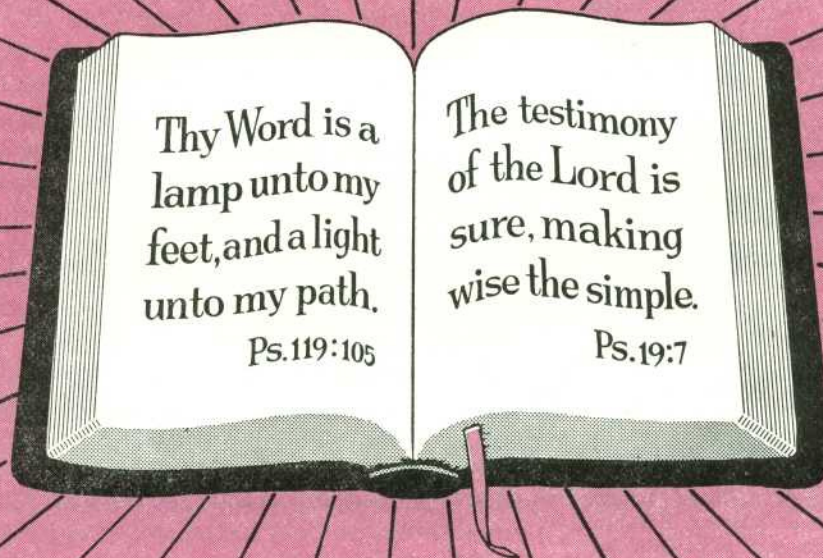


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



Where Is the Sacrifice?

World Hunger
To Wait or To Work?
Concerning Demons

Megiddo Message

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Editorially Speaking . . .

Success Is Costly

SUCCESS in any field is costly.

The concert pianist must become a slave to his instrument; five hours, six hours, even eight or ten hours each day he sits at the keyboard developing those skills which he will need to render a near-perfect performance. Many a dedicated scientist practically lives in the laboratory. The philosopher devotes himself totally to his thought, the scholar to his studies. The price may seem high, but to some it is worth it.

The same laws of success operate in the higher field of the inner life; spiritual greatness has its price. Eminence in the things of the spirit demands a devotion to these things far more complete than we naturally feel should be required. But the law of success cannot be escaped. If we would succeed, we must give; if we would succeed totally, we must give totally.

Through a gross misunderstanding of the plan of God, many people rearrange these laws of success when it comes to religion and think of success (salvation) as a sort of payment in advance on the basis of Christ's merits; a "good life" is to be the natural response of the grateful heart. However, this idea is totally foreign to the entire plan. The Bible is filled with examples that show the need for preliminary, personal action. There are lessons on the diligence of the ant. The slothful man is cited as a horrible failure, and the sluggard sitting in his ruined house or walking between the rows of his scrubby corn serves as a melancholy example of what laziness can do to the man who does not conquer it. Jesus' opinion of the man who began to build without figuring the cost leaves no place for the "free" salvation theory—a good start was *not* enough. The king who started war without being fully prepared; the farmer who put his hand to the plow and then changed his mind and looked back—all these say the same thing: success in the spiritual life requires hard work.

The amount of loafing we too easily do in our spiritual lives would ruin a concert pianist if he allowed himself the same in the field of music. The small leftover energy we may be giving to the Lord's work would end the career of a medical doctor in a single week. No scientist could solve his exacting problems if he took as little interest in it as some of us who profess Christianity take in the art of being holy. The nation whose soldiers were as soft and undisciplined as we who claim to be soldiers of the King are content to be, would be conquered by the first enemy that attacked.

If we would progress spiritually, we must concentrate on doing the things of God to the exclusion of the thousand things we naturally consider important. We must make the interests of God the whole sphere of our activity, and labor there as a farmer in his field, or a miner in the earth. It is the only way to success; it is the only way to LIFE.

Triumphs are not won in easy chairs; success is costly. ●●

Where Is the Sacrifice?

ONE of the Old Testament accounts that still moves our hearts today is the story of Abraham offering Isaac on Mount Moriah. We feel for Abraham in facing so bravely this supreme test of his loyalty to God. We admire his courage, his devotion and his straightforward and unhesitating obedience. We see the mighty love of a father for his son set aside for an even greater love of a man for his God.

Abraham's obedience is the main theme of the account in Genesis 22. There is, however, another thought hidden away here which deserves our attention.

As we follow the old Patriarch up the mountain, we overhear the conversation between him and his beloved Isaac. Somewhere in the arduous climb to the summit Isaac proposes the heart-rending question: "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

A Test of Faith

As we read the story we are immediately aware of two things: First, Abraham did not simply *happen* to be in the vicinity of Moriah and decide to go up and make a sacrifice. He was brought to this place at this specific time by God. He was following God's specific instructions, in humble obedience. Second, God did not intend to destroy Abraham's long promised seed on Moriah's crest and thus annul the promise and covenant He had made with him. He was only putting Abraham to the test, allowing him to prove his loyalty, after which He would confirm the covenant.

However, Abraham as he was trudging up the mountain did not know all this.

In the same way, let us remember that we are not pilgrims who merely *happen* to have come on the scene of life at this particular time in history. We are here because God has placed us here; we are instructed in the things of God because God Himself has planned that we should be, and has provided the means whereby we may be acquainted with His plan. God works not by chance with respect to those who may be heirs of salvation. He calls now, as ever He has through the ages, for all who would seek to come. "And the Spirit and the

bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). The instruments used may be human, but the work and the call is divine.

We should remember also that when God calls us to a supreme test of obedience which we cannot understand, when the long road up the mountain of obedience requires the utmost in faith and endurance, God is still with us. And as soon as our testing is complete and our loyalty is proved, He will credit our service and trust toward the eternal blessing He has promised.

God's purpose in allowing us to be tested and tried is not that He wishes to destroy us, but that He may bring us through to greater victory! He is eager and anxious to renew His covenant with us; all He asks is the completion of our obedience. This very time is God's hour. It is the critical hour just before the moment when the Lord shall "make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isa. 52:10). It is the critical hour just before the fulfillment of the greatest prophecy of the ages, when "the Lord God [Emmanuel, God with us] will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him" (Isa. 40:10). We should not forget it for a moment.

Materials for Sacrifice

Isaac was well acquainted with the procedure of sacrifice, as his question reveals: "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Let us take this question, with the story as a background, and study it with reference to our day.

"Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" All the necessary implements were at hand. They had wood, that is, *combustible material*, with which to burn the sacrifice. And so have we as we prepare to make our sacrifice. We have a measure of the material goods of this world, which we may consecrate and use to the service of the Lord. Lands, houses, worldly possessions; the externals with which we live and work—all these are the "wood"

God has provided the wood, the knife, the fire. But are we willing to take our place on the altar?

which God has provided, and with which we may make our sacrifice.

While the wood is no part of the sacrifice, it is a necessary concomitant to any sacrifice, an expendable substance that must be burned before any animal sacrifice can be completed. So our temporal possessions can be represented by the wood used in making the sacrifice. It is our *interest* in these things that must be sacrificed. We always have this "wood" with us. It is the *love* of money that is the root of all evil—not the money itself. Our "mammon of unrighteousness" can be used either as a millstone around our neck, or as a buoy to keep us from drowning.

Then, of course, there is the *knife*, which speaks to us of the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Thank God that we can stand unflinchingly for the double-edged sword which is "quick and powerful," and pierces "even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). It is the divine instrument by which we may make our sacrifice complete, if we will but wield it mightily against ourselves. It is God's communication to us, a message which we should value above all else.

Abraham took "*the fire*" with him also. He did not have a box of safety matches, which we would take on such a venture; there were none in his day. He had to take a few red-hot coals in an earthen pot, adding fresh fuel occasionally to keep them alive all the way up the mountainside. It was not a flaming blazing fire upon which to roast the flesh of the sacrifice, but it held the potential.

We also have the fire, the living truth and divine faith which easily may blaze into a consuming heat. It is the ardent zeal and flaming enthusiasm which may touch every aspect of our lives and envelop us totally in one consuming purpose.

We have the fire, but too often we keep our fire in the pot. We carry the pot, occasionally removing the lid to show our friends that we still have the fire; but we fail to let it blaze brightly in our own lives. Such a fire will never make our sacrifice complete; such a fire will never burn away the evil and set our hearts ablaze with hope divine. The fire in the pot is our potential; but it will die if we do not feed it.

Thank God for the fire in the pot, but God grant that it shall touch the combustibles (the God-given externals in our lives, our possessions, our wealth) until all of our work blazes anew with holy fire!

The Sacrifice

With all this said, we have yet to come to the crux of the matter. Isaac's piercing question was this: "*Where is the sacrifice?*" and it comes echoing down the corridors of time as though it were meant for none but us. It strikes conviction to our souls and lays bare the insubordination that rules our hearts. The sacrifice, now as then, is available. The only question on that occasion long ago was Isaac's willingness. The test was not all upon Abraham; part of the mission, a very significant part, lay with Isaac himself. For he himself was to be the victim of the sacrifice. Had he chosen to do so, he doubtless could have physically overpowered his aged father and escaped the place on the altar. We, too, can run from the altar! We can refuse to give ourselves totally to God. The sacrifice is available; but are *we* willing to take *our* place on the altar?

We should notice that Abraham was a wealthy man; he had great herds of cattle and an abundance of riches. The record runs: "And Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold" (Gen. 13:2); and when Abraham's trusted servant was sent to secure a wife for his son Isaac, he said to Bethuel, the girl's father: "I am Abraham's servant. And the Lord hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses" (Gen. 24:34-35).

But God did not want Abraham's wealth or cattle (although that too had to be dedicated to His service). God wanted the thing that was closest to Abraham's heart—that was more to him than anything else. God wanted *Isaac*! After Abraham had to all intents and purposes made the offering, "... the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven, ... and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore. ..." (Gen. 22:15-17).

The same is true with us. We have a measure of this world's goods; most of us enjoy the necessities of life, and much, much more. God in His mercy and goodness permits these things. But His primary interest is *you* and *me*. As Paul wrote to the Romans, He wants us to present our bodies "a

living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto" Him (Rom. 12:1). He wants that sacrifice which is "a soul with its evil crushed: a heart broken with penitence" (Ps. 51:17, Moffatt), and that demands the proper use of all our temporal possessions.

The command to Abraham comes down to us, and the question of Isaac still rings "Where is the sacrifice?" Are we anxious to get about making it? Our affluent Western world has poorly prepared us to answer this question. We are accustomed to pampering our desires, not denying them. We forget that there are two lights by which we walk: the light of choice, and the light of denial; the light of selection and the light of exclusion; the light of gain, and the light of sacrifice.

Most of us know much more about the first than the second. Our spiritual arithmetic is faulty; we know how to add but we know little about how to subtract. We compromise our convictions. We try to make choices that will always result in gain, not loss; in acquisition, not sacrifice. We try to add good without subtracting evil. And we fail.

