

Megiddo Message

Fall 2011

For the Lord is great and
greatly to be praised.

—1 Chronicles 16:25



DID YOU HEAR IT?

Our human capacity for selective hearing is gigantic. Somehow our subconscious mind extracts what we want to hear, then quickly shuts down. If we do not want to hear it (advice, negative criticism, a contrary opinion), our ears are closed. Convenient, isn't it?

A woman told about participating in a group study of marriage. As preparation for the study, the participants were asked to read a number of books, relating each to themselves. Looking back on the study, she commented, "several of us struggled to actually read the book for ourselves and not for our spouses. I found myself carefully re-reading sections my other half needed." One book was so "good" that she couldn't resist handing it over, appropriately highlighted and marked. "I had to admit that though my eyes were seeing the words, I was seeing for someone else."

What was the problem? She was reading (hearing) in an audience of two, not one. Think about the difference: When there is an audience of one, that "I" must take every word in a direct, personal sense. When there is an audience of two, each thinks that the speaker is referring to the other.

But sometimes there is no second person in the audience. Can you imagine how Jacob felt when he found himself one-on-one with an angel of God? What about Daniel, when the angel of God addressed him as "O man greatly beloved" (Dan. 10:19)?

Think about David, who more than once was one-on-one with God's messenger. When he had sinned grievously, and God sent Nathan the prophet to rebuke him, Nathan told a heart-rending story about a wealthy herdsman who took a poor man's one and only ewe lamb. David's immediate response was anger—that man should die for being so heartless and selfish. He was hearing for an audience of two. But when Nathan said plainly, "You are the man," David heard—in a solemn audience of one.

When David numbered Israel to see how great the nation had grown under his good leadership, even as the project was completed David's conscience smote him. "David said to the Lord, 'I have sinned greatly in what I have done... Oh Lord, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly'" (2 Sam. 24:10). There was no one else to share the blame he deserved. When the Lord sent Gad with three options for punishment, again David was one-on-one with God's messenger. Hearing the options, he chose to "fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great" (2 Sam. 24:14).

Today God speaks to us only through His written Word. But how do we hear? Do we listen even when it doesn't tell us what we want to hear? Or do we assume that it is being directed to someone else?

The current culture gives every man and woman a sense of empowerment that can act as a shield against unwanted facts. Each "I" has the right to define meaning for "myself." If "I" don't want to

- ★ **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.

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Do you hear for an audience of one—or two?

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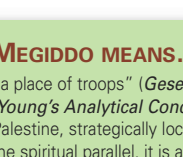
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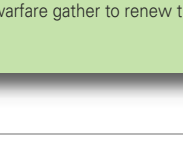
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MEGIDDO MEANS...

"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).

Front cover photo: Fall at Barrier Lake, Alberta, Canada.
Taken by Edward Shayler

Back cover photos: An Ibex on cliff in Machtesh Ramon. Three Ibex kids at EnGedi, Israel.
Courtesy of "BIBLEPLACES.COM"

Who is Welcome in His Presence?

You are *welcome* in *His* presence...
You will *dwell* on *His* holy hill if...

If you *live perfectly*, doing what is right,
and tell the truth from your heart.

If you don't use your tongue to do wrong to others,
or insult your neighbor.

If you despise one whom God rejects
but honor those who fear the Lord.

If when you promise, you don't change it,
even if it hurts you.

If you don't take unlawful or unfair
interest on money you loan, or
take a bribe against an innocent person.

If you do these things, you will never fail.

—Free Paraphrases of Psalm 15

Welcome!" "Come right in!" "Make yourself at home!"

When friends visit us, we let them know that even though they are on our premises, their presence is appreciated, even desired.

This is what the Psalmist was thinking about when he wrote, "Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?" (Ps. 15:1). In other words, Lord, who has the right to enter Your house? Who can be a guest in Your holy mountain? Who will You have sit down at Your table?

This brings up a question of great concern to each of us: Are we welcome in God's presence? What is His attitude toward us?

This is the question King David was asking thousands of years ago. He was concerned with the kind of person God would welcome because he himself wanted to be welcome. This is why he asked in Psalm 15, "Who has the right to enter your tent, or to live on your holy mountain?" (Jerusalem Bible).

When David speaks of God's "tent" and His "holy mountain," he is drawing his illustration from Israel's special place of worship in Jerusalem which was at that time still a tent, later to become the temple. He is asking, "What kind of person, Lord, do you let into your presence?" with the further half-spoken, half-whispered query, Would you let me in?

And we, nearly three millennia later, are asking the same question: "Lord, ... would you let me in?"

Yes, who is welcome in the Divine presence?

If we were to reply quickly to this question, we might say that the answer is quite simple. Of course God wants the believer, the man or woman who is of His own kind, one of His family.

But when we think further, as David did, we realize our answer needs to be translated into everyday terms. And so we ask, exactly what is the person like whom You accept? How does that person live? What does that person talk about? How does that person feel and think in his or her everyday world?

Are we perhaps going too far to ask such questions, farther than God looks? Not if we may judge by David's reply—and shouldn't we be able to assume that David knew? According to David, how one lives, how one speaks, and how one feels and thinks toward his God and


toward his human family are the very criteria by which God judges those who approach Him.

It has been suggested that our Lord used Psalm 15 as His text for the Sermon on the Mount. The same subjects are treated, and in approximately the same order. Psalm 15 is David's "Sermon on the Mount." It isn't long, but oh, how much it says!

The Question: Who Is Welcome?

The question is important for several reasons.

First, it is important because it deals with



To be welcome in someone's house means to enjoy the benefits of their hospitality, their protection, their sustenance. So David is asking, "Lord, whom will You invite to be a guest at Your table?"

practical everyday living.

Besides corresponding with the Sermon on the Mount, the qualities David discloses in this Psalm also are a close parallel to those the Apostle Paul listed as qualifications for elders and deacons in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus (see 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). They describe the character that is at the core of practical Christianity. They offer a practical description of how the believer should relate to people around him.

Who is welcome? The answer lies in how one lives.

Second, it is an important topic because no one can afford to miss the benefits of being welcome in God's presence. In Old Testament times, to be welcome in someone's house

meant to enjoy the benefits of their hospitality, their protection, their sustenance.

So when David asks, “Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle?” He is asking, “Whom will You invite to be a guest at Your table? Whom will You protect and sustain?”

In verses 2 to 5 he gives a threefold answer to this question.

2 *“He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart.*

3 *He who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;*

4 *In whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change.*

5 *He who does not put out his money at usury, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.”* —Psalm 15, The New King James Bible

David is picturing the ideal man, the man he longs to be. Who could ever long to be welcomed into the presence of God more than he!

The Answer

Notice the very interesting structure of David’s answer. He begins with a broad, sweeping statement in verse 2: “He who a) walks uprightly, and

b) works righteousness, and
c) speaks the truth in his heart.”

The one who is welcome in God’s presence is one who has integrity, who does what is right, and speaks the honest heart-truth.

What could such a one lack!

Integrity All Ways

In verses 3 to 5, these three characteristics are explained in more detail. Verse 3 corresponds to the third quality, that of speaking the truth; the first portion of verse 4 corresponds to the second quality, of working righteousness; and the last part of verse 4 goes

along with verse 5 and adds emphasis to the first quality, of walking with integrity. Notice particularly how often these qualities are revealed in how one speaks.

David’s ideal man has three basic and closely related qualities: 1) integrity—he “walks uprightly” 2) right living—he “works righteousness” and 3) truthfulness in what he says and thinks—“he speaks the truth in his heart.”

David states that the person who is welcome in God’s presence is one who speaks the truth in his heart. He doesn’t just speak it outwardly; his whole character is truthful. Proverbs 23:7 tells us that as a man speaks in his heart, so is he. What we are inwardly is what we really are. Instead of merely speaking the truth in words, David is pointing out that the righteous person lives truthfully.

Truthful living shows itself in many ways. First, he is truthful in what he says. He makes a serious effort to tell the facts without embellishment. He doesn’t run others down either in their presence or behind their back. He doesn’t slander with his tongue. Everything he says is truthful.

In addition to this, “he does no evil” to another. This kind of truthful living shows itself in many other ways. It means that he does not take unfair advantage of another person in a business transaction. In fact, he won’t take an opportunity to hurt another for any reason. He won’t deliberately injure or provoke another, even if that person may have done something to provoke or injure him.

He is careful to return what he borrows. When he drives his car, he drives with the interest of the other person in mind, as well as his own. He is thoughtful and considerate with those who are slow, with those who are aged, and those who have disadvantages. Whatever he is doing, he is unselfish and keeps the interest of others in mind.

Also, speaking the truth means that he does not “take up a reproach against his friend.” He “tells no tales against his neighbour” (New English Bible). He “casts no discredit on his neighbor” (Jerusalem Bible).

In other words, he doesn’t keep a running log of every wrong done against him. He cannot afford to hold grudges. If something does not seem just right, he investigates it with an attitude of true brotherly concern. When he has done what he can to resolve it, he dismisses it. He will not let his own record be blotted by feeling ill toward another.



When something questionable is heard or said about another, he always puts the best light on that person's conduct.

David goes on to tell us that the person who is welcome in God's presence is one who *"works righteousness."* The word "work" indicates effort. This man realizes there is something he must do. God never invites idlers into His presence. His call is always to those who are working, doing what they can. No one can be accepted in God's presence who is wasting his God-given time and resources.

The one God welcomes must be performing his obligations. He must be actively working, and working righteousness.

What is righteousness? It includes all aspects of personal ethics. It means that he acts in an honorable manner which is "right" by God's standard. He doesn't "cheat" or take unfair advantage in a situation even if he is sure no one will find out. If he realizes a clerk has given him too much money inadvertently, he does not pocket the money and say nothing. His life is governed by principles of personal honesty.

Then, in verse 4, David notes a striking contrast about this person: *"In whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord."* This person views life and people through God's eyes. He learns to hate what God hates, and to honor what God honors. He doesn't respect the rich, the famous, the powerful. He esteems character. He places value on people according as they reverence and honor God. He does not make his evaluations based on the standards of this world. Instead, he uses God's standard of measurement.

Along with being truthful, personally honest and honorable in his dealings, and viewing life and people through God's eyes, the one who is welcome in God's presence is one who *"walks uprightly."* He does his best to keep his word, to do what he says he will do and when he says he will do it. And if he cannot, he goes to the person to whom he made the promise and tries to make it right. He pays his bills when they are due; and if for any reason he cannot, he again goes to the persons to whom he is indebted and tries to make things right.


This kind of person keeps his promise even when it costs: *"He swears to his own hurt and does not change."* This does not mean that he deliberately tries to hurt himself. But when he has made a promise, if circumstances change so that he is at a disadvantage, he still keeps

his word unless he can be lawfully released.


This person of integrity is one who *"does not put out his money at usury."* He does not do anything to abuse or exploit another. David did not mean that charging a lawful rate of interest was wrong. The man God accepts is one who will not take unfair advantage of another.

In the same way, this ideal man of God will not take advantage of another's misfortune. He will buy and sell with a philosophy of "live and let live." He will realize that others beside himself need consideration, and will do his best to be fair in all his dealings.

This man or woman of integrity also will not be influenced by bribes. *"Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent."* It is another statement of his inner honesty. He does not think only of himself; he thinks of the other person as well. And he is not susceptible to outside influence or corruption. He



*The one God accepts
doesn't just speak
the truth—
he lives truthfully.*



*The person God accepts is
always honest—always upright—
always truthful—always fair.*

makes his decision honestly, on the basis of his own solid principles, then stands his ground.

