

Megiddo Message



The Man Most Misunderstood

True New Year Issue

Megiddo Message

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L. T. NICHOLS, *Founder*
KENNETH E. FLOWERDAY, *Editor*

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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
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Editorially Speaking...

Begin Your Year--With God

HOW to begin? That is the question that faces anyone who would bring any new task to a success. The salesman knows that his initial line of approach to a potential customer means all the difference between business transacted and business failure. How to begin an article, or an explanation is often more difficult than how to finish. How to begin a construction project is critical, for the strength of a building depends on the security of its foundations.

To launch thoughtlessly into any new task is to invite failure. And if we would make the coming year a success, we must begin it as carefully and as purposefully as a new assignment from our God, a fresh and untried task.

The new year is like a new and unexplored country. What perils and dangers, what joys and triumphs it may reveal, we cannot tell. What opportunities for progress, for usefulness, for service; what new fields of endeavor, what possibilities for good or evil, what victories or defeats it may bring to us, we do not know. But if we enter it merely to live each day as it comes, it will yield us a minimum in returns.

How shall we make the coming year an abiding success?

First, we must begin as the Great Book itself begins—"In the beginning, God. . . ." If the coming year is to have any real meaning, any worth or dignity; if it is to bring us to any worthwhile goal, to any loftier spiritual attainments, then He who is the source and inspiration of all that is good—God—must stand with us on its threshold.

God has a plan and purpose for those who choose to traverse the path of life with Him. It is a purpose which changes our few and strenuous days on one of the least of the planets, into a challenge that influences every waking moment and prepares us to live eternally. What a privilege to be able to see our lives with God, as it were, by our side. Called to be His prospective sons and daughters, how can we live even a moment without Him?

To be constantly aware of God and His overruling purpose as we go about our daily tasks, to feel His controlling presence in the office, the schoolroom, the workshop, the kitchen or the family circle—that is to make life really worthwhile. That is to strip it of all meanness and dullness and to glorify it with the radiance of heaven.

Trials and temptations are sure to come. Are we ready to meet them? Remember, there is only one way to meet them victoriously. It is to begin this year with God, to take Him as our friend, our companion and our guide through every step of the way; to listen to His counsel, and obey His commands through all the days and hours of the next twelve months.

If we begin with God, He will go with us as long as we stay with Him. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," is the promise. As sure as we continue, He will see us through.

In the beginning, God! And on to the end, God! ●●

The Man Most Misunderstood

IF we were to ask a number of people what they considered the role of Jesus Christ in the affairs of this earth, we would receive a variety of answers. In all recorded history there has never been a man more misunderstood than He. The very fact that we refer to Him as "a man" is anathema to some.

Jesus Christ was misunderstood by His own Jewish nation. In the throes of Roman domination, the Jews looked forward to the promised Messiah, whom they hoped would deliver them from their bondage. They had interpreted passages from the prophets (such as Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:4-5, and Jeremiah 23:5) to mean that a king would arise in their day and "execute justice and judgment" for them, freeing them from the Roman yoke. This false hope was due to a misunderstanding of the time to which these prophecies referred. Even the Jewish lawyers of Christ's day failed to perceive the dual prediction implied in many of the prophecies concerning Christ's coming. Without the insight that two thousand years of history has given us, it is very likely that we would do no better.

To a contemporary of Christ's, the statement of Isaiah, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder" could easily be misunderstood. It would be obvious that after an interval of time, the child would be born. More time would elapse before "the government" would be "upon his shoulder." But who could surmise that that second interval would be over eighteen hundred years! This fact does not in any way lessen the accuracy of the prediction, though it does show how easy it is to misunderstand a divine prophecy—a fact which is caused in part by the wide gap between the life-span of divine beings and that of human beings.

The prophetic utterances regarding Christ's kingdom were misunderstood by His countrymen,



and even by His apostles. The nation as a whole did not then and do not now recognize Him as the Messiah. His apostles recognized Him as the Messiah, but they did not comprehend at first the epoch to which the prophecies applied. Just before Christ's ascension, they asked Him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" And Jesus answered, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own

power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:6-8). Though being intimately associated with the Master for three years, they still misunderstood the time when He would set up His kingdom.

One reason the orthodox Jew showed such skepticism in accepting Christ as the Messiah was the unusual obscurity of the circumstances surrounding His birth and early life. He was born of a virgin, cradled in a manger, in a small out-of-the-way town. He spent His adolescent years in a carpenter shop—not exactly the high priest's idea of proper education for a prince who would become "King of the Jews." But if the rabbis had used a fraction of the solicitude in understanding the prophecies concerning the Messiah which they used in keeping the law of Moses, they would have had little difficulty identifying Him. Did not Isaiah predict that He would be born of a virgin? Did not Micah foretell that He would be from Bethlehem? (Isa. 7:13; Mic. 5:2).

In His later life, He was continually being misunderstood. He possessed the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, which the high priests did not. Much to the chagrin of the priests, He used this power to heal and bless the people. He called Himself the Son of God, which they considered blasphemous. He talked of setting up His kingdom on this earth, which they considered traitorous. He

openly violated the Sabbath laws and other rules and rituals of the old Mosaic law, which they considered sacred. The high priests could not understand Him. But they did understand that He posed a threat to their smug—and decadent—bureaucracy. To protect their contemptible but comfortable office, they turned Him over to the Roman authorities, demanding His crucifixion.

Several passages in the Gospels show that Jesus was misunderstood by the Romans, as well as by the Jews. If Herod had understood Jesus' real role in God's plan, he would have had no fear for his own position and would never have ordered the cruel infanticide which was a blot on his record. If the Roman ruler which offered Jesus all the land which he could see from the mountaintop if he would fall down and worship him, had understood that Jesus was destined to be King over all the earth eternally, he would have known that Jesus would not be interested in his petty offer. This would be something like offering the President-Elect of the United States the job of city councilman in Key West, Florida.

But the Romans did not understand Him.

Did Jesus fare any better at the hand of the Church fathers? The answer is no. They misunderstood Him just as their predecessors had. The apostle Paul foresaw that this would happen. He wrote, "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, . . . as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; . . . for the mystery of iniquity doth already work . . ." (II Thess. 2:1-3, 7).

As time went on, they first silenced the true followers of Christ by economic sanctions, then by persecution and in many cases death itself. Later they forbade the distribution of the Bible. What is even worse, they polluted the pure stream of truth with their man-made ideas—pollution which today still sullies the entire religious world. In the words of Christ's angel to the apostle John, they emptied the "golden cup" of its pure contents and filled it with abominations and the filthiness of Babylon's fornications (Rev. 17:4).

Some of the doctrines introduced during this time were: the mysterious trinity, which no one can fully comprehend; a literal devil, which no one has ever seen; a burning hell, which no one could reasonably survive; the doctrine of the immortal soul, which no one can ever see, supposed to leave the body at death and go directly or indirectly to

heaven—a place to which Jesus said, "ye cannot come." And there are many more.

When it comes to the world of our own day, which we like to think of as enlightened, the situation should be much improved. We would expect men to see deeper into the teachings of the Master, along with their tremendous advancements in scientific and technical fields. But in the greater part of the world, even in the so-called Christian world, we find a deplorable condition. No one man in all history has made such an impact on human lives as has Jesus Christ. But no one man's teachings have given rise to so many doctrines or been so misunderstood as those of Jesus Christ.

The world of today cannot agree on Jesus' origin. Was He God incarnate sent down to earth to die for our sins and return to heaven at His death? Who was His father? Was it God, or Joseph, or someone else? Did He exist through eternity past? Was He of human birth, conceived by a law which we do not understand?

We choose the latter statement. We cannot believe in the doctrine of the incarnation or the pre-existent Christ because the evidence purported to prove these theories is arrived at through much assumption, not from factual Biblical statements. (To give proof for these positions is outside the scope of this article, but we will be happy to send it to anyone interested in the subject.)

In the vast majority of homes at "Christmas" time, supposed to be the season of Christ's birth, Christ is replaced by Santa Claus. A young child receives the impression that it is Santa's birthday that is being celebrated. In many Christian churches and homes where the memory of Christ is revered, the emphasis is placed on the Babe in the manger, not on the mature Man and the great work He accomplished during His ministry and the greater work He will accomplish when He returns as King.

Why is this? Why so much emphasis on the Babe, the sheep, the manger, the shepherds, while the real issues are forgotten? Surely this over-emphasis on the trivial is very demeaning to a character so great as that of Jesus Christ. No other notable person in any field of human endeavor—in art, music, literature, politics, or religion—is treated in such an infantile manner. In honoring the famed composer Mozart, no one thinks of Baby Wolfgang; no one remembers President Eisenhower as Baby Dwight. We honor these men for their accomplishments as mature individuals, not as babes. We never even think of the circumstances surrounding their birth. The lives of these men, while a blessing to mankind, can never compare with the life of Christ as a mature individual.

Why so much emphasis in poetry, song and drama on the infant? Isn't it time we took Jesus out of the nursery and into the palace?

One of the major areas of misunderstanding concerning Christ is His mission. Why was He born? Was it merely to furnish the most interesting nativity story for coming generations? Was He born to fill the role of a prophet or a priest? Was His life destined to be an example for Christians everywhere to follow? Was He God or man? divine or human? Did He die on the cross to atone for our sins? Did the Romans crucify Him to satisfy the Jewish priests? or did God because of His unbounded mercy for the sinner plan His death as a propitiation for sin?

