

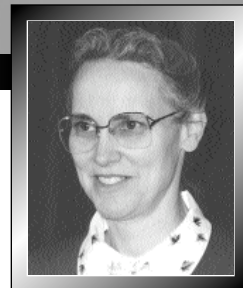
# Megiddo Message

Vol. 88, No. 3  
March/April, 2001



• LORD, IT WILL BE AS YOU SAY. •





# More, More, MORE

The growing Christian, like the serious student in school, is never satisfied with his progress. He always sees where he can do more and better. There is always something greater toward which to reach. Every field of knowledge conquered is the opening of ten more that were previously unknown.

This spirit was especially strong in the Apostle Paul. His letters ring with the challenge that motivated him—to be more and yet more like Christ, to do more and yet more for his brethren, to do more and yet more for his Master. And he was exuberantly grateful that God was able to do exceeding more for him. Indeed, the reward to which he was aspiring promised to be *"infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope"* (Eph. 3:20 NLT).

This quality of "more" is apparent in his first letter to the Thessalonians. Very early in the letter he expressed his gratitude for faithful ones. Then he says: *"We are always thankful as we pray for you all, for we never forget that your faith has meant solid achievement, your love has meant hard work, and the hope that you have in our Lord Jesus Christ means sheer dogged endurance in the life that you live before God, the Father of us all"* (1 Thess. 1:2–3 Phillips).

Yet it was not enough. They had not yet reached the ideal of the life God requires. There were yet problems to solve, lessons to learn, goals to reach before they could be found *"unblameable in holiness before our God"* (1 Thess. 3:13). They must keep going, just as steps ascend higher and yet higher. They must, by Moffatt's rendering of the text, *"increase and excel."* Did anyone think it impossible? They were simply following the example of Paul and his brethren. Of course it was possible! they had *seen* it done.

Paul emphasizes this "more" quality in many of his letters. He tells the Roman Christians that they must be *"more than conquerors"* (Rom. 8:37). He writes to the Philippians that their love is not only to abound but that it is to *"abound more and more,"* (Phil. 1:9).

His words to the Thessalonians confirm the same thought. *"Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we urge you in the name of the Lord*

*Jesus to live in a way that pleases*

*God, as we have taught you. You are doing this already, and we encourage you to do so more and more"* (1 Thess. 4:1 NLT). There was no place for any selfish satisfaction, only room for more.

Why more and more? Haven't you noticed that God never gives only the minimum? He never skimps or carefully parcels out His blessings. He is generous, abundantly generous. For what did the Psalmist give thanks? Was it for a cup carefully filled to the brim? No, it was for a cup that overflowed. *"My cup,"* he said, *"runs over."*

The writer of Hebrews had caught the spirit when he wrote, *"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching"* (Heb. 10:25 NIV). He wrote also that we must give heed, *"pay more careful attention...to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away"* (Heb. 2:1 NIV).

Why more and more? Because the more we give, the more we shall receive. God has promised that our reward will be just in proportion to what we do. *"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously"* (2 Cor. 9:6 NIV). This principle is the universal law of God: *"A man reaps what he sows"* (Gal. 6:7–8 NIV).

What does God offer in return? All our abounding, and giving, and excelling, and sacrificing falls far, far short of even approaching what God is able to do for us, He who has promised *"to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine"* (Eph. 3:20 NIV), whose reward will be *"an immeasurably great glory that will last forever!"* (2 Cor. 4:17–18 NLT).

Isn't this the only *fair* way? Isn't it the only *right* way? Can we skimp on *our* giving to God and expect Him to share His greater abundance with us?

This is our goal and our earnest prayer, that we may be found *"holy and blameless in heart and soul before himself, the Father of us all, when our Lord Jesus Christ comes with all his saints"* (1 Thess. 3:13 Phillips). ♦

*"Do not be deceived:....  
A man reaps what he sows"  
—Galatians 6:7 NIV*



## 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 March 25, Abib 1 begins this year on Sunday evening, March 25, and continues through Monday, March 26, 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 Friday evening, April 6.

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 9. 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 first-fruits 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 May 28.



# Megiddo Message

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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 Challenge of the *New*

Little Jamie begs for a new toy, promising "Then I'll be a good boy." The teenager blames his bad performance on a "poor" teacher. "Give me a new teacher, and then I'll do better." The man whose business is not doing well blames circumstances. "Give us a new year, and we'll show what we can do." There is some mysterious magic in newness, as if the new would automatically take care of the old problems.

The new year has something of the same aura about it, as though it were almost impossible not to do better with this new beginning.

What about *this* new year and *our* expectations for it? Yes, we have resolved that we will do better. Better than ever before. But do we realize that a new year does not make the new man? The new man makes the new year. There is a new leaf in the calendar—that is easy! But the new leaf is not in our character until we place it there.

Making new resolutions is entirely different from carrying them out. The basis of the problem is simple. Changing human character for the better is not a matter of making new things out of nothing; it means making new things *out of the old*. God gives us each morning a new day, and we have the opportunity to make it *all new*, to leave behind our old sinful ways and enjoy a totally *new* day. The problem is that we have to make that new day not out of anything new but out of what we already have—which means that very, very easily we can come up with the same old product! Old habits are not easily broken. Old ways are not easily changed. Old thoughts are not easily disposed of.

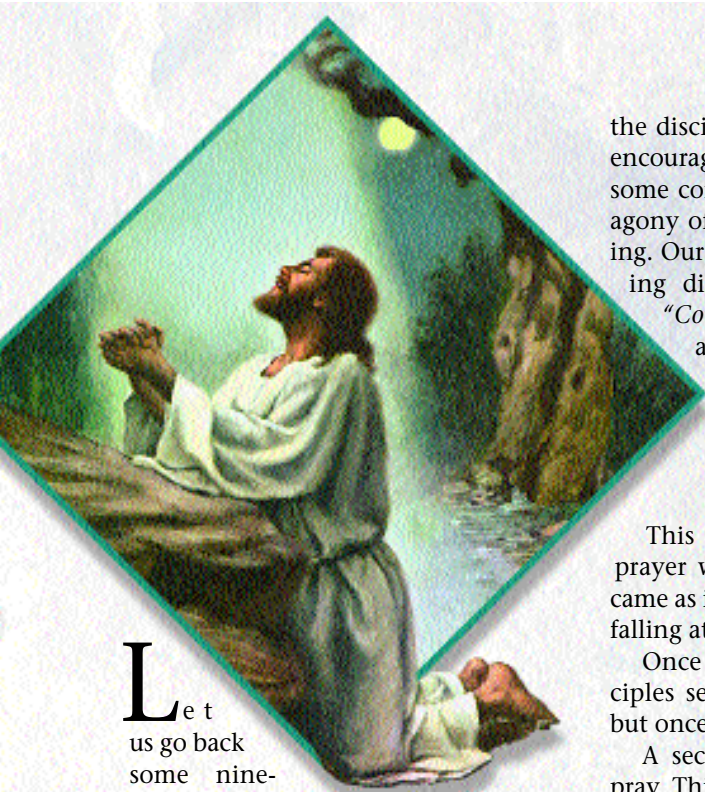
Yet this is our assignment, to make ourselves new using the raw material we already are. We must deal with ourselves beginning where we are and as we are, and work toward newness.

Here is a challenge. Here is what the new year is all about. "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.*" New, through and through.

It is not automatic, but it *is* possible.

May God grant us the strength and the endurance to see it through to a successful conclusion. ♦





Let us go back some nineteen hundred years to a garden called Gethsemane. Jesus has come there with His disciples on this night, the same night in which He was betrayed, for prayer. Judas has already left on his dastardly mission to betray his Master. Jesus invites the Eleven to join Him in a kind of inner fellowship. Eight of the disciples remain near the gate of the garden, and three (those closest to Him: Peter, James, and John) follow Him silently along the winding path that leads up the hill through the garden. Jesus stops and urges them to pray with Him.

Then He goes apart, throws Himself out flat upon the earth, and prays that the cup might not be His to drink. It is a moment of intense struggle and tremendous agony of spirit.

Having so prayed, He goes back to

the disciples hoping for some word of encouragement, some warmth of love, some comfort in this hour of supreme agony of spirit—and finds them sleeping. Our hearts are pierced by the sinking disappointment in His words.

*“Couldn’t you watch with Me,” He asks, “even for an hour? Watch and pray, lest you yourselves enter into temptation; your spirit is willing but your flesh is weak.”*

Again He goes apart to pray.

This time, the Scriptures say, His prayer was so intense that His sweat came as it were like great drops of blood falling at His feet.

Once again He goes back to the disciples seeking some word of support, but once again He finds them asleep.

A second time He leaves them to pray. This time it is a prayer of submission. *“O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.”*

He returns a third time to His disciples, and they are still asleep. But this time the need is not critical; it has passed. And so He lets them sleep. It does not matter now (this is a very significant detail in the account) because the opportunity has passed. His battle has been fought. And won. *“Sleep on,”* He says, *“and take your rest,”* and He goes back to pray alone.

Only moments later He sees torches flickering through the branches of the olive trees. The soldiers of the high priest have come. He goes back to His disciples and says, *“Arise. My betrayer is at hand.”* He is led off to the house of

Caiaphas, the high priest, and the disciples are left hiding among Gethsemane’s bushes. They are left in the shallows and they are left in misery, because they have missed the tide.

### The Power of Tides

During the troubled years of the Second World War the Italian forces were driven out of Eritrea in North Africa. In an effort to make the harbor unusable to the Allies, the Italians filled great barges with concrete, and then sank them across the entrance to the harbor. When the Allies entered, their problem was to remove the barges to make use of the harbor.