All About Words


Now look back at this Psalm and see how much one's words have to do with this ideal

person David has been describing.

- His words are truthful, even if no one hears: he *"speaks the truth in his heart."*
- His words are restrained: he will not slander or insult another.
- His words are respectful: he *"honors those who fear the Lord."*
- His words are reliable: he abides by his promise, even if he must suffer for it.

In Closing ...

What about this wonderful person David has been discussing? What is the special blessing he will enjoy?



*The one God accepts keeps
his promise, even if
he loses because of it.*

First, he is the answer to David's opening question: He is the one who will be welcomed into the very presence of God.

Second, his honored position in the presence of God will never be challenged. In fact, his whole future will be assured: *"He who does these things shall never be moved."*

"He who does these things" refers to an entire life based on the principles of integrity, righteousness, and truth. The one who reaches this standard will "never be shaken," *"never be moved,"* "never fail." This does not mean that such a one will never have problems, never experience conflict, never suffer loss. But in the end He will receive God's blessing, even eternal life.

"He who does these things shall never be moved." Such a one will never be removed

from his place in the Divine presence. He will never lose his welcome.

It is said that just north of Los Angeles is a very high observation tower. Visitors can ride an elevator to the top and enjoy a magnificent view of the entire area. What many do not know is that the tower was designed to have a sway factor of seven feet in either direction at its highest point. That means that in the event of an earthquake or high winds, the tower is built to be able to sway back and forth a total of 14 feet without danger. The tower definitely will be shaken, but the foundation will remain secure; and because of that security, the tower will last.

This is what David says of the true believer who shall *"never be moved."* He may have to feel some sharp wind, some severe shaking, but he will be secure because of his sure foundation, because God has accepted him.

The Ideal

All of this description is the "ideal." It is the character God is looking for. But God knows—and anyone who has made a serious effort to live this higher life knows—that it is not the work of a moment. That is why God's evaluation of each one is at the Judgment when Christ returns, not at the beginning or during one's term of service. The character He is seeking is the work of a lifetime of dedicated service, with many a stumble, many a fall, and many a getting up and going on. This is why God has a provision for forgiveness, because God knows our need. That is why David himself prayed, after a major tumble, *"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions... With the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption"* (Ps. 51:1; 130:7). He repented and turned from his sin, and God forgave him as the Lord will forgive all who sincerely repent (Isa. 55:6–9).

What is God's promise to the one who attains to this ideal? He shall never, never be moved; and never is a long, long time. Never through all eternity shall he be moved, for when Christ returns and sets up His kingdom, such a one will be granted an endless life as God's own son, and enjoy an endless duration that will continue to expand through all eternity.

"He who overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son."

—Revelation 21:7 ♦

WHO MUST FULFILL “THE GREAT COMMISSION”?

Jesus' commission to “Go and teach all nations” was given to His apostles and was fulfilled by them during the years immediately following. Let's look at the evidence...

“I know the Bible tells us to keep separate from ‘the world,’ but please explain one thing. How can anyone fulfill the great commission to preach the gospel in all the world (see Matthew 24:14 and 28:19) and keep separate?”

There is no question about the Bible command to keep separate from “the world.” This was among God's earliest instructions to the Israelites (Lev. 20:24, 26): *“I am the Lord your God, who has separated you from the peoples.... You shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine.”* By being separated God meant that they were not to intermarry or mix socially with other people. The purpose was to keep them from adopting the culture and the idolatrous practices of the surrounding nations (see Deut 12:1–8; 13:3–11; 16:12–16). God knew that association with other peoples was far more likely to draw the Israelites away from the worship of the true God than that His people would draw others to worship the God of heaven.

The apostle Paul was still preaching the same principle of separation centuries later when he said, *“Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty”* (2 Cor 6:17–18). The apostle John gave the same command, *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him”* (1 John 2:15).

Now what about Jesus' command, often called the great commission, to preach the gospel to all nations?

Most Christian churches today believe that

they are dutybound to fulfill this commission. Jesus' earliest statement of it is in Matthew 24:14, where He says that *“this gospel of the kingdom”* must be *“preached in all the world as a witness to all nations”* before Jesus returns. Many years ago Billy Graham took this text as a personal assignment, and he and his associates have made a major effort to broadcast what he believes to be the gospel in all parts of the world. Many Protestant churches, particularly the evangelical, also believe it is their mission to “save the lost” by getting as many as possible into the church so that these people can, in their words, “receive Christ.” The Seventh Day Adventists have taken Jesus' words as their church slogan, *“Go ye into all the world...”* Many churches support foreign missions for the same purpose. All are focused on fulfilling the command of Jesus to *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 16:15). Considering the billions of people on the earth, this is a gargantuan task.

Jesus' more detailed statement of this commission was just before He ascended to heaven, when He said to His disciples, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Matt. 28:19–20).*

*It appears that the belief that Christians are duty bound to preach the gospel literally to the ends of the earth is a relatively recent concept; that it was not widely believed or practiced until the 19th century. In fact, according to one historian, most mainline Protestant churches in the west only began to support and promote foreign missions in the 1830's (see <http://thereignofchrist.com/early-protestantism-great-commission-fulfilled>).

T*each them to observe all things that I have commanded you.*

—Jesus (Matt. 28:20)

When Jesus gave a command, He also gave the tools to perform it.

The Commission

Let us look more closely at Jesus' statement of the commission.

POINT 1: To whom spoken:

Jesus was speaking to His apostles in each recording of the commission (see Matt. 28:16–18; Mark 16:14; Luke 24:40–44)

POINT 2: Where they were to go:

"into all the world" (Matt. 28:16; Mark 16:15);
"to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47)

POINT 3: What they were to do:

"make disciples of all nations, baptizing them..." (Matt. 28:19);
"preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15)

POINT 4: What they were to preach/teach:

"repentance and remission of sins ... in His name" (Luke 24:47);
"teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20).

POINT 5: Divinely provided equipment for the task:

Jesus promised to be with them: *"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matt. 28:20)

Jesus promised them power: *"you [shall be] endowed with power from on high"* (Luke 24:49).

Jesus promised to accompany them with supernatural signs: *"These signs will follow those who believe. In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover"* (Mark 16:17–18).

Just before He ascended to heaven, Jesus repeated this promise: *"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"* (Acts 1:8).

POINT 6: The power was for a limited period of time only.

Jesus said, *"I will be with you always, even to the end of the age."*

A Short-term mission accomplished

From a careful comparing of related Scripture, we are convinced that the commis-

sion was given to Jesus' apostles at the time He ascended and was fulfilled by them during the years immediately following, and that it is not binding on us today. This fact removes the problems associated with trying to fulfill it. Furthermore, it is impossible for anyone today to fulfill this commission as Jesus gave it. Why do we say this? Let us look at each point.

Point 1 tells us that the commission was being given to the disciples Jesus addressed just before He ascended. Even so, some might argue that Jesus gave other instructions to them that are also for us. So let us look further.

Points 2 and 3 are: *"Go into all the world" and "preach the gospel..."* Many evangelists and gospel ministers have traveled widely and been successful at attracting a large audience with their message, but *"all the world"* literally is beyond anyone's reach. Millions still live and die without any knowledge of God or His Word. And among the so-called "Christian" faiths, the message of the gospel preached differs widely.

What *"world"* did Jesus refer to when He said *"Go into all the world"* (Matt. 24:14)? Was He thinking of the entire globe, from Asia to America, from the Arctic to the Antarctic?

The Greek language in which the New Testament was written has three words that are translated *"world."* One is *ge*, which is the "earth, land, soil." Then there is *kosmos*, which refers to an "orderly arrangement" on the earth, a "world system" such as a nation, a government, a political entity, or group associated. The word Jesus used in Matt. 24:14 is *oikoumene*, which means "earth, empire, people," and in the context of the New Testament, "especially the Roman empire" (SHG). Jesus was referring to the people inhabiting the region accessible to His disciples.

What about Point 4? Jesus' command was to preach *"repentance and remission of sins ... in His name"* (Luke 24:47)—forgiveness (remission) that follows genuine repentance, turning away from the sin. Who today is teaching Jesus' message on repentance?

Matthew's recording of Jesus' commission is even more specific as to what must be preached. Jesus said, *"Go... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you"* (Matt. 28:20). What popular evangelist is teaching that people must observe (obey/do/keep/live according to) *"all things"* that Jesus commanded?

What does *"all things I [Jesus] have command-*

ed" include? Start with Jesus' first sermon. The central lesson of this sermon is the gospel of hear and do (Matt. 7:24–25). Who today is teaching how to live to that standard? Jesus is very specific about who will be blessed, and each blessing is conditioned upon developing a certain quality of character. Jesus said:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit..."

"Blessed are those who mourn..."

"Blessed are the meek..."

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness..."

"Blessed are the merciful..."

"Blessed are the pure in heart..."

"Blessed are the peacemakers..."

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake..."? (Matt. 5:3–10).

Who is teaching how to be the "salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" and "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16)?

The standard of righteousness that Jesus taught was supremely exacting. He even said that one was not to "break one of these least commands," and that one's right doing must be far superior to that of the "scribes and Pharisees," the religious teachers of that day, or they would "by no means enter in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19–20). Who is teaching this?

What popular evangelist dares to teach Jesus' standard of morality, that a man must not commit adultery? More than this, he must not even "look at a woman to lust for her...in his heart" (Matt. 5:27–28). Who is teaching that Christ's standard disallowed divorce in most instances, and that remarriage is absolutely forbidden when one's spouse is living? (Matt. 5:32; Luke 16:18).

Who is teaching that one must not do good deeds to be seen of others, or "you have no reward from your Father in heaven"? (Matt. 6:1). All this is in His very first sermon. And there is much more, culminating with this supreme challenge: "You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

All of the above is part of the standard Christians must observe and teach to fulfill Jesus' commission. It is the standard Christ set for believers to live by (Matt. 28:20).

Point 5: Heavenly Help

Jesus knew that this type of teaching would not be popular, or easily accepted and believed, and for this reason promised help for this min-

istry in the form of supernatural power from God. Those preaching in His name would be able to demonstrate unmistakably that they were sent by Jesus because they would be able to perform miracles, signs and wonders in His name as no unauthorized person could do. These powers included the ability to restore sight to the blind, or heal the insane, make the deaf to hear, and the sick of the palsy to be well. Peter and John were able to heal the man lame from birth, and immediately he walked and leaped (see Acts 3:2–9). Can anyone perform such a miracle today? With the power of the Holy Spirit they could speak or understand a language they had not learned, as did the disciples on the day of Pentecost when people from 17 nations all heard the preaching of Peter in their own language—see Acts 2). People today claim to have the Holy Spirit, but can they demonstrate it as Jesus and His apostles did? Can they foretell future events with certainty as Jesus did (see Matthew 24)?

In the first chapter of Acts, Luke tells how Jesus promised the power they would need: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Jesus sent this power on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–8).

Point 6: For a Limited Time Only

Matthew's recording of the commission tells us that Jesus' support for the mission would be limited to one period of time: that age. Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). The KJV translates it: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." What does this mean? The Greek text reads literally, not that Jesus would be with them "always" but that He would be with them "all the days until the end of the age." The original Greek word translated "age" or "world" is *aion*. In the Greek-English lexicons, some of the meanings of *aion* are "lifetime, life, age, generation, one's life, destiny." Another definition is: "space of time clearly defined and marked out, epoch, age" (LSJ and Thayer).

