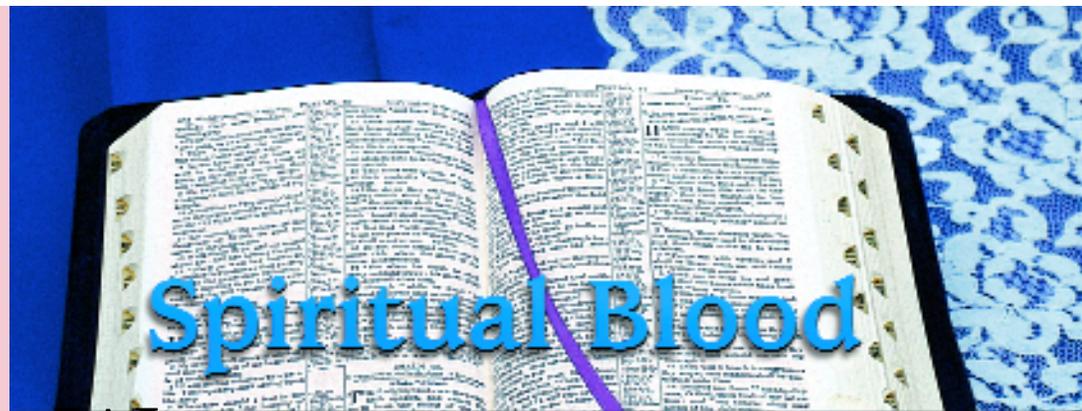
Now let's look closer at one of these red blood cells. Shaped like a cushion, the cell consists primarily of water and a red protein called hemoglobin. Hemoglobin gives the cell its red color and its remarkable oxygen-carrying ability. Each red blood cell does not contain one or two or even a dozen hemoglobin molecules but 265 million!

What makes a hemoglobin molecule able to carry oxygen? Each hemoglobin molecule, with its more than 10,000 atoms, consists of 4 elaborately entwined strands of protein (a substance that contains more than 570 amino acids). In the middle of each strand is a heme, a tiny disk of carbon, hydrogen and nitrogen atoms, and in the middle of each heme is a single iron atom. This atom of iron makes the heme act as a magnet, grabbing up oxygen and carrying it to the tissues where it is needed, then releasing the oxygen—and just in proportion to the need!

Where do these remarkable red blood cells originate? Day and night, year after year, as long as we live, our bone marrow is constantly producing them. Each red blood cell lives only about four months (during which time it makes about 250,000 trips through the body), then it dies, and is replaced by a new red blood cell. This process goes on very rapidly. Every second about 8 million red blood cells die, and the same number are born every second.

Even more rapid is the production of hemoglobin to fill these cells. It has been calculated that in a single second the human body produces about 500 trillion hemoglobin molecules, the tiny vehicles that carry the breath of life to our cells!

We can only exclaim with the Psalmist, "*Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom*" (Ps. 145:3 NIV).



Wasn't Jesus choosing the very most appropriate symbol when He chose the term "blood" to communicate to us the vitality, the living power, the wonderful life-sustaining quality of His message? For in it is life, yes, the very life of life—*eternal life!*

And can we wonder that He made this very special blood the fundamental condition of spiritual life? He even went so far as to say, "*I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you*" (John 6:53 NIV). Only as we eat His spiritual flesh and drink His spiritual, life-imparting "blood" can we have life. Again He said, "*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him*" (v. 56).

WHEN THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF BLOOD....

Let us consider the meaning of the word "blood" as the Scriptures use it in this symbolic sense.

The vital relationship of blood to life makes it especially meaningful in Scriptural phraseology as a figure or symbol of that which is vital to spiritual life. Just as literal blood supports physical life, so *spiritual blood* supports *spiritual life*. What can we learn about the nature of this spiritual "blood"?

Blood used in metonymy for the Word

Metonymy is a figure of speech in which a common term is used in place of a less common term (concept or idea) to convey a meaning which might be otherwise obscure. (*Note: Metonymy is used today in such terms as the "bull" in a bull market or the "bear" in a bear market, or the "stars" in Hollywood and the sports arena, or the "light" in a title such as "New Light on the Issues."*)

What, according to the Bible, is the lifeblood of the spiritual life? What is it that performs for the spiritual life what physical blood does for physical life?

In the Bible, the term "blood" is used in metonymy for the "Word," or wisdom, or life-giving knowledge of God. In this way, the potency and power of the Word of God and its vital relationship to spiritual life is emphasized. Just as physical blood cleanses, quickens, and supports physical life, so the Word of God supports spiritual life.

Jesus described His Word, His teaching, His wisdom, as this all-important, life-supporting substance (John 6:63). This Word, acting as *spiritual blood*, does the following:

- *It cleanses.* Said Jesus: "*Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you*" (John 15:3).
- *It quickens, or makes alive.* The Psalmist commented on this power of the Divine Word: "*For Your word has given me life*" (Ps. 119:50).
- *It gives light and understanding,* two requisites of spiritual well-being. "*As your words are taught, they give light; even the simple can understand them*" (Ps. 119:130 NLT).
- *It sustains life.* The Apostle Paul understood this special power of the Word to support spiritual life. We read, "*Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel*

Just as literal blood supports physical life, so spiritual blood supports spiritual life.

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Blood: Miracle of Life

continued from page 9

I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain” (1 Cor. 15:1–2 NIV).