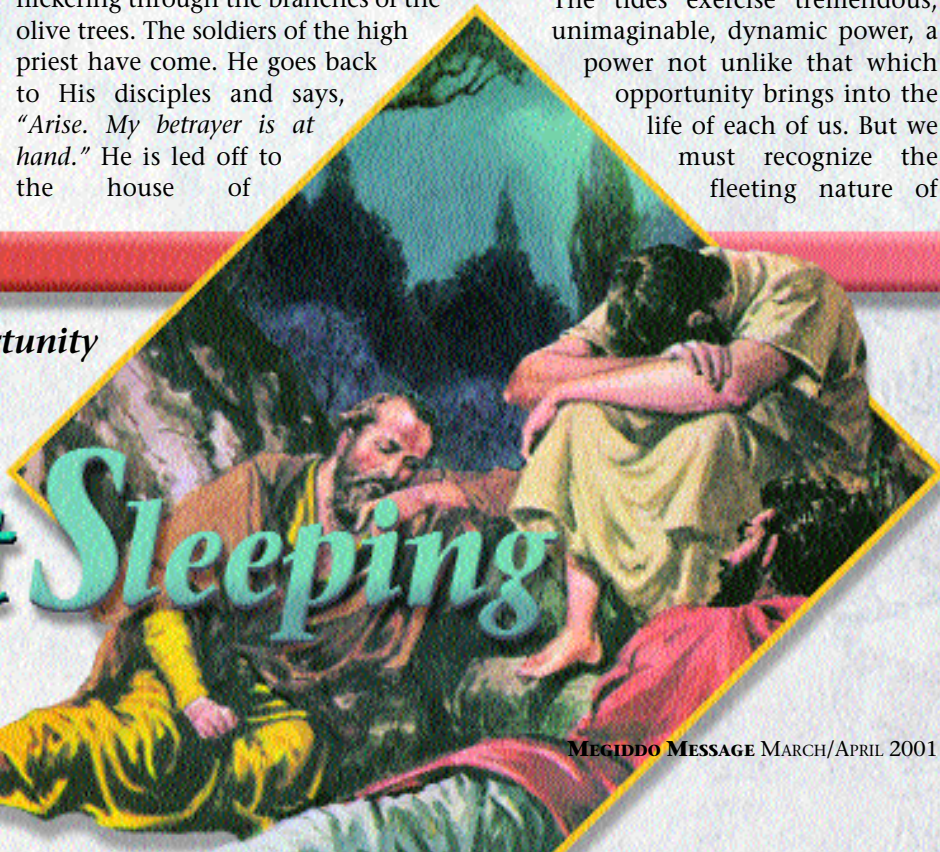
They did this in a very ingenious way. They sealed great empty gas tanks of the sort oil refineries use in storing fuel, and then they floated them in the sea above the sunken barges. When the tide was out, they chained the floating tanks to the barges. When the tide came in, the empty tanks exerted their tremendous buoyancy to tug the barges free from the bay’s sucking sand. It was then relatively easy to clear the harbor for Allied shipping.

Think of the power in that! The barges were chained to the tanks. The tanks were dependent upon the tides. The tides were pulled by the gravitational attraction of the moon, and the moon was moving in accord with the whole cosmos.

The tides exercise tremendous, unimaginable, dynamic power, a power not unlike that which opportunity brings into the life of each of us. But we must recognize the fleeting nature of

When life offers you an opportunity

DON'T BE  
Caught Sleeping





this tremendous tide-power, as the famous poet has so vividly pointed out in these words:

*There is a tide in the affairs of men  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.  
On such a full sea are we now afloat;  
And we must take the current when it serves  
Or lose our ventures.*

Not only should we recognize the power of these tides, but we should realize, too, that they cannot be stopped or retrieved. Their lifting strength comes for but a few hours and then is gone. And if we miss the flood, then we will be left in shallows and in miseries, having lost our ventures.

### **Growth in Character**

Those disciples in Gethsemane missed the opportunity to grow in character.

Why is it that most people today give so little thought to growing in character? Probably there are several factors: one concerns the popular idea which says that character is nothing more than the influence of our environment. Another is the teaching of many churches that the good life is the automatic result of accepting Christ and His power in your life. Then, too, moral relativism has settled across the land like a thick, stinking fog so that nothing is recognized as absolutely "right" or "wrong." So it should not surprise us that there is so little serious talk of character, let alone focus on its growth.

But we all need to grow in character. We need also to recognize that such growth cannot occur at just any moment and under any circumstance. There are tides in the development of character. Opportunities come, and opportunities depart. Catch them and growth is yours; miss them and you are left in shallows and in miseries.

A small city in Pennsylvania was at one time famous for having the world's largest steel tube-rolling mills. These people had designed a seamless tube that was unparalleled in the steel industry. An observer tells of standing with the machine operator in the command module of one of the great machines that made the tube steel. "I would see a great serpent of molten metal come slithering down into the machine," he says, "where it would be chopped off. Then the machine would grasp it by its ends and begin to spin it; by centrifugal force that bar of molten metal would open from the inside out, forming a perfect tube of steel, without seam or blemish."

"What is the most important ingredient in the process?" he asked the operator of the machine. The answer was simply this: "It's the temperature of the metal. If it is too hot, it will fly apart. If it is too cold, it will not open as it ought. Unless you catch the molten moment, you cannot make the perfect tube."

"Unless you catch the molten moment"—there is the point. Just so with us. Unless we catch those molten moments when character can develop, we miss our opportunity. The disciples missed such an opportunity in Gethsemane. They could have seen how Jesus handled suffering, fear and faltering. How much they could have learned as they watched Him confront ugliness straight on—not run away from it, or attempt to deny it, but confront it head-on and defeat it. What immortal lessons they could have learned firsthand that night, lessons about courage, and patience, and hope, and endurance, and mercy, and forgiveness, and fortitude. But they slept, and so missed the tide.

I do not know what will constitute the next molten moment for you. It might be your own suffering, or the death of someone you love very much. It might be an inner urge or impression you cannot explain. Or a sacrifice you feel impelled to make. Perhaps just a word—or even a look—from one you love; a bit of heroism in someone you admire; a Scripture; a letter; the words of a sermon. It is whatever suddenly causes within you a desire to expand your character beyond what you have known before.

Claim that moment. Don't sleep through it.

### **Growth as Children of God**

The disciples in Gethsemane also missed the opportunity to grow as children of God. Any one of us can strike a match. Any one of us can light a candle. Any one of us can ignite a bonfire. But no one of us and no group of us, not all of us together can command the circumstances that produce the perfect opportunity for inner growth. But it will come, just as it came for those disciples that night in Gethsemane. It will come.

And it will pass. Notice that while Jesus awakened the disciples the first time, He did not awaken them the second time. In Matthew 26:44 we are told that, finding them sleeping again, He went away. In other words, one cannot depend on God to interrupt in such dramatic fashion each and every time. If we turn away from the kindling opportunity, there will come a time when that opportunity is gone, and gone forever.

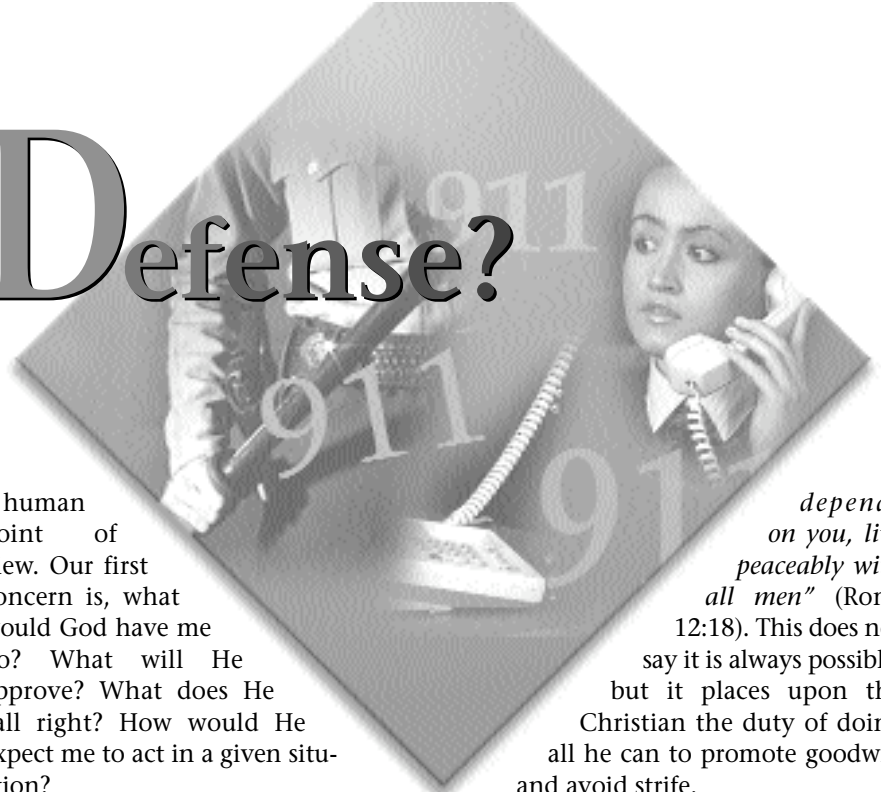
Think of this in terms of that great space shot when, a number of years ago, we sent a sophisticated space vehicle out to take pictures of the planet Saturn. For more than two years it moved toward its objective. Then came the time when it was closest to the planet it was sent to photograph. In those moments the cameras on board the vehicle took and sent back to us remarkable pictures of Saturn. Then, the time of its proximity spent, the vehicle continued on out into space, and it continues so until this very minute. Never again will it come close to Saturn.

*Just so in our lives, there are situations and events that bring unparalleled opportunities to grow in character, to expand in insight, to draw near to God and feel the pull of the higher life. At these times of closest approximation, let us take the step, make the*

*continued on page 22*



# WHAT ABOUT Self-Defense?



What is the Christian to do if personally assaulted or endangered? Is it right or wrong to defend oneself?

On this subject, the Bible does not give a plain "do" or "don't." It does, however, offer some guidelines.

A decision to act in self-defense has to be the result of a realistic appraisal of the situation (i.e., the imminence of danger, the amount of risk to life, the probability of retaliatory actions, etc.). For this reason it is not a simple right or wrong decision, and the serious Christian must be watchful of his or her own feelings and emotions.

Naturally we are born with a strong instinct to self-preservation. If someone challenges our life—or even our position, our opinion, or property—something within us springs immediately to our defense and we are ready to fight. This instinct is necessary to the continuance of the human family; but the degree to which it should be exercised or restrained is subject to a wide range of interpretations, which vary according to how seriously one regards his privileges and duties.

Aspiring Christians are by no means exempt from the instinct to self-preservation. In fact, the desire for continued life may be even stronger in them than in the average because the Christian has set his goal on the world to come, and he realizes his only hope lies in the opportunities that come to him during this present life. But for the Christian, *the desire for self-preservation must, like every other human instinct, yield to the control of the law of God. Even in self-defense, Christians cannot retaliate.* They can only protect their own life and well-being.

