

Megiddo Message

MARCH/APRIL, 2003

*Holy, Holy, Holy is the
LORD Almighty;
the whole earth is full of
His Glory! —Isaiah 6:3*

You Are...

the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13)

the light of the world (Matt. 5:14)

a child of God (John 1:12)

a branch of the true vine (John 15:1),
and my task is to bear much fruit (John 15:8)

Christ's friend (John 15:15)

a slave of righteousness and holiness (Rom. 6:18–19)

an adopted son of God; God is spiritually your Father (Rom. 8:14–15)

a joint heir with Christ, and may one day share in His inheritance (Rom. 8:17)

a temple—a dwelling place—of God, you are not your own (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19)

a member of Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 5:30)

a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17)

Christ's minister of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18)

a son of God (1 John 3:2)

an heir of God (Gal. 4:6,7)

a saint (Eph. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2)

God's workmanship, His handiwork, to do His work (Eph. 2:10)

a fellow citizen with the rest of God's family, built on the prophets, apostles and Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:19)

a citizen of heaven (Phil. 3:20)

chosen of God, holy and dearly loved (Col. 3:12)

a child of light and not of darkness (1 Thess. 5:5)

a holy partaker of a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1)

a partaker of Christ to share in His life (Heb. 3:14)

one of God's living stones, a part of Christ's spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:5)

a member of a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9)

an alien and stranger in this world (1 Pet. 2:11)

called to be an own son or daughter of God Almighty (2 Cor. 6:17–18)

Are You?

Believers ON TIPTOE

BECAUSE JESUS IS ALIVE!

On the day after the Roman soldiers had executed Jesus, Pontius Pilate found himself facing the somewhat uneasy chief priests and the Pharisees. *"The Pharisees...said, 'Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, After three days I will rise again.' Therefore order the sepulchre to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first.' Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can'"* (Matt. 27:62–65, RSV).

Think about that! Just how would you secure anything to restrict the power of God?

The Jewish authorities openly confessed one of their fears: that Jesus' disciples might steal the body and then launch a movement based on the claim that their Leader was risen from the grave. Underneath their expressed fear was another one that the priests and Pharisees found no courage to acknowledge: What if, by the power of God, Jesus were to come forth alive from the grave?

What the Jewish authorities found impossible to express, Pilate had dared to insinuate in his order to those who were responsible for posting the guard at the tomb of Jesus: *"Make it as secure as you know how."* It was as if he was saying, Do everything possible to keep Jesus in the grave!

Religious leaders and unbelievers for centuries have been trying to make the grave as secure as possible, to keep Jesus in the grave. For some strange reason it is easier to believe in a continuation of life after death than to believe in a restoration of life. Somehow the human mind resists openly acknowledging the power of God to renew and restore life.

But a physical, bodily resurrection is the plan of God for every sleeping believer. This plan has been certified to us by the fact of Jesus' resurrection, which rests on such solid evidence:

- 1) the empty tomb;
- 2) the changed attitude of the disciples and the spread of Christianity
- 3) the appearances of Jesus to His disciples

EVIDENCE OF JESUS' RESURRECTION

The Gospels indicate that Jesus appeared on several occasions, and to a great number of people—even 500 at one time! The evidence is strengthened by the fact that some of these people were incredulous and were not easily convinced.

Some scholars have suggested that the appearances of Christ after the resurrection were merely psychic phenomena. But if that were so, we would expect that the conviction that Jesus was alive would have become less vivid once the disciples ceased to be *"in touch"* with the



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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.

A Change...

Beginning with the next issue, the *Megiddo Message* will be published bimonthly, i.e., six 28-page issues per year. This change is the result of substantial increases in materials costs, especially postage, and limited staff.

The bimonthly edition is our way of responding to our obligations while still providing you with this valuable magazine.

As always, our goal is spiritual enrichment and Bible inspiration. If you have questions or comments, please let us hear from you.

unseen. We would expect also that followers who had not seen the evidence would be as skeptical as third parties usually are when confronted with reports of communications from the dead.

Neither of these expectations, however, corresponds with the facts. The conviction about the resurrection became even more settled once the appearances ceased, and those who had not seen the risen Christ were won to the faith just as those who had seen Him. The evidence was just too convincing to be denied.

Furthermore, the tomb *was empty*. Of this we can be rock sure. If the tomb had not been empty, the Jewish or Roman authorities would most surely have produced the body of Jesus to disprove the rapidly circulating stories of a resurrection and silence forever what was to them a defeat and a disgrace. After all, no one knew better than they where Jesus' body had been laid to rest.

But there is not even a whisper that such was ever done—and for obvious reason: Jesus was alive!

The other possible explanation against the resurrection is that the empty tomb and the series of appearances were a hoax perpetrated by the disciples, as the scribes and Pharisees wanted Pilate to believe.

But are we to believe that people will die for a hoax? This "hoax" deceived several thousand people almost immediately, and was proclaimed until it was believed over a very large part of the civilized world. It seems much easier to believe the testimonies of Peter and John and the rest of the Apostles than to accept either of these explanations.

CHANGED LIVES

One of the most decisive evidences for the resurrection of Jesus lay in its effect on the lives it touched most closely. On the day before the resurrection, Peter was a broken man, overwhelmed with the shame of having denied Jesus in His hour of crisis. Within a few weeks he was standing boldly before Jewish authorities and declaring, under threat of persecution, *"let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus*

Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone. Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:10–12). Something powerful happened in that brief interval of time to transform a coward into a hero.

On the day of the resurrection, the disciples had gathered in a locked room for fear of the Jews. Something drastic happened to send them out into the world with a burning zeal that no threat or hardship could quench. That "something" was nothing more or less than the resurrection of Jesus Christ, veritable, visible, true!

Saul, a nonbeliever, a persecutor of the Church, was on his way to Damascus with orders from the high priest to inflict yet greater horrors on the Christian community. Suddenly something happened, and Saul the nonbeliever became Paul the apostle, the great missionary of the Christian Church. What was it? Nothing more or less than a personal appearance to him by the resurrected Christ.

The history of the Church is filled with examples of similar transformations, all of them a result of the resurrection of Christ.

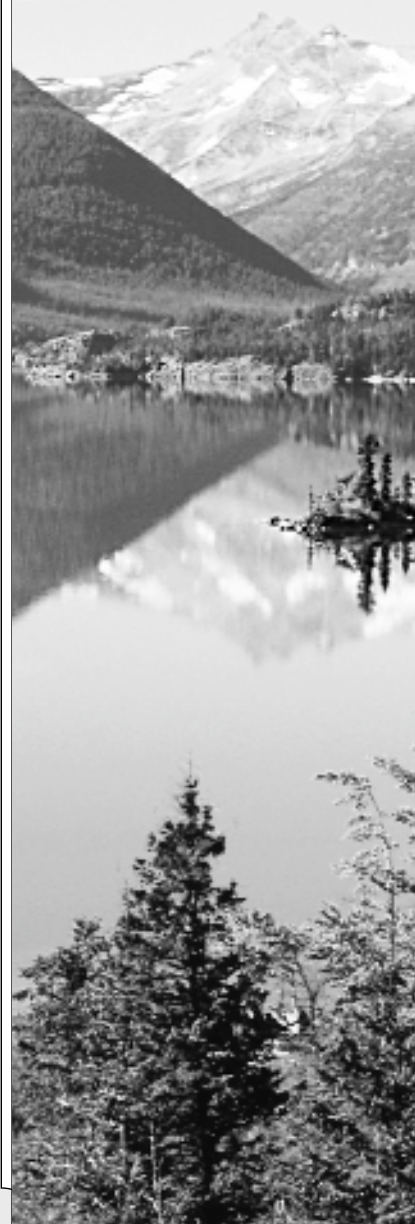
THE IMPACT OF THE RESURRECTION

The resurrection of Jesus brought about a new gospel, a new expectation, a new joy and a new watchfulness. Quite naturally, the central figure in that Gospel was Jesus Christ, crucified, resurrected, ascended, and who would shortly return. The New Testament writings reveal how intensely and how eagerly the early Christians anticipated the second coming of their Lord—they mention it more than three hundred times. No sooner was He out of sight than they began looking forward to His return.

The spirit of expectancy was high—very high—among the early disciples. There were two reasons: first, they knew the Old Testament prophecies; with the advent of Christ they saw the beginning

continued on page 7

*The
resurrection of
Jesus brought a
new Gospel, a new
expectation, and a
new joy.*



I'm coming soon! Blessed is the one who follows the words of the prophecy in this book" • "Keep a sharp lookout.



R THE *DAY* OF *Resurrection*

*Oh, Day of Resurrection! Earth, tell it out abroad;
The Passover of gladness, the triumph of our God.
From death to life eternal,
From earth unto the sky,
Our Christ hath brought us over
With hymns of victory.*

*Our hearts be pure from evil, that we may see aright
The Lord in rays eternal of resurrection light;
And, list'ning to His accents,
May hear, so calm and plain,
His own "All hail!" and, hearing,
May raise the victor strain.*

*Now let the heav'ns be joyful! Let earth her song begin!
The world resound in triumph, and all that is therein;
Let all things seen and unseen
Their notes of gladness blend;
For Christ the Lord has risen,
Our joy it has no end. AMEN.*

of a fulfillment. Logically they expected the remainder to follow. And second, they were very anxious for deliverance from a bad political situation, and saw in the promised Messiah a means for that deliverance. Even on the day of Jesus' ascension, as they talked with Him for the last time, they were asking about it, unaware of the long time that had to intervene. *"Therefore when they had come together, they asked of Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'"* (Acts 1:6). Though their information was lacking, their confidence was solid. They knew what He would do; what they failed to know was *when* He would do it.

Paul in his writings encouraged the high spirit of expectancy. He admonished his brethren to be *"sincere and without offense until the day of Christ"* (Phil. 1:9–10)—as though they might expect to live to see it. He encouraged them to hold out in spite of injustice and oppression because just retribution would be meted out to their enemies when Christ should return in power and glory (2 Thess. 1:7–9).

DID THE APOSTLES KNOW THE TIME?

Why such enthusiasm when the great Day was some twenty centuries in the future? Didn't they understand the plan?

We know from the record that they were told, but they seemed to forget. The Gospel of Luke records how Jesus Himself corrected His disciples when *"they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately,"* explaining that He had first to go away and that He would return only *"after a long time"* (Luke 19:10–27).

Paul discussed the subject at length in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians. Apparently some in his churches had been under a misconception that he and the other Apostles were expecting the return of their Lord immediately, and so Paul explained very carefully that the Day of the Lord would not come *"except the apostasy come first,"* an event that was at that time still several hundred years future.

Why, if they understood, did they speak of it being so immediate? Why such apparent disregard of the long

interval of time?