This symbolic use of the term “blood” is common in Scripture. Jesus Himself used it when He said to His hearers, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53 NIV). His “flesh” and “blood” were vital to “life.” But no one thinks Jesus was teaching cannibalism. And no one thinks He was speaking to people who were literally dead because they had not yet eaten that which would bring them into a state of “life.” The “flesh” the “blood,” and the “life” of which He spoke were all spiritual. He was using “flesh and blood” in metonymy for His

message, His words, His teachings, and in this way showing how vital they are to spiritual life. Because these people were not “eating” His symbolic “flesh” and “drinking” His symbolic “blood,” they were, spiritually speaking, dead: “you have no life in you.”

What are His flesh and blood? Jesus Himself answered the question clearly: “*The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life*” (John 6:63 NIV). Let us repeat: “*The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.*” His words were the flesh and blood capable of supporting spiritual life.

Why did Jesus compare His words, His heavenly message, to flesh and blood? Because His words, His teaching, the Word of God, are to the spiritual life what flesh and blood is to natural life. They are *absolutely necessary!* Without them, “you have no life in you.” In other words, without them you are spiritually *dead*.

Blood=Life, and Loss of Blood=Death

The Scriptures also use the term blood in another sense. Because blood is vital to life, it is sometimes used as the equivalent of life. The loss of blood is equivalent to the loss of life, or death.

Who, of all people on the face of the earth, should have known better what blood meant to life than the Jews, after the many years of offering animal sacrifices. By using this terminology Jesus was able to convey a lesson to them in terms they could understand. They knew what happened to an animal when its blood was drained from its veins—its life ended. Its life indeed was in the blood.

When the term “blood” is used in Scripture as the equivalent of life, then the loss of blood (shedding of blood) means death, both in a literal or symbolic sense. Let us look first at the literal.

The Scriptures may speak of a loss of literal life as “blood,” with an implied

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

It is with heartfelt thanks to God Almighty that I write you concerning what I have learned in the literature relating to this issue of salvation.

Fellow Christians, it is quite important to understand this because it is popularly believed today throughout Christendom that the Scriptures state that our salvation depends solely upon the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. This is claimed without searching the Scriptures, because other Scriptures state plainly that in order to gain eternal life—which is salvation—there are conditions we must meet. We have to be holy (1 Pet. 1:15–16), we have to be pure in heart (Matt. 5:8), we must endure to the end (Matt. 24:13). The Lord Jesus told His disciples that if they wanted to follow Him, they had to deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Him. There is nowhere in the Bible that says that since Jesus has died for our sins on the cross we need not do anything but rely on Him and wait to receive our crowns in the last day.

In the literature “*What Must We Do To Be Saved?*” it was mentioned that the salvation which is the gift of God is conditional; conditional in the sense that it is not for everyone but only for those who merit it. It is a gift which will be given only to certain individuals—those who comply with the conditions. The Apostle Paul in Rom. 2:7 (NLT) said that “*He will give eternal life to those who persist in doing what is good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality*” that God offers. And Paul continued in verse 8, “*but He will pour out His anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who*

refuse to obey the truth and practice evil deeds.” So looking deeply at the saying of a faithful man like Paul, we must say that the shed blood of Jesus Christ does not serve as a basis for one’s salvation. We must do and obey what our heavenly Father requires of us. And when one glances down a few verses, Paul said that the Gentiles will be punished by God when they sin, though they have not God’s written law, and the Jews will equally be punished for their sins even though they *have* God’s written law. If this is the case, then where is the belief that Jesus Christ’s literal blood saved both the Gentiles and the Jews from their sins if punishment awaits them for not being obedient to God?

According to a quotation in an article printed in the September/October issue of the Megiddo Message, when Rev. Mr. Nichols delivered his sermon under the theme, “*We’re Not Washed in Blood of Lamb,*” he said that from his mother’s knee he had been taught that the atoning blood of Jesus cleansed him from sin. This has been a popular belief from ages past and has misled many, even myself, though I am now thankful that I have found the true teaching. Mr. Nichols continued to say that there was no such thing as the atoning blood of Jesus making us clean from our sins. There is possible, however, an at-one-ment with God as the result of obedience to His Word.

I learned from our literature, “*The Atonement, Is It Biblical?*” Book One, that the attainment of salvation is an individual responsibility. The Apostle Paul was concerned about qualifying himself, and he mentioned conditions by

sense of guilt upon the one responsible. (The forceful taking of another's life was condemned from the very earliest times—see Gen. 4:6–14). This use of blood occurs in Rom. 3:15, *“Their feet are swift to shed blood.”* Again in Luke 11:51, *“From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias,”* meaning the death of these righteous men of God. Or as Pilate declared, *“I am innocent of the blood of this just person”* (Matt. 27:24), meaning that he did not wish to be guilty of taking the life of Christ. Each of these texts uses “blood” in the sense of a life taken, with guilt upon the one responsible.

Blood may also be shed, i.e., life taken or given up, in a spiritual sense. It is blood which every true child of God must shed. It is the blood of the old nature, the “old man” of the flesh, one's natural ways, and the result is death in a spiritual sense, the death of the old nature, the “old man,” the old “self.” It is the sacrificing of one's inner

desires, ambitions, will, etc.—that which is as dear as life itself.

This shedding of spiritual blood, and the resulting death of “self,” was a frequent subject in the Epistles of Paul. Indeed, it is the most serious aspect of the Christian life, which results in the complete transformation from the old creature to the new (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:17). Even Christ was not exempt from this spiritual shedding of blood. He, too, had to “die to sin.” In fact, Christ set the pattern for all who would come after Him. *“For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God”* (Rom. 6:10).