When we speak of self-defense, we are not thinking of the instinctive fighting spirit common to our race, nor can we judge an act as it might appear from

a human point of view. Our first concern is, what would God have me do? What will He approve? What does He call right? How would He expect me to act in a given situation?

Nor is the act the whole matter. God is as much concerned with the attitude, the feeling, the motive behind the act as with the act itself. In fact, a wrong desire not acted upon because of lack of opportunity is as wrong in God's sight as the wrong action would be. The Apostle John classified the one who hates his brother in his heart as a murderer (1 John 3:15); and the author of the book of Proverbs said, the *"thought of foolishness"* is *"sin"* (Prov. 24:9).

Most often an act of self-defense would be motivated by, or at least accompanied with, feelings of anger, or hatred, or revenge, or uncontrolled passion, or any combination of these. God views all these as animal traits which are definitely and absolutely forbidden the Christian. *The Christian can never, under any circumstance, harbor feelings of anger against his opponent.* God's law is: *"Cease from anger, and forsake wrath"* (Ps. 37:8).

*The Christian can never, under any circumstance, pay back evil for evil, or harbor any attitude of "give-as-good-as-you-get."* Again the law is plain: *"See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone"*—no exceptions—*"but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all"* (1 Thess. 5:15). Again, *"Repay no one evil for evil"* (Rom. 12:17).

The Christian can never, under any circumstance, try to provoke to evil or act aggressively. Once more the law is plain: *"If it is possible, as much as*

*depends on you, live peaceably with all men"* (Rom. 12:18). This does not say it is always possible, but it places upon the Christian the duty of doing all he can to promote goodwill and avoid strife.

Jesus both taught and applied in His own life this spirit of peace-making, non-retaliation and non-revenge. Such a spirit was in contrast to the law of Moses, which had permitted an *"eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."* With Christ came the "amplified version" of that law: *"You have heard...but I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also"* (Matt. 5:38-39). We cannot believe Jesus meant these words to be taken literally, as though when we find ourselves in trouble we should ask for more. But they do express the maximum of self-control, a total absence of any feelings of retaliation or revenge, and an active desire to promote peace.

Such was Jesus' own example toward those who arrested, abused and crucified Him: *"who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously"* (1 Pet. 2:23). He left the rendering of all vengeance to God; and so must we.

But assuming that our attitude is only to preserve our own lives; assuming we hold no feeling of ill will or revenge or anger or retaliation, and no desire to "get even," does God permit us to take any action to defend our lives against a lawless attack?

The answer is yes.

## Means of Self-Defense

Our first line of defense at a point of



danger would be 911: *Use the means provided by our local civil laws* (i.e., call the police, if help is available), and ask them to defend us. We are grateful to live under a government that provides laws and law enforcement for the restraint of evil. These are part of God's provision, and we must cooperate with them unless those laws conflict with our allegiance to God, for the Apostle Paul commands us to be "*subject to the governing authorities*" (Romans 13:1-7).

But suppose we are in a situation where no help is available and we must rely on our own physical resources. What then?

### 1: Use Verbal Defense

The first means of defense the Christian should consider is defense by words and sound argument. Is such defense justified? We find our answer in the example of Jesus. The Jews had accused Jesus of being a deceiver of the people, of being a liar, and of being possessed of what they called a "devil" (John 7:12, 20). Jesus proceeded to defend Himself, showing that He was sent of God, that He spoke only the words of His Father, and that His witness was true. At the same time He told them that they were of their father "*the devil*," adding, "*and the desires of your father you want to do.*" Jesus told them the facts. "*Because I tell you the truth,*" He said, "*you do not believe Me...I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. And I do not seek My own glory...If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word*" (John 8:44-45, 49-50, 54-55). Jesus defended Himself against their false accusations by words and sound argument.

Was Jesus retaliating? No, He was stating the facts plainly, but there is no evidence that He had any feeling of ill will. And as Jesus did, so may we. We, too, may defend ourselves, provided we are moved by the same motive that moved Jesus, that "*you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32). When we defend ourselves, our words must be without ill will, our only desire that our opposition be told the facts.

### 2: Use Legal Means

A second means of self-defense we find illustrated in the Bible is to *use the courts of the law*. We find an example in the experiences of Paul. On several occasions he made his defense before the courts and officers of the law and availed himself of their protection (see Acts 24:10, 22; Acts 25:8; 26:2).

Paul not only defended himself in the courts but took advantage of the law by asking his persecutors if it was lawful for them to scourge a Roman uncon-demned. This made them afraid. Paul was using his legal rights as a Roman citizen to protect himself. And he was justified in doing this. The Christian must have no spirit of revenge or ill will, only a desire to protect his own life and well-being that he might be able to proclaim the Gospel and fulfill the commission God had given him.

### 3: Escape

There may be times, however, when words and sound argument have no effect upon our opponent; and legal means may not be available when we need it most. At such a time we might try to *escape from our opponent* by any means we could find. Here again we have an example in the Apostle Paul when the Jews were watching the gates of the city day and night to kill him (Acts 9:23-26). Paul did not sit down and wait for an angel to come to his rescue, nor did he arrange for his friends to organize a group and fight for him. Rather, with their help, he escaped over the wall and made his way to safety in Jerusalem.

### 4: Use Force

If argument fails and we have no legal means at hand and we can see no way to escape, our only remaining alternative is to *employ force of arms* in an effort to overpower our opponent—either find someone to defend us or defend ourselves.

### An Example From Scripture

Have we any example of self-defense in Scripture? Look at an experience of the Apostle Paul. After he had made his defense before the council, the rabble cried out, "*Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.*"

What did Paul do?

First, Paul appealed to the law: "*Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?*" (Acts 22:22, 25). This only angered the Jews, and so Paul employed a different strategy: He referred to himself as having been a Pharisee. This set the Pharisees against the Sadducees (for Paul realized that both were present) and they fell to wrangling among themselves. A group of soldiers, under the orders of the chief captain, took Paul by force from among the people and brought him safely into the protection of the castle.

Then came a boy, Paul's nephew, informing Paul that forty men had vowed "*neither to eat nor drink until they had killed*" him. Paul directed the young man to the chief captain, who took immediate steps to ensure Paul's safety. The chief captain assembled an elaborate bodyguard for Paul, including 200 soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearsmen which should accompany him to Caesarea during that night. Had Paul not believed such measures for his defense were right, he could have protested. But there is no record that he did. And he knew full well the purpose of the defenders: Had any of the forty men attacked, these soldiers and spearsmen would have killed in Paul's defense. Such was their commission, and Paul knew it.

Was Paul accepting a service which he would not have performed for himself had it been in his power? We cannot believe that he was. Paul realized the need to take steps to defend himself, and it was right whether he did it him-

*continued on page 21*



• LORD, IT WILL BE AS YOU SAY. •

PART ONE

# A STUDY OF BIBLE PROPHECY

✧ INTRODUCTION

✧ A LOOK AT HUMAN PREDICTIONS

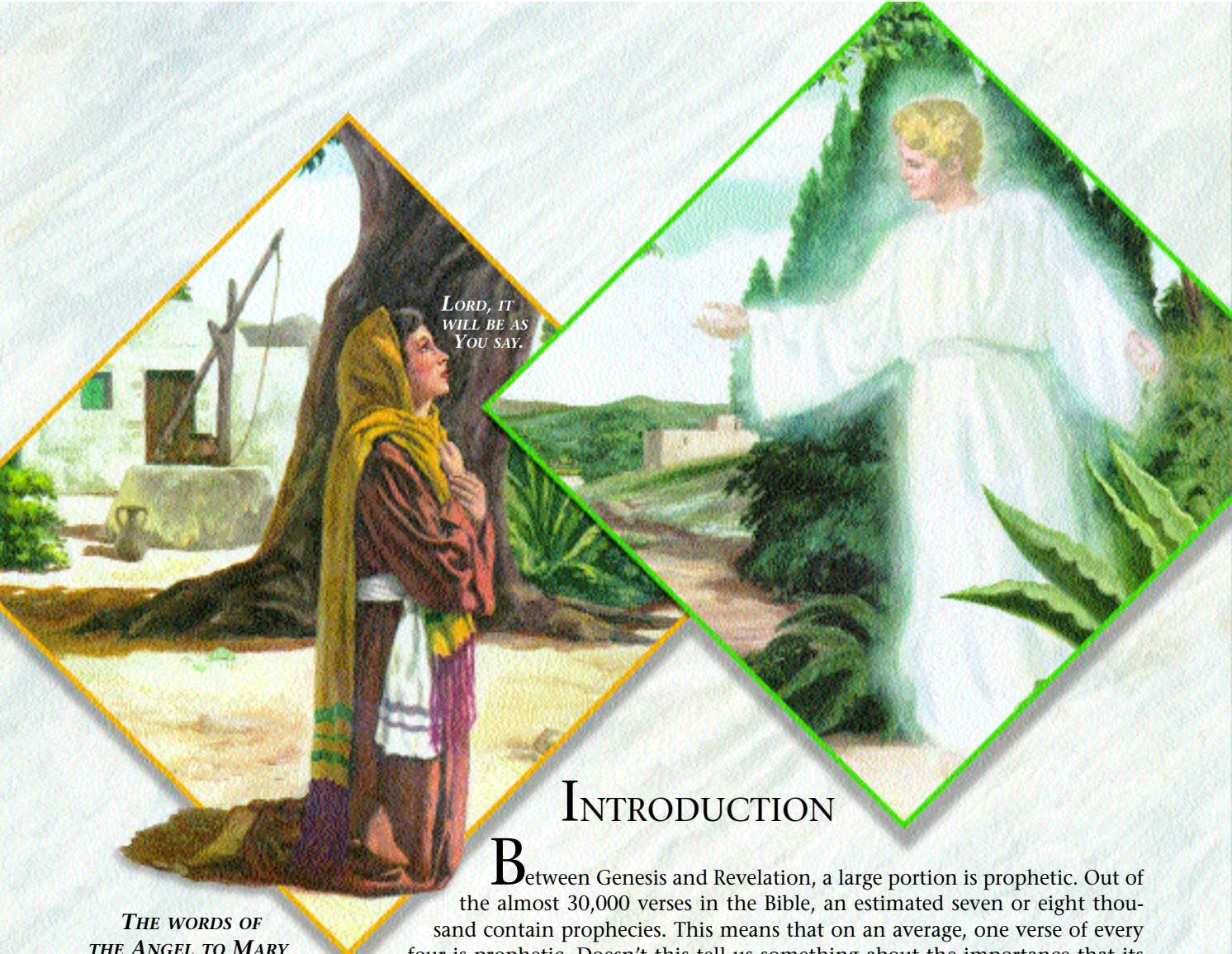
✧ THE MESSIAH IN PROPHECY

**Looking Back**

**Looking Ahead**

The Bible opens and closes with prophecy—not speculations but genuine, solid, specific predictions of future events. The first chapters of Genesis outline prophetically—in allegory—God’s plan of salvation for this earth and its inhabitants, and the book of Revelation concludes the message by telling of *“things shortly to come to pass”* (Rev. 1:1). And all of its prophecies have a practical meaning. Along with the final *“book of this prophecy”* is the command, *“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near”* (Rev. 1:3 NIV).





