

Megiddo Message

May
the GOD of HOPE
fill you with JOY in your FAITH,
that your whole life and outlook
may be RADIANT
with HOPE.
—Apostle Paul

Vol. 87, No. 3
March/April, 2000

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ME?

Of course you've heard it—perhaps even said it. "That's not my problem—it's not my fault." Most often the statement is followed by an explanation that is supposed to convince the listener that it couldn't be helped. "The circumstances weren't right." "It was beyond my control." "The machine did it." "There just wasn't enough time." The reasons are endless. The intended conclusion is the same for all: "Don't look at me—I'm not responsible for this one!"

The reasons are close kin to those which schoolteachers hear daily from students who don't have their homework done. They range all the way from not understanding the assignment or not knowing how to do it to the ultimate: "My dog ate it."

Which in reality is only giving us a little more practice telling ourselves that we could not have acted any other way.

More than likely, if we are totally honest with ourselves, we know that *we could have*. We didn't have to make the choice we made. We *could have* turned the situation around. We *could have* done better.

While there are certainly situations beyond our control, God has planned that we take responsibility for our actions. When we agree to serve Him, we pledge ourselves to use our God-given abilities to comply with His laws of right and wrong. If I do right, it is my credit. If I do wrong, *it is my fault*. Either way, God intends me to be responsible for my behavior.

What should I do when I fail? Take David for a pattern. When David had sinned, he prayed, "*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me*" (Ps. 51:10). He did not try to deny his sin. He took responsibility for it, acknowledged it, and asked God to forgive him.

Isn't that far better than holding an attitude of "Don't look at me—it's not my fault"?

The apostle Paul told Timothy that there are two kinds of vessels: one to be honored, one to be dishonored. Regardless of what we were last year, what will we be this year?

Face yourself—and God—honestly. Take responsibility for your conduct. A new *you* begins where you do. ♦

A new you begins where you do.



Wishing You A Happy New Year!

Abib first, the first month of the ancient Hebrew New Year. Another new beginning.

Are you thinking, "Been there. Done that"?

Are you seeing your life as a monotonous succession of days, with nothing out of the ordinary in sight? Are you thinking, "Yes, I'll renew my commitment, re-check my priorities, and resolve to live better in the days ahead.

But I've done all that before"?

You have...except...you never lived this day before. You called this morning a new day...God called it a new opportunity. You never before had the opportunity that God is giving you this very moment. You never were just your present age, in this exact situation. Never before have your family, your friends, your loved ones faced exactly what is ahead for them now. So *Happy New Year!*

What is a *year*? Whatever we choose as a starting point, it is a succession of God-given days of opportunity.

But nothing is *new*, you say. Nothing changes. No, *everything* changes. And thank God, we can change too, and that is precisely why we can say "Happy New Year!" because extended time is our opportunity to change. God is the only unchanging, dynamic, omnipotent one.

We can—we *must* change. Not only do we have a new year but a new day and a new hour, with new circumstances, new influences, and new opportunities to become new ourselves!

Now, what about the "happy" part? How can we be sure it will be a *happy* new year? Because our happiness is within our control. Happiness is not something that comes from outside stimuli. Our happiness is in direct relation to our obedience to our Creator.

Genuine happiness is an outgrowth of hope, hope in God and hope in the future and the reality of all that He has promised. I would like to repeat the benediction which the Apostle Paul wrote long ago to the believers in Rome:

"May the God of Hope fill you with joy and peace in your faith, that...your whole life and outlook may be radiant with hope" (Rom. 15:13 Phillips).

Place your faith and confidence in God, and give Him your best, then you can look forward to a happy new year—and a glorious, eternal future!

—The Editor

YOU CALLED THIS MORNING A NEW DAY...
GOD CALLED IT A NEW OPPORTUNITY.

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MEGIDDO MEANS...

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

WE BELIEVE...

- ♦ in God, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- ♦ in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- ♦ in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to

heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.

- ♦ in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- ♦ in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- ♦ in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- ♦ in ourselves as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

- ♦ in the promise of God, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

THE HERALD AND THE KING

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

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



THE MEGIDDO CHURCH

Welcomes Abib...

What is Abib?

Abib (or Nisan) was the first month of the sacred year as God instructed Moses to measure time. In the ancient Hebrew language, Abib meant "month of green ears," "spring or sprouting month." God commanded Moses to "observe the month of Abib" (Deut 16:1; Ex. 12:2; 13:4) as a reminder of their miraculous deliverance from Egypt during the month Abib.

Abib 1 was, on the ancient Hebrew calendar, the first day of the week, the first day of the month, and the first day of the year. The new moon occurring this year on April 4, Abib 1 begins this year on Tuesday evening, April 4, and continues through Wednesday, April 5, Bible time being measured from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32). History tells us that it was the pattern of the Hebrew people to begin the new year with the first occurrence of the new moon after the Spring Equinox.

The Megiddo Church observes Abib First as the first day of the sacred New Year, and also as the anniversary of Jesus' birth.

Abib 13 is the anniversary of the night when Jesus met with His disciples and partook of the Last Supper with them before He suffered. It falls this year on Sunday evening, April 16.

At this time the members of the Megiddo Church partake of the Passover emblems (unleavened bread and grape juice) in obedience to Jesus' command, "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24).

The Passover is a sacred rite, symbolic of the renewing of our covenant relationship with God. Partaking of the bread symbolizes our acceptance of the knowledge of the law of God, and the juice represents our pledge to apply that knowledge to our daily lives as Jesus did, to offer ourselves in total dedication to do the will of God.

Abib 15 is the anniversary of the Resurrection of Christ, occurring this year on the morning of April 19. In ancient Israel, this first-day-of-the-week ceremony was the waving of the first sheaf of the harvest before the Lord. In its spiritual parallel, Christ the firstfruits from death rose this morning triumphant over the grave.

On the morning of Abib 15, "very early in the morning" (Mark 16:2) certain women went to the tomb where Jesus had been buried. Finding it empty, they heard those immortal words that still warm our hearts today: "He is not here, for he is risen! Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matt. 28:6).

Pentecost, the festival by which the Israelites marked the end of the wheat harvest and the beginning of the barley harvest, came fifty days after the waving of the first sheaf offering on Abib 15. It falls this year on June 7. ♦

*C*ome, let us anew
Our journey pursue,
Roll round with the year,
And never stand still till the Master appear.
His adorable will
Let us gladly fulfill,
And our talents improve,
By the patience of hope and the labor of love.

*O*ur life is a dream;
Our time as a stream
Glides swiftly away,
And the oncoming moments refuse to delay.
The arrow is flown
The moment is gone;
The millennial year
Rushes on to our view, and eternity's near.

O that each in the day
Of His coming may say
"I have fought my way through,
I have finished the work that You gave me to do!"
O that each from his Lord
May receive the glad word:
"Well and faithfully done:
Enter into My joy, and sit down on My throne!"



ARE YOU READY FOR THE KING?

by RUTH SISSON

The King is coming! Jesus Christ, earth's long-awaited Messiah and Redeemer, is coming. It is the bright anticipation which Jesus Himself voiced in the prayer He taught His disciples to pray: *"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."*

The coming of the King is the promise of God Almighty, proclaimed by every sacred writer. It is the culmination of God's plan for this earth, the hour for which all creation is even now on tiptoe, eager *"to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own"* (Rom. 8:19, Phillips). Earth's rightful Ruler will arrive. The hour is near, the end of the age is upon us.

Are you ready? Am I? Are we ready to welcome Him today—tonight?

What can we, in a practical everyday situation, do to get ready?

If we look closely at the Scriptures, we will find what we can—and must—do to be ready for Him. These messages were recorded for us to hear and heed, and for this very purpose—lest the day of the Lord come upon us unawares.

What are they?

1: GET SERIOUS!

"Come to your senses and stop sinning. For to your shame I say that some of you don't even know God" (1 Cor. 15:34 NLT).

Do we hear what this great Apostle is saying? *"Come to your senses and stop sinning."* The Greek word translated *"come to your senses"* means *"to arouse out of stupor, awake,"* as out of a drunken sleep. The Apostle is comparing a lack of spiritual alertness to the repulsive condition of drunkenness—in order to shock us to our senses. *Get serious,* he is saying, about your standing before God, about the hope which God has set before you, about the Word of God and its effect upon you and its power in your life. You know these things, he says; you know what God is going to do, and you go about as though you were drunk! Get serious! Come to your senses and *"stop sinning."*

Paul was rebuking their thoughtless, heedless, unwary attitude toward sin. Real believers must be alert to every possibility of wrong in their lives, everything that might bring the disfavor of God upon them. Sin shuts us out of the presence of God. Sin keeps God from hearing our prayers. God hates sin in its every form. Sin will prevent us from receiving anything eternal from God.

What can we do about the sin that plagues us? Just this: Stop it! Whatever it is, stop giving in to it. What if it is a weakness of the flesh that continually tempts us? Resist it! What if it is a useless thought that we simply can't stop thinking about? Displace it. Overpower it. Flood it with a host of heavenly thoughts of things that are true and noble and upright and good, until there is no place for it to lodge.

There can be no real faith without a corresponding change in one's life, so *"come to your senses."* Get serious!

2: WAKE UP!

"Try to find out what would please the Lord; take no part in the barren deeds of darkness, but show them up for what they are. And so the hymn says: 'Awake, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine upon you.' Be most careful then how you conduct yourselves: like sensible men, not like simpletons. Use the present opportunity to the full, for these are evil days" (Eph. 5:11, 14–16, NEB).

Paul was out to attack spiritual sleeping sickness and anything related to it that might be afflicting his brethren and keeping them from wholehearted obedience to God. And so he admonishes, *"Awake!"* *"Be most careful how you conduct yourselves,...use the present opportunity to the full."* It is so easy to let slip the little opportunities of every day. While we are waiting for some great and heroic test, the little things that could be the making of us go by unused. Don't let this happen, he says. The present opportunity is ever with us, and must be redeemed. *"Use the present opportunity to the full."* Here is a continual obligation, from which there is no escape.

It is so easy to be caught in the whirlpool of this world, its thoughts, its cares, its interests. But as Christians we do not belong to this world. We are looking for our King, preparing, getting ready.

Don't wait for better days. The days are evil, and will get worse. Use the time that is now, and you have done all that you can do. Let the evil of the times confirm your faith. The good news of the Gospel is that the worst will give way to the best. In the midst of trouble and tumult, *the King will come!*

3: STAY AWAKE!

"But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son; no one but the Father. Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!" (Mark 13:32–37 JB).

Jesus is teaching by means of parable. The subject is His return, and the warning: all who would be ready to meet Him must stay awake. There would be danger—great danger—of falling asleep.

One may be awake for a time, but Jesus' admonition here is to stay awake. In other words, some will be nodding, weary of the prolonged wait. All of us know how hard it is to be alert when others are sleeping.

Notice particularly the possible hours of His return: *"At evening,...midnight,...cockcrow,...dawn"*—all are times when people are least alert, if not asleep. It is as if He said, "I am coming when most people will be sleeping, but you must stay awake. Let others doze—YOU KEEP AWAKE!"

Also in this parable is a call to faithfulness in stewardship. Every servant is responsible for something, every servant is accountable. Be awake, He says, and vigorous with whatever you have been entrusted!

In every way, Christ's servants must be different. When others are dozing, His servants must stay awake. While others live thoughtlessly and carefree, His servants must be getting ready. While others *"eat, drink and be merry,"* His servants must be intent on their duties. Like soldiers on the watch, they must stand out from the hapless hordes who will be shocked at the sound of the last trumpet.

"If he comes unexpectedly he must not find you asleep." He must not—He will not—if we stay awake.

4: DO RIGHT, SPEAK RIGHT, BE RIGHT!