Christ's greatest mission on this earth was not as a sacrifice—He is a King. This is unequivocally proved by His own statement to Pilate. When the governor asked Him, "Art thou a king then?" Jesus answered, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world" (John 18:37). The apostle Peter dispelled any doubt about who crucified the Saviour when he said to his countrymen, "Him . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). The Apostle also answered the question concerning Jesus' role in our behalf: He is our example. "For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21).

As for Christ's nature, we are told that "Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me [Moses]: him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you" (Acts 3:22). If we would not allow preconceived ideas to warp our judgment, most misunderstandings about Christ would disappear.

Other areas of misunderstanding concern His cross, His blood, and His love. The cross is a popular Christian symbol, but what does it mean? Its significance has been so distorted by centuries of manipulation by pseudo-authorities, that the original meaning has been lost. Thousands of churches throughout the world display the cross, and untold thousands of communicants wear a symbol of the cross. What is the sense of this familiar symbol?

What is the real Biblical meaning? Is it simply a trademark of the Christian Church, as Coca-Cola is of the soft-drink industry? Is it a symbol of the instrument used in the crucifixion of Christ?

Or does it represent Christ's death as a sacrifice for our sins? If we would accept Christ's own words for the meaning of this symbol, there would be no misunderstanding: "And he said to them all,

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). This was the cross of Jesus, and it is our cross—the daily cross of self-denial. It is a wonderful representation of the Christian's duty, a constant reminder of the part he himself must play in his own salvation. Unfortunately its role has been reversed and it has become a representation of a sacrifice made to appease God's wrath for our sins.

There is no area of misunderstanding concerning Christ which can so seriously affect our future than the cross, His blood, His love. These terms are all related, and all grossly misunderstood. They all affect our salvation, therefore require utmost care in analysis. The term "Christ's blood," like the term "the cross," is symbolic. It is not literal blood. Theology interprets the phrase as meaning the literal blood of Christ, His lifeblood as shed on Calvary as a propitiation for our sins. Due to Christ's unbounded love for all mankind, they say, we have only to accept this magnanimous act to qualify for eternal life—our deeds are secondary.

A classic example of wishful thinking. It is a trait of human nature to look for an easy way. If in the strenuous area of self-improvement God has provided an easy way out, especially if the idea can receive unlimited support by misinterpreting a few passages of Scripture, it at once becomes popular.

But there is no place for the aspiring Christian to rely on tradition, sentiment or natural desire. Jesus said, "For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. . . . My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. . . . It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:55; 4:34; 6:63).

Christ's blood is simply a symbol of the full life devotion and complete surrender, even to the point of crucifying every desire and affection that God forbids. It is a symbol of His true teachings, the Word of God, and the living out of that Word in His daily life. God sent His Son into the world to teach us how to live that we might become worthy of eternal life on this earth. Christ's love for us was demonstrated in His life of self-denial. He did always those things that pleased His Father. And if we expect to please Christ when He returns to this earth as King, we must now do the things that He commanded us. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." This is the only love which will be acceptable to Jesus. To repeat the words "Oh, I love you, Jesus, I love you blessed Jesus" and then disregard His moral precepts is only mockery. A wife might say that she loved her husband, but if she

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Emmanuel

~“God With Us”~

“And they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

The story of Emmanuel is not the story of shepherds and wise men and innkeepers. It is not the story of the helpless infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

The story of Emmanuel is the story of the Son of God, Him whom God sent to be our Saviour, Redeemer, and King. He came the first time as a man, to prove Himself worthy of the offices to which He was destined. And He is coming the second time to be King over all the earth. The story of His life is the most revolutionary epic in all history, for it means a change in every nation in the world; a change in every city in the world; a change in every family in the world; a change in every person in the world.

For the story of Emmanuel is the story of God with us.

This means that Emmanuel is coming back to dwell among us. And with Him will come--

Divine authority.

Divine blessing.

Divine wisdom.

Divine life.

“And of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

—Isaiah 9:6-7



"And He Opened His Mouth and Taught Them, Saying..."

INTRODUCING THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

THE fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of the first Gospel of the New Testament contain the greatest moral challenge ever given to men. They are the words of Jesus, addressed to His disciples who had followed Him up the mountain. "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them..."

Jesus *saw* the multitude; they were attracted to Him—the curious crowd, always interested in the unusual: Pharisees and publicans; ritualists and harlots; scholarly men and illiterates; men esteemed and men depraved—they came, some to see, others to hear, others to follow the crowd.

But Jesus withdrew from the motley throng to teach His disciples, those who came to *follow*. He *saw* the multitude, but He had more to give than the multitude could ever appreciate or comprehend. Love and light and law and liberty—these were the heavenly blessings Jesus had to give, and the multitude were not prepared to receive them. Jesus came to equip the men who would obey, and *show* the multitude what He really meant *in life*.

A Gospel to Live

Jesus taught a gospel to be lived, not merely listened to. He told His disciples, "Go ye therefore and teach all things," and here in the Sermon on the Mount are the "all things"—meant to be taught, but meant more especially *to be lived*. Here is the supreme moral challenge of the Sermon on the Mount—it is practical. For the Man who first spoke these words practiced them, and the practicing of them produced a character so symmetrical and so perfect that it ultimately received the greatest blessing God could give—even immortality!

This is why Jesus came—to demonstrate in His own life the truth He taught. From His lips they could *hear* the gracious words; but truth is of no real value until it is proved in actual life. In Jesus' life they could *see* the real truth proven.

A Gospel of Principle

The Sermon on the Mount is not a code of rules, but a description of character. Jesus made a special point of discouraging the emphasis on outer observances and hard and fast rules and regulations. What He insisted on was a certain spirit in one's conduct, a certain purpose in one's actions, and a basic principle in one's life. Jesus was concerned with spiritual freedom, and He knew that it is possible only through tremendous moral power and development. A man must be struck down by the immense seriousness of his moral responsibility and become conscious of the vast ranges of his spiritual obligation before he can comprehend the depths of the truth that makes men free. Character is supreme. The spiritual is the fundamental. Many are the men who have tried to purify the stream of human behavior; Jesus passed back to its *source* and said all purifying must begin *there*.

The Sermon on the Mount is a picture of what every true Christian is to be. Jesus establishes the ideal and says that only those who live by these principles are truly happy, and only *they* will receive God's eternal blessing.

Jesus meant by this sermon to show the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian. There is a difference in what they seek: the Christian must "seek... first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness." There is a difference in whom they serve, for "no servant can serve two masters." There is a difference in what they admire: the Christian longs above everything else to be *like Christ*. There is a difference in their rewards: the Christian must be content to wait for the greater honor of God. There is a difference in their loyalties: the Christian is a stranger and a pilgrim in this world; his real residence is in the world to come.

None of the principles in the Sermon on the Mount describe a man as he naturally is. They all mean *change*. No man naturally lives by all the

principles in the Sermon on the Mount, nor may such a character be inherited.

A Revolutionary Gospel

Jesus' teaching was revolutionary. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, He introduced His hearers to a fresh scale of values, a guideline that, if followed, would lead them to the Kingdom of God. He reduced the 672 "shalt-nots" of the Pharisees to a simpler list of commandments, the greatest of which was the love of God. And from a Bible standpoint, to love God is to "keep his commandments" (1 John 5:3).

Jesus brought a change, a drastic change. The law of Moses had said, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." Whatever one man did to another, he should suffer the same by way of punishment. If he killed, he would be killed. If he injured, he would be injured. The law was intended to restrain the would-be evildoer. But the Jews were not content with the straightforward commands of the law of Moses; they added a myriad of outward trifles, all of which they said had to be obeyed.

Along came Jesus and removed all superficiality from religion. Genuine religion, He said, was not outward in form; His teaching dealt with the heart, the inner man. He went to the root of evil, the heart. Evil, He said, came from within a man's own mind. Evil thoughts head His list of thirteen evils that must be dispensed with.

Those who heard the Sermon on the Mount had no doubt seen the Pharisees performing their "good works" in a way to be seen of men, showing themselves to be saintly. But Jesus exposed the fallacy of such religion; He branded them as hypocrites because they did everything only to be seen of men.

Mankind in general still cherishes the illusion that outward acts can take the place of an inside change in thought and feeling. But Jesus' words are true: Think right thoughts, and in due time they will be reflected in right actions. Think evil thoughts, and evil deeds are sure to follow.

If we are content to make only an outward show of our religion, without changing ourselves inwardly, we are playing the part of the hypocrite.

The Pharisees found it easy to buy and wear ceremonial garments, to repeat set prayers in public places, to follow stereotyped forms of devotion, to attend religious services at prescribed times—and to leave the heart unchanged. It took but a moment to fasten on a phylactery; this they were willing to do. But the cleansing of the heart, a process that takes days and years of earnest

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And he opened his mouth
and taught them,
saying . . .

"Blessed

HUNGER. Thirst. Words we use loosely to describe our appetites.

Actually, few in our part of the world have experienced the hunger which makes survival itself a goal. In our modern society of vending machines, snack bars, take-out dinners and supermarkets, we do not live in fear of the diseases caused by hunger. If our mouths are a bit dry, all we have to do is to walk to the faucet, and with one motion of our wrist we may satisfy our thirst.

But to those perishing by starvation, hunger and thirst mean real, desperate pain and agony. Food being necessary to the preservation of life, appetite is one of the strongest cravings known to man. Jesus uses hunger to illustrate an intensity of desire, and thirst is an even stronger word. In Jesus' time, water cisterns were a matter of life and death for those living in desert lands. Jesus meant the hunger of the man who is starving for food, and the thirst of the man who will die unless he drinks.