**THE WORDS OF  
THE ANGEL TO MARY  
TELLING HER THAT SHE  
WOULD BE THE MOTHER OF  
JESUS WERE A PROPHECY  
WITH A NEAR-AND  
SURE-FULFILLMENT.**

LORD, IT  
WILL BE AS  
YOU SAY.

## INTRODUCTION

**B**etween Genesis and Revelation, a large portion is prophetic. Out of the almost 30,000 verses in the Bible, an estimated seven or eight thousand contain prophecies. This means that on an average, one verse of every four is prophetic. Doesn't this tell us something about the importance that its Author placed on revealing the future? Can't we conclude that God has caused His Word to be written to reveal His plans?

We deplore the flood of sensational publications today that purport to be "prophetic," end-of-the-world predictions but which are really only the old, familiar hype, revised and warmed over. But if they accomplish nothing else, perhaps they help the Divine cause by drawing attention to a subject which is now more important than ever before, when the Second Advent of Jesus is imminent! Yes, Jesus Christ is coming back—soon!

When? We do not attempt to set any dates, but one statement can be made with absolute surety: Never in the history of the earth was the coming of Jesus nearer than it is this very moment!

**W**hat is prophecy? In everyday terms, prophecy is a window through which one can peer into the future. Technically, the word comes from two Greek words, *pro* which means "for," "in front of," "on behalf of," and *phanai*, which means "to speak," so it is literally to "speak in front of," to "speak for" (as an agent), or to "speak before" (in time).

The prophet of God had two primary responsibilities: 1) to speak out in front of, or "in behalf of" God, delivering His messages and 2) to speak beforehand, in advance, of coming events. The prophet was, in the first sense, the mouthpiece of God. In earlier Old Testament times, the prophets were known as "seers" (literally, one who "sees"). As related in 1 Sam. 9:9 NIV, "Formerly in Israel, if a man went to inquire of God, he would say, 'Come, let us go to the seer,' because the prophet of today used to be called a seer."

In a broader sense, the word "prophet" can refer to anyone who speaks the word or will of God, whether revealed through dream, vision, or spoken message.





## THE PROPHECY

What is a suitable subject for a Divine prophecy? Nothing seems either too small or too great. Whether a prophecy be of the future destiny of the earth or only something that will happen tomorrow, it is a clear demonstration of Divine power, for who of us can know what will happen one hour from now?

Someone has said that the best way to predict the future is to not state any time with a prediction—almost anything can happen eventually! This is surely the only way to “predict” successfully if the mind behind the prophecy is human, but no such need for uncertainty accompanies the prophesying when the Omniscient God is behind it. “My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips,” is His own testimony (Ps. 89:34). The test of the ancient prophet was just this: “If the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him” (Deut. 18:22). King Saul’s servant could testify about the Lord’s “seer” Samuel, “All that he saith cometh surely to pass” (1 Sam. 9:6)—even if it is only a matter of locating lost animals! (1 Sam. 9:20; 10:16).

### God Knows

When God makes a prophecy, *He really knows*. When He looks ahead, He sees the future as clearly as we can see the past.

The fullest beauty of true religion is in its forward look. Truth is not static, complacent, or backward looking. It is the Word of God for today and tomorrow. And taken seriously, it affects us personally, making our life before God more careful, more considered, more upright.

In many religious circles, the study of prophecy is neglected—on the assumption that no sure information is available. Truly many false, foolish, and heretical statements have been made about Bible prophecy. But these do not condemn the prophecies themselves, only the erroneous thinking of those who interpreted them. The Divine Word still stands.

It may even be said that we today owe more to the teaching of the great prophets than to any other part of the Old Testament.

But by no means is Bible prophecy confined to the Old Testament. It is found in every book of the New Testament as well. Not only does the New Testament quote many of the Old Testament prophecies, but there are new prophecies as well. The entire Book of Revelation is a Book of Prophecy pertaining to things “soon to come.” In other words, things that had not occurred before the Book was written. Some of these are yet future, and, we can be sure, they will be fulfilled right on schedule. ♦

# A Look at HUMAN

*“If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.” —Deut. 18:22 NIV*

You say prophecy can’t be depended on, that all prophecy is just so many words? Maybe that is because you have been listening to human, self-appointed prophets.

Every January, newspaper headlines feature the predictions made by leading psychics and world figures. The front page stories contain amazing forecasts of major disasters and key world events, as well as medical and scientific breakthroughs. They also contain a lot of speculative trivia about political, film, and TV celebrities. “Counterfeit prophets,” someone has commented, “annually fire prophetic buckshot into tomorrow’s clouds, hoping to bag an occasional stray duck as it passes overhead.” But what is it worth? Do their predictions rival the prophecies of Scripture? Occasionally when an event occurs that someone has predicted, great publicity is given to the fact. But seldom is the other side of the story publicized—the thousands of predictions that are erroneous and fall by the way like withered leaves. A few years ago someone did a tally of 250 published predictions that were supposed to happen within the year. At the end of the year, less than 3% (i.e., 6) could be listed as reasonably fulfilled. The remaining 97% (244) missed the mark completely.

In December 1999, a well-known financial analyst made a forecast of 10 “events” which he projected had a “50% or better” chance of happening in the year 2000. Looking back on his projections, it is plain to see that his “crystal ball” was faulty (he predicted the winner of the upcoming presidential election—and didn’t even have one of the correct candidates on the ballot!).

Many hundreds of prophecies were made at the dawn of the new millennium. The following are from a group compiled by B. A. Robinson and posted on the web in the fall of 1999. Looking at them 18 months later, how do we judge their rate of success? Zero! (Note: The list has been shortened for lack of space, but not a single prophecy in the list proved true.)



# PREDICTIONS

On April 27, 1999, Edgar Cayce predicted that a cosmic storm would hit the earth in **January 2000**. Winds of 1000 miles per hour and tremendous swings in temperature would kill millions.

According to the June 24, 1997 issue of *Sun Magazine*, Pope John the 23rd predicted in 1961 that Doomsday would begin on **January 1, 2000**, with the detonation of an atomic bomb in a major European city by a Libyan terrorist group.

Thomas Chase predicted that on **January 1, 2000**, the Y2K bug would cause a worldwide electrical failure, trigger a world economic depression, and bring on the Antichrist.

Gary North, Christian Reconstructionist, made several predictions of significant developments at the start of the new millennium, including a prediction that "thousands of computer programs will fail, largely in small commercial establishments." [CNN reported on **January 1, 2000** that there were no noticeable electric power interruptions, except those caused by weather (which were unrelated to Y2K). Some computer failures happened, but no overwhelming catastrophe occurred.]

He also predicted that a nuclear war would erupt in the Middle East. Those members of *The Order of the Solar Temple* who have survived earlier mass murders and suicides will gather at Jerusalem.

About 1999, Orville T. Gordon (a.k.a. Nodrog) who leads a Texan group called "*Outer Dimensional Forces*," expected that UFOs would

come from outer space, remove the ODF groups from earth, and destroy the United States with a great flood.

Marion Derlette, a religious historian, predicted that doomsday would occur on **January 16, 2000**.

According to Weekly World News for April 27, 1999, Mother Seaton (Elizabeth Ann Seaton) predicted in the early 19th century that Washington DC would be bathed in an evil stench during the summer of 2000. Political leaders who stayed behind in the city would be driven mad.

According to Weekly World News for April 27, 1999, a scroll written by the great Chinese philosopher Confucius predicted that a massive solar flare would erupt and bathe the earth with enormous amounts of energy in **July 2000**. This would burn and blind millions of people, worldwide.

Jim Searcy, pastor of the *Cumberland Presbyterian Church* predicted the end of the world in **October 2000**. He also concluded that Prince Charles is the Antichrist.

Nostradamus predicted that a giant asteroid would hit the earth in late **November 2000**. This would start a fire that would burn up the planet.

Elohim City is located in the Cookson Hills of eastern Oklahoma. One hundred heavily armed inhabitants live there under the leadership of Robert Millar, a former Mennonite preacher. They expect an invasion of the U.S. by Asians. He believes that a series of natural disasters would occur probably soon after the year 2000. The

wicked and unworthy would be purged from the earth at that time.

*Sun Magazine* reported in its October 14, 1997 issue that Noah's Ark had been discovered intact in undamaged form on a slope near Mount Ararat in Turkey. Inside were a group of 6 copper-gold-silver scrolls, each 12" square. One scroll revealed that Doomsday would occur on **January 31, 2001**. Good people who repented of their sins would be saved; cruel tyrants would be cast into the burning fires of hell.

A large evangelical program devoted to end-time prophecy predicted that "*by the year 2001, there [would] be global chaos*," and Islam would become much larger than Christianity. (That would take a sudden growth spurt; Islam is currently followed by 19% of the world's population vs. 33% for Christianity). A one-world church would emerge; "*controlled by demonic hosts*." Temple rituals would resume in Israel.

## Enough!

Are you shouting to yourself, "Enough! enough!"? That is how I feel, too.

Yet the predictions go on and on. One observer commenting on them in December 1999, was not worried: The human record is well established. "We have noted over 6 dozen **past** predictions of the end of the world," he said, "which have one factor in common: *none ever came true*." He suspected the same would be true of these.

And it was.

