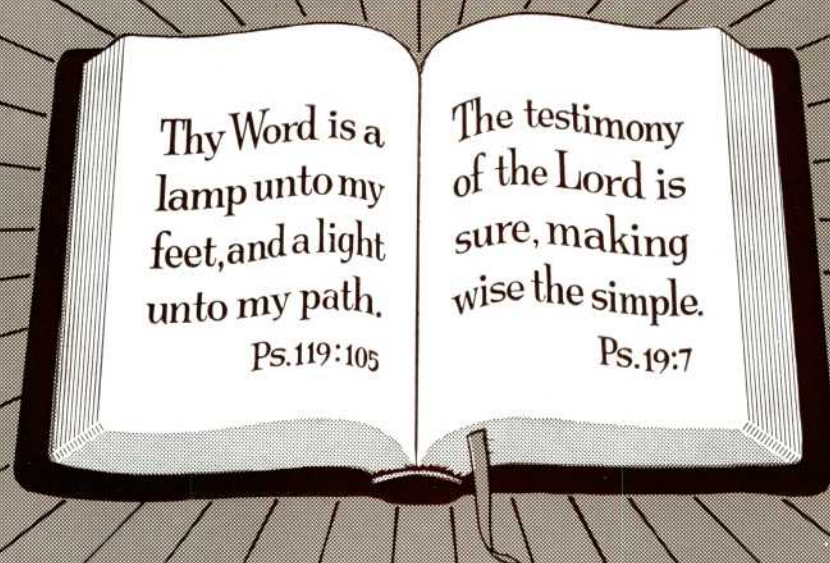


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



The Inspiration of the Scriptures

"And There Shall Be No . . ."

A Thousand Years On Earth

Pro & Con

Check Your React-Ability

HAVE you ever wondered what makes you act as you do on any particular day? What determines whether you are happy or sad, cheerful or glum, kindly or contentious, eager or frustrated, buoyant or brooding? What makes the difference? Is it the weather, or the people around you, or what you happen to be doing, or how you feel, or how things go, or—perhaps a combination of all of these? If such is the case, you are one with the most of the human race—a “reactor.”

Actors are rare, and their skills are invaluable. Actors plot their own course of action by using their own inner resources; their temperament, their disposition is what they have determined to *make* it. Instead of reacting to everything and everyone that comes along, they set their course straight ahead and *act*. No wasted motions, no actions either undirected or misdirected, no random thoughts or expressions are theirs; their course is dictated from *within*. Both mind and body obey the voice of the will.

Such are the Christian actors. Their course in life is dictated from within, and so unwavering is that inner dictation that no outer circumstance can affect them. They act from a deep, inner conviction which has captured them, even an edict from the high courts of heaven. They have received and heard, and henceforward their whole will is to *act*.

Do we wonder that these highest quality actors are so rare?

Reactors are so much more common. All of us by nature are reactors. Haven't you felt it happen—when you were in a real good “spirit” and all seemed favorable, and suddenly someone dropped a sharp or critical remark. Did you feel the weather in your soul change? Did a cloud come over your sunny, good feeling, and you spout something sharp in return? If you didn't say it, did you *feel* it? You were a reactor; you let the other person determine your temperament, rather than keeping it under your own control. You set aside your *planned* course of action—and your better judgment, too!

The Christian actor has power to influence

others also, with good results. Haven't you seen someone in a rage? What happened when you answered him calmly and quietly? Didn't it amaze you how the rage subsided? Truly, “A soft answer turneth away wrath”—because all of us are by nature reactors.

Unless we realize this phenomenon in our nature and force ourselves to set our own pattern of conduct, dictating to ourselves what we shall and shall not do, and shall and shall not feel, we will always be able to look around and know why we feel as we do; for our attitude and feeling will be the direct result of whoever comes into the circle of our lives or whatever happens. If someone close to us gets upset and cross, we will feel a reacting impulse within and will find ourselves either bracing up in self-defense or bristling up for an argument. Or if one is pleasant, we will find it easy to be the same.

An educational film produced some years ago points out vividly this strange phenomenon that is part of each of us. The plot line follows a man through a day in his life where everything goes wrong for him and he reacts to every situation, thus making it worse. Then he is permitted the opportunity of living that day over again (an opportunity we would all like now and then!); this time he is given some instructions on how to get along with people. The second time around the same things go wrong, but this time he controls his reactions and turns every event into a pleasant experience and in the end has a wonderful day. It is just a story, but it shows what happens when we act instead of *react*.

It may have been the “reacting” instinct that prompted the apostle Paul to pen these words: “I run the race . . . with determination. I am no shadowboxer; I really fight! I am my body's sternest master” (I Cor. 9: 26-27, Phillips). He had no idea of letting whatever might come along affect him. He was a single-eyed actor; he wanted the prize.

Let us follow him, and next time we are tempted to react, tell ourselves this is the time to ACT. We have done *enough* RE-acting! ●●

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Megiddo Means

"a place of troops"

—Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon

"a place of God"

—Young's Analytical Concordance

Geographically, Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, located at a strategic point, demanding heavy fortification; for Palestine is the age-old gateway between East and West, and the avenue connecting North and South. Supremacy there has long been the envy of aggressive nations, and the prevailing power has guarded it with jealous eye. The famous pass at Megiddo through a solid mountain range is the one means by which this avenue between continents may be traversed.

In the spiritual parallel, it is a place of troops, where soldiers are equipped for spiritual warfare against the forces of evil without and within. "The weapons we wield are not merely human but divinely potent to demolish strongholds; we demolish sophistries and all that rears its proud head against the knowledge of God; we compel every human thought to surrender in obedience to Christ" (II Cor. 10:4-5, NEB).

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Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version

Other versions are abbreviated as: *New International Version* (NIV); *New English Bible* (NEB); *Revised Standard Version* (RSV); *The New Testament in Modern English* (Phillips); *The Living Bible* (TLB); *New American Standard* (NAS); *The Jerusalem Bible* (JB).

The Inspiration of the Scriptures

Rev. L. T. Nichols

Is the Bible the inspired Word of God? Can we depend upon what it says? Is it partially inspired, wholly inspired, or what is the plan whereby we may know the things pertaining to our eternal salvation?

The topic is timely; the Bible is still being challenged by those who believe it to be just another work of men; and often it is ridiculed because of the unreasonable positions taken by those who profess to defend it.

Nearly seventy years ago our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, spoke on this topic. What was his position? He let the Bible speak for itself. Were theologians today to take the position he took, there might be thousands saved from the ruin of infidelity.

What follows is an edited version of his discourse.

THE BIBLE is a wonderful Book, the Book of all books, the Book that is from God; the only Book in which are written the words of Him before whom, by and by, we shall have to stand and render our account for what we have done.

The Bible sets before humanity certain undeniable proofs of its divine origin, and from its holy Record I have become fully convinced of its truthfulness. I was once upon the fence, so to speak, and ready to go either way, as I surveyed the ideas of men of theological training and found them at variance with what I could read in the Book; consequently my faith was somewhat weakened in that Divine Book for a time. But I made up my mind that I would go to work like an honest man, and before I would throw away a Book of its distinction I would give it careful and candid consideration and delve down deep until I had studied the matter thoroughly, before I would dare to take a stand against the pages of the Holy Book.

The result of my investigation has proved most gratifying, and from the weight of evidence I fully believe the Bible to be of divine authority

instead of human origin. Thanks be to God, the teachings of the theologians are not the teachings of the Bible! In reading the blessed Word, we must let it be its own expositor, and how different are its teachings. When any word, phrase, or sentence is issued by Jehovah in His message to man, we are to let Him tell what He means instead of placing a meaning of our own upon His statements.

We take the position that the Bible is as up-to-date, as reasonable, as accurate, as open to analysis as any earthly science. We hold that, as originally written, it contains not a single contradiction, absurdity, impossibility or error; that it agrees with nature and all true science. We assert that it goes even further and reveals in itself and by an honest comparison with history that it is of divine origin. Nothing less than this position can satisfy the seeker for a life beyond this transitory career; God has provided us with a trustworthy Guide.

This holy Book was written by "holy men of God" in various times and under different conditions over a period of sixteen hundred years, from Moses the great Lawgiver, to John the Revelator. It was written by statesmen, by prophets, by herdsmen, by shepherds, by fishermen, by wise men, by all classes of individuals, and their writings agree so unanimously that it drives me to the conclusion that it is indeed the inspired Word of the God of heaven, and I am thoroughly convinced of its divinity. Why am I thus convinced? Because a writing composed of sixty-six books by forty different authors could not be compiled over a period of sixteen hundred years with such unanimous agreement and not be of divine origin. It would be impossible today to find as many different books by different authors and find them in agreement upon so many different topics as are presented in the Divine Record.

The Bible is the Word of the great Jehovah, who can tell the end from the beginning, who can tell the future as well as the past. It was the power of God working upon the minds of men that

caused them to write the things we find recorded therein. This is inspiration.

Such a Book is worthy of our earnest investigation. We should pore over its pages, should peruse every word and commandment and see that we have not missed one thing; and we should believe its glorious precepts with a desire to follow on and do the things written therein. It is "wisdom from above," says James 3:17.

He who knew the end from the beginning has declared that human ways and thoughts are all vanity; we must therefore become armed with the mind and thoughts of the high and lofty God of truth. As the apostle Peter declares, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Pet. 1:2-3). Seeing that human wisdom is a thing of naught, we must not look to it, nor to ourselves, for knowledge, but must come to this inspired Book of God; for all things that "pertain unto life and godliness" come through a study of this blessed Word. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (v. 4).

The power that imparted this wisdom to the holy men and women of old came from the same God who will grant us the great reward in the future and cause us to live to all eternity if we are worthy. It was His divine Power that inspired the Bible writers. The same Power caused the Master to teach wherever He went the "glad tidings of the kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1). The same Power enabled Him to answer when the opposers came to Him and found fault with Him, asking by what authority He did those things. He answered—because He knew their thoughts, because He knew they were only caviling—"The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me" (Mark 11:29-30). He knew what to say because He had this same Power within Him. They dared not answer Him, but "reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed" (vs. 31-32). They knew that if they answered one way they would defeat their own purpose; and if they answered the other way, they feared the people. Either way their argument was cut in two.

In olden times the angels were the means used

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to cause the writers of this Holy Book to inscribe what God wanted us to know. In Hebrews 1:14 we read, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" The prophets and apostles were moved by the Power of God to tell us of the glory and beauty of the great future; and they were moved upon to preserve this knowledge in writing for us to read. Thus "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:21). They were not allowed to speak their own ideas; neither are we, for Peter declares, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." To learn God's knowledge and what we must do, we must go to what those inspired men wrote.