Mark's Gospel tells how Jesus would be with them: "in signs following" (Mark 16:20), and Matthew tells how long: "to the end of the age." Jesus did not promise to be with them "in signs following," i.e., with open demonstrations of Divine power, through all time to come. The arrangement was temporary, and was to be continued "to the end of the age," which closed

"All" that Jesus commanded does NOT make popular teaching today.

with the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70) when the special power to confirm their message by signs and wonders and miracles was withdrawn. (For more evidence on this subject, see our booklet on *"The Holy Spirit"*).

Was the commission fulfilled?

The answer, according to the Bible, is yes. Mark states that the Apostles *"went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs"* (Mark 16:20). The apostle Paul writing to the church in Rome during his third missionary journey, said that Christ had through him made *"the Gentiles obedient in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ"* (Rom. 15:18–19). Luke records in the Book of Acts that the apostle Paul, shortly before this, had continued *"for two years" in Ephesus, so that "all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks"* (Acts 19:10–11).

Writing to the church at Colosse, Paul said that the *"hope of the gospel... [had been] preached to every creature under heaven"* (Col. 1:23)—a figurative statement showing the broad expanse of their ministry. The author of the letter to the Hebrews, probably the latest testimony to the fulfilling of the commission, says that God used the Holy Spirit power, *"bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will"* (Heb. 2:4).

Our Commission

The commission addressed to the apostles to *"Go into all the world... preaching"* was fulfilled by them.

To summarize: Why are believers today not commanded to preach the gospel "to all the world" as the disciples of Jesus were commissioned to do? If this were our task, God would provide the equipment and the situation we need to make it possible, just as He did for the Apostles in the first century. Why do we say this?

1) No one today has the "helper alongside" — the Holy Spirit — that special Divine power Jesus sent back to His disciples after He had gone to heaven to bring all things to remembrance that He spoke, to give force and conviction to His messengers and show absolutely that their authority was from God (see John 15:26; 16:7–8; Mark 16:17, 20; Rom. 15:19–20; Acts 1:8).

2) The prophecies for the time immediately preceding His second advent tell of perilous times (2 Tim. 3:1–4). Evil would thrive and faith would be at low ebb (see Luke 18:8). It would be an age when conditions would be parallel to those in Sodom and Gomorrah in the time of Lot, and like the world of Noah's day before the flood (Luke 17:26–30). Instead of the people of earth becoming evangelized, God foresaw that they would be wicked.

3) Another parallel to the times of Noah and Lot as indicated by Jesus is the fact that the number of believers was few. If Jesus had planned that the gospel be preached worldwide immediately before His return, would He allow that preaching to be largely ineffective? During the first century, the Holy Spirit was directing. Peter saw a vision that told him *"What God has cleansed you must not call common"* (Acts 10:15). He was to baptize believing Gentiles into the faith. Consistently the Holy

Spirit directed the travels of the apostle Paul (see Acts 16:7, 9), and he was able to establish churches in many cities in a relatively short period of time.

4) Christ when He comes as king will launch a worldwide campaign giving all men and nations a choice to submit to His authority and live, or rebel and die. The edict will go forth: *"Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come"* (Rev. 14:7).

The prophet Isaiah told of the effectiveness of Divine judgments when Christ returns: *"When Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness"* (Isaiah 26:9). Sadly, that is the only way the people will *"learn righteousness."*

5) If Jesus has commissioned Christians to preach the gospel worldwide at this time, whose gospel should be preached? Christian creeds vary widely. In fact, from all appearances, the world is converting the church. Then too, what about all the other faiths? Some are aggressively proselytizing.

No, all of the above facts reinforce the fact that preaching the gospel to the ends of the earth is not our task today.

What, then, is our duty? What remains for us to do? There is still the everlasting commission for all who seek a place in Christ's kingdom, and that is to seek first the Kingdom of God and righteousness, as Jesus said: *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you"* (Matt. 6:33). He did not say, Carry my name to the ends of the earth, but *"Seek first the kingdom of God and ... righteousness."*

What does it all add up to? *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil"* (Eccl. 12:13–14).

A passage near the close of Revelation says the same: *"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city"* (Rev. 22:14) ♦

The commission for all who want to be in Christ's Kingdom on earth is to seek first the Kingdom of God and righteousness, as Jesus commanded.

FROM THE LIFE OF DAVID

1. Who anointed David to succeed King Saul?
2. Why was young David in the army camp when he heard the taunting of Goliath?
3. Why did David feel capable of fighting the giant Goliath?
4. Goliath trusted his physical strength and armor, David trusted his God. How do we know?
5. Which prince loved David very much? What did he give him as a token of his friendship?
6. Why did Saul turn against David?
7. Why did David not take King Saul's life when he had the opportunity to?
8. In what city was David anointed king of Judah?
9. What was the name of Jonathan's only son to whom David extended grace in keeping with their compact?
10. Who rebuked David for his sin with Bathsheba? What was his famous response to David's verdict?
11. What did the prophet tell David would happen to his family because of his sins—first adultery then murder?
12. How do we know David repented of his sins?
13. David was not to build God a temple in Jerusalem as he planned, so instead what did he do?
14. What counselor of David joined Absalom's coup? And what counselor gave Absalom "bad" advice because he was on David's side?
15. Which son of David became the next king of Israel?

FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

1. Has any man seen God at any time?
2. Simon the son of Jona was given this name by Christ: _____ or _____ which means _____.
3. What was the first miracle Jesus performed _____? and where _____?
4. Jesus told Nicodemus that one would not see the kingdom of God unless He was _____.
5. When Jesus was tired and sat by a well, He asked a _____ woman for a drink. Why was this strange?
6. Why were the Jews angry that Jesus healed a lame man by the pool of Bethesda?
7. Jesus said: "You will know the truth, and the truth will _____."
8. When Jesus fed the five thousand, what food items did He have at hand?
9. What pool did the blind man have to wash in to be healed?
10. In what town did Lazarus, Jesus' friend live?

11. How long had Lazarus been dead when Jesus arrived?
12. Jesus says in John that He is the true vine, and His Father is _____.
13. Jesus says in John that He is the vine, and His disciples are _____.
14. According to Jesus, "Greater love has no one than this, _____."
15. What did Jesus say about His relation to His Father that shows He was not God?
16. Jesus prayed that His disciples might be one in what way?
17. Jesus said to Pilate that His kingdom was "not of this world" (that *kosmos*, or "order of states or government" – LSJ). If His kingdom HAD been of that world, what did Jesus say His servants would have done?
18. When Jesus was taken to be judged and crucified, how many disciples followed Him?
19. According to the gospel of John, what were Jesus' last words on the cross?
20. What title did Pilate post on Jesus' cross?
21. Who saw two angels where the body of Jesus had lain?
22. To which disciple did Jesus say, "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed?"
23. On what occasion did Jesus invite His disciples, "Come and dine"?
24. Jesus commissioned which disciple three times to "feed my lambs or my sheep"?

ANSWERS ON PAGE 25





The Book of Philemon has only twenty-five verses. Not much for size, but the life principles it teaches in a harsh and violent world are unsurpassable.



Some of the people in this book are only names and unknown to us. But we know human nature, and we serve the same God. When these two facts are taken into account, we feel that we know considerable about them. When a person submits to being remade and reshaped by the law of God, he or she has much in common with others who are undergoing the same process. We speak the same "language," as it were, face the same struggles, confront the same enemies, and know the same joys of victory. We can even guess how they may react in some of the very difficult situations life presents—those character-building situations so needful to all. Slavery is not our problem, but how one person treats another is still relevant.

The result is not character alone, it is Christ-like character—the beautiful lives God is seeking for His eternal Kingdom on this earth.

One of the remarkable things about developing a Christian character is that neither wealth, genius, great cathedrals, multitudes, nor even freedom, is required. A correct knowledge of God's will for man and a rock solid determination to live by it are the only requirements. This challenge is open to any level or station of life, from the heights of wealth to the depths of slavery. God is not partial; He regards only character. All whom He calls share the same opportunity. Whatever one's situation, no one can harness another's mind; and that is where the new nature is formed, slowly, carefully, thought by thought. As one "thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

When the apostle Paul wrote this short letter, he was in prison in Rome.

Yet he calls himself Christ's prisoner.

The letter is from the heart of Paul to the heart of Philemon, "our dearly beloved, and fellow laborer" in the church in Colosse. Philemon was another of Paul's sons-in-the-faith.

SCENE FIVE: The Homecoming

CHARACTERS:

PHILEMON: master and Christian convert

ARCHIPPUS: son of Philemon

ONESIMUS: young household servant of Philemon

ANDROCLES: servant of Philemon

ADMEATUS: child, son of Philemon

SETTING:

Philemon and his son Archippus are talking. The father sits on a bench, the son stands. They seem distressed and worried.

Philemon: How in the world are we going

to do this, Archippus? There just aren't enough of us.

Archippus: You're right, father. One of us has to go to Alexandria to straighten things out there, and one has to stay here to see to the business. It's shearing time, and the wool is pouring into the warehouses so fast we can hardly handle it. One plus one makes two. So who does that leave to carry our Spring offering to Rome?

Philemon: We could send it by a ship captain as we did once before, but this

The Runaway's Return

time we ought to send a personal messenger. News travels so slowly... Brother Paul may be ill. He may have had his hearing and been freed: he may not even be in Rome. Or he may... *(a pause.)*

Archippus: I know what you mean, Father. We don't like to think about that, but it may happen. Some say the Emperor is a madman, and that he grows more bloodthirsty every day. It is dreadful to think of our beloved Paul standing before such a character for judgment. We must find out, some way, how it is with him.

Philemon: The Lord's work should come first, I know. But it takes so long to go to Rome, and back, and there are so many places one is needed. I wish there were two of me and three of you, Archippus.

Archippus: Isn't there some one of the ecclesia we can send?

Philemon: I'd gladly buy him a first-class ticket if we could find some one. I've been going over and over the list, and I can't see who it would be. Some are slaves, most of the rest are not able to leave their work, the way times are. Gaius is free to go, but his health is bad. So there you are. It looks like you are going to Rome, Archippus, business or no business.

Androcles: *(enters)* There is a man at the gate to see you, Sir.

Philemon: *(rather annoyed)* Who is it? Doesn't he know it's past business hours?

Androcles: He didn't state his business, Sir, nor his name. He only asked to see you.

Archippus: Do you suppose he's got wool to sell?

Philemon: Probably.

Androcles: I doubt it, Sir. He doesn't look like the type. It may be you have talked with him before; his face...seems familiar.

Philemon: Well, show him in. *(Androcles exits)*

Philemon: *(grumbling)* Every year I say I'm going to cut down and do no more business at night, and every year I keep right on. I don't know why I do it.

Archippus: Well, Father, all you'd have to do is...

(Enter Androcles with Onesimus. Both men show shocked surprise as they recognize the runaway. Onesimus has restored his master's initial to his costume.)

Philemon & Archippus: *(unison)* Onesimus!

Onesimus: Yes, Master, it is I.

Archippus: Onesimus! Is it really...?

Onesimus: Yes, the traitor has come back. I have returned. Master, to ask your forgiveness, and to right the great wrongs I have done you.

Philemon: Well, that should be possible. Why did you run away, Lad? Had I treated you badly? Had I been unfair to you? Many times I have searched my heart for the answer.

Archippus: Your going as you did Onesimus, was a terrible blow to us all.

Onesimus: It was a terrible thing I did, Master. You had always treated me fairly and kindly. It was only that I did not appreciate my blessings, and I became dissatisfied. And, worse than that,... I stole money from you.