"Why all this stress on behaviour? Because, as I think you have realized, the present time is of the highest importance—it is time to wake up to reality. Every day brings God's salvation nearer. The night is nearly over, the Day has almost dawned. Let us therefore fling away the things that men do in the dark, let us arm ourselves for the fight of the Day! Let us live cleanly, as in the daylight, not in the 'delights' of getting drunk or playing with sex, nor yet in quarrelling or jealousies. Let us be Christ's men from head to foot, and give no chances to the flesh to have its fling" (Rom. 13:11–14 Phillips).

Could words be plainer? Could the warning be sharper or more direct for us in this late hour? The Apostle is shouting across the centuries to us to wake up to reality. Time is more critical than ever before. The coming of the King is imminent. It is nearer now than when we first believed.

How can we get ready? Paul is direct: *"Fling away the things that men do in the dark...arm [yourselves] for the fight of the Day!...be Christ's men from head to foot, and give no chances to the flesh to have its fling."*

Getting ready for the coming of our King involves our whole being—what we do, what we say, what we think about, how we feel, what we enjoy—everything in and about us that is within our power to control. We must show that we belong to Christ, and *"give no chances to the flesh to have its fling."*

If we are getting ready for our King, we will not discuss topics of no spiritual benefit. We will follow the advice of the Apostle and speak only to edify, upbuild, instruct and encourage (Eph. 4:29). Our words will never show any trace of foolishness, uncleanness, anger, or impatience. Nor will we ever speak to build up ourselves in the sight of others. Rather, we will speak to promote the interests of Christ and His Kingdom.

If we are getting ready for our King, we will keep our thoughts to the same line of obedience. This is what we are commanded: to take captive every thought and make it obey the law of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4–5). We have no time or place to let our minds wander at will. Our thoughts must be regimented, tracked, and directed at all times.

What will their topic be? Will we spend hours ruminating on an unkind comment, a petty hurt, or something we can neither correct nor change? Or will we waste precious time in daydreaming, in a land of fiction and fantasy? Not at all! We

have an interest too large and too serious to allow any of these. Rather, we will again follow the advice of the apostle Paul and see that our mind is filled at all times with *"all that is true, all that is noble, all that is just and pure, all that is lovable and gracious, whatever is excellent and admirable"* (Phil. 4:8, NEB).

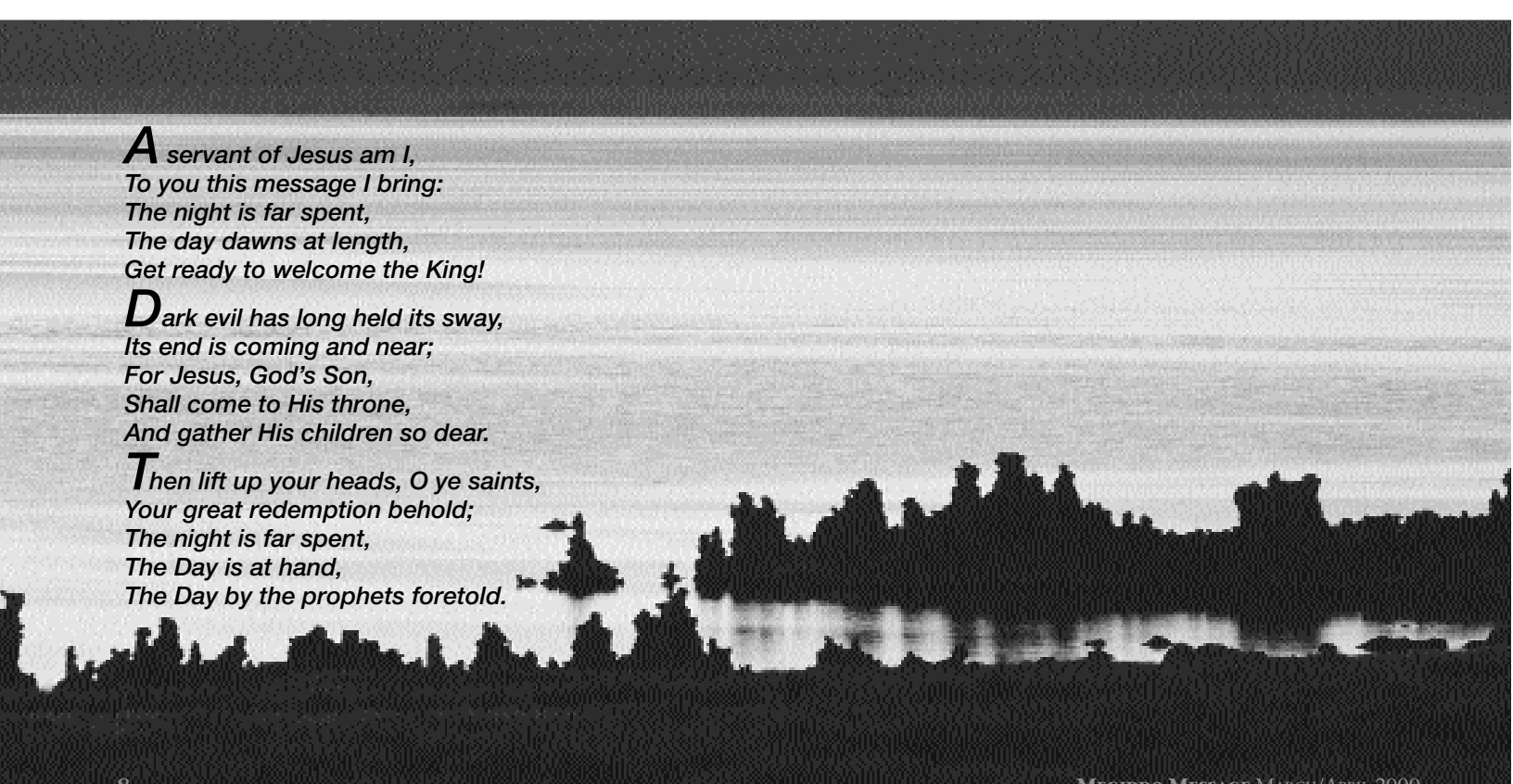
Our feelings, too, will be under the same strict control if we are seriously getting ready for our King. We will not allow ourselves to be submerged in a dozen minor interests. Our one overpowering thought in all that comes will always be, How can I use this (experience) to get ready for my King? Nor will we allow ourselves to be annoyed or unduly stirred by what does not please us, but will view all in relation to our coming King and the part we will be able to share in His New World. In that penetrating light, petty annoyances, small hardships, and even suffering and pain will be viewed as a passing thing, not worthy of too much concern, if only we can make sure our place with our Lord in that New World.

Do we wonder that the Apostle said, *"The present time is of the highest importance"*? There is no time for drowsiness, no time to relax and take things easy.

Using a different simile, Jesus' parable of the Ten Virgins is another warning to be prepared. The King is coming, and those who would be accepted then must get ready now. In Jesus' parable, ten virgins went out to meet the Bridegroom; but only five were ready when He arrived; the lamps of the others, the foolish virgins, had gone out.

The lesson: Jesus will find some sleeping. Jesus will find some ready. Which will you be? Will He find you wide awake, alert, watching? Or will He find you weary...yawning...asleep?

How many will He find spiritually alive and full of faith



A servant of Jesus am I,
To you this message I bring:
The night is far spent,
The day dawns at length,
Get ready to welcome the King!

Dark evil has long held its sway,
Its end is coming and near;
For Jesus, God's Son,
Shall come to His throne,
And gather His children so dear.

Then lift up your heads, O ye saints,
Your great redemption behold;
The night is far spent,
The Day is at hand,
The Day by the prophets foretold.

(Luke 18:8)? Jesus wondered. We wonder. If the King should suddenly drop in on us this very hour, how would He find us, you and me?

The words of Scripture echo and re-echo in our ears: Get ready! Get ready to meet the King! Live more intensely, more fervently according to the demands of faith. This is no time to play with any evil, any waywardness, any lust of the flesh. This is the time to be *“Christ’s men from head to foot, and give no chances to the flesh to have its fling.”*

Our days of preparation are fast drawing to a close. *The King is coming!*

5: PUT ON THE CHRISTIAN ARMOR

“But as to the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night....But you are not in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all sons of light and sons of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But, since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:1–8 RSV).

Again the theme is Christ’s sudden return and the right attitude for believers. They must be getting ready for their King. Again there is a warning against falling asleep. Each must walk and act like a child of God, their lives beaming with the light that represents Him. By active obedience they must overcome the tendency to any negligent disregard.

The passage indicates that Christ’s coming will be *“like a thief in the night”* to some.

To be able to stand and continue standing, we need the whole armor God has provided—the sword of the Spirit, the breastplate of righteousness, the sandals of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation (Eph. 6:10–11, 13–16). Without these, we are defeated before we start.

But *with* these, we will be able to stand.

Protect yourself! Put on the heavenly armor—by giving serious attention to righteousness, peace, faith, and the hope of salvation—now!

6: BE INTENSE

“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord” (Rom. 12:9–11 NIV).

Love, devotion, zeal and fervor are all vital components of the proper end-time attitude. And Jesus has yet another description for it, found in Matthew 11:12: *“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matt. 11:12).*

The word translated violence means “to force, compel, carry a point by obstinate perseverance.” As used in Luke 16:16, it means “sought with burning zeal” (Arndt & Gingrich).

We should notice Christ’s remark as it is phrased in two other translations: *“From the days of John the Baptist until now...they are pressing into the Realm of heaven—these eager souls are storming it!”* (Moffatt). *“The kingdom has endured violent assault, and the violent seize it by force [as a precious prize]—a share in the heavenly kingdom is sought for with most ardent zeal and intense exertion”* (Amplified).

No place here for drowsiness, sleepiness, or day-dreams.

It is an opportunity to be excited about, to be alert, intense, industrious and aroused by! The true Church is a band of dedicated soldiers ready for invasion! Eager! Pressing! Forceful! Coming on strong for the Kingdom of God!

Sleep is for those in the night. Christ’s men are men of the day. Zealous! Alive! Energetic!

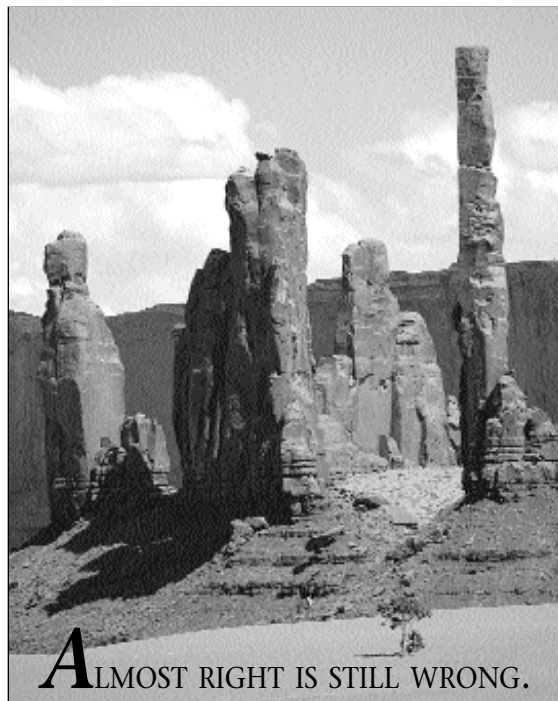
What should we do while others slumber and sleep? How shall we keep awake? What is our strategy for coping with the yawning, sighing stupor that surrounds us? How shall we overpower the deadening effects of those who are immersed in the interests of this world, or materialism, or secularism, or just plain day-to-day dullness?

There is only one answer: Keep your mind alert and your faith active, working, intense. Our preparation days are fast drawing to a close. If we don’t get busy and do it *now*, the King will be here before we’re ready.

We have no time to waste, no time to get comfortable, relax, doze or despair. There is only time for action and vigilance. There is only time for the attitude Jesus advises, positive, daring, vigorous, alarmed, coming on strong for the Kingdom of God!