The book of Hebrews tells us how God revealed His knowledge in time past. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). This is why we have His Word, and it is inspired as God directed His holy men to write. If He spoke in times past by the prophets and by His Son, will you and I know anything concerning His plan unless we consult the Record wherein He made known His purpose? We should never of ourselves be able to know; we cannot expect to find this knowledge apart from the writings of those through whom He spoke.

Do not think, though, that every word in the Bible is inspired; no, not by a long, long way. That which is inspired is that which foretells something that will come to pass, something that we could not know of ourselves. All the prophetic sayings of Scripture are the result of inspiration, and they are true. "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job 32:8). Inspiration relates to something not otherwise knowable.

When Jesus said in John 8:45, "Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not," He was not speaking by inspiration but was simply telling what He could observe; He could see that they did not believe what He was telling them. But when He said, as in Luke 17:26, "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man," He was speaking by inspiration; He was foretelling what conditions would be in the last days when He should come the second time. This is how God spoke in times past unto the fathers—by the prophets, then He spoke by His Son, and that which was revealed by them was revealed by inspiration.

Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. This places the dividing line between what is inspired and what is not. All on this

side of the line—that which we already know—is not inspiration; but all on the other side of the line, that which we do not know, things relating to the future, is revealed by inspiration. For example, Paul needed no inspiration to request Timothy, “The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee” (II Tim. 4:13). It required no inspiration for the chronicler to record that there was a child born and that he was named Hezekiah. It took no inspiration for the Prophet to relate that during Hezekiah’s reign as king he had a serious illness. But to foretell the outcome of that illness, and to tell the king that he would live another fifteen years, and then to foretell that all the treasures he had delighted to show to the King of Babylon would be carried away to Babylon, is inspiration. To tell an event before it comes to pass, to tell what man cannot know of himself, is inspiration.

That which is past history needs no inspiration to reveal it. The line of demarcation between what is inspired and what is not inspired is the line between the historical and the prophetic. The holy men of old did not have to be inspired to tell what they had experienced, but to reveal what was in the mind of God needed inspiration. For example, Moses needed no inspiration to write that he went down into Egypt and there encountered much opposition, that he went before Pharaoh and finally assembled a great throng of Israelites whom he led out of bondage. How did he know these things? Not by inspiration but by actual experience. But the power that moved Him to each of these accomplishments was of God. It was God who moved Moses to return to Egypt, and to go to Pharaoh; and it was inspiration from God that directed Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

We need no inspiration to tell you what has happened during the last sixty years; but to show what is to take place in the future needs inspiration, and we cannot do it. Apart from the Word of God we would be in total ignorance of what is in the future; we would not know anything about the plan of God but for the holy men whom God inspired to write the things “that pertain unto life and godliness.” Apart from what they wrote we would not even know that all things pertaining to future life come “through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”

We today are not inspired as were those “holy men” of old, therefore we cannot foretell future events. Yet, in another sense we are inspired. We might call it “secondary” inspiration. “First” inspiration is that which God reveals directly, as

He did to men in olden times; it is knowledge that comes by direct communication from God. “Second” inspiration is that which comes to those who read and believe what others were inspired to write. This is the inspiration we have, for we have never seen an angel or heard his audible voice. But we can be inspired as we read the inspired words that were written for our learning.

We have a “secondary” inspiration because we receive our knowledge “secondhand.” We personally were moved to make a sacrifice that we might give to others the knowledge we had obtained by deep study; this is why we built the large Mission Boat for our work on the Mississippi and tributaries. I need no inspiration to tell you of the day I made up my mind to start out in this great mission work; but there was inspiration back of it—*second* inspiration. As I perused the inspired pages, I read, “Gather the people,” and it inspired me, or moved me, to act. There was a great work to be done, and we needed to be gathered together to accomplish it; being together, we would be in a better condition to keep the commandments of God.

In the first chapter of the last book of the Bible we read how we may receive this “second” inspiration: “Blessed”—do you want to be blest with life eternal, with joy and happiness that shall increase as the ages roll by? Do you not want to be one of those blessed ones? Then hearken to the words of Jesus: “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand” (Rev. 1:3). We have to read, hear and keep the inspired Word of God.

All I know is what I can learn from the written Word of God, what I have learned from the inspiration of the Bible. “The inspiration of the Almighty giveth . . . understanding.” That which we can see, needs no inspiration; but to know that which is beyond our experience, that must be revealed to us by inspiration.

I would much rather know what God has said than what all mankind together may say. God knows everything; man knows so little. Man can give you no information beyond this life; He may give you a home, or a few dollars, but he can never give you anything that pertains to the life eternal; nothing whatever. He can never give you a life beyond that narrow home toward which we all are drifting. What will be your wealth, what will be your fame, your joy, your pleasure then? We shall remain in the tomb unless we now use the means God has revealed by which it can be unlocked. Unless He comes who has the key, and unlocks it for us, we shall remain there

forever. But we have the blessed promise of deliverance, if we comply with His requirements.

The prophet Daniel by inspiration told of this deliverance: "And at that time [the time of the end] shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time, thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. 12:1). We must have our names written in the book if we want to be delivered; this is what we learn by the inspired writing of the Prophet.

"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (v. 2). Why? Because they have taken heed to the knowledge that will unlock the tomb for them, because they have their names written in the book of life. This is

the promise from God; it has come to us through the inspiration of the Scriptures.

We advise you to throw away all creeds of men and come to this Blessed Volume, for it is a "thorough furnisher unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:17). What more could you want? The Bible gives us a religion worth having; it is something real, something you can depend on. I am all wrapped up in these words of life, the inspired Scriptures of truth that tell us what we must do to live forever, and I have a longing desire for you to be wrapped up in them also. I am willing to spend and be spent that others may obtain life eternal.

Start today; believe what God has caused to be written for our learning, and then go to work to be more patient, more kind, thoughtful, long-suffering, meek, humble, gentle, and easily entreated; then you will get the crown of life eternal. This is what God has promised. ●●

Eternal Father,

*I thank Thee for today, and for everything Thou wilt
send today to enable me to overcome.*

*I thank Thee for any service Thou wilt require of me today,
for any good word Thou wilt enable me to speak,
and any good work Thou wilt enable me to do.*

Help me to learn the lessons Thou art trying to teach me.

Grant me today to learn more of self-mastery and self-control.

Grant me today to better rule my temper and my tongue.

*Grant me today to leave my faults further behind and to
grow more nearly into the likeness of Thy Son.*

*May I count that day lost that does not show some spiritual
gain, when I cannot see myself a little further on
in the way of holiness.*

*So may I live this day, Father, that tonight I may offer it
up to Thee with all its dark hours and shining moments
to be fitted into the plan Thou hast designed, that I
may live in Thy glorious Kingdom.*

Amen.



*This is the twelfth in a series
of articles on the coming
MILLENNIUM and the
ETERNITY Beyond.*

*"And I saw a new heaven
and a new earth:
for the first heaven and
the first earth were passed away;
and there was no more sea."
—Revelation 21:1.*

*"And I heard a great voice
out of heaven saying,
Behold, the tabernacle of God
is with men, and
he will dwell with them,
and they shall be his people,
and God himself
shall be with them,
and be their God.*

*"And God shall wipe away
all tears from their eyes;
and there shall be
no more death,
neither sorrow, nor crying,
neither shall there be
any more pain:
for the former things
are passed away.*

*"And he that sat
upon the throne said,
Behold, I make all things new.
And he said unto me,
Write: for these words are
true and faithful"
—Revelation 21:3-4.*

"And There Shall Be No..."

OUR pre-millennial world today has nothing that can bear comparing with the wonders of Eternity. Our finite minds can scarcely begin to comprehend its transcending beauty, joy, prosperity, happiness, peace, love and light. Even John the Revelator was at a loss for words to describe it.

But what he has written is surpassingly grand. In the final chapters of Revelation is description upon description of the bright New World. Lacking any better way to convey thoughts to us, he uses a series of negative statements to describe it, as well as some positive ones.

"... And there was no more sea" (21:1).

The "sea" is a term for "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues," in the symbolic language of Revelation (17:15). From this we learn that the sea is people. At this time, when the "new heaven and new earth" are complete, there will be no people outside God's fellowship; all will be part of one holy, glorious family, for "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3).

By this we are not to think that God Himself will make His abode on earth, but Christ, "Emmanuel, God with us" (Matt. 1:23) will dwell with His own forever. On earth the disciples enjoyed being with their Master, but He was taken away. In this life all ties of friendship must finally be broken. But in that Eternal age, Jesus will dwell in their midst forever.

"... No more tears, neither sorrow nor crying" (21:4).

John pictures God as doing a most tender and loving act: "He will wipe all tears from their eyes" (v. 4). In this world, bright as the lives of some may seem, each "heart knoweth his own bitterness" (Prov. 14:10). Now a thousand sorrows and heartaches beset the children of men. Then, hallelujahs of joy will ring throughout the land.

"... Neither shall there be any more pain" (21:4).

Even the healthiest will appreciate this, much more they who experience constant pain. We can scarcely comprehend that future blessedness when no one will be weary or sick.

"... And there shall be no more death" (21:4).

Today there is no escape from death. But in that land the sod will no more be cut with graves. Its streets will never be lined

with funeral processions. There will be no obituaries published. For death shall be swallowed up of life—life that is real, life that is lasting, even eternal life!

Three short words assure us that this blessed state *is coming*: “true and faithful.” “And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful” (21:4-5).

“... *There shall be no night there*” (Rev. 21:25).

Now we are glad for a night of rest in which to renew our strength. But someday it will get dark for the last time. Immortal beings will be there, and their radiance will mean the end of night; it will be light all the time.

What about the sun and the moon? They will continue to shine, the Bible tells us, but they will not be needed for light. “The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory” (Isa. 60:19).

Immortal beings radiate light. A prophet of God centuries ago spoke of the wise as shining forever like stars: “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever” (Dan. 12:3). The light of the immortals will make light for the mortal nations during the Millennium, for we read: “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it” (Rev. 21:23-24). When all who live are equal to the angels, shining and immortal, the earth will indeed be filled with light. And it will be light that will never dim but increase in glory through the Eternity beyond.

“And the gates of it [the Holy City] shall not be shut at all by day”—and there shall be no night, so they will be always open.