What a contrast to the prophecies of Scripture, where prophecy after prophecy has been fulfilled just as foretold! ♦



# The Messiah IN PROPHECY

## PROPHECIES CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST

*Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension*

One of the most central topics of prophecy in the Bible is the subject of the Messiah. The prophecies focus on two comings, a first and a second. And since all the prophecies of His first coming were fulfilled just as predicted (see chart, "Looking Back"), we can trust that the prophecies of His second coming will also prove 100% accurate.

The Old Testament records some 300 prophecies about the Messiah that were fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Does this seem incredible? It would be, except for the Divine Mind behind these predictions. God doesn't guess, He knows. When His prophets spoke, they revealed the future with certainty.

Could this be by chance? Could 300 predictions about one person who was to be born hundreds or thousands of years in the future just happen to come out right?

To comprehend this amazing fact, an illustration is helpful. Suppose you take not 300 predictions but only 8. What are the odds that these predictions might all be fulfilled in one person? The likelihood is said to be that of one in 10 to the 17th power (1 in 1,000,000,000,000,000,000)! To make this statement more meaningful, Josh McDowell put this into the form of a picture. Imagine, he said, that you cover the state of Texas with silver dollars to a depth of 2 feet, and on one of those silver dollars you place a mark. Now blindfold a man and tell him to pick up just one silver dollar—how likely is he to pick up the one that you marked? That is parallel to all eight prophecies being fulfilled in one man! (Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, vol. 1, pp. 144, 167).

Below is a chart of some of the prophecies of Christ's first coming that were fulfilled, along with the references to their fulfillments.

### Looking Back

Prophecy	Reference	Century of Prophecy	Century of Fulfillment	Reference
Called Emmanuel (God with us)	Isa. 7:14	8th c. AD	1st c. AD	Matt. 1:23
Born of a virgin	Isa. 7:14	8th c. AD	1st c. AD	Matt. 1:23
Born in Bethlehem	Mic. 5:2	8th c. AD	1st c. AD	Luke 2:4-5, 7
Descendant of Abraham	Gen. 22:18	19th c. AD	1st c. AD	Matt. 1:1
Descendant of Isaac	Gen. 21:12	19th c. AD	1st c. AD	Matt. 1:2-16
Descendant of Jacob	Obad. 1:17	6th c. AD	1st c. AD	Matt. 1:1-2
Descendant of Judah	Gen. 49:10	17th c. AD	1st c. AD	Luke 3:23-33
To be given the throne of David	2 Sam. 7:12-13	11th c. AD	1st c. AD	Luke 1:32-33
Joseph and Mary flee to Egypt	Hos. 11:1	8th c. AD	1st c. AD	Matt. 2:14-15
Herod tries to kill Jesus	Jer. 31:15	7th c. AD	1st c. AD	Matt. 2:16-18
Christ a prophet raised up among the Jews	Deut. 18:15	15th c. AD	1st c. AD	Acts 3:20, 22



Prophecy	Reference	Century of Prophecy	Century of Fulfillment	Reference
John the Baptist, Christ's first forerunner	Isa. 40:3-5	8th c. AD	1st c. AD	Luke 3:3-6
Lord declared Jesus as Son of God	Ps. 2:7	11th c. AD	1st c. AD	Matt. 3:17
To minister in Galilee	Isa. 9:1-2	8th c. AD	1st c. AD	Matt. 4:13-16
Details of Christ's ministry	Isa. 61:1-2	7th c. AD	1st c. AD	Luke 4:18-19
Will speak in parables	Ps. 78:2-4	11th c. AD	1st c. AD	Matt. 13:34-35
Rejected by own people	Isa. 53:3	8th c. AD	1st c. AD	John 1:11
Christ not believed	Isa. 53:1	8th c. AD	1st c. AD	John 12:37-38
To ride into Jerusalem on a colt	Zech. 9:9	5th c. AD	1st c. AD	Mark 11:7, 9, 11
Betrayed by familiar friend	Ps. 41:9	11th c. AD	1st c. AD	John 13:18
Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver	Zech. 11:12	5th c. AD	1st c. AD	Matt. 26:14-15
Accused by false witnesses	Ps. 35:11	11th c. AD	1st c. AD	Mark 14:57-59
Was silent when accused	Isa. 53:7	8th c. AD	1st c. AD	Mark 15:4-5
Spat on and struck	Isa. 50:6	8th c. AD	1st c. AD	Matt. 26:67
Hated without reason	Ps. 35:19	11th c. AD	1st c. AD	John 15:24-25
Hands and feet pierced	Ps. 22:16	11th c. AD	1st c. AD	John 20:27; Luke 24:39
Crucified with malefactors	Isa. 53:12	8th c. AD	1st c. AD	Mark 15:27-28
Sneered at and mocked	Ps. 22:7-8	11th c. AD	1st c. AD	Luke 23:35-39
Soldiers cast lots for His garments	Ps. 22:18	11th c. AD	1st c. AD	Matt. 27:35
The 30 pieces of silver used to buy the potter's field	Zech. 11:13	5th c. AD	1st c. AD	Matt. 27:3-7
No bones were broken	Ps. 34:20	11th c. AD	1st c. AD	John 19:32-33, 36
His side pierced	Zech. 12:10	5th c. AD	1st c. AD	John 19:34-37
Buried with the rich	Isa. 53:9	8th c. AD	1st c. AD	Matt. 27:57-60
To be resurrected	Ps. 16:10	11th c. AD	1st c. AD	Mark 16:6; 1 Cor. 15:4
Taken to heaven	Ps. 110:1	11th c. AD	1st c. AD	Mark 16:19; Eph. 4:8

## PROPHECIES CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST

*Second Advent, Judgment and Future Kingship*

What shall we say of Christ's second coming and the events associated with it? What does the Bible tell us about events associated with Christ's second advent?

Here are a few definite points:

- **No one knows when Christ will return.** *"No one knows when that day or time will be, not the angels in heaven, not even the Son. Only the*

*Father knows"* (Mark 13:32 NCV).

- **Christ will come when not expected,** as He mentioned in His parable, *"But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what*



time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into" (Matt. 24:43 NIV).

- **Christ will come during a time of rampant wickedness.** Conditions will parallel those that existed during the time of Noah, when only 8 persons were saved while multitudes drowned (Matt. 24:37–39). Or they will be like they were when Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed in fire, when only Lot and his two daughters were saved (Luke 17:28). Life will seem to proceed as usual, "People...eating, drinking, marrying, and giving their children to be married" (Luke 17:27 NCV), when suddenly the great change will come!
- **Fear will be gripping the hearts**

of men, as Jesus predicted: "Men's hearts [will be] failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:26).

It will be a time of fear and dread for the unbelievers, but not for the righteous. God has promised, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

- **There will not be another one-government world until after Christ returns** (Daniel 2:35–45).

Certain conditions will exist when Christ returns:

- **A time of rampant unbelief.** Scoffers will be saying, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever

since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation" (2 Pet. 3:3–4 NIV).

- **A time of international distress.** There will be "distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring" (Luke 21:25).
- **A time of unprecedented violence, danger and peril.** "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come" (2 Tim. 3:1).
- **It will be a time of "business as usual"** (Luke 17:30 NLT).

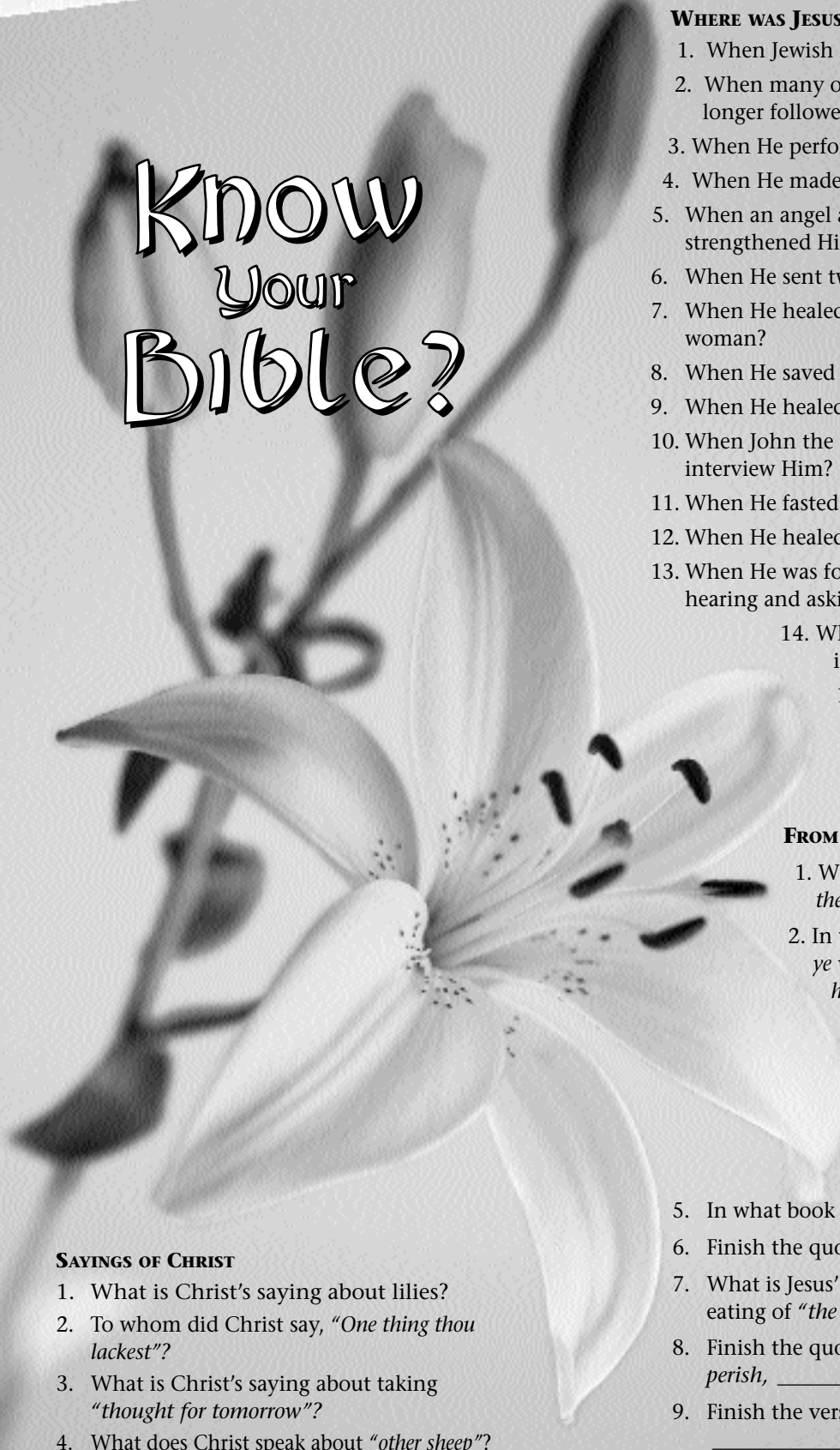
Nevertheless, some will be eagerly expecting Jesus' return and will be ready to receive Him (Matt. 25:1–13).