It may be that the issue was not a difference in *meaning* but a difference in *emphasis*. The primary concern of the apostles was not the *time* of Jesus' coming but the *fact* and the *obligation* upon them as individuals. Yes, the event was far in the future. But what difference did that make? Their duty was to prepare, and that had to be done *right then*. Never did any generation have longer to prepare than their lifetime.

Perhaps the misconception of the time was for their benefit. Who can intensely prepare for an event that seems remote, or only vaguely real? If the misconception increased expectancy and pushed the work, we can only say that God wanted it that way. At least, He allowed it. Truly they were expecting Him too soon. But God did not want any languid, halfhearted faith. He wanted believers on tiptoe, eager and vibrant with hope. Only so would they have sufficient incentive to make the all-out effort needed to get ready. Only so would they be able to give themselves totally to the cause.

God had always wanted wholeheartedness, men and women who were willing to believe with all their heart and soul and mind and strength (Mark 12:30–31), and were willing to stake everything on it. As someone has said, True faith doesn't take much of a man. It takes all of him.

And God wants *all of us*, every part. Who could really believe that Jesus was coming back to set up a worldwide government where everyone would live in peace, where everyone could prosper and have everything they needed, where there would be no sickness or pain, no suffering or oppression—who could really believe all this with all his heart and soul—and not give ALL of himself to Christ's cause enthusiastically! What is there in all the world that can even touch such expectation!

Just think how different would be the account left on record for us if those early believers had been unconcerned because the Day of Christ was so far in the future. Just think how we would feel if Paul had written, "Looking for that blessed hope, and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus

*It is not
shame to be weak
in faith; it is shame
to stay weak,
especially when
God has given
us so much
evidence.*



*A physical,
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is the plan of God
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believer.*

Christ. But don't be anxious, because He won't be coming for a long, long time. None of us will live to see it..." How would we feel? Or suppose we read, "Unto a very few who are looking for Him, many, many centuries in the future, He will appear the second time...." Would not such an attitude dishonor the God who had given them this great revelation? (see Titus 2:11-13 and Heb. 9:28).

A feeling of urgency is vital in stimulating action. Have we ever noticed how something in us will put off a task—particularly a difficult task—just as long as possible? (Can we think that they were any different than we are?) By obscuring the length of time God was fostering a spirit of urgency. And can we not see the value of it—when for everyone the great event is as near as the close of one's life?

Our founder, L. T. Nichols, needed this same spirit of urgency, and God made a way for him to have it. When he discovered the Bible teaching of the coming of Jesus and the great events that would follow, by his best calculations he decided that Jesus was coming soon. And when he realized the magnitude of the work to be done, he preached with all the zeal and fervor of an apostle of Christ. He felt deeply the pressure of time. Like the apostles, he grossly underestimated the time, but who has suffered for the mistake? Has it not proved the greatest benefit? Could he and his brethren possibly have accomplished the work without this sense of urgency? Who would make the titanic effort to replace the old nature with the new—unless given a maximum incentive (the reward of eternal life) coupled with the feeling that he had hardly time enough to do it?

And so our founder joined the ranks of believers on tiptoe—with a far different spirit than he could have had he known that we, more than 100 years later, would still have opportunity to prepare.

How we should thank God for His great mercy! And how very, very near the great Day must be for us! Because it IS coming. Time as we know it will not always continue. What super-urgency

we should feel as we find ourselves so far down the stream of time!

The Gospel of Luke records Jesus' last conversation with His disciples, as *"He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven."* So suddenly it was all over. But there was no disappointment, only a new expectation, for we read that *"They worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God"* (Luke 24:49-53). They were believers on tiptoe.

STILL FIRED BY HOPE

When the Apostles first went out to preach to the pagan world, they were fired by hope. Christ was coming to right earth's wrongs, to overcome the last enemy death, to remove all injustice and oppression, and bring in a kingdom of everlasting righteousness. Add to all this their personal expectation of eternal salvation, and it was enough to put any real believer on tiptoe!

But something special was needed to sustain this lively expectation as years lengthened into decades and decades into centuries. Then, too, there came very soon the added trial of walking by faith. As long as there was open vision, the expectation was renewed. It climaxed with the revelation of Jesus Christ to the beloved John on lonely Patmos. Who could witness all that glory, and all that power, and all that prophecy, and not walk the rest of his days, so to speak, on tiptoe! Even if everyone wanted to disbelieve it, the facts remained—all true, all sure, all certain. *"These words are true and faithful,"* said the heavenly voice (Rev. 21:5).

Within the echo of such a message, faith reached unto heaven. At the same time, they realized that soon, very soon, they would have to go on believing *without seeing*, and future generations would have no direct contact with those who had seen. It would be a new challenge, for which they must prepare.

We today must still believe without seeing, but not for long. These are not

ordinary days, these days just before the great consummation. These are days full of lively expectation. These are days tense with opportunity. This is no time to be all absorbed with the affairs of this world. This is no time to be taking our ease, enjoying the pleasures of life, oblivious to what is just ahead. This is the time to be taking to heart all that has been written for our learning, to glean every word we can from the sacred page, every message God has intended for us, to give us faith and hope and courage. This is the time to be watching every step we take, to be sure that we are making maximum use of all that God has entrusted to us; to be sure that we are making no missteps in our walk toward the Kingdom.

When Jesus spoke about the future, either in parable or in plain words, He often ended His lesson with an admonition to watch. After He told the Parable of the Fig Tree, which would be putting forth leaves, showing that summer was nigh at hand, He said solemnly, *"Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only."* In other words, You won't be told the date that it will come. But you must be watching, on tiptoe.

When Jesus compared the time of His coming to the time of Noah and to the time of Lot, when destruction came upon a world oblivious to danger; when He told the parable of the women in the field, or grinding at the mill, and *"The one will be taken and the other left,"* what were His next words? *"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your lord is coming."* In other words, be watching, alert—on tiptoe.

For, *"If the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect"* (Matt. 24:42–44).

Jesus spoke also of the fate of the servant who should say in his heart, *"My lord delayeth his coming,"* as if telling the Lord that He did not know, that the time was not right—when it was. Then followed the fact: that *"The lord of that servant"* shall come in *"a day when he*

looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,...there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 24:48–51).

When Jesus told the Parable of the Ten Virgins, and the need to be watching, to arise and trim our lamps, living every moment in readiness, He again closed with the solemn admonition: *"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming"* (Matt. 25:13). Here was another admonition to watch, to get ready, to be believers on tiptoe.

This is no time to be dallying, to be thinking we will take our faith more seriously another day, or another week, or another year. The time to obey is right here and now. The time to improve is now. The time to break our old habits and our old nature is right now.

This is no time to be seeking the common pleasure of life, the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eye, or the pride of life (1 John 2:15–16). This is the time to cut loose from everything around us, to let the world go by and all its vain pursuits, and to give ourselves heart and soul to the things we know are true, to the hope which will soon be visible reality right here among us.

This is the time to be believers on tiptoe! For one of these days, the great Day will be here, and all the great and wonderful things for which we have waited will become glorious reality. It is all true, it is all sure—because it is all of God.

When that Day arrives, the unbelievers will still be unbelieving. The scoffers will still be scoffing. The world will still be pursuing its pleasures, its business, its short- and long-term goals. They will be unaware, until—suddenly, dramatically, the great Day will arrive, shaking the earth from pole to pole. Not a single living person anywhere will be unaware of the event. Not a single living person anywhere will be unaffected, or oblivious, or be able to avoid the consequences of that Day. For *"Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye will see Him"* (Rev. 1:7)—every eye, no exceptions.

Jesus is coming. And it may be sooner than we think. ♦

*Are we
planning what
we shall do and
be when Jesus
returns?*



Jesus:

EXCELLENCE IN LIFE

Jesus' entire career on earth was a striving for excellence, first in Himself and then in those who followed Him. No teacher ever required more of His students than did this Master. Nor would He tolerate any mediocrity, in His own life or in the standard He set for His followers. Everything about Him and His had to be the best. It was all excellence.

First He was concerned with excellence in knowledge, that is, excellence of the mind, that proper knowledge which forms the basis of right living. How frequently He challenged His audience with: *"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."* Or, in other words, If you want to hear what I am about to say, you will need your minds as well as your ears. If you think you can hear Me with your ears open and your mind closed, you may as well go home.

Following close upon this excellence of knowledge was His concern for moral excellence, i.e., excellence of the life and character. Well He knew that knowledge without application could never win the recognition of God.

We know that Jesus called and used *"unlearned"* men (Acts 4:13). But this does not suggest any lack of intelligence, or any deficiency of general knowledge, or even any carelessness in the use of opportunity. It merely describes their status as it was judged by certain members of the Jewish hierarchy who considered themselves the ultimate in intellectual attainment during their day. So far as these high-up professors of religion were concerned, the Apostles were ignorant nobodies.

But their being *"unlearned"* in the eyes of their contemporaries was absolutely no discredit to them so far as God was concerned. *"For the Lord seeth not as man seeth"*—in the days of Samuel, in the days of the Apostles, or even now in our own day. God's call is always to excellence—excellence by His standards, excellence of heart—which, incidentally, represents the very highest in human attainment. Even the Apostle Paul, already a high achiever according to Jewish traditions, put it all behind him when Christ called, counting it *"mere refuse"* in his quest for greater excellence.

In the eyes of God, excellent knowledge is first of all, true knowledge, or knowledge of that which is true. It is knowledge that speaks to the heart, that speaks of the realities of life and death and salvation. It is knowledge that communicates a true estimate of one's worth, and a sense of total dependence upon God.

How easily in the midst of the struggle we lose this vital sense of dependence. At such times the words of our great Teacher come to rebuke us: *"Without me, ye can do nothing."*

Jesus' quest for excellence included also an excellence in life and attitude. What man or woman seeking the heights of Christian achievement would stop with excellence in knowledge? Right knowledge must issue in obedience, an obedience that reaches into every aspect of one's life. In coming or going, in working, in watching, in speaking, in thinking, in

praying, we must be like Christ. We must share His aspirations, His desires, His purity, His aspiration to excellence. Nothing ordinary will do.

This was Paul's thought as he admonished each candidate for the crown: Ordinary running is not enough. *"Run in such a way as to get the prize"* (1 Cor. 9:24 NIV).

The apostle Paul set the standard in masterful language when he wrote in his letter to the Philippians: *"This is my prayer, that your love may grow ever richer and richer in knowledge and insight of every kind, and may thus bring you the gift of true discrimination. Then on the Day of Christ you will be flawless and without blame, reaping the full harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God"* (Phil. 1:9-11, NEB).

Have we this consistent striving for excellence in all the varied details of everyday? Is our primary concern to excel in obedience, in doing right and being right, wherever we are and whomever we are with? Is our first thought always to be and do the very best of which we are capable?

The temptation to compromise is always with us, to put off the serious confronting of ourselves as we know—and God knows—we are.