Here is a symbol of perfect safety, perfect freedom and warm hospitality and free interchange of friendships.

Open gates, when applied to the future state of blessedness, suggest that while this beautiful earth will be their permanent abode, yet the dwellers in that city will not be confined. The whole universe will be open to them! They will be permitted to go forth and visit the works of God in all parts of His vast domain. And everyone who comes and goes through these heavenly gates will be an angel of light. What privileges when earth becomes a part of heaven! (And what a change from locked doors and security guards and bolts that we must use today!)

“*I saw no temple therein*” (21:22).

There is no one place especially sacred or holy then, for the whole earth is hallowed. What need of a temple when all the earth is paradise?

There will be a spiritual temple, however, of which every glorified being will be a part. “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God” (Rev. 3:12). Each will have a permanent place in that eternal abode. Each will have a place of strength and honor and beauty. Each will be an integral part of the glorious whole forever.

*“And I saw no temple therein:
for the Lord God Almighty
and the Lamb
are the temple of it.*

*“And the city
had no need of the sun,
neither of the moon,
to shine in it:
for the glory of God
did lighten it,
and the Lamb is
the light thereof.*

*“And the nations
of them which are saved
shall walk in the light of it:
and the kings of the earth
do bring their glory
and honor into it.*

*“And the gates of it
shall not be shut at all by day:
for there shall be no night there.*

*“And there shall in no wise
enter into it
any thing that defileth,
neither whatsoever
worketh abomination,
or maketh a lie:
but they which are written
in the Lamb's book
of life”
—Revelation 21:22-27*

When Jesus walked with His disciples on earth, wherever He was there was a temple, whether in the mountains, in the wilderness, in the midst of the street or by the concourse; on the heights, in the upper room, along the way to Emmaus, or on the shores of Galilee—wherever He was there was a temple. So it will be someday for all people.

"There shall be no more curse" (Rev. 22:3).

This suggests there will be no retribution for sin—because there will be no sin. Beyond the Millennium sin cannot go. Sin will be gone forever; God will be all in all.

There will be "nothing to harass us, nothing to torment, to persecute or frustrate us. There will be no hindering circumstances without to resist and no inner feelings to restrain. There will be no weariness or weakness to cope with. With perfect freedom, life can be developed to its fullest powers."*

In the present life we expect difficulties; they are our testing ground. We need them to develop virtue and character. But if we are judged faithful and merit a place in the Holy City, all this warfare will be over. Life will be one joyous experience.

The Fountain of Life--Drink!

There is another beautiful promise in Revelation 21:6, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

A fountain is a source or spring-head of water. This fountain is a fountain of the water of life—it sends forth vital refreshment that imparts life. To have the privilege of partaking of such a fountain suggests the disclosing of the knowledge of the source of life itself. Everyone who drinks of this fountain will have within him real life—and the secret of how to perpetuate it.

Jesus made a similar promise, stating that every faithful one would himself become a fountain of the water of life. "He who believes in Me, just as the Scripture says, streams of water shall flow from his innermost being" (John 7:38, Berkeley). Jesus was quoting the prophet Isaiah, who wrote, "The Lord shall guide you continually and shall satisfy your soul in dry places; your strength shall be renewed, and you shall be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never disappoint" (Isa. 58:11, Berkeley).

Life is of God; and when God fully satisfies the soul of His faithful child, streams of living water, of life itself, "shall flow from his innermost

being"—he shall become a fountain of life also!

Can we not see why God's people shall "never thirst"? They will have within themselves a living spring of living water!

More Water of Life

"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1)—more water of life! The water will be everywhere!

"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (22:2).

This "river of water of life" is like the fountain. The wonderful, life-imparting wisdom that proceeds from God and from Christ and from the newly glorified faithful shall ultimately become a source of life and spiritual blessing to everyone on earth!

The Revelator sees this "river" as very beautiful, shimmering like crystal. This suggests its pure, living quality. And this river has great transforming power: It promotes such abundant growth that the trees along it bear fruit *continually*. Each one who is faithful to God will be one of these living, growing, fruitful trees, nourished by the life-giving river.

It is the time of eternal growth, eternal expansion, eternal improvement, eternal productivity. There are no prohibitions; none suffer from deficiencies; there is abundance for all. No longer are the blessings afforded by the garden of God limited to a few. At the beginning of the Millennium there were only a few of these "trees" (144,000) established to impart spiritual life for the blessing of the nations. Now there are a vast number of young trees of life. All these trees will flourish together in the paradise of God forever. And their life-giving fruit and leaves will bless and heal far beyond the borders of this glorified planet.

A heavenly city, the New Jerusalem; fountains of life, streams of living water, trees of life, the paradise of God; no more sin, sorrow, sickness, night or death, but praise and glory and honor and happiness and life forever, even forever and ever! Is it not enough? Do we not feel like shouting with the "great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God"; and with the faithful co-regents of the King, "Amen; Alleluia"; and with the King Himself, "Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great"!

*J. R. Dummelow, *One Volume Commentary*.

What transporting joy and victory! Is it not a message to give us unbounded joy and courage in these cool, closing hours of the day of salvation? We are not walking blindly into an unknown future. We have been informed. Great things are ahead!

Shall we let slip our opportunity to be part of all the Millennium—and the Eternity beyond—will bring to worthy earthborns? Shall we slight offers and opportunities of such supreme glory and life?

Let fortunes pass. Let earthly friendships fail. Let earthly comforts go. Cast honors and ambitions, fame and pleasure in this old world to the moles and bats. But let not go the opportunity of be-

coming an immortal being in that eternal world!

As John closes His Revelation, Jesus Himself intervenes with one final word: "Surely I am coming soon." Does this not emphasize the urgency of the message—especially for us in the final hour of the day?

Hear John's expectant answer: "Even so come, Lord Jesus." He is ready; he is eager; he is willing. Are we?

Let us also conclude with John's note of expectancy and work as we have never worked before to get ourselves ready.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all"—until the King returns, and all these wonders become glorious reality! ●●

We Need Enthusiasm

IN this rapidly decaying world, we always need stirring and uplifting. We need godly exhortations to lift our minds from the base things of earth and project us into that future heavenly world. Just think of it! Eternity. If we could live one thousand years, we would be very happy, but a thousand years is less than one tick of the clock compared to what God has offered us! Unending days with no more pain, and no more temptation, and always knowing that what lies ahead is going to just get better and better!

I often think what an outstanding man our founder was. We are certainly indebted to him for the work he did, and I am sure the only way we can ever repay him is to perfect our characters that we may be worthy of sharing the wonders of eternity with him.

In a book published recently, the writer asks the question, "Who in the world can be accepted by God if he is going to have to keep the law in his thoughts and motives?" The law he is referring to is the commandments as expounded by Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount. In answer to his question he says, "The commandments were never given to be used to work our way to God. The commandments were primarily given to show us how perfect we would have to be in order to earn acceptance with God by our own deeds." He did not say where he read this in the Bible.

His reasonings are not at all in line with Bible teaching. Jesus said that out of the heart of man

proceed evil thoughts, foolishness, pride, and all other defiling things (Mark 7:15-23). Since all these evils come from our own minds it is imperative that we have to bring all our thoughts into subjection for Christ. Outward good deeds and kind words can sometimes hide a heart full of evil, as was the case with the Pharisees. The mind must be purified.

As our founder said in his sermon published in the October *Message*, we must be meditating on the Word of the Lord day and night. We have to renew our minds; take out the old carnal mind and replace it with a mind all absorbed in divine things. The truth of the matter is that we will never be worthy of eternal life unless our zeal for God is enthusiastic. We cannot win the victory if we are only mildly interested. It takes enthusiasm and intense devotion.

We are called to be priests of God, and the sacrifice we must make is a daily sacrifice of our own will. To our natural way of thinking we are very important. We feel that the universe revolves around us. But now we know that before honor comes humility. We must first learn to be humble, then we can be exalted. We have to put away our feelings of self-importance, get self off the throne and let God's Word rule us.

Let us strive daily to keep the spiritual uppermost in our minds that we may continue to grow in holiness. ●●

—From A Reader in Tennessee

Christians Must Be Different

Christians during the early years of the Church were persecuted severely. Many were persecuted for mere rumors. But the main reason they were all persecuted was that they were different.

If we are true Christians today, we too will be different. And though we live in a land of religious freedom, we can expect feelings of disapproval from the world around us. The world suspects people who are different. Nowadays an umbrella is a common thing, but when John Hanaway tried to introduce it in England years ago he was pelted with dirt and stones as he walked down the street beneath one. He was, in fact, persecuted.

Anyone who is different, who wears different clothes, who has different ideas, is automatically suspect. He may be regarded as eccentric or as a madman or as a danger; but life will not be all comfortable for him.

The world dislike people whose lives are a condemnation of theirs. It is, in fact, dangerous to be too good. Nowadays a man can be persecuted for working too hard and too long. It is dangerous to practice a higher standard than the world.

The world also suspects non-conformity. They like a pattern, and they like to see each person conform to it. The person who will not can expect to meet trouble.

But the basic demand on the Christian is that he have the courage to be different, even if it is dangerous. No man can be a Christian unless he accepts that risk, for there must be a difference between a man of the world and a man of Christ.

We should examine ourselves to see if we are really different from the world. II Corinthians says we must examine ourselves to see if we be of the faith; we must prove ourselves. When we drift along from day to day and don't continually compare ourselves with God's standard, we are in danger. It is so easy to slip. It is work to become perfect before God, and we have no time to lose in complacency. Continual self-improvement is the only way we can gain the heights of perfection. ●●

If we make God's will our law, then God's promises shall be our support and comfort, and we shall find every burden light and every duty a joy.

Is thy cruse of comfort failing?
Rise and share it with another;
And through all the years of famine
It shall serve thee and thy brother.

Love divine will fill the storehouse
And thy handful still renew;
Scanty fare for one will often
Make a royal feast for two.

For the heart grows rich in giving;
All its wealth is golden grain;
Seeds which mildew in the garner,
Scattered, fill with gold the plain.

Is thy burden hard and heavy?
Do thy steps drag wearily?
Help to bear thy brother's burden—
God will bear both it and thee.

—Selected

A Grand Opportunity

We want to rejoice in that Great Day coming so much nearer each day. We need always to think of the reward, as we strive to overcome all things in opposition to the divine will. It is the overcoming that counts, in reaching for higher and ever higher levels. God wants us to crush and kill out every evil way of the flesh.

