

Megiddo Message



Megiddo Message

Vol. 58, No. 3

MARCH, 1971

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF
THE MEGIDDO MISSION CHURCH
L. T. NICHOLS, *Founder*
KENNETH E. FLOWERDAY, *Editor*

A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

- Strengthen your faith in the Bible
- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God.
- Bring peace and stability to your life

Published monthly by the
MEGIDDO MISSION CHURCH, 481 Thurston Road
Rochester, N. Y. 14619

● **SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** One year, \$2.00; six months, \$1.00. Make checks or money orders for all literature payable to the Megiddo Mission Church. Please notify promptly of any change of address. Foreign subscribers, please make all payments by international money order, available at most banks and post offices.

Second Class Postage paid at Rochester, New York.

INDEX

On—On—On!	3
The Coming Day	6
The Birthday of a King	7
Prayer for the Year's Beginning	9
Understanding the Bible	13
Christmas	17
Honest Bee	20
Meditations on the Word	27
Our Spiritual Calendar	28

Editorially Speaking . . .

One Day to Live

ONE DAY—only one. The thought is sobering, shocking. We are facing a new year, yet none of it is absolutely certain beyond this very hour. Have we considered that this day may be our last?

This is not a morbid question. It is the realistic query of each one who believes that this life is but the prelude to a better life. We are not getting ready to die—we are getting ready to live!

One day to live. The thought is startling, for it may be true. Statistics give no surety of tomorrow, nor can history grant us any consolation.

As mortals we are so prone to a thoughtless existence. We tend to consider our days as numberless grains on an endless seashore, rather than as limited grains in the hourglass. But it is stark fact that our days are numbered. Our life-span on earth is brief! How easily we may spend our days in a vain show, an empty excursion, a meaningless pursuit, and forget that life was meant for width and depth rather than length of days.

One day to live—a startling thought, but a strengthening thought as well. For we do not face a foreboding future of trouble and trial and loneliness, of poor health, old age and isolation—how can these bring doom upon us if God is on our side? Our measure of trouble will be no greater than our cup, steadied by His never-failing hand, can hold.

Each new day is a challenge—to employ all the strength that God has given us. How frequently we have drawn upon that strength at the break of day and then forgotten it through the remaining hours! God has not promised strength for the morning, but strength for the whole day!

One day—and what shall we have at its close to bring to our Lord and Saviour?

I am reminded of a thoughtful verse of poetry:

"We should fill the hours with the sweetest things . . . If we had but a day; . . . We should drink alone at the purest springs . . . In our upward way; . . . We should love with a life-time's love in an hour . . . If the hours were few; . . . We should rest, not for dreams, but for fresher power . . . To be and to do.

"We should waste no moments in weak regret, . . . If the day were but one, . . . If what we remember and what we forget . . . Went out with the sun; . . . We should be from our clamorous selves set free, . . . To work or to pray, . . . And to be what the Father would have us be . . . If we had but a day." ●●

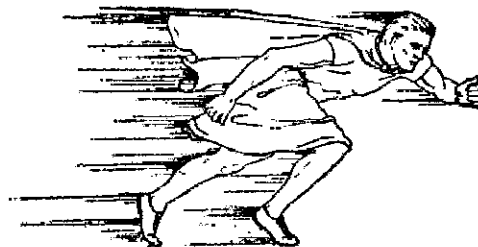
"... I do concentrate on this: I leave the past behind, and with hands outstretched to whatever lies ahead I go straight for the goal"

—Phillips Translation

"... My one thought is, by forgetting what lies behind me and straining to what lies before me, I press on to the goal"

—Moffatt Bible

ON - ON - ON!



PAUL'S figure is drawn from the foot race, the prime focus of the Greek athletic world. The Greeks, to whom Paul was writing, were avid sportsmen. They knew what Paul meant when he said: "This is my idea of a Christian. He must discipline himself. He must not break training. He must concentrate his energies. He must keep his eye on the goal."

We put life into Paul's words to the Philippians when we see the glow of sweat on the athlete's face, and catch the labored panting of his breath. "Forgetting what lies behind," the runner kicks out the cinders from beneath his spiked shoes. What cares he for the distance already covered? His eye is on the goal. "Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on."

Place this picture of the Christian athlete beside your mirror where you can compare it with the person you see reflected there. Too often as professing Christians we are not running. We are dawdling, loitering, looking to right or left, making excuses for our failure to dig in with our spikes and run!

The athletic hero was the pride of Greece. We number our years from the birth of our Lord. The Jew numbers his years from the creation of the world, according to Jewish tradition, 3761 B. C. in our chronology. The Roman numbered his years from the legendary founding of Rome by Romulus and Remus, by our reckoning, 753 B. C. On Roman buildings you find the initials A. U. C., followed by a date. The initials stand for *ab urbe condita*, "from the founding of the city." The Greek numbered his years from the first Olympic games.

What the temple sacrifice was to the devout Jew, what the triumph of a victorious general was

to the martial Roman, the Olympic games were to the sport-loving Greek.

These games were held every fifth year at Elis in Olympia. The interval between the games was called an Olympiad. Every third year, similar games were held at Corinth; these were called the Isthmian games, named after the isthmus that joins the Peloponnesian peninsula to the mainland.

Spectators came from all over the Greek world. They sat on benches arranged in tiers around an oval, about six hundred feet long, called a stadium. Judges were chosen from the most distinguished men of Greece. Clothed in purple robes, they sat in raised chairs to watch that the rules were observed, to penalize fouls and to award prizes.

In every Greek city, like Philippi to which Paul was writing, or Tarsus where he had grown up, there were well-equipped gymnasiums where the athletes trained. The word "gymnasium" comes from the Greek word *gymnos*, meaning "naked." The Greek was not self-conscious about his body. He played his games and engaged in contests unencumbered by clothing. Neither can the Christian be encumbered by his old clothing of the flesh. Moses at the burning bush was commanded to put off his shoes. Joshua was given similar orders just before the conquest of Jericho: he was to take the shoes off his feet. More than a thousand years later another Joshua, the high priest, was commanded to remove his filthy garments and clothe himself with a change of raiment. And the same order is binding upon us today. We must change the filthy garments of our natural ways for the clean raiment of right doing, the fine linen which is "the righteousness of saints" (Rev. 19:8).

Paul was not misled. He saw that the Greek athlete subjected himself to long and rigorous

training in his eagerness to win the champion's laurel crown. The competition was so keen that he knew he had no chance to win unless he kept in top condition. Those who reached the Olympic games had already survived regional elimination tests. They were the picked athletes of Greece. They were all out to win. So likewise, if in this coming year we are to make maximum progress toward the Kingdom, we must be determined to win over every element of the world and the flesh. We, as God's "picked representatives," must be all out to win.

Just as Paul admired the soldierly virtues of courage, loyalty, and endurance that he saw in the Roman legionary and said to his converts: "You must be like that. You must put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand. You must endure hardship like good soldiers. You must fight a good fight"; so he admired the Greek athlete's coordination, grace, skill, and above all, his single-minded concentration on his goal, and held him up as an example to Christian strivers.

But the chief event to which all others were preliminary was the foot race. The winner's name was known throughout the Greek world. Poets composed paeans in his honor. Minstrels sang songs in his praise. The memory of his prowess was handed down from one generation to another.

The people to whom Paul was writing were familiar with the Olympic and the Isthmian games. Well they knew what he meant when he wrote to the Corinthians, "Do not you know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control. They do it to win a perishable wreath, a garland of leaves that will wither in a few days. We strive for an eternal crown that will never fade. I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I disqualify myself."

Paul was fervent, eager, intent. He did not only instruct others; he dug in with his own spikes and ran! This is the weakness of Christendom as a whole; millions of professing Christians: none really running the race. Hang Paul's picture of the Christian athlete in the gallery of your mind. When you are tempted to droop, to lag, to despair, to drop out, God will speak to you through that athlete who is pressing ever on toward the goal. Watch that you do not grow weary in well doing, and so lose the prize you could have had if you had continued faithful to the end—eternal life.

Man is a forward-looking animal. His eyes are set in the front of his skull, not, we may assume, by

chance, but by design. He can turn his head and glance backward over the way he has come. But when he does, he is not looking where he is going. He is likely to slow his pace, perhaps stumble and fall. Eyes, arms, legs—all work best in the same direction, and that—forward!

Life lies ahead: glory, honor, immortality, *eternal life*—all are ahead; it is as true for the old as for the young. Reverend M. Hembree, pastor of the Megiddo Church for twenty-four years, said in one of her sermons that while the young could grow strong physically, those along in years could grow strong spiritually. We have no control over the past, so it should have only the smallest place in our thoughts either by way of self-congratulation or of vain regret. We have a measure of control over the future. We can at least determine the spirit in which it is lived. And though our outward man perish and grow weaker with each passing year, the new man may grow ever stronger and stronger.

Speculators in grain, timber, oil, and other commodities speak of "dealing in futures." All of us deal in futures. It is the only legitimate business. You can buy today's paper for a dime. You can get yesterday's for nothing. But if you could buy tomorrow's paper today, you would gladly pay ten dollars for it. But we must be dealing in futures. God has set eternity in our hearts. The Christian lives in two worlds, the present by necessity, the future by choice. Let us make the things of here and now a means to a greater end, and not an end in themselves. Let us remember Jesus' words, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

History deals with the past, but we study it chiefly for the light it may throw on the future, in the hope that we shall be helped to see where we are going by learning where we have been. All true religion is prophetic. So are art, science, politics. In world politics practical men sense the need to scrap the old patterns which have brought us to the edge of the abyss, and begin working on new ones. So if we have been living to the flesh let us resolve here and now to develop new patterns during the coming year, to re-double our effort toward holiness.

Man alone of God's creatures has the power of *pre-vision*. Bees store honey against the day when no flowers bloom. Squirrels hoard nuts to keep them through the winter. Birds build nests for eggs not yet laid. But this is instinct, not conscious foresight. Man plans for years, builds for centuries, sacrifices for generations unborn. He alone has dreams of a Utopia, a new Jerusalem, "when earth

shall shine among the stars, its sins wiped out, its captives free"; and of a life of a larger scope and permanence than earth affords. But our hope for a time when God's glory will fill the earth is no vain dream, it is backed up by the unchangeable Word of God Almighty. Foresight is one of man's highest faculties, for it enables him to set up goals, and then patiently, steadily, to work toward them through the years. Let us show our wisdom by employing our powers of pre-vision!

Man was made to *reach*. What interests him most is what lies beyond his grasp. This is the fascination of space travel. Within the memory of some of us, man has discovered both poles; climbed earth's highest peak; trudged the Antarctic wastes; gone under the North Pole. As far as this planet goes, the age of discovery and exploration is over. The only thing left beyond man's grasp is outer space. Space is his new frontier. And God has promised His loyal servants just this; if thou shalt honor Me, "not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasures, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father"; "whoso offereth praise glorifieth me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God"; "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

Watch a baby, so young he cannot yet walk. See him pull himself up and reach for objects beyond his grasp. As soon as he begins to talk, his language reaches—why? why? why—until he wears his parents down. As soon as he understands one thing, he goes on to something else. He adopts Paul's principle of forgetting what lies behind, and of stretching forward to what lies ahead.

