



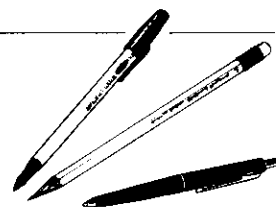
# Megiddo Message

Vol. 69, No. 3

Our God Is Able

March, 1962





### Where Have You Been?

**A** STRANGE question, perhaps, to ask mature persons. It is the question we heard as children when we did not arrive home at the precise moment Mother or Father expected us. Or it may be the question heard by the man who is late in getting to his job: "Where have you been?"

Is it not also appropriate that we ask ourselves this question with special reference to things spiritual: Where have you been?

We are not here to look backward; but at the beginning of another sacred New Year, what could be more fitting than to assess our progress in the divine life for the purpose of doing better—much better—in the days and weeks to come? Before we proceed further, we should surely know where we have been. A careful analysis of our journeyings during the past twelve months should help us to avoid the mistakes we have made in the past and to maximize the opportunities that lie ahead of us.

So let us ask ourselves in all seriousness: Where have you been? Perhaps, like the small child, we would rather not tell all we know. Yes, we have done some dallying, some toying with temptation. We have sought some fleshly gratifications that we should have forsaken long ago. More than once we have entertained thoughts and desires which we prefer not to disclose. We have spent precious time with issues and petty concerns that are clearly not appropriate to our high calling. We have left footprints in the sands of self-love. And there are our tracks through the slough of despond, where we vowed never never to go again. We can thank God, who showed us a way out, but why did we go there at all? In vain we cast about for reasons to justify our poor behavior.

But in spite of our regrets, we should also find some measure of encouragement in noting definite progress we have made. Where have we been? Further, much further down the hill than we are at present; which is another way of saying that we are climbing. Some of the sins that used to plague us are not the problem they used to be. Some petty jealousies and foolish pride, even sensitive situations that used to vex us, are no longer a problem.

If we look carefully into the perfect law of liberty, we should be able to see signs of spiritual growth and improvement. If we have been conscientious in our efforts to live godly in Christ Jesus, we surely can look back and see progress in the right direction.

We recall times when we were stubborn, hard-headed, hard to work with, impossible to reason with. Yes, we have been over all that ground many times. We have been unyielding in our opinion, even when it was proven wrong. We have been determined to see our point through to a victorious finish, even at the expense of another. We have shunned that which would reflect ill on our reputation, and have welcomed flattery—anything to bolster our sinking egos.

But now we have left much of that behind. We are making progress with this ill-tempered nature of ours; genuine progress. We should see it and be encouraged and stimulated—not in any feelings of self-satisfaction but with a determination to make still more progress in the days and months to come.

This is what New Year is all about, so that when next New Year comes—if God in His mercy shall grant it to us—we may look back and see where we have been, and know that we are a full year's distance nearer our goal.

## Megiddo means

"a place of troops" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon); "a place of God" (Young's Analytical Concordance). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (II Cor. 10:4-5).

### We believe

—in God the Creator of all things, all men, and all life.

### We believe

—in the Bible as containing the genuine revelation of God and His purposes for men, and as being our only source of divine knowledge today.

### We believe

—in Christ the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was born of a Virgin, ministered among men, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven, and who shall shortly return to be king of the whole earth.

### We believe

—in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.

### We believe

—in all mankind as providing the nucleus from which a superior, God-honoring people shall be chosen to receive the blessings of immortal life.

### We believe

—in ourselves as capable of fulfilling the demands and disciplines given us in the law of God, thus perfecting that high quality of character which God has promised to reward with life everlasting in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

### We believe

—in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth will be filled with His glory, His people, and His will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

## Bible quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

Other versions are identified as follows:

**NEB**—New English Bible

**NIV**—New International Version

**NAS**—New American Standard

**RSV**—Revised Standard Version

**TLB**—The Living Bible

**TEV**—Today's English Version

**JB**—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

**Phillips**—The New Testament in Modern English

The use of selected references from various versions of the Bible does not necessarily imply publisher endorsement of the versions in their entirety.

## About Our Cover...

For our cover photograph and for the other photographs of galaxies, star clusters, and star nebulae in this issue we are grateful to the kindness and courtesy of Astronomer Bill Gutsch and the Strasenburgh Planetarium of Rochester, New York. Dr. Gutsch generously permitted us to select any photo we liked (what a task!) from their collection of more than two thousand.

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The **MEGIDDO MESSAGE** is a religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ, and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Church. L. T. Nichols, **Founder**; Kenneth E. Flowerday, **President and Editor**.