Philemon: You should not have done that, Onesimus, but we can talk about that later. It's the violation of our trust that hurt most, not the loss of the money. But go on with your story, Lad. What led you to return?

Onesimus: *(with strong emotion)* How base I was, Master, and how I misjudged you. I thought I was only hurting your purse,

when it was your heart. Well, I had freedom, but not the wisdom to use it. I went from bad to worse until, penniless and desperate, I walked the streets of Rome. And there I found a man who changed my whole life. *(Father and son exchange wondering looks.)* His name is Paul.

Philemon: Paul! Do you know Paul? The Christian preacher?

Onesimus: Yes, Paul, the greatest man who lives on this earth today. Under his tutelage I became a Christian. And for the past eight months I have been his helper.

Archippus: Now it begins to clear. Do you remember, Father, what I said when we received Brother Paul's note last winter?

Philemon: Yes, you said he must have a new secretary, and that the handwriting made you think of Onesimus, but of course... we never dreamed!

Onesimus: It was when he dictated that letter to me that I had to tell him I was your runaway slave, and a thief. Although he needed me, he sent me back to you to make things right. I have no money to repay you and nothing to give except myself. So here I stand, ready to take my punishment, whatever it may be.

Philemon: I'm not worrying about punishments right now. What we want to know is, how is Brother Paul?

Archippus: Has he had his hearing yet?

Onesimus: No, not yet. Perhaps it would be better if he never had it. The Emperor Nero is... well, there isn't much law in Rome these days, just the Imperial whim. But Paul is well, well and busy. He is still a prisoner in his own hired house, with a few brethren to keep him company and carry on his work outside. He is the busiest prisoner you ever saw. He...he sent a letter to you, Sir. *(hands over letter)*

Archippus: Read it aloud. Father.

Philemon: *(reading)* "Paul, a prisoner for the sake of the Truth, and Brother Timothy, to our dear fellow-worker Philemon, and our Sister Apphia, and our true soldier Archippus, and the church that meets in your house. God bless you with every favor and peace."

"Every time I mention you in my prayers, I thank God for your love toward the Truth and those who are trying to live it. And I pray they may share your faith and your knowledge of all the wonderful things the Truth will surely bring to us. I am greatly pleased and encouraged by your good example to those around you. It warms our hearts here."

"Now I could use my authority as an Apostle and give you orders, but I would rather rely wholly on your love for the Truth. I write as a humble follower of our Lord, not as Paul the Ambassador of our coming King, but Paul, an old man in prison for His sake."

"I appeal to you for my spiritual child, born during my imprisonment: Onesimus, the valuable; once worthless to you, but now priceless to me, and to you, too, for I return him to you as your brother and my son. Parting with him is like sending you my own heart. (Overcome by emotion, Philemon hands the letter to his son Archippus, who continues.)"

Archippus: *"I yearn to keep him here as a loving son to comfort me, imprisoned as I am for the Truth, but not without your permission. Now if you send him back it is a voluntary act of love, free from all compulsion. Are you and I partners in the Truth? He and I are, too. Receive him as my partner. Does he owe you anything? Charge it to my account on our books, and I will pay your loss. I write this promise myself: I Paul will pay. Now of course, I will not stress unnecessarily how much more you owe me, even your chance for eternal life. This is your chance to make a small payment on this account with me, and how happy it will make my heart."*

"I have great confidence in you apart from any arguments I advance, for I know your Christian character and generosity. Now you have Onesimus, I wish you would also reserve a room for me, for I hope I may soon be released through your prayers."

"Epaphras is in prison with me. He greets you too, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke. They are all working with me here. God bless you every one."

Philemon: *(taking Onesimus' hand)* Brother Onesimus, on my part, all is forgiven. I have no desire for vengeance, and I suspect that you have been punished more than enough by your experience and your

conscience. Your repentance and willingness makes everything right between us.

Archippus: We cannot refuse Paul's request.

Philemon: And I have no inclination to do so. From the moment I saw your face tonight, I longed to forgive you. There has been an empty place in our household, Onesimus, which only you can fill. The children have missed you so much.

Onesimus: Young master Admeatus, is he well?

Philemon: Well, and growing up to be a fine lad. This will be the happiest day of his life.

Onesimus: Will you receive me again into your service? I know you can never trust me as you once did, but I will do any work, no matter how hard, and I promise to do it faithfully.

(Archippus calls Philemon aside and whispers to him. Philemon assumes a sterner face.)

Philemon: Yes, I will receive you, but I am convinced that some punishment is in order—something to make you remember. Archippus, give me your knife. Onesimus, come here. *(Onesimus steps forward, fearful. Philemon takes the knife and cuts off the red initial and puts it in his pocket.)*

Onesimus: What does this mean?

Philemon: Onesimus, you made life hard for yourself by doing what you did. You could have been a free man these four years or more.

Onesimus: You mean—?

Philemon: Four years ago I freed all my household in obedience to a Christian conscience. And I may as well confess that this trouble is partly my fault. I had it in mind before I went away to give you your freedom within the year. But, selfishly, I neglected to say anything to you about it. I forgot that you, too, had feelings and hopes and fears. I could not know that your hopelessness and dissatisfaction were getting the better of you. I had it in my power to stop it—and I failed. You will forgive me? *(Onesimus is too full to speak, but makes a gesture revealing his feelings.)* But now you are free. Tomorrow we will go to the magistrates and complete your

manumission. I am sorry it has been so long delayed. There will always be a place for you in my business, if you care to work for me. But you will be working for wages.

Onesimus: But I will work out what I owe you, first.

Philemon: We'll talk about that later. It is your return as a brother that matters. All my former servants, with one or two exceptions, have stayed with me, and most of them have become Christians.

Onesimus: Androcles?

Philemon: Oh, yes. Androcles is one of our strong members. I wonder how he kept a straight face tonight. But Paul says he needs you. Do you wish to return to him?

Onesimus: Much as I love you, Master, and my home—the only home I ever had—I would ask nothing better than to be Brother Paul's helper. My presence would release someone else for the missionary work outside.

Philemon: Then suppose you rest up here for a month, then go back to Paul for as long as he needs you. I will pay your expenses. Then if he is released, you can accompany him to Colosse. How does that sound to you?

Onesimus: Master, you are too good to me. Your kindness is... more ...more than I can bear.

(Philemon takes both Onesimus' hands in his.)

Philemon: Do not call me master. Call me Brother, for I am your Brother in the faith. We are one in Christ Jesus. We are in the fight together, and together we will run our course, forbearing one another and forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us.

Onesimus: *(touched)* Yes, Brother Philemon.

Admeatus: *(enters, exclaims when he sees Onesimus)* 'Nesimus! 'Nesimus! *(runs to him and grabs his arm.)* Oh, 'Nesimus! I knew you'd come home. I always knew it. *(beaming)* I'm so glad you've come home. ♦

(The End)



Who are the Angels?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT THE ANGELS?

Angels were once mortals like us: One of the angels who relayed Jesus' message to the apostle John on Patmos said to John, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." (Revelation 22:9)

Angels are children of God who were worthy of the better resurrection: "But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, ... [cannot] die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." (Luke 20:35-36)

Angels are God's family in heaven: "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." (Eph. 3:14-15)

Angels encamp: "The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them." (Ps. 34:7)

Angels minister: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" (Heb. 1:14)

Angels protect and deliver: "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old." (Isa. 63:9)

Angels guard and direct: "I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey his voice." (Ex. 23:20-21)

Angels announce glad tidings: "Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." (Luke 2:13-14)

Angels shine: Of the angel that rolled back the stone at Jesus' resurrection, it is written: "His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow" (Matthew 28:3). Luke describes the angels at the tomb as "two men ... in shining garments" (Luke 24:4). When Peter was in prison, during the night an angel of God came to him and it says "a light shined in the prison." (Acts 12:7)

Angels administer Divine judgments: When Herod flaunted his own glory in the public eye, it is recorded that "Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died." (Acts 12:23)

Angels perform special tasks: "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matt. 24:31)

Angels will accompany Jesus when He returns: "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works." (Matt. 16:27)

Who Are the **ANGELS**?

The subject of the angels, their origin, their life, their work, their home, is one of the most fascinating and inspiring topics in the Bible.

Who are they? Where do they live? How did they arrive at this level of life?

The answers to these questions are found in the Bible. And these answers are more than cold, lifeless facts. They concern us personally because *the Bible tells us we can one day be made "equal to the angels"*! (Luke 20:35–36).

What does that mean?

Angels are real beings

Many people picture angels as some type of created spirit hovering over us to protect us, or singing praises around the throne of God in a vaguely blissful existence. The picture is distorted by fears of demons, which are thought to be angels in a "fallen" state. Others credit the existence of angels to an overactive imagination.

How do we know that angels exist, if they have never been seen by anyone living today?

The answer is, *they have been seen*, just not in our day. If the Bible record is reliable—and we believe that it is—many of their appearances have been documented and preserved for us. Abraham and Sarah, Lot, Jacob, Moses and Aaron and the millions of Israelites with them, Joshua, Gideon, Manoah, Elijah, Elisha, Daniel, Jesus, Peter, John, Paul, and many others saw angels.

Angels called "Lord" or "God"

Many times we read in the Bible that "*the Lord*" appeared, or that "*God came down*," or that "*the Lord spoke*." How are we to understand these statements, in view of the fact that "*no man has seen God at any time*"? (1 John 4:12; John 5:37). Are the two statements contradictory? Not when we realize that in the Bible, angels, being children of God, are called by their Father's name.

In Exodus 23, the Lord is quoted as saying about the angel He was sending: "*Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way*

and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him" (Ex. 23:20–21). Just as we often take our father's name, angels have God's name.

And angels act in behalf of their Father. The Almighty God does not come down to earth to tend its affairs. He who has countless millions



Angels are real beings, once mortal like us. –Revelation 22:9

and billions of worlds to oversee works through His appointed ministers, representatives, messengers—angels!

Angels are messengers

The Hebrew word translated "angel" means "messenger, envoy." Messengering seems to have been one of their principal functions in behalf of the human race. They were God's messengers delivering His message to His human servants; they were envoys announcing special events, they were His army sent to protect His people and execute His judgments.

Usually their appearances were sudden, brief, unannounced. Again and again we read only that "*The angel of the Lord came...*" or "*the angel of the Lord appeared....*"

Angels appear as humans

Often when angels are described in the Bible, they appear to look like men. No mention is made of any bizarre shapes or even of the once traditional "wings." The idea that angels need wings to fly has been carried over



from the medieval age when people could not conceive of flight without wings (as a bird). Modern artists, realizing that this is not valid reasoning, no longer add wings to all their drawings of angels.

Sometimes in the Bible the angels were mistaken for men. The writer to the Hebrews suggests that one may entertain angels without even knowing it—hardly possible if they were spirits (Heb. 13:2).

The three angel visitors to Abraham were identified as “three men” on their arrival, and they accepted a meal, after which two of them continued on to Sodom. Lot apparently received them as ordinary travelers in need of food and lodging (Gen. 19:1–2).

The angel who appeared to Joshua at Jericho was described as “a man...with His sword drawn in His hand” (Josh. 5:13–14).

A “man of God” (an angel) appeared to Manoah’s wife to announce the birth of a son (Judges 13:3–11).

The angel sent from the presence of God to give “insight and understanding” to Daniel about future events was described as having “the appearance of a man.” Again he was plainly identified as “the man Gabriel”—his general appearance must have been that of an ordinary man. We are also told that he “touched” Daniel (Dan. 8:15–19; 9:21)—an action we would hardly associate with a spirit being. Years later this same angel Gabriel appeared first to Zechariah when he was ministering in the tabernacle, and six months later to Mary (Luke 1:9, 26).