Why did Christ denounce the Pharisees in scathing terms? The Pharisee was, in many ways, an admirable person, a Hebrew Puritan. He had convictions and the courage of them. But he had ceased to reach. He had attained the standard he had set for himself, and with it was content. Let us not be content with ourselves until we shall have reached the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

But we need look no further than man to perceive how faculties develop only under pressure. Why are we not as keen visioned as the Indian? Because we do not stretch our eyes as he did amid the hazards of the primeval forest. Why is our hearing and our sense of direction less accurate than his? For the same reason. The faculty that is not stretched deteriorates and disappears. This is especially true of the mind. The mind that feeds

"... Stretching forward to what lies in front of me, with my eyes fixed on the goal I push on to secure the prize"
—Weymouth Translation

on chaff loses not only its taste for good reading but also its capacity to read anything that requires close and sustained attention. The man who reads books that require him to stretch his mind finds his power of attention strengthened. This is the reward of mental exertion, of "the pain in the mind we call thought": the confidence that, when we put the pressure on, the response will be there.

True it is of us as of the ichthyosaurus, the dinosaur, the pterodactyl: when we cease to reach, we are doomed.

If you forget all the rest, remember these bracing words of Paul: "My one thought is, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal." It is a summons not to young men only but also to old men. A trained runner never strikes a pace he cannot hold, never falters on the last lap. Instead he runs faster. Brethren, we are on the home stretch, let us run faster and faster—*accelerando!*

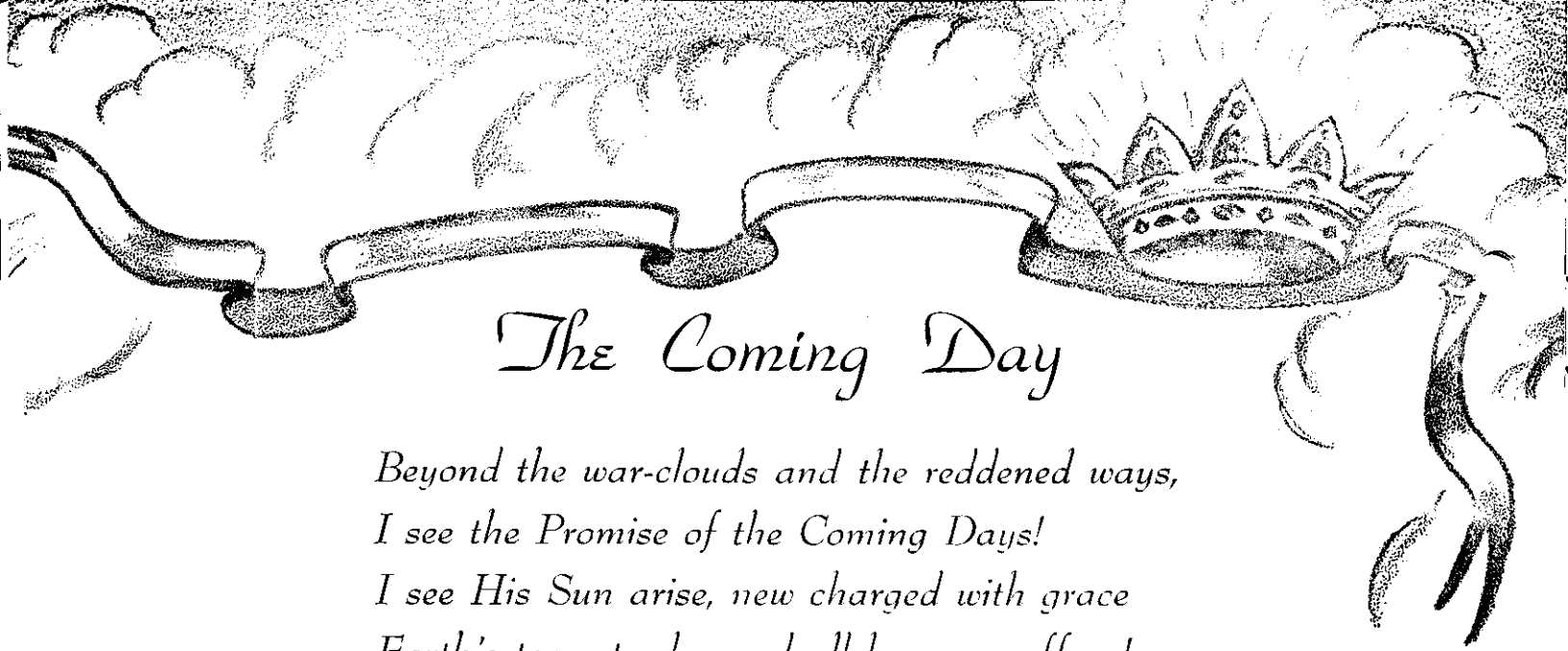
If you watch one of these crack milers, you will see that, when the pistol shot announces the last quarter, he quickens his pace. When he comes into the stretch with the finish line before him, he gets up on his toes and sprints, putting his last ounce of energy into a drive for the tape.

So, as we grow older, we must run harder. It is then that our years of training and discipline ought to count. It is thrilling to remember that Paul used this figure of the runner pressing on toward the goal not at the beginning of his career, but at the end when he was a prisoner in Rome with the flash of the headman's sword before his eyes. He used it again when he wrote to a younger comrade: "I have finished the course."

This is the spirit in which the Christian ought to live. How furiously men contend for lesser prizes—riches, position, power, fame. No sacrifice is too great; no discipline is too severe. Sometimes evil men sacrifice honor, conscience, friendship, to reach their goal. Even so, their striving stirs their blood.

How then ought we to run—we whom Christ has called to be His own? Ought we not forget the ground we have covered, allowing nothing to divert us to either hand, and press straight for the goal of our high calling in Christ Jesus!

Fellow runners, let us make this year the best year of our lives! Let our daily motto be: "Forgetting what lies behind me, and reaching toward what is before, *I go straight for the goal—on—ON—ON!*" ●●



The Coming Day

*Beyond the war-clouds and the reddened ways,
I see the Promise of the Coming Days!
I see His Sun arise, new charged with grace
Earth's tears to dry and all her woes efface!
Christ lives!*

Christ loves!

Christ rules!

*No more shall Might,
Though leagued with all the Forces of the Night,
Ride over Right. No more shall Wrong
The world's gross agonies prolong.
Who waits His time shall surely see
The triumph of His Constancy;--
When without let, or bar, or stay,
The coming of His Perfect Day
Shall sweep the Powers of Night away;--
And Faith,
 Replumed for nobler flight,
And Hope,
 Aglow with radiance bright,
And Love,
 In loveliness bedight,
Shall greet the morning light!*

Things as they may be at--

The Birthday of a King

A Fantasy of the Future

CHAPTER ONE From Another World

ARTURO had no idea where he was going, but he was certainly and swiftly on his way. He had asked no questions, for such opportunities do not come every day. In fact, this was Arturo's first long trip, and he was having the time of his life. Flight in itself was not altogether a new experience, although the wonder of it still thrilled him. But this particular voyage was something really big in his life. He had hardly dared hope so soon to be permitted to join in interplanetary travel.

His home, a small satellite of a mighty sun of a distant galaxy, was a gloriously happy and interesting place, but for years the coming and going of the higher angels, speeding in small groups or vast processions from world to world, and their tales of other and farther-away places, had kindled in him a desire to visit and see for himself. So he had bent all his energies to that end. He was but a servant, a common citizen, and young in the immortal state; yet even a servant might win promotion and special rewards by distinguished service.

Without warning the invitation had come, and before he could fully collect his wits he found himself speeding breathlessly and effortlessly through space, surrounded by a crowd of his fortunate fellow creatures who, he soon learned, knew as little of their destination as he. Like him they had been assembled without explanation and started on this tremendous voyage through the sky. As their familiar home planet became a diminishing point of light behind them, they discussed the probabilities. Whether a jubilee such as they had witnessed at home, or a coronation, or a creation, or simply a pleasure trip—what was it to be? They did not know. Possibly it might even be a punitive

or protective expedition. Someone suggested asking one of the officers at the head of the shining procession, but others thought it not worthwhile, as all their questions would soon be answered anyway.

Before long other signs of life and activity appeared. From several directions dazzling trains of light were sweeping comet-like through the void, all converging upon a small planet which glowed faintly in the distance. Other glorified spheres were being represented at the gathering, whatever it might prove to be. It was plain that the occasion was one of joy, which afforded Arturo much relief. He had witnessed or experienced very little unpleasantness in his mortal career, and the execution of divine judgment had never yet fallen to his lot; such tasks, he often told himself, could be performed infinitely better by others.

With his feet on solid ground he looked about in bewilderment. He had expected things to look strange, but this world in which he found himself was *very* strange. Certainly it could not be a finished product; in all his life he had seen nothing quite so primitive. From his position on a mountainside he overlooked a broad valley, apparently newly created by some mighty convulsion of nature. The harsh red earth was imperfectly masked by a flush of tender grass, and in spots the valley floor had been landscaped in an orderly manner—not so artistic or beautiful as at home, to be sure, but showing promise.

In the center of the valley a city was rising, a city of dazzling splendor and magnificence, its finished and incomplete edifices alike marvels of art and skill. Arturo studied the scene with the eye of a comparing critic. It was lovely, of course, but in his world he had seen nothing but loveliness. Those builders, whoever they might be, were doing well for beginners, which he suspected they were; one could not expect too much of pioneers. There was no sign of activity; what should have

been a hive of industry was pervaded by a strange silence. Occasional figures came and went, but building operations seemed to be at a standstill. In the foreground, a little apart from the city, stood a vast open pavilion, magnificent beyond words, but also deserted.

Beyond the western end of the valley Arturo could see (his vision was improving year by year) a chaos of ruined buildings, a great dead city which looked as if it might have been shaken together and stirred with a stick. Only a few large structures, newer than the rest, still stood. Outside the valley, as far as the eye could reach in every direction, not another large settlement could be seen, and most of the rugged terrain was a scene of utter desolation.

Arturo could not understand it at all. He had formed some conclusions, but thirsted for accurate information. When his angelic procession broke formation and he began to roam about, he found the surrounding mountains filled with angel encampments. Millions upon millions there were, with new delegations still arriving. Arturo was accustomed to the light which emanates from every immortal being, but such a tremendous concentration seemed all but dazzling. His intention was to soar above the scene and view it all in panorama, but the glory was intense beyond description; so he decided to return to his own company till he grew more accustomed to things. He had saluted many of these heavenly strangers, and had received the most familiar and brotherly greetings in return. An atmosphere of joy and good fellowship flowed about the hillsides, and all seemed to be members of one big harmonious family. Still he had asked no one the question which was pressing upon him. Everyone seemed so busy with his own affairs and conversations, and he hesitated to interrupt. He strolled toward a crowd a furlong away, to find two musicians from an unknown satellite rendering impromptu duets for their own edification and that of a hushed and admiring audience. Delightful entertainment, but no information. At last Arturo resolved to ask the first passerby, regardless.

But when the first angel approached, Arturo's courage almost failed him again, for this was obviously no ordinary immortal. His radiance was almost overpowering, while dignity, wisdom, experience, and a vast kindness were written large on his majestic features. Arturo trembled and would have shrunk away had not the other smiled and greeted him affably, and, to the young angel's overjoyed astonishment, stopped to ask a question concerning his homeland. Had he but known it, the elder had discerned that he was a new arrival

and somewhat confused, and had paused to lend a hand, to make him "feel at home." (Even angels take pleasure in such simple acts of kindness and thoughtfulness—should mortals ever deem them beneath their petty dignity?)

In the presence of such an august personage, Arturo fully expected to stammer and perhaps become speechless, but to his surprise he found himself talking easily, almost familiarly. True greatness is always characterized by simplicity; it does not find it necessary to give itself airs or isolate itself upon a pinnacle—and this angel was very great.

"Would you be so kind as to tell me, Sir," Arturo began, "just what all this means?"

"Do you mean to tell me," was the reply, "that you were sent here without being told where you were going, or why?"