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## The Time of Your Life

**T**HE PASSING of one year and the coming of another inevitably gives rise to some rather personal reflection on the passage of time. The ultra-American saying, "time is money," is really a tribute to the value of time. It is also a kind of American creed which, unlike so many of our religious creeds, we daily put into practice. Ride the New York subways during the rush hours. Or try getting out of line at the supermarket on shoppers' night. Or just drive home from work during traffic hours. You will soon find out how greatly our fellow Americans prize time.

We are time-conscious people. We are in a proverbial hurry. We think we just cannot be beat at squeezing that "sixty seconds' worth of distance run" from each "unforgiving minute." It may surprise us to learn that the ancient Romans (who hardly thought of themselves as ancient) were at least as time-conscious as we are. They, too, drove themselves—and others—as fast as they could. Why? Not because they were having the "time of their life" but because they were anxious, worried, eager to escape the sense of futility and doom which hung over their prosperous days. Any astute observer, like the apostle Paul, could detect in the Roman way of life certain familiar patterns of escape.

There was, first, the escape into work. Roman businessmen drowned their fear of the inexorable march of time in an orgy of work. Theirs was a frantic race against time to make money. Thousands of Roman citizens grew rich during the decline and fall of their empire, but few of them knew how to take the time to enjoy it.

Then there was the escape into pleasure. The gladiatorial games, which were only a little more repulsive than some of the modern wrestling matches, commanded the entire interest of masses of Roman citizens. The rabble of the great cities lived from hand to mouth, drowning their sense of the shortness of time in an orgy of vicarious pleasure. "Bread and games!" was their cry.

There was the escape into religion. The Roman Empire at the time Christianity began to spread, accommodated more sects and cults than does twentieth century America; and that is saying a great deal.

Sophisticated city-dwellers fawned on hundreds of quacks who plied their hocus-pocus in strange dress or lectured on occult lore in a mumbo jumbo which sounded erudite chiefly because it did not happen to mean anything. Disillusioned with their waning heritage, thousands of skeptical, insecure, haunted Romans drowned their sense of the shortness of time in an orgy of religion.

In this escapist view of time, the early Christians did not share. Not in the least. They realized more than any others that time was passing rapidly and that life was short. They realized it all the more keenly since they believed that Christ's return in glory and all that it would bring—the final judgment and the new age—was just ahead. How much time lay between, they had little idea; but their whole thought was on using the swiftly passing moments to get themselves ready. So instead of escaping from the sobering thoughts of the time, they resolved to face them and use them to their fullest as a spur to prepare.

Paul's admonition to the Christians at Corinth furnishes an outstanding example of their view of time. "Brethren," Paul wrote, "the time is short." Then he proceeded to give some specific advice which we may paraphrase in this way: "If you are single, stay single and spend the remainder of your time getting ready for the end; if you are married, stay married but concentrate on the spiritual value of marriage, in order to be ready when the end comes; if there is either joy or sorrow in your heart, control yourself and maintain your dignity: soon both your sorrows and joys will be judged; if you are engaged in business, let it not absorb you altogether; and if you have been exposed to the world and its foolishness, let it not engulf you; the time is short!"

To those not familiar with the anxieties and priorities of Christian living, Paul's words may sound strange and forbidding, negative, otherworldly, gloomy. And yet, they contain the only positive, realistic view of time. For what would you suggest to a man who had only one week to live? Or one month? Or one year? What would you advise him to do—to forget it by drowning his fateful knowledge in work, or pleasure, or some stupid idolatry? Or would you advise him to compose himself, to go

about his business quietly, straightening out the tangled skein of his life, taking stock of his relationship with God and his fellowmen, redeeming—as far as he could—the time left to him?

Some people feel so superior as they read Paul's words that they point out that he was mistaken, that the whole Early Church was mistaken, because the end of the world did not come! But where is Paul? Where are the Early Christians? They are dead! They died, every one of them, and that day was the end of the world for them. The next thing those early Christians know they will be resurrected and standing before the Judgment seat of Christ. What fools are we to think that we have outgrown them!

The Scriptures teach that the return of Christ in glory will be a spectacular event, but Christ Himself admonished us not to speculate about the exact day of His coming, for "no man knoweth the day or the hour." What difference did it make to them whether the Lord returned in 981 or 1981? The end of their lives came soon enough, and with that the end of their day of opportunity to prepare.

So will it be with us, except the Day of the Lord come first. In either case, the words of Paul are true for us, too: "the time is short." The time is always short—too short, except to those who live so close to God that they are ready at any time! The foolish Romans were right: doom did hang over them, not just because they lived in a decaying civilization but because they were mortal human beings. The early Christians were right: their time was short, no longer than the length of their lifetimes, perhaps shorter if they were caught in the throes of fierce persecution. And the time is short for us. It is only God's grace which prevents us knowing how short our time may be.