Abraham had to subtract; Isaac had to subtract; and so must we. The Christian life demands sacri-

fice; there can be no denying it. There must be a loss. Does it seem a harsh proposition? It is because we have forgotten the end. For in the Christian life there is no sacrifice without greater gain. *We subtract so that God may add—and multiply!*

"Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" Who is ready to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord?" (I Chron. 29:5; Phil. 3:8). Where is the sacrifice, yours and mine?

God is looking for expendable Christians. Where are those who will turn their backs on all this world has to offer and give themselves totally to His cause? Who will be stirred to the kind of dedication this hour demands?

Where IS the Sacrifice?

Let us now consider the sacrifice from the viewpoint of comparative values.

In view of the inestimable reward that God offers who can but exclaim, Where is the sacrifice! All of His demands add up to only a "reasonable service." Everything He asks us to do makes us better even for this life. Living as a Christian makes us hap-

Eternal God, Thou for whom no dawn arises and no evening sets, we look for Thee to cast Thy countenance upon us and show us light. Clear, O Lord, our inward vision, that we may see through the false shows of life, and be kept true and quiet by Thy great realities. Following in the footsteps of Christ, Thy gladdening light, and in the path of all Thy children who shine as lights in the world, may we rejoice to be faithful today, glad for the humblest task that waits for us by Thy will, and shine with the holy light of Thy approval.

Worthy art Thou, O Lord of the universe, to receive honor and glory and praise, for Thou hast created all things, and even now art creating and bringing to perfection Thy designs, forming a new heavens and earth, a new and righteous people who one day shall form the nucleus of Thy new order upon a redeemed earth.

Thanks be to Thee that Thou hast made human beings with the potential to make themselves into Thy spiritual likeness, and dost support and guide all who have the spiritual gumption to become a part of that noble creation.

Thanks be to Thee that Thou hast given Thy Son, Jesus Christ, as our great Pattern and Example to show us how the work can be done, and by His mighty victory over evil and death hast

opened the door into the Kingdom of heaven here and now and hereafter and forever to all true believers.

Grant us the wisdom to render our bodies a living sacrifice to Thee, to realize it is but our reasonable service. In every surrender that we are called upon to make for Thee may our attitude be, Where is the sacrifice?

May we not be conformed to this world that is so soon to pass away, but transform our lives by surrendering to Thy leading in everything, that we may sense that which is true and good, and eschew and flee from everything that is evil. Give us the strength to renew our minds through the indwelling of Thy Word, and keep them renewed.

Deal tenderly and firmly with us when we indulge in self-pity or in foolish adventures. Enable any of us who try to escape from our duty to face our tasks, accept ourselves, and to make the most of our best for the sake of those who may depend upon us and for Thy sake.

To Thy healing compassion we bring those in any pain or weakness; those who face the possibility of long and wasting disease, those who tire of the burden of many years or many anxieties. As we wait upon Thee now for guidance, may we know the joy of being Thy children, and friends of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

***In view of the inestimable reward
God offers, who can but exclaim,
Where is the sacrifice!***

pier, more contented, more patient with others, more satisfied with our lot whatever it may be—it blesses us in every way.

Sacrifice has a dynamic, arousing challenge. The fact is, you cannot win without sacrifice. Few are called to make great sacrifice, but no one can escape the opportunities to exercise the noble qualities of self-denial. Every profound affection must face sacrifice; for when one interest is dominant, other interests must of necessity be secondary.

Here is the key to a prosperous, ever advancing Christian life. For what we give up adds to our lasting store. The principle of sacrifice is one of the fundamental laws of the universe. It underlies the grand plan of salvation. One cannot have everything; one can only have a choice of things. Sacrifice the present, and reap the future. Surrender the right to your own ideas, opinions, ambitions and goals, and everything that naturally seems right to you, and take what God calls right. It is a loss, but it is a loss that we can well afford to sustain. It is a greater gain. "For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (II Cor. 4:17-18, RSV).

Now all this brings us to the thought of

Counting the Cost

To the person with a true estimate of values, the answer to the question "where is the sacrifice?" should be in the negative. Our resounding answer to the query should be: *There is no sacrifice*. In view of all that God offers for faithful service, no sacrifice should be considered great. God has promised to do for us "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

Divine wisdom, which includes a knowledge of God's plan and purpose, and a fitting of our life pattern into that purpose, is said to hold in her left hand riches and honor, and in her right hand length of days in which to enjoy them: "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her" (Prov. 3: 13-18).

In Luke 14:28 we have Jesus' statement about the man counting the cost before starting to build a tower. This parable represents the absurdity of

those who undertook to be the disciples of Christ without considering what difficulties they were to meet with and what strength they had to see them through the undertaking.

When Jesus spoke these words He was on His way to Jerusalem. He knew that He was on the way to the cross; the crowds who were with Him thought He was on His way to the kingship. That is why He spoke to them as He did. In the most vivid way possible He told them that the man who would follow Him was not on the way to worldly power and glory, but must be ready for a loyalty which would sacrifice the dearest things in life, even to the suffering which would be comparable to the agony of a man dying upon a cross.

This passage points up the fact that it is possible to be a follower of Jesus without being a disciple; to be a camp-follower without being a soldier of the King; to be a hanger-on in some great work without pulling one's weight.

It is the Christian's first duty to count the cost of following Christ. The tower which the man was going to build was probably a vineyard tower. It may have been a combination house and tower. Vineyards were often equipped with towers from which watch was kept against thieves who might steal the harvest.

An unfinished building is always a humiliating thing. In every sphere of life a man is called upon to count the cost. No man need become a student unless he will count the cost of learning. It is so with the Christian Way.

A man would be counted foolish indeed who started to build a house, or began any major enterprise without seriously considering every angle of the proposition. Any man of intelligence would carefully check his capital against the known necessary outlay, even providing for unexpected extra costs before committing himself to the project.

On the Minus Side

We learn from the Word of God that perfection of character is expected and demanded of every one who would claim the benefits that God holds in store for His children. But before making a definite commitment to enter the Christian Way, we want to know what this perfection of character involves. To obtain this knowledge we must "search the Scriptures."

In doing this we learn that the Christian must "cleanse [himself] from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (II Cor. 7:1); must abstain from foolish talking and jesting (Eph. 5:4); must give up doing the things he naturally would do (Gal. 5:17); must

(Continued on page 25)

TIMELY TOPICS

IT IS said that half the world go to bed hungry every night.

Today there is much discussion regarding the plight of millions of people in Africa, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand, who are hungry, suffering from malnutrition and dying from starvation. Many authorities who have studied the problem state that the population of this planet is increasing faster than the food supply. They feel that not many years hence the shortage of food will reach a state of crisis. The earth just cannot produce enough food to feed the population, they say, if it continues to increase at its present rate.

World Hunger

Whether the outlook is as gloomy as pictured we cannot say. All facts considered, there are many "ifs." And at best the picture is complicated. The causes of the problem are many and varied, among which we could list politics, greed, inefficient and traditional farming methods, obsolete equipment, food taboos of various kinds, improper and uneven distribution, inertia and ignorance. These causes could be remedied by man, if all were willing to cooperate and seek each other's good. But there are other causes beyond man's control, such as climatic conditions, diseases, natural pests, drought or the opposite, flooding.

America is blessed with an abundant supply of food, and no one need go hungry in most sections of this country. However, we should not be smug in our affluence and think that God has poured out a special blessing on the people of this country. As Christians we should be willing to share our abundance with other less fortunate nations.

Food is a basic necessity of all living creatures. To obtain food has been the cause of many wars. Hunger could be a contributing cause of the fear and perplexity predicted for the "last days." The Western world is concerned over the energy shortage. But a food shortage is much more serious. When a person is starving he will stop at nothing

to satisfy his hunger. As W. Stanley Mooneyham, president of *World Vision* said, "We cannot expect the third and fourth worlds to quietly and patiently starve to death while the rest of the world enjoys its affluence."

Christians should and must be willing to share their abundance with others, but there is little an individual can do to keep millions of people in another part of the world from starving. Knowing as we do the nearness of Christ's return, we can take comfort and rejoice in the prediction of Isaiah 23:18: "Her merchandise and her hire will be set apart to the Lord: it will not be stored up or hoarded, but her gain will be given to those who dwell in the presence of the Lord, to supply them with adequate food and elegant clothing" (The Berkeley Version).

The world of today is suffering from another shortage which gets practically no publicity but which is actually far more serious. While spiritual food would do a person no good without natural food, its lack will have serious—even fatal—consequences. In this case the "wealthy" nations are suffering just as much from malnutrition as the poorer nations. God has provided a bountiful supply of nourishing food which if accepted would make everyone spiritually strong and robust. Man in his ignorance imprisoned the prophets, persecuted the apostles and crucified God's Son. Men then tried to adulterate the Source, leaving only food of no spiritually nutritious value. Millions today are suffering from the effects of devitalized spiritual food being offered by nominal religions.

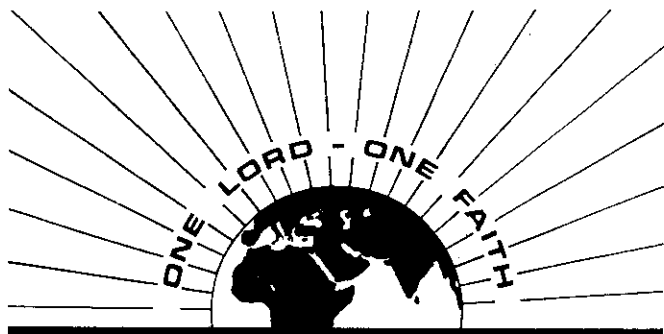
As serious-minded Christians we can rejoice in the fact that someday soon the prediction of Habakkuk will be fulfilled: "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14). ●●

Abib Is Coming...

The steady onward march of time is bringing us nearer and nearer to the beginning of another sacred New Year, Abib 1, which falls this year on April 12. It begins the evening of Friday, April 11, and ends the evening of Saturday, April 12.

The ancient Hebrew calendar being based on the lunar cycle, the new year commences with the first new moon after the spring equinox.

The arrival of Abib means for the members of the Megiddo Church a double celebration—the recognition of another New Year, and the anniversary of the birth of our Coming King, Jesus Christ.



THE BIBLE, What Is In It For US?

Are you interested in learning the basics of true Bible belief? Is its teaching new to you? Follow this series, of which this is Part 3, and learn why we are here and what our religion is all about. Or if you are already committed to God and His plan, refresh yourself in the plan and purpose of it all—it will help you strengthen your faith and give you renewed impetus to serve God in obedience.

The Bible is reliable. We can depend on its teachings, as is amply proven by fulfilled and fulfilling prophecies. One of the most striking examples of this fact is the prophecy contained in the book of Daniel. You can read about it in Daniel 2. The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar had a God-inspired dream, in which he saw a great image, having a head "of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay" (Dan. 2:32-33).