"No, sir—that is, I wasn't *sent* at all; I was just brought along. I couldn't possibly have found my way here alone. You see, this is the first time I've been away from home. . . . I'm a servant on Celestra."

The great angel had known that without being told, but did not say so. "Indeed!" he replied with a congratulatory smile. "Then you must have been doing some good work of late. These trips are not granted without cause."

Arturo was abashed by the praise. "Well, I tried hard for many years to be worthy of something like this, but when it came it was so sudden there was no time to ask questions. So if you will enlighten me—"

"With pleasure! This is the birthday of a King."

"The birthday of a King?" Arturo was still puzzled. "You mean—"

"Exactly. A new Kingship is being born—to immortality."

"Oh! I understand now. That means that a world is being reborn also."

"It amounts to that. At least it is visibly started toward that end. The glorification and coronation of the King is the first of the final steps. It is a turning point for this planet, the dawn of a new era."

"Well," Arturo opined, "the place looks as though it needed *something*."

"Don't be too hard on this poor little ball," was the great angel's gentle reproof. "It has had its troubles and has been bad enough at times, and I admit that just now it looks exceptionally rough and raw, but there are worse places in the universe—thousands of them. And some very good people have lived here; you'll see them before you leave."

(Continued on page 9)

PRAYER

for the Year's Beginning

O God of the ages, the pages of another year have been torn from the calendar of our lives and cast into the wastebasket of time. One year ago they hung before us clean and uncluttered, holding in their crisply numbered days the golden gift of time. And now those days of promise have turned into memories.

For some of those memories, O Father, we are deeply thankful. Thankful for the moments of love and joy and Christian friendship that we have shared. Thankful for the flashes of success in our effort to combat the promptings of the flesh that have shown the stamp of Thine approval upon our efforts. We are thankful for the achievements in our growth into holiness that have brought a sense of real worth to our lives, and provided ground for hope that we may win in the race for life eternal. And we are thankful for the opportunities to bear crosses, to lift loads, to endure trials, aware that these are the steppingstones to holiness.

But for some of our memories we are deeply ashamed. Those moments of pride and prejudice

when we thought to elevate ourselves by putting someone else down. Those times of selfish indifference when need sat by our side and pleaded with us for help and understanding and we refused to hear. And we wish we could forget those instances of moral cowardice when we faced ourselves in the throes of transgression and shielded ourselves with slippery words or embarrassed silences, and tried to daub our crumbling wall with untempered mortar.

For these and all our sins, O Gracious Father, we are genuinely ashamed. And we plead for strength to grow above these petty human weaknesses, that it may be Thy good pleasure to let these memories be consumed along with the used calendar pages in the purifying fire of Thy forgiveness, that they may not stand against us when we appear before the Judgment seat of Christ.

We thank Thee for the blessings the past year has brought, that a few hearts have been turned to Thee, and that there are a few souls that are hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

We pray Thee to forgive us for the sins that we have turned from and forsaken, and we pray for strength to continue steadfast to the end, that we may have an abundant entrance into Thy glorious Kingdom. In Thy holy Name we pray. Amen.

The King

(Continued from page 8)

I have done a great deal of work on this planet and I know its virtues as well as its many faults. You must remember that as a subject you have lived under the most favorable circumstances. You haven't seen much and you know very little of the conditions under which these people worked out their salvation. In your home you probably have the advantage of several thousand years of divine government. By the way, where did you tell me you came from?"

"Celestra."

"Celestra? Oh, yes; I have been there several times. Well, your government is not so old—about thirteen hundred years, I believe. I remember its glorification. And, while you may not like to believe it, Celestra once looked worse than this place."

"That must have been long before my day."

"That depends on when you were born. You know we can make a great transformation in a very short time when once we start; it's all in knowing how and having the power to perform."

"I was told," said Arturo, "that the Kingdom on

Celestra was set up about three hundred and twenty years before I was born."

"Then it is certain you have never seen a world in its natural state, its early travail. You have much to learn. Don't judge this place by what it is now; come back after three hundred and twenty years and see what we have made of it! Or, for a concrete example, take your eyes off those ruins and look at the new city yonder. That is a start, the work of only a few weeks. Why, three hundred years from now—"

He spoke with such fire and enthusiasm that Arturo was almost afraid. He was sorry he had spoken so critically, and said so. His one great fear was that his new acquaintance might vanish suddenly and leave him unsatisfied. Several of his fellows had drifted up and were listening eagerly. "Tell us more about this place and its people," Arturo begged, "that is, if you have the time—"

"Time?" the great one smiled benignly. "Well, my young friends, I think I can spend a little time with you, if you really wish to hear. In a little while the exercises will begin, and then I must leave you. Let us go to a quieter place."

In a sequestered spot the neophytes clustered

about their teacher. "I presume," he began, "you know something of the general plan of the creation, perfection and salvation of a world."

"Why, a general idea. That is, I know something of the history of my own home planet; I suppose it is the same everywhere."

"It is the same, and yet not the same. Broadly speaking, the Plan is uniform throughout the universe, but there are variations in detail, just as no two leaves are alike, nor two snowflakes, nor two faces. Here we are, all immortal beings, filled with the same spirit of indwelling life and reflecting the same glory, but our features possess individuality and the light differs in degree. So what was done here or on Celestra, while working toward the same end, may not have been exactly what took place on a star thousands or millions of times greater, such as the one which is my home—when I am there. Do you see the point?"

"I see."

"This planet upon which we now stand is a small body, a little larger, perhaps, than Celestra. It was created hundreds of millions of years in the past, by means of laws which you will learn some day, even though you may never be permitted to direct their operation as we do. For countless millenniums it rolled in space while the mighty forces of nature worked upon it, preparing it for human occupancy. Fire, flood and ice changed the face of the newly created world many times. Long periods of tropical heat and humidity, followed by tremendous upheavals and pressures, provided vast stores of fuel and energy for man's use when he should appear.

"The waters teemed with life; strange monsters roamed the dry land; they passed away and new forms took their place. God's creative power was displayed on every hand and on a lavish scale, but all was done with purpose. What that purpose was you will learn in the future, if you do not already know. . . . That is one of the best features of immortality, it seems to me; there is infinite time in which to gain infinite knowledge.

"At last came man. Much like the brute he was, living on the beast-level, intent only on providing for his gross body. A poor creature at best, but with the beginnings of a mind, which enabled him gradually to rise above his brute neighbors."

"And did any of these first men serve our God?" a young angel asked.

"None; they were not proper material. But the Creator's purpose was being worked out through natural laws; and under law man, after hundreds of thousands of years of slow development, lifted his face from the mire and began to grope after God. Then, and not until then, did God reveal Him-

self. To have done so earlier would have been a waste of effort."

"How long ago did all this happen?" some one inquired.

"The first call of the Creator to reasoning man was about six thousand years ago, as men on this planet count time."

"Only six thousand years—after those thousands of barren centuries? It seems a long time of preparation for so short a work."

"Not at all. You are still thinking of time as mortals regard it, something to be carefully measured out and used in haste before it ends. Remember that you and I are living in eternity, and this world is now at the threshold. Look forward, not backward, and you will see that all those years of preparation, even if multiplied by a thousand, or a million, or a billion, would still be but a quick breath in comparison with eternity. The Creator has all time at His disposal, and He can well spare as much of it in preparation as His wisdom decrees. If He saves every one who becomes worthy, what matters the length of time required?"

"I see; very true," replied Arturo. "But who was the first man to whom the will of God was made known. I'd like to meet him."

"His name was Adam. You will not be likely to see him; he was not all he should have been."

"What was the matter? Did the call come too soon? Was he still too primitive?"

"No; he *could* have done the work, but he would not—like many others. It was his own fault. His son, however—" He broke off abruptly as a bright angel, also of high degree, dropped into the group. "Raphael, my friend!" he cried, joyfully, "what brings you here?"

"I've been looking all over the hill for you," said the newcomer. "The ceremonies are about to begin. Come."

The great angel turned to his new acquaintances. "I am sorry," he said, "but I must go. I will come again if you wish and tell you more. . . . Or, better still, while I am on duty I will send my friend Raphael to you to explain things. He knows the story as well as I."

Like a flash he was gone, and Raphael with him. The pupils looked at one another in amazement, a little disappointed that their lesson had ended so suddenly. Still he had promised not to forget them.

But now all eyes were focused upon the golden pavilion below, where signs of activity were seen. Without warning, a thick cloud, impenetrable even to immortal vision, filled the valley. The curtain was down! In awed silence the Celestrites watched and waited, meditating on their rare good fortune.

None of them had comprehended the full significance of the event before talking with their new instructor. The birthday of a King! Arturo knew full well that this King was a *multitudinous* ruler, a class of royal priests, the firstfruits of the harvest. At least, that was what had happened long before his day, on Celestra, and he believed it would be the same in this place. He had not seen *that* coronation, but now he was privileged to witness the beginning of a planet's redemption, and, most wonderful of all, with a majestic angel from some vast sun or star as his personal guide. It was all too good to be true.

CHAPTER TWO

The Great Day of Coronation

NO ONE knew how long the waiting lasted, but then, no one cared. Immortal beings are not slaves to timepieces. Of one thing they were certain—the coming spectacle would be well worth waiting for. If not, they would not have been brought here. From the depths of the cloud floated strains of the sweetest music, faintly at first but gradually and majestically swelling. Then, with a mighty burst of harmony that fairly rent the heavens and shook the earth, the curtain rolled back and vanished, and the eager eyes of the countless spectators feasted upon a scene of overpowering brilliance and splendor.

The new valley was no longer empty. The great pavilion, open to the sky, was filled with figures in spotless white, thousands and thousands of them. They were not angels, for most of them possessed only the faintest radiance—a reflection, as it were; yet they occupied what were evidently seats of honor. These, Arturo surmised—and correctly—were the successful candidates for the kingship. In their midst, on the loftiest throne, sat a being glorious beyond description; and Arturo, who had several times seen the ruler of his own planet, knew at a glance that this was none other than the King of kings, already glorified. By his side sat a man of impressive and commanding appearance, his naturally stern features relaxed, as a warrior might relax after a battle well fought and won. This personage also shone, but not with the full light of immortality.

Before the pavilion were seated the angelic choir and orchestra, momentarily silent. A great voice announced the dawn of a new age, the formal assumption of authority over a redeemed planet by a King and His associates. The latter, the heralds stated, were on this occasion to receive the reward

of their labor—power, honor, and glory of eternal duration. Then, as the orchestra thundered forth a triumphal march, the immortal host filling the mountainsides and valley, passed in glittering review before the thrones—a parade such as mortal eyes had never before witnessed on this sphere.

At the head of the procession was the great angel who had talked with the visitors from Celestra, glowing like the sun in its strength. Certainly, the young angels whispered excitedly to each other, this must be a personage of unusual importance. Arturo was still more amazed at his own presumption, yet there was no fear mixed with the amazement. Fear had long since been cast out of his life, and he had known little enough of it at any time. What was there to fear? On Celestra there was nothing to hurt nor destroy, and the great one had said that soon the same blessed condition would prevail here. It was well, and he rejoiced.

But now the great thing was to watch this parade. Arturo had never beheld such a spectacle, not even on the memorable occasion when he with the entire subject class of Celestra had been rewarded. Even angels enjoy a bit of brilliant pageantry; and how much keener must be the enjoyment of those fortunate beings, still mortal, who from their thrones in the pavilion were beholding for the first time a heavenly entertainment, they in whose honor and for whose pleasure this colossal triumph was being enacted. So intent was Arturo on the colorful panorama below him that the command to fall into the ranks came as a surprise. He, too, was to be part of it; he, too, was to be privileged to pay his respects to the new rulers. The hinder ranks of the Celestra contingent may not have been so per-

There were no footprints left upon the waters
When Jesus walked on Lake Gennesareth.
The unrecorded words His fingers penciled
In dust upon the road are gone like breath.