In every life that pleases God, this blood of the old self must be shed, a life must be given up, a death must be suffered. Paul spoke of the process as being *“crucified with Christ”* (Gal. 2:20). Again he spoke of *“crucifying the sinful nature”*: *“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires”* (Gal. 5:24

NIV). He also spoke of it as being “dead”: *“For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God”* (Col. 3:3); and *“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry”* (Col. 3:5 RSV). Again he spoke of it as being “dead to the world”: *“Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: ‘Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!’? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings”* (Col. 2:20–22 NIV).

Each of these verses pictures the complete giving up of the sinful life.

The writer of the book of Hebrews spoke of this death when he said, *“without shedding of blood there is no remission”* (Heb. 9:22). Again he said to his brethren, speaking of the spiritual death which they were even then in the

continued on page 12

using the “If clauses.” For example, *“If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead”* (Phil. 3:11). Paul would not have used this statement if salvation for him was already sure through Jesus' atoning blood. Some of the conditions we must meet to attain salvation are: we must repent, hold fast, be faithful unto death; we must overcome; we must strive to enter through the narrow gate (Jesus said); we must walk worthy, etc. etc. There are few sayings in the Bible that even mention that Christ's literal blood gave us salvation—so then I ask myself, why do so many people believe this?

Christ's death on the cross was itself an obedience carried to the point beyond which it could not be carried any further, because it was obedience to the point of death. When He died, His offering was complete, a perfect and acceptable sacrifice to God. In this way, Christ did what each of His members must also do. Each must offer himself a complete and total offering to God. He showed us how to die—how to live a life in complete obedience and self-surrender to the will of God. And this is the death in which each of us must participate if we would share His life (Rom. 6:4–6).

The death of Christ accomplished many things:

(1) His death was a fulfillment of prophecy. It was prophesied long ago before His birth.

(2) His death serves as an example for believers to follow in how to take suffering with patience and without revenge. The Apostle Peter said that Christ's death was on our behalf in that He showed us an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Pet. 2:21), but He did not mean that we would all be crucified on a cross like Jesus was.

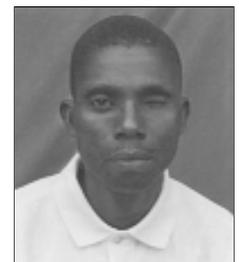
(3) Christ's death allowed God to demonstrate the power of resurrection. Christ died and was raised from the dead and this, as Paul said, gives us assurance that those who died in Christ shall be resurrected.

(4) Christ's physical death completed His total sacrifice of Himself to God. Christ was giving all He had when He died on Calvary, His death marked the end of His lifelong sacrifice of Himself to God, His “death to sin” (Rom. 6:1–10).

(5) Christ's death marked the end of the Mosaic Law or covenant. This fifth-counted point has today been the subject of controversy among the churches around the world. Today many churches of Christendom hold the belief that we are still under this covenant, the Mosaic covenant. The Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 3:7, 11, 13 made mention of the abolition of the law after Christ first came. He redeemed those under the law—the Mosaic Law—that they might receive the full rites of sons. This law has now been done away with through Christ, and we are no longer under slavery. Christ has redeemed us from this bondage.

Christian Brethren, we are urged by the Lord Himself to strive to enter through the strait gate that leads to eternal life (Matt. 7:14), and this has become our utmost concern. Our two primary concerns today as true followers of Christ are (1) to enter the Kingdom of God on earth when Christ comes again to rule as King and (2) to enjoy eternal salvation in paradise on earth when the Lord shall wipe away all tears and when there shall be no more death (Rev. 21:3–4). I'm striving hard myself, holding fast to the Gospel of Christ so that tomorrow I, too, may be worthy of His calling. ♦

Brother Samuel Newray lives with his wife Diana and children, Emmanuel (15), Ismael (11), Vivian (6) and Alain (3), in Ghana, Africa.



Blood: Miracle of Life *continued from page 11*

process of executing, “*You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin*” (Heb. 12:4). This text indicates clearly the nature of the “blood” to be shed. It is blood shed by “*striving against sin.*” (This text shows also that each individual must “resist unto blood,” not that Christ’s sacrifice covers all.)

pouring out of our spiritual lifeblood, is the sacrifice which is required of each servant of God. It is precisely this crucifixion of the old life which allows the new life to thrive. Obedience to the Word of God means death to every part of the old nature. “*Without shedding of blood (the lifeblood of the old nature) is no remission*” (Heb. 9:22).

The Apostle Paul frequently pictured the Christian life as a life-and-death

of the sacrifices made under the old law.

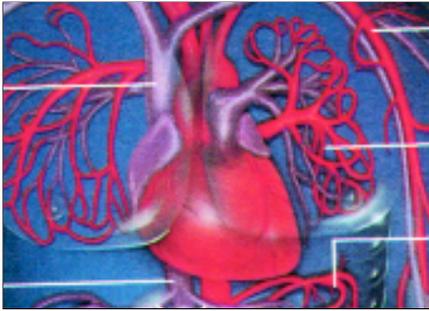
No description of the Christian life could be more meaningful. No contrast could be more vivid than that between a state of death and a state of life; or between blood that supports life and blood that is shed.

When blood is used in this same sense, the words a “full surrender” or “living sacrifice” may be substituted, as in Hebrews 12:4, “*You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin,*” meaning, You have not yet fully surrendered yourselves.

Jesus Himself spoke of His own “blood” in this highly symbolic and spiritual sense at His last supper with the disciples. These are His words: “*This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this...in remembrance of me*” (1 Cor. 11:25 NIV). In other words, this cup is a symbol of the new testament or covenant, which I am ratifying by My death. It is a covenant of death, a covenant of total self-sacrifice. I have met the requirements of this covenant; I have fulfilled it by My death, and you must do the same. You too must die. You too must surrender your lifeblood, even as I have. It is the terms of the covenant.