Angels radiate light

A number of times in the Scriptures when angels appeared they were said to “shine.” When Moses came down from meeting with the angels on Mount Sinai, his face radiated so much light that the Israelites were unable to look on him (Ex. 34:29–35). An angel at the empty tomb was described as appearing “like lightning and his clothes as white as snow” (Matt. 28:3). Luke describes two angels who met the women who were early at the tomb as standing “by them in shining garments” (Luke 24:4). Cornelius saw an angel as a “man ... in bright clothing” (Acts 10:30). And John the Revelator who saw angels numerous times says of one that “the earth was illuminated with his glory” (Rev. 18:1).

Angels Today?

We have never met an angel. We have never been privileged to see one of them on a lightning-swift flight from heaven to earth. Yet there may be within our reach this very moment an angel of God. Though we lack the sight, we have the promise: “The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them.” (Ps. 34:7).

The promise is simple and straightforward. Even a child may grasp its message. God’s angels protect and assist all will-be-heirs of salvation.

And we should notice that the promise is without time limit or date of expiration. Angels do minister, and will continue to minister. The only qualification is to be one who reveres God (Ps. 34:7) and is an heir of salvation.

But we should notice that God’s promise does not say how or by what means the angels protect and aid. Nor does God promise that they will always be visible.

Believe when we cannot see...?

Can we believe in angels when we cannot see them?

How can we safely judge what is and what is *not* when we have such limited powers of perception? Think of some of the very common things around us which we cannot “see,” yet we know that they are real. Take a drop of water from a mountain lake in the palm of your hand. Examine it closely. You see nothing but water. But put that drop under a microscope, and you see that it is teeming with life.

We cannot “see” electricity, but when we press a switch we know it is there. We cannot hear radio waves, yet the air around us is filled with them—all we need is the proper receptor to translate them into intelligible sounds.

Bats have a phenomenal built-in radar system by which they fly safely at night. A dog hears sounds that to our ears are not audible and a dog’s sense of smell is many, many times keener than ours. Most birds have migrating instincts that are awesome. Some have an instinctive sense of direction by which they can cross the ocean and return to the same nest they occupied the season before! Common

houseflies, we are told, have eyes with some 20,000 lenses—they can see in all directions at once.

Why is it incredible, then, that angels may be right around us, all unknown to us simply because we lack the sense to perceive them? And is it not entirely within the power of God to withhold such a sense when He wishes?

Angels seen and not seen

During Bible times, angels were sometimes seen and sometimes not seen.

When the king of Syria planned to capture the Lord's prophet, the Syrian army surrounded Dothan, the city where Elisha was staying. When Elisha's servant saw the surrounding army, he was frightened. But Elisha's answer was: *"Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."* Then Elisha prayed, and the Lord opened the eyes of the servant, and he saw *"the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire [angels] all around Elisha"* (2 Kings 6:16–17). The *"chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels"* (Psalm 68:17).

In the incident of Balaam and his donkey, the donkey saw the angel blocking the way, which Balaam could not see. Only after his donkey veered the third time and Balaam in anger beat his poor beast and the donkey spoke, did the angel open Balaam's eyes and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way with a drawn sword (Num. 22:21–33).

When Jesus on the day of His resurrection joined two of His disciples who were walking to Emmaus, we read that the disciples' *"eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him"* (Luke 24:16). Then, when they reached their destination and *"He sat at the table with them"* and *"took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them, their eyes were opened and they knew Him"* (Luke 24:30–31). Though this incident did not involve angels, it shows the same Divine ability the angels have to *"open"* or *"close"* human eyes.

At the present time, God is temporarily withholding sight of His higher realm from us, because during this age He is silent. We walk by faith rather than sight. We have only the Bible by which to be guided.

But soon, very soon, however, we shall see that which is at this time invisible. **Angels are coming to earth, and they will be visible.** Angels will accompany Jesus when He returns to be King of the whole earth. Jesus Himself

said, *"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels"* (Matt. 16:27; Mark 8:38). This age will shortly end in the most dramatic of all events *"when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels"* (2 Thess. 1:7).

From that time forward God's angels will be visible participants in every activity on earth until the Kingdom has been fully set up and earth has been annexed to heaven. The Prophet Daniel saw a vision of thousands of angels minister to Christ when He sits as Judge (Dan. 7:10). We read that *"ten thousands"* of angels came down on Mount Sinai at the time Moses received the Law (Deut. 33:2), and *"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands"* will be attending when Christ and His co-administrators are inaugurated as the new heads of state (Rev. 5:9–13). When the bride and the bridegroom are united in marriage, a multitude



*Christ will return in the glory
of His Father "with the holy angels."*


—Mark 8:38

of angels will be attending. Taylor has paraphrased his idea of the angels attending that momentous marriage in The Living Bible. He says their voices will be like *"the shouting of a huge crowd, or like the waves of a hundred oceans crashing on the shore, or like the mighty rolling of great thunder, 'Praise the Lord. For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us be glad and rejoice and honor Him; for the time has come for the wedding banquet of the Lamb, and His bride has prepared herself'"* (Rev. 19:5–7 TLB).

Angels—a higher level of life

The facts about the angels are more than cold, lifeless facts because they concern us personally.

Angels enjoy a higher level of life than we know. We are mortal, flesh and blood beings, what the Bible calls *"earthly"* (1 Cor. 15:48). The angels are the next higher—*"heavenly"*—level of life. They are of special interest to us because they used to be mortal like us. Some time in the past they received the change from mortality to immortality, just as we may one



day, if worthy, be changed ourselves, into their likeness. This is the hope held out in the Bible (Luke 20:35–36).

We mortals—earthborns—homosapiens—can become angels!

How do we know? Jesus said it in Luke 20:35-36, *“Those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead...[neither] can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God.”* It is the reward God is holding for every faithful servant. The apostle Paul says of those whom God approves, that the *“Lord Jesus Christ”* is coming from heaven, and He *“will transform our lowly [mortal] body”* and make it like *“His glorious body”* (Phil. 3:20–21).

This fact that we can become angels is strongly confirmed by a conversation recorded in Revelation 19 between the Apostle John and the angel who delivered the vision. Overwhelmed at all he had seen and heard, John’s instinctive response was to worship the angel. But when he fell at the feet of the angel, the angel stopped him. *“No, don’t worship me. I am a servant of God, just like you and your brothers and sisters who testify about their faith in Jesus. Worship only God”* (Rev. 19:10 NLT). The speaker was an angel, yet he could identify with John as *“your fellow servant.”* In other words, I was once just like you.

Revelation 22 records a similar incident, where John again wanted to worship the angel who had showed him such marvels. Here the angel said again, *“No, don’t worship me. I am a servant of God, just like you and your brothers the prophets, as well as all who obey what is written in this book. Worship only God!”* (Rev 22:8–9 NLT). Had this angel been a “prophet of God” during his day of probation on some other planet in God’s universes? The angel said: *“I am just like you and your brothers the prophets... I had to obey, just as you do.”*

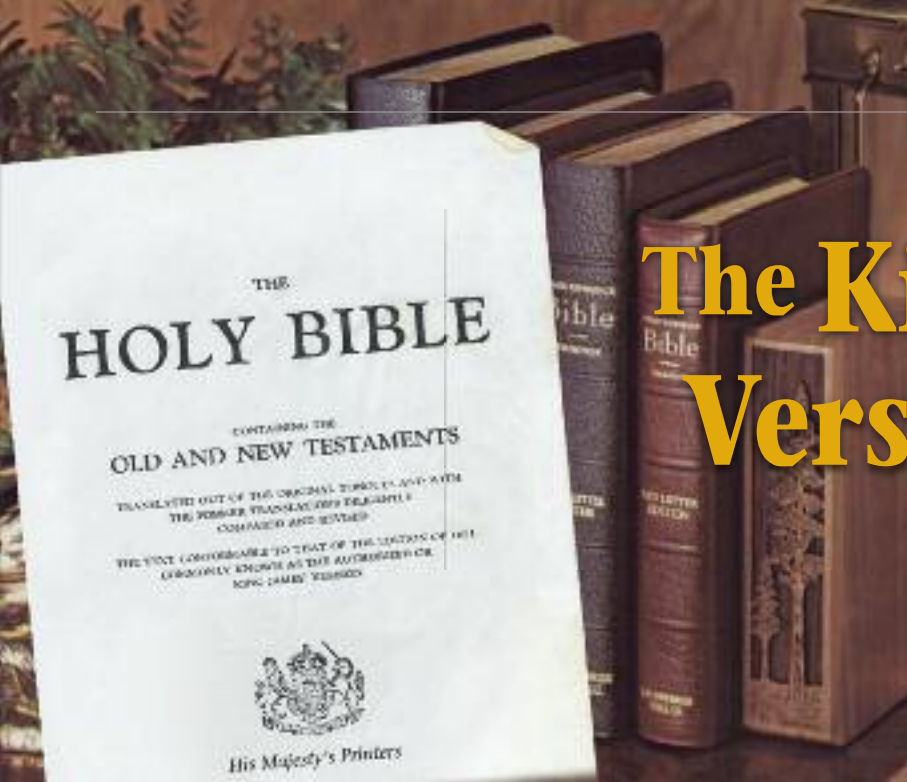
The prophet Daniel makes the following statement regarding God’s faithful children; *“Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever”* (Dan. 12:3). If the angels which visited men were shining beings, and God’s faithful servants will *“shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father”* (Matt. 13:43), isn’t that evidence that mortals can become shining angels of God?

The Divine Plan

This earth is only one small part of God’s vast creation. And because the Bible tells us the *“mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him”* (Ps. 103:17), we know that there have been beings somewhere in His vast creation on whom He has had mercy in the past (*“from everlasting”*) and on whom He will continue to pour out His mercy in the everlasting future. When we see the vastness of the heavens, can we think that our little earth was the first and only planet to be created, populated, and prepared for glory? The universe visible to the modern telescope contains countless billions of shining worlds (stars), many of which must be already inhabited with the higher level of life we call the angels—else where do they live? And does it seem incredulous that many more are in stages of development similar to our earth?

The Bible calls the God we serve, *“the Lord God of hosts”* over 200 times. He is not dwelling in holy isolation. Has he been sleeping through ages past and only recently awakened? or in keeping with His claims (Isa. 45:12; Neh. 9:6) He is constantly planning, fashioning, expanding and glorifying His creation. And when the time is right on any planet, God performs the great change to the worthy inhabitants, transforming them from the mortal level to the immortal—just as He has plans to do on this earth (Phil. 3:20–21; 1 Cor. 15:52–54). It is all according to our Creator’s *“eternal purpose”* (Eph. 3:11). It is His promise: *“Truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord”* (Num. 14:21).

The Lord’s prayer tells us that God has a finished creation where His will is fully done now: *“Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”* (Matt. 6:10). We look forward to the time when God’s will shall be done just as fully on earth, when all its inhabitants will be made immortal like the angels of God, freed forever from the fear of sickness, accident, and death (Rev. 21:3–4). This change will come with Jesus Christ (1 John 3:2; 1 Pet. 5:4) when He returns to awaken His sleeping servants, to judge and reward them for what they have done, and to set up His worldwide Kingdom of righteousness and peace. ♦



The King James Version, or...?

change the standard King James Version, as though its cadences are sacred. Are newer translations really necessary?