How often at the end of the day we look back upon a record of which we must humbly say, *"this is not my best."*

But the standard is fixed, and we must reach it. God will have excellence. His very nature decrees it—His name is *"excellent"* (Psalm 8:1); His work is *"honourable and glorious"* (Ps. 111:3), His will is *"good and acceptable and perfect"* (Rom. 12:2). *"Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee"* (Isa. 12:6).

Hasn't He every right to ask our best? The Old Testament sacrifices were to be always and only the best the worshiper could give. Offerings were to be the finest of the flock, without defect (Lev. 1:10), the finest grain, the first fruits, the best sheep—always the best belonged to God.

And still today He wants the best. He wants our best—in return for which He will give us His best.

Are we ready for this? Have we the steadiness to continue this quest through all the mundane tasks of every day? Do we keep ourselves wholly and thoroughly Christian in all our associations with others? Do we excel in patience, humility, kindness, and long-suffering in the hundred details of every day?

Are we continuing our quest for excellence with an attitude that is thoroughly Christ-like as we face the pressures of the home, the office, the shop, or the job?

It is not easy, but it must be done. Our quest for excellence must be the consuming desire of our hearts. In praying, in working, in watching, we must excel.

We cannot afford to risk a single unguarded hour. *"Therefore you also be ready for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."* (Matt 24:44) ♦



God's PROVIDENCE against Human CONSPIRACY

by RUSSELL HAMBY

Micah 5:2-4; Matthew 2:1-18

How moving, how inspiring is the Bible account of the birth of Jesus! so full of tender love and quiet joy, so vivid with promise and hope. Yet right in the midst of it is a bloody murderer whom history calls Herod the Great. But then, that shouldn't surprise us. That is the way this world is. Evil and good must co-exist for a time. Even when God is taking steps to bring about great good, more often than not there is a wicked Herod plotting evil right in the midst of it. How can it be?

Start by looking at Herod himself, a heartless, crafty, cruel ruler if history ever had one. He has used his Jewish ancestry to get Rome to make him a governor among the Jews. Once established, he continues his devilish schemes until, finally, in 40 B.C., he is named king of the Jews. Herod is jealous of that title to the point of being paranoid. In a rage, he murders his wife. Because his mother-in-law goes behind his back to Cleopatra, he murders his mother-in-law. He murders his oldest son, Antipater, and another son, Alexander. No wonder Caesar Augustus says of Herod that it is safer to be Herod's pig than Herod's son. And no wonder that Matthew states that when Herod is troubled, "all Jerusalem" is troubled with him. For good reason. They know Herod will do whatever he

must to protect his throne, even to killing the baby boys of the Jews if he thinks one of them may succeed him.

But Herod is not just a self-serving egomaniac from the pages of history, long dead and forgotten. His kind are surely still with us. And the evil that is loose in this world and that produces his kind is part of your daily experience and mine. We see it in the hideously tangled web of politics. We see it in the economic and social struggles of our world. The Herods are the embodiment of all that is at war with God. And ultimately God will put down all the Herods and bring health, healing and wholeness worldwide.

Strange, isn't it that as Matthew tells the story, Herod the Great, king of the Jews, directs the Magi to Bethlehem, though in all fairness the star pinpoints the precise place where the child is. But what is intriguing about this story is that Herod, even while serving himself in the most diabolical fashion is also serving the needs of others, in this case the wise men.

Is it possible, then, that the Herods of this world may be used to serve others even when they don't want to? Their serving, for good or ill, is only for a moment. So brief, it is not even counted in the Divine scheme.

It would appear that there is an intentionality working in and through the events of this life carrying the whole sweep of history on toward an absolutely good end.

The events of history are working out the plan of God—which is precisely what Matthew is trying to tell

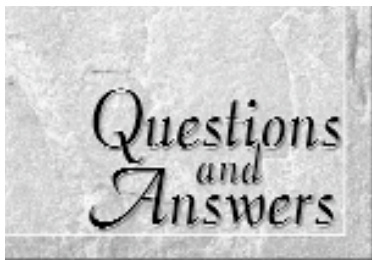
us. Three times he stops the action in this exciting story to tell us that a particular something happened just so that a specific Old Testament prophecy can be fulfilled. The first time he does it he skillfully includes it in the words of the chief priests and scribes who quote Micah to the effect that the Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). The next time it happens is right after the holy family flees to Egypt not only for their safety but also for the fulfillment of "what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, 'Out of Egypt have I called my son'" (Hos. 11:1). Or, again, it is part of that scene so dreadful to contemplate: "Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: 'A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentations. Rachel weeping for her children...'" (Jer. 31:15).

Three times Matthew reminds you and me that all of this that is going

*Peace on earth
will yet be a reality
after the Herods of
this world are
forgotten.*

on in our world—painful and evil as it is—is nevertheless somehow directly connected with God's intention for His people and His creation. Three times Matthew harks back to the distant ages of the past to remind us of God's intention to fulfill His promise

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HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME

by GERALD R. PAYNE

A man from Watchtower stopped by and talked with us. He was concerned about the fact that "Jehovah" is taken out of many translations and is replaced with titles of God, such as "High One" or "Lord." He thinks this is taking the name of God in vain. According to his belief, it is very important to call God by His name "Jehovah" and not by a title such as "Lord" or "God."

He referred to Psalm 110 in particular. The New World Translation words it: "The utterance of Jehovah to my Lord is; 'Sit at my right hand! until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet.'" In the New International Version it reads: "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'"

He also used the Lord's Prayer as an example of why Jehovah should be used and not a title: "Hallowed be Your name."

He asked me how I would answer this. I could not answer him, but told him that to me it did not take the Lord my God's name in vain.

He gave me a copy of the New World Translation. I have not read it through, but I did notice that in the Psalms the name "Jehovah" is used many times.

In answering your question we will try to look at several points:

- 1) What is the significance of the proper name of the Deity?
- 2) How is He addressed by the Scripture writers?
- 3) How do we hallow His name?

How Significant Is God's Proper Name?

We have to agree with you; we cannot see that in using a properly descriptive title of God in speaking of Him is taking His name in vain.

Proponents of the idea that the Heavenly Father's name is Jehovah or Yahweh appear to have some Biblical support for their position. In the Bible, many names had meanings, particularly in Old Testament times. The names were even changed because of their meaning, as it might apply to a situation in their lives. The Lord changed Jacob's name to Israel (meaning, "God prevails"). He changed Abram's name to Abraham (meaning, "father of a multitude" or "chief of a multitude"), and Sarai to Sarah (meaning, "noblewoman"). Jesus' name is "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us" (Matt. 1:23). (Definitions from *Strong's Enhanced Lexicon*).

What is the Heavenly Father's name? One passage often cited is Psalm 83:18, which is translated in the King James Version, "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth." The passage is translated by James Moffatt, "To teach them that thou, O Eternal, thou art God most high o'er all the world." The NASB and NASB 1995 update translate similarly, "That they may know that You alone, whose name is the Lord, Are the Most High

over all the earth." The NIV reads, "Let them know that you, whose name is the Lord—that you alone are the Most High over all the earth."

The original Hebrew word used in Psalm 110 is YHWH, which is defined as "self-existent or eternal: Jehovah: Jewish national name of God: Jehovah, the Lord." Used some 5500 times in the Old Testament, it is often translated Lord God, Lord, or God. For this reason, those who believe in the sacredness of the name feel that its significance is lost to the average reader.

Their contention centers around the fact that "Lord" is a title, not a name. "To remove God's distinctive personal name from the Bible and substitute a title such as "Lord" or "God" makes the text weak and inadequate in many ways....One cannot render a distinctive proper name by a mere title. A title can never convey the full, rich meaning of the original name of God" (www.Watchtower.org). The entire discussion centers around whether the Father should be called by His title or His name. The term God is a title, not a name. We have the same situation if we speak of the highest position in a kingdom as "the king", or in our country as "the president." Is it possible that some are trying to force a point which is not essential?

We fail to find any command in Scripture instructing us to address the Heavenly Father by His proper name only, or any suggestion that we are using His name in vain if we speak of Him by an appropriate title in place of using His name. God is holy, and He wants our utmost respect and reverence. Are we dishonoring if we call Him "the Holy One of Israel" as Isaiah did (Isa. 12:6)? Are we withholding that reverence if we address Him as "the Most High," as David did (Ps. 46:4), or as Moses did (Deut. 32:8), or as Abraham did (Gen. 14:22), or as Daniel did (Dan. 4:24; Dan. 5:18), or as Stephen did (Acts 7:48), or as the author of Hebrews did (Heb. 7:1)? Are we being disrespectful to address God as the "Almighty" or "God Almighty" as the angel of the Lord did when speaking to Abraham (Gen. 17:1), or as Jacob did (Gen. 48:3), or as Job did (Job 5:17; 21:15; 22:3; 22:17, 23, 25; 27:2; 31:2; 31:35; 32:8; 33:4; 34:12; 35:13), or as Naomi did (Ruth 1:20), or as the Psalmist did (Ps. 91:1), or as Ezekiel did (Ezek. 1:24), or as Isaiah did (Isa. 13:6)?

When discussing the background of the name YHWH, the enhanced BDB (Brown-Driver Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon) explains, "Yahweh, the proper name of the God of Israel...the pronunciation Jehovah was unknown until 1520, when it was introduced by Galatinus; but it was contested by LeMercier, J. Drufius, and L. Capellus, as against grammatical and historical propriety." The Anchor Bible Dictionary says, "The pronunciation of YHWH as Yahweh is a scholarly guess....Though the consonants remained, the original pronunciation was eventually lost. When the Jewish scholars (called Masoretes) added vowel signs to biblical manuscripts some time before the 10th century A.D., the Tetragrammaton was punctuated with the vowels of the word "Adonai" or

“Elohim” to indicate that the reader should read “Lord” or “God” instead of accidentally pronouncing the sacred name (*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 5: 501–02).

The form “Jehovah” results from reading the consonants of the Tetragrammaton with the vowels of the surrogate word Adonai. The dissemination of this form is usually traced to Petrus Galatinus, confessor to Pope Leo X, who in 1518 A.D. transliterated the four Hebrew letters with the Latin letters jhvh together with the vowels of Adonai, producing the artificial form “Jehovah.” ...While the hybrid form Jehovah has met much resistance, and is universally regarded as an ungrammatical aberration, it nonetheless passed from Latin into English and other European languages and has been hallowed by usage in hymns and the ASV; it is used only a few times in KJV and not at all in RSV.”

The Hebrew words elah, elohim, eloah, all translated God, and meaning “object of worship,” occur roughly 2300 times in the Old Testament. To translate all of these Yahweh would seem out of place. The Hebrew word Jehovah, probably read by the Hebrews as elohim, occurs 300 times. Four times it is rendered Jehovah without translation. Sometimes it is used in the plural form to speak of other members of God’s family, i.e., angels (Ps. 82:6).

What Is Important?