It is for your life!

And it is for the time right now, when the Day of the Lord is imminent! ♦



For the Right Reason

It was one of those beautiful early spring days, and Bill and Jeff were racing to see who could get his half of the front yard cleaned up the fastest and the best. Bill, the older by two years, had agreed for the half with the rose bushes, to even up the contest.

"Who would think so much debris could collect over a winter!" exclaimed Bill as he dragged his second bag of trash to the curb.

"I know," agreed Jeff readily, stopping to wipe his brow. "We had every leaf raked up last fall, remember?"

"Sure do!" replied Bill emphatically. "Remember, I found that bolt from the lawnmower!...Now for the roses, then I'll be done!" Both boys went back to work in earnest.

Just as Jeff was hurriedly filling his last bag of leaves and sticks, a shiny new Audi 6 sedan slowed down in front of their house. It was Shawn Kruger and his father! Shawn was in most of Jeff's junior high classes, and they often shared equipment in science lab. Shawn's father worked at the plant where Jeff's father was manager.

"Whatcha doin', Buddy?" called out Shawn, as he waved enthusiastically from the open window. Jeff and Bill looked up and waved back as the car sped away.

Bill went over to where Jeff was working. "Can you believe it—they've got *another new car!*"

Jeff muttered something under his breath, then said out loud, "I can just hear Shawn telling everybody in the school tomorrow how perfect this new car is, then looking over at me as if to say, 'And when's your Dad going to get a new one?'" Jeff's bitterness showed clearly.

"Come to think of it," added Bill, "seems like it was about this time last year that they bought one."

"And both our cars are six or seven

years old!" exclaimed Jeff. "It just isn't fair."

"What's 'fair' got to do with it?" questioned Bill.

"Because I'm sure Dad earns more money than Mr. Kruger does. Dad's the plant manager. Yet they have five or six cars to our one...and lots of long trips, and a big new entertainment center, and a pool in their back yard, and...and we—we get to clean up the front yard! I mean it!...it's not fair!"

"So you wish you were Jeff Kruger instead of Jeff Stevens?"

"Wouldn't mind trying it for a week or two," retorted Jeff as he tossed his last bag by the curb. "What's money for, anyway, if not to enjoy?"

"Maybe there are other things to consider," countered Bill, trying to be reasonable. "For one thing, the Krugers don't have as big a family. They just have Shawn, and Dad and Mom have four of us to support."

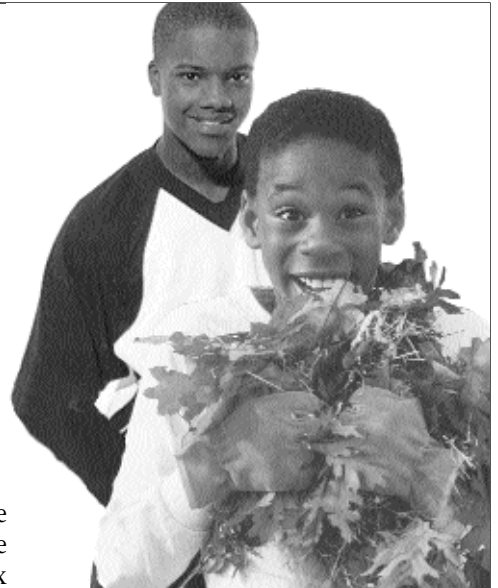
"I suppose."

Just then the famed six-year-old Ford station wagon turned into the driveway. Their mother was home from grocery shopping. "You're just in time, Mom!" called out Jeff, as she climbed out of the car. "I just finished my half—first." "What a nice surprise! I have such good boys," she said as she reached inside the car and pulled out a bag. "How about some fresh pizza? The grocer was almost giving it away—I assured him I had a good market for it."

"Thanks, Mom!" both boys said in unison, as they leaned against the car to enjoy their pizza. "We'll bring the groceries in," Bill assured Mother. "When this pizza job is done," added Jeff with obvious pleasure.

Mother smiled at her "busy" sons as she turned to go into the house.

Almost immediately the conversation about the Krugers resumed. "Bill, did you see what model that car was?"



interposed Jeff, sounding like an automotive pro. "Did you notice the headlights on it, and the hubcaps, and the skylight, and the leather seats? Those things push the price right through the roof, if I know anything about it!"

"I wouldn't mind having a new shiny car," Bill said thoughtfully. "But..." looking at his brother, as if inviting him to listen, he continued. "Jeff,...do you think Shawn is happier than we are? Only a few weeks ago he was over here because he was afraid to be at home...remember? Would you have traded places with Shawn then?"

Not waiting for an answer, Bill went on. "Then also, both Shawn's parents work, while Mom stays and takes care of us and everything."

"I know," admitted Jeff quietly.

"And I'm not sure that it's *how much* you earn. Dad and Mom try to think first of what we *need*, and let other things go. It's a big responsibility to manage."

"But what's wrong with putting money into a new car?" asked Jeff, not willing to give it up.

"Nothing, if we do it for the right reason," replied Bill. "Would you say it's a 'right reason' if we want a new car because the Krugers have one?"

"We should get a new car because...because ours is wearing out,...and because ours doesn't look up-to-date anymore,...and lots of other reasons:" Jeff was thinking fast.

Just then Father turned into the driveway. "Good! Dad's home," exclaimed Jeff as they raced to his car.

continued on page 22



The Kingdom of God

- Real
- Literal
- Worldwide
- Eternal

IS THE CHURCH THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

DID THE KINGDOM COME ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST?

IS THE KINGDOM HERE NOW?

WHAT DID JESUS MEAN WHEN HE SAID,
"THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU"?

DID GOD HAVE A LITERAL KINGDOM IN ISRAEL?

WHEN WILL THE KINGDOM COME?

Is THE CHURCH THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

SECTION ONE

"On page 4 (contents page under 'We Believe...') you write: 'in Jesus Christ...who shall shortly return to be king of the whole earth' and on the same page, you write that the Megiddo Message is 'A religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ.'"

"My question: How can you publish, as fact, that Jesus Christ is a yet future king, when Scripture plainly reveals that He is right now, and was in the first century, a king ruling from heaven? And He is not just any king, but a present-ruling king over the entire earth and all its inhabitants. Where is it written in Scripture that Jesus Christ is a yet future king (in our future)? Your comments would be interesting."

Since the Bible was written some nineteen centuries before our time, what was future at the time of its writing could easily have been fulfilled already.

However, if Jesus is already king, then we should be able to see the fulfillment of other passages of Scripture which describe the earth and what it will be like in the Kingdom.

In the following discussion we will look at what the Bible says about the Kingdom, and what it says that suggests it could be existing now.

What does the Bible tell us about the Kingdom of God?

1 CHRIST WILL RULE ON EARTH

When the Kingdom is established on earth, Jesus will be ruling on earth, not from some distant point in heaven.

The Bible makes a number of statements which indicate that Christ and His saints will be on the scene, i.e., on the earth administrating the affairs of the new government. The Psalmist prophetically pictured both Christ's time in heaven and its duration, which would terminate in His ruling "in the midst of" His enemies. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send

the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies" (Ps. 110:1-2).

The writer of the book of Hebrews described Christ in His present position, having "sat down on the right hand of God;... henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool" (Heb. 10:12-13). Jesus is now at the right hand of God, not ruling, not reigning over the kingdom of earth but only "henceforth expecting," i.e., waiting, looking forward to the time when He will rule. The same word is used in Heb. 10:27 of the "looking for of judgment." It is the anticipation of something that has not yet happened. Christ will not reign until "his enemies be made his footstool." This confirms the words of the Psalmist, and gives the reason why Christ is presently in heaven; until the time is right, until He can come to take control and put down all human authority, and reign supreme. He could not be said to be "expect-

ing" if He already had full authority.

The Revelator spoke of Christ dwelling among men. "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself [Emmanuel, God with us, Matt. 1:23] shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:3-4).

The prophet Zephaniah also pictured Christ's presence among His people: "The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more" (Zeph. 3:15).

The prophet Isaiah, describing the glorious time when Christ would be reigning on earth, says, "Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee" (Isa. 12:5-6). Again, Isaiah pictured Christ and the time when He is exalted (Isa. 33:5-6) as a time when "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty" (Isa. 33:17). He will be seen as a king. And should we wonder whether this is the time when He will be King, verses 22 and 24 leave no question: "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us....And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." This condition has never existed on the earth up to this time.

Again in the book of Revelation, the Lamb, representing Christ, is pictured standing on Mount Zion with His saints, the 144,000. All are said to be standing on the Mount Zion, not Christ up in heaven and the saints alone on the mountain. We read: "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1). These are the same group pictured in Rev. 5:9-10, who

sing the new song, saying "Thou...hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." This same setting was pictured by Zechariah (14:1-4).

Jesus told His disciples that they would eat and drink "with [Him] at [His] table in [His] kingdom" (Luke 22:29-30). He said also on the night of the Last Supper, "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29). He would eat with them—a statement hardly realistic if the Church were Christ's Kingdom and He were ruling from heaven.

2 IDEAL SOCIAL CONDITIONS WORLDWIDE WHEN JESUS IS KING

When the Kingdom is established on earth, certain conditions will exist worldwide, and none of these conditions are satisfied by the New Testament Church.

The Bible forecasts certain conditions which will be enjoyed by the inhabitants of Christ's Kingdom when it is established, and these benefits will prevail for ever. There is no possibility that these conditions have yet been fulfilled. For example:

No more war, no learning of war

"And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Mic. 4:3).

Righteousness will be practiced by all people on earth....

"Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified" (Isa. 60:21). "For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations" (Isa. 61:11).

Universal peace

"In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:7-8). "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isa. 32:17-18).

No violence anywhere

"Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise" (Isa. 60:18).

No more sorrow, crying, pain or death

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:3-4).

No opposing or insubordinate government on earth

"For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted" (Isa. 60:12).

No non-belonging kingdom or government anywhere

The government of Christ will encompass "all the earth," extending from "sea to sea"—there will be no room for any other kingdom. "The Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one" (Zech. 14:9). "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8).

All the kingdoms of earth will become part of the new kingdom. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15).

The new government of Christ, represented by the "little stone" which struck the image on the feet, is said to "break in pieces and consume all these [other] kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44).

Justice for everyone for ever

"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever" (Isa. 9:7).

Security for all people

"But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it" (Mic. 4:4). "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9).

Everlasting joy, no sorrow, no sighing

"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35:10).

God's will done on earth as it is in heaven

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He incorporated in His prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

Since these conditions are clearly prophesied to be "for ever" or "everlasting" once they begin, we should see them existing today if the Kingdom had come on the day of Pentecost or at any time subsequent to that time; but our world today is far from this blissful state.


3 JESUS WILL JUDGE, CONQUER AND RULE

When Christ comes, He will have Divine authority to judge between good and evil, to punish evil and reward the good.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:1).

Jesus Himself pictured the Divine plan in parable: He was as a nobleman going into a far country to "receive for himself a kingdom and to return...after a long time" (Luke 19:12, Matt. 25:19).

continued on page 22



***"Look up into
the heavens and
count the stars if
you can. Your
descendants will
be like that—too
many to count!"***

– Genesis 15:5 NLT

When the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, He gave him a promise so vast that it reached forward thousands of years.

Who would be the beneficiaries of this covenant? God promised that it would go to Abraham's descendants. *"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great; and you will be a blessing:...and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed"* (Gen. 12:2-3).

When the Lord repeated the promise to Abraham a few years later, He compared the number of Abraham's privileged descendants to the number of the stars. *"Look up into the heavens and count the stars if you can. Your descendants will be like that—too many to count!"* (Gen. 15:5 NLT).