Yet when the charts and books are all discarded,
And, dreadful in the dawn, the horn is heard
Above the ended roads, the cancelled phrases,
Behold! the living Christ, the deathless Word!

fect in appearance and action as those of the older and better trained angels, but their salute as they passed before the throne was heartfelt and enthusiastic. It was easy to catch the spirit of the occasion; and that march before a King was a milestone in their lives, something always to be remembered.

ONCE MORE ON THE HILLSIDE, Arturo and his brethren watched with heightened enjoyment the remainder of the parade, wondering just how many worlds were represented. As the cloud-curtain again blotted out the scene, Raphael suddenly joined the group, coming so quietly that his presence was at first unnoticed. (Had he appeared to them in his full splendor, they would have been unable to endure it; but, like the other great one, he tempered his glory to their imperfect eyes.)

"You will enjoy the next feature," he told them, but did not indicate what the surprise might be. "Now, just where were we when I left you? Gabriel told me to tell you anything you wished to know."

Gabriel! The name left them breathless. Who had not heard of Gabriel? His fame and his mighty deeds were often recounted even in far away Celestra, and many another world acknowledged his dignity and power. And they—they had talked face to face with Gabriel! Raphael read their wonder and smiled. "Yes, that is Gabriel," he said. "He seems to have taken you under his wing, so to speak. That is just like him; I never yet saw him at a gathering when he wasn't picking up some lonely newcomer and showing him around. Everybody loves Gabriel, and you are fortunate to know him. This planet has been his special charge for a long time, and very little has happened here that he has not seen. But where does our story start?"

"With Adam's son, I believe."

"Oh, yes; righteous Abel was his name. He was the first to please God. . . . He was murdered by his own brother." A shocked murmur ran around the group. They had heard of such things on Celestra, but only in tales from the bad old days; such barbarity was inconceivable to their minds.

"How sad! . . . But, after all, he is now alive, while his wicked brother—"

"Is also alive," Raphael finished the sentence. "But not for long. He is working out the penalty of his misdeeds in sorrow and anguish of heart,

Thou Light of Ages, Source of living truth,
Shine into every groping, seeking mind;
Let plodding age and pioneering youth
Each day some clearer, brighter pathway find.

Thou Light of Ages, shining forth in Christ,
Whose brightness darkest ages could not dim,
Grant us the spirit which for Him sufficed,—
Rekindle here the torch of love for Him.

and when he has done his work he will return to the grave forever. You all know that part of the Plan, of course."

Yes, they knew. The time passed quickly as Raphael recounted to them the early struggles of the Eternal's people and the triumph of the few who endured to the end. The end—that was the thing. From this height, looking backward, the quest of salvation seemed a very simple thing, the toils and trials too light and too brief to be remembered; but back there, in the valley of sin and mortality and shortsightedness, the battle had been very real. Arturo and his companions, reared in a land of plenty, peace and uprightness, with external temptations completely suppressed and righteousness the popular thing, had difficulty in maintaining contact with the problems of those early pioneers of holiness, but Raphael had not forgotten the travail of his own probation on a world many millions of light years distant—the same star, in fact, that gave birth to Gabriel.

CHAPTER THREE

Revealing Festivities

WHEN once more the mists vanished from the valley the scene was unchanged, except that on three sides of the pavilion angels were massed in shining battalions, a guard of honor for the King. The novel entertainment which followed was a delight to the visitors, and doubly so to the Chosen. It consisted of realistic dramatizations, by immortal actors, of the most stirring and significant events in the history of the Eternal's people. For once mortals were seeing themselves as their God saw them! At the close of each act the characters depicted were brought forward in person and introduced to the assembled angels. (Among themselves they all seemed to know one another; Raphael said they had had a perfectly grand time getting acquainted while away at the Judgment.) Each was given an opportunity to make some response in his or her own way. Some, it seemed, could speak eloquently; others could sing or play, or both.

As drama and introduction alternated, Raphael explained everything to his charges. Righteous Abel was there first of all; later a venerable man named Enoch. His appearance was somehow different from the others; a brighter radiance, somewhat like that of the mysterious figure seated at the right hand of the King. He had never died, Raphael told

(Continued on page 15)

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Nature of Man

GOD IN HIS infinite wisdom and peerless excellence has set in order a plan for the perfection of His earthborn creation—a plan that reaches from eternity past to eternity future. It is a plan of progression, a plan of transformation, both physical and moral, which will continue until lowly man feels and knows the pulse of divine life.

We shall study this immortality that awaits the faithful, following our outline of study:

II. The Physical Nature of Man

D. Immortality

The Scripture writers describe this ultimate stage of development in glowing terms: the "river of thy pleasures"; the "crown of glory that fadeth not away"; the "length of days" and riches and honor that wisdom holds in her right hand; the days of prosperity and years of pleasures; the eternal change from "glory to glory"; the bodily remaking of our low estate until it is fashioned "like unto his glorious body"; that eternal and perfect rest that remains for the people of God; "glory, and honour and immortality"—eternal life.

II. THE PHYSICAL NATURE OF MAN

D. Immortality

According to the dictionary, immortality means "not subject to the destruction of time and death; unending existence; uninterrupted survival; eternal life." But as understood by a major portion of the Christian world today, it refers to the doctrine that the human person, or personality exists for eternity in spite of the event of physical death.

The idea of a continued existence of the soul after death is a popular belief and has been from ancient times. But **such a belief is not to be found in the Scriptures. The concept of the soul as a separable part of the person is not to be found in either the Hebrew Bible or the Christian New Testament.** Much of the doctrine of an immortal soul can be traced to the Greeks. It was their belief that the soul or spirit of man was in its essence eternal, not subject to the destruction of death and would there-

fore continue forever. The idea was popular with Greek philosophers who took up the thought and expanded it. Plato played a major part in the development of the theory, introducing many arguments supposedly to prove that the soul could not be destroyed. While his arguments are far from convincing proof, they have had a definite influence on the general acceptance of the belief.

While promulgators of the theory of the immortal soul may be sincere, there is such a thing as being **sincerely wrong. The Scriptures do not uphold the doctrine.** As stated in our previous lesson, **man does not HAVE a soul; he IS a soul. And man is mortal, not immortal.**

1. Immortality defined. As given before, immortality means "unending existence; eternal life; uninterrupted survival; a state of exemption from death." And the Bible definition is in accord: "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, . . . neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels" (Luke 20:35, 36).

2. Immortality a future possession. The Bible clearly states that Jesus Christ is the only one of our earthborn race who has immortality (I Tim. 6:16). Jesus Christ did not possess immortality from the beginning, but was rewarded with immortality after He spent His mortal life doing the will of His Father, learning obedience "by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 10:7; 5:8, 9). He is the first and **only** member of our earthly race to receive eternal life as promised by God; and He is our assurance that if we follow in His footsteps (I Pet. 2:21), we too shall receive immortality.

According to Paul, Christ "has broken the power of death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (II Tim. 1:10, NEB). Through His teaching in the Gospels, Jesus shed light on the subject of immortality and life. By virtue of a righteous life He has been resurrected from the dead and exalted to immortality, thus showing how the power of death can be broken. **Immortality is conditional; it is the reward to be given to those who do His will and purify themselves from every sin.**

3. Facts about immortality. Since it is evident from the Bible that man is not immortal, how and

when does or will he become immortal? Let us go to the Scriptures for the answer.

a. Immortality—how?

Immortality is to be sought for. It is for those “who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life” (Rom. 2:7).

Immortality is something to be put on in the end; it is not in our possession now. “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (I Cor. 15:53). It is the recompense to be received by the just (Luke 14:14).

Immortality is assured for the future by adding virtue to our character now—knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity—“for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (II Peter 1:5—11).

b. Immortality—when?

Not now, but future; at Christ’s return. “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (I Pet. 5:4). “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness” (II Tim. 4:8).

c. Immortality—a promise, not a present possession. Paul labored, “in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Titus 1:2; 3:7). “And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (I John 2:25).

4. Immortal beings, equal unto the angels. None of us have seen an angel, but many people picture angels as spirit beings, winged creatures, fluttering about the throne of God. Hence, they think of immortal beings as having a similar nature. But the Scriptures do not uphold this description. Angels are **glorified mortals with supernatural powers.** Angels were once human as we ourselves, but through living a righteous life they made themselves worthy to have their mortal bodies changed, made immortal. This belief accords with Scripture. The angel who delivered the message to John the Revelator described himself as a “fellowservant,” saying “I am but a servant like yourself and your brothers the prophets, who lay to heart the words of this book. Worship God” (Rev. 22:9, Moffatt).

The Hebrew word translated “angels” (also the Greek word), means simply “messengers” and their principal function in the Bible was that of ministering to human need. Many times angels were described as “men,” as in the case of the angelic visits to Abraham, Manoah, and Daniel.

5. Immortality—the better resurrection. The resurrection brings the dead to the level of the liv-

ing only, and unless a greater power is brought to bear to place that person beyond death, he will in time return again to the tomb. Hence the need of the “better resurrection”—a lifting up to a state of immortality. It was this hope of a “better resurrection” that inspired the noble deeds of the faithful as recorded in Hebrews 11. It was this same hope that enabled Jesus to endure the cross—the “joy that was set before him” (Heb. 12:2).

a. The better resurrection—when? This “better” or “first” resurrection follows the Judgment. It was seen in vision by John in Revelation 20. In v. 4 he pictures the Judgment scene, and of those found faithful he says: “They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. . . . This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection. Over them the second death exerts no power; instead, they will be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (vs. 5, 6, Berkeley).

The word “first” as used here has reference to **rank and not number.** Those who have a part in this “first” or “chief” resurrection are the faithful of the six thousand years who have been judged worthy of ruling with Christ. They have been given immortality, hence “over them the second death exerts no power.” They have been made “equal unto the angels”: they have been placed beyond the reach of death.

The resurrection and the change from mortality to immortality is explained in great detail by Paul in I Corinthians 15. In vs. 42—44 he describes how the dead are sown, or cast out of the grave mortal—in “dishonour” in “weakness,” “natural bodies.” Then after receiving the “well done” of Christ they are exalted to the heights of immortality “in incorruption”; “in glory”; in “power.”

b. The necessity of the change from mortality to immortality. This change is necessary because “**flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**” (I Cor. 15:50). **We cannot inherit the Kingdom in our mortal state; we must be changed, and we cannot receive this change until Christ returns** (Phil. 3:21). **This change is the “better resurrection.”**

To be a messenger you must know the message.

TEST YOURSELF

1. Prove from the Bible that we do not have immortality now.
2. What is the better resurrection?

<p><i>Reprints of these studies are available upon request.</i></p>

The King

(Continued from page 12)

them, although he lived in the early morning of the Day of Salvation; he had for many years walked with God so perfectly that he was taken bodily to another planet, where he awaited in the full vigor of mortal life, this glorious day.

Another very old man, named Noah, was introduced, following an act in which a great, ungainly, covered barge was constructed, into which a handful of people went for safety while a frightened mob clamored—too late—for admittance. By some strange illusion a mighty flood appeared to rise, submerging the masses of wailing humanity and bearing the barge from sight. And before an immortal congregation Noah preached righteousness with all the fire of former years and with a ring of triumph new even to himself.