The Apostle Paul captured the full meaning of Jesus’ self-sacrifice as he repeated His words to the Corinthian brethren: “*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?...In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me’*” (1 Cor. 10:16; 11:25). Notice the command: “*This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes*” (1 Cor. 11:25–26).

Let us feel a new sense of gratitude to God for the life that is in our blood, and now consecrate every drop of our spiritual lifeblood to Him, as did Christ. Then one day we shall experience the change to immortality, that state of life that is better than flesh and blood, and receive the crown incorruptible. ♦



BLOOD (physical)

- nourishes
- cleanses
- feeds and sustains physical life



BLOOD (symbol of the Word or knowledge of God)

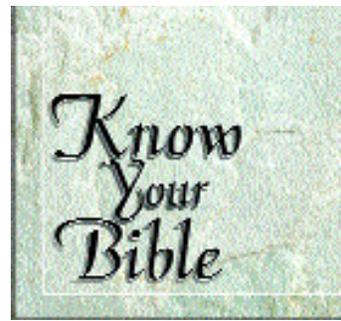
- nourishes
- cleanses
- feeds and sustains spiritual life

The book of Revelation describes this same self-sacrifice using another term for death: beheading. The removing of the head signifies in a spiritual sense the giving up of one’s will, opinions, ideas, thoughts. The Revelator saw under the altar “*the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years*” (Rev. 20:4). They had shed the blood of the old nature, had given up themselves totally, in a spiritual sense. (This total self-sacrifice could—and did sometimes—include a surrender of physical life, rather than deny one’s faith. This was true of Christ and many others during the early centuries.)

The putting to death of the old life, the giving up of our own ways, the

struggle, a battle of flesh against spirit, of the old against the new. He spoke of his own struggle against sin as a fight and a death. He said, and meaningfully, “*I die daily*” (1 Cor. 15:31). Again he wrote to the Galatians (Gal. 6:14 NIV): “*May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*” It is a contest of “flesh” against “spirit,” the old life against the new (Gal 5:16), with the result that “*you cannot do just what you please*” (v. 17 NCV). Each must present his own body a “living sacrifice,” spiritually speaking, “*holy, acceptable unto God, which is [our] reasonable service*” (Rom. 12:1–2).

The ultimate of that “offering” of our bodies as a living sacrifice is that the offering be perfect, without spot or blemish. In this way, our individual offering of ourselves becomes a “type”



BIBLICAL GARMENTS

1. A woman touched the hem of _____, and was healed.
2. This man was clothed in camel's hair.
3. This man left his garment behind, as he fled from a seductive woman.
4. This king of Israel tried to thwart the words of God's prophet by removing his royal robes when he went into battle and dressing as a common soldier. What happened?
5. The armies that follow the Faithful and True one are clothed in this.
6. In Revelation a good woman is clothed with this.
7. In the parable of the wedding feast, what happens to the man who shows up without a wedding garment?
8. This man's servant lied in order to obtain two garments from a foreign dignitary.
9. This man coveted a garment and some gold, and was stoned for it in the valley of Achor.
10. What is the clothing of the Bride of Christ?

ABOUT ELIJAH

1. Where was Elijah from?
2. What did Elijah do to the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel?
3. How was Elijah taken up to heaven?
4. Who else appeared with Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration?
5. How long were the heavens shut up in the days of Elijah?
6. What did Elijah pray for earnestly and received an answer to his prayer?
7. How much of Elijah's spirit did Elisha receive?
8. Elijah performed a miracle for a widow from this place.
9. What brook did Elijah drink from?
10. What king was reigning in Jerusalem when Elijah sent him a letter?
11. Who was Elijah's successor?
12. How many times did fire come down at Elijah's request?

MEANING OF NAMES

1. Name the tribe of Israel whose name means "forgetting."
2. Whose name means "red"?
3. His name means "he laughs."
4. Abraham means _____
5. Jesus means _____
6. Jesus called Peter _____
7. Emmanuel means _____
8. Christ mean _____
9. Israel means _____

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOVE

ELIJAH

1. Tishbe in Gilead (1 Kings 17:1)
2. Mocked them (1 Kings 18:25-27)
3. A chariot of fire in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11)
4. Moses (Matt. 17:1-8)
5. 3 years and 6 months (Jas. 5:17)
6. That it would not rain, then that it would rain (1 Kings 17:1; Jas. 5:17-18)
7. Twice as much (2 Kings 2:9-12)
8. Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-16)
9. Brook Cherith or Kerith Ravine (1 Kings 17:1-4)
10. Jehoram (2 Chron. 21:9-12)
11. Elisha (1 Kings 19:19)

12. Once on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:38), and twice killing a captain and his 50 soldiers (2 Kings 1:1-12)

BIBLICAL GARMENTS

1. Jesus' garment (Matt. 9:19-20)
2. John the Baptist (Matt. 3:4; Mark 1:6)
3. Joseph (Gen. 39:11-12)
4. Ahab, He was killed in battle (1 Kings 22:29-39)
5. White linen (Rev. 19:11, 14)
6. The Sun (Rev. 12:1)
7. He is cast into outer darkness (Matt. 22:11-13)
8. Gehazi (2 Kings 5:20-27)

9. Achan (Joshua 7:20-25)
10. Fine linen (Rev. 19:7-8)

MEANING OF NAMES

1. Manasseh (Gen. 41:51)
2. Edom or Esau (Gen. 25:25, 30)
3. Isaac (Gen. 21:5-6)
4. "Father of many nations...kings shall come from you" (Gen. 17:5-6)
5. "He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21)
6. A stone (Matt. 16:18)
7. "God with us" (Matt. 1:23)
8. The Anointed one, the Messiah
9. "Prince of God" (Gen. 32:28)



What A Promise!