Blessedness through Righteousness

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Jesus' words express no surface sentiment; they have a depth of meaning that may surprise you. Jesus would have us penetrate our hearts to discover what is the deepest inner craving of our soul. Of course we hunger and thirst—but *for what?*

Perhaps our desire is for blessedness, happiness, pleasure—a very human and natural longing, for no one wants to live without a certain measure of these. But there are those who make pleasure the ideal of existence; all of life becomes a frenzied pursuit of this one objective.

Was Jesus advising this? He was not. Note carefully His words: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst *after righteousness*." We are not to hunger and thirst *after blessedness*; rather, we are to hunger and thirst *after righteousness*, and blessedness will be *the result*.

This is the message of the Bible from beginning to end. They alone are truly happy who put right-

Are They Which Do Hunger . . ."

eousness before every other goal. Put happiness ahead of righteousness, and you will have neither.

What is the righteousness for which we must hunger?

Righteousness is the desire to be right with God. The man who desires righteousness examines himself in the light of Scripture and sees that he is shackled by sin; he must become free before he is righteous. But he sees in himself something even worse than the sin itself—he sees that he *likes* it, that he *wants* it, and that God condemns some of the very things that bring him pleasure. If he would hunger and thirst after righteousness, he must drastically alter his appetites and cravings; for he cannot hunger and thirst after righteousness and after sin at the same time.

To *hunger* and *thirst* after righteousness is to sever our desire for that which God forbids. This means cutting ourselves away from our naturally self-centered life—our self-justification, self-glorification, pride and sensitiveness—until we have no appetite for these unholy gratifications.

But Jesus' message is not wholly negative. We cease to desire the things of self by developing our desire for that which is positively right and holy and godly. He who hungers and thirsts after righteousness longs above everything else to be *like Christ*. His appetite for spiritual food is so keen that it is a matter of life and death; he must satisfy it, or die.

Hunger for righteousness is a deep consciousness of our great need, even to the point of pain. It is not just a passing feeling—it hurts, it is painful, it is like physical hunger and thirst; it keeps increasing until we feel desperate. The Psalmist described it when he said, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God" (Ps. 42:1-2). To hunger and thirst for righteousness and for God is to realize the urgency of our need—life is slipping away, and we are starving.

It is possible for us to hunger and thirst for only

a partial goodness. We become satisfied with less than the best. To live a clean life among respectable people, to serve in our church community, to be separate from the world in outward form, becomes enough. We drink ourselves so full on the milk of the Word that we have no appetite for the meat. However, if this is true of us, we are not ready for Christ's blessing, for our deepest craving is not for righteousness.

Are we ready to meet Christ's challenge? How intense is *our* desire for righteousness? Do we crave it as a starving man craves food and as a man dying of thirst longs for water?

We may test our degree of spiritual hunger by comparing our lives with those recorded in the Scripture. Do we *long* to be like them? Or do we want the blessedness without the righteousness?

If we earnestly desire righteousness and the full satisfactions of righteousness, we will carefully avoid everything that opposes it. If we know there is serious infection in a house, we avoid that house. We segregate the patient who has a contagious disease. How much more should we avoid that which is harmful to righteousness!

And we should go even further—if we are truly to hunger and thirst after righteousness, we shall not only avoid what we know is bad, but we shall shun anything which might tend to take the edge off our spiritual appetite. It might be something of itself quite harmless, but if it takes so much of our time and interest that it lessens our desire for the things of God, we must avoid it.

Righteousness and Satisfaction

Every hunger has its food. That food may not always be available, and there are hungers which cannot be filled. But the hunger Jesus described is a hunger which shall ultimately be fully satisfied. And when this hunger begins to be satisfied, it is renewed in higher and deeper hunger.

What shall be the full satisfaction? Wrote the Psalmist, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake,

with thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15). Here is full satisfaction: to behold the face of the Lord and to share His likeness. This is glory; this is blessedness; this is immortality!

Can we honestly say that we desire this satisfaction above everything else? If we do, our first concern will be God and righteousness, and we will desire that righteousness as a starving man craves food and as a man dying of thirst wants water. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." ●●

"And He Opened His Mouth"

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effort, prayer and self-discipline, they preferred to avoid.

A Gospel for US

Do you really wish to alter your life, to change yourself until you become one of Christ's true disciples—until you become *like Christ*? Then read the Sermon on the Mount; it will show you how. The task is not easy, but it *can* be accomplished, because others have accomplished it. But the price must be paid, and the price is the actual carrying out of these principles in every corner of our life, in every daily transaction, in every word and thought and motive and desire. It is a matter of saying to ourselves in every situation, "What would Jesus do?" and then acting—or thinking, or feeling—accordingly.

Do we belong to this world, or to the future? Are we willing to show in our daily lives that Christ is our Lord and King? Is it our first ambition to be like Him?

The challenge is great, and the price is high. But if you are prepared to pay that price, to break completely with the old man, your old natural self, and start upon the creation of the new life, Jesus' great Sermon will bring you to the Mount of Liberation! ●●

There are three things from which to choose what we shall do. We can lie on our bed and talk, we can sit on our bed and squawk, or we can take up our bed and walk.

We cannot take time in this busy world—we must make time by leaving lesser things undone.

We must be ruled by God's law, not by our feelings and emotions.

The Sacred Season

The New Year is upon us—the season which, on the ancient Hebrew calendar, was distinguished by its special days and spiritual revivings. The year, as God commanded Moses to count time, began with the new moon of Abib, which was the first new moon to follow the spring equinox.

The new moon occurring this year on March 23, the New Year will begin with the evening of that day (days were always measured "from even to even"—Lev. 23:23). At this time (March 23,

You Are Invited

Friends—subscribers—readers—come! Join us in Rochester, as we render honor to whom honor is due, and welcome the beginning of another sacred new year! (Or, if you cannot come, set aside the day in your home for special Bible reading, prayer and song—use the time to build up your spiritual reserves against the days of testing that are sure to come. God will bless and reward your efforts.)

March 24), the Megiddo Mission Church will conduct special services and programs as we offer praise and thanks to God for bringing us to this time of beginning again. The day will also be observed in honor of Christ, our coming King, whose birth, life, ministry and future destiny we remember at this time.

Thirteen days later (Abib 13) we will meet to observe the New Passover, the anniversary of our Lord's Supper (this year on April 4), when we renew our covenant to serve our God wholeheartedly. This will be followed two days later by a special morning worship on Sunday, April 7, commemorating Christ's triumphant resurrection. Fifty days later (May 26) will be the day of Pentecost, when over nineteen hundred years ago, the power of the Holy Spirit descended upon the assembled disciples to give them new impetus to carry out the task they had been assigned. ●●

When angry, count ten before speaking. When very angry, count one hundred—and then don't speak.

The way to strengthen your faith is to keep it working.



And he opened his mouth
and taught them,
saying . . .



"Lay Not Up . . . Lay Up"

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

But

lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and . . . thieves do not break through and steal:

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"—Matt. 6:19-21.

LIFE is like the gathering of wealth, this embryo parable is saying. A choice confronts us: we can have treasure on earth, or treasure in heaven.

In these verses our Lord deals with the true attitude of His subjects toward the material world. Here is a negative and a positive: "Lay not up, . . . lay up." Treasures upon earth, "Lay *not* up. . . ." Treasures in heaven, "Lay *up*. . . ."

Let us notice the comparison of values. Treasures laid up on earth are perishable. Moth and rust can consume. Thieves can break through and steal. Treasures laid up in heaven are lasting and sure, for to them neither moth, rust, nor thieves have access.

Next notice Christ's reason for this injunction: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Treasures on earth are beset by risks and end inevitably in total loss. Wealth in Christ's day was not only in coin and monetary exchange; it was partly in fabrics—in rugs, in fine and elaborate clothes and expensive hangings. Vermin threatened the stored treasures, and thieves could easily break through the mud walls. Many a man's wealth consisted in the corn and the grain that he had stored away in his great barns. But into that corn and grain could come the worms which would eat it away; rats and mice could invade, until the store was polluted and destroyed. In any event, death would soon overtake the owners.

Were Jesus speaking today, He might mention inflations, depressions, and the uncertainty of fluctuating stocks. He would remind us that "you can't

take it with you." The only bank that will never break is the bank of worthwhile human character laid up in the presence of God.

In this parable Jesus is also showing that the physical and the spiritual cannot be completely separated. Dead-earnest life-seekers are spiritually minded, but they still have to touch material things. However much the inner life may be sustained by that which is essentially spiritual, we can only continue to live at all as we touch and handle things which are seen and temporal. And this is the lesson our Lord was teaching: Every Christian must live in the material world; but his heart must be elsewhere; he must be dominated by a super-earthly consciousness. He must use the things of earth, but they must not be his real treasures.

There is danger that we will attempt to place treasure in *two* places, that we will be straining toward *two* goals. Should Jesus speak to us today, He might say: "You are not single-minded in your spiritual life; nor are you single-minded in your material life. And these cross-currents bring collapse. You are trying to lay up treasure in two directions—in heaven and on earth. The human heart cannot hold within itself two great loyalties. If you tolerate conflicting interests in your lives, sooner or later one of these interests will rise up and assume control. The treasure draws the heart after it."

To live a spiritual life in the midst of a material environment has ever been the problem of God's people.

What are we to do about earthly treasure? Notice

that Jesus did not say, "Lay not up treasures upon earth." What He did say was, "Lay not up *for yourselves* treasures upon earth."

Fundamentally, the Christian does not own anything, not even himself. But he can, by proper use, turn the things of this world into the coinage of heaven. He can use the temporal to gain the eternal. He may regard his material possessions as the rough granite out of which he, as master sculptor, is to chisel and perfect an ideal character image.