Drawbacks of the King James Version

1) *Age of the manuscripts used*

The older a Greek manuscript, i.e., the closer in time to the original, the more likely it is to be accurate, because each time a manuscript was copied, new errors could creep in.

The King James Version, first published as the “Authorized Version” in 1611, is a revision of the Bishops’ Bible, published in 1582. The Bishops’ Bible was a revision of the Great Bible, published in 1538, which was largely a revision of the work of Tyndale and Coverdale. Underlying all of these was the Greek text of Erasmus, published in 1516, who had only a limited number of manuscripts from which to work.

The earliest manuscript Erasmus used for the Gospels belonged to the 15th century; the earliest manuscripts he had for the Acts of the Apostles, for Paul’s letters, and for the Book of Revelation was from the 12th to the 14th century. No manuscript dated back further than the 12th century.

Since then, far older manuscripts have been discovered. In the 19th century, both the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus—Greek manuscripts containing most of the Old and New Testaments and some early church writings—were discovered and became available to scholars, and both of these manuscripts date back to the 4th century. The oldest known New Testament manuscript to be found is of a portion of John’s Gospel, and it dates back to the first century, to less than a lifetime after John died.

This means that Bible translators now have access to manuscripts of the New Testament which are at least 1,000 years older than anything from which the King James Version was made—which means 1,000 years nearer to the original language, and therefore more accurate. However, detailed comparing of the oldest manuscripts with later ones has revealed only very slight differences, which are usually a matter of spelling, or the addition of “notes” placed in the margin by earlier copyists and translators which were not intended to become part of the text. (For further reading on this subject,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

This year marks the 400th anniversary of the Bible translation we call the King James Version because the translation was sponsored by (not translated by) James I of England. The work was begun to satisfy the demands of the English churches for a single Bible in English without notes, as had been customary in previous translations.

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, with a few portions in Aramaic, while the New Testament was in Greek. Before the time of Jesus, during the second century BC, the Old Testament had been compiled and translated into Greek by a group of 70 Jewish scholars; the translation was known as the Septuagint.

And during the fifth century the entire Bible was translated into Latin for use in the Roman Church, Latin being the official language of the empire. During the intervening centuries, the Bible was translated in whole or in part into various languages, either from the Latin Vulgate or from the Greek, but often the translators were martyred by the Roman Church. Not until the 14th century did the whole Bible appear in English, and even then, both the translators and their translations were outlawed.

The King James Bible in 1611 was actually the first translation of the Bible into a common language to be endorsed both by the state and by the church. Although there were no documents officially “authorizing the KJV, because its title page said it was “Appointed to be read in Churches,” it became known as the “Authorized Version.”

Today the KJV is still the most published and most widely circulated of any translation – it is part of every Bible software program available, as well as every smart phone. Yet it is only one among a flood of new translations, most of them published in the second half of the 20th century.

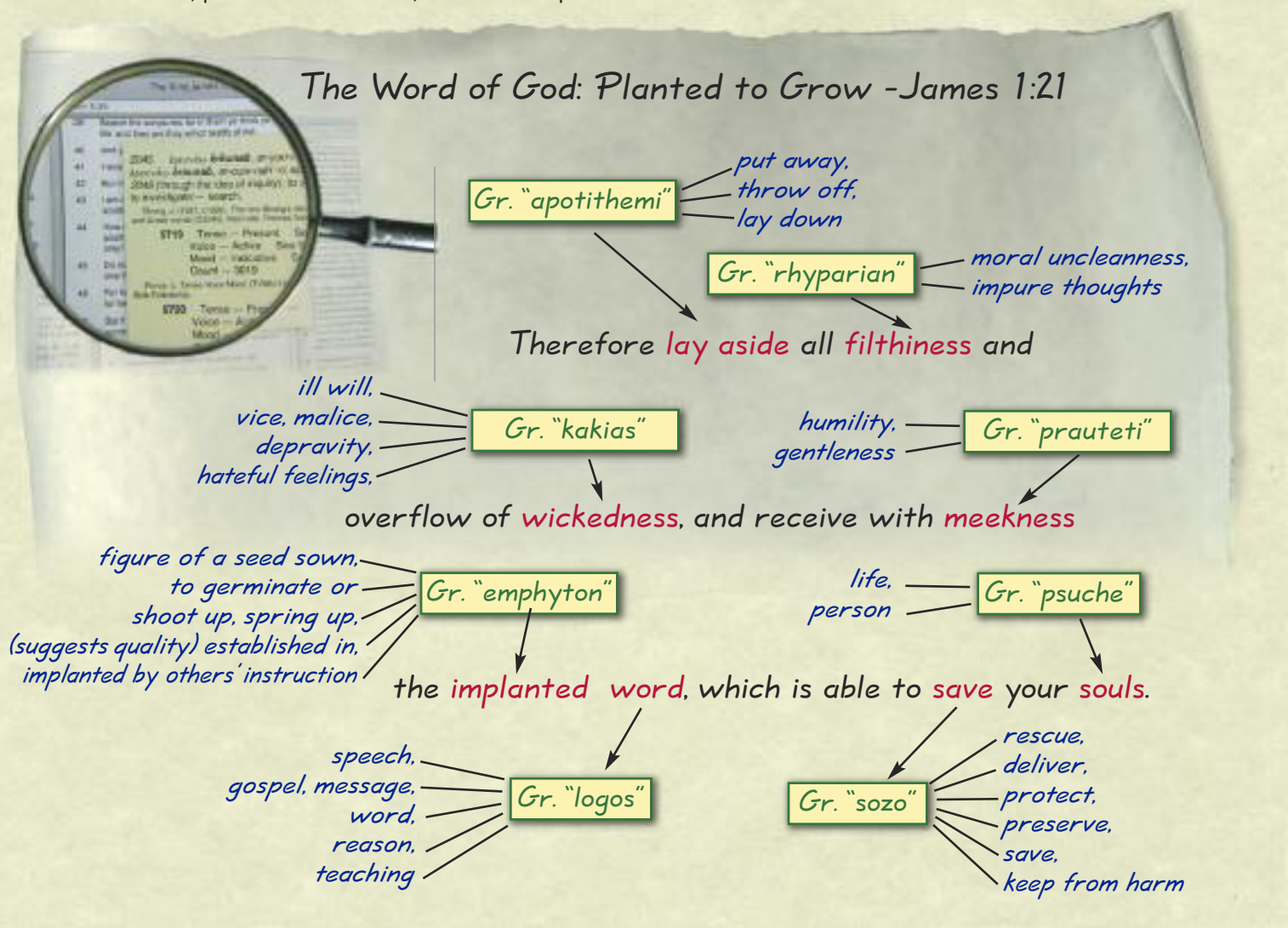
Why all these new translations? What is wrong with the Authorized Version?

Some people come near to resenting any attempt to

MAGNIFYING THE WORD

Search the Scriptures – James 1:21

The word of God, planted in our hearts, must shoot up and bear fruit if it is to “save” our souls from eternal death.



DID YOU HEAR IT?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

hear it, I am not responsible.

God recognizes no such right. His Word and His authority are absolute. In His presence each of us is one-on-one, there is only one command for each of us: "Obey."

What is the "conclusion of the whole matter"? Just this: "Fear God, and keep His commandments." Why? Because "God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Eccl. 12:13-14).

James is right to the point: "Do not merely listen to the word... Do what it says" (James 1:22 NIV).

Do you remember the reaction of the disciples at the Last Supper when Jesus said one of them would betray Him? His words sounded

strange, frightening, even threatening. But their response showed that each heard the Master as an audience of one, for they "began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, 'Is it I?' And another said, 'Is it I?'" (Mark 14:17-19).

If we are going to benefit from God's Word, we need to hear it for ourselves, one-on-one. This is why the Psalmist said, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak" (Ps. 85:8). "I will hear"—in an audience of one.

Did YOU hear it?—did I? ♦

If we are going to benefit from God's Word, we need to hear it for ourselves.

The King James Version, or...?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

see F. F. Bruce, *"The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?"*)

2) The limitations of 17th century English

The language of the King James Version is inevitably the language of 1611, and therefore archaic. Newer translations offer the advantage of more familiar vocabulary.

For example, Acts 21:15 reads in the Authorized Version, *"After those days we took up our carriages and went up to Jerusalem."* Here "carriages" is used in the sense of "that which we had to carry." The ESV phrases it, *"After these days we got ready and went up to Jerusalem."* The NLT says, *"After this we packed our things and left for Jerusalem."*

When the Authorized Version emerged in 1611, it used the everyday language of the common people. But the English of 1611 is not the English we speak today. A more modern translation, such as the New King James Version, helps it speak to us again.

Also, modern translators have the advantage of the discovery of a host of documents, such as private letters, legal documents, census papers, minutes of meetings, etc., that make them able to better understand and convey the language of the New Testament.

Translator Bias

One problem remains with regard to every translation, and that is the inevitable influence of the translator's beliefs on the translation. Every translation is to some extent a commentary. The translator must repeatedly choose one definition from among many, and his decision will be influenced by his background, education and personal beliefs. This fact even more obvious in recent translations of the Bible which try to convey the feel and dynamic of the text, as well as the literal rendering of the words. The result can be a serious misunderstanding or misrepresenting of the author's meaning, particularly in passages of Scripture that are symbolic or figurative.

We are grateful to all the translators who have given their best scholarship to make the Bible come alive, and communicate its message. However, because of this unavoidable "human" factor, no translation is completely accurate—which is why, when one passage of Scripture seems to contradict another or to militate against the overall teaching of the Bible, it is necessary to consult original language sources.

Scripture must always be the final authority in understanding Scripture. ♦



(above) The earliest known complete text of the New Testament is in the Codex Sinaiticus, written in Greek. This 4th-century manuscript was found in 1859 in a monastery on Mt. Sinai. It was the forerunner of the modern book. Besides the New Testament it contains most of the Old Testament up to Ezra.

ANSWERS FOR PAGE 13

FROM THE LIFE OF DAVID

1. The prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 16:4–13)
2. He was delivering food to his three brothers and their captain (1 Sam. 17:17–18)
3. While protecting his sheep, God had helped David kill both a lion and a bear; and David knew the Lord would help him kill Goliath as well. (1 Sam. 17:34–37)
4. "Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand...'" (1 Sam. 17:45–46)
5. Jonathan. He gave him his armor, his sword, his bow and his belt (1 Sam. 18:1–4)
6. Saul was jealous because the women had praised David's battle victories as greater than his. (1 Sam. 18:9)
7. Because he would not kill God's anointed king (1 Sam. 26:7–11)
8. Hebron (2 Sam. 2:1–4)
9. Mephibosheth, lame in both feet (2 Sam. 9:1–7)

10. Nathan the prophet. You are the man. (2 Sam. 12:1–9)
11. The sword would never depart from his house (2 Sam. 12:10–12)
12. David acknowledged his sin and Nathan told David God had forgiven him (2 Sam. 12:13). Psalm 51 records David's prayer of repentance.
13. David planned for the temple. He lined up laborers and gathered gold, silver and other materials in abundance for the Temple Solomon was to build (1 Chronicles 22:2–10)
14. Ahithophel. Hushai (1 Kings 1:28–40)
15. Solomon (1 Kings 1:28–40)

FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

1. No (1:18)
2. Cephas (1:42)
3. Turned water to wine at the wedding in Cana (2:1–11)
4. Was born again (3:3)
5. Samaritan. Jews wouldn't speak to Samaritans (4:7–9)
6. Because it was the Sabbath (5:5–10)
7. Set [make] you free (8:32)

8. Five loaves and two fishes (6:8–13)
9. The pool of Siloam (9:1–7)
10. Bethany (11:1)
11. Four days (11:14–17)
12. Gardener (husbandman, vinedresser) (15:1)
13. Branches (15:5)
14. "that a man lay down his life for his friends" (15:13)
15. "my Father is greater than I." (14:28)
16. In the same way Jesus and God are one—united in one purpose, one in mind (17:20–22)
17. They would have fought to prevent His being captured (18:36)
18. Two—Peter and John (18:15)
19. It is finished (19:30)
20. "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews" (19:19)
21. Mary Magdalene (20:12)
22. Thomas (20:29)
23. A morning after Jesus' resurrection when they had fished all night and caught nothing (21:12)
24. Simon Peter (21:15–17)

Read: Acts 16:1-5

Memorize:

*"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity."
—1 Timothy 4:12*

HOW ABOUT YOU?