Shall we reach the grand height of perfection? God helping us, we shall; but we must do on our part faithfully, having strong faith and trust in every commandment and promise of God. To be like Him is to bring every phase of our daily living to conform to the divine, even as Christ did. What a wonderful achievement it will be, and the gladness and joy we shall have if accounted worthy to hear the "Well done." We can be such difficult creatures to ourselves at times, and we do need the prayers and help of one another; so may they rise as a pleasant offering before the throne of Grace, coming from a heart and mind determined to do the will of God.

How blessed we are to have such a grand opportunity to make ourselves over into new creatures. May we never weary in sowing to the spirit, that we may have the joy of the harvest-gathering time when our Master returns, when faith turns to sight and our highest hopes become reality.

From a Friend in Warwick, Qld., Australia

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Pre-Existence of Christ

WHAT IS pre-existence? It has been defined as "existence before existence," or "prior existence." The dictionary defines **pre** as "before," hence pre-existence would be non-existence, for before existence is non-existence. But such explanations notwithstanding, it is believed by nearly all Christendom that Christ had a prior existence with the Father in heaven ages before He was born of the Virgin Mary.

Our studies have shown that the pre-existence doctrine was post-apostolic and that its origin is to be found in Greek philosophy, not the Bible. Philo, a first century philosopher from Alexandria, "translated and reinterpreted Judaism," in order to make it "more palatable to Greek tastes," and in the process he mixed Greek philosophy with the Scriptures.

Philo was a student of Plato, a philosopher who lived some four centuries before him. It is to Plato that we are indebted for the doctrine of the immortal soul, and the idea that death is but a separation of body and soul—doctrines that are almost universally accepted, but which find no support in the Scriptures. It was a time when philosophic speculation held the center of interest.

Drawing heavily on the writings of Plato, Philo speculated broadly concerning the meaning of the Logos. He described the Logos as pre-existent, or "existing before the world," as "neither created as humans nor uncreated as God." He further described it as the "image of God," "the true and first begotten son," as "captain and steersman in the management of the universe." The early Church fathers, as they wandered away from the teachings of Christ and His apostles, adopted these ideas of Plato and Philo and used them in explaining the meaning of the Logos in the prologue of John's Gospel. Thus they distorted the Apostle's true thought, and declared that the Logos was indeed Jesus Christ and that therefore Jesus was pre-existent.

This thought has been perpetuated through the March, 1978

centuries, and most writers today can see nothing but pre-existence in the Gospels, so thoroughly have they accepted the conclusions of the church "fathers." "Jesus of Nazareth," says one modern writer, "is the vehicle for the Word, but as a real human being in himself, he is never clearly in focus. Genuine human existence is almost sacrificed in the descriptions of pre-existence or essence."

We have already discussed many texts used to support the idea of Christ's pre-existence; in this issue we will complete our study of the subject.

III. THE PRE-EXISTENCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

"The Gospels record the story [of Jesus] within the bounds of historical existence; that is, between His birth and death and resurrection," writes Fred B. Craddock in *The Pre-Existence in the New Testament*. "However, every event is told in such a way as to make the reader conscious of the pre- and post-existent dimensions of the story."

"The portrayals of Jesus' teaching, healing, doing mighty works, are drawn so as to impress clearly upon the reader that Jesus is not simply 'of Nazareth'; He can be understood only in the context of eternity. The fact of His existence is in the middle of a three-chapter history: pre-existence, existence, post-existence."*

We would agree that the Gospels present the story of Jesus "within the bounds of historical existence"—and **only** within these bounds. They give a running account of His birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection. His conception was unique, but the angel Gabriel made no mention of a prior existence in his message to Mary. His birth was as that of any other child. When He was eight days old, He was presented at the Temple as was the custom in Jewish families.

The Gospels tell how He went with His family to the Passover Feast at the age of twelve; He lingered behind at the temple and grieved His

*Fred B. Craddock, *The Pre-Existence in the New Testament*, pp. 85, 86.

parents, but He obediently returned home when they summoned Him. He spent eighteen years subject to His parents before He was baptised at the hands of John and began His public ministry. His career was marked by many notable miracles, parables and sermons. Throughout the Gospels He is pictured as the obedient Son of His heavenly Father, a Son who yielded to His Father's will, even unto death. There is no evidence of pre-existence.

After His resurrection and ascension His personally chosen representatives went forth fired with a holy zeal to establish the Christian Church on the basis of what they had seen and heard. The faithful Luke recorded the trials, tribulations and successes of these able missionaries in the Acts of the Apostles.

What was the message they preached? Did they preach a Christ that had always existed and recently come down from heaven? Let us examine the record.

C. The Pre-Existence in the Acts?

In the words of one writer, "it is quite probable that Paul often quoted a poem, a hymn, or liturgical formula already used in the [religious] community to express the pre-existence of Christ." If such a doctrine was prevalent in the time of the apostles, we should find it in the Acts. Let us see what they were preaching.

1. **Peter** in his first sermon after Pentecost preached "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs," a man who was crucified and "whom God hath raised up." There is no mention of any pre-existence (Acts 2:22-38).

Again, at Caesarea, he testified to the Gentiles concerning Jesus whom "God raised up the third day." Peter also told how Jesus had commanded them to "preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which"—always existed with the Father from the beginning? No, "it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick [living] and dead" (Acts 10:36-42).

There is nothing whatever in Peter's preaching to indicate that he thought of Jesus as pre-existent. He and the other apostles knew Jesus as a man, not as the God of heaven in human form.

2. **Philip**, chosen by the apostles as a man "of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3), "went down to . . . Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake" (Acts 8:5, 6). And we read that "they believed Philip preaching the things con-

cerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ" (v. 12). Philip taught as did Jesus Himself, concerning the Kingdom, and concerning Jesus. There is no hint of pre-existence in his preaching.

Philip later met the Ethiopian eunuch and "preached unto him Jesus," or as rendered in the New International Version, he "told him the good news about Jesus" (Acts 8:35). It was the "good news," which is the gospel that he was preaching. It was the same gospel preached by Jesus Himself, the "gospel of the kingdom" which He went about preaching (Matt. 4:23; 9:35), and which Paul said "is the power of God unto salvation," and "by which also [we] are saved if [we] keep in memory" what has been preached to us (Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 15:2).

3. **Paul**, speaking to the people at Antioch reviewed the history of God's people, showing how God fulfilled His promise through Jesus, affirming how God "raised him from the dead," and "that through this man [not a god from heaven] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:14-38). Nowhere do we find Paul making any mention of pre-existence. We are confident that the doctrine of the pre-existence had no place among the beliefs of the early Christian Church.

D. The Pre-Existence in Paul's Epistles?

Supporters of the pre-existence doctrine admit that any clear proof is lacking in the Gospels, but most claim firm support from the Apostle Paul. Fred B. Craddock, in his book on pre-existence, says, "A preliminary reading of his [Paul's] most explicit statements of the pre-existence of Christ indicate three major themes: . . . 1) a pre-existent Christ is related not solely to redemption but to creation as well; 2) a pre-existent Christ who becomes existent; 3) a pre-existent Christ is not limited to the Christian era but figured in Israel's history as well . . ." In other words, Mr. Craddock believes that Paul taught "the pre-existence of Christ . . . in relation to creation, to incarnation, and to history."

If Paul was teaching the pre-existence, the term should appear at least once in his epistles—but we fail to find it. We will discuss some texts from Paul's writings which supporters of the doctrine claim support their view.

1. **I Corinthians 10:1-4**. "All our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; . . . and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

Was Paul here teaching a pre-existent Christ, one who did not begin with the Virgin Mary but who accompanied the Israelites in the wilderness? Believers in the pre-existence would answer in the affirmative. But must we assume that the meat, drink, and rock of which Paul wrote were the Man Jesus Christ?

The use of the adjective "spiritual" with all three nouns indicates clearly that Paul had no intention of teaching pre-existence for Christ. Were we to assume that the physical Christ was intended, we would also have to take literally the portion of the verse that says the people ate and drank these objects, hence they would have been eating the man Christ.

As explained in greater detail in our previous lesson on this subject, the term "Christ" in the Bible does not always refer to the man Christ. Its use here designates the gospel or truth that He taught, the "spiritual Christ." It is the same as the "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Common sense tells us that the literal Christ cannot be in anyone.

We are confident that Paul, who in other epistles identified Christ as "descended from David" (Rom. 1:3, RSV), and as God's Son, "born of woman, born under the law" (Gal. 4:4, RSV), was not here describing Him as pre-existent.

2. Romans 9:5. "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." Was Paul here giving Christ the same status as God, inferring pre-existence?

Paul was simply showing the human descent of Christ from the patriarchs, which he follows with an exclamation of praise to God. Newer translations make the text clearer: "Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them, in natural descent, sprang the Messiah. May God, supreme above all, be blessed for ever!" (New English); "They [the Jews] are descended from the patriarchs, and Christ, as a human being, belongs to their race. May God, who rules over all, be praised forever!" (Today's English Version). It is God who rules over all, not Christ. There is no thought of pre-existence here.

3. Philippians 2:5-8. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

To those who believe in the pre-existence and
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the atoning death of Christ on the cross, these verses describe His mission on earth. But let us remember that these are the words of Paul, who according to Peter, wrote "some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (II Pet. 3:15-16). Let us try to better understand Paul's words.

How was Jesus "in the form of God"? Certainly not in power, for He said Himself, "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). He was "in the form of God" in substance, being the Son of God. The writer to the Hebrews described Him as the "express image of his [Father's] person" (Heb. 1:3). Paul was speaking of Christ's relationship with His Father during His life. There is nothing to indicate a prior existence.

Did Jesus, who said His Father was greater, claim to be "equal with God"? Paul was put into the ministry by Christ Himself. Certainly he would not contradict His words. The statement that Christ "thought it not robbery to be equal with God" seems demeaning; however, the trouble is not with Paul's statement, but with the translation of his words.

According to the **Greek-English Lexicon** by Arndt and Gingrich, the Greek word here translated "robbery" has other meanings which would come closer to Paul's thought. "Robbery, . . . is next to impossible in Phil. 2:6," says the Lexicon, as "the state of being equal with God cannot be equated with the act of robbery." This same Greek word is also used of "a piece of good fortune, a windfall; . . . prize, booty . . . and only the context and an understanding of Paul's thought in general can decide whether it means holding fast to a prize already obtained or the appropriation to oneself of a prize which is sought after." We are confident Paul had no thought of "robbery"; newer translations also omit the thought.