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. —Rom. 8:28

God has ways of working that are unknown to us. But we must note several things: All things are not good. It makes no difference whether they are caused by human selfishness or by what we call accidents or acts of nature. Life can deal some harsh blows. Maybe you are receiving one of them right now.

All people undergo suffering. The rain falls on the unjust and the just. Sinners suffer and die. They get sick, lose their jobs, have children who break their hearts, and all the rest. It's a mistake for us to think that Christians suffer more than do non-Christians. So, we must derive some very important truths from Romans 8:28. I'm going to gather these thoughts under the words **who**, **what**, **how**, **to whom**, and **when**.

WHO? Who does the work? The understood subject is God. All is under His control that concerns His children. He is watching over the scene.

WHAT? "All things." Not some things, or good things, or bad things, but "all" things. Everything that happens in the lives of His children is a subject of God's concern.

HOW? All things "work together for good." Work takes time. Work takes energy. The more delicate the work, the more time and patience are required on the part of the workers.

How does God work all things for good? How does He bring good out of evil? Consider the oyster that had the misfortune of getting a grain of sand inside its shell and against its tender flesh. What did it do? What did it not do? It did not curse Divine providence by saying, "Why me? What have I done to deserve this?" That's the way some people handle their

troubles and disappointments, but the oyster did better. How did the oyster handle its pain? It secreted a white liquid that surrounded the roughness of the sand with smoothness. Where did the oyster get the white liquid? Ah! there it is! That's where God comes in. God equipped the oyster with the means by which it could handle its disappointment and pain. Doesn't it seem reasonable that we also are equipped to handle our disappointment and pain?

Once we have accepted the fact that God is with us and will give us help in our times of trouble, then we should look for opportunities for handling the difficulty. If oysters can do that instinctively, surely we can do it with thought and practice.

TO WHOM? All things work together for good "to them that love God...who are the called."

God works with "those who love [Him]." They have the promise of God's presence and power working with them. In other words, we cooperate with Him. For good to come, we must be among those who love Him and be willing to do our part.

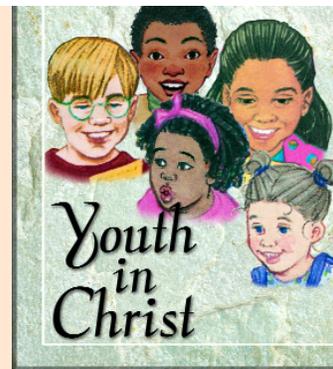
But behind the human scene, the Divine is at work.

WHEN? Paul qualified his bit of counsel and comfort: all works for good "to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). That means commitment. The degree of our commitment to God is the degree to which we can claim this promise of good for our lives.

Commitment means surrender. We must surrender our wills to the Divine will. Bitterness, resentment, and self-seeking will keep us from the good that God wants to work out for us. We must surrender these to accomplish the task. In each situation we must ask, "God, what can I do right here and now to honor You?" In other words, How can I make this work for eternal good?

That is all that matters. ♦

The degree of our commitment to God is the degree to which we can claim this promise of good for our lives.



Item needed: Tape Measure

BIBLE VERSE:

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. —2 Peter 3:18

LESSON:

To grow up, tall and straight, we also need to grow down—deep and strong roots so that we will be obedient and loving.

(Group Activity)

Boys and girls, I need a couple of volunteers this morning. I want one of you to hold the tape measure straight against the wall. Let it begin at the floor and hold it very straight. Now, let's measure a couple of you (measure some of the children).

If we brought this tape measure back next year, would you be the same size? Of course not. You are growing, and next year you will be bigger and taller than you are today. Everybody here is growing.

Ken Medema, the blind concert pianist, talks about a funny thing. He talks about growing *down*. Now who in the world can *grow down*? All of us know something about growing up, but what about growing *down*?

Did you know that a tree grows down as well as up? The roots grow down into the ground at the same time the tree grows up, up, up. If the tree doesn't grow down and make strong, deep roots, it will fall over. Growing down for us is learning to be kinder, more loving, helping other people, being like Jesus. When we have lots of strong, healthy roots, we can stay standing tall when temptations come that might otherwise knock us over.

We know that Joseph as he grew up, also grew down and deep, for when he was tempted to do wrong he said "No! I won't hurt my good master nor disobey God."

So, like the tree, we must grow up, and we must grow down. Up, up until we are taller and kinder. Down, down until we are deeper, stronger, and sturdier children of God. ♦

PRAYER:

Lord, help me to grow deep roots of faith, and big branches of love and goodness. I ask Your help, in Jesus' name. Amen.

WHO KEEPS THE COMMANDMENTS?

by GERALD R. PAYNE

"In reading your magazine and your web page, I could not help but notice that you are strong in opinion concerning the necessity of our keeping the law of God. Amen. I agree 100%. I also assume that you would agree with me that it is NOT in our own strength, but only as Christ lives in us, living out His own life through us."

You are correct to say that we strongly believe in the necessity of keeping the law of God. We also agree that this is difficult, even impossible through our own unaided efforts. However, we must never lose sight of Christ's answer when He was asked, *"Who then can be saved?"* This is a question of utmost importance if we are interested in salvation. What was His answer? *"The things which are impossible with men are possible with God"* (Luke 18:26-27). With God's help we can keep the commandments. But what commandments? Just to keep a set of rules will not result in eternal salvation.