If you needed a good reference for something that was very important to you, would you have a difficult time finding one? Do you tend to forget that people are observing your actions? Do you sometimes say unkind things or tease others just for fun?

Little things that don't seem so bad to you at the time can affect other people's opinions of you. Ask your parents to show you things you do that may be hurting your testimony to others.

Read: Matt. 25:14-30

Memorize:

*"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city."
—Revelation 22:14*

REFERENCES

Mom, look! I've got an application to work at the corner store doing sweeping and stuff. See...here it is." Craig was so excited, he couldn't stop talking. This would be his first job. "Who can I give as references?" he asked.

"How about the Michaels?" suggested Mother. "And maybe the Martins."

Craig looked a little sheepish. "I cut in front of Mrs. Michaels at the store the other day," he admitted. "I was in a hurry so I pretended I didn't see her, but I think she knew. I'm not sure I should ask her. And...ah...well...Mr. Martin saw me hit a little boy over the head with my lunch box." Mother frowned. "It was empty," Craig hurried to say. He paused. "Do you think that matters? I didn't hurt him."

"Well, you hurt yourself," said Mother. "You hurt your reputation. But put the application away for now—it's time for supper."

After the evening meal, Craig's father took the big family Bible, and together they read from the sixteenth chapter of Acts. "Hmmm. That's interesting," murmured Mother. "It seems that before Paul took Timothy with him

on a missionary journey, he asked for references."

"References?" puzzled Craig.

"He was well spoken of by the brethren," pointed out Mother.

"Yeah," said Craig, "and Timothy must have been happy when he found that the men gave him a good report. It would be pretty exciting to go on a missionary trip with the Apostle Paul!"

"It sure would," agreed Mother. "Can you imagine what would have happened if they had said, 'Well, Timothy's usually pretty good, but we saw him hit a little boy over the head with his lunch box'? Or, 'I like Timothy, but sometimes he pushes people out of his way if he's in a hurry'?"

Dad looked puzzled, and Craig laughed nervously. "I think you're finding out how important all your actions are," added Mother. "Besides, what does God think of our actions?" she finished.

ALL YOUR ACTIONS ARE IMPORTANT



Gary looked at the keys he held. His grandparents had dropped him off at their house. They'd be home after Grandma had her checkup at the doctor's office. In the meantime, he planned to enjoy a glass of milk with

THE RIGHT KEY

some of Grandma's nice, big, chocolate-chip cookies. "Grandpa said the silver key with the round top is their house key," he murmured, "but I can't find one like that." One by one he slid the keys around on the ring.

Then Gary tried each key in the lock, but none worked. Oh, why didn't I let Grandpa open the door before he and Grandma left? he thought. Grandpa had offered to do it, but Gary had wanted to feel grownup and independent. Now he walked around the house, checking every window and door. They were all locked securely. I'll just have to sit down on the steps and wait. How boring! Besides, I'm hungry. Thirsty, too!

As he waited, Gary thought about the things he could be doing inside. And out on the steps, a sharp cold wind made him shiver.

After two long hours his grandparents arrived. "What took you soooo long?" Gary burst out. "I've been outside the whole time."

Grandpa looked puzzled, "Why?"

"Because I can't make any of your keys work," answered Gary.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Grandpa. "Now I remember! I took the house key off that ring when I had a duplicate made. I must have forgotten to put it back. I'm sorry, Gary."

"Well, I have a key," said Grandma cheerily, and they used her key to open the door.

"It sure was tough sitting out there with all those keys, and not one that would work!" said Gary as he watched Grandma begin to make supper a little later.

"Gary, do you know there's something much worse?" Grandma said thoughtfully. "It's expecting to get eternal life and then finding too late that you have the wrong key."

"What do you mean?" asked Gary.

"Well, there are thousands who believe the key to eternal life is simply, 'Believe on the

Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.'" She paused and then continued, "but Jesus said '*Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.*'"¹ So you see, the right key to the gates into the city is to 'do His commandments.'"

"But doesn't the Bible say 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved?'"²

"Yes, it does Gary. But to believe means much more than simply saying 'I believe,'" explained Grandma. "Jesus also said, '*he who endures to the end shall be saved.*'"³ Those who truly believe the gospel with all their heart will live by it. And to those with the right key Jesus will say, '*Well done, good and faithful servant;... Enter into the joy of your lord.*'"⁴

BELIEVE AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS



thought about what her mother had said. She remembered how she often listened to the radio at her friend Nancy's house. She and Nancy were usually busy with something else while they listened, but even though she seldom paid that much attention to the words of the songs they played, Stephanie knew all the words. Reluctantly Stephanie admitted to herself that Mom was right. Something about the music made the words stick in her mind. She really didn't want junk food in her mind.

As Stephanie put the box of cereal she had chosen into the cupboard she made a resolve, "No more junk food for my mind!" ♦

FEED YOUR MIND WHOLESOME THOUGHTS

The above stories are adapted from *KEYS FOR KIDS* 1999

How ABOUT You?

What "key" are you counting on to get you through the gates into the Holy City?

¹Revelation 22:14

²Acts 16:31

³Matthew 24:13

⁴Matthew 25:21, 23

Read:

Psalm 139:1-5, 23-24

Memorize:

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." —Philippians 4:8

How ABOUT You?

Do you listen to music or anything else that encourages a way of life that doesn't please God? He is pleased when you listen to things that are uplifting and that help you grow spiritually. What you hear gets into your mind whether you are aware of it or not.

Make sure God is pleased with what He sees in your mind.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Mom, may we buy this cereal today?" Stephanie asked. She held a brightly colored box over the grocery cart as though she were going to put it in. She giggled at Mother's raised eyebrow and quickly added. "I'm not serious, Mom, I know this one has too much sugar." She replaced it with a different kind. "Is this better?" she asked. Then, with a twinkle in her eye, she parroted Mom's often repeated words: "You are what you eat." Mom smiled and nodded.

In the car, Stephanie flipped on the radio to listen to the weather report. It was followed by a musical program and Stephanie hummed along with the number being sung, but Mom reached over and turned off the radio. "The words of that song encourage a kind of life that isn't pleasing to God," she said with a frown.

"But it has such a pretty tune," protested Stephanie. "Can't we just ignore the words?"

"Listening to that kind of music is like eating food that isn't good for us, Honey. Our minds 'eat up' the words whether we pay attention to them or not," Mom explained.

"Physically, we are what we eat, and mentally, we are what we think about," added Mom. "We should fill our minds with thoughts that are pleasing to God so we grow spiritually."

Stephanie said no more, but at home while she helped Mom put the groceries away, she



Lorna Vivian Shayler

On July 6, 2011 our long-time friend and Sister, Lorna Vivian Shayler, fell asleep in death after a short illness at the age of 94 years. A resident of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, she was a life-long member of the Megiddo Church. The following was written by her family and read at a service in her memory:

We are here today to cherish the memory of Lorna Vivian Shayler.

Lorna had two focuses in her life: her family and her faith. She was steadfast to both throughout her life. Lorna's family and friends would like to take a moment to reflect on the steps they took alongside Lorna on their path through life.

Her husband and life partner of 71 years, wants you to know that Lorna valued truth, honesty and genuine love. She believed in the good in people, and would let them know when they transgressed—her husband adds, “especially Ed.” He also says she would want you to know how fortunate she always felt to have two lovely, loving daughters.

Her daughters Donna and Gail wish you to know how truly blessed they were in having a selfless and unfailing friend and mother in Lorna. Her self standards were high, and her life was her example. Her example taught them how to be mothers to their own sons, as well as how to be themselves. They miss her sadly.

She extended her family to include people that she truly loved, and her Brothers and Sisters in the faith of Jesus Christ at the Megiddo Church. Lorna had an impact on those she met along life's mortal path, even if just for a short time. Her ways were quiet, simple, humble, and gracious.

Lorna found joy in the natural world around her, as she found it a reflection of her faith she had in the Lord. She would marvel at the beauty of a flower, be moved by the splendor of a sunset, be charmed by the shy passing of wild animals, and find delight in the sweep of the seasons.

The following is extracted from a service held in memory of Sister Lorna Shayler by her Church friends in Rochester, New York.

The Bible calls death a sleep, a dreamless, unconscious sleep. Remember when Martha and Mary sent word to Jesus, who was out of town, that their brother Lazarus was gravely ill? Then he died. Jesus' report to His disciples was, “*Our friend Lazarus sleeps,... I go that I may wake him up*” (John 11:11).

Ages before, the patriarch Job had said, “*If I wait, the grave is mine house.*” He did not look forward to that long, silent wait. But he did look forward to what lay beyond it. Just thrill with the expectancy he felt as he wrote about his own personal hope of a resurrection in the far distant future: “*Oh, that my words could be recorded. Oh, that they could be inscribed on a monument, carved with an iron chisel and filled with lead, engraved forever in the rock....I know that my Redeemer lives, and he will stand upon the earth at last. And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God! I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!*” (Job 19:23–27 NLT)

The promise of a physical, bodily resurrection, when we will see and know our loved ones and they will know us, is the real hope held out to believers. This is why the apostle Paul said, “*I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope*”—don't sorrow, because it will not be long until “*the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise*” (1 Thess. 4:13, 16 NKJV & NIV). It will not be long to wait, not now.

This very real hope of the resurrection was the bright expectation of our Friend and Sister, Lorna Shayler, affectionately known among us as Sister Lorna.

Sister Lorna was born on June 12, 1917. She was married to Edward Shayler on May 14, 1940, with whom she shared life for 71 years, and who survives her. She is also survived by their two loving and caring daughters Gail and Donna, who looked after their parents' every need—and more, their happiness and well-being (I am thinking about special dinners at home, trips to parks, excursions to the mountains, simple rides in the country, and much more we didn't happen to hear about). Sister Lorna is also survived by two grandsons Eric and Brynn, and their families.

Sister Lorna's faith in God and the Bible was the solid center of her life around which everything else revolved. She learned about the Megiddo Church from her mother, and took it as her own, and has been a member of the Church family for more than 40 years. If it had not been for the problems inherent in living in a different country, she and Brother Ed would have been resident with the Rochester Congregation. They have been one with them in heart and in spirit, and came to Rochester for the Abib/New Year celebrations as long as health permitted. A number of the Church members also have fond memories of visiting them—in Calgary, in British Columbia, and again in Calgary—and being genuinely welcomed in their home. They gave up traveling to Rochester only when forced to by the problems of advancing years.