Will that number include you? Will it include me? ♦

## Looking Ahead

Prophecy	Reference	Century of Prophecy	Fulfillment
Christ comes unexpectedly	Matt. 24:44; Rev. 16:15	1st c. AD	Future
Elijah precedes second coming	Mal. 4:5–6; Matt. 17:11	4th c. BC	Future
Dead resurrected	Dan. 12:2; Rev. 20:5	6th c. BC	Future
Rapture	1 Thess. 4:17	1st c. BD	Future
Judgment	Dan. 7:9–10; Rev. 19:11	6th c. AD	Future
Reward righteous	Isa. 40:10; Rev. 22:12	8th c. BC	Future
Stand on Mount Zion	Ps. 2:6; Rev. 14:1	11th c. BC	Future
Stand on Mount of Olives	Zech. 14:4	5th c. BC	Future
Come as Lion of Tribe of Judah	Rev. 5:5	1st c. AD	Future
Nations fight against Christ	Rev. 19:19	1st c. AD	Future
Conqueror	Rev. 6:2	1st c. AD	Future
New heavens (rulers) earth (subjects)	Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1	7th c. BC	Future
Law goes forth from Zion	Isa. 2:3	8th c. BC	Future
Everlasting Gospel taught to all on earth	Rev. 14:6	1st c. AD	Future
To reign forever	Ps. 45:6–7; Heb. 1:8–12	11th c. BC	Future
Priest forever	Ps. 110:4	11th c. BC	Future
Rule earth in righteousness	Isa 32:1; Rev. 19:2	8th c. BC	Future
Righteous to rule with Christ	Dan. 7:22, 27; Rev. 20:4	6th c. BC	Future
All nations will worship the Lord	Isa. 66:23; Rev. 15:4	7th c. BC	Future
One worldwide kingdom under God after the Millennium	1 Cor. 15:28	1st c. AD	Future
No more sorrow, pain, death	Isa. 25:8; Rev. 21:4	8th c. BC	Future
No more immorality, crime, evil of any sort	Rev. 21:8	1st c. AD	Future
All dates are estimate/approximate.			





# Know Your Bible?

## SAYINGS OF CHRIST

1. What is Christ's saying about lilies?
2. To whom did Christ say, "One thing thou lackest"?
3. What is Christ's saying about taking "thought for tomorrow"?
4. What does Christ speak about "other sheep"?
5. What does Christ say about "the cares of this life"?
6. What is Christ's saying about the needle's eye?
7. What is Christ's saying about where we should lay up treasure?

## WHERE WAS JESUS—

1. When Jewish leaders took up stones to stone Him?
2. When many of His disciples forsook Him and no longer followed after Him?
3. When He performed His second miracle?
4. When He made use of a small scourge or whip?
5. When an angel appeared unto Him from heaven and strengthened Him?
6. When He sent two of His disciples to fetch an ass?
7. When He healed the daughter of the Syrophenician woman?
8. When He saved Peter from a watery grave?
9. When He healed the daughter of Jairus?
10. When John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to interview Him?
11. When He fasted forty days and nights?
12. When He healed a woman taken with a great fever?
13. When He was found with the doctors of the law, both hearing and asking them questions?
14. When the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from top to bottom?
15. When wicked men spat on Him and struck Him?

## FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. Who is recorded as singing, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth"?
2. In what book are these words, "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts"?
3. Where does it say, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb"?
4. In what connection did Jesus use the words, "With God all things are possible"?
5. In what book does it tell about Armageddon?
6. Finish the quotation, "Lift up the hands \_\_\_\_\_."
7. What is Jesus' promise to the overcomers besides eating of "the hidden manna"?
8. Finish the quotation, "though our outward man perish, \_\_\_\_\_."
9. Finish the verse: "They could not enter in \_\_\_\_\_."
10. Who said "I am he that liveth, and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for ever more"?

answers on page 21



# FAITH *in Action*

by RUTH E. SISSON

Bible Text: Acts 6:1–8 NIV

1. In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.
2. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.
3. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them
4. and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."
5. This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.
6. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.
7. So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.
8. Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.

## THE LEADERS RESPOND

### WHEN SOMEONE COMPLAINS

 READ ACTS 6:1–8

The young church was growing. There were now several thousand believers in Jerusalem—quite a change from the time of Jesus. Many were meeting in the Temple, others in the homes of some of the believers. As the Church grew, it wasn't strange that they grew into a few problems. Methods that once worked fine now had to be modified.

Some of the believers who had property had sold at least part of what they owned and given the proceeds to the apostles for distribution.

What do you do when you hear someone complaining? Do you take their side, and add perhaps fuel to the fire, looking for something else to complain about? Or do you immediately take the defensive, and make every possible attempt to silence their complaint?

There is yet a third course, which is better than either of the first. And it is simple: listen to the complaint, investigate what is wrong, and correct the problem. This latter course is what the leaders of the new Church in Jerusalem did.

It seemed like an ideal system, but everyone was not happy. The first complaint sounded very much like a modern cultural battle. ("We of this race, gender, network" didn't get as much as "they" of another race, gender, network)!

It does seem that the nature of the problem was cultural. In the Church were two types of Jews, those who spoke Aramaic and were native to Palestine, and those from the west who were Greek. The Greek Jews complained that their widows were not receiving a fair share of the daily distribution. Was it a modern case of discrimination?

Nothing in the record says that the complaint was just or unjust. And that wasn't the issue. If there was a perception of a problem, the problem was real enough, and needed action.



The Apostles acted promptly. The program clearly needed better direction. So what did they do? Did they simply appoint more “staff” to handle it? No, first they called a general meeting of the Christians, and explained the situation. They had studied the problem, and had a remedy to suggest. The Apostles reasoned that they should not be spending their time “serving tables” (gathering daily provisions and distributing them). Their primary work was to teach and preach the Word of God.

Responsible people should be appointed to run the Church’s ministry of assistance. Apparently everyone agreed, and seven of the believers were selected. These seven, sometimes called “deacons,” were chosen on the basis of their quality of character. With seven to share the task, the workload could be divided, and all money matters could be above suspicion.

Meanwhile, what did the Apostles resolve to do? *“We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”*

1. Who took responsibility for stating the qualifications of those who would serve the church? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why were the men chosen on a basis of character rather than ability alone? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What effect did the New arrangement have on the Apostles? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



A closer look

### Qualifications of the Deacons

Those chosen for public office in the Church were not chosen for financial success, or organization ability, or good business acumen. The Apostles had other criteria to judge by. A successful man might not be a spiritual man. On the other hand, a spiritual man might not be a sensible businessman. What were the Apostles looking for?

First, he had to be a *good* man. This was of paramount importance. He had to be one who commanded the love and respect of others because of personal integrity and unblemished character, one who avoided evil and devoted himself to the Cause of Christ and the well-being of others.

Then, too, he had to be a godly man, *“full of the Holy Spirit”* and *“full of wisdom.”* Not all good men and not all godly men are wise.

Imagine what kind of government we would have today if all who served were godly, wise and “good” by God’s standard of goodness!

9. Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen,

10. but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.

11. Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, “We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God.”

12. So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin.

13. They produced false witnesses, who testified. “This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law.

14. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.”

15. All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.





Insight

### Calm and Radiant

A man facing deadly charges was calm, radiant, his face shining with the light of another world, just as Moses' face had shone when he came down from the mountain. Those who saw him must have marveled that there was no hate, no bitterness, not even fear, but only a heavenly radiance in his countenance.

Isn't there a tremendous lesson here? Can we imagine how the young man named Saul of Tarsus who was present might have perceived that angelic face? Doubtless it haunted him, though at the moment it may have filled him with anger.

Having heard the indictment, Stephen was now given the opportunity to respond. What was the initial reaction? *"But the counsel, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel"* (Acts 6:15).

*to be continued*

*A man who is willing to follow God may not always do what is popular or convenient, but he will do what is right and good. Then he will have no regrets if others choose to follow his example.*

*If it's more precious to you than God, spell it I-D-O-L.*

*We make our decisions and then our decisions make us.*





## What About Self-Defense?

*continued from page 9*

self or whether others did it for him. If it had been wrong for Paul to defend himself, it would have been wrong for him to accept the protection offered by the chief captain. It is just as wrong for us to engage someone to steal for us, as it is to steal for ourselves. It is just as wrong to hire someone to commit a crime for us as to commit the crime ourselves. Likewise, it is just as right to do something ourselves as to get someone to do it for us.

The defense of the soldiers was Paul's last resort against the lawless ones who had threatened to kill him. Paul could not have stood against them alone; he had to have help.

Had self-defense been wrong, Paul should have said to the chief captain, "I have faith; I do not believe in defending myself. God will deliver me. Let these men go their way." But Paul did not. He accepted the men who were hired to defend him, and who were ready to fight if necessary.

Jesus said something about this type of defense when talking to His apostles the last night before He was betrayed. When He had sent them out under a special commission some two years previous (Luke 10), He had told them they

would need to take nothing with them. God would provide for their physical support and protection. But now as He addressed them He told them this commission had ended; now they would be on their own. Lacking Him and His supporting power, they would need money, provisions, even a means of defense against possible aggressive attack. He said: "*When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?*" So they said, 'Nothing.' Then He said to them, '*But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one*'" (Luke 22:35-36).

There had been a change. No longer would Divine power protect them from every foe; they should be prepared to defend themselves when necessary.

### Be subject to "the law"

What about the times when believers were being persecuted by the

authorities of the government under which they lived? Why did they not resist, or act in self-defense but willingly submitted?