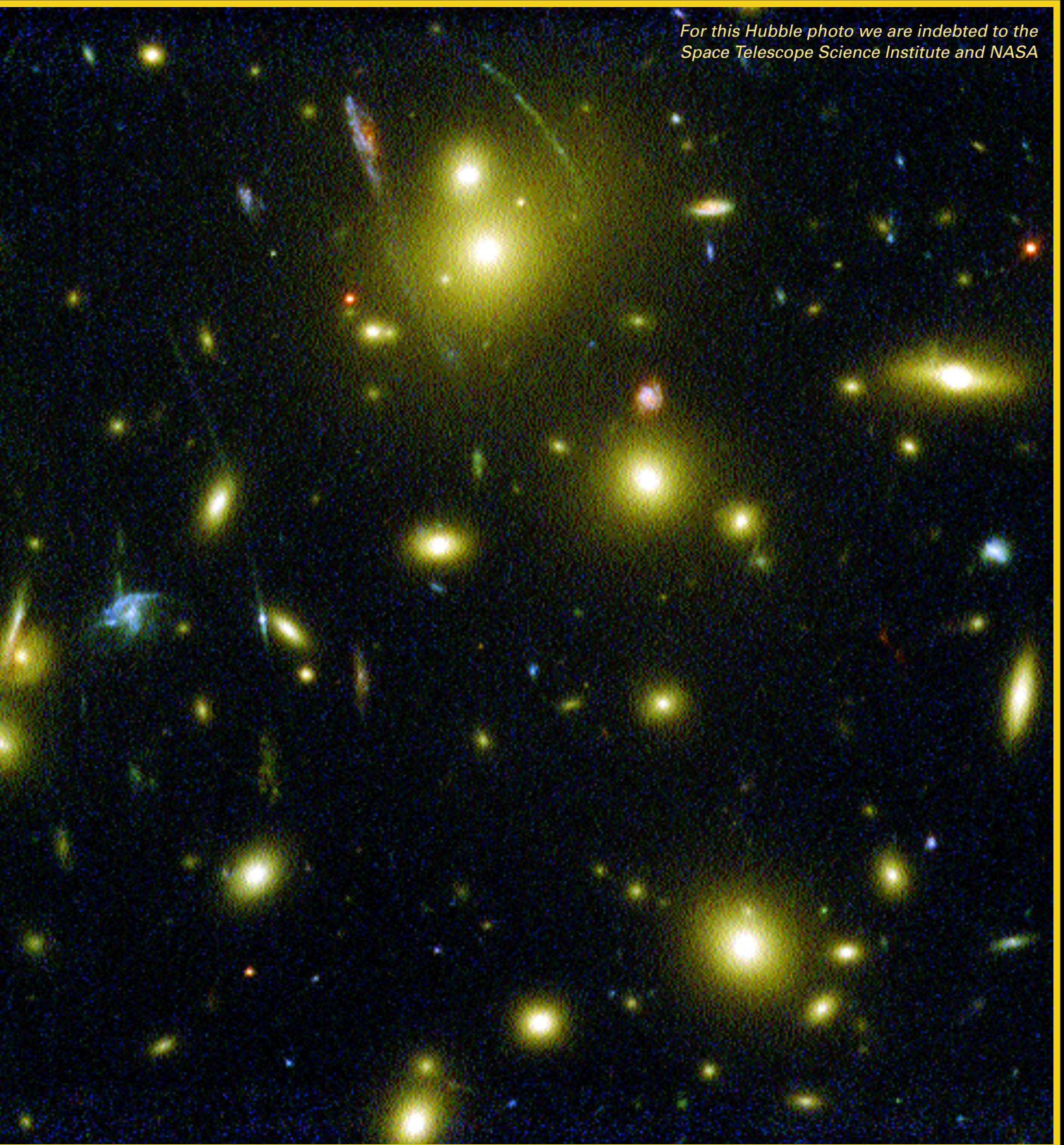
And *"Abraham believed."* Do we wonder that

Abraham was called the *"father of those who believe"*?

Though at that time *"the stars"* was the number visible with the naked eye, the promise still must have seemed impossible beyond reason—especially when Abraham had not even one child. But that is how God works. He takes what looks impossible and turns it into solid reality.

When the Kingdom of Christ is set up, and all His officers and agents are righteous, law-abiding people; when the whole earth is under one government, one King, and one authority, then the promises to Abraham will be fulfilled. God-fearing, upright living people will multiply and the result will be a world that is filled with the glory of the Lord and a people which will be, figuratively speaking, *"like the stars—too many to count!"* ♦

*For this Hubble photo we are indebted to the
Space Telescope Science Institute and NASA*



A giant, cosmic magnifying glass, the massive cluster of galaxies called
Abell 2218, as imaged by the Hubble telescope.
This “hefty” cluster resides some 2 billion light years from Earth.
“Clusters” are collections of hundreds or thousands of galaxies.

Then Jesus told this story to some who had great self-confidence and scorned everyone else:

"Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a dishonest tax collector.

"The proud Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: 'I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else, especially like that tax collector over there! For I never cheat, I don't sin, I don't commit adultery, I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.'

"But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.'

I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For the proud will be humbled, but the humble will be honored."

— Luke 18:9–14 NLT

Foiled by Our Own White Hats

By RUSSELL HAMBY

When reading Luke 18:9–14 the other day, I fell to thinking how easily we sometimes get fooled by our own white hats.

One of the characteristics of the fifties was symbolized by the old western movies. You always knew who the villains were because the villains wore black hats. The heroes wore white hats.

Then, something happened. It got to where you couldn't tell the difference between the heroes and the villains. Then, too, as we grew older, we began to realize that the heroes in the white hats weren't altogether good, and the villains in the black hats weren't altogether bad. It wasn't that simple.

We had to learn to live with some confusion, and we weren't too comfortable, because we like everything to be black and white. Especially when we can believe that we are the ones in the white hats.

One of the two central characters in Jesus' story was very sure that his hat was white. Absolutely white. Dazzling white. But God wasn't dazzled.

Let's look at these two characters, and see what we have to learn from them.

Point 1: Since Jesus began with the Pharisee, we will, too. It is important, as we look at this man, to remember that *all* Pharisees weren't necessarily like this one. We get a one-sided view of the Pharisees when we read the Gospels. There were some in this much-maligned group who possessed some measure of understanding of what authentic faith is all about.

But by and large, the Gospels' assessment of the members of this group is true. For the most part, the Pharisees were—well, they were pharisaical. In other words, they were so good that it wasn't good for them. We shall note that when Jesus told the parable, He never even suggested that the Pharisee wasn't telling the truth when he claimed in his prayer that he was light-years ahead of the average person in terms of his moral and religious righteousness. Jesus was willing to concede that everything he was saying about himself was true. He had everything—in fact, he had everything except the most important thing.

And just maybe, having everything was his downfall. You see, it's hard to enter and maintain a genuine relationship with God when you come to Him with your hands already full. The Pharisee had his hands full, and because he did, he was unable to focus his attention on anything other than what he was bringing to God.

Notice, too, how this man's attitude affected his evaluation of other people. Looking at his neighbor elsewhere in the temple, he felt even better about himself. He saw the tax gatherer, saw how black his hat was, and thrilled at the whiteness of his own. He was incapable of seeing his own sins and failings and all the wrong choices that had dirtied up his hat. Instead, he saw in himself only a symbol of everything he was thanking God that he wasn't.

The Pharisee
was very sure
that his hat
was white.
Absolutely white.
Dazzling white.
But God wasn't
dazzled.

Now notice how the Pharisee's attitude toward himself affected his attitude toward God. After all, the Pharisee had been exceedingly good. And why did he work so hard to be good? Why fast twice a week when only one day a year was absolutely required? Why give a tithe of everything he owned when tithes were only required on agricultural products? He had gone to a lot of trouble—for what? To meet his own requirements. This man set his own standard of righteousness, and wanted God to commend him for keeping to it.

Point 2: Now let's look at the Pharisee's fellow worshiper, the publican. As we do, we need to remember that even as the Pharisee couldn't speak for every other Pharisee, this tax collector cannot speak for every other tax collector. The average publican very likely wasn't as conscience-stricken as the man in the temple. The average tax gatherer wasn't a very likable person. He was collaborating with the oppressive government against his own neighbors and countrymen. In most cases, he was even dishonest. Still, there were decent tax collectors.

But focus on this man in the temple. He brought nothing to God but a penitent heart. His hands were empty except for an honest confession of sin. He didn't have much of anything else, but he had the most important thing. He wouldn't even come close to the altar; he didn't feel worthy of that. All he could say was *"God, be merciful to me, the sinner!"*

Not a sinner, but *the sinner*. Many may think this to be a small thing, but it isn't. The tax gatherer regarded himself not merely as another sinner indistinguishable from all the other sinners in the temple that day—he viewed himself as *the sinner* or, in the words of Paul, the *"chief of all the sinners."* This was his attitude toward himself.

And his attitude toward others was conditioned by his attitude toward himself. Our attitudes toward others are always conditioned by—if not determined by—our attitude toward ourselves. This man was utterly oblivious to anybody else in the place except God and himself. He had neither time for nor interest in nosing about anyone else's sinfulness. He knew something we

do well to remember: It's of no use to compare ourselves to anybody else. We'll always be able to find somebody less righteous than we are. If we must compare ourselves to anybody, let us compare ourselves to God's revealed standards and will as found in Jesus Christ. Nobody shows up naturally good on that comparison scale.

And, what of this man's view of God? He certainly wasn't expecting to be elected a director in the Lord's corporation. His hands were empty, and he knew it. He simply threw himself on the mercy of God, hoping that—however little he deserved it—he might find some mercy that day. And, according to Jesus, that is exactly what happened. He went home, said Jesus, justified. That doesn't mean that he entered the temple as a bad man and exited as a good man. It means that he left the temple as a man who had started down the road to repentance.

What shall we say of this story?

Many things might be said, but at least two warnings stare us in the face....

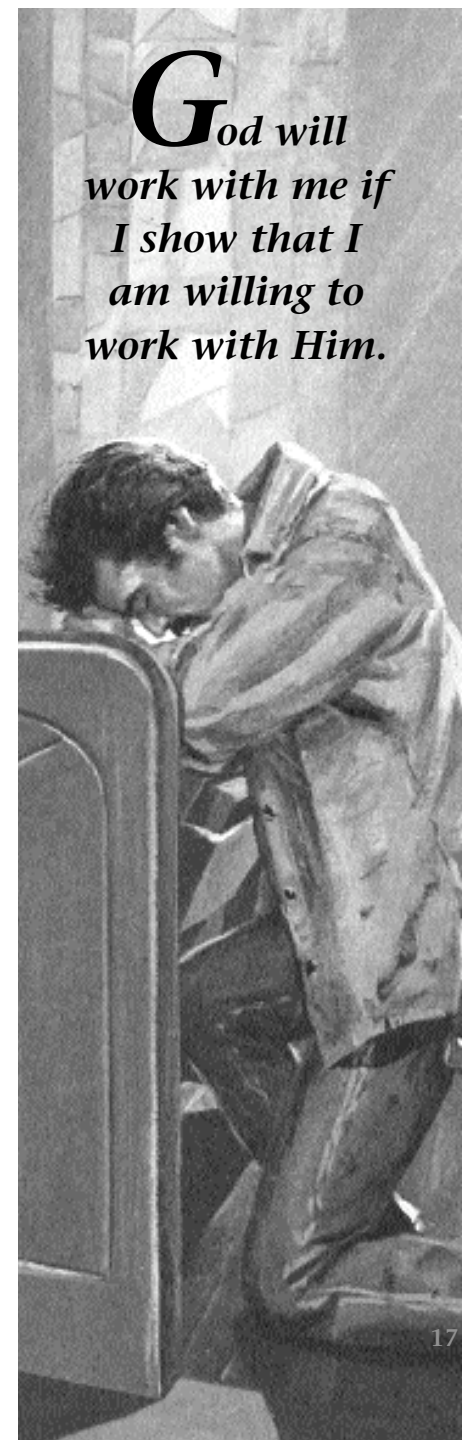
First, we are warned against the dangerous sin of pride; that is, presuming that God will accept us because we think we are so good. We learn from the Pharisee that all our goodness is of no account, unless it is accompanied by a genuine humility, an honest acknowledgment of our sins, and a sincere desire to seek God's righteousness.