A rich young ruler once asked Jesus, *"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"* Now the answer to this question from both our Master and Judge should be of great importance to us. As you recall, Jesus reminded him of the commandments, and gave examples, *"Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother."* As I am sure you will agree, these commandments are not difficult to obey. The young man said, *"All these have I kept from my youth up."* But this was not enough.

Jesus' reply to his response is words which were not welcome to the young ruler nor to many others. The commandments, just quoted, would only affect one's outward conduct. Our religious training must go far deeper than an external code of rules or laws. It must govern our thoughts and intentions, as Jesus' statement shows, *"Yet lackest thou one thing."* Jesus said that he still fell short of the requirements to inherit

eternal life. Then He probed deep into the young ruler's heart (and ours, if we only let Him). *"Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me"* (see Luke 18:18-22).

Jesus taught a total commitment—all we have. He also put it another way, *"If your hand or foot or eye causes you to sin, cut it off or gouge it out"* (Mark 9:43-47). If something is standing between you and the Kingdom of God, even if it may be like cutting off a hand or foot or gouging out an eye, or, as in the case of the rich young ruler, (selling all one has), you must do it. Was Christ really serious about this? One need look no further than His example: He knew in advance that His destiny, if He obeyed every word of God, was crucifixion. Yet He obeyed, even unto death.

This total commitment was required long before Christ made these statements. We find it in the first commandment, to love God with all our heart, soul and might (Deut. 6:4-6)—no self justification, no self-righteousness, no boasting about what "I did." It is all for God, with God, with longing anticipation for the reward awaiting the faithful.

If you mean that Christ is living in us who have patterned our lives after His, that is, His word is living and working in us, then I certainly agree that Christ's life is being lived through us. But, I would not say that Christ is living out His life in us as a spirit being. Nor is He overruling our will. We are responsible for our own choices, good or bad.

Perhaps you mean that Christ is living in us if our attitude, conduct, thoughts and devotion are like His. He prayed that His disciples, and those who believe through their word, might be one with Him as He and the Father were one (John 17:20-21). To become one with Him is to agree with Him in every respect, and conduct ourselves accordingly. But before one can agree, they must be correctly informed. I am sure you will agree that to be well informed

regarding any subject requires effort on our part—study, attention to detail, practical exercises, and in this case, prayer and meditation coupled with faith. To be at one with Christ requires us to compare our thoughts and actions with Christ's and copy Him. Yes, giving up our ways for His may seem painful, but Peter informs us, *"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"* (1 Pet. 2:21-22). At the time Peter made this statement, Christians were being persecuted. You could lose your life for being a Christian. But the plan, which involves suffering (discipline), was in effect long before Peter, and remains today.

If you are saying that Christ is doing the work for us, no effort on our part, then we cannot agree. Jesus said clearly, *"If you love Me, keep My commandments"* (John 14:15). He did not say, I will be keeping My commandments in you. We are responsible for our actions. *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad"* (2 Cor. 5:10). We will be rewarded for what we did, not what Christ did, or someone else.

God applied this same principle in the Old Testament. When He was warning that He would bring judgment on the land, only the righteous would be spared, no one else. And a righteous person could not deliver someone else by his righteousness. *"Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God"* (Ezek. 14:14). Every person coming under covenant will be judged according to what he or she has done, not what Christ did. *"I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings"* (Jer. 17:10).

The Apostle John also wrote,

“Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He [Christ] is pure” (1 John 3:3). Every person must purify himself or herself. Christ will not do it for us.

James also addressed this same important point of personal obedience. He wrote, *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:22–25).*

Jesus is not in us in some mysterious way changing us or overruling our will. But we do have the promise from the heavenly Father, that *“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5)*. God is our ever present helper (Ps. 46:1), and I am convinced that God will always help those who are helping themselves in earnestness. *“For the Lord loves justice, and does not forsake His saints; they are preserved forever, but the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell in it forever” (Ps. 37:28–29).* ♦

Building the Kingdom *(continued from page 7)*

What will be the source of law in Christ’s Kingdom? In Isaiah 2, the prophet identifies the high authority of the laws that will govern the people of the Kingdom during the millennial age: *“Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:2–3; see also Mic. 4:1–4).*

The enforcement of these laws will result in total peace and justice worldwide. How? They will be everywhere and always present in the form of law enforcement agents who will be able to check misbehavior at its source. *“Your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left” (Isa. 30:20–21).*

No one anywhere will be able to plead ignorance of the law, for the people will be totally informed, from the least to the greatest (Jer. 31:34).

A law unenforced is worthless. But in Christ’s Kingdom, for the first time in history, perfect enforcement of fair and equitable laws will bring universal benefit. No open disobedience will be tolerated. *“For the nation and kingdom which will not serve You shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined” (Isa. 60:12).*

When all the building blocks are assembled, the result will be the Kingdom of Christ: A King, associate rulers, a populace, land, and laws. Even the capitol city has been identified in advance: the city of Jerusalem (Zech. 2:12; Ps. 48:1–2; Isa. 24:23). Jesus Himself declared Jerusalem *“The city of the great King” (Matt. 5:35).*

According to His plan, the Lord has set aside 7000 years to complete this building project. When it is done, He will have a finished product, perfect, beautiful, with nothing to hurt, nothing to destroy, nothing to make trouble.