Now all kinds of so-called "prophets" and "wise men" have been telling visions and dreams through the ages. What makes those in the Bible *different*? The difference lies in the *real meaning* and certain fulfillment which always accompanied Bible prophecies—because they are revelations from God and not imaginations of men.

The King called upon Daniel to reveal and interpret the unusual dream. Read the explanation which follows in Daniel 2 (verses 36-45). "Thou art this head of gold," he told the Babylonian king. But Babylon was not to be the dominant nation forever. "After thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee," the prophecy continues, and it describes what was the kingdom of Medo-Persia. But this kingdom was also to fall in due time, and a

third kingdom "of brass," the kingdom of Greece, was to replace it. Again the kingdom of Greece was not to be supreme forever—it would fall before a "fourth" kingdom "strong as iron," the Roman Empire.

History confirms that these kingdoms *did* rise and fall, just as the Prophet said they would, and the Prophet spoke these words when only the *first* of these world kingdoms was in existence. What better evidence could we find of the certainty of Bible prophecies! The God who can foretell the future of nations accurately can also be depended upon to reveal other events, which we may know will most certainly come to pass as predicted. This is the whole purpose of the Bible's predictions—to give us faith. The Bible itself presents this challenge to us: "How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken?" it asks. And the answer: "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken" (Deut. 18:21-22).

Fulfilled prophecy gives us faith and confidence in the God who caused it to be written.

But there is more in the prophecy in Daniel than we have mentioned. The Prophet went on to tell of a fifth world kingdom, represented in the vision as a "stone . . . cut out of the mountain without hands," which struck the feet of the image and "brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold," all the kingdoms of men, and "became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

What is this fifth kingdom? The Prophet tells us plainly: "In the days of these kings [when their days are completed] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: . . . and it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44).

Here is a prophecy which affects every one of us. And in view of the fact that the four previous kingdoms rose and fell just as predicted, we may have full confidence that this fifth kingdom, the Kingdom of Christ, will some day be established upon earth, just as the Bible says it will be.

This is the purpose for which the Bible has been given to us: to tell us of the plan of God for this earth and for mankind. God has plans for His creation, and He wants us to know about them so that we may become part of His plans when that fifth world Kingdom fills the earth.

What can we learn from the Bible about God's plans? We can learn, first of all, what God is doing with this planet we call earth, and we can learn how we can be a part of that great work.

The Bible informs us that God has an overall purpose in all His creative work. Speaking of the

creation of the earth and men upon it, the prophet Isaiah wrote, "He created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:18). Inhabited by whom? by men and women who live, some in poverty and some in wealth; some in hunger and want and some in abundance; some in constant mischief and some in respectable community life; some in misery and sickness and some in abounding health? No, no, NO! God is going to have a world where *all* who live will enjoy peace and abounding prosperity.

The Bible is filled with prophecies that tell of the happy life people will enjoy who will be privileged to live in the new age after God's Kingdom is set up. There will be:

Universal prosperity: "They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Isa. 65:21-22).

Universal peace: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isa. 32:17-18).

No more sickness: "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick" (Isa. 33:24).

No more war and bloodshed: "They [the nations] shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2:4).

No more crime or injury: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9).

No more poverty: "And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing" (Isa. 23:18).

No more injustice and oppression of innocent people: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice..." (Jer. 23:5).

One worldwide, stable government: "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one" (Zech. 14:9).

In our next discussion we will learn more about how God will bring all this to pass.●●

March, 1975

Kathy Kandor's Korner

Grow Up!

"EVERY time I ask Uncle Jim a question, his answer is, 'Oh, grow up!'"

My twelve-year-old Janet gets along well with her uncle, but his bits of fatherly advice strike hard occasionally.

"Every time, Janet?"

"Well-I-I-I-I, Mom, you know. But how can I grow any faster? I can live only one day at a time, and there's *nothing* I can do to grow taller *faster*!" Her voice was filled with youthful distress.

"Janet, dear, your Uncle Jim isn't blaming you because you are short. When we tell someone to grow up, we are talking about certain attitudes and skills and mental processes that we have to learn with experience and training."

"Uncle Jim thinks I ask such childish questions. But how am I going to learn if I don't ask questions?"

I tried to reason with Janet. But her mood hadn't changed much as she stomped grumpily upstairs to finish her homework—clear evidence of her immaturity.

But I fell to thinking how much the Bible has to say about the need for all of us to grow up—spiritually. Verses went through my mind, like that one in the Second Epistle of Peter: "But *grow* in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18). Or that one in Ephesians 4: "... Be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men... But speaking the truth in love, may *grow up* into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:14-15).

"Grow up"—how much it means for all of us.

It means eating grown-up's food. Warm milk and strained vegetables are fine for babies. But
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“WE are what we think” is a phrase we have all heard. We make life what we believe it to be. If we think happy thoughts, we are happy; if we are always dwelling on the inconveniences and the negative aspects of our lives, we make ourselves quite miserable.

Expecting to find something worthwhile in every situation is one long step toward a better life for each of us. We cannot make a bad situation better by continuing to think how bad it is; this often makes it worse.

A university professor once asked his class members to try a practical experiment. He divided the class into two groups. One group was to give all the reasons they could imagine why the day was a bad one—it was cold, rainy, the traffic was congested, and so on. The other group was to talk about the good elements—it was not so hot, the

know what they are and set positive goals for ourselves. We should think about our objectives every day and create concrete mental images of the goal as if we had already achieved it. When we concentrate on what we expect to happen, we begin to act as though it had happened. We walk, talk and act more confidently when we think success.

Think of David as he walked out in front of Goliath. He went right on and faced the giant as if he were a man Goliath's own size and strength. David knew that with God's help he could conquer the giant, just as he had overcome the lion and the bear. David's only advantage over the other men in Israel's army was his faith in God and his determination that the slanderous giant should no longer live.

Gideon also had faith that with God's help he and his small army of three hundred men could

We Are What We Think

rain was needed, many people were benefiting from the good roads to drive on, and so on.

The members of each group discussed their viewpoint and then presented it to the class. After the “bad ones” talked, it seemed like a terrible day; but after the optimists discussed their feelings, it seemed like a wonderful day.

What we think has a definite effect on our life and health. Doctors recognize the sanguine effects of positive thinking when one is sick. Surgeons sometimes postpone surgery when a patient has the feeling that he may not live. The patient's confidence must be bolstered before the surgery can be performed.

Tribal natives have been known to die after becoming convinced that they would. Autopsies disclose no reason for such deaths. Strong belief by natives that spirits would kill them apparently caused it.

If we can affect our circumstances by changing our thoughts about them, why not practice it? Look on the positive of each so-called problem. For every problem is an opportunity in disguise, an opportunity for spiritual growth, if we believe it so and make use of it accordingly.

We have to train ourselves to look at our troubles objectively. If we are to overcome them, we must

conquer the vast army of the Midianites and the Amalekites. God had given him special signs; but there were so many enemy soldiers that the Bible says they were like grasshoppers for multitude. If Gideon's thoughts had not been right, his heart could have been filled with fear at the sight. But God had told him it could be done, and Gideon believed God and went ahead and did it.

God has promised to help us, too. He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear. But it is up to us to take the initiative in our fight with sin. We have to make up our minds that no matter how hard it appears to overcome some sin, with God's help we *can* and *will* do it. Thinking that we cannot overcome is merely another way of saying that we are unwilling to try.

If we are to overcome we must not concentrate on what we have already accomplished but keep looking at our goal.

There is much a positive attitude can do for us both to improve our life here and now and to help us in gaining that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. We are happier, our associates are happier, and we get much more accomplished both in the physical and spiritual work if we are looking on the bright side and growing from each experience life has to offer. ●●

--JESUS DID IT!

PETER sat looking across the shining blue waters of the Sea of Galilee silently—thinking—for a long time. Why did he doubt? Why had he *ever* doubted the Master? Of course, that had been his nature ever since he could remember. He always had to have proof, always had to be shown to believe. It seemed that the other apostles did not have the doubts that kept coming into his mind. Well . . . Thomas was an exception. He had voiced his doubts about things sometimes.

But the events of the last few days had indelibly burned themselves into Peter's mind. He kept reviewing them again and again so he would never forget them as long as he lived. So many miracles had been performed before his very eyes since he had become a follower of this great new Teacher. Deep within himself he knew and was thoroughly convinced that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah.

Only a few days ago, Peter had been with Jesus and the other disciples listening with keen attention as Jesus had taught the multitude. There had been over 5,000 men, besides women and children in that crowd; and when evening drew near, Jesus had fed them all with only five barley loaves and two small fishes. Now that was a miracle that he had *seen*, and he had believed with all his heart (or so he thought). No one else could do the things that Jesus did.

Then, that very evening Jesus had instructed the disciples to get into their boat and go across the lake. They obeyed, but soon darkness fell and a fierce wind arose. The waves dashed higher and higher as the disciples struggled to keep the boat upright on the rough water. With their small strength they battled the wind and the waves for

what seemed almost an eternity. Their muscles ached and their bodies were tired, but they dared not relax their efforts; to do so could mean certain death for all of them.

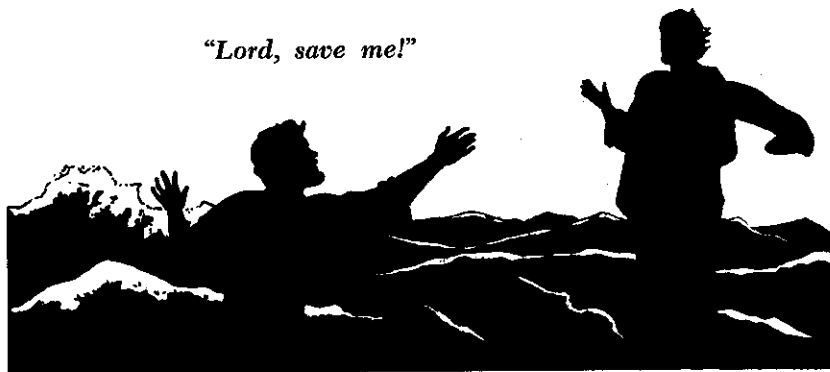
Then, all of a sudden, they saw the Master walking toward them—on the water! Could it possibly be? None of them had ever seen anything like that happen before! It must be a spirit! It couldn't be, it simply couldn't be Jesus, walking calmly and confidently out there among the angry waves. The disciples cried out in terror. Jesus' reply floated across the troubled waters to them, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." For a moment the disciples were silent, each busy with the thoughts that were rushing through his mind. Peter was the first to speak. How well he remembered his words! "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." And Jesus had answered simply, "Come." Peter was the impetuous type, and in a moment he was over the side of the boat. He was walking on the water! He was walking directly toward Jesus! Peter would never forget the thrill that he had felt within his being as he confidently and trustfully took one step after another on the rough waters. What pleasure it was!