Second, we are warned against being so concerned about others' faults and overlooking our own. I suspect that may be the most popular pastime among people. We spend so much of our time looking over each other's shoulders and taking each other's spiritual pulses that we become blind to our own faults and shortcomings.


This is where the parable hits us the hardest, isn't it? In fact, we can be glad we're not as morally deficient as the publican apparently was. Right now, most of us are probably thanking God that we're not like that sorry old Pharisee. But, can't we see that looking down our noses at the Pharisee because of his lack of humility is no more pleasing to God than looking down our noses at the publican because of his lack of piety? Both are a hindrance to pleasing God.

Some days I am more like the Pharisee, smugly content that God has somebody of my moral caliber on His team. My hat is white; my hands are full. On other days, I am much more like the tax gatherer: black hat, empty hands, and a plea for the mercy of God to me, the sinner. I need to recognize both dimensions of me, even if I don't especially like them. I suspect there are many others out there who need to do likewise.

I surely don't want to be fooled by my apparently white hat. God will work with me if I show that I am willing to work with Him. What a good thing to know! ♦



God will
work with me if
I show that I
am willing to
work with Him.



OU alone are God. You have made... the heavens, the earth and the seas, and everything in them. You preserve it all. —Neh. 9:6 TLB

Hop To It!

The Wonderland of Frogs



Did You Know...?

- ✓ ...that all tadpoles develop into frogs, but all frogs do not develop from tadpoles
- ✓ ...that certain frogs swallow their eggs, then allow them to hatch into tadpoles and then mature into tiny frogs—in their mother's stomachs
- ✓ ...that a frog's tongue is attached to the front of the mouth so that it can more quickly catch prey
- ✓ ...that some frogs can stay submerged under water for months. If left in a dry atmosphere, some species will die within 3 hours
- ✓ ...that a Jamaican frog lays eggs in a cave and, after they hatch into froglets, carries them out on her back to a friendlier environment
- ✓ ...that a West Africa frog is covered with hair
- ✓ ...that most frogs eat only that which has a pulse, while 80% of the diet of the Indian green frog is leaves and flowers
- ✓ ...that some frogs can jump 20 times their own body length in one leap, over 50 feet for us humans. The longest known frog jump is about 33 feet
- ✓ ...that frog bones, like trees, form a new ring every year during hibernation
- ✓ ...that a painkiller with 200 times the power of morphine has been found in the skin of a frog
- ✓ ...frogs cannot live in salt water
- ✓ ...that captive frogs have lived for as long as 20 years

by GERALD R. PAYNE

Next time you are out in the country on a summer night, listen to nature's music all around you. Those high tenor voices coming from high up in the trees, those deep bass ones coming from way down the creek—you guessed it—it is the music of the wonderland of frogs.

What are frogs? Well, to describe them is a little tricky because there are so many varieties and they are so different.

Perhaps the best place to begin is with what frogs have in common. All are cold-blooded creatures that can live both in water and on land. Because their body temperature changes with their surroundings, they usually feel cold to us. They have two bulging eyes and a nose on top of their heads, external eardrums, no obvious neck, two front legs and two back legs, the latter being used for leaping. And they do not drink. How do they get moisture? All their intake is absorbed through the skin. Toads (a "land" variety of frogs) press against something moist to absorb water through their skin. They even have the ability to taste through the skin. And they have a body with insides very much like those of larger animals. Many high school students have dissected these creatures in biology classes where they saw intestines, liver, pancreas, lungs, spleen, etc.

I admit that this description is not very complete. But when our Creator decided to include frogs among earth's residents, He wanted them to be healthy and live in all kinds of places. So in many, many ways frogs differ, according to the region they inhabit. Of course, Pharaoh would not agree, but frogs in most places do provide a good service to their surroundings, helping to control insects, as well as being useful in medical research. Some are also used for food and are considered a delicacy, while others have poison in their skin.

What does a frog look like?

Of course, everyone knows what a frog looks like! If you have seen one frog, you have seen them all—right? Not exactly. Just look at the names of a few of the 2500 different species of known frogs, and you will have some idea of their diverse appearances. There is the Rocket frog, which actually resembles a rocket. Can you guess what the



Horned frog, a native of South America, looks like? (It is as big as a large dinner plate and shaped like a mushroom with two little appendages on each side, has a couple of holes for breathing and two bulging eyes mounted over a huge smile.) Try to imagine what these look like: the Western Spotted frog, the Turtle frog, the Orange-crowned Toadlet (also a frog), the Clawed frog, the Wood frog, the Platypus frog, the White-lipped frog, the Goliath frog, and some 2500 others. Just how varied are they? They range in size all the way from less than half an inch to one foot!

Where do frogs come from?

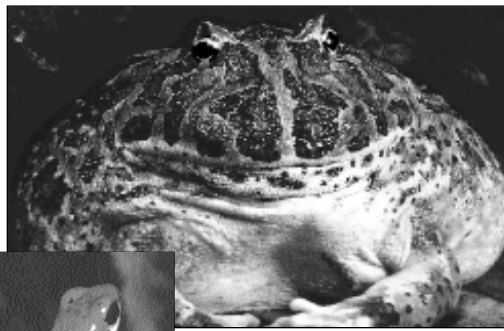
Some people used to think that frogs came from the sky during heavy rain. Before the rain started to pour down, there were no frogs to be seen. Then suddenly, they were everywhere. Being so sure they came from the sky, someone in England probably performed one of the first scientific tests: He put pans outside. It was soon discovered that they came from the ground, where they had hidden while waiting for the rain. Now they were hopping with joy.

Then came the theory that frogs evolved about 200 million years ago. Fossil remains have been found that were declared to be that old. Isn't it strange, though, if they came by evolution, that they still look like frogs after 200 million years?

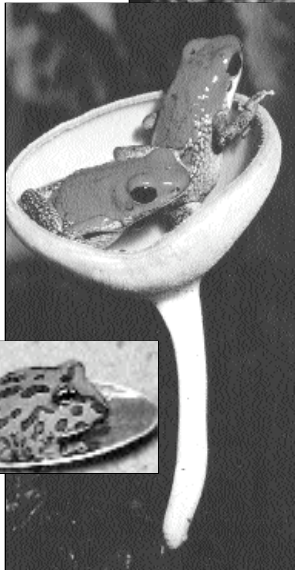
Still others claim that they developed from tadpoles. This isn't exactly right either, as we will see later.

How do frogs multiply?

Several species of frogs lay eggs—some lay as many as 4,000—in a mass of jelly (spawn) in water, and the eggs hatch into tiny tadpoles. Unlike frogs, the tadpoles have external gills for breathing under water (they do not have lungs,) and a tail for swimming. As they mature they begin to grow legs and develop lungs. Suddenly they quit eating for about four days. During this time, a remarkable change takes place: from tadpole to frog. Dr. Tyrone Hayes has



(above) Full-size Horned frog and (below) Baby Horned frog in spoon



(left) A pair of Poison-Arrow frogs pose in a "toad-stool"

commented on this amazing process: "In one tiny little egg, [are] two completely different animals." Is this evidence of evolution? No, the makings of the frog, as Dr. Hayes pointed out, are in the egg. An intelligent Designer placed everything in order

many millions of years ago. Are they perhaps copies of something He created in the past on some other world?

What keeps the tadpoles from starving during the transition from tadpole to frog? Well, the Designer didn't overlook anything. He always cares for His creatures, small or large. You see, tadpoles don't just lose their tail, they absorb it. Nothing is lost except the gills, which disappear. Now little frogs, they hop out of the water.

But not all species of frogs lay eggs in water. One, the Foam Nest frog, lays eggs in a foam nest (in branches of a tree or bush). When the rains come, the nest dissolves and the eggs drop into the rain water, which is sufficient for the eggs to develop into frogs. (Just how did this frog figure out this unusual process, that they could build the nest and the rain would take care of the rest?)

Another group of frogs lay eggs in damp places instead of in water. These eggs do not hatch into tadpoles, but directly into baby frogs.

The Marsupial frog lays eggs in a brood patch on the mother's back, where they hatch and pop out as little frogs, ready to make their way in the world.

Do you think this is unusual? Read on.

Another Marsupial frog from the border between New South Wales and Queensland, Australia, lays her eggs in a patch of jelly right on the surface of the ground. The male keeps an eye on them until they hatch. The jelly then liquifies, allowing the tadpoles to swim freely—right into the males' "hip pockets" where they remain until they emerge as baby frogs.

As amazing as this is, it is a small wonder beside the incredible Gastric frog. Found in Queensland, Australia, this frog spends nearly all its time in water just relaxing. However, it is a powerful swimmer and is also capable of traveling long distances on land. The Gastric Brooding frogs, discovered in 1972 and 1984, had perhaps not been found earlier because of their small size and timid nature (males grow to about 1.2 inches, females to about 2.2 inches).

What is so strange about this frog? The female, after laying her eggs, swallows them—about 18–25 fertilized, cream-colored eggs. During the next 6 to 8 weeks, while the eggs develop into tadpoles, then into frogs, the female does not eat. The process switches off the production of hydrochloric acid in her stomach wall, shutting down the entire digestive process to prevent the mother from digesting the young. (Just think of the benefit for us humans if we could learn how to do this for patients with gastric ulcers.)

The tadpoles do not feed either. As they mature, they become larger, filling most of the cavity inside the mother—so much so that she can't even take a deep breath.

Finally, after about 8 weeks, the mother opens her mouth wide and the youngsters are propelled into her mouth. They hop out, and go their way. Those that aren't ready for the outside world are just swallowed again until later. (How did the species survive while she was learning this remarkable process?)

Another type of Gastric Brooding frog rivals it closely. This frog also swallows its eggs, and in this frog no one knows how the young are prevented from being digested, because the gastric juices are not turned off. It is thought that the eggs may be covered with mucus, like the lining of the stomach



(left)
Bulges are young she carries in a pouch on her back.

Two Poison-arrow tadpoles cling to their mother's back (right). She will deposit them high up in a bromeliad plant "pool" where they can develop.



wall, to protect them. These eggs hatch into tiny tadpoles, then into froglets which mother frog expels at the appropriate time.

Does this sound impossible? Perhaps you have been underestimating the ability of your Creator.* If He can make such creatures as these, we should have no doubt that He can fulfill what He has promised to His faithful children.

Music from frogland

The sounds which frogs make are almost as varied as their means of reproducing. The pitch of the frogs' voice seems to be in direct proportion to his size: big frog, deep voice, tiny frog, high voice. For example, the Carpenter frog sounds similar to sawing a board with a handsaw, the Pig frog sounds like a grunting pig, and of course, the Bull frog sounds similar to a bull. (You can hear these and other sounds at www.naturesound.com/.) Many of the frogs are identified by the sounds which they make (the Banjo frog, the Humming frog, the Moaning frog, the Quacking frog).

*This information was obtained from CSU (Charles Stewart University of Australia); ANCA (Department of the Environment and Heritage, biodiversity group, Australian Government); Monash University of Australia, and the University of Michigan, USA.