The Christian has but one basic test with regard to the material world: Is this for myself? or am I using it for the furtherance of the gospel?

We have been warned that our giving can become selfish, our prayers a showpiece for spirituality; our sacrifices may be performed for effect. Such Christian works lay up only treasures on earth.

But when the same Christian works are done from the heart and for God, they turn into "treasures in heaven." We must make a choice, for we cannot lay up value in two places; we will not be paid twice. We cannot have our rewards both in this world and in the world to come.

The moment we find ourselves laying up treasures for ourselves, the moment we discover a selfish purpose animating us in pursuing the material, that moment we must let it go or lose our treasure in heaven, our genuine Christian character. If we find ourselves desiring the material in order to gain power, to gain prominence, to satisfy the love of display, to give us selfish ease, to hoard with no thought of using it in the service of our Master, then our earthly treasures will be only for ourselves, and they will drag us down to the dust.

To know just where the material interests in our lives cease to serve God and begin to spring from purposes of selfishness requires keen spiritual discernment.

The material world may be a cog or a clog. As long as it fits into God's purpose, it is a cog and we may use it. But the moment it becomes a clog to our spiritual life, we must break with it lest we ourselves be broken.

The heart of the Christian is an area where the currency must be not the coinage of this world, where no outside voice can rule and where the only whisper is that of divine law. Every man who desires to be truly Godlike must decide to draw a line somewhere in his life and say to material things, "Thus far shalt thou go and no further."

When we break the power of the material by dedicating it to spiritual ends, it then becomes for us a spiritual agent.

A writer has well said, "Our natural love of property is like the thyroid gland. Without it we are abnormal, but if it becomes too active, we have spiritual goiter and are choked to death."

With riches often comes temptation to pride and many other evils; therefore Paul warns: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches; . . . that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (I Timothy 6:17-19).

Why this warning? "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Every man has something that he treasures, whether it be his wealth, his home, his earthly ambitions, his knowledge or his skill, or even his own opinion. In every man there is a passion for possession. And Jesus does not condemn us for satisfying that passion; His warning, however, is that we satisfy it in the right way. For the possession of treasure will have its effect upon us.

If we take our treasures and place them here, our heart will be here and we will be here; and we shall become of the earth—earthy, sensual, material-minded—because our treasure is here. But if we store up our treasure in heaven, from whence comes our reward, laying up our treasures beyond, our heart will be beyond and our life will be lifted; all the love of the infinite will dominate us, and the life of the infinite God will be ours, surging, beating, thrilling, throbbing through us.

By our daily life we show what place we have reserved in our hearts for God. We show by our actions whether we are giving Him first or second place. In every circumstance, in every incident, no matter how petty the detail, we show where our affections lie. This fact is important; for where *our* treasure is, there will *our* heart be also.

Unlike earthly treasures, treasures of heaven are within the reach of all. A person does not have to possess outstanding ability, talent or wealth to have treasure stored in heaven. In fact, when Christ rewards His faithful workers, they will be surprised that the small and seemingly unimportant tasks daily performed in His name could bring such vast returns (Matt. 25:41-45). Although their earthly habitation was modest, a mansion is prepared for them, for in their lifetime they provided all the necessary material.

When the books are opened, many will find they have no treasure laid up in heaven. They placed their treasures in the things of earth and had their reward as they went through life. The work they

(Continued on page 19)

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Ministration of the Spirit

THERE can be no doubt that the apostles possessed a mighty power after the Pentecost experience. It was the power of God, the Holy Spirit, a power that equipped them to do a major job of evangelism in a comparatively short time. Considering the modes of transportation and communication of the times, it was a task impossible by human standards.

Some would argue that there have been frequent recurrences of the Spirit such as the Pentecost advent and that we are witnessing such a phenomena today. We cannot agree. There is a great difference between what is claimed to be works of the Holy Spirit today and what positively happened at and after Pentecost. Today the emphasis is on speaking in tongues and healing, plus a few snake-handling cults. But to claim the ability to heal, to speak with other tongues or to handle snakes without harm today is presumptuous. The death of several of the snake handlers as well as the deaths of several who claimed to have been healed from diabetes and other diseases is obvious proof of the falsity of the assertion.

In recent years one well-known "faith healer" gave up his healing ministry in favor of television producing. Another evangelist who claimed to have healed thousands, and who wrote: "The gift of healing needs no help from doctors, for it is all-powerful to remove a cancer or a tumor," died in a hotel room of what a coroner diagnosed as "acute alcoholism."

Our reason tells us that God would not use a drunkard to minister His Spirit if He were bestowing His power today. And if it were true that such diseases as cancer and diabetes could be healed by miraculous means, one who possessed the power to perform the healing would not be giving up such a worthwhile and lucrative business.

God has now been silent for nearly two thousand years. He has not sent His Spirit upon anyone on this earth since John penned Amen to the book of Revelation. But that silence will be broken and the power of the Holy Spirit will again be known

on this earth. In this issue we will complete our study of the Ministration of the Spirit, following our outline:

VII. The Renewing of the Holy Spirit

VIII. The Grand Birth of the Spirit

Are we today witnessing another Pentecost, another mighty moving of the Spirit of God? Have there been recurrences of the Holy Spirit in every age since the Apostolic Age? Is God now "pouring out His Spirit in a greater measure than at any time since the days of the apostles?" For our answers we will resort to the Holy Scriptures.

VII. THE RENEWING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

During His short ministry, Jesus made frequent reference to the Holy Spirit power which the apostles were to receive. His final promise before His ascension was definite: " 'You must wait,' he said, 'for the promise made by my Father, about which you have heard me speak: John, as you know, baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit, and within the next few days' " (Acts 1:5, NEB).

The promise was fulfilled; they received the power of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, and in the strength of that Power "they went out to make their proclamation everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed their words by the miracles that followed" (Mark 16:20, NEB). And just as certain as the Holy Spirit came on that first Pentecost following Jesus' ascension, just so surely will the power of the Holy Spirit be renewed. God's plan so long foretold will be consummated, and man on earth shall again have help from above.

A. The Renewal in Prophecy

In our last lesson on the **Ministration of the Spirit** we covered the prophecy of Paul in I Corinthians 13 showing that the gifts of the Spirit were to cease and that only faith, hope and charity, or love, would remain. And as the end of the power of the Holy Spirit was a subject of prophecy, so also was its renewal. We will review some of the prophecies:

1. Joel's prophecy. The prophet Joel foretold both the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost and that which is yet future, when, God says, "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh." (This prophecy was covered in detail in the January 1974 section of "Understanding the Bible.") The "latter rain," *malqosh* in the Hebrew, "a great rain before the harvest," is to come with the return of Elijah the prophet before Christ returns to reap the harvest.

2. Peter's prophecy. In explaining what had happened on the day of Pentecost, Peter repeated the words of Joel. He understood that only the first part of Joel's prophecy was then fulfilled ("this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel") and emphasized the greater outpouring yet future, "in the last days" (Acts 2:16-17), when God would "send Jesus Christ, . . . whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3:20-23).

B. The Holy Spirit Restored

Jesus Himself said, "Elias [Elijah] truly shall first come, and restore all things." These words, coupled with those of the prophet Malachi, picture Elijah's work on his return. Elijah's return must necessarily be by the same power by which he was taken away—the Spirit of God.

To restore is "to bring back to the first state or condition." But with the power of the Holy Spirit, we are promised that it will not only be restored, but, said Jesus, "The works that I do shall [ye] do also; and greater works than these shall [ye] do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12). There will be a greater demonstration of power than during Jesus' ministry or during the days of the apostles. We will review some of the promised manifestations of the Spirit.

1. The resurrection. Perhaps the first and most startling work of the Spirit after its restoration will be the resurrection of the dead. There are only three recorded instances in the Gospels where Jesus restored life. But in the resurrection at the coming of Jesus all who sleep in Jesus will be raised to mortal life. This work will be performed by Elijah just before the coming of the Lord (Elijah is the "archangel" or "chief messenger"—I Thess. 4:14-17), else they would not be able to meet the Lord at His coming.

2. Miraculous healing. During His ministry Jesus healed many, and after receiving the Spirit at Pentecost the apostles were able to heal many more. But in the future all will be healed. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing

...sorrow and sighing shall flee away... And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick" (Isa. 35: 5-6, 10; 33:24). What a wonderful time in which to live!

3. All shall know the Lord. In that day it will no longer be a minority who fear the Lord and serve Him, "for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:34). The word of the Lord will be taught openly, "yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isa. 30:20-21). There will be no turning back, no returning to the old ways.

4. Peace will be worldwide. "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places . . . and wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation" (Isa. 32: 17-18; 33:6). **Only a righteous society will bring worldwide peace. Peace is possible only through the work of the Spirit of God.**

5. Rulers with power and justice. The tendency through the ages has been for rulers to seize power and oppress the people. When the Spirit is restored, "a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment... I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise" (Isa. 32:1; 60:17-18).

This is only a small sampling of the promises contained in the Scriptures concerning the wonderful time that is to come. All this will be possible through the Spirit or Power of God. Only when God sends Elijah and Jesus to this earth and restores His power can these things come to pass. History has proven that it is beyond the power of man to build and maintain peace in the world. It has been the aim of many a President of the United States, but it is not within their power to fulfill. Only God through His Spirit can bring in a righteous society and lasting peace.

Miracles have been an important part of the work of the Spirit of God from the time God turned His attention to the earth. The following is a partial listing of those recorded.