But then, Peter had taken his eyes off the Master. He was now looking at the big waves and thinking of the fierceness of the wind. What if a big wave broke over him? All of a sudden he was afraid; and immediately he felt himself beginning to sink into the sea. Terrified, he called out, "Lord, save me." Jesus reached out His hand and caught hold of Peter. Then He spoke those words that Peter would never forget, "Oh, you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Yes, that had been Peter's problem. He had doubted. He became afraid as the big waves rolled toward him; they had diverted his attention from the Master. Jesus and Peter both climbed into the boat and the wind immediately ceased. That had been another miracle!

Peter's doubts vanished.

Now, as Peter reflected, he recalled all these things. Yes, these things had *actually happened*. He had seen them with his own eyes, he had actually experienced Jesus' power himself as he walked on the water. He had seen the sea grow calm. Jesus was reminding him of his weakness when He had said, "Oh, you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Yes, Jesus was aware of Peter's weakness and now Peter was more aware of it, too. He determined that he would never doubt his Master again. He might fail occasionally, but

"Lord, save me!"



his new determination would keep him trying, trying to overcome that failing.

As Peter slowly arose to his feet, he spoke aloud to himself. "Yes, Peter, you have been a doubter too long. It is time now for you to begin having implicit faith in the One whom you know to be a teacher sent of God."

We know that Peter kept working with his innermost self and became a true and faithful believer, worthy of becoming a great leader and teacher in the early Church. But, what of us? Are we doubters? If so, why not let Jesus' words ring down through the ages to us, "Oh, you of little faith." Our faith should not—must not—be weak. We have too much evidence to keep our faith strong and abiding.

May the "miracles" of fulfilled prophecy that are constantly being unfolded before our eyes become the "miracle" that will cause our faith to become so strong that nothing can destroy it. ••

THINK!

1. Now in this place there was much green grass,
And five thousand men sat down en masse.
Then Jesus gave thanks for fishes and bread,
From a meager lunch He the multitude fed.
And all the five thousand were full satisfied.
How many baskets were gathered beside?
2. A ruler of the Jews was sad one day;
His daughter of twelve had passed away;
None in the synagogue could him console,
But the Lord of Life soon restored her whole!
In all the land went forth this fame.
Pray tell, what was the father's name?
3. This man had been dead for fully four days,
And friends were talking in consoling ways;
But the Master gave thanks, then loudly cried,
"Come forth"—and the dead man stood by His side.
They loosened his grave clothes and let him go.
Now tell who he was, if you do know?
4. "Put thy sword in its place," the Master said
When Peter cut an ear from another man's head.
This enemy's ear Jesus healed right then,

And taught we should never do violence to men.
But what was the name of this wicked man
Who helped carry out a still more wicked plan?

5. A woman had suffered for twelve long years;
At times she may have succumbed to tears;
She heard that the Master could heal all such;
Through the crowd she pressed His garment
to touch.
His healing power she felt right away,
Though to the physicians of that day,
She had given—for nought—how very much
pay?
6. The fiercest demoniac Christ met one day;
The people were frightened to pass that way;
That unclean spirit Jesus sent away,
And in his "right mind" the man lived from
that day.
In what country was Jesus for this man's sake?
(Recall that He'd crossed over Galilee's lake).
7. A woman was sick with a very great fever;
Jesus touched her hand, and it did leave her.
She went at once about her work,
Certainly she was not one to shirk.
Who was this woman's son-in-law?
He the transfiguration saw!
8. A nobleman's son was very sick;
The father asked Jesus to come most quick.
Jesus went not, but answered his plea,
"Your son is well, go home and see."
Many miracles did Jesus in Galilee;
Was this one the second, or number three?

Answers

1. Twelve (John 6:13)
2. Jairus (Mark 5:22)
3. Lazarus (John 11:43)
4. Malchus (John 18:10)
5. All she had (Mark 5:26)
6. The country of the Gadarenes (Mark 5:1)
7. Peter (Matt. 8:14; 17:1-2)
8. The Second (John 4:54).

It is more difficult to make a half-hearted Christian effort than a completely dedicated one. The half-hearted man is constantly vacillating between the appeal of a thoroughly Christian life and the deadening drag of compromise and sub-Christian living. He never really enjoys either. He is like a man driving two horses that want to run off in opposite directions. The strain is terrible.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

World Religions

RELIGION is not a dead issue. It is a living element in today's world. Religion deals with the things that matter most. What is it that matters most? For the majority, it is life itself.

Men have always had an inborn desire to live as long as possible, to find some means to extend life. In an effort to find life beyond death, men have sought the aid of spirits, gods of their own imagination, sacrifices, witchcraft and magic, as well as the true God.

For the Christian, religion begins with God. But only one third of the world's population is Christian, thus we have many forms of religion. Some form of religion or worship can be found in the earliest records of mankind. What they worship and why depends upon their race, their background and the culture under which they have been educated.

Over the years, religious leaders have influenced the lives of many. Arnold Toynbee, the noted historian, lists as the greatest benefactors of the living generation of mankind such religious teachers as Confucius, the Buddha, Zoroaster, Mohammed and Socrates along with Jesus and the prophets of Israel and Judah. In the mind of the Christian, the words of the Buddha, Mohammed and other religious leaders are not to be compared with the words of the prophets and Jesus, but they have had an undeniable impact on many.

In the words of the poet, it used to be

"East is east, and West is west,

And never the twain shall meet,"

but modern technology has changed this. Easterners go West and Westerners go East—and they meet every day. Because of this, the impact of the Buddha, Mohammed and the Hindus, is being felt even in our own nation. We thus believe it profitable for us to briefly study these other faiths that we may better appreciate the Christian faith. Observing the weaknesses of other faiths should serve to strengthen the faith of the true Christian.

The two world religions which we have studied contrast sharply with the Christian religion in

their basic concept of man's salvation. Both Hinduism and Buddhism see life as a sort of hopeless state of existence and salvation as an escape from existence. To them life is but a series of sufferings ending in death, while for the Christian this life is a field for spiritual attainment and a place to prepare for a better life in the future. "Birth is suffering; decay is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are suffering; not to get what one desires is suffering," said the Buddha.

It is this bleak outlook on life that leads to the acceptance of such a doctrine as the transmigration of souls—the hapless believer hopes to find something in a future life that he has been unable to find in this present life. It is not surprising that such a belief has found wide acceptance in that part of the world where the majority have very little of this world's goods and often not even enough to eat.

IV. ZEN BUDDHISM

Zen Buddhism, an offshoot of Buddhism, combined with the mysticism of Hinduism, has found its way to our shores in recent years where it has been embraced by a considerable number of intellectuals, professionals and not a few laymen. The majority of Zennists are to be found in the Far East, particularly in China, but whether or not they are able to practice their religion under the Communist regime is questionable.

Zen is a contemplative sect, supposedly instituted by the Buddha himself by the simple act of looking intently at a flower without speaking. It was from this act of "profound contemplation" that Zen Buddhism began.

Followers of Zen believe that enlightenment comes from a sudden flash of intuition during periods of "profound contemplation," meditation periods that may add up to years. They place little value on books, discussion or preaching, having no fixed creed or scripture. Zen gives a psychical character to religion.

Religion, according to Zen, is a matter of the mind. Trainees sit for endless hours of silent meditation. (A Chinese Emperor is said to have sat

facing a wall the greater part of his waking hours for nine years trying to understand the secret of the faith.) This meditation must be done in the proper posture (cross-legged on a cushion on the floor, with hands, feet, body, head—even the tongue placed in a prescribed position), with the breathing regulated, the gaze fixed on a single spot. Thought is to be consciously dismissed from the mind.

"Banish thoughts of recollection, perception, and contemplation," says the manual. "Make no distinctions between right and wrong. Have no desire, be eager, . . . yet become as a dead tree. Do not doze. . . . Only sit in perfect meditation until you win enlightenment." Winning "enlightenment" may take years of preparatory meditation and schooling, sitting hour after hour, day after day, year after year, before the intuitive power is developed.

Part of the schooling includes seeking to answer unfathomable riddles. Here is one example: "We are all familiar with the sound of two hands clapping. What is the sound of one hand?" (If you protest that one hand can't clap, you go back to the foot of the class.) Such problems are said to be for the sake of demonstrating that solutions "do not come at last by thinking."

The goal of Zen meditation is to achieve what is described as "an intuitive experience" called *satori*, "a mystical experience which . . . brings joy, a feeling of oneness with all things and a heightened sense of reality." Beyond the initial experience the goal is to seek for further enlightenment until the candidate sees all things in a new perspective.

Unlike the parent Hindus and nominal Buddhists, Zennists see life as basically good. For them (after achieving enlightenment) the division between life and death disappears. Says one writer, "When this realization is completely achieved, never again can one feel that one's individual death brings an end to life. One has lived from an endless past and will live into an endless future. . . . At this very moment one partakes of Eternal life—blissful, luminous, pure."

A Zennist who has achieved the desired end describes his experience:

"Ztt! I entered. I lost the boundary of my physical body. I had my skin, of course, but I felt I was standing in the center of the cosmos. . . . I saw people coming toward me, but all were the same man. All were myself. I had never known this world before. I had believed that I was created, but now I must change my opinion: I was never created: I was the cosmos; no individual . . . existed."

A. Zen vs. the Scriptures

Zen Buddhism is yet another of the mystical,

fanciful, state-of-the-mind religions of the East. It contains all the mysticism of India, plus rituals for performing even the commonest of everyday tasks such as gardening and housekeeping. Tea drinking is done following a very elaborate ritual, all a part of the Zen religion.

Zen bears not the least resemblance to the Christian faith. It offers nothing except a supposedly blissful mental state in this life, somehow mysteriously connected to an imaginary existence beyond death. It places no dependence on any higher power and worships no god but self. It offers no hope of salvation, no resurrection from the grave.

We will compare some of the major points with the Scriptures:

1. Thoughtless meditation. According to Zen, one should spend hours in thoughtless meditation, contemplative silence. Such senseless, purposeless activity is forbidden the Christian. The Christian is exhorted to redeem the time (Eph. 5:15-16); to study (II Tim. 2:15); to meditate, not on nothing, but on God's word, His precepts and promises (I Tim. 4:15). "O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day. . . . thy testimonies are my meditation," cried the Psalmist (119:97, 99).

To become a true Christian requires the application of all one's mental powers; nothing is gained by removing all conscious thought.

2. Religion, a "matter of the mind"? Religion must begin in the mind, but it must go beyond the mental state, else it is to no avail (John 13:17). To be a Christian requires first a knowledge of what God demands, then **that knowledge must be put into practice in our everyday lives—not by following prescribed rituals, but in the mundane activities of ordinary living. Every thought, word and deed must be consciously controlled to conform to God's law (II Cor. 10:5).** Such control comes from the mind, the brain, but not by emptying it of all conscious thought.