In the book of Acts are many instances where the Apostles were arrested, tried and punished as law-breakers. They did not resist, though they did use the law when it was in their favor (when Paul used his rightful privileges as a Roman citizen to escape beatings).

Believers have an obligation to "be subject" to the ordinance of lawful government (Rom. 13:1-3), and to obey it as far as it does not conflict with the higher law of God. And when and if it does conflict, the believer must "be subject" to that law by submitting to its penalty.

When one disobeys the authority of proper law, there is no provision for self-defense. At that point one must be willing to take the consequences imposed by that law. ♦



*The One who seeks our highest good,  
He knows when things annoy,  
We would not long for Zion  
If earth held only joy.*



### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 17

#### SAYINGS OF CHRIST

1. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow" (Matt. 6:28-29; Luke 12:27)
2. The rich young ruler (Mark 10:21-22; Matt. 19:20)
3. "the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself" (Matt. 6:34)
4. "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16)
5. They choke out the word (Matt. 13:22; Mark 4:19)
6. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25; Matt. 19:24)
7. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21; Luke 12:34)

#### WHERE WAS JESUS

1. In Jerusalem (John 10:22, 31-32)
2. In the synagogue at Capernaum (John 6:59-66)

3. In Cana of Galilee (John 4:46-54)
4. In the Temple at Jerusalem (John 2:13-15)
5. At the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39-43)
6. Ascending up to Jerusalem and to the Mount of Olives (Luke 19:28-30)
7. On the borders of Tyre and Sidon (Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-29)
8. On the sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:22-32; John 6:1-19)
9. Capernaum (Matt. 4:12-15, Mark 5:1-43)
10. In Nain (Luke 7:11, 18-20)
11. In the desert (Luke 4:1-2)
12. In Simon's house in Capernaum (Luke 4:31-39)
13. In the Temple at Jerusalem (Luke 2:42-46)
14. On the cross on Calvary (Mark 15:22, 37-38)
15. In the high priest's palace in Jerusalem and in Pilate's palace (Mark 14:60-65; 15:15-19)

#### FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. The voice of "many waters," of a great multitude (of angels, see Rev. 19:1-6)
2. Hebrews (3:15)
3. Rev. 19:9
4. After He answered the question of the rich young ruler (Mark 10:25-26; Matt. 19:24-26; Luke 18:18-23)
5. Revelation 16:16
6. "which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Heb. 12:12-13)
7. "a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Revelation 2:17)
8. "yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16)
9. "because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19)
10. Jesus (Rev. 1:18)



# Don't Be Caught Sleeping

*continued from page 7*

*sacrifice, claim the opportunity, seize the molten moment; for if we miss that moment, it may never come for us again.*

Our church, in which we congregate every week, is now more than 90 years old. This sanctuary has heard tens of thousands of prayers and admonitions from the Word of God. If these walls and rafters could chorus together, they might well speak to us of scores of well-intentioned comers who sat here and were impressed by the truth they heard. They recognized a call to be answered, a duty to be fulfilled, a work to be done, a promise to be claimed, a goal to be attained. But for most of them, that is all there was to it. They did not claim the molten moment. They missed the tide of opportunity, and it will never come for them again.

We have all heard the story of how Satan once called together the emissaries of hell, and told them he wanted to send one to earth to aid women and men in the ruination of their souls. He asked who would volunteer. One creature came forward and said, "I will go."

And Satan said, "If I send you, what will you tell the children of men?"

He said, "I will tell the children of men that there is no heaven."

And Satan said, "They will not believe you, for everyone knows that there is a heaven, and that right and good must have the victory. You may not go."

Then another came forward, darker and more foul than the first. And Satan said, "If I send you, what will you tell the children of men?"

And he said, "I will tell them that there is no hell."

And Satan looked at him and said, "Oh, no; they will not believe you. For in every human heart is a conscience—an inner voice that testifies that not only will good be triumphant, but that evil will be defeated. You may not go."

Then one last creature came forward, this one from the darkest place of all. And Satan said to him, "And if I send you, what will you say to women and men to aid them in the destruction of their souls?"

And he said, "I will tell them that there is no hurry."

And Satan said, "Go!"

That spirit is still abroad on the face of the earth. "There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." Missed, and we are left "in shallows and in miseries." The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Awake, because the tides may be running for you at this very moment. Don't miss those tides.

## Growth in Service

Those disciples in Gethsemane also missed the opportunity to grow in friendship with Jesus. It is wonderful to have friends,

especially in time of trouble. When we are battered by the hammer of hardship, we need our loved ones close. That is the reason Jesus, who is most often recorded in the Scriptures as going off to pray alone, on this occasion took His disciples with Him. If ever He needed their help and encouragement, it was now. He knew the deep agony of spirit that was going to be His, and He wanted their comfort close; He wanted to feel their shoulders beside His own. But they slept.

When He came back the first time from His prayer, He wanted comfort, assurance, support. But there was no one to give Him any words of love or encouragement. To all His other burdens was added this pain of loneliness.

Yet He was not alone—far from it. He was not forsaken or forgotten. His Father was watching; the angels were watching; and after His second agonizing prayer we read that God Himself intervened and sent His angel from heaven, "*strengthening him.*"

Jesus triumphed, but the disciples had missed that opportunity for service. And never would it come again. Never again did those disciples have such an opportunity.

Don't miss the tide that gives you the opportunity to serve others. On this same date next year, if it be granted us, some whom we know will no longer be with us. Perhaps there is on your mind right now someone to whom you ought to speak; a word of encouragement, a word of reproof, a word of witness, a word of apology. Don't miss the opportunity when it is yours. Don't forsake the tide that might be flowing in your heart of hearts at this very moment. Claim this day, with all the growth that it can give you; for in very truth, there will never be another like it again.

**Claim**  
*today, with all  
the growth that it can  
give you—there may  
never be another  
like it.*

We have been considering a message that addresses the human soul. We have looked at growth in character, growth as a child of God, and growth in service and love.

Don't respond by thinking about what you can do about it tomorrow. "Tomorrow" is the word the Bible does not know. Its word is *today*. "**Now is the accepted time.**" "**Now is the day of salvation.**" "**Today, if you will, harden not your hearts and hear my voice.**" Don't say tomorrow!

*Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death.*

Yes, the word from God is today. Now, while the tides are still rising. Now, while the day is still extended. Now is the time to live and love and serve and give—our best, our all.

It is now or never. ♦

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# He Went Out

*From our little reservations and inhibitions, we need to hear such a voice as Abraham heard: "Get thee out."*

by RUSSELL HAMBY

Most of us at one time or another, when asked how we are doing, have said, "I'm taking it one day at a time." Is that a good answer? Is our life covered by one day at a time? Is there no hope for tomorrow?

When Jesus sent His Apostles out to spread the Gospel, He gave instructions for the days ahead, not just one day. And, the Bible tells of many others who prepared for their days ahead. Would not a better answer be: "I'm going to do all I can today, and, God willing, tomorrow I can do even more!" Even if our mortal life ends before tomorrow, the hope of the righteous is to live in that glad Tomorrow where there will be no more trouble. So, why take one day at a time as if there were no hope beyond the present day (moment)?

To better understand this confusion about "tomorrow," let us think about The Man Who Lived For Tomorrow. If ever there was a mortal being that lived for tomorrow, it was Abraham.

Abraham stands as the ideal which successive generations have claimed. In him men and women recognize the spirit which makes life great.

But how could one be great who could be described in words such as these: "*He went out, not knowing whither he went*"? Is that not the opposite of greatness? What sort of leadership can we look for from one who, when he starts out, doesn't know where he is going?

However, that is not the whole story. He was a man who went out from his own surroundings into a country he had never seen, because God commanded it. He entered upon this experience which had in it very little which other men of his time might have envied, attaining no great visible success, yet at the end he has achieved a success so vast that all history is ennobled by his name.

Therefore, let us take up these three considerations: first, his impulse to obey; second, the experience through which he went; and third, the result he reached.

## **First, the command...**

At the command of God, Abraham left the land of his birth to seek what he called "the Land of Promise." In doing this he moved away from all his inherited associations, ideas, and satisfactions. Always there are two alternatives. We may make terms with our world and with our easier, more complacent self. Or we may heed the Higher Voice that calls us to seek the "Land of Promise" of a wider spiritual venturing, and follow that.

We can observe this difference in our physical inclinations. Very few of us live at the full stretch of our powers. We think that we are taxing our physical energies not too little but too much. We say that we are strained and tense and driven. So, indeed, we are, but the rea-



son is not that we are using too much strength but that what we do use is used in the wrong way. We are tired and harassed not by any great things that we do but by the irritation caused through a thousand petty nonessentials which we allow ourselves to be drawn into because we have no controlling aim. And the still sadder lack may be our life has very little reliance on God. Consequently, when we come to the end of our immediate resources, we have nothing which carries on, and carries us with it, past the point where we have stopped.

Our society is full of despondent men and neurotic women who are failing not because their real strength is exhausted but because it is not mobilized toward a fulfilling end. Most of us need to feel that there are larger things that we ought to be doing and can be doing when we follow one central purpose with all our might. From our little reservations and inhibitions, we need to hear such a voice as Abraham heard: "*Get thee out.*"

The choice which Abraham had to make, and which we must also make, exists not only in that realm of physical effort but in the realm of our ideas. It is many times less difficult to put our bodies in motion than to put our minds in motion. If Abraham's neighbors were never moved to seek any "Land of Promise," the reason was not so much that they shrank from the effort of the journey as that they were not interested in making *any* journey, *anywhere*. It did not occur to them that there was anything which could allure them into the new and undiscovered. They were satisfied to cling to their old ideas and the conventions of the crowd among whom they moved.

In every civilization, from Ur of the Chaldees down to our own time, men and women are prone to be like that. They let their mental processes travel in old grooves. They repel the suggestion that they should climb out of these and follow some new and uneven path

which the intellectual pioneers have begun to blaze.