A more logical translation of the text might be: Christ, though being the possession of God and made in the likeness of God, did not consider (His advantages) a prize to be appropriated to Himself alone—He led (others) to be like God.

Verses 7 and 8 emphasize Christ's humility. But Paul was not telling of some former existence Christ had enjoyed with His Father in heaven. Christ was "made in the likeness of men" from the beginning, having been "born of a woman" (Gal. 4:4, NEB), and "made like his brethren in every respect" (Heb. 2:17, RSV). All of His deeds were performed during the space of time between His birth and His ascension; He had no prior existence, and Paul claims none for Him.

4. Colossians 1:15-18. "Who is the image of the

invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, . . . All things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

Without the closing sentence of this passage, we might have difficulty understanding Paul's statement. But Paul is not teaching pre-existence. Rather, he is pointing to Christ as the "firstborn from the dead," the "firstfruits" as in I Cor. 15: 23, the first to be rewarded with eternal life. As Paul wrote in his Epistle to Timothy, it is He "only [who] hath immortality."

Because of the supremacy of His position, He is worthy of being the "head of the body, the church," as in verse 18 and to have preeminence over the same. He is the first of our race to possess immortality, hence is called "the firstborn of every creature," again referring to His rank, not His place in time.

Surface reading of verses 16 and 17 might relate Christ to the creation of all things. But we are confident that Paul, who explained the true God to the men of Athens as "God that made the world and all things therein," had no intention of attributing the creation to Christ. Rather, he alluded to the new heavens and earth which Christ *will* create as though they were a finished product, speaking of "things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). Christ is "before all things" of this new creation, "and by him all things [of the new creation] consist," because He will be the king, the head of the new arrangement that will replace our present government at His return.

5. **Ephesians 1:22-23.** "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Here again Paul refers to Christ as the head of the new creation, again speaking of "things which be not as though they were" (Heb. 2:5).

All things are not yet put under His feet, as the writer to the Hebrews stated it: "But now we see not yet all things put under him" (Heb. 2:8b). The time is yet future when all things will be under Christ. The writer is here referring to the same time he referred to in Colossians 1:15-18. Not until the Kingdom is fully established will all things be under Christ.

6. **Romans 11:36.** "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever." This is yet another text from Paul's words to which those who believe in the

pre-existence fly for proof. But have we any reason to think it was Christ of whom Paul spoke?

Verse 36 standing alone might be construed to mean Christ. But let us begin with verse 33 to get Paul's thought: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" (Rom. 11:33-35).

It is obvious from the context that Paul's reference throughout was to God. The change to "Lord" in verse 34 does not alter the line of thought. God Almighty is often referred to as Lord in the Bible. The whole passage refers to God and not Christ. There is no pre-existence here.

7. **I Timothy 3:16.** "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Believers in the pre-existence understand the "mystery of godliness" to be the process by which the pre-existent Christ became a human baby, born of the Virgin Mary.

The Greek word for "mystery" does not mean mysterious as we might think of it. Rather, it means "revealed truth," things formerly hidden, but now revealed. It is purely assumption to say that the "mystery of godliness" refers to the incarnation of Christ. Paul was saying, Great is the revealed truth of our religion; he was not describing the religion of Christ as a mystery.

Newer translations give no indication of incarnation. The New English Bible renders it, "He who was manifested in the body, vindicated in the spirit, seen by angels; who was proclaimed among the nations, believed in throughout the world, glorified in high heaven." The description is of Christ, not God, and offers no proof of pre-existence or incarnation. ●●

TEST YOURSELF

1. Where did the idea of a pre-existent saviour originate?
2. In what sense is Christ the "spiritual Rock"? Does this suggest that Christ pre-existed?

*Reprints of these studies available,
10 cents per copy*



A Thousand Years On Earth

OF ALL that is foretold of the wonder and glory of the Golden Age, perhaps no single fact is more arresting than its physical reality. The Kingdom of Christ will be a real government of real territory (the earth) under the rulership of a real king (Jesus Christ) and His chosen associates (the saints). This is the plan outlined in Scripture. There is nothing nebulous about it, nothing visionary, nothing far-off and distant and illusive; it is all solid reality.

But there are some people, particularly our Adventist friends, who believe the Millennial Age will be in heaven, that Christ and the saints will rule a thousand years in heaven.

What is there in Scripture that leads them to believe Christ and His newly crowned saints will spend a thousand years in heaven?

They go to Revelation 7:9, where the Revelator saw in vision the saints standing before the throne, and they comment: "This Scripture shows plainly that the righteous are all taken to heaven immediately after the first Resurrection." They apparently conclude that because the saints are said to stand "before the throne," that they are before the throne of God in heaven.

Now God's throne is in heaven. "The heaven is my throne," says the Lord (Isa. 66:1). "The Lord's throne is in heaven" (Ps. 11:4). But this does not say that the throne of Christ is in heaven. "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men" (Ps. 115:16).

Is not Christ among the children of men, of the seed of Abraham, made like unto His brethren? (Heb. 2:16-17). And will not He as King have a throne on earth? We read the words of the prophet Jeremiah: "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem" (3:17). Jerusalem is a city on earth, and the nations of earth will "be gathered unto it"—and surely all the nations of the earth will not be taken to heaven! There is no suggestion that the throne of the new government will be in heaven.

The angel Gabriel prophesied of Christ at the March, 1978

time of His birth that "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever." This pictures an earthly setting for the Kingdom, for David did not rule from heaven. David's throne was on earth; Christ's throne will likewise be on earth.

Psalms 110:1 is sometimes quoted by those who believe Christ and the saints will reign in heaven during the thousand years, while the earth is being cleansed of all evil. The text reads: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." But the very next verse shows that when the time comes for Christ to take control He will be on the earth. "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion [a city on earth]: rule thou" from heaven until thy enemies are perished? No, "rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." What enemies could He have in heaven? The chapter continues to tell of Christ's reign on earth after He returns: "He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies" (v. 6)—this surely could not happen in heaven.

The Bible contains text upon text indicating that the earth will be the domain of Christ and His saints, and there is nothing whatever said of a thousand-year delay.

Revelation 20:4 speaks of the reign of Christ and the saints: "And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." But is there any possibility that this may be in heaven? The chapter begins with an angel coming down from heaven, laying hold on the "dragon," the "old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan," and binding him a thousand years. No one supposes this event to take place anywhere except on earth. In verse 3, Satan is cast into the "bottomless pit," shut up, and a seal set upon him that he should deceive the "nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled." The term "nations" depicts an earthly group of people, not a heavenly.

According to Revelation 20:7-9, Satan is to be "loosed" at the end of the thousand years, and shall go out to again deceive the nations of the earth; "and they went up on the breadth of the

earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." Here again the earth—not heaven—is the base of operation.

Another text indicating the location of Christ's reign is in Revelation 2:26: "And he that overcometh . . . will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." Can we think that the saints in heaven are in need of ruling "with a rod of iron"? It is the nations of earth that Christ and the saints will be ruling.

Revelation 5 depicts the time of the opening of the "seven seals," an act which only "the Lamb" was worthy to perform. To open the seals suggests the enacting of the program of events which the seals represent. Then follows the triumph song of the worthy saints: "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood [word] out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." What could be plainer? "We shall reign on the earth." Nothing is said of a thousand years in heaven, after which they should reign on the earth; they are redeemed, and at once their reign on earth begins.

The prophet Daniel tells us when this new government will be set up. A small stone (representing the kingdom of Christ) smote the great image (representing the kingdoms of men) on the feet. Such was the dream of Nebuchadnezzar the king, which Daniel interpreted by the power of God. After the little stone smote the image, it immediately began to grow; and it grew and grew until it "became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth"—not heaven. Daniel also tells us that in the last days of the rulership of men "shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed" (Dan. 2:44). Notice, that it is "in the days of these kings," not a thousand years later that God sets up His kingdom under Christ (Dan. 2:34-35, 44).

All the events which the Bible outlines to follow the return of Christ center around solving the problems of earth's government and benefiting the people on the earth. Upon the arrival of Christ the King, the proclamation will go forth to every kindred, and nation, and tongue, and people, saying: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come" (Rev. 14:7). Mankind will be faced with the ultimatum: submit or perish. It will be the hour of decision (Joel 3:14). The resultant battle between the forces of

Christ and the forces of evil men is styled "Armageddon" (Rev. 16:13-14, 16).

This battle of Armageddon is to be fought on the earth, and the saints will be in command, directing, commanding; Christ Himself will ride forth "conquering, and to conquer" (Rev. 6:2)—how could He possibly be said to do this if reigning from heaven? The nations of earth (Rev. 17:2) shall "make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev. 17:14). Here is pictured the King and "they that are with him" overpowering the forces of evil—how could this possibly be done from a heavenly platform? Another chapter in Revelation pictures a "white horse" and "he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war" (Rev. 19:11); and "out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. 19:15)—this could hardly describe any other than Christ and His righteous administration of law and judgment. The next verse is definite: "And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords"—this is Christ the King, and He is on the scene of earth, where there is evil to be put down so that righteousness may triumph.

Psalms 149 describes this world-shaking event which will take place on earth, with the saints in command: "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud. . . . Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron" (vs. 5-8). This would be possible nowhere but on earth; and Christ and the saints will surely be present, for the text concludes with "This honour have all his saints."

Malachi 4:1 pictures Armageddon as the "day" that shall "burn as an oven," in which all "the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root no branch." Verse 3 reveals that the righteous shall be present, directing this work of cleansing the earth from the incorrigible element, not millions of miles away in heaven: "And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet, in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts."

The wicked, rebellious element removed, the road for progress will be wide open, and progress will there be, "For the earth shall be filled with the

knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14). Here is another promise to be fulfilled on the earth, and there is no suggestion that it will begin to be fulfilled only after a thousand years of desolation. Jeremiah, depicting this same period of time, and the same glorious results, said of the inhabitants of earth, "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them" (Jer. 31:34). People on earth will be taught of God, and who will teach them if all the people of God are absent for a thousand years?

Proverbs 10:30 declares forthrightly that "the righteous shall never be removed." Would not a thousand years in heaven involve the removal of the "righteous"—especially if the earth is to be desolate during that time?