3. God or self? A religion that glorifies self, that makes self the center of one's own universe, is far removed from the religion of the prophets, apostles and Jesus. **Religion, to be of value, must begin and end with God. Without God we could not exist; He controls the universe, even the air we breathe (Job 34: 14-15; Acts 17:24-25).** To leave out God is to leave out all. There is no other way to gain life beyond this mortal span but through the knowledge of God and His Son, Jesus. The Zennist concept of passing from life to death is much like the Hindu and Buddhist concept of the transmigration of souls, based on the immortal soul theory. And it is only a "theory," without Biblical or scientific support. Remove this false doctrine, and the life of the

Zennist ends in the grave, for "this is the place of him that knoweth not God" (Job 18:21).

V. ISLAM—THE MOSLEM FAITH

"La il-a-ha- il-la 'llahu; Mu-ham-mad ra-su-lu 'llah! La il-a-ha- il-la 'llahu; Mu-ham-mad ra-su-lu 'llah!" These Arabic words are repeated over and over as the class carefully pronounces each syllable after their teacher. The teacher is dressed in Moslem dress—a long robe and a turban. The class consists of young and old, black and white, but all are intensely interested in their instruction.

The scene is not in Mecca or some other Arabian city, but within the borders of our own country. Such classes are being conducted daily in some of our largest cities by representatives of the faith known as **Islam**. The Arabic word **Islam** means "submission," and is the faith of the **Moslems**, the title for the followers of **Mohammed (or Muhammad)**.

These Arabic words quoted above represent the Islamic call to prayer, a call instituted by Mohammed in the seventh century because he disliked the pealing of church bells. To learn and repeat these words in Arabic at least once daily is known as the first of the "Five Pillars of Islam." Translated into English, the words mean, "There is no God but Allah; Mohammed is Allah's prophet."

Because of the missionary character of Islam, we have chosen to study it next in our series of World Religions.

A. The Founding of Islam

Mohammed, or Muhammad, the founder of Islam was born about 570 years after Christ in Mecca, a city in southern Arabia, now known as Saudi Arabia. Mecca was the religious headquarters of the Arabs, a thoroughly paganized city. The Arabs were a very superstitious people and their religion at that time entirely pagan, consisting of the worship of innumerable "desert spirits." Gods were likewise numerous, each tribe having its own.

Mohammed's parents were of a poor tribe and he grew up as a shepherd and trader. He later became a camel driver, and as he traveled the western trade routes of the caravans he managed to become acquainted with both Jews and Christians. (The influence of both is evident in the Koran, the scriptures of Islam.) It was not until he reached middle age that he felt himself called to religious service. By his own declaration, he was called to be a prophet by the angel Gabriel, with the words: "Thou art the man. Thou art the new prophet of Allah [Arabic for "the god"], to convert the people of Arabia."

His first twelve years of preaching met with little success in paganized Mecca, his home city. The inhabitants were hostile toward him because he interfered with their religious customs. He was forced to flee for his life and moved his headquarters some 250 miles northward to the city now known as Medina. Here he was welcomed and his new doctrine flourished.

Mohammed was a man with much religious zeal and a powerful leader. According to one source, "he was a child of his age and race—ruthless and cruel as well as brave, and no better in his moral standards than other Arabs of his day." These characteristics were evidenced in his willingness to attack desert caravans and wandering shepherd tribes when he was short of funds and supplies.

Mohammed's motives were political as well as religious. History records that he made himself a military dictator by constant fighting. Eight years after leaving Mecca he returned with his army and compelled them to surrender the city to him. Two years later he died.

In his last years, "Mohammed had increasingly come to wield the sword of a militant ruler and to head the affairs of an aggressive political state, conscious of its role in history." Within a year after his death, the military forces of Islam, acting on the words of the Koran, "Fight the unbelievers until they pay tribute; truly Allah loves those who fight in his cause," invaded a world that before had hardly known of its existence.

They carried out one of the greatest military crusades of history—and in the name of religion. In less than twenty years they conquered the entire Persian Empire, and in a little more than 100 years they conquered all of northern Africa, crossed the Mediterranean at Gibraltar to conquer Spain and Portugal and to push far into France. Here they were doomed to defeat, suffering great losses at the famous Battle of Tours, a defeat that saved Europe from conquest by Islam.

Today there are more than half a billion members of Islam throughout the world. Mosques and minarets rise in a far-flung spiritual empire, from the Philippines to the United States and from Russia to South Africa. In growth and development Islam leads every other living religion with the exception of Christianity. It is missionary-minded, being the chief rival of Christianity in the mission field, particularly in Africa and India.

B. Principal Beliefs of Islam

Islam is definitely a "this-worldly" religion with very little stress laid upon the future. For its millions it is the "Kingdom of God on earth." Moslems

preach a universal brotherhood of all believers with the expressed aim of converting the world for Islam. They claim to worship the true God whom they call "Allah" in their native tongue. Islam has no educated clergy or priestly caste. Any member can become a leader of mosque services without formal training.

1. The "Five Pillars of Islam." All Moslems are bound to comply with the "five pillars": profession of faith, almsgiving, fast, pilgrimage and worship. The "**profession of faith**" consists of reciting in Arabic the words given at the beginning of this section. This must be done at least once daily. **Almsgiving** consists of giving one fifth of his earnings to feed the poor.

Fasting is done for the month of Ramadan each year. The faithful Moslem will neither eat nor drink during the daylight hours during this month. He will limit his eating to the hours of darkness, eating moderately. **Worship** demanded is to answer the call to prayer five times daily, always facing Mecca; the **pilgrimage** is to be made to Mecca, Islam's "holy city," once in a lifetime. If one is not physically able to go, another must be sent in his place. All five duties are considered sacred.

2. The Koran, Islam's scriptures. Mohammed, Islam's founder, claimed to have received his teachings direct from God through the angel Gabriel. Because Mohammed could neither read nor write, none of his teachings were written down until after his death. The first book of these teachings was compiled within a year after his death, but it was twelve years before the Koran was put into its present form.

Moslems regard the Koran as infallible, and the book claims for itself: "No doubt is there about this Book," and again, "Whatever verses we cancel, or cause thee to forget, we bring a better or its like" (2:1, 100). And cancellations there are—to correct contradictions.

C. Islam vs. the Scriptures

Islamic beliefs are drawn entirely from the Koran, a collection of the teachings of Mohammed assembled after his death as explained above. Mohammed had been exposed to both Christian and Jewish teachings, and his words reflect this contact. However, his knowledge of Bible narratives was quite inaccurate and his recounting of them is more of a parody than a retelling. Mohammed uses characters by the same name as those in the Bible, but his accounts are often incomplete or have different settings.

The Koran contains some good moral teachings and its influence on the Arab world has been a

civilizing one. **But the book lacks the stamp of divinity of the Holy Bible. It is obviously the work of man and not God.**

1. The inspiration of the Scriptures. Islam can offer no proof that its scriptures, the Koran, are inspired. **There is abundant proof that the Holy Bible is inspired.** God often sent instant proof of His words at the time they were spoken. Consider the Red Sea crossing, the word given on Mt. Sinai, the cleaving of the earth that destroyed Korah and his followers, the rain in the harvest season in the time of Samuel, and the scene on Mt. Carmel between Elijah and the prophets of Baal.

And in the New Testament there was the voice that spoke from heaven identifying Jesus as the Son of God, the earthquake when He was crucified, the Resurrection and the angels at the tomb afterwards, the earthquake that freed Paul and Silas from prison, the angel that led Peter out of the prison and the angel that stood by Paul on board a sinking ship.

Many, many more could be named to prove that God was behind the great work that was being carried out in His name at that time. And in addition we have numerous fulfilled prophecies to prove the Bible true.

2. Contradictions and corrections. Infidels and agnostics may claim that the Bible contains both, **but we firmly believe that it contains neither.** The Koran admittedly contains both. Consider the command concerning marriage. In one instance it says, "if you cannot deal equitably and justly with more than one wife, you shall marry only one," and in another verse it says, "You may marry two, three, or four wives, but not more." And Mohammed, the founder of the faith, had eleven! **God never applied a command to His people that He did not apply to its leaders!** Mohammed was a prophet only by his own declaration; he expressed his own thoughts, as in his descriptions of paradise and hell:

"The faithful believers shall lie forever in gardens of bliss...no headache shall they feel... they shall have fruits and fowl as they desire... The wicked unbelievers shall broil in hell, and an ill resting-place shall it be. Sheets of fire shall encompass them..."

A righteous God would not subject the most wicked to such a torture. These are the words of a man, not God.

*Reprints of these studies are available
upon request.*

To Wait or To Work?

WHICH is better—to serve God now, or to wait until Christ comes?

This is the question of a friend, who has written us the following:

“Why is it that when Christ returns, the laborers who have tried to live right but are found imperfect will be destroyed, while the sinners who have not tried will not be destroyed but will be given a chance to live during the Millennium when it will be easy to live right and all people will have true knowledge and understanding and ‘all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest’ (Heb. 8:11)?

“It does not seem fair that the servants who tried but are imperfect will be destroyed while the sinners get to live during a period when they will really understand and find the Lord, when people’s eyes are opened and righteousness flourishes.

“Would it not be better to not try to live right currently, than to try and to be found wanting? Wouldn’t it be better to wait until Christ comes?”

The conclusion does seem reasonable at first thought. For example, say Mr. A decides to serve the Lord. He makes a valiant beginning, but fails to follow through with a complete surrender. If the same Mr. A were to postpone his decision until Christ arrives, then turn and serve God during the Millennium, he might succeed and be worthy of eternal life because conditions then will be so greatly improved.

However, there are a few fundamental points we are overlooking. The first is the uncertainty of our mortal life. How can we know that we will be living when Christ comes? God gives us this present life, but with it comes no guarantee of its duration. And if we fail to use the life we have to the best of our spiritual ability, God is under no obligation to extend it or to protect us until the day of Christ arrives. And should we die while still undecided, we shall be eternally lost; God offers no second chance after a resurrection.

Only those who are living when Christ comes will be given the opportunity of submitting and

turning to God and thus be granted life during the Millennium in which to prepare themselves for the eternal blessings. Should we plan to continue in sin now and turn when Christ comes, we *could* miss out *completely*. For unless we are among those who “fear him,” we do not have the promise of the Lord’s protecting care even now (Ps. 34:7). Our life could be terminated at any time by sickness, accident, etc., and we would have no chance at all for future salvation—and the fault would be all ours, not God’s.