Miracles of the Bible

In the time of Moses and the Children of Israel:

The ten plagues upon the Egyptians	Exodus, chapters 7-12
Aaron's rod that became a serpent	Exod. 7:10-12
Parting of the Red Sea	Exod. 14:21
Feeding the people with manna	Exod. 16:14-35
Moses draws water from the rock	Exod. 17:5-7
Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and company slain	Num. 16:31-35
Aaron's rod that budded and bore fruit	Num. 17:8
The crossing of Jordan by Joshua and people	Joshua 3:14-17
The fall of the walls of Jericho	Joshua 6:6-25

In the time of the Judges and Kings:

Death of Uzzah who touched the ark	II Sam. 6:7
Jeroboam's hand withers	I Kings 13:4-6

Miracles of Elijah:

Barrel of meal and chuse of oil that failed not	I Kings 17:14-16
Widow's son restored to life	I Kings 17:17-24
The test on Mt. Carmel	I Kings 18
Elijah runs before the king to Jezreel	I Kings 18:46

Miracles of Elisha:

Waters of Jordan divided	II Kings 2:14
Increase of the widow's oil	II Kings 4:2-7
Shunammite's son raised from dead	II Kings 4:32-37
Naaman's leprosy cured	II Kings 5:1-14
Iron axe caused to float	II Kings 6:5-7
Syrian army smitten with blindness	II Kings 6:18-20

Miracles in Daniel's time:

Daniel delivered from den of lions	Dan. 6:16-23
Daniel's three friends delivered from fiery furnace	Dan. 3:19-27

Miracles of Jesus:

Water turned to wine	John 2:1
Healing man at pool of Bethesda	John 5:1
Jesus escapes unseen from multitude	Luke 4:30
The great draught of fishes	Luke 5:1
Centurion's servant healed of palsy	Matt. 8:5
Widow of Nain's son raised to life	Luke 7:11
Ten lepers healed	Luke 17:11
Man born blind caused to see	John 9:1
Lazarus raised from the dead	John 11:43
Four thousand fed	Matt. 15:32
Five thousand fed	Matt. 14:19
Fig tree caused to wither	Matt. 11:18
Peter's mother-in-law healed of fever	Matt. 8:14
Storm at sea calmed	Luke 8:22
Herd of swine stricken, drowned in sea	Mark 5:1
Jesus walks on the sea	Matt. 14:25
Jairus' daughter raised from dead	Matt. 9:23
Blind Bartimaeus cured	Luke 18:35

Miracles of the Apostles:

Healing lame man at Gate Beautiful
Death of Ananias and Sapphira

Aeneas healed by Peter
 Dorcas raised from dead
 Herod smitten with death
 Elymas stricken blind
 Crippled man healed
 Eutychus restored to life by Paul
 Poisonous snake fastens on Paul's arm

VIII. THE BIRTH OF THE SPIRIT

To be "born of the Spirit," or the "Spirit birth" means many things to many people. To one group it means "regeneration," defined as "the act of God the Spirit by which He instantaneously implants spiritual life in the one who receives Christ."

To another, to be "born of the Spirit" describes the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of Christians and suggests the "coming into existence of a new life." Nearly all professing Christians believe themselves to have been "born again" when they were converted, and to most it describes a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit changing a man of the world into a Christian without effort. Biblical proof for such an assertion is lacking.

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3); then by way of explanation He added, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (v. 5). What did Jesus mean? Let us follow Jesus' admonition and "search the scriptures" for our answer.

A. Being Born of Water

Jesus' statement to Nicodemus clearly indicates two separate births, neither of which can be literal. To be "born of the Spirit" in the Kingdom of God, we must be "born of water" now. This is something that can and must be done by every believer in his mortal state.

Before the Christian can be "born again" he must be first "begotten." To be "begotten" is to be started on the way to a new life. James said "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth," and Peter wrote that God "hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (Jas. 1:18; I Pet. 1:3). The "word of truth" by which we are begotten is the same as the "water of life" of which Jesus spoke to the woman at Jacob's well: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

The "water" and the "word" are synonymous: "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63); the water gives

life and the word gives life. The first step to being born anew is to drink of this "water of life," to learn what God requires of us. This is to be begotten by "the word of truth," started on the way to a new life.

The next step in being "born again" is to apply the word or "water of life" to our everyday living, to put off the evils of the flesh and to live according to God's commandments. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). When we have put off the old ways and put on the new, we have done all within our power, but we are still mortal.

B. Born of the Spirit

The final step in being "born again" is not within our power; we cannot make the physical change. This step must await the second coming of Christ when we shall be judged, and if found worthy, be changed into His image, when "the Lord Jesus Christ... shall change our vile [corruptible, mortal] body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). **The Spirit birth will then be a physical reality; we will be truly "born again."**

Jesus' words concerning the Spirit birth are much misunderstood: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). There is nothing in this statement that would lend support to the commonly accepted idea that the Holy Spirit enters into the heart of a man at conversion and makes him a Christian. Rather, it suggests the freedom of movement enjoyed by angelic beings as was the case of Gabriel who was caused to fly swiftly to bring skill and understanding to Daniel. Angels are not earthbound as are mortals, but can come and go with the freedom of the wind, and that is what every one born of the Spirit will be able to do (Isa. 40:31). **When "born of the Spirit" we will have been made immortal, a necessary change; for we learn from Paul that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Only when "death is swallowed up in victory" shall we be truly "born again" into the Kingdom of God.**

*Reprints of these studies are available
upon request.*

ISRAEL

Yesterday Today Tomorrow

ISRAEL today is a name of international prominence. To many people, the mere mention of the name creates feelings of fear and unrest, or confidence and patriotism, together with emotions of sympathy or prejudice. Israel today is a nation, aggressive and energetic, determined to hold her own against any hostile intruder. It is the ancient homeland of the patriarchs reclaimed by those who after centuries of dispersion and exile still feel bound together by a common history and a common hope.

The Bible, God's written revelation to men, abounds with promises and prophecies which focus upon one central purpose: the perfecting of a righteous people to inhabit eternally a remade earth.

Who shall compose this select group of highly favored people whom God shall bless eternally? There is but one answer: Israel.

"But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. For thus saith the Lord, that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:17-18).

Israel shall be saved. But who shall compose this Israel of God? Are they to be all of the natural children of the seed of Abraham,

Is the modern State of Israel a fulfillment of Bible prophecy? Is God blessing Israel today because of the promises to their fathers?

Who are the Israel chosen of God, who shall receive His everlasting inheritance?

During recent months we have received numerous inquiries as to the significance of modern Israel in the light of Bible prophecy. In reply to these queries, we are publishing a series of articles which will discuss the subject in detail.

all blood brothers sharing equally by right of birth the blessings promised to God's chosen people? Or are they a select group of tried and proven individuals, chosen by God out of every nation and people?

"Israel" Defined

The term Israel appears more than two thousand times in the Sacred Scriptures. The first is at the time God assigned the name to Jacob. Later, it was applied to Jacob's descendants and to the land in which they lived. When these people formed themselves into a self-governing nation, that nation was known as Israel.

The nation of Israel existed under three kings: Saul, David and Solomon. Under Solomon's successor, Rehoboam, it was divided into the two kingdoms, known respectively as Israel and

Judah, which existed until the time of their captivities. After the period of exile, the people who returned, although consisting chiefly of the remains of Judah and Benjamin, again took the name enjoyed by their forefathers—Israel.

Defined literally, "Israel" means "contender, soldier of God." It is derived from the Hebrew word meaning "to fight." According to Gesenius' *Hebrew-English Lexicon*, the term is applied generally to Jacob and his descendants and the land they inhabited. The root of the word contains the idea of "rectitude, uprightness," as referring to the "righteous little people." The term is "sometimes used of those really worthy of the name."

When one speaks of Israel today, his first thought is the re-established state of Israel, which many today feel is deeply significant as a fulfillment of Bible prophecy and as a sign of Christ's approaching advent. There may be some measure of correctness in this application of prophecies (we shall study them in detail later), but we shall see throughout that God's chief concern is always with His chosen faithful few, *true* Israelites, those "worthy of the name."

The TRUE Israel

The Bible, especially the New Testament, contains much evidence to show that the recipients of God's eternal blessings and promises are to be not natural-

born Israelites but *true*, spiritual Israelites, whatever their nationality by birth.

From the very beginning God has respected character above nationality. God chose Israel to be His people and His nation, but among Israel were "rebels," rejects, those who stubbornly refused to obey His laws (Numbers 16; Ps. 107:11; Isa. 1:3-4). Amos said in his day that Israel was no better than her pagan neighbors (Amos 9:7). And among other nations were persons whom God saw fit to honor and bless (I Kings 17:9; II Kings 5:14).

Furthermore, the term "Israelite" as used in the Bible does not always apply to the literal descendants of Abraham, but rather to those who qualify as God's truly select and chosen people. For example, God loved "Israel" with an "everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3). His love for natural Israel could never be described as "everlasting," for Israel as a nation transgressed and was cast off (Jer. 5:23); because of their sinfulness they failed to inherit the blessing they could have had. God hates sin and all sinners (Ps. 7:11; 60:1; Isa. 5:24), hence His "everlasting" love must belong to a faithful chosen few, rather than to the whole race.

The apostle Paul said plainly that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6). And again he explained who is the seed to whom the promises pertain: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many: but as of One, And to thy seed, which is Christ." The promises belong to those who belong to Christ—a relationship not limited to any one nationality. For this reason, Abraham was called the "father of all them that believe" (Rom. 4:11), and "a father of many nations" (Rom. 4:17). He is the father of all those Jews who are Jews "inwardly; . . . whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28-29).