The Bible writers are respectful, whatever name or title they use. It is said that the Hebrew people felt that the name of God was so sacred that they did not pronounce it at all. At the other extreme, the Watchtower people feel that we should pronounce it always rather than use a title, and have arbitrarily chosen one “most known” way to pronounce it.

When Moses was commanded to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, he inquired, “...when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?” The reply seems to place the emphasis on the authority and the existence of the Divine Being, “...God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM. ... Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.’” God was declaring Himself to be the One and only caring, eternal, unchanging God, Whose presence is from everlasting to everlasting. After this He said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations’” (Ex. 3:13–15). God was “the existing One,” unlike the deities of other nations, which were often a stone or a piece of wood or metal formed into an image by the craftsman and worshiped as a god. Rather He is the existing One who will be present with them.

A passage in the book of Psalms tell us that God’s name is not His chief concern. Psalm 138:2 reads: “I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.”

He values His Word—His promises, His decrees, His precepts—above the name by which He is known. And Rev. 19:13 says of the Messiah’s name, “His name is called *The Word of God*.”

If we were to attempt to pronounce “correctly” the name of the Deity, we are at a loss to know what that correct pronunciation is: God has not spoken His name to us. We do not have the slightest idea of the language spoken at the throne of God or by His holy angels. Even the best languages of this

world must seem very crude to immortal beings who have existed for untold ages. Besides, there is no command in Scripture which tells us our salvation or our acceptance by God will depend upon properly pronouncing the Creator’s name. He is looking for our honor, our dedication, our commitment, our obedience.

As long as one shows the proper respect in speaking of God and does not take His name in vain or in any way blaspheme His holy name, we do not feel that the exact term or pronunciation we use is a matter of serious concern to God. He is not concerned, whether we use Father, God or Lord, Creator, Judge, Redeemer, Jehovah, God of our fathers, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, or the term “I AM”,

YHWH, or Yahweh. God will judge the spirit and motive of the one who uses His name. “For the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed” (1 Sam. 2:3). And, “In every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness”—not he who properly pronounces His name—“is accepted with him” (Acts 10:35).

In all of Scripture we find no statement that suggests that the correct pronunciation of the name of the Deity, or the use of a title was a matter of obedience or disobedience. Nor do we see any virtue attached to properly pronouncing it. All emphasis is on imitating the character of the Deity, being holy as He is holy, and this seems the likely meaning of “hallowing His name” as Jesus prayed in His prayer, “Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.” How do we hallow His name? How do we glorify it? How do we sanctify it? Jesus was not impressed with lip service. He said of the people of His day, “This people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me” (Matt. 15:8). If correctly pronouncing His name was a matter of supreme importance, they should have been able to honor Him with their lips, but Jesus said they could not. He wanted their hearts and not their lips.

God wants us to love Him with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, all our strength (Mark 12:29-31). This goes much deeper than the proper pronouncing of His name.

The Watchtower people say also, “Even though the modern pronunciation Jehovah might not be exactly the way it was pronounced originally, this in no way detracts from the importance of the name. It identifies the Creator, the Living God, the Most High to whom Jesus said, ‘Our Father in the

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God values
His Word above
the name by
which He is
called.



RECIPE FOR A *Happy New Year!*

Take twelve fine, full-grown months. See that each is thoroughly free from old memories of bitterness, rancor and hate. Cleanse completely from every clinging spite; pick off all specks of pettiness and littleness; in short, see that these months are freed from all the past—have them fresh and clean as when they first came from the great storehouse of Time.

Cut each month into thirty or thirty-one equal parts. Do not attempt to make up the whole batch at one time (so many spoil the entire lot this way) but prepare one day at a time.

Into each day put equal parts of faith, patience, courage, work (some people omit this ingredient and so spoil the flavor of the rest), hope, honesty, thankfulness, kindness, prayer, and one well-selected resolution. Add a heaping cupful of good spirit, the gratitude variety. ♦

—ANONYMOUS

LENGTH X WIDTH X HEIGHT

Carpenters' Motto: Measure twice, cut once.

Sometimes the simplest questions can also be the most profound. Like when a salesclerk recently asked me, "What are the dimensions?" Just a few hours earlier my wife and I had been discussing whether something would fit under the cabinets in an area of our kitchen. The space just didn't seem large enough to me. In my haste to go to the store I had measured only one dimension—the one that I was most concerned with—the height. Now as I stood before the salesclerk staring at the small sheet of paper where I had written only one measurement, I heard the question again. "What are the dimensions?" The salesclerk's question was a gentle reminder that I was not prepared. Every item has three dimensions—length, width and height. If you want to know the true size of something, you have to look at all the dimensions.

Isn't the same true of knowing God? The Bible gives us a glimpse of these three measurements from God's point of view in Ephesians 3:18, "*And I pray that you and God's holy people will have the power to understand the greatness of Christ's love. I pray that you will understand how wide and how long and how high and deep that love is.*" What are these dimensions? Breadth or width is revealed in our attitude toward others. Depth is all the way to the core of our own heart's desires. And height or length is another dimension.

How deep do we measure? ♦ — *Selected*



The Heavenly Kingdom on Earth

STEPS INTO THE KINGDOM

The Kingdom of God is the sure promise of Jesus. But how do we get from here to there? The Bible outlines the steps.

BREAKING THE SILENCE

Some 2000 years ago, Jesus was on earth, preaching, teaching, and healing, all in a very quiet way for a very brief three and a half years. The prophet of Israel had also said He would be a King, and since they did not say when this would happen, many expected that when they saw the King they would soon be seeing His Kingdom. Jesus knew this was not the plan, and on at least two occasions He made clear that then was not the time for setting up His Kingdom. When Pilate was questioning Him, Pilate asked Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice" (John 18:37). What was the answer? Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world [this cosmos, this "present arrangement"]. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

When Jesus was with His disciples, just before He ascended, one of the disciples asked Him, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). They did not realize His Kingdom was yet many years—nearly 2000 years—in the future.

After Jesus was taken to heaven, He sent special power back to His people, to help them carry on the work He had begun. This power, the Holy Spirit, came on them at Pentecost, just 10 days after He had ascended. Jesus had commissioned His disciples to preach the Gospel throughout the world, and He knew they would need help to accomplish this (Luke 24:46–49). He had also planned that they should write down the text of His preaching, so that it would be available for generations to come. We have this text they wrote in the New Testament.

During all of this time, God was working with His people openly, through special power, visions, miracles, and other supernatural ways. But the time came when He changed His method of working. God had planned that when the Bible was completed, the Holy Spirit power should be withdrawn. He would continue to work with His people, but not openly. The Apostle Paul describes this change in 1 Cor. 13. "Whether there are prophecies [by divine power], they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge [by Divine revelation], it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophecy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away" (1 Cor. 13:8–10). What might be the "perfect" that was to come? The Psalmist tells us that the "law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Ps. 19:7). After God's people had the written law in their hands, they no longer needed the power of the Holy Spirit to instruct them, and it

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PART THREE
by RUTH E. SISSON

Steps Into the Kingdom

1. Elijah the Messenger Arrives
2. Holy Spirit Power is restored
3. The dead in Christ are resurrected
4. Jesus Christ returns
5. Jesus Christ chooses His co-rulers
(Judgment of covenant makers)
6. Jesus Christ is crowned King
7. The Millennium begins
8. Battle of Armageddon; one third of the earth's population submits to Christ
9. Satan is bound (no open manifestation of evil)
10. Earth is repopulated and re-trained under new rulership (Christ and Saints)
11. Satan is loosed (strict authority is relaxed)
12. Second resurrection
13. Open rebellion against Christ's government
14. Rebellious element is destroyed
15. Final judgment of mortals who lived during the Millennium
16. Glorified earth is annexed to God's family in heaven and the Eternal Age begins

was taken away. Between that time and the second advent of Christ, is a period of silence. When Christ returns, God will be breaking the silence.

We learn of this time in Psalm 50, where we read, *"The Mighty One, God the Lord, has spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun to its going down. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; A fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous all around Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people"* (Ps. 50:1-4). This is a very descriptive passage, telling of the time we are in. It is the time that will be interrupted, when *"our God shall come, and shall not keep silent."* God will be breaking into the silence, ending the time when there were no open miracles or visions. He will be sending Christ to *"judge His people...to gather His saints...those who've made a covenant."* Christ is coming to break the silence.

What is the first event that will break the silence?

STEP #1: ELIJAH THE MESSENGER ARRIVES

When Jesus came the first time, when He was born in Bethlehem, and grew up in Nazareth, and finally at 30 years of age started His ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing, He had an announcer. The mission of this announcer was foretold in the Old Testament, as one who would be for Him *"the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God'"* (Isa. 40:3). This prophecy was fulfilled by the ministry of John the Baptist. John said, *"I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose"* (John 1:26-27). The next day he baptized Jesus. When someone questioned John about his mission, John answered, *"I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him....He must increase, but I must decrease"* (John 3:28, 30). John the Baptist announced the first advent of Jesus.

At the very end of the Old Testament, we have a prophecy of another announcer, Elijah. In Malachi 4, we are first told about a severe time of judgment that is coming. We read, *"Behold the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, 'That will leave them neither root nor branch'"* (Mal. 4:1). Then the prophet tells of the rising of the *"Sun of righteousness."* We read: *"But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings"* (v. 2).

Then two verses later, the prophet tells of the forerunner who will announce the coming of Jesus when He shall come to judge and save: *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse"* (Mal. 4:5-6).

Could this possibly be a prediction of John the Baptist, who announced Jesus' first advent? We must notice that the prophet describes the time of Jesus' coming as *"the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."* If we read the Gospels, we realize that Jesus' first advent was not a *"great and dreadful day."* There was no judgment, no punishments on the wicked, nothing that could be described as great or dreadful. On the contrary, Jesus suffered at their hands. They crucified Him.

Jesus' first advent was not a time of dramatic turning either. There was no great turning to Jesus as a result of His ministry. After He had preached for three years, and gone to heaven, how many gathered in His name? Only 120 were in



*Behold, I will send you
Elijah the prophet before the
coming of the great and dreadful
day of the Lord. - Mal. 4:5*

the upper room waiting for the power He had promised to send. There was no dramatic turning to God at Christ's first coming.

If we turn to Matthew 17, we find another prediction of Elijah's coming. This prophecy immediately follows the transfiguration, when the disciples had seen Jesus in His glory. Very logically, as they came down from the mountain, after the vision (Matt. 17:9), after they had seen Jesus coming in this very dramatic way, the disciples asked a question. *"Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"* (v. 10). Why did they mention Elijah? Because they had just seen Elijah in the transfiguration, and they knew the prophecy that Elijah would come before Jesus. So Jesus answered, *"Elijah is coming first and will restore all things."* In these words Jesus affirmed the prophecy of Malachi, that Elijah would precede His second advent. *"Elijah is coming first"* (Matt. 17:11).