Another fundamental principle with God is that knowledge always brings responsibility. God does not provide His saving knowledge for men to take or leave at their whim. Jesus said plainly, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin” (John 15:22). We need to remember that it is God who is behind the entire plan—dispensing the knowledge, regulating working conditions, length of working day, advantages, disadvantages, etc. If we were not *able* to complete the work under the conditions He provides at the time He makes His knowledge known to us, He would withhold His knowledge until the time was right. He is not pressed for time, nor is He short of human hands to help Him in His work. Referring again to our opening illustration, we might say that if Mr. A were not able to do the work fully during the more difficult period, God would not have given it to him to do. We can be sure God knows what He is doing, though with our limited perspective it is sometimes difficult for us to understand. He is merciful and He is just. We must learn to ask with Abraham, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” and know that the answer is a positive “yes.” God in His infinite wisdom can know who will work best under what conditions, and He will be able to see that those people live at the right time. How else could He have “mercy” that reaches “from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him”? (Ps. 103:17-18).

The Bible says also, “Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (II Cor. 6:2). When God makes His knowledge known to us, He expects us to use it—*now!*

There is yet another point involved in the question of whether we should work or wait for the

New Age. Two different groups of people are involved in the Lord's service. The working day of the first group, those called out to be co-rulers with Christ in His Kingdom, closes with the advent of Christ. The working day of the second group, those from among whom will be chosen the populace of the Kingdom, will extend through the Millennial reign of Christ. Hence no person could belong to both groups. If his working time is complete before the coming of Christ, he will belong to the first group. If he has not had sufficient time before the beginning of the New Age, God will see that that person has the time he needs for service during the Millennium.

Will not the living conditions of the second group be far superior to those experienced by the first? They will. The establishing of the Kingdom of Christ upon earth will mean tremendous improvements in society, in government, in law and order, in education, and every aspect of life. That is why it will be a "new world." All this will mean a somewhat easier training course for the second group, in contrast to the severe testings of faith endured by those of the first group. But here again God is just—the reward of the first group will be the greater. All members of both groups will have attained the same standard of moral perfection through growth, and all will be made immortal before the Lord's program upon earth is complete. The first group will have the honor of sitting with Christ in His seat of authority (Rev. 3:21) and being His co-rulers (Rev. 14:1; 5:9-10). The second group will compose the populace of the earth, who shall fill the world with God's glory. Their reward, though abundant and everlasting, will be a lesser position.

Now let us return to our friend's question. Is the sinner who repents and turns when Christ comes better off than the man who has been serving God in this age imperfectly?

The answer to this question depends on the probation day of each individual. A man's status in the sight of God is determined at the end of his course, not at any time during the running. It is he who "shall endure unto the end" who shall be "saved" (Matt. 24:13). If God sees that one has had sufficient time to perfect his service in this age, that man's working day will end with the advent of Christ; and if that man is found imperfect, he will be among the unfaithful. If the sinner, who has not known previously of God or His plan, turns to Christ as a result of His judgments in the earth, he will be given his day of probation during the Millennium; and it will be easier than that of the man who lives during this age. If he uses his time

to overcome his evil tendencies and serves God wholeheartedly, he may be eligible for life eternal at the judgment at the end of the Millennium and will become one of the immortal inhabitants of the Kingdom.

The sinner "who repents and turns when Christ comes" will not be unacceptable because of his evil past; God does not hold against us the wrong we do when we are not subject to His laws—if we turn from the evil and do that which is right. His policy is one of mercy and fair dealing: "When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby" (Ezek. 33:18-19).

What about the man who continues to serve God during this age, but serves imperfectly, or as is recorded of one of the kings, does "that which [is] right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart" (II Chron. 25:2)?

Here again God's plan is fair and just. His arrangement with the children of men is to give every man "according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). Though none of us would aspire to such an imperfect record, or seek to merit anything less than the fullest reward, God foreknew that not everyone would reach the mark. And He has provided for such. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7-8). This is His eternal principle. For "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love" (Heb. 6:10).

Just how God will manage this part of the program is not revealed, but we can know He will do it right. He always gives "more than our iniquities deserve." The Second Epistle of John (verse 8) admonishes us to work for the "full" reward, which suggests a *partial* reward for a *partial* service. No one will reap "life everlasting" who has not sown fully "to the Spirit"; who has not achieved the absolute "purity of heart" God requires. The less-than-perfect work will receive some form of temporary blessing. But it will be only temporary and extremely limited, in comparison with the great reward of immortality; for the Lord comes to "execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds" (Jude 15). When a man has promised to serve God fully, he has placed himself under a covenant from which there is no escape or release. He must either live according to his agreement, or pay the consequences.

But when we are dealing with God, we may be
(Continued on page 25)

You are calling our Blessed Savior a liar, and your faith is not founded on the Bible which I read. My Bible tells of Lucifer, a beautiful angel, rebelling against God, and drawing one third of the angels with him. Jesus is quoted speaking of casting out demons, and they spoke to Him also. He gave His apostles power to heal the sick and cast out demons in His name.

Apparently you are not Christians. I pray the Holy Spirit will enlighten you before it is too late.

Mrs. E, San Leandro, Calif.

NOTE: *Who is Lucifer? See the January, 1975 issue of the Megiddo Message: "Are Devils Fallen Angels?" Read Isaiah 14 carefully, and you will find it is a "proverb against the king of Babylon" who was high in authority, not any "beautiful angel" of heaven.*

—EDITOR.

Your theory that Satan and demons do not exist, does not hold water. Too much Bible evidence to the contrary!

Believe every word of the Bible. Don't try to add to it, or take from it. The Bible is true, and demons are real.

If spirit beings good and evil did not exist, then the Bible wouldn't mention them. Look in your concordance and see how many times Satan and demons are used.

Be sure the Bible is the very Word and Mind of God. Be sure there are spirits—there is spirit warfare going on this very moment!

Mr. L. Wilkes-Barre, Penna.

If devils, demons in more contemporary translations, are only personifications of evil or symbols of the lust within man, how are we to believe that Jesus cast them out of the two men of Gergesenes? (Matthew 8).

You state that your magazine is published to disseminate Bible truth. Why don't you do so?

Mr. C, Trenton, New Jersey

NOTE: *Our friend should observe that following the miracle of Jesus' casting the demons out of the two men we read that "the man, out of whom the devils were departed" was "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind" (Luke 8:35). He had been insane, and Jesus had healed the insanity. The ancient people in general connected disease and insanity with what they believed to be demons. They even named the demons according to the particular disease each was supposed to cause. And if a disease was what we would call "contagious," they believed in a demon which could travel from one person to another and possess both. Jesus simply healed the sickness, and the "demon" was "gone out." —EDITOR.*

March, 1975

Concerning Demons

THIS is an age of phenomenal scientific progress, together with almost unbelievable mental stagnation. Master minds penetrate deeper and deeper into the mysteries of space, while millions grovel in the darkness of medieval superstition in matters of religion, tracing evil and sin to the same source their cave-men forebears designed—demons and spirits.

Belief in devils and demons is as ancient and as universal as the human race. A close kin to polytheism (belief in many gods) and animism (the attributing of conscious life to nature and natural objects), belief in demons has been a religion, or a science, or a novelty among practically all peoples who have left any record of themselves upon this planet. Among the ancient Babylonians, Assyrians, and later among the Persians, evil spirits as well as good ones were thought to be continually involved in the affairs of men. They were even organized into a complete system, with a supreme ruler who had under him subordinate chiefs. The Chinese, the Dravidians, the Arabs, the Japanese, the Indians and a thousand more peoples and sects believed evil spirits abounded. Among these different groups, the spirits had differing names; but their activities and their character were essentially the same.

"The great ethnic faiths of India, China, and Japan major in demonism, as well as the animistic religions of Africa, South America, and some islands," says a current theologian in support of the belief. He sees all this demon belief as "historical evidence" that demons *do* exist—because the belief in demons has been so widespread for so many centuries and appears to be almost instinctive in the mind of man. "Men sense the power of Satan and demons in their lives," he says.

But must we rely upon such "evidence" as the thoughts of men for our belief? What about all the centuries men believed the earth was flat—did their erroneous reasonings change the shape of the earth? What if men have always felt and still feel today that they are subject to a superpower they cannot control—might not that power be their own undisciplined will? Must we rely for evidence upon men's *feelings*? Does not a man's mind influence what he *thinks he feels*?

The belief in demons and devils is usually part of a "dualism" in religion, through which the world is seen as the battleground between two opposing forces, i. e., good and evil, God and Satan. This view of religion is in striking contrast to that of the early Hebrew people, whose faith proclaimed one God supreme and all-powerful, whose authority stands forever immutable and unassailed. Never once in the entire Biblical record preserved for us do we read where people were advised to fear demons or to beware of literal devils or spirits of evil beyond human control.

(Continued next page)

All this was part of the pagan religions practiced by Israel's neighbors, and from which they were commanded to keep themselves entirely separate, "that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise" (Deut. 12:30).

The entire Old Testament stands opposed to the belief in evil spirits. In fact, there is scarcely a mention made of such. Moses commanded the Israelites not to sacrifice to "devils" as other nations did, but this command in no way acknowledged their existence (Deut. 32:17). Psalm 106:37 tells of the "heathen" who "sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils," but this does not say that the "devils" were real spirit beings any more than the fact that pagan nations worshiped other "gods" says that these "gods" were real deities. The false "gods" and the "devils" were actually one and the same—the creation of men's hands and minds.

At the time of Jesus, demonism was in full bloom among the Greeks and the Romans. And as the Jews came more and more into the influence of the Greek world, they too became absorbed with its superstitious ideas and practices. The Christian world also came to be affected, as the Greek beliefs in spirits together with the beliefs of other Oriental religions became popular. The movement started among the lower classes, gradually moving upward. It started in obscurity, then burst into a vigorous, open religion that was practiced before all. It started morally indifferent and ended as the supposed cause of all wickedness, as well as physical and mental disease.

Such was the thinking of the world into which Jesus came teaching the things "pertaining to the Kingdom of God." It was an age "ruled by the black one and his hordes"—"it lieth in the evil one," says a historian of that period.

What was Jesus' attitude toward it all? Did He join in the superstitious beliefs of the people? or did He give silent consent? or did He ever suggest to them that their belief in the world of spirits was a *right* belief? No, He did none of these. There is not a word in any of the four Gospels which tells us Jesus either believed in demons or taught men to believe in them.

Why, then, did He "cast out devils"? Why did He speak to demons and tell them to come out? Why do the Gospels tell of Jesus' casting out devils as though the demons did really possess people and had to be evicted?