The time is short. Paul was right even while he seemed wrong; there was no time to waste; there was only time to turn to God, to subordinate all pursuits to Him, and make ready. For the early Christians did not stop living. They only learned to live in the perspective of eternity. Whether awake or asleep, they wanted to be ready.

The time is short. The sooner we realize this sobering fact, the sooner we will learn to live realistically and bravely, keeping a just sense of proportion about our joys and sorrows and trusting all to the God from whom we come and to whom we must give account. Every day is a new day of grace, a new day to draw close to God, a new day to forgive and seek forgiveness.

The time is short. We must learn to be time-conscious, not in the conventional sense of the word, which is often stupid and unrealistic, but in the Christian sense of the word, where to be time-conscious means to be aware of the shortness and the uncertainty of our life, at the same time appreciating and using God's gift of today. It is

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**Every day is a new day  
of grace, a new day  
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a new day to forgive  
and seek forgiveness.**

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useless to cry with the poet about the "years we waste" when there is so much we can do today. The price of our time goes a little higher every day, because every day the time remaining gets a little shorter. He wants us to make every day the "time of our life." And we can—beginning with today—if only we remember the simple wisdom expressed in the popular wall plaque:

**Only one life,  
Twill soon be past:  
Only what's done  
For Christ will last.**

For the use of our time, just like the use of our money, is a true and telling index of the state of our hearts. We cannot redeem our past; years wasted in trivial living and self-indulgence cannot be brought back. And they need not be. Nor can we concern ourselves with the future. Christianity is not a pledge-now, pay-later plan, whereby work that ought to be done today can be indefinitely postponed. What God wants is the present, this present moment, and the next present moment when it comes, and the next, and so on. Whatever our calling, whatever our duties in life, He wants our dedication now and henceforth.

We do not know how much more time God has allotted us before the end of this age; but this we do know: that all we have belongs to Him, and as we dedicate it—time, talents, all—He will give us, in every sense of the phrase, now and forever, "the time of our life." MM

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#### **Be a bearer!**

***No matter where you go, take something with you that you can leave behind. Carry the best of you wherever you go.***

***And remember that the influence which you leave about you is immortal. It really never dies—any more than any active force for good or evil ever dies. In time it becomes a part of the structure of the universe itself.***

# Our God Is Able

**W**HEN WE try to comprehend the ability of our great God, we realize immediately that we are pondering matters too wonderful for us. Who are we to explore the resources of infinity? Who are we to touch the reaches of eternity? How can our small minds comprehend boundlessness, limitlessness, infinitude, and the incomprehensible greatness of our great God?

Yet has He not challenged us to think deeper and deeper thoughts of His greatness and His ability that we may be inspired to serve Him with all we have and are? Is not this greatness the sacred certainty assuring us that our eternal needs can be satisfied? Does He not do all according to one long-range—even eternal—purpose? (Eph. 3:14). Has He not promised to supply all our need "according to his riches in glory"? (Phil. 4:19). Has He not assured us that He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think?

Should not our contemplations of the greatness of such a Being be as great as human thinking and imagining can allow?

In his moving Epistle to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul explores this far-reaching contemplation of what God is able to do. Well he knows that he is thinking beyond the thinkable, dreaming beyond the dreamable, and attempting to express the inexpressible; yet how else can the noble Apostle convey to us the impressions that are his by the power of the Holy Spirit? How else can he heighten our high visions of our great God and inspire us to work for *all* that He can give us? Far be it from Paul to limit God's ability by the limited thoughts and expressions of mere mortals. Nor would he have us confine our heavenward longings by any idea of limitation on God's part. He knows that *all* we can think, *all* we can ask, *all* we can imagine does not comprise even the smallest part of what God is able to do for us. **Our God is able!**

And so Paul writes: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think,

according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3:20). He is able to do all that we can ask or think. No, His ability is *above* all that; no, it is *abundantly* above all that—no, it is *exceeding abundantly* above!

Indeed, **our God is able!**

## EVIDENCE for Our Faith

But how shall we establish a solid foundation for our faith in this fact of God's ability? How can *we* be sure **our God is able**? Must we take His high-sounding statements on blind faith, without evidence? God never asks us to believe without evidence, solid, convincing evidence. He has given us minds, and He expects us to use them; and He has provided something for us to think about. In fact, we have not one source upon which to build our faith but *three*: 1) what we ourselves have seen and experienced; 2) what others have seen and experienced; and 3) what God has caused to be written in His holy Word.