The Psalmist, inspired by God, describes the extent of the new government as "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8). And the details that follow show definitely that this will be true when Christ first takes office, while there are still mortal people on earth in need of education and help. We read that "kings" shall "fall down before him," and "all nations shall serve him"; He shall "deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also"; He shall "redeem their soul from deceit and violence"—all this must meet fulfillment prior to the time when all men everywhere on earth are immortal, as they will be during the Age beyond the Millennium.

Isaiah 65 pictures in heart-warming words the conditions under which earth's blessed inhabitants will live during the glorious Millennium when Christ and the saints will be reigning on earth. And we can know that the description applies to the Millennium rather than to the Age beyond because during that time "a child shall die an hundred years old" (Isa. 65:20)—and there will be no death in Eternity (Rev. 21:3-4). Isaiah's picture is far from one of dire desolation. We read: "And I will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed" (Isa. 65:19-20). Physical suffering will be practically unknown, and the life span shall be greatly lengthened: "Anyone dying under a hundred years must be accursed by God" (Moffatt).

"And 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" (vs. 21-22).

These prophecies of Isaiah are not being fulfilled anywhere on earth today, nor can they fit into the scheme of the finished handiwork of God when there will be "no more death, neither sorrow nor crying" (Rev. 21:3-4); hence they must picture life on earth during the glorious Millennial Age, when Christ and the saints will "live and reign . . . a thousand years."

The prophecies of Scripture all point to the throne of Christ being established on earth. The words of Zechariah confirm again: Christ comes to dwell among the people of earth. We read, "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord." And this prophecy cannot apply to the Age beyond the Millennium, for again the "nations" of earth are in the picture: "And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, . . . And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again" (Zech. 2:10-12).

If there is to be a thousand-year reign in heaven, surely many passages of Scripture need adjusting! ●●

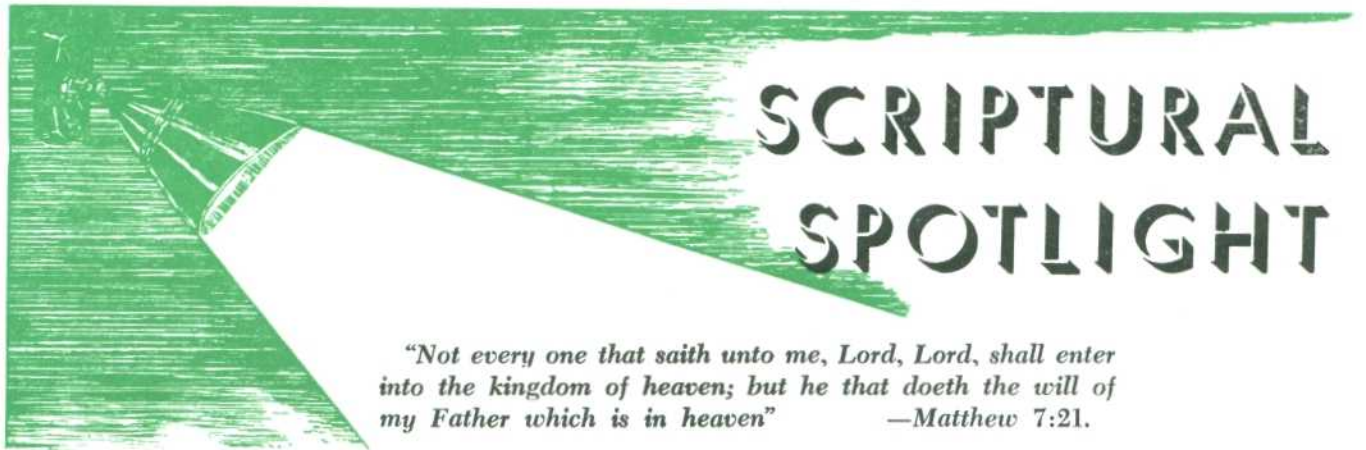
*Soon shall the great glad song arise
From all earth's millions to the skies;
That song of triumph which records
That all the earth is now the Lord's.*

*Let thrones and powers and kingdoms be
Obedient, mighty God, to Thee;
And over land and stream and main
Wave Thou the scepter of Thy reign.*

*Oh! that the anthem now might swell,
And host to host the triumph tell,
That not one rebel heart remains
But over all the Saviour reigns.*

*Through North and South and East and West
Shall His eternal Name be blest,
Till ev'rywhere beneath the sun
His Kingdom rules, His will is done.*

—Selected.



SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"
—Matthew 7:21.

OUR LORD and Master struck a hard blow at all show, sham and hypocrisy when He uttered these memorable words. Jesus again struck at hypocrisy when He reiterated the words of Isaiah the prophet: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

The lips were moving, the worship was there, but the worship was vain. What was lacking? The very thing that was most vital and essential—there was no heart in it. The words were from the lips out, it never got down any deeper.

When we think of lip service, our attention may be directed to the hypocritical scribe or Pharisee. We may endeavor to find consolation in the fact that lip service is found only among those who love the greetings in the market places. We all pass by on the other side lest we come in contact with that dread disease—the leaven of the Pharisees.

But today we ask for a deeper searching of our own hearts, lest we go down in the stormy night because our righteousness did not exceed the righteousness of those who profess to know God but in works deny Him. We have all been guilty of lip service. It is so easy to say and not do. It is so easy to say "Lord, Lord" and do not the things He has commanded. The lips may be moving but the heart is hard. The tongue may be singing but there is no music in the soul.

"Oh, why, why," said our Master, "do you persist in calling me, Lord, Lord, and do not those things I command?"

Here Jesus is striking close home. We have all used the polishing rag too often to polish the outside of the platter, and left underneath filth and dirt. We have all tried to make our lamps burn when there was no oil. The Moffatt Translation in describing the Pharisee, says "they talk but do not act."

The psalmist David caught the true spirit of service in his humble prayer to God, asking forgiveness when he cried out, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer." He was crying out to God that he might render a service that would go down deeper than his lips. He was pouring out his supplication that his service might reach so far that it would take hold of his entire being, his mind, his might and strength.

Today we should long to take part in a service that will gird us for action, a service that will cause us to leave far behind that class who say and do not. Happy indeed is that man who reaches that place where he holds back nothing from God. The smallest secret sin held and cherished will stay the great blessing. A man who counts service to God drudgery, we can be assured, is out of touch with God.

Too often we have brought into the temple the mint, the anise and all that goes with it and left outside the weightier matters of judgment, mercy and faith.

Gideon demanded of his followers more than the few words, "I will go." He wanted more than lip service from the three hundred that struck consternation to the Midianite camp. We sing,

*"Our hearts now obey our lips while they say,
'We have loved Thee, O Lord, with the few.'"*

God demands the lips and the heart working in perfect combination.

A writer who was describing the life of the apostle Paul said that he was a man with a purpose because he knew what he was talking about and meant what he said. There is wonderful power in that sentence, "He meant what he said." Lip service never gets down that deep. The way to avoid spiritual death is by spiritual growth. Let us never forget that what we believe most deeply

and most truly enters into and constitutes our very life. We pretend to follow Christ, but too often we follow so far behind that we lose sight of our Master and great Example. Our lips speak of the glorious majesty of His Kingdom, but what is our service in preparing ourselves and others for that great Event? With our mouth we make claim to the old-time religion, but is our service such that men can see and behold that we are real contenders for the faith once delivered to the saints?

Business men tell us today that people want service. If they do not get it, they will go somewhere else. The service must be speedy. That means action. Lip service will never fill the bill, but too often that is the type of service we attempt to palm off on God. But let us remember that He "is a God of knowledge, and by Him *actions* are weighed."

Again Jesus speaks a solemn warning, "But do not ye after their works, for they say and do not." We belong to just one of two classes, the Saying class or the Doing class. The membership of the Saying class is heavy. Even down at the Judgment Hour the Saying class are crying, "Lord, Lord, have we not done this or that?" The Doing class do not have to speak. Their works have followed them. The service they have rendered is an open book.

Could we but catch the spirit of the Master today when He said, "I do nothing of myself; but as my Father taught me, I speak these things." His heart was working in exact harmony with His lips. We do so much speaking when there is no God in it: words and speech without edification. Can it be possible that with the same lips we utter words to bless God, and with other words we bring a curse upon our own heads? Can it be possible blessings and cursing stream from the same lips? James says, "Brethren, this ought not so to be." It is time and high time for us to see to it that our service gets down deeper than our lips. If our service to God has never gone down deeper than the lips, the day that now belongs to us will have been a miserable failure.

The day is not far distant when all show, sham, veneer and hypocrisy will be exposed to view. The All-searching eye of the One with whom we have to deal "seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." The Moffatt Translation renders Mark 4:22 as follows: "Nothing is hidden except to be disclosed, nothing concealed except it be revealed."

Again we read, "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him." The works never follow, the life is empty; they never learn to know God, and in the Great Day of Reckoning He in turn

answers them, "I know you not."

"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, that seek him with the whole heart." More than lip service here. A consecrated life, a full surrender. Nothing in reserve. God to such is All in all. ●●

Obituary

William H. Payne

On January 26, 1978, the Megiddo Church lost its eldest member, William H. Payne.

Brother Payne was born in Ontario, Canada, on December 9, 1877, just one hundred years ago last December. He made a permanent move to Rochester in 1900, becoming a citizen of the United States in 1908. That same year he was married to Harriet May Eames, and they enjoyed many happy and fruitful years together, until her death in 1964. They had two children, a daughter Evelyn, who died in 1964, and a son Newton, who survives him.

Brother Payne's acquaintance with the Church dated back almost to its founder, the family becoming interested the year Rev. Mr. Nichols died.

Brother Payne was always steady, strong and straightforward. His convictions were firm, and His confidence steadfast that "all things work together for good, to them that love God." Perhaps the greatest test of this came in his 87th year, when he suffered the loss of both his wife and his daughter, both of them loving and devoted companions. The blow was severe, but he accepted it nobly, with the courage and fortitude born of a solid Christian hope in God who is able to raise the dead and reward every man "according to his works."

A carpenter by trade, Brother Payne found much church work where he could use his skills; in fact, there was not a building project during his active years to which he did not lend a hand, contributing generously of his time and effort and skill.

Jesus promised a hundredfold of blessing to those who would follow Him; Brother Payne had it abundantly. He was blessed in just about every way a mortal can be. He had a kindly and loving wife, who was also a faithful spiritual helpmeet, and two loyal children; he had a useful trade and steady employment through all his working years, securing enough of this world's goods to provide a comfortable home for his family; he had good health, good friends, and a full thirty years beyond the average allotment, most of which he was able to enjoy. He was also blessed with kind hands to care for him during his declining days.