A strange, almost incomprehensible scene was enacted. An old man bound a stalwart young man hand and foot and laid him upon a rudely built table of stones. A knife flashed upward in a sinister arc, but clattered harmlessly to the ground as an angel, hovering overhead, seized the arm of the actor. Then a voice thundered forth, in solemn and impressive tones, words which Arturo did not fully comprehend until their significance was explained to him: "Because thou hast done this . . . I will bless thee. . . ." Then the original participant of the scene was led to the front of the rostrum, and before his august countenance even the angelic chorus and orchestra rose up with gestures of respect and reverence.

"It is Abraham, the father of the faithful," said Raphael. "Finding him perfect in other things, God put him to the supreme test. His son, the apple of his eye, the child of his old age, must be sacrificed. Abraham met the test in the manner you have seen, realizing that what God gave He might also take away, and trusting Him to restore his son to life according to the promise. Such faith is unusual, even in such a choice assembly as you see down yonder. Of course, God did not intend that a hair of the son's head should be harmed, and, as you have seen, stayed the father's hand; but Abraham did not know—well, you may be sure it was a real test. Did you have any sons?"

"Yes," replied Arturo simply, and was silent. This was something to think about.

"So did I," replied Raphael, ". . . they were rebellious and worthless. Their sins destroyed them, and my affection for them was destroyed, too. But my test was not like Abraham's, for his son Isaac

was noble and obedient. Look! there he is now. The other is Jacob, Isaac's son, and the father of twelve famous sons."

"Are they all here, too?"

"Not all; it would be a rare thing to save all the members of so large a family, at least in the kingly probation. There stands the best of the lot, named Joseph. I will tell you his history during the intermission; you'll enjoy it, I know."

Episodes from the life of Moses brought tremendous applause from the surrounding mountain sides, and when in acknowledgment the eagle-eyed old leader himself stepped forward and held his rod aloft as if to divide again the waters of the sea or pronounce the doom of a nation, there was a long and deafening ovation.

"Such a man!" exclaimed Ormaros, admiringly. "A leader of men, and no mistake!"

"Yes, a very great leader," replied Raphael, "but equally renowned for his meekness, his reliance on the superior leadership of the Eternal, whose lieutenant he was. He was truly a capable commander, for few men could lead a vast multitude of former slaves safely through a strange and hostile desert, disciplining and developing them for forty years, as did Moses."

"And how many of them proved faithful?"

"Only a few." There was a gasp of astonishment. "Yes, that is correct. That was an age when only a few could be awakened to the plans of God. In fact, of all those hundreds of thousands who started out with Moses, though there were a few who proved faithful in the end, only two *wholly* followed the Lord. Their names were Caleb and Joshua; you may see them over there—and Joshua still looks every inch a general! The rest were useful only as the progenitors of a better generation, which grew up in the wilderness under law and were worthy of entering the Promised Land. But listen! Moses is making a speech! In his lifetime he always thought he was slow of speech, and used his brother Aaron as his spokesman. Even Aaron seems to be surprised. . . . Rather a pleasing thought, that many of those people down there will now be able to do the things they always longed to do, but couldn't. But it is time for an intermission, I believe—and here comes Gabriel!"

The intermissions which came at regular intervals throughout the festivities were not necessitated by weariness, for neither entertained nor entertainers were subject to fatigue. Nor did darkness halt the activities, for while the familiar routine of day and night prevailed over the rest of the globe, this region was perpetually illuminated by the indwelling light of its occupants. So no one

knew how many days or weeks the jubilee continued, and no one cared, for every one was having a glorious time. The intermissions were as thoroughly enjoyable as the formal exercises, for while the latter were thrilling, absorbing, stupendous, it was in the periods of relaxation that new acquaintances were made, new friendships formed, experiences compared, and the surrounding country explored. ("If you ever come to Yama," you might hear, "be sure to look me up. I'll be expecting you." "I surely will," the other angel would reply, "and you *must* visit Detros some day. It's not a very big world, but a grand place nevertheless. But let me know when you are coming, so I can be at home." And, unlike some mortals, they really meant it.)

Arturo and his fellows visited the unfinished city, learning that its name was New Jerusalem, founded but a short time ago in this earthquake-created valley, and destined to be the capital and metropolis of the entire planet. Groups of angels who were architectural experts in their own lands might be seen measuring, comparing, scrutinizing, criticizing, suggesting. Even a layman might see that this city was to be a marvel of magnificence, luxury, and comfort, a fit habitation for the King and his Chosen.

It was also thrilling to walk, in company with Raphael, through the ruined streets of Old Jerusalem, made a desert by the same convulsion that had cleft the Mount of Olives to form the raw but potentially lovely valley in which the new city stood. It was pleasant to hear the guide's tales of the earlier capitals which had occupied this site, in which so much history had been made and in which so many of the people of God had lived and worked out their salvation. The serviceable buildings, they learned, were being used to house the armies of builders and laborers who were creating the new paradise. These workmen were also servants of the Eternal, but servants who had broken their contract, who had not kept faith with their Employer. Now they were serving by compulsion. Still, those whom the visitors saw did not appear so thoroughly miserable as might have been expected; they were, it seemed, the best of the unfaithful horde, that numerous class which is more tardy and negligent than rebellious. Instead of sharing the harder fate of their more culpable fellows, they were now privileged to labor constructively and almost happily in the presence of the King and the faithful, and many of them might enjoy, as a reward for work actually performed in their probation, long years of abundant life in a world made new. But the wages of sin is death, and eventually

all these sinners must die eternally. The consciousness that they, too, might have had the full reward had they been a little more diligent, was part of their punishment, just as the privilege of witnessing the present ceremonies was part of their compensation.

Two or three times the young visitors were taken on swift and extensive tours over several continents, "just to make them appreciate their own homes," as Gabriel put it. He did not accompany them, but sent competent guides. They saw the battle lines where the armed forces of the nations, stubbornly and insanely resisting the blessings of the new order, were being battered to pieces by the army of the Lord. This vast array was composed of the worst class of the unfaithful servants—the apostates and the very rebellious. Little comfort could they find in their present rigorous service, except possibly in the thought of the better time they were helping to inaugurate, of which they should not be permitted to partake. If the sight of their camp was impressive, the ghastly spectacle of the utter desolation behind them as they advanced was even more striking. In time, of course, this blackened waste would blossom as the rose and a commonplace world become a wonderland of beauty; but to the less experienced the prospect seemed dark.

These violent judgments, it was explained, were more than deserved by the surpassing wickedness of the inhabitants of the earth, and had long been delayed for the benefit of the faithful; but now the time had come for a clean sweep. Two-thirds of the entire population, who had rejected the terms of mercy offered by a compassionate God, were to be wiped out as worthless and hopeless, while the remaining third were to form the nucleus of the second class, the subjects of the Kingdom. "Like us," Arturo said; this was something he could readily understand. Yes, like them; a thousand years of divine government over the mortal nations would fill the planet with an incalculable number of happy commoners, to be immortalized at the end of that period. Death was then to be abolished forever and this world be fully glorified, to enter upon its eternal destiny, a member of the heavenly family, shining for the illumination of dark bodies yet to be developed. Such is the eternal purpose of the Creator.

Some of this second class, they learned, had begun the work by faith shortly before the advent of the King and the great change, and these would occupy positions of high honor if they continued faithful to the end. Many of them were attending

(Continued on page 23)

Christmas

WHAT IS Christmas? Where did it originate? The original story is simple.

A virgin named Mary, espoused to a man named Joseph, both of the lineage of David, accompanied her husband to Bethlehem where, according to the narrative, she gave birth to a child. The inn being crowded, they were forced to resort to the accommodations of a stable. That night there were shepherds watching sheep in the fields of Judea, to whom angels appeared and announced the birth of the child. The shepherds hurried thither to see and worship the newborn infant. Some time later, "wise men from the east," came also and presented gifts and worshiped the child.

Such were the circumstances of the birth. The child grew to manhood. He grew also in wisdom and knowledge, and in favor with God and man. His life was in every way exemplary. It demonstrated the completeness of dedication by which men may win the approval of God. Meanwhile, His teachings presented a new way of life and hope for humanity. After His death, resurrection and ascension, His followers continued the work He had begun to the extent that in their lifetime the entire Mediterranean territory was informed of His life and teaching.

As years grew into centuries, the true meaning of Jesus' life and purpose became increasingly obscured and misunderstood. But the record of His life and work, preserved for us by the sacred writers, have had a profound influence for good upon humanity. His life of purity and nobility and love and kindness have affected even those who disagreed with His doctrine. Truly He qualifies in every respect as a Man worthy of honor.

But what have we today? For our modern

world, is Christmas a Christ-honoring occasion? Supposedly, December 25 is the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ, who was born to be the Saviour and King of the world. But the celebration has been converted into a colossal fraud. Weeks before the day arrives, elaborate preparations begin in all commercial houses. By means of tremendous pressures of advertising, by press, radio, TV and other means, the experts in the commercial world stir up the people to exorbitant spending, with little or no thought or reference to the original Christmas story.

In the business world, Christmas means money. It means doing all you can to get all the money you can from all the places you can in as many ways as you can.

In the world of society, Christmas is the Christmas "spirit," or Christmas "cheer." And the villainess and abhorrent practices that accompany such "cheer" are often indulged by persons who call themselves Christians.

In the home, Christmas means family gatherings, gay decorations, and the exchanging of gifts. One of the serious detriments to the Christianity of Christmas is the competition of the Santa Claus hoax, a lucrative tale that attracts the innocent children. The writer happened to call at a home during a recent "Christmas" season, where the mother had displayed in her living room a large poster that proclaimed "Happy Birthday!" She remarked that it was amazing how many persons who chanced to visit her had inquired, "Whose birthday is it?"

Were Christ suddenly to enter in the midst of many of the preparations and celebrations supposedly in His honor, what would He say? What

would He do? Might not He act as He did when He found the money changers doing their business in the sacred Temple precincts?

The fact that so-called Christian people observe the event does not make it Christian. We may call the celebration Christmas, as in honor of Christ, but that does not make it so any more than calling a snake a kitten changes the nature of the snake.

If there is anything certain about the birth of Christ, it is this: Jesus was not born December 25. Luke states clearly that at the time of the birth of Christ there were shepherds watching their flocks by night not far from Bethlehem (Luke 2:8). In Palestine, during the month of December this would never have occurred, nor during any of the winter months. Winters in Palestine are rainy and cold, and during this time the flocks are sheltered in the folds. The Bible itself attests to the rainy character of the winter months.

When Ezra was making a speedy reform in Jerusalem after the Captivity, it is recorded that the people gathered together in the ninth month and "trembled" because of the "great rain" (Ezra 10:9, 13). (The year began with Abib, the first month of the year as God taught Moses to measure time—see Ex. 12:2; 13:4—which corresponds to our March or April, making December about the ninth month.)

The singer of the Song of Solomon says, "For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone" (2:11)—a statement which suggests the discomforts caused by that season of the year.

In the book of Jeremiah (36:22, 23) is recorded how King Jehoiakim in the ninth month sat in his winter house before a fire, and burned the pages of a scroll which Jeremiah had written.

We have also the advice of Jesus, given in reply to the apostles' queries, concerning Jerusalem and the time of the end. He said, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, . . . then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains." Then, enumerating some of the hindrances which they might encounter, He added, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter" (Matt. 24:20).

These incidents and statements reveal that winter was not a comfortable season of the year, nor a suitable time to travel—and certainly no time for the shepherds or sheep to be out on the hills.

Adam Clarke, a reputed authority, writing about conditions in Palestine, says: "It was the custom among Jews to send out their sheep to the deserts, about the passover, and bring them home at the commencement of the first rain: during the time they were out, the shepherds watched them night

and day. As the passover occurred in the spring, and the first rain began early in the month Merchesvan (Heshvan), which answers to part of our October and November, we find that the sheep were kept out in the open country during the whole of the summer. And as these shepherds had not yet brought home their flocks, it is presumptive argument that October had not yet commenced, and that consequently, our Lord was not born on the 25th of December, when no flocks were out in the fields; . . . On this very ground the nativity in December should be given up. The feeding of the flocks by night in the fields is a chronological fact, which casts considerable light upon the disputed point."