Home for froggie

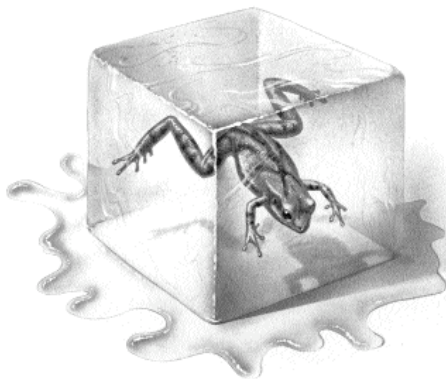
Frogs have something in common with just about every other living creature. Our Creator has designed them very specifically for the regions which they inhabit. And frogs inhabit just about every region on earth, the only exceptions being the regions of the Arctic and Antarctic. They are found in cold areas such as Alaska and Canada, in streams and lakes of the Deep South, rainforests, and even in the desert. How did the Creator equip these varying species to live in such varied places?

The answer to this question is more involved than the scope of this article, however a few observations will show us how little we know about our living companions on earth. We can only marvel at our Creator's handiwork.

Wood frogs of the North

Let's visit the Wood frogs that live around the Alaskan ponds and forests. How do they survive?

When late July arrives, it's time to begin preparing to survive the winter. First, they disappear under the leaves in the forests to bed down for the winter. Even protected by the snow pack and bed of leaves, the temperature is believed to drop at least to 5° Fahrenheit. As the temperature drops and their eyeballs and brain begin to freeze, it seems that the cold sends a message to their tiny liver which begins to convert glycogen to glucose. The glucose floods their vital cells to resist drying (drying causes frostbite in humans). While the frog may appear dead, with eyes, and



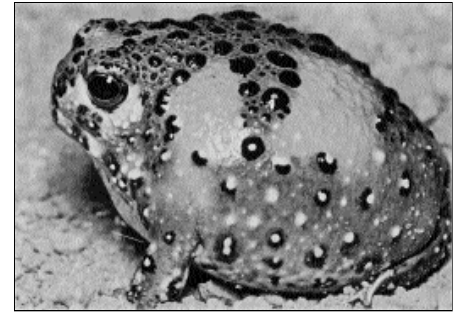
Three kinds of land frogs can be frozen solid and still stay alive. When spring comes they thaw out and hop away.

brain frozen rock solid, it isn't. When spring arrives it will thaw out and soon the melodies of frogland will be heard again.

How can evolution explain it? Any frog from the temperate or tropical zones would die under these frigid conditions. How did these frogs survive the Alaskan winters while they were "perfecting" their method of survival?

Frogs of the desert

The desert frog's greatest need is that of every other desert animal: some special means of storing water. Some frogs that live in the Australian desert absorb so



This toad, "a living water bag", stores water during rain for time of drought.

much water that the Aborigines catch them to drink their store of water during the dry season.

The Australian water-holding frog forms a cocoon of its own shed skin that is so efficient at preventing dehydration that it can wait as long as seven years for water while it is burrowed underground.

The Wax frog can produce wax to cover itself, preventing dehydration during a dry season. (By what evolutionary process did it acquire the know-how and materials to make "wax"?)

Desert frogs, during intense heat, bury themselves in sand or clay and go into a state of torpor.

Tree frogs

This group of frogs is found in North and South America, as well as Europe and Asia. Tree frogs are especially equipped for living in trees. They have little disks or pads on their fingers and adhesive pads on their toes, and a groove between the tip of the finger and the rest of the finger. Some tree frogs are even better provided for. They have a first finger that is opposed to the remainder (like our thumb) so they can

grab onto branches. Their fingers and toes include special disks for sticking onto smooth surfaces.

Flying tree frogs, found in Central America and Southeast Asia, have webbed feet with fan-like structures that enable them to glide from tree to tree or to the ground without injury.

Of course, if a predator gets too close, the Tree frog can leap great distances, gliding to other trees or even sailing to the ground.

Self-defense

How do frogs defend themselves against predators? Some, like the Tomato frog, discharge a thick white substance which is irritating to animals and can produce allergic reactions in people.

Some frogs reflect the same amount of ultraviolet light as their immediate surroundings, making it very difficult to be spotted by predators such as snakes.

Others change their skin color to

certain frog skins. They would kill the frog, then hold it over a fire, which caused the poison to drip out. Arrows dipped in the poison could be used for killing game or an enemy. This practice gave this variety of frog its name: Poison Arrow frog. Like other poisonous creatures and plants, the Poison Arrow frog is brightly colored. Some are blue, some green, some have bright yellow markings. This is code language to all who happen to come near, which means, "Leave me alone! I am not tasty at all!"

Of the poisonous frogs, the Golden Dart frog is most potent. It is said that one frog's skin contains enough poison to kill a thousand humans.

The frog evolved?

Does it seem possible that with so much diversity among the frog family, all could have come about by evolution? Could each have designed itself for the exact habitat in which it lives?

For example, how can a frog swallow its eggs until they hatch and develop, without some Master Designer putting the right elements in place?

How long would a desert frog last if taken from the tropics and set free in a frigid Alaskan winter?

Each variety of frogs was specifically designed for its specific region. So masterful was this design that different species still exist, even after approximately 200 million years. What has changed with the process of evolution?

The frog is a rather delicate creature, especially in the larval state. Yet some frogs, those that lay the fewest eggs, are able to protect their young until they are ready to be on their own. Those that lay hundreds or thousands of eggs do so because only a few hatch and mature into frogs. The rest were designed to provide food for other small animals and fish. How did they survive and reproduce until they developed these peculiar features and instincts?

This is not to say that some frogs cannot live equally well in places which

are not normal to them. But to introduce a different species to a totally different area can be devastating. Some years ago the cane toad,* was introduced into Australia to kill insects. It seemed like a great idea. These toads will eat almost anything that moves, including insects, small mammals, fish and other amphibians. And they reproduce very rapidly. Pharaoh thought he had a problem? His problem went away. Not so with the cane toads. There are parts of Australia that are literally crawling with them. To complicate matters, they are very poisonous! If animals, such as cats, dogs, birds, bite down on a cane toad, they die—no second chances. How does one figure this into evolution? The animals, since they die, can never learn to leave them alone!

No, frogs have not evolved. Our Master Designer created them and saw that they were placed in just the right environment to survive.

As the Creator declared, *"I am the Lord, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who by myself spread out the earth. For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being, declares the Lord"* (Isa. 44:24; 66:2 NRSV, NASB). And again we read, *"God, the Lord, created the heavens and stretched them out. He created the earth and everything in it. He gives breath and life to everyone in all the world"* (Isa. 42:5 NLT).

Who are we, mere dust of the earth, to dispute God, the God who declares that He made these things? Having seen the glorious handiwork of God, how can we ignore His instructions to *"turn from godless living and sinful pleasures...? We should live in this evil world with self-control, right conduct, and devotion to God"* (Titus 2:12 NLT). ♦

* Toads belong to the same family as frogs. The main difference is that toads generally have dry warty skin and spend more time on land than frogs. True frogs have smooth skin and can stay submerged without drowning.



The tip of a dart is rubbed on this species of Poison-dart frog. The poison will be potent for more than a year.

match the surroundings by expanding and contracting three layers of pigment cells in the skin. (How did Mr. Frog engineer the pigmentation of his skin in this most useful way?)

Many years ago hunters and warriors of South America discovered poisons in

Sources of information used in this article:

Charles Stuart University of Australia at: www.csu.edu.au/faculty/commerce/account/frogs/frog.htm; Australian Nature Conservation Association. 1996. www.anca.gov.au/plants/manageme/frogprod.htm; Monash University of Australia www.monash.edu.au/ University of Michigan: [animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/accounts/rheobatrachus/r_silus\\$ narrative.html](http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/accounts/rheobatrachus/r_silus$ narrative.html); ANCA (Department of the Environment and Heritage, biodiversity group, Australian Government): www.anca.gov.au/plants/manageme/frogprod.htm; Oregon Coast Aquarium: www.aquarium.org/frogs/frogs_clues_to_survival_2.htm; Irish Peatland Conservation Council: aoife.indigo.ie/~ipcc/worldfrogs.html Alaska Science Forum www.gi.alaska.edu/ScienceForum/ASF12/1297.html The Exploratorium of San Francisco: www.exploratorium.edu/frogs/mainstory/index.html Lang Elliott, NatureSound Studio: www.naturesound.com/frogs/frogs.html

IS THE CHURCH THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

continued from page 13

This is why the Bible associates the judgment, the rewarding of faithful servants, the setting up of a new government, and the conquest of the nations all with the second coming of Christ. He is coming *"with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him"* (Isa. 40:10). He is coming to resurrect those who have served Him, who are sleeping in death, and they together with the living servants of God will be judged and rewarded (1 Thess. 4:16–18; Luke 14:14; 1 Pet. 5:4). These, having qualified themselves by becoming like Him, will sit with Him on His throne (1 John 3:1–3). Those judged faithful will be His co-rulers, who sit *with Him* on the new throne—and there is no indication that that throne will be anywhere but on the earth (Rev. 3:21). The Bible even gives the name of the kingdom's metropolis, *"Jerusalem,... the city of the great king"* (Matt. 5:35).

4 ALL THE FAITHFUL WERE NOT PRESENT IN THE CHURCH

When the Kingdom is established, all the faithful will be present together in the Kingdom.

Jesus described the Kingdom as a time when all the faithful will be present together. *"...Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God.... And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God"* (Luke 13:28–29; see also Matt. 8:11).

This has not been true at any time yet in the history of the church.

5 FAITHFUL BELIEVERS IN APOSTOLIC AGE WERE "HEIRS" OF THE KINGDOM

The faithful believers are said to be "heirs of the Kingdom," and heirs are not in possession of their inheritance.

"Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (James 2:5; see also Rom. 8:17).

Peter assured his brethren that if they were diligent in living in obedience to the commandments of the Lord, *"an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"* (2 Pet. 1:11)—a promise for the future. *continued next issue*

For the Right Reason *continued from page 10*

Dad looked approvingly at the yard as he got out of the car. "What a transformation, sons. Nice work!"

"I cleaned up this half, Dad," bragged Jeff as he waved his hand to the left. "And I beat Bill."

"I got stuck on the rose bushes," laughed Bill.

"They're kind of prickly to clean out," agreed Dad, "but the roses make it worth it.... Did I interrupt a serious conversation?" he asked perceptively.

The boys looked at each other. Bill spoke first. "Well, Dad, Jeff and I were just saying how much we need a new car. Have you seen the Kruger's new one?"

"Yes, I've seen it, boys," continued Father. "But I keep wondering what is right for us. The Lord, you know, has promised to supply all our needs—not all our wants. Is a new car a need, or a want, as the Lord sees it? You know, a lot of people make themselves very unhappy because they are always working very hard just to keep up with their neighbors."

"But Dad!" insisted Jeff, "I can't see why we can't afford a new car at least every other year, when the Krugers can have one every year. Don't you earn more money than Mr. Kruger, Dad?"

"Well, yes, but your Mother and I follow a different plan than the Krugers,"

explained Father. "The Krugers buy many things on a plan of so-much-a-month."

"What's wrong with that?" questioned Jeff. "At least you get to enjoy some things."

"But Jeff, do you realize what that means? They have a big debt hanging over their heads all the time. It's all fine if times are good. But suppose your Mother and I spend this way, and get all these things we like. Then suppose the plant has a bad year, or I should become very sick, and lose my job. Do you know what would happen?"

Jeff hung his head. He didn't like to think about things like that.

"We plan to have money first for the things we need," continued Father.

"Like food and clothing for all of us," added Bill.

"And fuel for the furnace, and insurance, and money for our education," added Jeff.

"And we pay tithes to the church," added Father.

"Probably the amount we pay in tithes would make the payments on a new car," suggested Jeff. "The Krugers don't even go to church, so they don't have that expense to worry about."

"Are you suggesting that we would be better off to put our money into a new car than to pay our tithes?"

Jeff was silent. Father continued.