We cannot seize our better future by clinging to old prejudices and reciting outworn customs in regard either to our political, economic, or religious life. We cannot hide ourselves behind the walls of our own self-satisfaction. We must stir today the spirit of the pioneer if we are to fulfill our higher destiny. For all our thinking we must hear again the heavenly voice, "*Get thee out.*"

**God**  
*calls us to make a  
lasting contribution not  
to this world but to  
the world to  
come.*

There is another aspect of Abraham's response which we should consider. I call it devotion. Our first instinct is to be devoted only to that which is already familiar. For most of Abraham's neighbors, Ur of the Chaldees was all sufficient. That is true with many people. There are men and women interested in their own families who have no sense of civic responsibility for their neighborhood or for the city in which they live even though they take advantage of all it furnishes. This is the spirit of Ur of the Chaldees. It is a kind of devotion to one's own narrow advantage which presently turns stagnant and breeds an influence from which individuals and nations die.

On the other hand, there is the larger devotion that was typified by Abraham, a devotion to something beyond the borders of one's own immediate profit, a devotion to those far hopes for humanity which the spirit of God Himself kindles in great people and makes them follow. To that very same sort of devotion God calls us today! He calls us out to make some lasting contribution not to the world that is but to the world that is to be.

### **Second, the experience...**

Now we come to the experience through which Abraham went. He had to cross many miles of desert before he reached the land he sought. It was a long journey and an arduous one. That desert was matched against a vast indifference.

Through that sort of desolation Abraham went until he came to the land of Canaan, and there in the land of Canaan he lived for the rest of his career. As you will see by reading the narrative in the Book of Genesis, Abraham never gathered to himself any very conspicuous or permanent possessions other than his flocks and herds. He was not seeking the best for himself. The only real estate he ever owned in Canaan was a sepulcher. He had gone to the Land of Promise, he lived there, and at last he died there; but he did not inherit it then, nor did the Land of Promise seem much different when he died than when he arrived. He had to still trust God and the future.

Is not the same true with us in the pursuit of our ideals? Life seems to be all road and no arriving. Those people of any generation who have heard the commanding voice of God know what it is like. But like Abraham, they have not been able to rest in the narrow and complacent conditions into which they were born. They want to find a kind of life more true, more righteous, more fruitful than that with which their neighbors are content.

Those who have some spark of the pioneer in them keep going, seeking the "Land of Promise" as Abraham did. It does not dismay them if they cannot do all that they would like to do in this world. It is enough that they hear a voice telling them to keep on and go forward.

### **Third, the result...**

Now we come to the result Abraham reached: We have said that Abraham did not reach any clear result. That is true so far as the immediate is concerned. He was a wanderer, dwelling in tents. He never built a city—or so many think. But in so thinking they are wrong. He did help to build a city which is invisible and which outlasts all time. For as another verse in the Epistle to the Hebrews goes on to say, "*He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*"

Abraham did not know what was going to happen in that region which he called "The Land of Promise." He could only follow the leading of God, be faithful and trust Him for what



should come. And what did come? Out of him there rose a family, and out of the family a clan, and out of the clan a nation. In the midst of that nation, as its capital, rose Jerusalem; and through the streets of Jerusalem at length should walk the feet of Jesus. That city in its material fact should fall and did fall. But it is destined ultimately to be the "city of the Great King" when Jesus comes to dwell among us.

That city should be the spiritual destination of each one who moves out beyond the commonplace along the path of spiritual achievement. Great is the inspiration which this

truth can bring to our life.

Every living stone fashioned by faithful service will be one day a part of that city. Through the difficult days, believe in that unseen city, the city "which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God!"

"He went out, not knowing whither he went." Now, we know that there is nothing foolish in Abraham's "going." These

same kind of roads are the roads on which the faithful servants of God have always gone, and they are the roads which we should want to follow. For at the end of the road we shall find the blessings of our obedience and be granted an abundant entrance into that eternal city where we shall be introduced to the finest of all blessings, "even life for evermore" (Ps. 133:3). ♦

*I'm going to  
do all I can today, and,  
God willing, tomorrow I  
can do even  
more!*



### **"If Only I Were Not So Human!"**

It is amazing how much physical evidence is being discovered to prove the accuracy of the Bible and its prophecies, yet, even more amazing is the number of people who remain scoffers and skeptics!

We all need prayer these trying days! Stormy-days spiritual-wise are all about, and prayer and faith keep us in touch with God so we don't get discouraged. Prayer gives us the spiritual armor we need.

I saw my mother reach the stage where she was far above any hurtful remarks or sarcasm. Have I completely reached this state? I think 98 percent of the time I have, but every once in awhile I get that "old feeling" and have to push it off and away. I wish I were not so human! The old man is always waiting, "in the wings backstage," so to speak.

I have been listening to a tape entitled, "Practicing The Presence of God." I try to keep in mind as I live through each day that I'm being watched, the angels are taking notes. I hope this will help increase my awareness of the fact that I have much to overcome.

Keep your light shining. It is needed—its shadow reaches Maine!

*R. Deschenes, Maine*

### **Seek God Now!**

I have been reading and studying Isaiah. Chapter 40 starts with "Comfort, comfort my people says your God." It's a beautiful chapter from beginning to end for those who do His

will. It makes us realize how small and unimportant we are if we don't hear His Word, but the end of the chapter gives great hope. Those who serve the Lord faithfully will have their youthful strength restored.

So many friends have died suddenly over the past few months, it has made us think how quickly life comes to an end. Most of them were atheists and never read the Bible, so they didn't know God's will. It's so sad they didn't read Isaiah 55, verse 6, while they had the chance. "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his ways and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon." Chapter 38, verses 18-19 say, "For the grave cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise, those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness. The living, the living—they praise you" (NIV).

The Lord has been so good to us giving us health and strength. But just because our family before us lived into a good old age doesn't mean we will. So each and every day the Lord gives us we must seek Him and try to make ourselves better in His sight.

*J. Treharne, England*

### **Plan Ahead**

The most important and vital question is: Will we have time to make the necessary change from our old nature to become a new creature worthy of perpetuation, especially as we are nearing the end? To renew ourselves inwardly is not automatic but will require much effort on our part to accomplish.

Human beings could not know all the wonderful thoughts of God, for God's thoughts and ways are so very much higher than man's, and although the Romans changed God's times and laws, and many people have fixed different and erroneous dates for the Second Advent of our Lord,

God will send His beloved Son Jesus Christ, in His own appointed time, and nothing whatsoever could change what God has ordained.

People are planning ahead in this new "millennium" to make it bright and new, but the things of this world are not for ever, so let us "watch" as we are admonished; and avoid the terrible fate of the five foolish virgins—eternal destruction. Rather let us follow the example of the five wise virgins, taking a good supply of oil with our lamps, keeping them filled, trimmed, and brightly burning, for we do not know the day or hour when the Bridegroom will come, and we want to be ready to go in with Him to His marriage feast when He does come, before the door is shut. We want to be ready to enjoy the wonderful bliss, peace, and joy, which is ahead in God's Millennium—the glorious reign of Jesus Christ for a thousand years.

*"A thousand years of sorrow free  
and after all, Eternity!"*

*B. Boyer, Florida*

### **Looking for Flaws**

I enjoy the Bible study and church tapes very much because I am always learning about what God expects of us. There is always something in our character that needs to be corrected.

Having the right attitude is about half the battle, then following through with the right action is the other half. I keep looking for flaws in myself and strive to overcome them. Being impatient is one of my flaws.

In my prayers to God, I ask God to help me and commit myself to following the Master. During the day I send "flash" prayers to God seeking help and thanking Him for His presence in some of the situations that I encounter during the course of the day.

I will keep working on kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering.

*J. Kranich, Illinois*





# The Sculptor's Attitude

I woke up early this morning excited about all I could get done today before the clock strikes midnight. I have responsibilities to fulfill today. My job is to choose what kind of day I am going to have.

Today I can complain because the weather is rainy—or I can be thankful that the grass is getting watered for free.

Today I can feel sad that I don't have more money—or I can be glad that my finances encourage me to plan my purchases wisely and guide me away from waste.

Today I can grumble about my health problems—or I can rejoice that I am alive.

Today I can cry because roses have thorns—or I can celebrate that thorns have roses.

Today I can mourn my lack of friends—or I can excitedly embark on encouraging the friends I have.

Today I can whine because I have to go to work—or I can shout for joy because I have work to do.

Today I can murmur dejectedly because my paths are so ordinary—or I can feel honored because God has provided for me, my mind, my body and my soul.

Today stretches ahead of me waiting to be shaped. Here I am the sculptor. God has given me the tools I need. What I make is up to me.





*What the New Year will bring depends a great deal on what we bring to the New Year.*

*It does not take great men to do great things; it takes only consecrated men.*

*Choice, not chance, determines your eternal destiny.*

### For the *New Year*

*Are you willing...*

- ◆ to close your Book of Complaints and open the Book of Praise?
- ◆ to be content with such things as you have and stop whining for things you have not?
- ◆ to forget what *you* have accomplished and meditate on what *God* has done for you?
- ◆ to enjoy the simple blessings of life and cease striving for artificial pleasures?
- ◆ to stop thinking what God owes you and concentrate on what you owe God?
- ◆ to consecrate your life to God and forget yourself?

*He who prays as he ought must live as he prays.*

The divine moment is the present moment.

Humility is the trait which enables us to see ourselves as we are.

*God's mercies are as old as eternity and yet they are new every morning.*

Those who are drawn toward Christ are drawn toward each other.

*Those who bless God in their trials will be blest by God through their trials.*

Find the life that you can enthusiastically recommend to someone else and you will discover a higher life yourself.

*Christianity is not a voice in the wilderness but a life in the world.*

Whitewashing the pump won't make the water pure.

### Ten Lessons to Learn:

*The value of time  
The need of perseverance  
The pleasure of serving  
The dignity of simplicity  
The true worth of character  
The power of kindness  
The influence of example  
The obligation of duty  
The wisdom of economy  
The nobility of labor*

Like Enoch, walk with God this New Year. But remember that if you would walk with God, you must walk in the direction God goes.





## Resolutions

A little less impatient with those we deem too slow;  
A little less of arrogance because of all we know;  
A little more humility, seeing our worth is slight;  
We are such trivial candles compared to stars of night!

A little more forgiving and swifter to be kind;  
A little more desirous the word of praise to find;  
The word of praise to utter and make a heart rejoice;  
A little bit more careful to speak with gentle voice.

A little more true eagerness to understand each other;  
A little more real striving to help a shipwrecked brother,  
A little more high courage to each task that must be done;  
These are our resolutions, and God help everyone!

—Selected