Climatic conditions being what they are in Palestine, it would have been unwise for the great Au-



The Way, The Truth, and The Life

*O Thou great Friend to all the sons of men,
Who once appeared in humblest guise below,
Sin to rebuke, to break the captive's chain,
And call Thy brethren forth from want and woe—*

*We look to Thee! Thy truth is still the Light
Which guides the nations, groping on their way,
Stumbling and falling in disastrous night,
Yet hoping ever for the perfect day.*

*Yes; Thou art still the Life, Thou art the Way
The holiest know; Light, Life, the Way of heaven!
And they who dearest hope and deepest pray,
Toil by the Light, Life, Way, which Thou hast given.*



gustus Caesar to order a census at that season of the year. At such a time it would have been physically impossible to move all the populace in the Roman world. He most certainly would have chosen a more suitable part of the year for this important event, a time of year when travel would be convenient and all people could enroll. There was money at stake, and the emperor would doubtless have taken a business man's view of the situation.

In the celebration of the present-day Christmas the keen observer will notice many relics of paganism that have been adopted by the celebrants. Among these are such customs as the Christmas tree, mistletoe, holly wreath, Yule log, candles, etc.

Many centuries ago the prophet Jeremiah described a similar custom which was practiced among the people of his day. He said, "Hear ye the word which the Lord speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen. . . . For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not." The tree has been worshiped by pagans from antiquity.

As for the other relics, we learn from the *Encyclopedia Americana*, "The holly, the mistletoe, the Yule log and the wassail bowl are relics of pre-Christian times."

One of the most disgraceful aspects of the Christmas celebration is the Santa Claus lie. Throughout the year, conscientious parents punish their children for telling falsehoods. Then, at the Christmas season, they themselves tell their children the lie about Santa Claus. Is it any wonder that many of them, when they grow up and learn the truth, begin to believe God is also a myth?

Along with the Christmas tree and Santa Claus goes the frenzied exchanging of gifts. Many will feel that surely there is nothing wrong with such a custom. But where did it originate? Gift-exchanging was a practice well-established with the Saturnalia worshipers, and the apostate Christians tried to "Christianize" the heathen practice by giving it another name. The fact that the "wise men" presented gifts to Christ is no license for the extravagant gift-exchanging that accompanies the modern Christmas. Note also that the "wise men" presented their gifts to *Christ*, not to each other.

There are several instances recorded from Biblical times where gift distribution was done in a pleasing manner, as the giving of portions or gifts to the poor (see Nehemiah 8, Esther 9:22). It always was and still is honorable to help the needy. The apostle Paul was always forward to remember the poor and to secure gifts for them (Gal. 2:10; II Corinthians 8). The principle is eternal; it is what each follower of Christ ought to do. But the custom of gift-giving or card-sending lest someone be offended is contrary to the spirit of truth and justice. Far from rendering honor to Christ, it becomes a financial and time-consuming burden.

If we wish to favor our friends with gifts, why wait until December 25?

It is absolutely essential that Christ be honored in our lives every moment of every day, but it is by no means out of harmony with true Chris-

tian principle to observe a special day devoted wholly to honoring Christ. The apostle Paul recommended rendering "honour to whom honour is due," and honor is indeed due to Christ more than to any other mortal man of past or present ages.

The most appropriate season for observing this holy occasion is in the spring of the year, at the time of the Passover. The Scriptures point to the beginning of the sacred year, the first of the month called Abib or Nisan as the proper time to honor Christ, as well as the beginning of the New Year. There was a three-day feast in Bethlehem for the family of David on the first new moon of the year (I Sam. 20:6). It was also on the first day of the year that Moses set up the tabernacle in the wilderness—a "shadow" of which Christ was to be the fulfillment and reality.

During the spring of the year the climate in Palestine is ideal. The grass is green and shepherds are out with their sheep by day and night. And the story of Biblical reckoning of time is not mixed with pagan myths and relics of barbarism. The New Year commenced at a time of a dramatic experience in the lives of God's people. It was a time of deliverance for the children of Israel, whom God was rescuing from Egyptian bondage. They were also beginning a new life as a people devoted to God. How fitting that in the same month we should honor Christ for our deliverance from present-day "Egyptian bondage" and rededicate our lives to Him who will one day deliver us from the bondage of mortality.

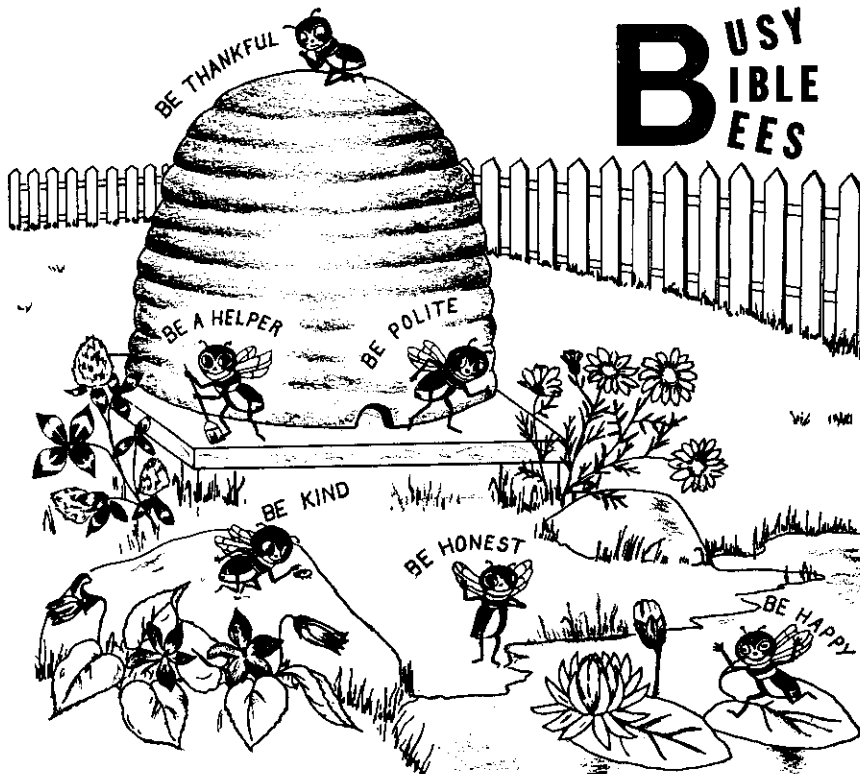
We are sometimes asked, "Why be different?"

We reply, "Why be wrong, when it is just as easy—even if not so popular—to be right?" To follow the crowd in a known error seems neither honest, nor courageous, nor even sensible. (And, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil"—Ex. 23:2).

Announcement

THIS YEAR THE ANNIVERSARY of the New Year falls on the evening of March 26 and the day of March 27, Bible time being counted "from even to even." According to the history of Hebrew reckoning, the New Year began with the first new moon after the spring equinox. This year the equinox occurs on March 21, and the first new moon after that date on March 26. Thirteen days later, on the thirteenth of the month Abib, or April 7, will be the anniversary of the New Passover instituted by Jesus, and on the morning of the fifteenth day of Abib, April 10, will be the anniversary of the Resurrection of Jesus.

How thankful we should be for such an opportunity to honor Christ! ●●



Children, have you ever heard of Christian "Bees?" You haven't? Well, suppose we study about some of them. When we learn what is the right thing to do and are tempted to do wrong, these "Bees" will remind us to do what is right. This month we will study about "Bee Honest." You know, children, there are many different ways that we can be dishonest.

**BEE
HONEST**



MANY YEARS ago there lived three little boys—Joe, Henry, and Charles. They all started to school at the same time. For a long while they kept together in their classes; and they were very good friends.

But when they were about fourteen, two of the boys—Joe and Henry—began to go out nights; and it was always late when they got home. Charles stayed at home in the evening and studied his lessons for the next day, as he had always done.

Of course, the difference soon showed up in their schoolwork. Charles always knew his lessons, while Joe and Henry fell far behind.

When examination time came, the boys begged Charles to help them.

"No," said Charles firmly. "I will never do anything like that. My mother says that my father wanted me to be honest; and I mean to be."

"Aw!" said Henry. "Your father has been dead a long time; and your mother'll never know."

"I say there's no harm in giving a fellow a lift in his examinations," grumbled Joe.

"It would be cheating," said Charles quietly, "or helping you to, and that would be just as bad." And with that, he turned to his own work and began to write diligently.

Of course, Charles passed all his examinations with honors; and Joe and Henry failed.

After that, the boys tormented Charles in every way they could. They called him "Mother's honest little darling"; and when they saw him coming they yelled, "Go home and hang on to your mother's apron string."

Mother knew, by Charles' sober face, that something had gone wrong. "What is it, Son?" she asked. Charles told her what had happened. She told him how glad she was that he would not do wrong; and how proud his father would be of such a son.

"I shall never be ashamed of you," she said, "as long as you are perfectly honest. Sometimes you will find it rather hard; but just wait a few years, and you will see that it pays."

Charles had been almost discouraged; but Mother's words made him feel quite strong and brave again. The next time he saw the boys, his honest blue eyes looked straight into their faces, unashamed and unafraid. They dropped their eyes, and hurried away as quickly as they could. They did not bother Charles again; for the principal had heard of their actions, and had punished them severely.

When school was out, the boys began to think about doing something to earn a little money. Henry was passing the drug store one day when he noticed a sign in the window—"Boy Wanted. Apply in Person." He went into the store at once, and asked for the job.

The druggist took him to a little room back of the store. "Here," he said, "is a chest of nails and bolts. You may sort them."

The boy worked for a while, and then he said to himself, "What a queer job this is!" He went back into the store and said to the druggist, "If that is all you have for me to do I don't believe I want the job."

"Very well," said the druggist, "that is all I have for you to do just now." He paid Henry for the work he had already done, and the boy went home.

The druggist went back to the little room, and found bolts and nails scattered all over the floor. He put them back in the chest, and then he hung his sign in the window again.

The next day Joe passed by and saw the sign; and he too went in and asked for the job. The druggist took him to the little room and showed him the chest of nails, and told him to sort them.

When the boy had worked only a little while, he went back to the druggist and said, "Those rusty old nails are no good. Why don't you let me throw them all away? I don't like this kind of job, anyway."

"All right," said the druggist; and he paid Joe for what he had done, and let him go. As he put the nails and bolts back in the chest he said to himself, "I am willing to pay more than this to find a really honest boy."

Later Joe and Henry, sauntering down the street together, saw the same sign in the window—"Boy Wanted. Apply in Person."

"Guess he doesn't want a boy very bad," said Joe. "That's no job—sorting those old rusty things. Did you find anything in the chest besides bolts and nails, Henry?"

"I'm not telling everything I found," said Henry with a laugh.

Joe looked up, puzzled and a little alarmed. "Now I wonder—" he began—but broke off suddenly and

started to talk about something else.

A few days later Charles passed by the drug store and saw the sign in the window. He went in and told the druggist he would like to have the job.

"Are Joe and Henry friends of yours?" asked the druggist, looking at him sharply.

"No, sir," replied Charles quickly. "We used to be good friends; but something happened between us that I don't like to tell; and they wouldn't have anything to do with me afterward."

"I'm glad to hear that," said the druggist. "I rather think you're the boy I want."