"I like to think that when we pay tithes we are investing in a heavenly cause. The money we give is our share in God's work. You know, everything around us belongs to God. *'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.'* There isn't anything that is really ours. If I die tonight, I will not be able to keep one penny. It is all God's."

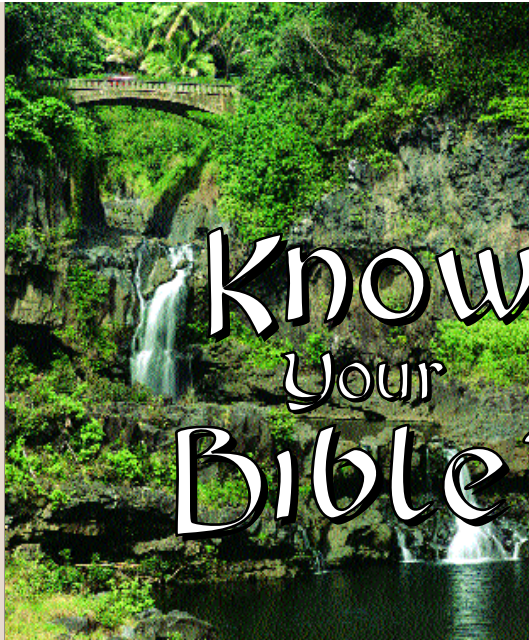
"I'm sure you and Mom know what you're doing, and someday we'll understand too," replied Bill seriously. "I know you're looking out for us."

"Yes, I know that too," admitted Jeff as he grinned at his father. "I wouldn't trade you or Mom for any other parents in the whole world."

"And do you know what I was thinking?" added Bill. "The Kruger's shiny new car will be old in just a few years, just like our old Ford wagon. It's only a matter of a little time."

Pleased with his sons' response, Father reached into his pocket and handed the boys a bunch of car brochures. "Would you like to help pick out our next new car, sons?" Father didn't need an answer as he looked into the faces of two beaming boys.

"Remember what Jesus said, *'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.'*" ♦



Know Your Bible?

MISCHIEF MAKERS

1. Who said, *"Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment"*?
2. In what book is the statement, *"Where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth"*?
3. Who wrote the following statement concerning young widows: *"Wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not"*?
4. Complete the following proverb: *"A talebearer revealeth _____."*
5. David says that he who conceives mischief brings forth what?
6. Who said, in defense of himself, *"Thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief"*?
7. What does Peter call a person who interferes in other people's business?
8. Who introduced the law, *"Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer"*?
9. Who fixed his eyes on Elymas, the sorcerer, and denounced him, saying, *"O full of all subtilty and all mischief"*?
10. To whom did Shimei say, *"Thou art taken in thy mischief because thou art a bloody man"*?

MISCHIEF MAKERS

1. Jesus (Matt. 12:36)
2. Proverbs (Prov. 26:20)
3. Paul (1 Tim. 5:13)
4. Secrets (Prov. 11:13)
5. Falsehood (Ps. 7:14)
6. Aaron (Ex. 32:22)
7. A busybody (1 Pet. 4:15)
8. God. (Lev. 19:16)

9. Paul (Acts 13:8-10)
10. David (2 Sam. 16:5-8)

MINERALS

1. Elisha (2 Kings 6:1-6)
2. Tubal-cain (Gen. 4:22)
3. Moses (Deut. 5:1; 8:15)
4. Ahasuerus (Esther 1:1-6)
5. Lead (Ex. 15:10)
6. Brass (Ex. 38:8)

MINERALS

1. What prophet threw a stick into the Jordan River, causing an iron ax head to float?
2. Who was the ancestor or instructor of every artificer in brass and iron?
3. Who asked the question, *"Who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint"*?
4. Who gave a great feast and put his guests on beds of gold and silver, upon pavements of red and blue and white and black marble?
5. In Moses' song of thanksgiving, he said the Egyptians sank in the mighty waters as what mineral?
6. Of what metal was the laver of the tabernacle made?
7. Who was the silversmith who made silver shrines for the goddess Diana?
8. Who was the coppersmith who wrought much evil upon Paul?
9. Hiram who was cunning to work with brass, was from what city?
10. Which prophet wrote, *"The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond"*?

YOUNG BOYS OF THE BIBLE

1. One who as a child had known the Holy Scriptures
2. Son of Abraham and Sarah
3. Brother of Abel
4. Brother of Moses
5. A child who ministered to the Lord in the presence of Eli the priest
6. A child who said *"Here am I"*
7. The number of fish a little boy gave Jesus to feed the 5000

KINGS

1. Who was the most wicked king of Israel?
2. To what king of Israel did the Lord appear in a dream by night?
3. What king showed to the messenger of another king all his silver and gold and treasures?
4. What king of Judah had not seen a copy of the law till he was twenty-six years old?
5. Name a king who was an extensive farmer and loved husbandry?

7. Demetrius (Acts 19:24)
8. Alexander (2 Tim. 4:14)
9. Tyre (1 Kings 7:13-14)
10. Jeremiah (Jer. 17:1)

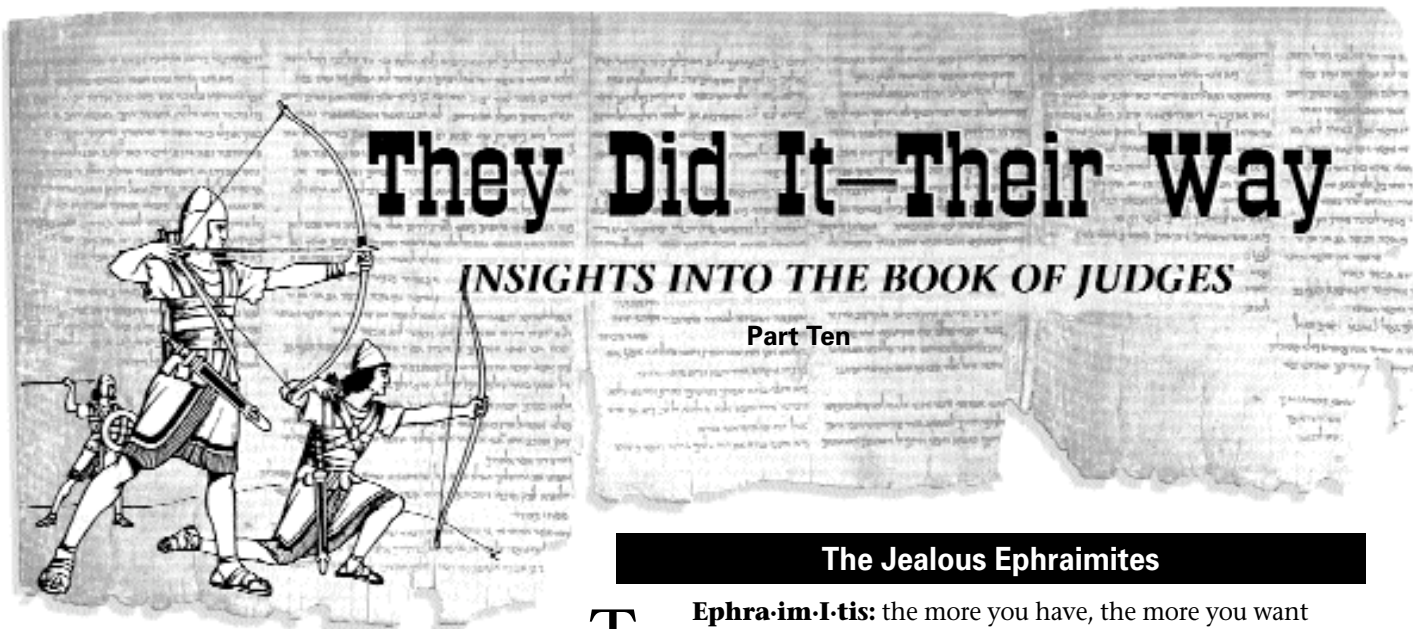
YOUNG BOYS OF THE BIBLE

1. Timothy (2 Tim. 3:15)
2. Isaac (Gen. 21:3)
3. Cain (Gen. 4:1-2)
4. Aaron (Ex. 6:20)

5. Samuel (1 Sam. 2:18, 20)
6. Samuel (1 Sam. 3:4)
7. Two (John 6:8-13)

KINGS

1. Ahab (1 Kings 21:25)
2. Solomon (2 Chron. 7:12)
3. Hezekiah (Isa. 39)
4. Josiah (2 Kings 22:1-10)
5. Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:8-10)



The capacity for self-esteem is highly developed in most of us. It was especially so in the ancient Ephraimites. Not that this tribe was without its true heroes, but the traits of pride and jealousy are strongly conspicuous in their history.

When Jacob, the grandfather of Ephraim and Manasseh, blessed the sons of Joseph, he placed Ephraim before Manasseh. This honored son of the distinguished Joseph was the progenitor of the tribe of Ephraim. While Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons was significant because of its spiritual rather than literal meaning, the tendency to pre-eminence revealed itself more than once among the succeeding generations.

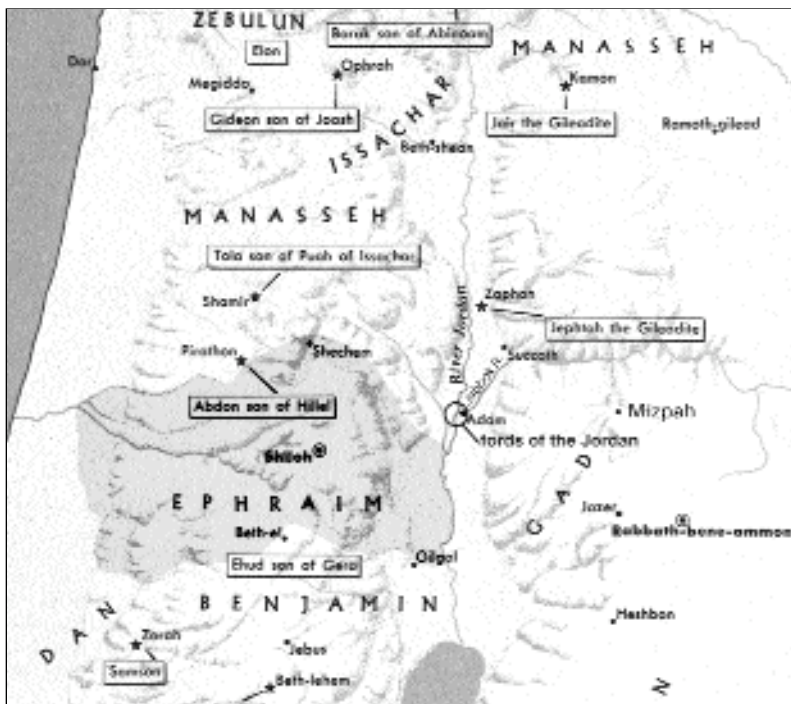
Very early the tribe of Ephraim stood out among the Israelites. When the children of Israel on the way out of Egypt set up the tabernacle at the campsite, three tribes were assigned to each of the four sides. On each side, one tribe was always leading the others. Ephraim was the leader of the western camp, followed by Manasseh and Benjamin (Num. 2:18–24). Again, when they marched, the tribe of Ephraim held a prominent position.

The tribe of Ephraim was again prominent when the twelve spies were sent out by Moses to spy out the land. The leader of the group Joshua (Moses' servant) was the representative sent by the tribe of Ephraim. Joshua, together with Caleb, brought back a true report of the land. And Joshua, who became the successor to Moses (Deut. 34:9), had the rare privilege of taking the children of Israel across Jordan into the Promised Land.

When the land was divided among the Israelites, who should find fault about their inheritance but Ephraim and Manasseh! Not satisfied with their lot, they came to Joshua complaining: "Why have you given us only one portion of land when the LORD has given us so many people?" (Josh. 17:14 NLT). The "Big I" was there. No doubt about it. They thought they

should be given special consideration! Envious of the other tribes' inheritance, they looked upon their portion as too small.