God Chose Natural Israel

For the greater part of two millenniums God dealt directly and primarily with those people whom we shall call "natural" Israel, the descendants of Abraham. First as individuals, then as a family, then later as a nation God worked with this "chosen" people.

The name "Israel" first appears when it was given to Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, by the angel: "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men" (Gen. 32:28).

From that time on, Israel became the national name of the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, and was applied to all the twelve tribes of Jacob. It was the name these descendants of Abraham used among themselves, and of which

they were proud—for it was a name that had been assigned them by God.

God's special dealings with this people began with their father Abraham. The first recorded promise to Abraham reads, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).

Here are promises both immediate and long-range. Abraham was to have a posterity that was to become a great nation; they would be especially blessed and ultimately would be the channel of blessing for "all families" of the earth. God also promised a physical inheritance: "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12:7), which was the land of Canaan (Gen. 13:14-15).

In succeeding years the promise to Abraham was repeated and confirmed. But who was to share in the benefits?

Heirs of the Covenant

At the onset it was clear that God had a definite purpose which was certain to be carried out. But it was also clear that those whom God would use to carry out that purpose and whom He would bless had to qualify by proving their worthiness through obedience to Him. Not all of natural Israel would meet the qualifications. His dealings were all on a covenant-basis: God agreed to do such-and-such, IF Israel did such-and-such.

At the time the covenant was delivered, not all aspects were revealed. Nor was the entire plan made known for years to come. Initially the promise was to Abraham and his seed. But almost immediately it became apparent that not all the seed of Abraham was included. Of the two sons of Abraham (Ishmael and Isaac) only Isaac was chosen to be the seed of promise.

The next generation revealed a further narrowing of the promised heirs. Jacob and Esau being twins, one might have expected them to share equally in the blessings and the promised inheritance. But the promises went to Jacob; Esau did not share at all.

On his deathbed, Jacob blessed his twelve sons who were to be the nucleus of the physical nation of Israel with which God would work. But upon only one son (Judah) did he confer the special blessing—the line of descent through which the Messiah would come (Gen. 49:9-10). Only one perpetuated the seed of promise.

Thus were selected the physical progenitors of the chosen race.

Why was the line of descent so restricted?

A CONDITIONAL Covenant

God chose to deal with men on a covenant-basis; receiving His promises depended on men's response—if there was no compliance on the part of man, there would be no fulfillment on the part of God.

Note again the command which accompanied the very first mention of a promise to Abraham: God said to Abraham, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee"—here is the command. And then followed the promise: "And I will make of thee a great nation," etc. Had Abraham not left Ur of the Chaldees in obedience to God's command, he would never have been brought into covenant with God and would never have received any special place in the plan of God.

Before God even offered to make a covenant with Abraham, God gave him a definite command concerning the obedience that would be required. We read, "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). Then followed the covenant proposal: "And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly" (v. 2).

When the covenant with Abraham was confirmed, it was again the result of Abraham's obedience. Had Abraham not showed his willingness to put the command of God before every other interest of his life—even before Isaac, his own child of promise—he would never have become Abraham, the father of all that believe. We read the confirmation of the covenant: "Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, . . . and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:16-18).

Following Abraham's death, the same covenant was reiterated to Isaac, and again it was contingent upon obedience. The Lord said to Isaac, "Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and I will bless thee," etc.

Of Isaac's two sons, only one shared in the promises of the covenant. Why? The second son, Esau, did not qualify; he was a "fornicator" and a "profane person, . . . who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." And "afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected" (Heb. 12:16-17). God was selecting on a basis of worthiness.

March, 1974

The narrowly restricted line of descent down to the twelve sons of Jacob did not mean, however, that no other persons in these families or from any other family could have any share in the covenant and its promises. God was working *especially* with one family and one nation, but He was not working *exclusively* with them. His primary interest was in a worthy people, not a blood relationship. ●●

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

"Lay Not Up . . . Lay Up"

(Continued from page 12)

did may have been worthy, but they did it to be seen of men. And Jesus said of such, "They have their reward." We may endure patiently for Christ's sake, yet show little investment in true riches because we refused to sell *all* to the Lord.

But there will be those who will have an abundant store laid up, and when the Day reveals every man's work "of what sort it is," they shall receive a full reward. They put their entire trust in the Lord and devoted their all to Him. Of their substance they gave gladly and without grudging. Their time and talent they used freely in the cause of truth, and whatever they did was done as "to the Lord, and not unto men." They labored unceasingly "in season, out of season," serving their God in sincerity and humbleness—their record of a perfect and holy character is in God's book of remembrance, and it will be there eternally.

Where Christ found refreshing spring water, He longed for us to dip our cup. On the mountain height He moved aside so that we could also share the view of the mind-expanding horizon. After sharing His treasure with us, He turns tenderly to us and asks: "My child, where are *you* laying up *your* treasure?"

When we place before God ourselves and all that we have, and say, "These are for Thy use, Lord, and for Thine alone," then we are not laying up treasures upon earth. We are taking earthly treasure and transforming it into the coinage of heaven. We are imploring,

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my will and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine. . . .
Take my love, my God, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take my self, and I will be
Ever, only, *all* for Thee."

Lord,
Teach
Us
to
Pray



MANY many years ago, Jesus' disciples asked Him a very important question. They knew Jesus talked often with His Father by praying to Him, and they wanted to learn how they could talk with Him also. So they said to Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray." Jesus' answer told them, and it still tells us today how we should approach God.

The Lord's Prayer is like a letter we send from earth to heaven. It is directed to *Our Father*. The place is *in heaven*. The letter contains several different requests. The close is *for thine is the kingdom*. The seal is *Amen*. And this letter even has a date—*this day*.

Let's think about what this prayer really says.

Our Father

Jesus was the Son of God, and He always talked about God as His Father. But here He says that *we* can call God "our Father," too. And this makes us feel closer to Him, for God *is* our Father when we believe what He says and live as He wants us to live. But God is not easy-going like our parents sometimes are. He never shuts His eyes to any wrong. We must do right to call Him "Father."

God is *our* Father—you will notice that the words "I," "my," or "me" never occur in the entire Lord's Prayer. When we say *our* Father, we are including ourselves in God's family.

Which art in heaven

God is not on the earth, as we are. His home is *in heaven*. So we send this letter to heaven. Everything in heaven is holy, so we must pray to God with a feeling of reverence and awe. He has made us. He has given us everything we have—our parents, our homes, our food, our clothes, our friends. Without God in heaven, we would not be here.

Hallowed be thy name.

The word "hallowed" means "different," or "separate from the earth." Something was hallowed when it was set apart and used only in the service of God. Do you remember hearing about the time long ago when Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt? They had a tabernacle where they worshiped God. And that tabernacle and all the furniture and vessels and utensils in it were hallowed. They were consecrated to God's service. They were set apart from ordinary earthly things.

We hallow God's name with our lips when our conversation is holy. We hallow Him in our thoughts when we think about good things and put the bad out of our minds. We hallow our lives when we live to God's glory. To hallow God's name, we must do what He wants us to do, and do it gladly, even if it is something we do not naturally like to do.

*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be
done in earth as it is in heaven.*

Jesus spent His whole ministry teaching people about the Kingdom which God is going to set up someday on earth. The Bible tells us He went into "every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1). He told them about it in many ways. Often He made a short story to teach people about it. He compared the Kingdom to a mustard seed, to leaven, to a net, a treasure hidden in a field.

Thy will be done.

When we say to God, "Thy will be done," we mean that He can do whatever He sees is best, and it is all right with us. It means that we trust Him to direct our lives, to tell us what to do and what not to do. It is like saying, "God, I belong to you. Do with me whatever you know is best. And teach me always to obey you, so that I will not displease you by anything I do." This is the earnest prayer of every loving child of God.

Give us this day our daily bread.

After we have prayed for God's glory, His kingdom and His will, then we can ask God for what we need. And we need bread to be able to live and work. But this does not mean that because we ask God for bread He will leave a loaf each day on our doorstep. He gives the sunshine and the rain to make the grain grow, and we must be willing to do our part. We must plant the seed and till the soil and harvest the grain and then make it into bread. But without God we would have no bread.

There is another kind of bread which we must think of when we pray the Lord's Prayer. It is the bread that comes from the Lord's table. It is the bread of life, God's Word, which we can eat as we learn what it tells us to do. Eating this bread will help us to grow—it will make us grow in holiness.

*And forgive us our debts, as we
forgive our debtors.*

When we do something wrong, we need to ask God to forgive us. That means that we say we will not do that wrong again, and we want Him to forget that we did the wrong and give us another chance to do right. That is what we mean when we pray, "Forgive us our debts."

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But Jesus is teaching us something else, too. He is saying that when *other* people do wrong to *us*, we must be ready to forgive *them*. Otherwise, we cannot ask God to forgive *us* for the things we do that are wrong.

*And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

God never leads us into temptation. He never does anything to try to get us to do wrong. Instead of "lead" we could say "leave," or "abandon us not in temptation." The Bible tells us we are tempted when our own desires lead us into what we should not do (James 1:13-15).

We want to ask God not to forsake us when we are being tempted. We need His help to get out of the way of the temptation.

*For thine is the kingdom, and the
power and the glory, for ever.
Amen.*

When we say *Amen* at the end of our prayer, we say "let it be so." In other words, "I mean what I say. Do everything just the way you want to. I will obey."



Maybe you already know the Lord's Prayer. If you do not, learn it. Say it over every day. And each time you say it, think about what it really means. Remember, it is the prayer which Jesus taught His disciples—and us, too. ••

The Man Most Misunderstood

(Continued from page 5)

was unfaithful, if she neglected her duties to her home and family and disregarded her husband's desires and requests, the words "I love you" would be meaningless.