For two or three hours Charles worked steadily, now and then whistling a snatch of tune. Then he went to the druggist and said, "I have finished the job you gave me. What shall I do next?"

The druggist went to the little room to see how Charles had done his work. The boy had found some boxes lying about; and he had placed the bolts in one, the nails in another, and the screws in a third.

"And see what I found!" exclaimed Charles. "It was lying under those old crooked bolts in the bottom of the chest." And he handed the druggist a tightly folded five-dollar bill so old and so covered with rusty dirt that it was scarcely discernible.

The druggist took the money and said with a smile, "Now you may place the bolts and nails and screws back in the chest just as you have them arranged in the boxes."

After he had done that, Charles was sent on a

For Tots:

PICTURES FOR BUSY HANDS TO COLOR, CUT, PASTE

22 pages of wholesome attractive childhood scenes. Do-it-yourself, color, cut, assemble, and paste. .35

INSPIRATIONS IN ABC

The Bible ABC's, to capture the eye and mind of the primary child. 1.25

LETTERS OF THE BIBLE

Something to learn about every book

Old Testament	1.00
New Testament	1.00

BIBLE STORY COLOR BOOK

Thirty-two delightful short stories of favorite Bible characters, with illustrating pictures to color. .50

Children's Books



SEND NOW

STORIES FOR CHILDREN

Stories to read and re-read. You'll never forget them. .35

For Juniors:

The Story of DANIEL

46 pages about a children's hero, capturing to youthful minds. Illustrated. .50

The Story of JOSEPH

Even prison couldn't get him down. 83 exciting pages. Full-color illustrations. .75

The Story of SAMUEL

Read about this young lad's loyalty and devotion. 78 pages. Full-color illustrations. .75

LET'S LEARN ABOUT THE BIBLE

A living lesson from every book of the Old Testament. Colorful, illustrated. .50

JESUS' LIFE, TEACHING and FOLLOWERS

30 interesting lessons about the greatest life ever lived. .50

few errands; and then he was dismissed for the day.

A few days later the druggist gave Charles a key and said, "Come early in the morning and open the store, and do the sweeping and dusting."

At the end of the first week, when Charles received his pay-envelope, he found the five-dollar bill along with the week's wages.

One morning not long afterward, when Charles was sweeping the floor, he found two very old quarters lying near the counter. He picked them up and laid them on the shelf, and told the druggist about them. Another day he found some pennies, a dime, and two nickels. These too he laid up on the shelf, telling the druggist where he had found them.

About a month later, when he was sweeping one morning, he found a bright, crisp new dollar. How he did wish he might keep it for himself!

"The druggist would never know it," whispered a tiny voice.

But just at that instant, "Bee Honest" began to buzz around his ears. "Don't forget what Mother told you," said the bee. "She said she would never be ashamed of you, as long as you were *perfectly honest*."

Charles turned the clean, new dollar over and over in his hand. The bee kept on buzzing—"Never do anything that will make your mother ashamed of you. Be honest! Be honest!"

"Yes," said Charles at last. "I will." He laid the dollar up on the shelf; and when the druggist came in, he told him about it.

The druggist smiled and patted him on the shoulder. "You are an honest boy," was all he said. And at the end of the week, Charles found the new dollar bill in his pay-envelope, besides his pay.

A few weeks later, the druggist began to give Charles large sums of money to take to the bank for him. "I have found that I can trust you, my boy," he would say.

Charles worked in the store all that summer; and when school opened again, he helped the druggist mornings and evenings. His tired mother did not have to take in so many washings now; for Charles always gave her his money at the end of the week.

After he had finished school, the druggist gave him a steady job in the store, with good wages.

"Charles," said the druggist one day, "do you remember the day you sorted bolts and nails?"

"Indeed I do," answered Charles. "How glad I was to find work that day, so I could help my mother a little. And I shall never forget how surprised I was when I found a five-dollar bill at the bottom of the chest."

"I put it there on purpose," said the druggist. "I wanted to find out what sort of boy you were."

"You did!" exclaimed the astonished boy.

"Yes, and when you brought it to me, I was pretty sure that I had found an honest boy. But I wanted to be able to trust you with large sums of money, so I tested you still further. I left quarters and nickels and a dime on the floor and last of all, a dollar. When you picked them all up, and laid them on the shelf, and told me about them, I knew then that I could safely trust you."

"I should like to ask you," said Charles suddenly, "was there a folded bill lying in the bottom of the chest when Joe and Henry sorted the nails, too?"

"Yes," said the druggist. "Each of them found a bill there; and each of them kept it for himself."

"So you lost ten dollars!" exclaimed Charles.

"Yes, lost ten dollars hunting for an honest boy. But it was worth it—for I found one at last!"

Soon after Charles started working for the druggist, Henry was caught stealing some things from a department store. He was arrested; but his father paid the fine, so he was allowed to go free.

But his dishonest habits soon got him into trouble again. He broke into a house while the family was away, and stole some money. He was sent to a reformatory for boys; and he had to stay there a long time. After that, he never could keep a job long; for he was so dishonest that no one could depend on him.

Joe did not get into so much trouble in his boyhood; but after he became a man he forged a check, and was sent to the penitentiary.

How much better it would have been, if Henry and Joe had only listened to the bee in the first place.

Are we honest if we tell lies or things that are not true?

Are we honest if we take things that do not belong to us?

Are we honest if we take part in something that is not honest?

Are we honest if we do things we know we should not do?

Suppose someone told us something that was not true about someone else. Would it be honest for us not to tell them that it was not true?

Memorize

Romans 12:17: "Provide things honest in the sight of all men."

This Year

This new year brings to you its share of duties, opportunities and responsibilities. The spirit in which you accept the work and the activities of this year will vitally affect the results.

Go forward with large confidence and high expectation. Be faithful to your obligations, and discharge every duty promptly and thoroughly.

Be alert to the fresh opportunities of this day and advance your highest and best interests. Stimulate your mind with clearer, strong, uplifting ideas of what you wish to accomplish, and realize the immense resources at your personal command!

Go with God, and make this year mark a distinct and important advance in your progress toward your great life ideal.

The King

(Continued from page 16)

the jubilee, after which they were to be employed as missionaries to instruct the newly conquered peoples in the way of life and salvation.

.

One by one the members of the faithful band faced the glorified audience in his or her great moment. Samuel, the stern, inflexible, incorruptible Judge, was there; but Saul, the first-anointed, was not. Another of those tragedies of willfulness. King David, regal in bearing but with the look of a man whom self-knowledge and bitter experience had humbled, had evidently been planning his course of action. When his name was called, he stepped quickly into the orchestra, borrowed a harp from a player, mounted the platform, and there was music in the air. David had been a skillful player in his tempestuous lifetime, but now he had improved a hundredfold. Perhaps it was the new harp.

Suddenly he paused and beckoned to Chenaniah. This person had been David's choirmaster, and as soon as he was formally presented he signaled to the chorus which he had been busy organizing and training ever since the Judgment. Quickly the singers found their places before him—men and women from all ages and all nations—while David recited to them the words of a psalm he had just composed for the occasion and gave them the melody; and the angels listened raptly to mortal voices. If he could only have had his old choir,

Chenaniah thought, but most of them had failed to make themselves worthy of participating in this concert. Well, that was *their* loss; he was doing what he could with this new organization, but they lacked experience. The leader of the immortal choir, perceiving his thoughts, tendered his baton and invited the veteran chorister to lead his angels in a hymn of rejoicing. Chenaniah's calm acceptance and unruffled performance concealed his real surprise and agitation, but the experience was never effaced from his memory.

"King David had a son named Solomon," said Raphael to his charges. "He would have enjoyed this sort of thing, and could have been very useful. He was reputed to be the wisest man on earth."

"Isn't he here?" some one asked.

"No . . . unless it is as one of those laborers down there in the ruins."

"But you said he was the wisest—"

"He *was*. But wisdom not practiced is soon lost. Solomon became a fool. He couldn't stand prosperity or power; very few men can. Strange women—idolatry—failure."

The high point of one session was an episode from the life of the mighty prophet Elijah—the dramatic scene on Mount Carmel, where the lone champion faced a hostile court and priesthood and staked his life on the support of his God. As the test moved swiftly and breathlessly toward its climax, Raphael whispered to Arturo, "Look!" He pointed to the figure at the right of the throne, that strange, stern, half-luminous personage. He now leaned far forward from the edge of his seat, his eyes blazing, gripping his staff hard, carried completely out of his own personality by the tenseness of the drama. And as the blinding thunderbolts crashed to earth, consuming the Eternal's sacrifice and dooming the priests of Baal, the old warrior beside the throne leaped to his feet with a triumphant shout. This was Elijah himself!

Elijah, the greatest of the prophets, Raphael explained, after an adventurous and altogether extraordinary career had, like Enoch, been found worthy of translation without experiencing natural death; and in some other world he had been domiciled and educated through a prolonged mortal existence of nearly three thousand years. His present exalted position was due to his function as the personal herald of the King. He it was who had appeared suddenly on this planet to raise the sleeping servants of God and to prepare the way for the advent of the Anointed.

Daniel the courageous was quite evidently at ease in the presence of royalty, receiving his honors with calm dignity. "There you see a man," said

Raphael, "who could endure both captivity and temporal exaltation and be spoiled by neither. He could even hold public office incorruptibly—a very rare thing. He held it, of course, only by compulsion or to protect his people. Few prophets were more illustrious; perhaps none foretold future political events so fully and specifically as he. Look! he is talking with Gabriel as with an old friend. Gabriel appeared to him more than once in the old days, both in vision and face to face."

"One thing puzzles me," commented a young angel; "most of the Chosen whom we have seen, appear to belong to the same race—I believe they call it the Jewish race or family. Was salvation on this planet limited to one nation?"

"Never! The Creator has never respected anything but character. In the early days of His dealings with men He found more good material in this race than in any other, and so long as they maintained this good record He dealt with them as His own people, although any outsider who cared to keep His law was accepted. When the Jews began to presume upon their nationality and became unworthy of favor, He cast them off as a nation, although the same opportunity was open to them as individuals. But throughout the ages all the good and true from all nations and tribes were gathered into His fold. For instance, that soldierly-looking man over there is a foreigner. Men knew him as Naaman the Syrian; Elisha the prophet could tell you his history. And that beautiful woman who appeared some time ago was a Moabitess named Ruth, an ancestress of the King himself. The Chosen are gathered out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, but all lost their earthly nationality and became citizens of a heavenly Kingdom."

CHAPTER FOUR

Meetings and Greetings

IT WAS a memorable interlude in which Raphael and Gabriel took the group from Celestra, together with an assortment of neophytes from half a dozen other worlds (Gabriel was still picking them up and showing them around), on a trip to the Lake of Galilee. A great feast was in progress in the valley, but they had slipped away, their outward glory laid aside for the day, to enjoy this simple picnic in these historic and hallowed surroundings. There would be other feasts before this ended, and there was no compulsion. Seated on a sun-washed slope, they feasted their eyes on the idyllic ensemble of rippled blue water, flower-strewn hillsides, and misty mountains in the dis-

tance, such a scene as requires no transformation to fit it for the world to come. And there Gabriel told them about the King.

But first he introduced a stranger, a member of the Chosen, whom he had brought with him. John was his name, known to men as John the Baptist. Although unmistakably a lofty and noble character and obviously very happy, in the presence of the high angels he was shy and self-conscious.

"I'll tell you how it is," he said to a group of the younger visitors, "in my lifetime I was a man of the wilderness, a lover of the great silent solitudes. My only contact with men was in the course of my preaching. I suppose I was what you would call peculiar. . . . I was cut off rather early in life, so I never really learned to live with my fellowmen; it's something I'm just learning now. It is rather slow—but I'll succeed; I have plenty of time for it. And the farther I go, the better I like it."