Sister Lorna was a buoyant person who loved life as God made it, and found inspiration in the commonest things around her. A bird, a flower, a sunrise, the beauty of color and sound—each was evidence to her of the great God to whom she had committed her life, and who had promised so much more. It was her love of life that attracted her to the teachings

of the Megiddo Church, because, wonderful as life was, she wanted more, even eternal life in Christ's coming Kingdom. Everyone who knew her knew also of her strong stand for what she believed—they may not have agreed with her, but they had to respect her conviction. ♦

(right) Brother and Sister Shayler in "Kananaskis Country"—a very beautiful and favorite spot just miles from Calgary, Alberta. They often enjoyed trips to the country, ocean or mountains.

(Photo taken September 2006)



Getting ready to serve at our Abib dinner.

The Shaylers were regular visitors at our Church's New Year festivities.

(left to right, standing) Ruth Sisson, Margaret Tremblay, Alice Cummings.
(seated) Elsie Switzer, Lorna Shayler

(Photo taken in 1980s.)

Life Lessons

I believe we are missing something Sister Lorna gave all of us if we do not take some very good lessons from her life example.

First, Be too big for bitterness. She could have been bitter over her husband's horrible war experience, being a POW for four years, and the hard years of adjustment that followed. But she wasn't. Her faith in God and her hope of future life made her strong for the battles of life.

Second lesson: Be too big to feel sorry for yourself. Sister Lorna had many reasons to feel sorry for herself, but she didn't. She had the practical common sense to make the best of it, knowing "this too will pass." And when her husband joined her in her faith, nearly forty years ago, her patient holding-on was rewarded. In recent years they spent many happy hours worshiping, studying, working and growing together.

Third lesson: Be sure you can say "no" to yourself. Sister Lorna maintained an optimum quality of life even while living with the complications of two major diseases.

Medical science helped greatly, but a lot hinged on her being able to say "no" to herself. She saved herself a lot of suffering, and added years to her life by her rigid diet and exercise plan. If it meant eating half an apple and a dry rice cake, so be it. "Life is more than food," she would say. With the same strength she could adhere to the demands of the higher law of God—which offers greater, even eternal, benefits.

Fourth lesson: Keep learning. Sister Lorna kept her faith strong with daily Bible study, memorizing and reviewing Bible verses. In recent years, until ill health forced a change, she and Brother Ed enjoyed a daily routine of Bible study together twice daily—time they both treasured deeply—while keeping their minds active and their spiritual life growing. Their faith in the plan of God for this earth was real, and it was Sister Lorna's sincere hope to live to see the coming of God's prophet Elijah. It was not God's will for her, but when Elijah comes, she will be awakened to meet him. ♦

LITTLE THINGS

*It's the little things that bring us down.
The little things that mar our crown.
Like Solomon we have grand designs,
But little foxes spoil the vines.*

*It's the little things that make us stop.
We choose the wrong, taboos we drop.
Like Haman we think we're oh, so clever,
Then, hung by words, our "rep" we sever.*

*It's the little things that nip at our heel.
We want to walk upright, but sins we conceal.
Like Ananias we think our secret's unknown,
Then we fall on our face with a heart of stone.*

*It's the little things left unforgiven
That mar our record writ in heaven.
It's the little things that can cause us to sink,
The times we fail to stop and think.*

*Yet it's little things that keep us in the race—
Daily meditation, seeking His face.
Like Jesus, we need to pull away and pray,
Or the little things will lead us astray.*

What "little things" have I been hiding
or let slide in my life?

**Little things can TRIP us up—
little things can HELP us up.**

*Thoughts grow into deeds, deeds into habits,
habits into character.
What seeds are we planting?
Will we be happy with our harvest?*

The best way for Christians to grow is to eat
the bread of life.

*The fruits of the spirit grow only
in the garden of obedience.*

Don't spend your time, but invest it.

*We can dodge our responsibilities, but we can't dodge
the consequences.*

Our obedience is our expression of our love for
God and of our faith in His promises.

*The roots of contentment grow deepest in
the soil of gratitude.
And the roots of happiness grow deepest in
the soil of service.*

"Watch and pray." Does Jesus tell us to watch and pray about world events? or the stockmarket? or how well our children are doing? No! "Watch and pray" that the arrival of Jesus finds us ready to meet Him, our lives worthy of His protection and approval. "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." —Luke 21:36

*Let us not seek an easy life—
that life would be hollow and shallow.*

Death is not a "period" only a "comma"
for the true believer and
follower of Christ.

*Silence can be valuable.
Don't break it unless you can improve on it.*

There is no good excuse for ignoring God's
instructions.

Faith that is not personalized will drift and falter. The Israelites failed as a nation because they "forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the Lord to anger" (Judges 2:12, NIV).





In memory of **Rev. L. T. Nichols**, Founder of the Megiddo Church
Born October 1, 1844

UPON THIS ROCK

ROCK has long been a symbol of strength, stability, endurance, timelessness. A blast of wind, a pounding rain, even an avalanche of ice and snow can easily reduce to ruins a strong structure of wood and steel. But the pounding of the ocean only polishes the rock.

When all about us is shaking, we stand today upon the Bible, the Word of God, the Rock of Divine Truth, the *"faith once delivered to the saints."* For this we are indebted to the work of our Founder, whom we remember with deep gratitude and heartfelt thanks. Were it not for his tireless efforts in searching out the true teaching of the Word of God, we today would still be building on the shifting sands of human speculation and tradition.

Because of his valiant efforts, we stand today upon the solid rock of reason and evidence as revealed in the Bible. And deeper investigation and better tools only discloses more and more evidence of the solid foundation. It is all rock, and on this rock we take our stand. In the midst of doubt and uncertainty, we say with confidence: We believe.

✓ **WE BELIEVE... in the Bible**, our guide for life and our only source of knowledge of the Divine mind today. Its message of wisdom was *"given by inspiration of God"* and is *"profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Tim. 3:16–17). Scripture was designed to preserve and teach the plan and purpose of God, and to give us the practical instruction we need in order to qualify for a place in that plan and purpose. It tells us what God wants us to do and what He would have us refrain from doing.

✓ **WE BELIEVE... in one God**, the great Creator of all, who, in the extolling words of His prophet Nehemiah, has *"made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You"* (Neh. 9:6).

✓ **WE BELIEVE... in the plan of God, ongoing and eternal**, His *"eternal purpose"* (Eph. 3:11). *"From everlasting to everlasting"* (Ps. 103:17) He is seeking out of His vast creation

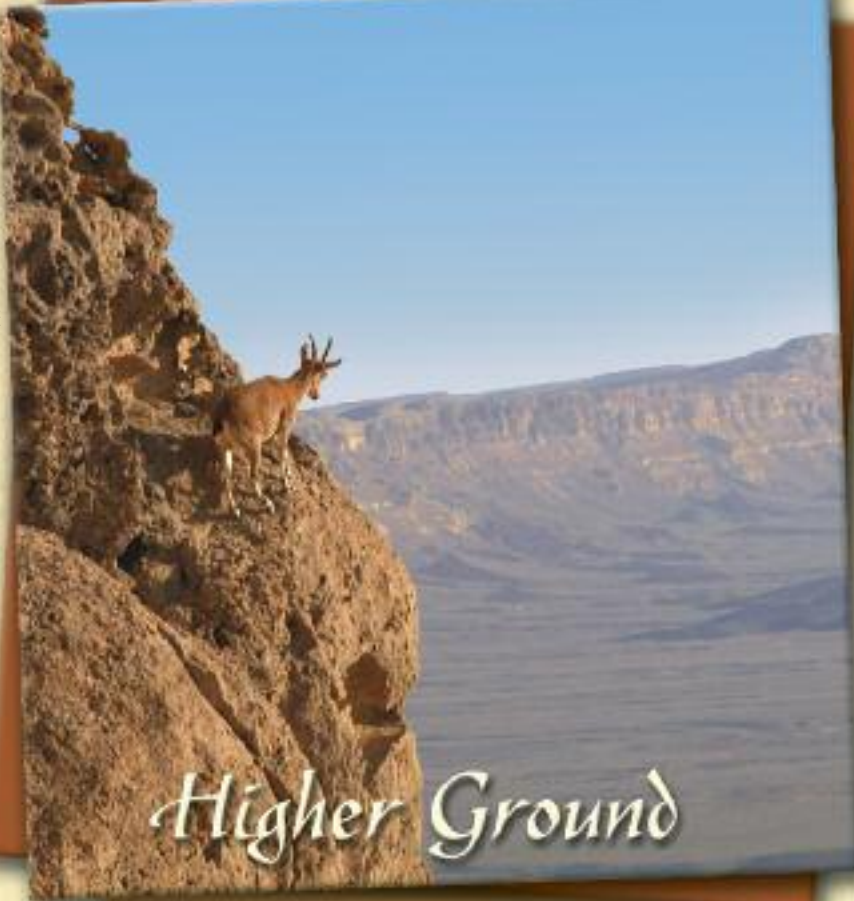
those who will serve Him in sincerity and truth. These He is perpetuating, rewarding them with every conceivable and inconceivable blessing and benefit. We believe that God will fulfill all that He has promised in His Word, that a new age is coming—is very near—when this earth will be annexed to heaven and filled with the glory of the Lord, His people (Matt. 6:10; Num. 14:21) as countless millions of worlds have been glorified before.

✓ **WE BELIEVE... in Jesus Christ**, the son of God and coming King of all the earth. He was born of a Virgin, in fulfillment of Divine prophecy (Isa. 7:14–15), raised up *"from among his brethren,"* and *"tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin"* (Deut. 18:15, 18; Heb. 4:14–15). He lived and worked among men, demonstrating in finest detail the life that is pleasing to His heavenly Father, finished the work He was given to do, was crucified by an angry mob, buried, and resurrected by the power of God. Forty days later He was taken to heaven, where He is seated at the right hand of God, awaiting the Day when He shall return to Earth with power and glory to establish His eternal Kingdom of peace and righteousness (Luke 1:31–33; Isa. 9:6–7; Dan. 2:44; 7:27).

✓ **WE BELIEVE... in man**, created lower than the angels (Heb. 2:6) but capable of attaining to the *moral* likeness of Christ (Eph. 4:13; Luke 6:40). Those who attain to that high standard of character through proper training, forgiveness, discipline, and growth will at Christ's return (1 Pet. 5:4) receive the *physical* change to the immortal state (Phil. 3:20–21; 1 John 3:2), being made equal to the angels never to die (Luke 20:35–36).

✓ **WE BELIEVE... in faith by which one can qualify for the eternal salvation** that Jesus will give to every faithful one when He returns (Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 5:4). Only by this faith or knowledge of God can one learn right from wrong by God's standard, turn from his sins, and be forgiven. *"Without faith it is impossible to please Him"* (Heb. 11:6); but only as faith results in right doing can one be among those who *"diligently seek"* and *"obey Him"* (Heb. 11:6; 5:9). For *"faith without works is dead"* (James 2:26).

This is the rock, and on this rock we take our stand. ♦



Higher Ground

I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining ev'ry day;
Still praying as I onward bound,
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

My heart has no desire to stay
Where doubts arise and fears dismay;
Tho' some may dwell where these abound,
My prayer, my aim is higher ground.

I want to live above the world,
Tho' evil darts at me are hurled,
For faith has caught the joyful sound,
The song of saints on higher ground.

I want to scale the utmost height,
And catch a gleam of glory bright;
But still I'll pray till Zion I've found,
"Lord, lead me on to higher ground."

Lord, lift me up, and I shall stand
By faith on Zion's table-land;
A higher plane than I have found,
Lord—plant my feet on higher ground.

— Johnson Oatman Jr.