How does this all fit into our picture of the steps toward the kingdom? We have a time of silence, the time which we are now in. That time will be interrupted by the appearance of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the second advent of Jesus. From the words of Malachi, we may conclude that he will make an all-out effort to inform people of coming events, and with some degree of success. *"He shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers."*

STEP #2: Restoring "All Things"

What will Elijah do? Why is he coming? Jesus said that he is coming to *"restore all things."* What might that *"all things"* include?

If we look at Peter's address on the day of Pentecost, recorded in Acts 3, we get a little idea. Peter relates the current event, the receiving of Holy Spirit Power, to the prophecy of Joel (Acts 2:17-18), and then he says, *"And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy."* Notice that this prophecy is speaking of a time when God will *"show wonders in heaven,"* when there will be dramatic demonstrations of Divine power. He also describes it as the *"great and awesome day of the lord."*

What will be restored at this time? Quoting Joel again, Peter cites the prophecy *"I will pour out my spirit on all flesh."* The restoring of the Holy Spirit Power may be a large part of Elijah's work.

In Acts 3, Peter again describes the second advent of Jesus as the *"times of restoration of all things."* He says, *"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began"* (Acts 3:19-21). It will be a time of restoration, of restitution, and Elijah will be a key person in this very important work.

STEP #3: Resurrecting the Sleeping Servants of God

Another task that must be done before the arrival of Christ is described in First Thessalonians 4, where the Apostle Paul is consoling some of his people who had lost loved ones. Paul says that when Jesus comes, those who are living and

John the Baptist or Elijah?

Some people believe that Jesus spoke of John the Baptist when He said in Matt. 17:11, *"Elijah is coming first,"* as though He spoke of a prophecy already fulfilled. The wording in verse 12 further complicates it, as Jesus says, *"I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished."* Why did Jesus refer to John the Baptist as Elijah? He had a reason. If we look at Luke 1:17, we learn that John the Baptist was to come *"in the spirit and power of Elijah."* And the way Jesus said this in Matt. 17:12 is a statement which could only be true about John the Baptist, because they (the authorities) had done to him (John) what they wished. This could not have been said about Elijah, who was victorious on Mt. Carmel, was in command, and at the end of the scene slew the prophets of Baal. At the end of his career, Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind. No one did to Elijah *"whatever they wished"*!

Verse 13 clarifies the point, saying that *"the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist."* The disciples understood, and if we think about what Jesus is saying, we can understand also. If we follow the narrative as recorded in the Gospels, we can see that when Jesus spoke these words, John the Baptist was already dead. The story of his suffering and death is told in Matt. 14. Herod had beheaded him, so John the Baptist's career was closed. True to Jesus' words, they had done to him *"whatever they wished."* Then Jesus says, speaking of an event yet future, *"Elijah is coming first."* Elijah the prophet, taken up miraculously at the end of his career, will be brought back, fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi that he will come before *"the great and dreadful day of the Lord"* (Mal. 4:5-6).

looking for Him will not have any advantage over those who have served Him and fallen asleep in death. Why? Because the dead in Christ will rise first, before Jesus comes.

The passage reads, *"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus."* How will this be possible? He says: *"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first"* (1 Thess. 4:13–16).

Here we have a picture of the resurrection. The dead in Christ are going to awake at the time of Jesus' coming, so that they are ready to meet Him in the air, as the next verse says: *"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."*

According to Paul, Jesus will return to living people. This means that those who have fallen asleep in death must be resurrected, and here is a work which may well be assigned to the prophet Elijah. We are not told directly, but the timing of the resurrection, being before the advent of Christ, would seem to indicate this possibility. One who comes with the ability to restore the power of the Holy Spirit would certainly be able also to raise the dead, if that is the plan of the Almighty.

God does not tell us the timing. We are not told how long the interval will be between the coming of Elijah and the second advent of Jesus. Communications as they are today, Elijah's message could circle the globe in seconds.

In First Corinthians 15, we have another telling of these events. In the early part of the chapter, Paul has been talking about the resurrection, the certainty of Jesus' resurrection, and the surety that all believers will also be resurrected. Then he says (v. 50), *"This I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."* Our corruptible bodies are not a type of substance that will be in Christ's finished Kingdom, when everyone who lives is immortal and incorruptible. We will have to be changed to some better, superior substance, at present unknown to us. That is why Paul says, *"Behold I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."* When Jesus returns, there will be living believers to meet Him, along with those who have been resurrected. Those who are living will not have to "sleep" but all, whether living or resurrected, will have to be changed into the immortal state, undying and incorruptible.

The Apostle speaks also of this change, and associates it with Christ's second advent: *"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."*

This passage tells us of three events. *"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound..."* Some have suggested that the trumpet may represent Elijah, who will come as Christ's announcer, a mission appropriately symbolized by a trumpet. After the sounding of the trumpet, the dead in Christ will be raised, so that they are ready to meet Christ when He returns. The next event will be the Judgment, not mentioned in this passage, when the faithful ones will be changed from the mortal to the immortal state. *"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."*



Taken or Left Behind?

The subject of the rapture is being widely popularized today by a set of books and movies titled *"Left Behind."* The films are an imaginative portrayal of the chaos which many believe will result when the members of the true church are "raptured," i.e., caught away, when Jesus comes. When in the words of the popular song, the "Father is ready to welcome His bride." The result is total chaos, when people are taken out of airplanes, or drivers are removed from their cars, or someone is suddenly absent from a conversation at a meeting. Even young children are thought to be raptured.

The common idea is that when Jesus comes, the good people will be taken away, and there will be a dreadful time of trouble on earth, known as, *"the tribulation,"* resulting in worldwide tumult and uproar among the nations.

The Evidence?

We want to look at the evidence supporting this belief, to know what part, if any, is true; and what part, if any, is false. Every belief must be founded solidly on Bible teaching, or we must classify it as mere human speculation.

We want to get all that the Bible says on a sub-

For yet a third description of these events, let us look at the words of Jesus Himself, recorded in Matthew 24. At this time, the disciples were with Jesus, and they were aware that their time with Him was limited. Jesus had been telling them about end-time events, and so the disciples asked, "Tell us, when will these things be? Lord what will be the sign of your coming?" (Matt. 24:3). Then Jesus goes into a lengthy discourse, telling them of events from the time then present through the time of His second advent.

The first major event which He mentions is the destruction of Jerusalem. "Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place..." (v. 15), and He gives a message pertinent to the people who will be living then.

Then He continues (v. 21), "Then there shall be great tribulation." After the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, true religion would be silenced, the power of Rome would overpower it, and for a long time no true religion could be taught or practiced. Here is a prophecy of the apostasy in the sequence of events. This same time was foretold by the prophet Daniel, as Jesus says (see Dan. 7:25; 8:12). Then as Jesus looks forward in the sequence of events, He approaches the time of His second advent, and issues a warning against false signs, false Christs, and false prophets (Matt. 24:23-26). Why is there no danger of mistaking the false from the true? Jesus states the answer very clearly in verse 27. You do not need to worry about being deceived, because "as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." No danger of confusing it with any pseudo-event.

Then He returns to the sequence of events that He has been discussing. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days [the end of the apostasy] the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light." He is describing a time of extreme distress and turmoil in the political heavens, the sun, moon, and stars of the political heavens. "The stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." It will be a time of extreme political turmoil.

And then what? Then the sign of the son of man will appear in heaven (v. 30). Here is another possible reference to the coming of Elijah, as "the sign of the son of man."

And then what? "And then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Then the event of the ages:

STEP #4: THE ARRIVAL OF KING JESUS!

Suddenly, with a host of angels as His escort, the King will arrive, not in spirit but in body, physical, as He went away (Acts 1:11).

Someday, some ordinary day the heavens will open, and down the parted skies will come the King in the greatness of His glory, His face shining with the splendor of the sun. The immortal Conqueror, the Eternal King, the Prince of Peace will come to take His throne, and "every eye shall see Him" (Rev. 1:7).

How magnificent beyond all mortal imagination! How glorious, how sublime the moment when He "shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels" (2 Thess. 1:7).

The arrival of the King will be the greatest event of the ages. It will be the culmination of all the years of watching, waiting, and preparing. It will be the fulfilling of all the prophecies of Scripture that have focused on this great event. ♦

To be continued next issue

Taken or Left Behind? (continued)

ject, but not more than it says.

What does the Apostle say in 1 Thessalonians 4? Let us read verse 13: "But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope." He was talking to serious believers, and some of their loved ones had died. Quite naturally, these people were sorrowful. But the Apostle tells them they do not need to sorrow as those who have no hope. He is going to tell them about the real hope of believers.

The surviving ones were thinking that their loved ones had missed out on something important because they had died before Jesus arrived. These believers were looking expectantly for Christ's return. They did not comprehend the time that had to elapse between their day and the era of His return. (Paul explains this subject in detail in his second letter to the Thessalonians).

We have to admire these believers for their real and living hope. But the Apostle says tenderly, "You do not have to sorrow as those who have no hope. You are among the believers. You have a real hope."

In the next verse he says, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again"—Paul focuses all hope of future life on the solid fact that Jesus died and rose again—"even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus." Paul is talking about the resurrection, not going to heaven. He does not say that those who die go to heaven, but that those who "sleep in Jesus" have hope of resurrection because Jesus died "and rose again." In the same way, their loved ones would be resurrected, to live again.

Verse 15: "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord"—the authority is from God, says the Apostle. He was not speaking something of his own—"that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep." He says to the sorrowing ones, those who are alive when Christ comes will not have any advantage over those who have died. Why? "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (verse 16). Those who die in hope, who die in Christ, are going to be resurrected. Says Paul, you do not have to worry about your loved ones, because when Christ comes the dead in Christ are going to be awakened.

Verse 17: "We who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them"—with the ones who have been resurrected—"in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

This is all Paul says. This is all we are told about this wonderful event. The living believers are going to join the resurrected ones, and together they will

Taken or Left Behind? (continued)

rise to “meet the Lord in the air.” This is all the Bible says about the rapture. For the rest of our information we must rely on other passages.

Where does Paul say that those who meet the Lord in the air will go? He does not say anything about taking them to heaven. There is nothing mentioned about heaven here. He says only that we will “meet the Lord in the air” and that from that time forward we will be together with the Lord.

Does the Bible tell us where the faithful ones are going to dwell? Jesus made one very plain statement in the beatitudes. He said, “*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*” The earth is going to be the home—the inheritance—of the blessed “meek.” Again, in the prayer Jesus taught His disciples, He said, “*Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*” (Matt. 6:10). God’s Kingdom is going to come to earth; we do not go away to it. “*Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth....*” The Prophet Isaiah, speaking the Word of the Lord, said about the earth, “*He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited*” (Isa. 45:18).