His kindly disposition made him a pleasure to care for. Time and again he proved himself flawlessly patient. And his willingness to cooperate with those caring for him was above reproach.

But even the longest, happiest, healthiest life has an end, and death at 100 years is just as real as death at 50; hence the admonition of the Psalmist: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

On January 28, 1978, funeral services were conducted, Brother Howard Sisson officiating. Interment was in Mount Hope cemetery, where others of our beloved dead await the Day when the dead in Christ shall rise and receive the reward their lives have merited. ●●

Please Come In Proper Attire

Due to current extremes in spiritual dress, we are compelled to issue the following directive to members of this church. Please read carefully and plan your wardrobe accordingly in order to spare yourself embarrassment at the forthcoming reception for the King of kings.

MEN: The whole armor of God (Eph. 6:13-18) is perfectly in order to be worn at all times. Full combat dress will identify you immediately as a soldier of the King.

LADIES: A robe made of "fine linen clean and white," even that linen which is the righteousness of saints (Rev. 19:8), is always acceptable attire. We realize this garment is expensive, but we urge you to invest in one. It will last a lifetime and will never go out of style. It will complement your high calling in Christ and take you into royal

company with a gracious air. If you desire ornaments, add the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit (I Pet. 3:4). It is sure to enhance your beauty.

CHILDREN: The suit of obedience (Eph. 6:1) is most becoming. This garment is designed especially for the youthful form. It may seem to be close-fitting at first, but once you adjust to it you will find it protective as well as attractive.

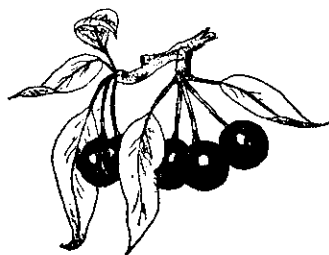
ALL CHRISTIANS: The garment of praise is good to have in your wardrobe for anytime (Isa. 61:3). These garments are woven of gold and silver threads and provide a pleasant and becoming appearance to the wearer at all times. They also catch gleams of heavenly light and reflect them back to the Creator.

If you should still have in your possession black garments of bitterness, complaining, criticism and hatred, dispose of them immediately.

Please note: Anyone wearing filthy rags of self-righteousness will not be admitted into the presence of the King of kings. ●●

—From A Reader

Fruitful Fragments



What we *know* we should DO, for delay is the door to eternal doom.

It is never too early to do right, but the time will come when it will be too late.

Those who are always finding fault wish secretly to drag others down to their own level.

No trial would seem too great if we could know God's reason for sending it.

Few people would be happy if suddenly they found themselves surrounded with everything they thought they wanted.

All achievement begins with an intense, burning desire for something definite.

It is better to lose the argument than to lose your peace of mind. Better yet: don't argue.

Store your mind with useful knowledge. Think more of what you can be than of how you can appear.

He that is good to another does good to himself.

We should always consider how much more unfortunate we might have been.

Lord, help me to remember that nothing is going to happen today that You and I cannot handle together.

To have more, desire less.

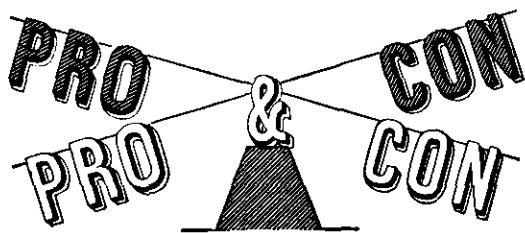
Temperance is moderation in the things that are good, and total abstinence from the things that are bad.

*I rest by serving at Thy will,
Thy yoke is easy and Thy burden light.
And peace grows deep and deeper still
As my obedience proves Thy might.*

Driver or hitchhiker—which are you? Are you one who does the work, or one who stands by—to criticize?

It takes a live fish to go upstream.

Kind words never die, but they must first be spoken.



A Column for Open Discussion

All our readers do not agree with us. If you are among those who differ on some point, write us your views and we will consider them in the light of Scripture teaching. Our policy is the Apostle's injunction: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

● Concerning Adam's Sin, Christ's Righteousness—and Us

"I have been reading your September, 1977 issue of the MEGIDDO MESSAGE, and I must write to you because of something you have written that I strongly disagree with and feel in my heart.

"You write: 'They feel that God originally planned a Utopian world for all mankind, but that Adam sinned and God was so outraged that he damned the whole human race on account of Adam's sin. Then he had second thoughts. In his love he decided to send his Son to die as a sacrifice to appease his wrath, thereby freeing the whole human race from the penalty of sin if they would only accept Christ as their Saviour.' You go on to say, 'We say flatly that it is not true. It is unscriptural. It is not worthy of an All-Wise Creator.'

"After reading this, my heart felt sorrow for anyone reading this and thinking it is true. I beg to differ with you!

"Beginning with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, every human being (except one) has walked contrary to God's way of life. We have all contributed our share to the sins of this world. What Adam did was bring death to all mankind into this world, for the 'wages of sin is death' (Rom. 6:23)."

—D. L. N., New Berlin, Wisconsin

Your statement, that "Beginning with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, every human being (except one) has walked contrary to God's way of life," and that Adam brought "death to all man-

kind into this world" because "the wages of sin is death" is not quite accurate. Natural death did not come about because of Adam's sin or anyone else's. There is nothing in the Bible that says natural death is the result of sin. Natural death was in the world long before Adam; it is the termination of natural life according to the laws which God built into our world. Natural death existed long before God started revealing His plan to man. God did not write His Book to tell us about what we can know from our own experience; the Bible tells us what we need to know to live eternally. Thus the book of Genesis opens with an allegory in which God reveals His plan to men—the story of Creation and the Garden of Eden are much more meaningful when approached in this manner. The term "Adam" then becomes a representative term for all who enter God's service and agree to work for Him. When anyone who has covenanted to serve God breaks that covenant by sinning and does not repent and turn from that sin, he brings death upon himself—but not natural death; he brings **penal** death upon himself, at the time he is condemned by the Great Judge (Matt. 25:41-46). Every human being born into this world is subject to natural death, whether he be righteous or wicked, and in the natural course of events dies. There have been only two exceptions during recorded history (Elijah and Enoch). If we were to believe that natural death is the result of sin, Elijah and Enoch would be the only two righteous, but we know this is not true.

Again you say, "Every human being (except one) has walked contrary to God's way of life." You are right, we are all sinful by nature. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5). The heart of the natural man is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9). All have sinned, even after knowing God's law—except Christ, who never sinned after He knew the law of God.

But there are many examples in Scripture of men and women who overcame their sinful tendencies and became pure and righteous. We read of Zacharias and Elisabeth in Luke 1:6, "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." Jesus said we would see "Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:28). The apostle Paul said he would stand among the conquerors: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (II Tim. 4:7); he overcame his sinful tendencies. Hebrews 11 lists Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and others

who pleased God and whose reward is waiting because they all "obtained a good report through faith" (Heb. 11:39-40). And they all died natural deaths (again with the exceptions of Enoch and Elijah, as noted in Heb. 11:5 and II Kings 2:11).

There are four different types of "death" spoken of in the Bible, and it is important that we do not confuse them or we will not be able to grasp what the writers had in mind. First, there is natural death, which comes naturally to all of God's animal creation. It has nothing to do with sinning, either Adam's or anyone else's. Second, there is "death to sin" (Rom. 6:2, 10-12). Third, there is the state of being "dead in sin" (Eph. 2:1). Fourth, there is penal death, death which is penalty for sin and from which there is no release. This is the death which is the "wages of sin" (Rom. 6:23). This penal death is not the same as natural death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20)—penal death. The sinner alone is responsible for receiving this death; he can escape it by living a righteous life: "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die" (Ezek. 18:21). In the natural course of events he will die a natural death, but by his righteousness he will be able to escape eternal death, penal death, and will receive instead eternal life.

"All human beings who have not repented of their sins are, so to speak, on 'spiritual death row'; this eternal penalty was earned by simply 'doing what comes naturally'—sinning!"

We agree with you here, with one qualification: "All human beings" have not agreed to serve God and therefore are not subject to condemnation for their sins; they that "have sinned without law shall also perish without law" (Rom. 2:12). They simply die a natural death, from which there is no hope of release since they did not die "in Christ," in hope, as believers (I Thess. 4:16).

"But God, in His vast mercy has provided a way by which we may avoid paying that extreme penalty: 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John 3:16)."

We agree that "God in His vast mercy has provided a way by which we may avoid paying the extreme penalty" of eternal death, and that that means is through God's "only begotten Son";

but we probably differ on the meaning of the word "believeth." I fear that your interpretation would be that to "believe" means to accept the fact that Christ lived, to believe that He loves us and died for our sins, thus freeing us from further responsibility.

Let's see what Jesus said about the way we may escape death. In His first sermon, He had this to say: "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). He stresses that He will hear not the one who says only, but the one who **does**. For "many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (vs. 22-23). He will say "Depart" to those who do not *do*, those who persist in their "iniquity."

Then Jesus continues by likening the man who hears the word and does accordingly to "a wise man" who "built his house upon a rock." What happened to his house when the storm struck? "It fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." Conversely, Jesus likens the man who hears and does *not* do to a foolish man who "built his house upon the sand." And what happened to this man's house, this man who merely heard and did not do? "It fell; and great was the fall of it" (Matt. 7:24-27).

Those who depend upon Jesus' physical death on the cross to atone for their sins and insure their salvation without their keeping all the sayings of Jesus and perfecting a character for His acceptance at the Judgment will be in that house, and great will be the fall of it. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

What is the meaning of John 3:16? What is the world that God loves? Is it the "world" that Jesus would not pray for (John 17:9)? Is it the world that hated His disciples, and from which He had called them to be separate (John 15:19)? We know it is not. God's love is not universal.

The world God loves is the "world of believers," the world that "through him might be saved" (John 3:17)—many in the present arrangement do not even **desire** to be saved. The Bible does not teach that God loves and will save all men indiscriminately. "I love them that love me," says the voice of Wisdom, speaking for God (Prov. 8:17), and all in the world do not love God. Therefore, the "world" that God loves is the "world" of those who love Him, and how can we show our love for God except by doing as He commands?

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (I John 5:3).

Those whom God loves will "believe" in the fullest sense of the word—not merely acknowledge that Jesus lived and died but consent to the principles He taught, principles which demand a complete reformation of heart and life. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). All these true believers, who show by their lives that they do believe, shall "not perish, but have everlasting life" in Christ's future Kingdom upon earth (John 3:16; Luke 20:35-36).