Do you want to be part of that Heavenly Kingdom on earth? Each of us can be—if we follow Jesus’ example, put on the character image of the King, the Lord Jesus. Then He will choose us to be part of His Kingdom, and we can belong to the things that will remain! ♦

Abib Announcement

This year the members and friends of the Megiddo Church will welcome the beginning of the sacred New Year on Thursday, April 3. The holiday begins with the evening of April 2, the new moon occurring during the evening of April 1, and Bible time being measured from “evening to evening” (Lev. 23:32). The ancient Hebrews, according to the law God gave to Moses, marked the beginning of the sacred New Year with the month Abib, which is the month beginning with the first new moon following the spring equinox (March 21 this year).

This day has double significance as we commemorate the beginning of the sacred year and also the birth of our great coming King.

Members and friends, plan now to join us for this sacred season. New Year services and programs will be held on Thursday, April 3 and also on the following Sunday, April 6. The anniversary of the Lord’s Supper will be on Monday evening, April 14, and Resurrection on April 17.



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The background of the page is a vibrant photograph of a fjord. In the foreground, the water is a clear, bright blue-green, dotted with numerous small icebergs. A large white cruise ship with a red funnel is visible on the right side of the water. The middle ground shows steep, rocky mountainsides with patches of snow and green vegetation. In the background, more snow-capped mountain peaks rise against a clear, bright blue sky.

Trusting You Always...

*Lord, I'm glad for this new day
The sky is bright and blue,
Thanks for safety through the night—
My whole heart praises you!*

*Help me to walk in faith today,
As I Your wonders see.
Continue walking by my side
And share Your love with me.*

*And if the trails are rocky, Lord,
Across this troubled land,
If I should stumble, precious Lord,
Please hold onto my hand.*

*And when the sun sinks in the west
Above the land or sea,
I still would be found praising You
For what You've given me.*

*I know you'll never leave me
You are my dearest friend,
Help me trust You always
Until the journey's end.*

—Roy W. Arthur

*Sometimes in our blindness we sort of abuse,
The good that we find 'long the way,
Thus making the journey a little bit rough,
By the things that we do and we say.*

*But each day's a new blessing and another new chance
To correct what was wrong yesterday,
And the privilege to start all over again—
Praise God for this gift of Today!*

*The ships that come in while
we sit and wait usually are
hardships.*

Your only real limitation is that which you set up in your own mind or accept as insurmountable.

When you are right you can afford to keep your temper. When you are wrong you can't afford to lose it.

Look for the good in each trial. When trials come big end first and pile up, could it be the Lord is giving us extra opportunity to qualify for His kingdom?

Don't compare your goodness with that of others; compare it with the goodness of the Man of Galilee.

The kindness planned for tomorrow doesn't count for today.

Knowing how forgetful we are should help us to bear patiently the forgetfulness of others.

God can multiply only what you give. If you give nothing, even if God were to multiply it, it would still be nothing.

Material riches have no intrinsic value in the perspective of eternity.