We must remember that during that time everything that was evil or opposed to good health and well-being was called a demon, as the people of that

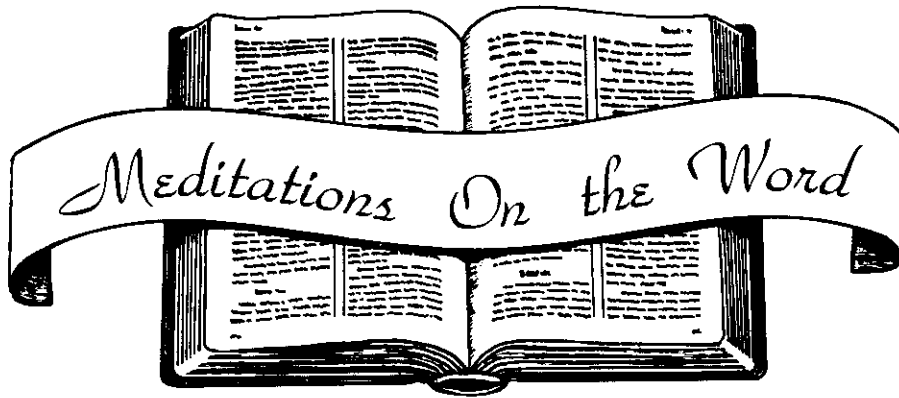
time thought demons were literally responsible for man's miseries and bad actions. The age in which Jesus lived was solidly grounded in the reality of demons and devils. Demons were no mere theory; they formed a vital concept of all existence at that time. The whole world and the atmosphere were filled with devils; every phase and form of life was thought to be ruled by them.

Now Christ's mission was not to uproot the superstition of the day, though we may be sure He recognized it as mere superstition. He came to show men the way to a better life—a life in which men did not *need* to believe in demons to explain what made men sin, for in that better life there would be no sin. He pointed men to a world to come where there would be no demons of sickness or suffering, for such things simply would not *be*. If men accepted His teaching, their ideas of demonism would fall of their own weight; for the teaching of Christ simply did not need any such.

Therefore we do not hear once of Jesus' preaching on the reality or non-reality of demons. He did, however, strive to convince men that He was the Son of God and superior in power to the forces which men feared as the most powerful in the universe. This was doubtless one of His main purposes in "casting out devils," as He did on several occasions, or forcing what they called "demons" to respond to His higher authority; or simply to recognize Him for what He was and is, the Son of God. Only by showing His supremacy over this universal belief could He convince men of His own position as the representative of God the Almighty.

We have no reason to believe that Jesus Himself believed in demons. Never once did He attribute sin, or sickness, or suffering to a demon. We must distinguish as between the fact and the framework. Jesus used the framework provided by the ancient world—most people believed the cause of illness to be demon-possession; and when Jesus by the power of God cured an illness, the "demon departed," in the language of the people. Medical science today would not attribute paralysis, deafness, blindness and madness to the powers of evil spirits or demons upon a person. This was, however, the belief of the victims of the diseases, and the belief of the spectators who saw them cured. It would have been totally unrealistic for Luke to have recorded that Jesus caused the harmful bacteria to die that were causing the infection; or that He mended the severed nerve which was causing blindness; or that He replaced some fluid in the spine, the absence of which had caused paralysis. We could not expect such a record from the first

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"Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it" —(Heb. 2:1, RSV)

WHEN we look over our past we see failures. It is a rare life indeed that can look back without regrets, or that can see nothing but a bright shining track of good behind him. Failures, whether great or small, are nevertheless failures; and being such, they will bar our entrance to Eternity. Our failures need not always be characterized as those ascribed to the lowest of humanity, but by Christian standards and in view of the wisdom entrusted to us, any transgression of God's law makes us, in that respect, a failure.

We can be failures to our calling through numerous transgressions of law, or because we have not made the best of our opportunity or have not used our ability as we should. When one looks back over his life since coming under the influence of God's law, if he cannot see glaring offenses he certainly can see periods where he could have done better; or, as a summary, he must admit that he could and should be much further ahead in divine things, both in knowledge and in experience.

Our text points to the danger of the present. The ever-present

tendency is to relax and be at ease, and once in that condition people are carried away like driftwood from the things of primal importance. People do not necessarily *deny* their high Christian calling, they merely *drift* from it. The results are the same.

What is the cause of drifting?

The obvious answer is a want of anchorage. A boat does not drift if it is anchored, nor do people move about from one way of life to another when they are settled and established in their belief. When men and women have no settled religious convictions, then they are dangerously likely to drift. In a general way they may believe in God, in Christ, in His coming, and the work that needs to be done, but that belief or faith is of little value when it does not restrain them from evil. That faith is near the drifting point which does not inspire to good. That faith which is in reality anchored, and grounded, and settled will not only manifest itself in abstinence from evil, but will be alive, energetic and zealous for everything that is good. It will be pushing its way upstream.

Drifting is also caused by winds and currents. What is easier than to go along with the crowd! To go along in the conventional manner of life is what most people desire; and even after one has had a vision of better things, that tendency still persists.

Companionship is another source of danger. The apostle Paul warned: "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals.' Come to your right mind and sin no more. For some have not the knowledge of God" (I Cor. 15:33-34, RSV). In questionable company one *may* feel himself strong to resist any alluring invitation into bypaths, but little by little the evil wins.

Circumstances and the many influences of modern life are yet another cause of drifting. We allow the cares of life to influence us; we are lured by the deceitfulness of riches and the many attractive items money can buy. We labor and tug to lay up stores for the years ahead and forget—or rather, sacrifice—the things of the spirit. We grasp the perishing and spurn the enduring! That which should be first (Matt. 6:33) is neglected.

The process of drifting needs

to be arrested! It can so easily be fatal!

Rocks and sand bars can be marked on a chart and a boat under good command can avoid them. But it is not so with a ship that has broken loose from its moorings. Drifting means ruin. A drifting vessel is also a source of danger to other vessels. The dangers involved and the wreckage that may result is incalculable.

In successful business enterprises men never think of drifting into success. No department can be neglected even for a short time without noticeable loss. If a gardener or a farmer lets his field "drift," what happens? A bountiful harvest? Never! It is so in our religious life; drifting means loss and ruin.

Drifting in spiritual things is all the more dangerous because so often no one can perceive the drifter's condition. From all outward appearances he seems all right. This is illustrated in the message to the church at Sardis: "You have the name of being alive, and you are dead. Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God." It is a sad situation; most unwholesome, to be sure. But the Lord is merciful and offers hope: "Remember then what you received and heard; Keep that, and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you" (Rev. 3:1-3, RSV).

In order to avoid drifting or to arrest our drifting condition, we must *confront* ourselves. This is difficult, for most of us through habitual practice, conscious or unconscious, have become incredibly skillful at *avoiding* ourselves. We fear to face ourselves honestly and do almost everything else to excuse our laxity. But certainly the only way to right our wrongs is to start with ourselves—not another, not circumstances, but *self*.

Next we must consider ourselves and know the kind of creatures we are. Successful spiritual living demands singleness of purpose. One cannot crowd a little of everything under the sun into one's life and succeed. The principal theme must dominate.

We must pay attention to our choice of the numerous things that would claim our interest. Our ability to choose is our greatest asset, but there can be no success as long as mean or beastly traits in us are allowed freedom.

We must exercise control. The effective way to do this is to stir up the imagination of our minds. Pay attention to the precious promises. Picture the best, the glory to be revealed, vividly. Speak habitually of the good and righteous way of living. Think optimistically of all it is possible for you to

become—pure, brave, conscientious, helpful. Thrust your best efforts into every good work in which you are involved. Avoid talking to no purpose about the devilish, carnal, degrading things that are already done. Give no portion of your mind to bitterness or revenge however severe the injury you felt. Entertain only the good, the true, the beautiful.

Finally, according to Paul's admonition (Phil. 4:8), think upon the things which are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious. ●●



Two Tables

We have two tables to eat from, and they are ever present. We may choose the food of our own desire.

The Lord's table is laden with the rarest and most nourishing foods, and will give life to all who partake of it and live according to its every command.

The "table of devils" is enticing in appearance, but offers only death with every article of food one may select.

Jesus, our Great Example, partook of the food from the Lord's table. He ate the butter and honey by which He learned to refuse the evil and choose the good. We must do likewise, never being overcome by evil but overcoming evil with good.

Selma, Iowa

G. M.

Good Reading

I want to give thanks to whom it is due. The article on the evolution question under "Understanding the Bible" in the *Megiddo Message* is the best I have ever read on the subject. I shall keep it for reference always.

I find much good reading in all the messages, but this one is super. There are also a few things now and then that I disagree with, which is natural, I suppose, with us imperfect humans.

Potsdam, New York

M. J.

Needed By America

Thank you so much for your *Megiddo Message*. It is one of the few publications with clean pages and language pure, true, honest, just, and good. It is needed by America today—"one nation under God."

May we all learn to trust more in God.

Cincinnati, Ohio

W. F. K.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"I must admit that though I study the Word of God, there come new questions to be answered which I still do not know. We read in I Thessalonians 4:16-17 that the faithful will meet the Lord in the air, together with the worthy from among the dead. This makes it appear as though these people have already been summoned, judged and rewarded by Christ before He actually arrives.

"But in Matthew 25:31-34, we are told that the Son of man, when He comes, will 'sit upon the throne of his glory' and then He shall separate the sheep from the goats. He will judge; and one class will be accepted, the other rejected. Second Thessalonians 1:7-10 seems to agree with Matthew 25, but not with First Thessalonians 4:16-17.

"Maybe I am a person who finds it unusually hard to grasp the meaning of these things, but could you please help me?"

Let us first read the text in I Thess. 4:16-17. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Notice that the "dead in Christ" are raised to life—this would include all who were "in Christ," that is, under covenant to serve God; hence, all His servants. Some would have been faithful during their term of service, others unfaithful. But this text does not distinguish between the two. The dead "in Christ" are raised, and they together with the "we," the living covenant-makers, will be "caught up together . . . in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." Up to this time, the status of neither group has been determined, faithful or unfaithful. Paul says simply that all "in Christ," His servants, will rise "to meet the Lord in the air."

The next text you mention is Jesus' description of the Judgment in Matthew 25. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered [out of] all nations; and he shall separate them one from another" (vs. 31-32). The text reads that He shall "sit upon the throne of his glory," but nothing is said of the location of this "throne." Might we not easily conclude that His throne is set "in the

air," just as the living and dead "in Christ" are "caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air"? This possibility is confirmed by the next event following the Judgment, which is told by the prophet Zechariah: "the Lord my God [Emmanuel, God with us] shall come, and all the saints with thee" (Zech. 14:5). The fact that the "saints" are with Him at this time would seem to indicate that the Judgment had already taken place; presumably in the air, though we are not definitely told.

The text you mention in Second Thessalonians 1:7-10 also mentions the advent of Christ, but Paul's subject at this time is another event which will also follow the return of Christ. We read, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (vs. 7-9). The judgment mentioned here is not the same as the judgment described by Jesus in Matthew 25. This judgment is upon them "that know not God"—a clear designation of those outside a covenant relation with God. They are not His servants, or they would *know God*. These are they who are wicked and rebellious and must be forcibly removed before the new and righteous government can be established in peace and equity (see Ps. 101:8; Zech. 13:8; Isa. 66:15-16). Only by these purifying judgments will the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness (Isa. 26:9-10).