It seems so strange that nearly the whole religious community will disregard hundreds of commands and requirements for salvation and then distort John 3:16 to prove that there is nothing (or very little) that we must do to "have everlasting life." A thoughtful reading of the verses following John 3:16 will show that we have something to do: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:19-21).

"A loving God wishes that all would claim the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, for the remission of their personal sins. 'But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life' (Rom. 5:8-10)."

Your statement that "a loving God wishes that all would claim the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ for the remission of their personal sins" is not found in Scripture, and seems an unfair accusation to direct against an All-Wise Creator. It puts the true and Omnipotent God on a par with heathen rulers, who sacrificed their children to appease the wrath of some imaginary god. Deut. 18:10 is very definite in stating God's attitude toward human sacrifice: "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire." Also, the words of the prophet Micah: "Where-with shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? . . . Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands

of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Mic. 6:6-8).

In the first place, God never sacrificed His Son;

Don't Hide Your Light



Under A Bushel!

"Don't hide your light," said Jesus, "but let your good deeds glow for all to see" (Matt. 5:16, TLB).

We are to "let it shine," and so long as there are no crossed wires, or blown circuits, or burned-out bulbs, the light will shine.

But there are other problems; so many things can hinder the shining of that light in us. Maybe we are nursing a grudge. Or we are out of sorts. Things have not gone the way we thought they should, and we are irked. Or our ill-temper has gotten out of control. Any of these make effective "bushels" that conceal our light. Or we were reprimanded, and we answered in a way that produced a lot of heat but very little light.

How about the light that is in us; is it shining? Or has the light in us become darkness because we keep it covered? God wants us each to be a burning and a shining light; "Ye are the light of the world." How well are we fulfilling that commission?

the Roman authorities, at the urging of the corrupt Jewish priesthood, crucified Jesus. God never sent Jesus into the world to die on the cross to appease His wrath for our sins. God sent Jesus into the world to show us how to live, that we might live with Him eternally. This is what Romans 5:10 says: "... much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Christ's death on the cross was only part of His lifelong commitment to do the will of His heavenly Father; it was His last act of obedience, the finishing of a perfect character before God. And that perfect obedience is what we must attain.

We must remember that Christ died "to sin" to show us the way to life—by doing the same ourselves. "For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now these words occur in the very next chapter following the one you quoted. If we take the words in Romans 5 as saying that Christ's death takes care of our sin, we are saying that Paul did not know what he was talking about when he says we must become dead to sin as Christ died (Rom. 6:10-11). If we quote Paul's words, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8) while we think that Christ died to save us from the consequences our sins deserve, then why the command, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body" (Rom. 6:12)? But if we understand Paul's words "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" as Christ completing His exemplary life of self-sacrifice to show us the way while we were yet dead in sin (Eph. 2:1), then we can realize how Christ's life of self-sacrifice can benefit us, by demonstrating how we too may die to sin, surrendering our will

to God as Christ did, becoming "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:11), and all of Paul's words are harmonious.

Again, if we quote Paul's words, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:9) as saying that he meant we are saved by Christ's death on Calvary, we again set Paul against himself; for in the very next chapter he says we must yield ourselves and all our members "as instruments of righteousness unto God" (6:13), must "walk in newness of life" (6:4), and become "crucified with him" (6:6). Paul clearly believed in a personal sacrifice for each of us to make, a sacrifice of obedience "unto righteousness" (Rom. 6:16). Thus when we quote Paul's words, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:9), and think not of any idea of atoning sacrifice but of His exemplary life of obedience ("blood" is a term for "life," the "life of the flesh" being "in the blood"—Lev. 17:11), we have nothing in this text that contradicts Paul's much emphasized belief in the need for personal righteousness. Indeed, as Paul himself says in Romans 5:10, "we shall be saved by his [Christ's] life." Christ is the impetus and the instrument of our salvation; we look "unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2) for our example to follow, and know that through Him, when He returns as King of the whole earth, we shall "be saved from wrath" (Rom. 5:9).

"There is only this one way to be covered by Christ's sacrifice—only one way to enter into eternity as a glorified member of God's family. And it involves repentance! 'Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out' (Acts 3:19)."

We surely agree that repentance is important, but repentance is more than open confession and more than a mere statement that we believe in Christ. John the Baptist clearly states that we must "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:8), or as we read in the margin, "answerable to amendment of life." The life must be amended; there must be a change, a turning from our sins before we have truly repented; it is when we have done this that God will pardon. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7). Repentance is more than a passive assent; it is positive action. ●●

Twelve Booklets

HISTORY OF THE MEGIDDO MISSION
THE COMING OF JESUS AND ELIJAH
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GOD'S SPIRITUAL CREATION
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Our Readers Write...

The Answer: Rejoice!

We need each other and the help we can get to make the trip we are on to eternal life.

I wish we could be there to celebrate Abib and the New Year with you all. And thanks for the enlightening leaflet. I never did believe it was in December, and this has more common sense in it than anything I've heard on it.

I feel we have found (at least partly) the answer, and it works when we apply it. It is, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). The rejoicing life is the victorious life. "Alway" means "in every circumstance," in the midst of every test, trouble, trial or problem, we are to rejoice in the Lord. Faith can work only in a rejoicing atmosphere. It cannot work in an atmosphere of fear. Rejoicing never accompanies unbelief, nor doubt. Rejoicing always accompanies victory and faith. The rejoicing Christian is the victorious Christian, the overcoming Christian.

First Thessalonians 5:16-18, especially verse 18, says this. "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." To me this has been precious, for it has taught me a lesson I will never forget.

Jacksonville, Florida

D. B.

It Takes Only One Short Lifetime

God has promised us great things. Life eternal can be ours if we meet the standards He has set for us. It takes only one short lifetime of willing service. We start in this way of life with great zeal and determination, but some grow weary in well doing. Do we want this to be true of us? We must not allow ourselves to become doubtful and indifferent but must think high and elevating thoughts and pure ideas.

When we avoid temptation, we prove we want life and want to abide forever.

When we displace feelings of bitterness, anger, jealousy, etc., with high and noble thoughts, we prove our desire to live forever is uppermost in our task.

We must be content with our lot and always be doing something for God and for truth, a work that befits our capabilities and our conditions.

True faithfulness is to always be doing things for God, and not to mind because they are such very little things.

If we work with all our mind, might and strength till the task is done, then with joy supreme we shall be welcomed into eternal bliss.

I feel like pressing on!

Peru, Iowa

F. B.

Cutting A Clean Furrow

We have put our hand to the plow. Let us cut a straight, clean furrow. This can only be done with watchfulness and a good sharp colter.

Let us cut clean from the world and turn the sod of worldly actions under and bring up the good fallow ground so the seed we sow will have good soil in which to take deep root.

Manitoba, Canada

V. H.

March, 1978

Rather Outspoken—But Right!

One of our local ministers called on me awhile ago, and said, "I don't see you out to church." I said, "No. I steer clear of the churches." And he said, "Well, why?" So I told him the story, how the Catholics cooked up their doctrine and beheaded and burned at the stake and stretched on the rack all that opposed it, till true Christianity was put right out of it. And then they kept adding rites and ceremonies to it all through the Dark Ages till it got so rotten that their own best thinkers couldn't stand it any longer. At last they got the Bible translated from the Latin to English, and this brought on what they called the Reformation and got the rot that had been added through the dark ages taken out, but all they had left was the foundational doctrines of the Catholic Church, and that is what most ministers have been preaching to us ever since, I told him. He said, "Oh yes, that's all it is, the foundation doctrine of the Catholic Church." I said, "and you are preaching the immortality of the soul and going to heaven or hell at death." He said, "You don't hear so much of that nowadays." I said, "I don't know, I haven't been to church for so many years." I asked him about the resurrection, and he said he couldn't understand it.

Nova Scotia, Canada

S. M.

Seeking What?

If we are seeking the pleasures of this life, then we can know the end is destruction, and that's not much to look forward to. We are told to seek first the Kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33). "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

Then He tells us of another class, those who shall seek and not find Him (Prov. 1:28). So that indicates that we could be too late in our seeking, and that will be a sad ending.

I want something to look forward to more than the fleeting pleasures of this life. I want to lay up treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves cannot break through or steal (Matt. 6:19).

Port-Au-Port, Newfoundland

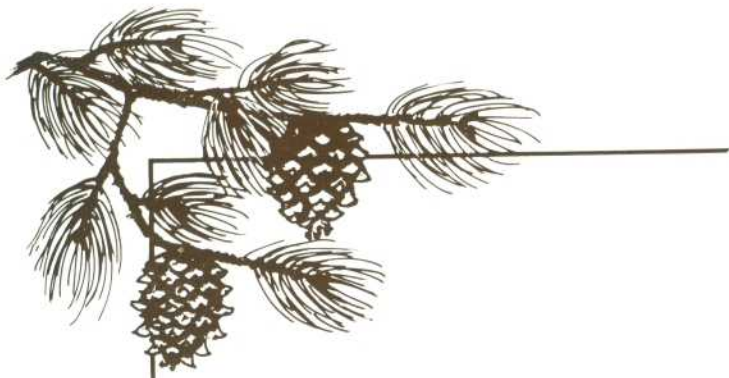
G. W.

Announcing ABIB

Time is marching on, another year is almost upon us. The Megiddo Church will welcome the beginning of another sacred New Year on the evening of April 8, Bible time being measured from "evening to evening" (Lev. 23:32). This is in accord with the lunar pattern, which repeats itself every 19 years. The ancient Hebrew people watched for the appearance of the first new moon in the spring, and with it marked the beginning of the year.

The arrival of the sacred New Year means the beginning of the month Abib and the time which we set aside to remember our great coming King, Jesus Christ.

Distant members and friends, plan now to join us this sacred season. Begin your New Year with a new and firmer resolution to serve God faithfully. ●●



Begin Today

*Dream not too much of what you'll do tomorrow,
How well you'll work perhaps another year;
Tomorrow's chance you do not need to borrow--
Today is here.*

*Boast not too much of mountains you will master,
The while you linger in the vale below;
To dream is well, but plodding brings us faster
To where we'd go.*

*Talk not too much about some new endeavor
You mean to make a little later on.
Who idles now will idle on
Till life is gone.*

*Say not some day you'll break some habit's fetter,
When this old year is dead and passed away;
If you have need of living wiser, better,
Begin today!*

--Author Unknown