Christ's followers are His bride, and He expects—in fact, requires—much more than verbal adoration from them. He requires a life dedicated to following faithfully the instructions He left and demonstrated in His own life. If we meet these minimum requirements, He will demonstrate His great love by bestowing immortality upon us. This is love beyond anything we know as earthbound mortals. It is love which no one else in the world can give us.

Without doubt Christ's greatest role in the affairs of this planet will be His work when He returns to earth as Judge, Conqueror and King of kings. His short ministry of three years had a minimal effect on the world as a whole. His teachings and precepts have been largely ignored, much to the detriment of mankind. The situation will be dramatically changed at Christ's second coming. This time He comes as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, conquering and to conquer (Rev. 5:5; 6:2). His first duty will be to judge His servants. Those who prove faithful through that Judgment will be granted immortality and be appointed a place as co-rulers with Christ.

Next He will call upon all the nations to submit to His rule. They will refuse to relinquish their control, and He will be compelled to fight against them in the great battle of Armageddon, which will end with the destruction of two-thirds of all earth's inhabitants (Zech. 13:8). Then and only then can Christ begin to straighten out the tangled affairs of this world and begin His everlasting reign of peace, prosperity and happiness. This is the good part, the joyful, happy part.

But we must never forget that there is also a sober part to this story, which is often overlooked and misunderstood. Human nature being what it is, not everyone will accept the discipline and restraint that will be required. In any society there are those who resist authority. Justice will be swift and sure, always tempered with mercy. It will be *just* judgment—not one standard for the rich and another for the poor, one for the public official and another for the private citizen. "Justice also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet," said Isaiah (28:17).

To the individual who misunderstands Christ and

His teachings, and whose love for Him is only from the mouth, the future holds many disappointments. To the individual who makes a sincere effort to understand Christ and His teachings, who makes an effort to look beyond the superficial and demonstrates his love by following closely in the footsteps of his Master, the future holds endless joys beyond what eye hath seen and ear hath heard. ●●

From A Reader—

For A Consecrated New Year

The past year has been a year of momentous events. There were joys and sorrows, victories and defeats, blessings and trials. As we review the past year, we ought to ask ourselves, "Am I pleased with what I see? Have I walked closely to my Lord? Have I been faithful in the stewardship of my time and talents?"

In most cases, we will have to admit that we are not fully pleased, nor have we done well in the fulfilling of our consecration vow. Oh, how often we chose to do what we wanted to do, and how often we followed the paths of our own desires!

The coming year shall be a better year in our Christian experience if we heed the Apostle's exhortation to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."

Not only is self to be thrust out of controlling our life, but the influence of the world must be renounced. We must ever be alert to those charms of the world that would allure us from faithfulness to Christ. "Be not conformed to this world" was the warning of Paul to the Romans. And it should be warning enough for us as well.

Let us strive to make this New Year a year of greater determination in the matter of denying self and renouncing the forbidden things of the world. Let us "fight the good fight of faith." Let us get on with the consecrated task of being transformed by the renewing of our mind.

Let us live this coming year so that a year hence we will be able to look backward and say, "I have made real progress in the Christian way."

Mrs. S., Wisconsin

The man who does just as he pleases is seldom pleased with what he does.

A New Year Prayer

Father everlasting, through whose favor we have come to the beginning of the new year, we assemble before Thee in gratitude at the remembrance of Thy mercies.

We rejoice in the ways we have traveled. Thy love has led us along sunlit glens of quiet joy; Thy sustaining hand has supported us through shadowed valleys of humiliation, and Thy presence has encouraged us in tempestuous seas of peril.

We thank Thee for the friends Thou hast given us. They have been as a refreshing oasis in the desert, as a shade from the burning heat, and as a shelter in the time of storm.

We praise Thee for every satisfying experience; for harvests gathered, victories won, progress made, we lift our hearts in gratitude.

And now Thou hast brought us to the dawn of this new year. Wilt Thou lead us along the unblazed trail. Be our companion as we trudge the dusty lane or hasten over the broad highway. Grant us Thy presence as we walk in familiar ways to engage in fresh experiences.

Give us an understanding of life's deeper meaning. Make us sensitive to spiritual overtones. Open our eyes to the beauty that lies in holy living. Awaken our minds to the absolute certainty of Thy great and precious promises; enliven our interest in obtaining the eternal salvation to be gained through high endeavor, even to become perfect as Thou, Father, in heaven art perfect.

Strengthen our hearts to face with courage all that may befall us along the unknown trail. Lead us in hope and faith and love. And grant us unflinching confidence in Thy eternal goodness. In Jesus Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.

THINK!

1. We build our characters each day;
Christ is the Life, the Truth, the Way.
As Master-Builder, Him we own.
Who called Him "the chief corner stone?"
2. Who praised God for mercy nigh,
And for Dayspring from on high?
He blessed God for His visitation
And for the Horn of our salvation.
3. Where are we told of the Prince of Peace
And the time when wars shall forever cease?
A government that shall never end,
Which the zeal of God will superintend?
4. Respect of persons you must not show,
It only proves that your faith is low;
Who pointed out this noble story
And called the Christ "the Lord of glory"?
5. A physician's not for those who're whole,
But for those who are sick in soul;
Jesus helped the ones in need;
Where do we this lesson read?

6. Our great High Priest was tempted as we,
But from all sin He made Himself free;
Our infirmities He knows right well;
Those comforting words are where, pray tell?
7. Who was that just and devoted man,
Waiting according to God's own plan
The Consolation of Israel to see?
Christ that blessed one was He.
8. A kingdom Christ will usher in,
We find this often written of Him,
But where did this noble man from afar
Say, "I am the bright and morning star"?
9. The Shepherd Chief will soon appear
With crowns the pure in heart to cheer;
Their glory will never fade away.
Who told these things of that great Day?
10. Who wrote these words so long ago,
That in His time our Lord will show,
That He is the blessed Potentate,
The King of kings whom we await?

Answers

1. Paul (Eph. 2:20) 2. Zacharias (Luke 1:69, 78)
3. (Isa. 9:6-7) 4. James (James 2:1-3) 5. (Matt. 9:12) 6. (Heb. 4:15) 7. Simeon (Luke 2:25)
8. (Rev. 22:16) 9. (I Pet. 5:4) 10. Paul (I Tim. 6:15).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"I am perplexed by two texts which seem to tell the same story two ways. Second Samuel 24:1 says that God moved David to number Israel, because he was angry with Israel. And First Chronicles 21:1 says 'Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.' Why is this?"

Of one fact we may be certain: God never influences anyone to do evil. "For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (James 1:13). Neither is there a literal devil or Satan which tempts men to do wrong, for James says also: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:14-15). A man's own lust and evil desire is the evil power over him.

A positive statement by Jesus also precludes the possibility of a literal Satan's tempting David or anyone else. "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him." How is a man defiled? "The things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. . . . For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, . . ." etc. Here is the source of all defilement and temptation and sin—the heart of men, from which come evil thoughts.

The term Satan in the Bible (meaning literally, "an adversary, an opposer") is sometimes applied directly to people. Jesus called Peter by this term when Peter opposed Him. Jesus said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me" (Matt. 16:23). He also called Judas a "devil" (John 6:70)—which he proved himself to be.

Who was the Satan that provoked David to number Israel? It was not Joab; unscrupulous though he was oftentimes, Joab objected to David's intention, saying that the king would make himself "a cause of trespass to Israel" (I Chron. 21:1).

After the evil was done and David was brought face to face with his transgression, he confessed his sin. And his confession reveals exactly who and what moved him to do wrong. We read: "And David said unto God, *Is it not I* that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed" (I Chron. 21:17). The record in Samuel is similar: "And David spake unto the Lord . . . and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly" (II Sam. 24:17).

What was the Satan that moved David to number Israel? It was nothing more or less than David's own pride, his desire to see how great the nation had become under his leadership. Even Joab recognized David's weakness. He questioned the wisdom of the king's decision, saying, "May the Eternal your God let my lord the king live to see him making the nation a hundred times as large as it is to-day! But why should my lord the king set his heart on this project?" (II Sam. 24:3, Moffatt Bible). Or as phrased in the *Living Bible*, "God grant that you will live to see the day when there will be a hundred times as many people in your kingdom as there are now! But you have no right to rejoice [delight] in their strength."

Apparently the census was mainly to find out how many fighting men there would be at David's disposal. It was to be the means of glorifying the power of the state; it was evidence of the king's growing love for power. It was a sign of a subtle transfer from "the people of the Lord" to "the people of David." In taking this census David departed from his more spiritual insight, "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord" (Ps. 144:15).

This appraisal of David's wrong helps us to understand what might be called God's part in the temptation. God permitted it. God's providence put David in a place of power where this type of temptation was inevitable. For His own purpose God gave David repeated victories and power to attain more victories to give him a larger kingdom. In this sense God incited David's temptation. Yet it was David's own lust which caused him to be "lured and enticed" into evil.

God creates man a free moral agent and places him in a position of responsibility and privilege—which may place that man in the way of temptation. But God gives man also the power and strength to rise above the temptation if he will, and to use the temptation as a means to greater spiritual strength.

Why did one recorder say that *God* moved David to number Israel, and the other that *Satan* was responsible? One may have been thinking of God as allowing it; it was common among the Hebrew people to see God as the First Cause of all things, good or bad, in the sense that all things were used to serve His purpose. The other writer may have been thinking of the real source of the evil, Satan, or the heart of the man David which was opposing the ways of the Lord.