Isn't that the insidious nature of jealousy? The more we have, the more we want. We might call it "Ephra-im-I-tis"—it was Ephraim's problem.



The tribe of Ephraim had the pre-eminence among the tribes of Israel. And they loved it!

Joshua had a ready answer for these faultfinders: If you want more land, go clear the mountain! These are his words: *"If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself."* That wasn't exactly what they wanted to do, and so they offered another excuse: *"The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron."* It might be all right, but those chariots of iron, they could never overcome them! Couldn't they have something else—something easier? They were afraid to venture it—who wouldn't be! The enemy was too much for anybody.

Joshua did not give in to their excuses. They could have the extra portion, but they could clear it for themselves.

The mountain they received gave them a strategic position among the tribes in the central highlands. And more pre-eminence. Because of its central location, the tabernacle was located in this mountain, at Shiloh, after Israel had settled in the land and had driven out the Canaanites (not all of them, but all they intended to) (Josh 18:1).

The tabernacle at Shiloh became the sanctuary for all the tribes, the whole nation. Here the national assemblies and the worship services were held. Having the tabernacle located in their territory added to the prestige of the tribe of Ephraim.

All these little privileges together added up to one big bump of pride, making them feel very important. It was only natural that they became jealous of the prestige that was theirs because of their position of leadership, first in the marches, then in having in their land the location of the tabernacle. They had not really been appointed as leader of the twelve tribes, but wasn't it obvious that they were superior? So almost from the beginning, the tribe of Ephraim had the pre-eminence among the tribes. And they loved it!

But love of pre-eminence is an ugly root, and theirs was no exception. The root was the source of bitter strife, jealousy and rivalry among the tribes.

This pride of position caused them to feel that they should be consulted and be given a prominent part in all significant matters. They could not take second place and like it; they had to be

first. They just could not stand seeing someone else receive recognition above them.

Worse still, they were not merely envious of the success of others—they became furious when others triumphed.

The jealousy of the tribe of Ephraim is seen first during the judgeship of Gideon when, but for the skillful diplomacy of Gideon they might have declared war on him!

"The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon" had won a great victory over the Midianites, and all Israel was benefiting. But was the tribe of Ephraim happy? No, they were furious—because they could not claim it for themselves! They were jealous because they had not been invited at the start of the campaign, only at the close.

When Gideon had gone out to deliver Israel from the Midianites he had first called his own tribe, then the neighboring tribes. Then, after the initial victory with his army of 300 unarmed men, Gideon called the tribe of Ephraim to catch the fleeing Midianites at the ford of the Jordan River. The Ephraimites performed the mission well. They captured the two Midian princes Oreb and Zeeb. But they missed out on the applause. There was no glory for them, and no share in the spoils.

Distressed, they came to Gideon to voice their complaint: *"And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply"* (Judg. 8:1). Gideon at this time was still completing the pursuit of the defeated Midianites, chasing them back toward their homeland. Were he to hesitate too long, the battle might be lost.

But the Ephraimites apparently gave it no thought. To them, mollifying their wounded pride was more important. Nursing their hurt feelings had top priority.

Even though he had been rudely interrupted by the Ephraimites, Gideon was still able to be patient with them. His diplomacy averted disaster. His considered reply proved to be balm in Gilead. *"What have I done now in comparison of you?...God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian,...and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward*

The Ephraimites
apparently preferred
physical wounds to
wounded pride.

him, when he had said that" (Judg. 8:2-3).

Gideon knew that a soft answer turns away wrath; hasty words would have led to a fight. He pacified them by complimenting them generously for what they had done; he used good psychology. And he was humble. Had he answered with a sharp retort, telling them that what they had done was little enough, the argument could have continued and he would not have been able to pursue the fleeing Midianites and complete the deliverance of Israel.

But Gideon's psychology did little to change their jealous disposition, for we find another flare up of this jealous spirit in the days of Jephthah. The Lord had given Jephthah a great victory over the Ammonites. Such a victory after eighteen years of oppression should have brought joy to all Israel. But not Ephraim. Again they were furious for not having shared in the victory. It was just too much for this proud tribe. An outcast of Gilead had defeated the Ammonites—without them!

The Ephraimites' display of pride in this instance was even worse than in Gideon's time. They complained that they had not been called to help in the battle. They might have come to his hometown of Mizpah, planning to find him at home, but perhaps Jephthah had heard of their coming and gone to meet them near the Jordan.

The Ephraimites demanded to know why they had not been asked to go with Jephthah to battle, and then threatened, *"We will burn your house over you with fire"* (Judg. 12:1).

In reality, their complaint was hypocritical, they were not so much interested in helping fight the battle as in sharing in the spoils and the glory of

the victory. They were more than jealous; they were angry. It was a terrible threat to come from men of Jephthah's own country, tribal brothers.

Jephthah's answer, though sharp, was dignified. Reminding them that they had declined his offer, he picked up on their attitude and asked, "*And why have you come to me today to fight against me?*" (12:3).

With both sides equally adamant, conflict was inevitable. The Ephraimites, who were evidently better at complaining than at fighting, were quickly overpowered by Jephthah's well-trained troops, and soundly defeated.

Was Jephthah wrong in fighting and overpowering the Ephraimites?

The Bible does not support or condemn, it only states what happened. The Ephraimites were not peace loving, or why did they come to Jephthah with a complaint and with thousands of armed men?

After routing the men of Ephraim, Jephthah's men went quickly to the Jordan River to control its fords. In doing this they cut off the retreating Ephraimites, so that those who had come to do Jephthah harm were totally defeated.

At this point in history, Jephthah was acting as God's agent, and to fight against him was the equivalent of fighting against God. The insensitive Ephraimites did not realize this, and paid heavily for their pride.

After this, Jephthah served a period of six years as judge of Israel, until his death (Judges 12:7).

When the Ephraimites had complained in the time of Gideon, Gideon had not invited them to battle. Jephthah, perhaps knowing what Gideon had faced, had tried to prevent trouble by giving them an invitation in advance. They apparently either misunderstood or ignored his summons, and still came to complain that they had not been properly recognized. Perhaps they came with the intent of making Jephthah suffer for having so humiliated them by not letting them have a share in the victory.

The Ephraimites saw themselves as a leading tribe which should have a part in all significant occasions. They simply had an inflated opinion of themselves. They felt so strongly about it that they were willing to make a sizeable effort, even to crossing Jordan with some forty-two thousand armed men, and then going to war rather than backing down on their contention. They should have admitted their wrong when Jephthah reminded them that he had called them earlier, but they apparently preferred physical wounds to wounded pride.

This tribal warfare was a blot on Israel's history, and its only cause was Ephraimite pride and jealousy. They were just too proud to back down in their contention with Jephthah and so suffered a humiliating defeat. But this is the last we read of their pride. No more did they insist nothing could be done without them. ♦



ZACCHAEUS

By MELVA WALTON

*Zacchaeus was a little man
Who didn't stand very high,
So he climbed the nearest sycamore tree
When Jesus was passing by.*

*He didn't think that Jesus knew
That he was in the tree,
But Jesus knew and said to him,
"Come down, and dine with Me."*

*One look from Jesus and Zacchaeus vowed
He'd give half his goods to the poor,
And if he'd defrauded any man
He would fourfold restore.*

*I wonder if when Jesus comes
One look from Him will make
Us wish that we had never sinned
As we stand to hear our fate!*

*Get ready now, my friend, right now,
He will be knocking soon
He said it could be midnight,
At cock's crow, or at noon.*

*To welcome Him get ready!
Your sinful ways forsake,
Oh, change your life like Zacchaeus did
Before it is too late.*

*In all the little things of life,
Yourself, Lord, may I see;
In little and in great alike,
Help me to faithful be!*

When Jesus chose His disciples, He selected busy men, but not too busy to put first things first.

They witness best who witness by their lives.

If my religion's not all that it ought to be...
The trouble is not with God, but with me.

We do not waste time. We simply waste our life.

Duty makes us do things well, love makes us do them beautifully.

God wants our whole heart, but it must be broken and contrite.

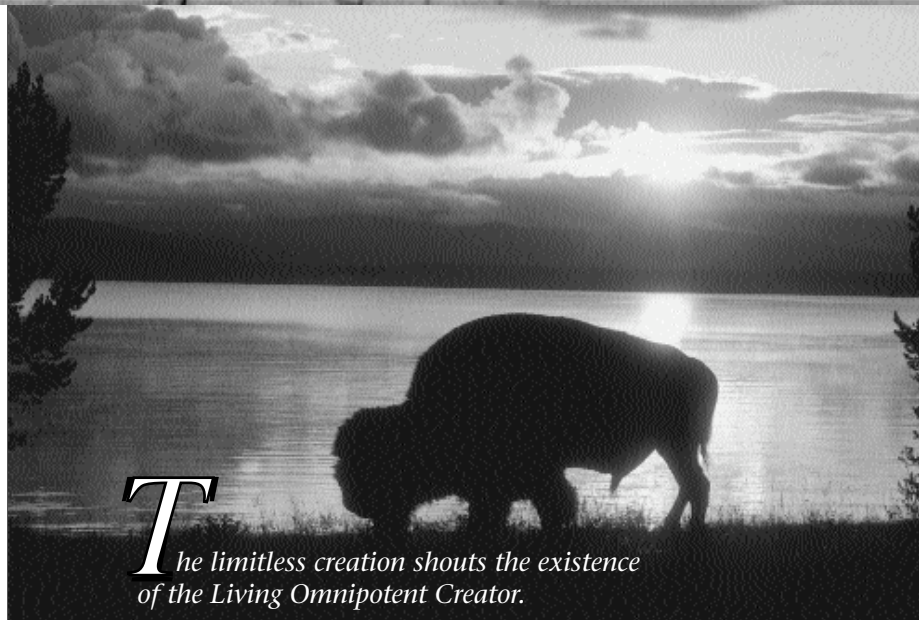
What we are afraid to do before men, we should be afraid to think before God.

To always speak to edification we must first think to edification.

Do not dare to be alone with yourself—our own thoughts may be bad company. Always invite Christ to be present also.

A NEW YEAR Wish For You

New mercies, new blessings, new light on your way;
New courage, new hope, and new strength for each day;
New notes of thanksgiving, new chords of delight,
New praise in the morning, new songs in the night;
New fruits for your Master, new garments of praise;
New gifts from His treasures, new smiles from His face,
New streams from the Fountain of infinite grace;
New stars for thy crown, and new tokens of love;
New gleams of the glory that comes from above.



The limitless creation shouts the existence
of the Living Omnipotent Creator.

God never chooses us for what we are, but for what we can become.

When home is ruled according to God's Word, angels might be asked to stay a night with us and they would not find themselves out of their element.

The hope of future glory must awaken in us a desire for purity.

Paul's Use of "Always"

The apostle Paul knew the secret of unwearied life, unfailing strength, and undeflected aim. Note his use of the word "always."

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus..."

"Always abounding in the work of the Lord."

"Always exercising myself to have a conscience void of offense to God and man..."

"Rejoicing always..."

"Praying always..."

"Giving thanks always for all things..."

"Always confident..."

If we fill our hours with regrets of yesterday and worries of tomorrow, we have no today in which to be thankful.

Joy thrives best in the soil of thankfulness.



*rown Him with many crowns,
the Lamb upon His throne,
Hark! How the heav'nly anthem drowns
all music but its own!
Awake, my soul, and sing
of Him who sets us free,
And hail Him as thy matchless King
now and eternally.*

*rown Him the Lord of life,
who triumphed o'er the grave,
Who rose victorious to the strife
and comes His own to save;
His glories now we sing,
He who ascended high,
Who rose eternal life to bring,
and lives that death may die.*