In the book of Proverbs we find this statement: “*For the upright will dwell in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the earth, and the unfaithful will be uprooted from it*” (Prov. 2:21–22). The wicked will be removed, the upright will remain. Proverbs 10:30 says the same: “*The righteous will never be removed, but the wicked will not inhabit the earth.*”

Another very clear passage is in Psalm 15, where the Psalmist asked the question, “*Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?*” Who do you want for your friends and family?

Then the Psalmist describes the type of character the Lord is looking for. “*He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart.*” What will happen to this person who perfects this high quality of character? The last verse in the chapter tells us: “*He who does these things shall never be moved.*” He will not be taken away but will remain: “*He will never be moved.*”

In the 37th Psalm, we find repeated six times that the righteous will inhabit the earth (see Ps. 37:3, 9, 11, 22, 29, 34).

When Jesus was foretelling His second coming, and comparing it to the days of Noah and the days of Lot, He said, “*Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left*” (Matt. 24:40–41). In the paral-

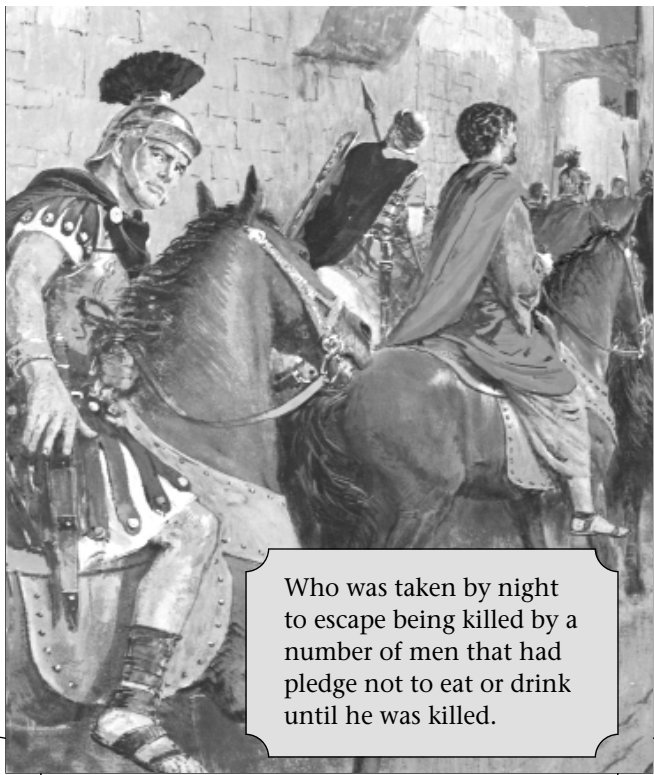
lel account in Luke 17, where He also compares the conditions and the attitude in the time of Noah and Lot with that of the world at the time of His second coming, He says again, “*I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left*” (Luke 17:26–36).

Do you want to be taken or left? Ask the majority of people in Christendom and they will want to be taken. But in view of what the Bible teaches about the permanent home of the righteous ones, and the fact that the wicked will be removed, don’t we want to be left?! Left, with the earth our eternal inheritance. Left, when all iniquity has been removed. Left, to enjoy the blessings of peace and prosperity in a remade world, where all who live will be immortal and loyal to their Maker!

A verse in the book of Psalms confirms that the earth will be the inheritance of the righteous. “*The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord’s; But the earth He has given to the children of men*” (Ps. 115:16).

Jesus spoke another parable that explains the same point. In Matthew 13, He was making a parable on the wheat and the tares, and He said, “*Let both grow together until the harvest.*” Then what would happen? Would the good be removed and the bad left behind? No, He says, “*First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.*” He is removing the tares, and leaving the wheat. We find the same thought in Proverbs 2:21: “*For the upright will dwell in the land.*” If we go to our garden, we pull the weeds out and leave the good plants. We do not pull out the good plants. That is the way the Lord will work. He will remove the wicked, taking them out of the way, so that the good can grow, blossom and flourish abundantly—forever.

What, then, can we expect at the rapture? We are not given many details, only that the resurrected ones, along with the living believers will rise to meet the Lord in the air at His return. But given the evidence in the rest of the Bible, we see nothing to suggest that they will go on to heaven, but rather return with Christ to the earth. The earth is to be the eternal home of the righteous. The whole plan of God centers around transforming this earth into a paradise of delight, heaven on earth, the eternal Kingdom right here, on the earth made new. ♦



Who was taken by night to escape being killed by a number of men that had pledge not to eat or drink until he was killed.

BIRDS IN THE BIBLE

1. About whom did Joseph prophesy that the birds would eat his flesh?
2. What was an acceptable burnt offering for the Israelites to sacrifice?
3. To whom did a Philistine say, *"Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air"*?
4. Who sat on sackcloth among the rocks during harvest to prevent birds from devouring her dead sons who had been hanged?
5. What bird did Noah send out from the ark first?
6. On whom did the Holy Spirit descend like a dove?
7. What bird did God provide for the Israelites to eat in the wilderness?

ESCAPES

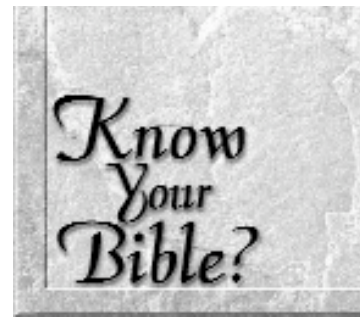
1. This king of Syria escaped on horseback from enemy Israelites.
2. The angels of the Lord helped this man and his family escape a wicked city before it was destroyed.
3. With the help of his wife, who let him down from a window, he escaped from his father-in-law.
4. Being warned by an angel in a dream, he escaped to Egypt with his wife and child.
5. To escape stoning by the Jews, he *"escaped out of their hands"* and went beyond Jordan.
6. To escape his brother, who wanted to kill him, he fled to his uncle Laban.
7. While Doeg was carrying out a wholesale slaughter of priests, he was the only one who managed to escape.
8. To escape a vengeful queen, he *"arose and went for his life and came to Beersheba."*
9. The disciples let him down a wall in a basket so he could escape enemy Jews.

IDENTIFY

1. I am a relative of Jesus. I lived in the desert and ate locusts and wild honey. I was beheaded by King Herod's order. Who am I?
2. I am a Hebrew prophet who wrote a book of the Bible. I was carried captive to Babylon. I saw a vision of a wheel within a wheel. Who am I?
3. I was my mother's favorite son. I bought my brother's birthright for a bowl of stew. I dreamed about a ladder to heaven with angels on it. Who am I?
4. I am a son of Amram and Jochebed, and Moses' older brother. I am also Miriam's brother. Who am I?
5. I came from Thyatira but I met Paul in Philippi. I was a seller of purple cloth. I was a convert under Paul's ministry. Who am I?
6. I am a prophet of the Lord. I saw Jerusalem destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. I was forbidden to marry and later fled to Egypt. Who am I?
7. I am Jesus' brother. I led a church council and wrote a New Testament book. Who am I?
8. I was recalled from Egypt to be king of Israel. I was a rival to Rehoboam, king of Judah at the time. I set up golden calves for worship at Dan and Bethel. Who am I?
9. I am a prophet of the Lord. I prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, four kings of Judah. Who am I?

PSALMS

1. In the sixth Psalm, David begs the Lord to save his life because he _____.
2. *"The wicked walk on every side,"* says the twelfth Psalm, when _____.
3. *"Keep me the apple of the eye,"* that is, _____.
4. The twenty-third Psalm is an analogy of _____.
5. *"The Lord is my light and my _____."*
6. *"The Lord is my strength and _____."*
7. David asked that his enemies be _____.
8. The thirty-seventh Psalm promises the righteous will inherit the land _____ times.
9. *"The sacrifices of God are _____."*
10. *"Moab,"* said David, *"is my _____."*
11. The ninetieth Psalm sets man's normal life span at _____.
12. *"The fear of the Lord is _____."*
13. *"The stone which the builders refused is become the _____."*
14. *"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we _____."*
15. Where can we go to be out of God's sight? _____.



Answers to questions on page 22

God's PROVIDENCE against Human CONSPIRACY

continued from page 11

to save. And it is, of all people, Herod the Great who sets in motion the very events that fulfill some of the words of those prophets and proclaim anew to you and me that God is faithful.

And that, in the final analysis, is all part of the story of the birth of Jesus. And because of that birth you and I can look forward to the Day when the words of the angels will be fulfilled; when there will be "peace on earth, good will to men" when the Herods of this world are no more.

What difference does the drama of the birth of Jesus make in a messed up world like this one?

The difference lies in the fact that the birth of Jesus is God fulfilling His promise. It is the hand of God at work even in the dark and gloom of our world to turn the nightmare of history into the triumph of the Savior and bring about the Kingdom of peace and righteousness God has promised. Because Jesus was born in Bethlehem the Herods of this world will be removed when God's time is right. That is the triumph God intends, the triumph of good over evil. For the moment, evil may seem to be winning, but not for long. Because there is a Divine plan in motion, against which no human conspiracy can succeed. The Babe that was born in Bethlehem is destined to end the reign of evil and bring in everlasting righteousness, everlasting peace, everlasting joy, everlasting love. ♦

HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME

continued from page 13

heavens, Let your name be sanctified'" (Matt. 6:9). If the inspired writers did not try to preserve the original Hebrew pronunciation, why would God put such emphasis upon it for us?

What did Jesus do? When praying He referred to God as His Father. The word He used is the same used to describe earthly fathers (Strong's number 3962). He also mentioned God as Lord (Strong's 2962), which might possibly have been YHWH and was lost in translation.

In our publishing, we often employ the terms "God," "the Eternal," "the Almighty," as well as terms describing His attributes or powers ("the Creator," "the Lord of hosts," "the Omnipotent God," etc.). We also use "Jehovah," "heavenly Father,"

etc., where the terms seem appropriate to the context. An explanatory note in *Young's Analytical Concordance* under the word Jehovah, suggests that the name was not spoken in Israel. "The incommunicable name of the God of Israel. In the Common Version of the English Bible it is generally though improperly, translated by 'The Lord.'"