"Is there any wrong in wearing a ring, if it is plain and simple?"

The Bible does not uphold the wearing of any article which is solely for adornment. As Christians, our adorning is not to be "that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel." Rather, we are to be concerned about "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (I Pet. 3:3-4). Paul's First Epistle to Timothy also mentions the wearing of ornaments, advising against the wearing of "gold, or pearls, or costly array" (I Tim. 2:9). The prophet Isaiah condemned the daughters of Zion, whose ornaments included "earrings, . . . rings, and nose jewels" (Isa. 3:16-23). God does not admire rings any more than our society today admires nose jewels. ●●

Kathy Kendor's Korner

(Continued from page 9)

a normal healthy adult needs solid meats, vegetables, grain foods and fruits.

I opened my Bible to that passage in Hebrews 5.

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God: and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat"—all because they hadn't grown up!

"For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:12-14). So many little things in life test our grown-up-ness. It takes a mature adult to moment by moment replace every jealous, angry, bitter, or envious thought with a pure, noble, elevating thought.

It takes a real adult to face blame squarely and say, "I was wrong. I am sorry. I am determined to correct my failure and do right next time, whatever the cost."

It takes a real adult to think beyond our own needs and momentary comforts. Only when we

become adults do we learn that *we* are not the center of the universe. If we still must be constantly coddled and protected, we are spiritual babies. We need to grow up!

Jim's advice to Janet is good for her—but it is good for me, too. Janet does display her immaturity—but so do I. And the more I think about it and watch myself, the more I realize it. I have much growing to do before I can call myself a spiritual "grown-up."

How about you? Have you checked your spiritual maturity recently?

Yours for a grown-up "me,"

Kathy

Concerning Demons

(Continued from page 20)

century, any more than we could expect to unearth the original manuscript of the Gospel of Luke and find it preserved on microfilm.

We must see in Jesus' mission of "casting out devils" His overall purpose, as it pertained to the persuading of men, rather than to try to understand in our language today what every detail of the recorded miracle should mean. Whatever name or description we give to an event does not change its nature or its quality. To say that Jesus "cast out devils" in no way detracted from His greatness; rather, for the people of that time it was convincing evidence. For everyone who saw Him knew that He was different from those magicians and priests who usually "cast out devils." When Jesus healed, it was not any magic word that produced a cure, but the God who heard and answered. It was not the method but the Man. Jesus' whole approach to the matter was different. He never carried any superstitious charm, as did the exorcists of His day; He never used any special preparation or medication; He never put on special robes for the occasion to look impressive before men. He never asked for money. He performed His cures in love and mercy. He spoke the word, and it was done.

And by healing men's minds and bodies, and by breaking the power of death, He showed men the true power of the living God, His Father, and called men to rise above the imaginary world of demons. ●●

HAVE YOU READ?--

HISTORY OF THE MEGIDDO MISSION
THE COMING OF JESUS AND ELIJAH
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?

GOD'S SPIRITUAL CREATION

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

THE GREAT APOSTASY

AFTER DEATH, WHAT?

HELL AND THE DEVIL

TRINITY OR UNITY?

THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE ATONEMENT

THE SABBATH

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To Wait or To Work?

(Continued from page 18)

always confident of one fact: "The word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth." He is "a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he." He has promised to render to "every man according as his work shall be," and He will do just that.

What shall we say then? Is it better to wait or to work? There can be only one answer: *to work*. To postpone our effort until the "easier" time arrives is to take a great risk—even to stand in danger of losing all. God does not promise a continued succession of days and years if we are failing to make use of the time we have. He will give according to our need—we have "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" only if we are using profitably the time that is ours now (I Tim. 4:8).

To wait or to work? To *work*! If you plan to try at all, do it NOW! You have everything to gain by working, and so much to lose by waiting!●●

Where Is the Sacrifice?

(Continued from page 6)

come out from the ungodly world, no longer conforming to its fashions and conduct (I John 2:15-16). We are told that we must purify ourselves as Christ is pure, that we must put away all anger, sensitiveness, jealousy, hatred, evil speaking; all pride of dress and station.

We learn that the family ties Jesus recognized were those attached to Him by an earnest desire and effort to hear and keep the Word of God (Matt. 12:49-50). With the passage of time it becomes clear to our now-enlightened mind that not only every act but also every thought must be brought into obedience to divine law. This is a tremendous assignment. This is the minus, or "sacrifice," side of building for eternity.

On the Plus Side

Now for the plus side. Godly living brings a peace and contentment that the worldling knows not of: "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Ps. 119:165); "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isa. 26:3); "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness

and assurance for ever" (Isa. 32:17); "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea" (Isa. 48:18).

Furthermore, we are promised enduring rewards in the world to come: "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" (I John 2:25); we shall receive an hundredfold in this life, and in the world to come eternal life (Matt. 19:29); "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9).

God has promised to wipe away all tears from the eyes of the righteous. He promises there will be no more pain, or crying, and even death will be no more. Where can be the sacrifice of giving up ourselves in this short span of mortal life when by so doing we can reap such an endless harvest of joy, pleasure and unspeakable delight? Surely our sights are set too low if we could be satisfied with anything of here and now. Jesus promised the overcomers: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43).

So Much for So Little

After counting the cost, every shrewd bargain-hunter, upon comparing the values, should exclaim: Where is the sacrifice! The Rev. L. T. Nichols, our founder, speaking of the rewards that God offers, said in one of his sermons, "It is just like putting your money in the bank and drawing a thousand percent interest." And even that seemingly overdrawn comparison is grossly inadequate to describe what God offers.

Jesus condemned seeking honor of men in the following words: "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (John 5:44). But He promised honor far more lasting and abundant: "...if any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (John 12:26). Honor from God should mean a thousand times more to us than honor from any frail mortal, and certainly it would be far more rewarding! Peter spoke of receiving honor at the appearing of Jesus Christ from heaven. What an honor to sacrifice for!

The price of God's sacrifice is high, demanding, as it does, the best that man can give. In Israel, the altar fires consumed some of the choicest specimens from among their herds. But when man paid the price and made the sacrifice, God, the loving, munificent Father, the Bestower of all blessings, generously defrayed the cost Himself. Thus the wise

Where can be the sacrifice in giving up ourselves in this short mortal span when by so doing we can reap an endless harvest?

author of the book of Proverbs urged: "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Prov. 3:9-10).

The loving command of the Lord comes through the prophet Malachi: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:10).

Here is the eternal principle at work. Though the cost seems high, if the sacrifice is made with a willing and obedient heart, *great* will be the blessings that follow! Peter was contemplating the cost when he said, "Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee." But Jesus directed his attention away from costs to the *results* of paying the price. These are His words: "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:28-30).

Give up—to Gain!

Give up all, and gain the hundredfold; sacrifice the present, and reap eternity; sell out all your former hopes, ambitions, and ideals, that you may secure the pearl of great price; lose your life in the service of the Lord that you may find it in the Kingdom of God—so taught the Master. And as we offer in living sacrifice ourselves at our best, as we sacrifice the sunny, favorable, working days of our life, the best of our talents, all our mind, might, and strength, we shall reap a hundredfold in present remuneration, and enlarge the capital for eternal dividends which they shall never know who spare to God only the weak, tired, little end of life, that which is left after they have served self.

Oh, *where* is the sacrifice?

Does the Christian life seem dull and unsatisfying? It is because we have not accepted its challenge. Our hearts will thrill to the message of the gospel and the promises of God in direct proportion as we are willing to sacrifice to receive them.

How do we do it? Sacrifice has many avenues. One need not be appointed to a special committee to be able to serve. Anyone can serve within the compass of his own home and family. Any man can pray; any man can think; any man can develop in his own life the virtues God desires. Any man can be "an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). And as we pray and think and work and live for God and the success of His purpose, we make ourselves a part of that success. In all these things, God has appointed that every man be faithful.

We can never feel a part of any movement until we have learned to participate. In like manner, we cannot belong to God and His cause until we have put ourselves into it and sacrificed for it. This is done by giving our time, our energy, our talent, our ambition, our love. And all this means sacrifice. It means doing the things we would not naturally do, and *delighting* to do them. There is no other way. The most worthwhile things demand the most in sacrifice.

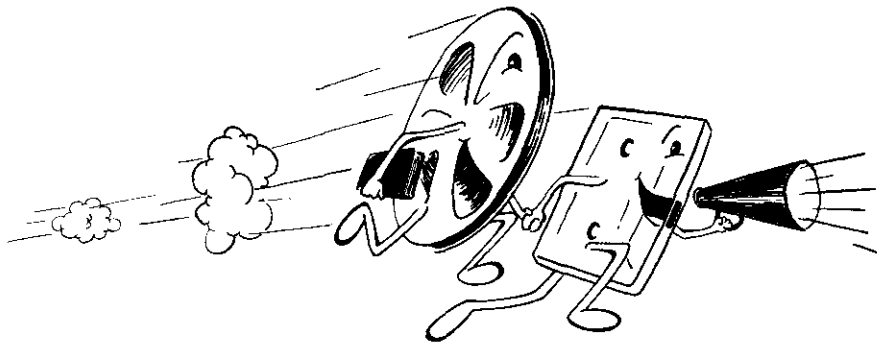
But what matters the pain? It is but for a moment, and the joy will be eternal.

What no eye has ever seen,
What no ear has ever heard,
What no heart has ever thought—
All this our God has set aside
For those who are His own.

With such a prospect, sacrifice becomes a privilege—it is only a "reasonable service." ●●

The Seeds We Sow!

The soil will nurture and will grow
Whatever kind of seed we sow.
If weeds are planted, rest assured
That weeds we'll have when they're matured;
We cannot expect from seeds to rise
A flowered vine of paradise.
The soil of life will likewise grow
Whatever kind of seed we sow.
Regardless of the plant we breed,
The product rises from the seed.
So onward as through life we go,
We all must watch the seed we sow.



**We're On
the Move!**

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I agree to accept these tapes and mail them on for a period of at least two years. The cost of postage will be paid by me.

I will not keep these recordings for more than two Sundays after I receive them. If for any reason I am away from home for a period of time, I will arrange for someone to mail them on for me.

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Thou God of Truth

*O God of truth, whose living Word
Upholds whate'er hath breath,
Look down on Thy creation, Lord,
Enslaved by sin and death.*

*Set up Thy standard, Lord, that we
Who seek a heav'nly birth
May march with Thee to smite the lies
That vex Thy groaning earth.*

*We fight for truth? we fight for God?
Poor slaves of lies and sin!
He who would fight for Thee on earth
Must first be true within.*

*Then, God of truth for whom we long,
Who hearest heartfelt prayer,
Do Thine own battle in our hearts,
And slay the falsehood there.*

*Yea, come; when, tried as in the fire
From every lie set free,
When perfect truth has dwelt in us,
Then we shall dwell with Thee.*

--Sel. and alt.