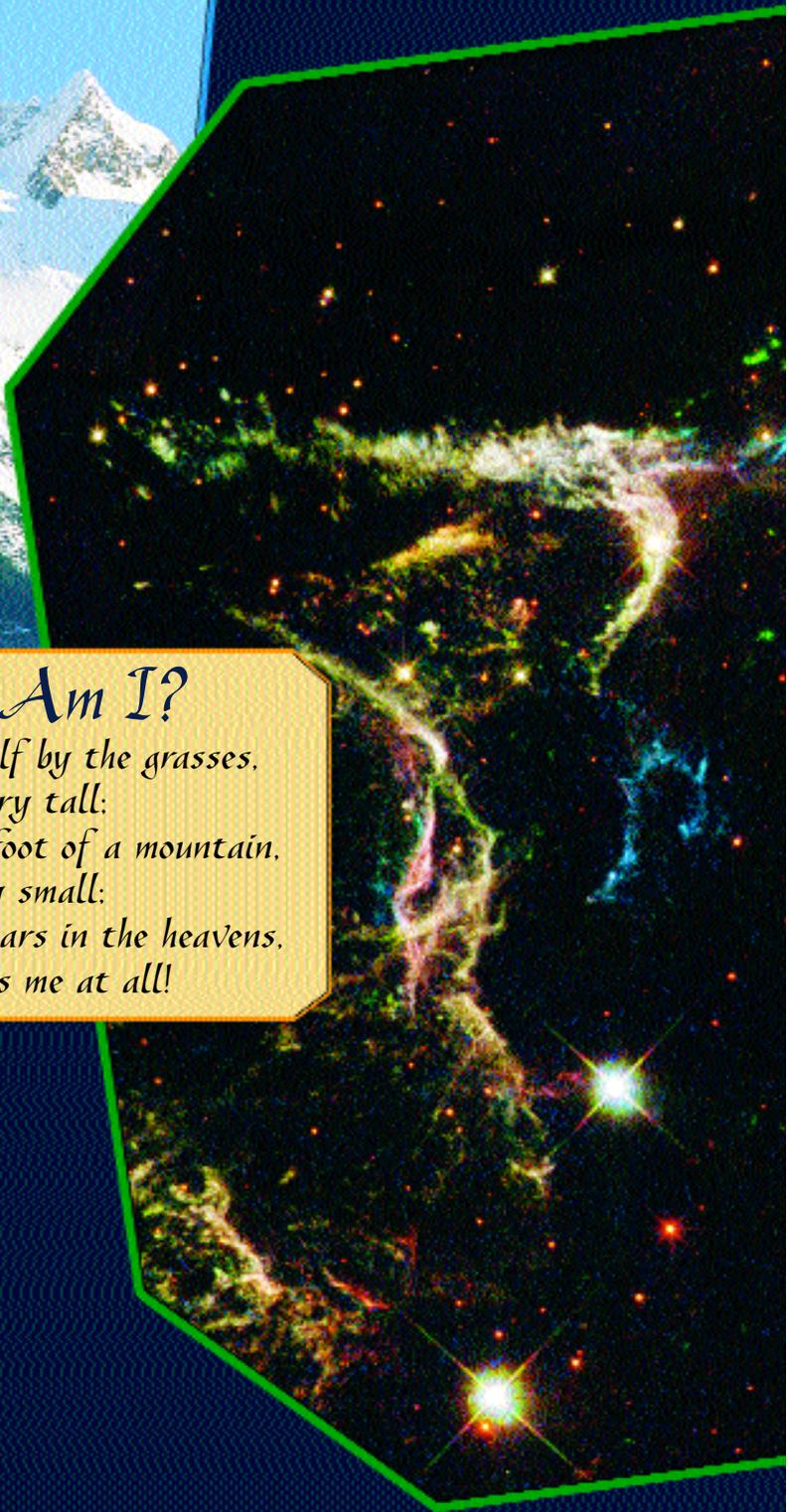
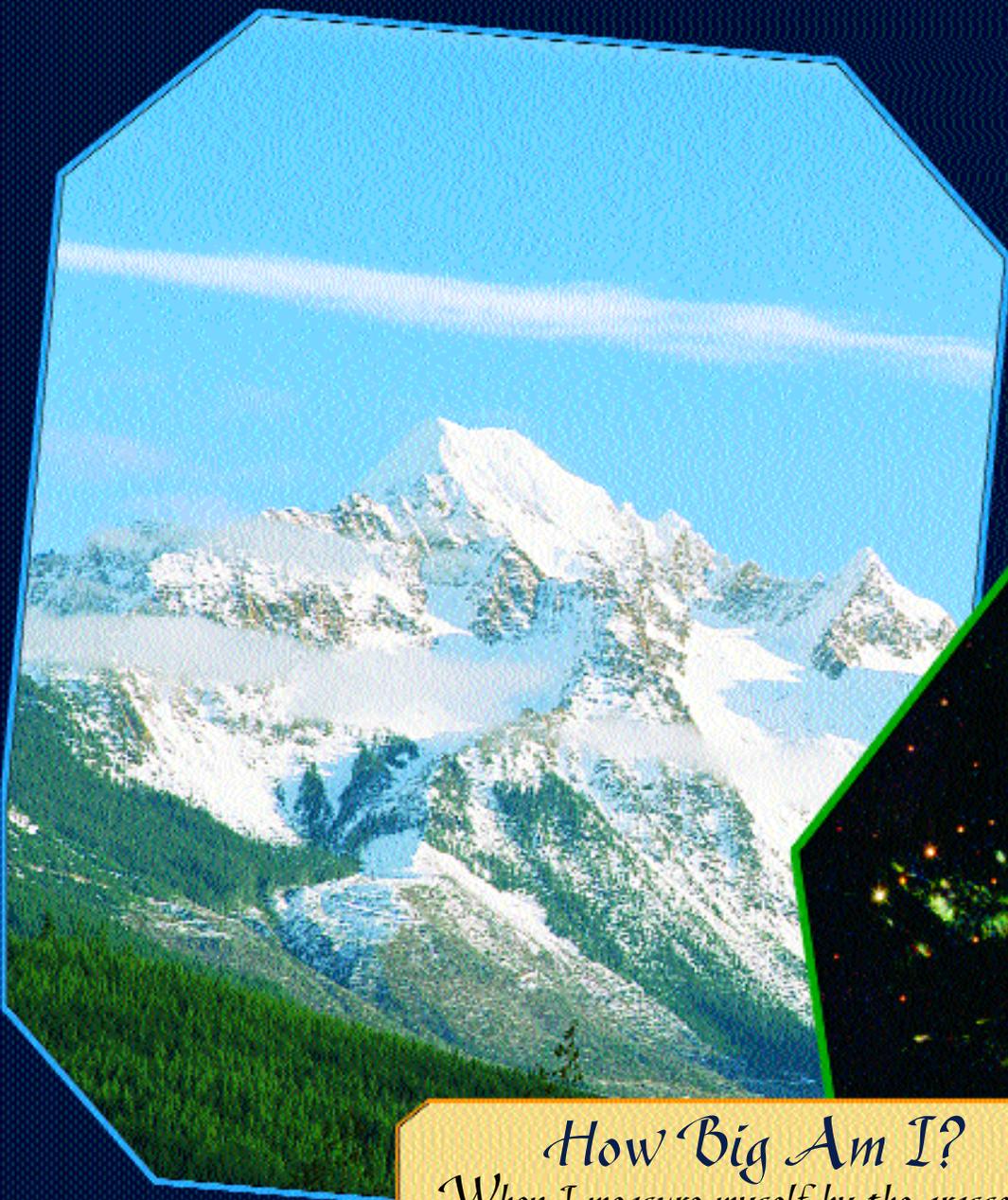
By yielding to temptation one may lose in a moment what it took him a lifetime to gain.

God is not interested in saving those who are not interested in saving themselves.

An EGOTIST is a person who is always ME-DEEP in conversation.

Too many times we care more for a person's feelings than we do for his soul.

Humility is not humiliation.



How Big Am I?

*When I measure myself by the grasses,
It seems I am very tall.*

*When I stand at the foot of a mountain,
I feel I am really small.*

*When I look at the stars in the heavens,
I marvel God sees me at all!*