God wants our hearts, not our words only. The apostle Paul in Romans 10 places all emphasis on the sacred testimony, even calling it the Christ. "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (That is, the word of faith which we preach)." The word must be in our mouth and in our heart, indicating much more than the correct use of the sacred name (Rom. 10:8-13). ♦

Difficulties are the opportunity of the strong.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 21

IDENTIFY

1. John the Baptist (Luke 1:34-36, 57, 60; Matt. 3:1, 4; 14:3, 9, 10)
2. Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:1-3, 15, 16)
3. Jacob (Genesis 25:28-34; 28:10-12)
4. Aaron (Exodus 6:20; 15:20)
5. Lydia (Acts 16:11-15)
6. Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1; 52:12-15; 16:1-2; 43:5-7)
7. James (Matt. 13:55; Gal. 1:19; Acts 1:14; 15:2,13; James 1:1)
8. Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:1-3, 12, 20, 26-29)
9. Isaiah (Isaiah 1:1)

BIRDS IN THE BIBLE

1. The baker (Gen. 40:16-22)
2. Turtledoves (Lev. 1:14)

In picture: Apostle Paul (Acts 23:12-24)

3. David (1 Sam. 17:44)
4. Rizpah (2 Sam. 21:2-10)
5. Raven (Gen. 8:6-8)
6. Jesus (Matt. 3:16)
7. Quail (Ex. 16:11-13)

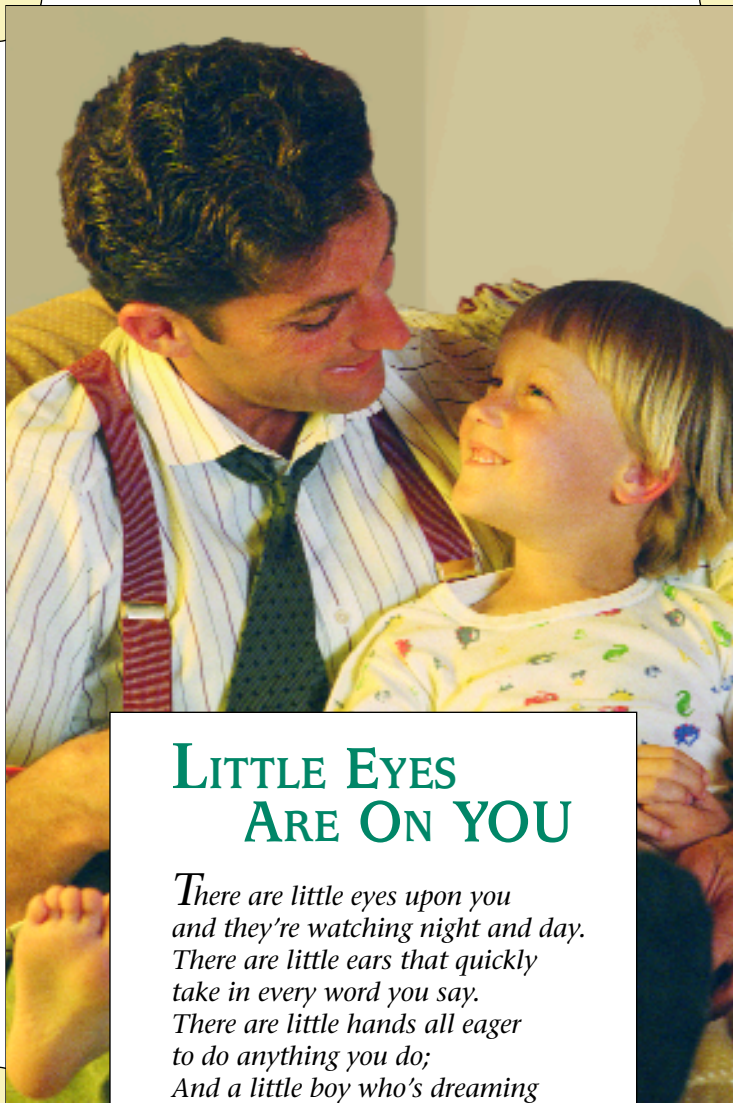
PSALMS

1. cannot thank the Lord when he is dead (Ps. 6:5)
2. "the vilest men are exalted" (Ps. 12:8)
3. safe from my enemies (Ps. 17:8-9)
4. a shepherd (Ps. 23:1-5)
5. salvation (Ps. 27:1)
6. my shield (Ps. 28:7)
7. confused and put to shame (Ps. 35:4, 26)
8. six (Ps. 37:9, 11, 22, 27, 29, 34)
9. a broken spirit (Ps. 51:17)

10. washpot (Ps. 60:8)
11. threescore and ten (Ps. 90:10)
12. the beginning of wisdom (Ps. 111:10)
13. head stone of the corner (Ps. 118:22)
14. wept, when we remembered Zion (Ps. 137:1)
15. nowhere (Ps. 139)

ESCAPES

1. Benhadad (1 Kings 20:19-20)
2. Lot (Gen. 19:12-17)
3. David (1 Sam. 19:10-12)
4. Joseph (Matt. 2:13-14)
5. Jesus (John 10:31, 34, 39-40)
6. Jacob (Gen. 27:42-43)
7. Abiathar (1 Sam. 22:18-20)
8. Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-3)
9. Saul (Paul) (Acts 9:23-25)



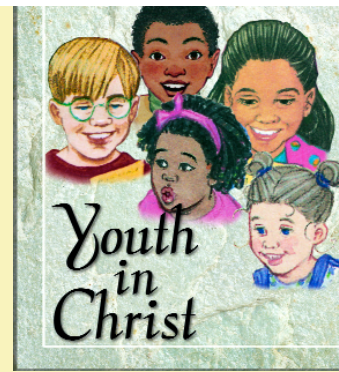
LITTLE EYES ARE ON YOU

*There are little eyes upon you
and they're watching night and day.
There are little ears that quickly
take in every word you say.
There are little hands all eager
to do anything you do;
And a little boy who's dreaming
of the day he'll be like you.*

*You're the little fellow's idol,
you're the wisest of the wise.
In his little mind about you
no suspicions ever rise.
He believes in you devoutly,
holds all you say and do;
He will say and do, in your way
when he's grown up just like you.*

*There's a wide-eyed little fellow
who believes you're always right;
And his eyes are always opened,
and he watches day and night.
You are setting an example
every day in all you do
For the little boy who's waiting
to grow up to be like you.*

—Selected



KEVIN'S PRAYER

Three-year old Kevin was getting ready for bed when he announced to his father, "I don't want to say my prayers tonight." His father did not scold him or shame him or try to force him to say his prayers. But neither did he let him get into bed immediately. Although Kevin was very young, he needed to learn how important prayer is and that he should be responsible in saying his prayers.

Gently Dad lifted Kevin onto his lap and started to talk to him. "Kevin, I would like to tell you why I say my prayers." And Dad told him why he prayed. "I pray because I want to talk with our Heavenly Father and thank Him for a nice warm home, and a loving mother, and a little son Kevin. I want to thank Him for the food we had to eat today so I don't have to go to bed hungry. I want to thank Him for my nice warm bed and the good night's sleep I'm looking forward to. I want to thank Him for all the things I'm looking forward to doing tomorrow. I want to thank Him for being there to protect me from accidents and danger and hurts so that I can come home after work and be with my family. Oh, I just have so many, many, many blessings to thank Him for... You know Kevin, I want to be a good and obedient child of God."

At that point Kevin jumped down from his father's lap. "Now Daddy, I want to say my prayers, 'cause I have blessings too."

Father and son knelt together by Kevin's bed. Eagerly Kevin began, "Dear Daddy God, thank you for Mommy and Daddy and Pepper. Thank you for candy—I like Reese's Peanut Butter cups best of all—Pepper likes them, too. Thank you for my wagon. You know God, I got a booboo on my knee and it hurts. Can You fix it? I don't like going to bed like Daddy. Ah, ah, I didn't want to talk to You 'cause I was naughty today. I'll talk to you again tomorrow. Amen."

Dad was teaching Kevin that there are things we should not avoid doing just because we don't feel like doing them at the moment. He was also teaching Kevin that it was his choice to say his prayers or not. For Dad it was a personal responsibility, a debt that he really wanted to pay. ♦

Jean Biddle

We have received word that Sister Jean Biddle of Warwick, Queensland, Australia, fell asleep in death on February 18, at the age 86.

Sister Jean is the last of the family that has headed the Australian ecclesia of the Megiddo Church for the past 50 years. The family first heard of the Church when Sister Jean's father, Mr. Thomas Biddle, answered an ad in a New Zealand paper that had been sent to him by a friend, offering literature from the Megiddo Church. Mr. Biddle sent for the books, and found some things he already believed and others that were different, explained Biblically. In a short time he was convinced, along with his wife and two of his adult daughters, Jean and Alice. Very soon the four of them became active believers, holding regular services in their home, and advertising in the local area, and engaging in numerous conversations with inquirers about the faith. They carried on extensive missionary activities from their home, and gave strong support to the teachings and principles of the Bible.

After the death of their parents, Sisters Jean and Alice continued to make their home together, both of them career women, their primary bond being their common faith. Both corresponded actively with the Church and took their religion seriously. They remained together until Alice's death in 1993. Since that time, Sister Jean has carried on alone, always grateful for the help of family and friends, especially her niece, Mary Knight, who saw that her aunt had everything she needed.

Sister Jean was a thoughtful, caring, conscientious person. During her productive years, she worked as a dental nurse, a home nurse, and a dressmaker. Her deep love for God and her serious concern for Christian character showed in her letters, and in her relationships with others. Her faith was a beacon light in her life. During recent months we heard from several who cared for her



SISTERS JEAN AND ALICE BIDDLE

that she was a pleasure to be with, consistently grateful and encouraging, and kept her life shining with hope.

In 1970, I was privileged to be one of three Church members to visit the Biddle family in Australia and spend several weeks with them. I left the Biddle's home with one strong impression: there is a spiritual lesson in everything about us, if only we look for it. Sister Jean was continually gleaning spiritual lessons from her garden, kitchen, or any small event. Everything that happened had something to tell her about how to apply her faith to life.

Sister Jean corresponded regularly with the Church as long as she was able, and her letters always reflected her determination to keep gaining more and more spiritual ground, to reach the high standard set by Jesus Christ. She had her heart set on sharing a place in the Kingdom of Christ, and this bright hope kept her buoyant even in months of failing health. She lived and died in hope.

Sister Jean is survived by several nieces and nephews, also grandnieces and grandnephews. ♦ —THE EDITOR

Today's preparation determines tomorrow's achievement.

MY PRAYER

*To grow a little wiser day by day,
To school my mind and body to obey.
To keep my inner life both clean and strong,
To free my life from guile, my hands from wrong,
To shut the door on hate and scorn and pride,
To open it to love, the windows wide,
To meet with cheerful heart what comes to me,
To turn life's discords into harmony,
To share some weary worker's heavy load,
To point some straying comrade to the road,
To know that what I have is not my own,
To feel that I am never quite alone;
This would I pray from day to day.*

(Sister Jean contributed this poem to the newsletter of the home where she was cared for during her last months. She had nothing but praise and gratitude for their services.)

OWL, SPARROW, PELICAN, OR...?

by JEAN and ALICE BIDDLE
Printed in the Megiddo Message in 1974

THE OWL CHRISTIAN

An owl is a sad creature. Its mournful hoot in the dead of night never cheered anyone. It is not a companion of sunlight and joy. It is rather the epitome of dour mournfulness and the utter absence of joy.