It has also been suggested that the second chronicler did not wish to connect so sinful an act with God and so credited it all to Satan, i. e., to David himself.



Certain Change

Nothing is certain except change. We face into the dark, and the future lies in an area of the unknown. However, the Christian need not be disturbed by that fact.

With the Psalmist each of us can say to God, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." As Christians we may face the future assured that all things work together for good to them that love God, and that God is faithful, "who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able." The Master of the universe is our guide, as we walk in His ways. And we can hear His oft-repeated word, "Fear not, be not afraid."

May we strive each day to keep self, which is our greatest enemy, under control.

I read the Message and receive great blessing from the truth it contains.

Newfoundland, Canada

M. A.

New Year in the Spring

I am so glad to learn that the true New Year begins in the spring. It is such a lovely time of the year, when flowers are in bloom and birds are singing. And it is such a good time of the year to celebrate our Saviour's birth.

I always enjoy the *Megiddo Message*. It is so helpful and instructive.

Lothian, Maryland

M. S.

Time to Read and Meditate

We need to take more time to read and meditate. We should take a retrospective view of ourselves—what have we done with the months that have flown by? We should tell ourselves that we really have to buckle down and take heed to the great Apostle's words, to never let our zeal flag. Our weaknesses and desires are ready to confront us daily, and when lust conceives, it brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.

We need to try harder to be like Christ, never allowing unguarded moments to entangle us in the nets of sin. We are going to fall, but we must rise again, and with determination and prayer and godly repentance.

Selma, Iowa

V. T.

Meditations On the Word

(Continued from page 26)

away. Where the offender has repented, forgiveness must be extended; where the wrongdoer remains offensive, we must have no bitterness or

resentment (Heb. 12:15; Eph. 4:32). A kindly act will often soften the offender.

Of course, it is not difficult to forgive trifles, but the Lord requires that we forgive not only trifles but things which at first appear impossible. We may cry, I cannot do it, it is too much to ask, the injury was too great; but our own forgiveness from God is dependent upon our extending forgiveness to whom it is due. If we cannot do it and must postpone it, then, as we stated, our spiritual growth will cease, and we shall have to postpone the recital of the Lord's Prayer till we *are able* to do so.

More and more we need to examine and understand our own heart and character. We need to learn how deceitful and desperately wicked our hearts naturally are (Jer. 17:9); how we are so often puffed up by our own self-importance and miserable pride; how vain and wayward have been the thoughts and imaginations of our minds. Then, too, we need to consider what our attitude has been toward our fellow man, our neighbor, our brother in the faith. Unquestionably, our brother has besetments too; for, being human like ourselves, he is subject to every temptation. Life is a growth, and we need to realize that our brother must grow even as we. Too suddenly we can pass judgment, that such a one is hopeless, that he will never merit God's favor. And in our hasty conclusions we forget that we are acting the part of Simon the Pharisee, of Jesus' day. In our self-righteousness we overlook *our* need of forgiveness and are ready only to condemn another.

Jesus' parable of the two debtors is striking indeed, and His application of it to Simon and the sinful woman teaches us to look to ourselves. The woman was sinful and needed much forgiveness, 'tis true; but she realized this and was doing something about it. Simon thought he was just about all right. He thought that as far as the law was concerned, he was blameless. But in reality, he did not take the law to heart in the least. The pharisaic ordinances he performed with meticulous care, but the weightier matters of the law he overlooked completely. Hence, he too needed forgiveness, but did not know it.

Are we like that? If Jesus were to sup with us, would He have need to inform us: "I have somewhat to say to thee" (Luke 7:41)?

Lest in that future Day we should be faced with that humiliating moment in the Lord's presence, let us examine our hearts and see that no grudges are camouflaged therein in some self-righteous way. Forgive, as you would be forgiven; clear yourself of all resentments and bitterness and you will find your general happiness and spiritual growth to be nothing less than phenomenal. ●●



Meditations

On the Word

WHEN we contemplate elaboration on these words spoken by our Master we seem to have the feeling that we are treading, as it were, on holy ground, and are forced to realize the need of caution. These words and the words used in the Prayer, "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," are so constructed that it seems no comment is necessary. Truly, they are plain and understandable, with no allegorical meaning which might require many hours of study to fathom their mystery; but our meditation upon these texts, together with others pertaining to the subject of forgiving and forgiveness, may prove helpful to us. It may make us more aware of an important step which must be taken before we can be granted the full salvation.

Because our iniquities separate us from God and hide His face from us that He will not hear our prayers (Isa. 59:1-2), we need to get into a state where we can secure forgiveness. Sin stands between us and God; it isolates us from Him, and in that state we cannot approach Him with petitions either for temporal blessings or for the rewards of life eternal.

Sin to be forgiven, must be forsaken.

Isaiah states further that if we wash and cleanse from our sins, if we cease to do evil and learn to do well, then, though our sins had been red like crimson they shall be white as wool (ch. 1:16-18). God will pardon, He will forgive; all He asks is that we stop sinning, that we forsake our ways and thoughts and turn to Him with our whole heart (ch. 55:6-7).

It is right and proper that we ask forgiveness for our many sins, and more, we are commanded to do so. For it is only as we ask and expect to

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"

(Matthew 6:14-15).

receive forgiveness according to His terms that we shall make an effort to eliminate our sins.

The words of our text impress us primarily that while petitioning forgiveness for our shortcomings we cannot in any way hold grudges, or ill feelings

against others who have caused us wrong in any way. When we realize the meaning of Jesus' words we are faced with a problem from which there is no escape. We must positively and definitely extend forgiveness to anyone and everyone to whom we owe forgiveness. Jesus leaves no room for any possible evasion. He has constructed these words with such skill that once our attention has been drawn to this matter, we are inevitably obliged either to forgive our enemies or cease repeating His Prayer—and with that, cease growing spiritually.

An unparalleled principle of God has always been that if a man turns from his iniquity and does that which is lawful and right, his sins shall no more be mentioned (Ezek. 18:21-22). Just so must also our forgiveness be for those who trespass against us and then repent. If we say, I will forgive, but I won't forget, it is just another way of saying, I will not forgive. As someone once stated, forgiveness ought to be like a cancelled note, torn up and thrown away, so that it never can be shown against our debtor.

There are few people in the world who have not at some time or other been really hurt by someone else; or disappointed, or injured, or misled. Such things sink into the memory where they cause inflamed and festered wounds. There is but one remedy—they have to be plucked up and thrown

(Continued on page 25)

On Christ's Life In Deed

O Master workman of the race,
Thou man of Galilee,
Who with the eyes of early youth
Eternal things did see;
We thank Thee for Thy boyhood faith
That shone Thy whole life through;
"Did ye not know it is My work
My Father's work to do?"
—Jay T. Stocking

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to
the poor;
he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted,
to preach deliverance to the captives,
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty them that are bruised,
to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*
—Luke 4:18-19

Matthew presents Jesus as the Royal Saviour;
Mark, as the Servant of man; Luke, as the
Son of man; John as Son of God.
—Anon.

For two thousand years Jesus Christ has been
the one central character of human history.
—Anon.

*Nothing will do except righteousness; and no other
conception of righteousness will do except Christ's
conception of it.*
—Matthew Arnold

*His parentage was obscure; His condition poor; His
education null; His natural endowments great; His
life correct and innocent; He was meek, benevolent,
patient, firm, and of the sublimest eloquence.*
—Thomas Jefferson

*Jesus was the greatest religious genius that ever
lived. His beauty is eternal, and His reign shall
never end. Jesus is in every respect unique, and
nothing can be compared with Him.*

—Joseph Ernest Renan

*The Sermon on the Mount is Christ's
biography. Every syllable He had already
written down in deeds. The sermon merely
translated His life into language.*

—Thomas Wright

And even though Jesus was God's Son, he had to
learn from experience what it was like to obey,
when obeying meant suffering. It was after he had
proved himself perfect in this experience that Je-
sus became the Giver of eternal salvation to all
those who obey him.

Heb. 5:8-9, *Living Bible*

Jesus, Thou Joy of loving hearts!
Thou Fount of Life! Thou Light of men!
From the best bliss that earth imparts,
We turn unfilled to Thee again.
—St. Bernard of Clairvaux

*Indeed this is your calling. For Christ suffered for
you and left you a personal example, and wants
you to follow in his steps. He was guilty of no sin
nor of the slightest prevarication. Yet when he
was insulted he offered no insult in return. When
he suffered he made no threats of revenge. He
simply committed his cause to the one who judges
fairly.*

—I Peter 2:21-23, Phillips

Jesus ate every word of God, and just before the
wicked mob took His life He could cry: "I have glori-
fied thee on the earth: I have finished the work which
thou gavest me to do." —John 17:4. Was Jesus ever
counted a sinner? No. As soon as He learned the law
He always obeyed and never again transgressed that
law. That is why He has a higher position than any of
His children. That is why He will be our future King
and Ruler of the world. —Rev. Maud Hembree

*Lord of us all, when earth you trod,
The life you led was perfect, free,
Defiant of all tyranny:
Now give us grace that we may face
Our foes with like temerity,
And glory give to God.*
—Donald Hankey

*We pledge ourselves
To follow through the coming year
The light which God gives us:
The light of Truth, wherever it
may lead;*

*The light of Freedom, revealing
new opportunities for
individual development and
service to others;*

*The light of Faith, opening new
visions of the better world
to be;*

*The light of Love, daily binding
brother to brother and
man to God in ever closer
bonds of friendship and
affection.*

*Guided by this light
We shall go forward to the work
of another year with
steadfastness and
confidence.*

—Selected.

Facing the New Year