"John is almost too modest," said Gabriel. "Any man who can successfully finish his course in so few years as he did is no ordinary person. Nor would an ordinary man be selected to act as the forerunner of the King."

"The forerunner?" Arturo was puzzled. "Why, I thought that prophet—what was his name?"

"Elijah. You are correct; but while Elijah prepared the way for His second advent, John was the messenger who heralded His first appearance, His earthly ministry in the mortal state."

And then he told the story of the Perfect Life, the Son of God born of a woman, the man who walked for thirty-three years in a sinful world without partaking of its contamination in any degree, but uplifting, healing and saving all who came to Him. Here on this very hillside He had taught the people the simple principles of upright living; from a boat on the lake below He had preached to the thronging multitudes. There He had called His disciples from their nets, and there He had come to the rescue of His storm-tossed followers, walking on the water. Most of the younger angels could see nothing particularly remarkable in that, for in their habitations every one knew the simple law by which it was done. To John, however, it was still a wonder; he had never tried it, so Gabriel promised to take him for a stroll upon the waves before returning to Jerusalem.

"For four thousand years," the great angel said, "men had lived under law, and many had worked out their salvation. But while there had been perfect men, there had never yet been the perfect example of a man who lived sinlessly from the moment of learning right from wrong. In John's day

the time was ripe for the appearance of such a pattern."

"But why," some one interrupted, "was not the perfect example given at the beginning of the Plan? That seems the logical place."

"It was not necessary, because during those four thousand years men were instructed by angels; prophets and seers received visions and direct revelations, and the multitudes saw the power of God demonstrated by miracles and mighty wonders. A more primitive people required visible evidence, and the fierce persecutions suffered by many of the believers in earlier times needed the compensation of angelic visitation. More important still, there was no complete written Guide. But the Plan called for a change. After the days of the King, a band was to be developed without the aid of any visible manifestation such as other ages had enjoyed. Civilization had broadened the mental powers of men, and the written law was completed, so that they were capable of walking by faith if they only would. Tolerance had become more general and persecutions were lighter; nevertheless the work was greater than any that had preceded it. . . . I know; in my mortal probation I myself walked by faith."

"And were the miracles ever restored?"

"Not until the end of probation. The course was finished by faith. Only when Elijah the messenger appeared a few years ago did men see the power of God manifested."

"Then the reward of this band will be greater, will it not?"

"Much greater, as is just and right. The best are reserved until the last, the end of the day of salvation; and when the prizes are awarded, when actual immortality is bestowed—it hasn't been given yet—the last taken out will be the first to be rewarded. But, as I was about to say, it was for the sake of this class that the King was born in the fulness of time. It was better that the perfect example be nearer their own day, to be a light in the long darkness."

"I see. But tell us more about the King. You say He was not kindly received?"

"No; the rulers of His day hated Him, and when His work was finished they crucified Him."

"Crucified . . .?" Arturo did not understand.

"Yes; it was an extremely cruel custom of that age. The victim was nailed alive to a cross and left to die slowly and painfully. Sometimes he lived several days." There was a shudder among the younger angels of the subject class; in their spheres such things were only dimly remembered in old tales. Never having seen or experienced cruelty,

they could not comprehend it. And, indeed, what evil is more unnecessary, more hideously unnatural?

"And so the King died, although His Father shortened His sufferings so that He lived but a few hours in torment. I stood by and comforted Him until the end, although forbidden to intercede in His behalf. I could have destroyed all His persecutors in an instant, but the time had not come; it was needful that He make this last sacrifice to be a complete and perfect Pattern, since many were destined to perish for His name's sake. He died and was buried, but God raised Him from the tomb and took Him unto Himself, where He received His reward. And now He has claimed and received His kingdom, the thing for which this planet was created so many millions of years in the past. . . . The King, by the way, was John's cousin."

All too soon the golden day passed. After a simple but delicious lunch some of the lads had to investigate the fishing (in this world or the next you will find them, eternally, incurably hopeful), some walked upon the waves with Gabriel and John, while others were silently content to drink in the tranquil beauty of the purple twilight.

On the return trip Raphael told of the twelve apostles and the heroic days of the early Church. A few sessions later they were privileged to hear Paul, the last and greatest of the Twelve, preaching to an innumerable company of mortal and immortal beings. "Wait until you hear Paul," Gabriel had said. "There is nothing Paul likes better than an opportunity to tell the glad tidings, and, mark my word, he will experience no stage fright. He is a hardy veteran; he has seen much of this world and has preached to all classes and under all conditions. To him more than to any other man the church owes its vigor and growth." And, to fill their cup to overflowing, later he introduced them personally to Paul and some of his band. In the great Apostle's presence Arturo, in spite of his advantage of years of immortality, felt very small, as indeed he was.

The last scene of the great drama was unique: those of the latter-day harvest who had fallen asleep in death, together with the band of believers who never saw death, whose labors were terminated only by the coming of the Messenger, were received with the loud acclamations and great honors which their faith and endurance had won for them.

Then, in conclusion came the grand finale, the majestic parade of earth's redeemed before the angels and before their King, who stood as His faithful soldiers passed in review. The last to be called were in the forefront of the mighty phalanx,

true to the prophecy of the angel. And as each passed before the throne he received the coveted reward, the guerdon of life—everlasting, incorruptible, painless. Nevermore would the chilling fear of sorrow, disappointment, old age, sickness or death circumscribe their boundless happiness; the trials, toils, griefs and uncertainties of the past were gone as waters that pass away; for them this was the beginning of all things worthwhile.

And at the end came the climax of the entire jubilee, the supreme moment when innumerable hosts of immortal attendants arrayed in majestic, resplendent glory, and the small company of radiant mortal spectators knelt in reverent homage. Paeans of ineffable praise swelled by shouts of acclamation resounded through the heavens as the highest angels sent from the presence of the Father Himself placed the diadem upon the head of the Saviour and Ruler of the new and better world—Lord of all.

It was the birthday of a King. ●●

Reviewing Resolutions

We have the New Year once again
 The old year traveled fast.
 We think of things that might have been
 In days that have gone past.
*Did you do all you should have done
 And leave undone the deeds
 That New Year's day you said you'd shun—
 Did you obey your creeds?*

I wonder if you read the things
 That you declared you'd read
 And left untouched all worthless stuff
 According to your creed.
*I wonder if you used your mind
 To exercise the good—
 Did you forget all foolishness
 As you agreed you should?*

Did you do everything you should
 To help your fellowman?
 Did you declare a plan of life
 And then stick to your plan?
*I wonder if you kept your tongue
 From framing words unkind.
 You promised you would speak the truth—
 Did you keep that in mind?*

I shouldn't ask these things, I guess,
 I do not qualify—
 But with a prayer this New Year's day
 I'll re-resolve to try!

Meditations On the Word

(Continued from page 27)

leave it and overcome its defilements had His prayers, but never the world which would not return to Him.

There must be, then, another world—a world worthy of the Father's love and of the Son's ministry. It is plainly identified in Hebrews 2:5—"the world to come, whereof we speak." That is the world which the Eternal loves, the world in which He is interested, the world which He has had in His mind and care from the beginning of His plan. It is the world to come, the world of believers, the "new heavens and earth" which are still in the making. It is the Kingdom of God on earth, the "far-off, divine event to which the whole creation moves."

It was God's love and care for this world to come and its individual members that led Him to send His only begotten Son Jesus Christ. God sent His Son, not as a sacrifice but as an Example (I Pet. 2:21) and a future King (John 18:37). The central act of His life ministry was not His death on Calvary, but His daily death to sin (Romans 6:10), a death which will save us only if we die with Him (Rom. 6:11, 12). His cruel death on the cross was but the last act, the supreme test of His endurance and faith.

Belief in the Son of God is the key to everlasting life, our text assures us, and to this agree all the other Scriptures. To believe in Jesus is to believe the "all things" He proclaimed; it is to keep His commandments, be overcomers. That is all—and that is plenty to keep us busy for a lifetime. The Bible often makes a distinction, even a contrast, between hearing and doing (Matt. 7:4—27), but never between *believing* and doing, for the reason that the two are inseparable. One presupposes and involves the other, and it is impossible to have one without the other. Doing is a vital part of believing.

If we believe with all our heart in any man, that means that we consent to all that he teaches. If we believe in Jesus Christ, that means we agree to all His principles. For instance, the thought expressed in John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Or Matthew 7:21, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Do we believe this? Our works are the test. If our deeds give the lie to our words, we do not believe, and eternal life is not for us; we are no part of the world to come, the world which God loves, and over which Christ will reign forever. ●●



Meditations

On the Word

AS THE NEW moon of spring ushers in the joyous Abib season and another year is born, our thoughts turn to the Father's Gift, the Man whose birth we commemorate.

Certainly no greater gift could come to a people or a planet than that of the person of the only begotten Son of God. The world of that day, as we all know, was unworthy; it betrayed its trust and crucified Him, just as it has always crucified and stoned and beheaded and imprisoned and exiled its saviors, those men of vision who would lead it out of the morass of human passions to the heights of holiness.

With these thoughts in mind, we have chosen for our meditation text that most misunderstood and misapplied of verses, John 3:16: It is paradoxical that no passage of Scripture is so revered by all Christendom, and for so wrong a reason! "The Golden Text of the Bible," it is called. This is an overstatement, for every word of divine inspiration is likewise golden. It might be termed a "captive" verse; it has been kidnapped by the theologians and persistently twisted by men who ought to know better (II Peter 3:16) to support the unfounded doctrine of substitution—the heresy that one man can do the work of a whole fallen race, that an irascible and unforgiving Deity required the vicarious suffering and death of His obedient Son to cancel an ancient debt which, as a matter of sober fact, never existed.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord" (Isa. 1:18). Why, in the name of all reason, should we be held guilty of a sin committed by our earliest ancestor? And how can the death of another, be he ever so pure, affect or benefit us? Such a doctrine violates every concept

of justice and mercy and decency, and places the Almighty far below our modern judiciary, with all its corruption! No judge in any civilized country would pass such a judgment. The doctrine of the Atonement is as thoroughly pagan as it is unreasonable and unscriptural. Any man or woman who can read the Eternal's revelation of His mind in the 18th chapter of Ezekiel and still cling to this relic of heathenism, would not be convinced though one rose from the dead.

A careful analysis of John 3:16 rescues it from the shallow sentimentalism with which generations of churchmen have walled it in, and restores it to its true stature and beauty and harmony with the rest of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "God so loved the world." Did He? Certainly He did; but what world? If it is this present evil world (Gal. 1:4), then His nature is contradictory or He has forbidden us to be godlike. No, our God is One; He cannot deny or contradict Himself; His word is not Yea and Nay, but Yea and Amen (II Tim. 2:13; II Cor. 1:20). And if God really loved such a world as this, surely He could have found a better way of saving it than by torturing an innocent Son to death. We might reason profitably and at great length on this subject, but let us look at the Record.

What was the attitude of Jesus—who always spoke the words of His Father—toward this present world? Through His beloved Apostle He gave us a definite command: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him." Would God love a thing

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

which He forbids us to love? Jesus Himself refused to pray for an unregenerate world (John 17:9). Those who would

(Continued on page 26)

Our Spiritual Calendar

"We bring our years to an end as a tale that
is told"—Psalms 90:9.

*Sixty smiles a minute
Brighten every hour.
One whole day of effort
Kindles moral power.*

*Seven days of gladness
Speed the week along.
Four swift weeks of service
Turn dull months to song.*

*Twelve full months of duty
Glorify the year.
Four-score years of virtue
Bring God's blessing near.*