How many times are we like the owl, when everything does not go just to please us? We act as though we had never heard the glorious word, *"The joy of the Lord is your strength"*; or that gracious command, *"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice."* We look as though we were weaned on a lemon, when we have every cause to rejoice. No wonder some people think that becoming a Christian is the same as saying good-bye to joy.

Who in the whole world has greater cause for joy than we have! So many people are searching the world over for something that will make life worth living. We have it! Should we not sing and shout for joy? Should not our glorious hope shine in our faces?

The life that is filled to overflowing with the true joy of the Lord is the life that will draw others to the way of Christ. Honey catches more flies than vinegar. Someone is seeking for what we have to give. Nothing will be more convincing to them than the life of heavenly joy lived in the week-day valley, day in and day out, through good times and bad.

Do not be an owl! *"Rejoice in the Lord!"*

THE SPARROW CHRISTIAN

Now let us consider the sparrow that sits alone on the housetop. The summer has ended, and rough winds shake the once-green boughs of the trees. Other birds are flying to warmer climates. Now on a bleak, gray autumn day, one lone sparrow is perched on the housetop. No other sign of life can be seen. Here is a picture of melancholy loneliness.

The true Christian need never be like this sparrow alone on the housetop. What a pity that we should ever attempt it! We need to do more communing with God, more fellowshiping with His saints, whose lives have been recorded for our instruction and inspiration. We need to help



others, and be helped. Our spiritual lives are sure to suffer if we cut ourselves off from any source of strength that God has provided us.

The sparrow alone on the housetop is missing the joy of fellowship, the stimulus of responsibility, the encouragement of accomplishment and the added strength of union. He stays away from the fire, and—then he wonders why he is growing cold!

We are not alone in our desire to please God. We are not alone in our work for His eternal Kingdom. We are like an army, fighting to win. And if we would win, we must keep in contact. We need all the help our allies can give us. As soon as we isolate ourselves, we will begin to lose the freshness of our hope, the keen edge of our zeal, and before long we will not be worthy to be called Christian.

THE PELICAN CHRISTIAN

The pelican has one outstanding feature that is always plainly visible. It is his big mouth. No one knows how much trouble has been caused because there have been too many pelicans in our religious circles.

What about you and me? Have we ever been pelicans?

There should be a sensible ratio between the use of the mouth and the use of the ears. Too often we shift our brain into neutral and let our tongue idle. Too often we have gone about shooting from careless lips barbed words which can never be recovered. Too often we have been so lavish with words of criticism and downright stingy in giving encouragement. What would happen if we made it our daily habit to encourage at least one person?

We shall have to give account for our words someday, and the pelican who is continually speaking will have much to account for.

Real wisdom is demonstrated in saying nothing that is untrue, unkind, or unnecessary.

Do not be a lone sparrow! Do not be a too talkative pelican. And do not be a dour-faced owl. God has called us for special service. Give Him your utmost effort and devotion — with enthusiasm! ♦



THE THINGS I SEEK

*There are a few things I would pray for, Lord,
a few small things Your Word alone can give:*

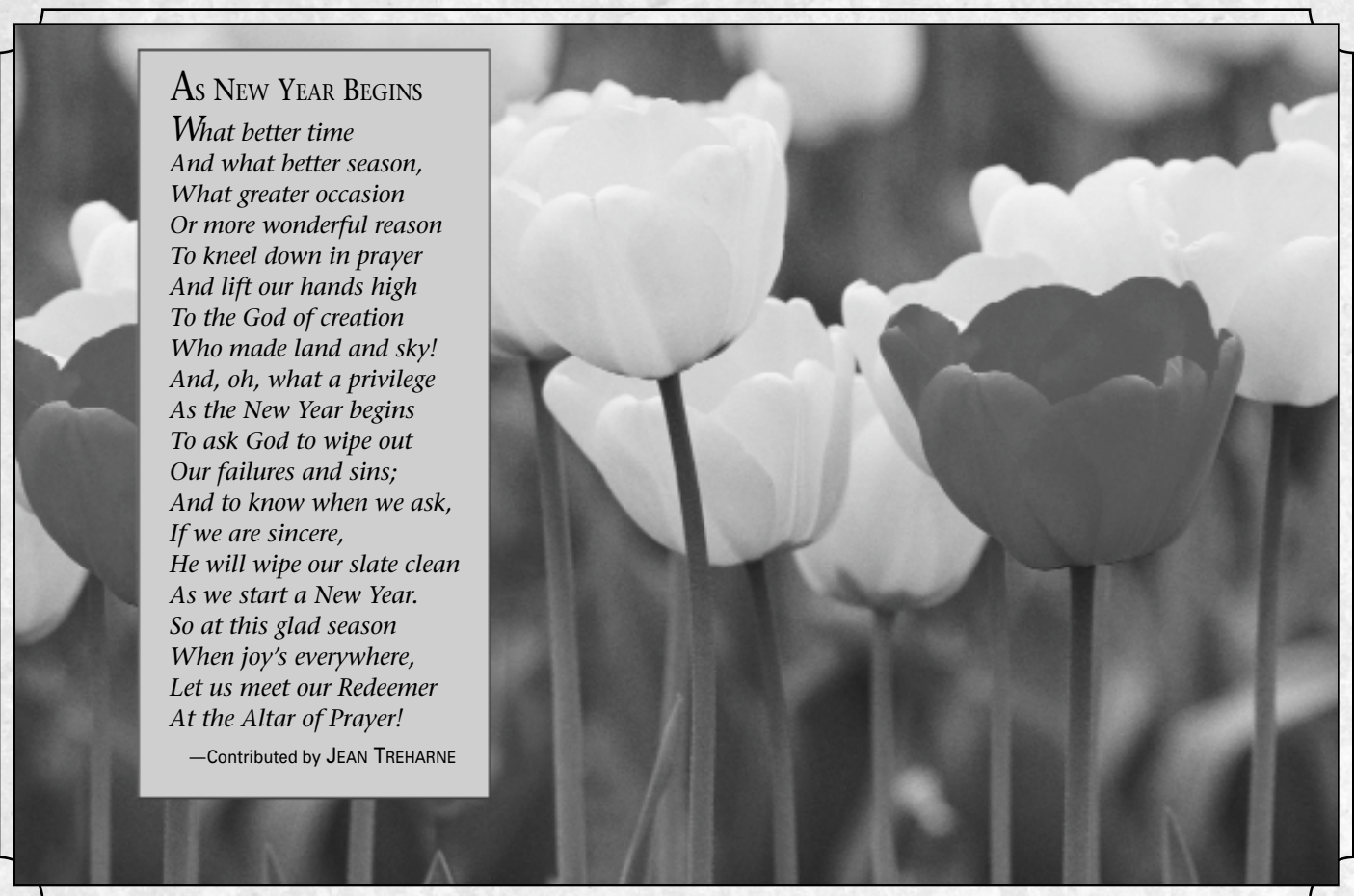
*The power to leave unsaid the bitter words,
the strength to say the kind words,
and to live each day in fear of God
and not for praise of man;
the will to love the good, and evil hate;
the courage to go on and try again when
I have failed;
the patience, Lord, to wait;
the wisdom to see clearly and to cling to
simple truth though every prospect dim;
the faith to make a dream a living thing;
the loyalty of heart to follow You;
a gentleness of soul;
a spirit meek;
a noble life.*

These are the things I seek. AMEN.



A NEW YEAR PRAYER

*May God make your year a happy one!
Not by shielding you from all sorrows and pain,
But by strengthening you to bear it, as it comes;
Not by making your path easy,
But by making you sturdy to travel any path;
Not by taking hardships from you,
But by taking fear from your heart;
Not by granting you unbroken sunshine,
But by keeping your face bright, even in the
shadows;
Not by making your life always pleasant,
But by showing you where you can grow most in those
noble virtues of patience and faith that
make life worth living;
God's love, peace, hope and joy to you for the
year ahead.*



AS NEW YEAR BEGINS
*What better time
And what better season,
What greater occasion
Or more wonderful reason
To kneel down in prayer
And lift our hands high
To the God of creation
Who made land and sky!
And, oh, what a privilege
As the New Year begins
To ask God to wipe out
Our failures and sins;
And to know when we ask,
If we are sincere,
He will wipe our slate clean
As we start a New Year.
So at this glad season
When joy's everywhere,
Let us meet our Redeemer
At the Altar of Prayer!*

—Contributed by JEAN TREHARNE

The only way we can erase unkindness is with kindness.
Don't lose the eraser.

God never puts anyone in a place too small to grow in.

You do not do God a favor by serving Him. He honors you
by allowing you to serve Him.

Prayer will either make a man leave off sinning, or sin will
make him leave off praying.

The Christian's walk and talk must go together.

Encouragement is like premium gasoline. It helps to take the
knock out of living.

The man who really wants to do something finds a way;
the other man finds excuses.

HOME

At home we show our true character.

We all know people who put on company manners while in company with others, but should we not be as patient, as kind, as polite, as agreeable at home as we are in public?

At home is the place to start a Christian life, to have always that evenness of temper which make us the same person, whether in public or in private. Persons practicing Christian virtues will have an even character. The Psalm, "*Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them,*" describes those who are Christian everywhere—all the time.

When our spouse or children do something not to our liking, or a friend calls for our help just when we finally are able to relax, or we have to cancel a vacation because of illness, these are the tests that reveal true character. Can we maintain an even temper and thank God for these tests?

Try an attitude like this and make your home a place of rest and pleasure, a place of inspiration and meditation, a place where God's spirit dwells and His law is uppermost.

Hope is putting faith to work when doubting would be easier.

A long dispute means that both parties are wrong.

New Year

Resolutions

I Will...

walk in daily fellowship with my Heavenly Father...

like **Enoch**

keep in mind the better country, the heavenly...

like **Abraham**

be patient under all circumstances...

like **Job**

know that God will exalt when the time is right...

like **Joseph**

choose rather to suffer than to enjoy the pleasures
of sin for a season...

like **Moses**

uphold the hands of my spiritual leaders...

like **Aaron** and **Hur**

refuse to be discouraged though multitudes disobey

like **Caleb** and **Joshua**

advance whether my friends are many or few...

like **Gideon**

always strengthen myself in the Lord, from whom comes my help...

like **David**

consecrate myself to do God's work and answer the call of Christian
duty with "Here am I, send me"...

like **Isaiah**

prepare my heart to seek God...

like **Jehoshaphat**

be faithful to God and commune with Him often, come what may...

like **Daniel**

keep faithful in my commitment to Christ, even though He rebuke
me, and have the courage to try again each time I stumble...

like **Peter**

show a right spirit even to those who oppose me...

like **Stephen**

forget the things which are behind and press forward to
that which lies ahead...

like **Paul**

study the Word of God and give myself to it wholly...

like **Timothy**

look beyond the cross to the joy that is set before me...

like my **Lord Himself...**

so that I may endure without flinching, and someday join all the
faithful in Christ's Kingdom.