## We Have Seen... Things Great...

What have we seen and experienced? Our realm of sight and insight into the workings of God is necessarily limited. We walk by faith. Nevertheless, we *have* seen; we *have* experienced—perhaps more than we realize.

Go outside on a starry night. Gaze upward, and marvel at the magnificence above you; the beauty, the majesty, the depth and vastness of the visible creation. Realize what a privilege is yours to view firsthand, visible evidence of the great Creator. If this view were possible but once in a lifetime, would it not be a treasured experience? Here is power beyond our fathoming, glory beyond our visioning, distance beyond our comprehending.

Then imagine—if you can—the enormous realm of space lying beyond what you can see, which the modern telescope has disclosed, worlds so distant that the light reaching our earth today left their shining surfaces as much as ten billion years ago! (And try to imagine how far light travels in 10 billion years at a speed of 186,000 miles every second, or about 6 trillion miles every year!) God's realm encompasses entire universes of creation, each

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Note: *Our God Is Able* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

with its own set of unnumbered galaxies, and each galaxy having its own millions of stars, all shining with celestial light and glory. They are all out there, in the great beyond.

Then imagine—if you can—all the *unexplored* and as yet *invisible* realm which lies even beyond the ten-billion-light-year range of the modern telescope, for no boundary to space has yet been found; nor can any be imagined. What does it all mean?

All this is firsthand evidence of the existence of our Great God and His vast ability to create. These are *His* worlds, shining with *His* light. You feel like exclaiming with the Psalmist: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork” (Ps. 19:1). And again, “O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens” (Ps. 8:1). And again, “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man...” and there words fail you. So far does it dwarf our little ability to comprehend.

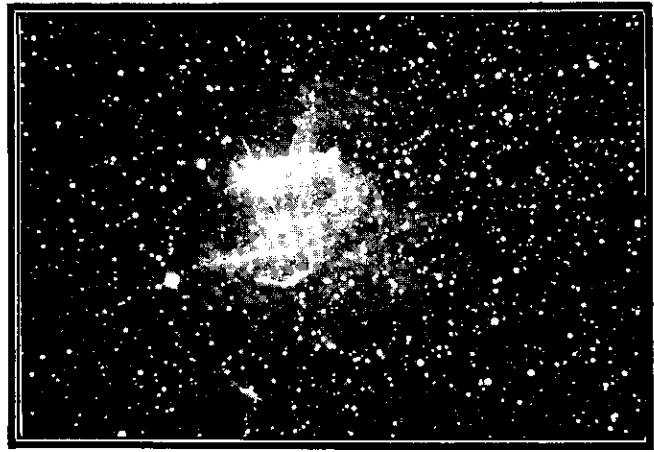
And this is not a creation we have heard about from someone else’s experience. We ourselves can see and know that it exists.

#### ...and Things Small

Then, think of the minutiae that compose the real world in which we live. The ordinary objects we handle every day are composed of particles so small that they must be magnified by powerful microscopes before they can be seen. Everything we see is made up of tiny atoms—the floor, the wall, our chairs, the air we breathe, our bodies. Each consists of billions and billions of atoms so tiny that no one can see them, and yet so vast that there is a universe between their component parts. Atoms are mostly empty space, dotted occasionally by weightless electrons with great distances between them, held together by the force of whirling electrons moving so rapidly that they cannot be crushed. The electrons surrounding the nucleus in an atom are worlds apart, as far apart in proportion to their size as the planets are from the sun. And the electrons move in orbits just as the planets do. They whirl at fantastic speeds, completing billions of trips around the nucleus in millionths of a second. It is amazing, incredible, glorious. Does it not demonstrate the ability of our great God?

#### ...and Things Spiritual

Then think of what we can see in the realm of things the plan of God working to completion even in our day. After centuries of midnight darkness, the light of divine knowledge is once again shining—and right in our midst. And to realize that it is our rare and sacred privilege to be



**“He telleth the number of the stars, he calleth them all by their names” (Ps. 147:4)**

in on the “ground floor,” so to speak, of God’s plans for our earth and its inhabitants. Through the work of divinely appointed human instruments whom it has been our privilege to know, we have been given insights into matters of eternal destiny. All this is ours not through any might or wisdom of our own but through the great goodness of our great God. Indeed, **our God is able.**

#### Others Have Seen

But God does not ask us to build our faith simply on these insights and experiences. Others before us have been convinced that God is able. On what did they build their faith?

The Bible gives some dramatic accounts of the ability of the great God we serve. By reviewing what He has done for others in the past, we can strengthen our faith in what He is able to do for us.

#### Moses’ Experience

**Our God is able.** This was the vivid experience of Moses. After forty years in the desert, how inadequate he felt for the task God was appointing him. But one dramatic encounter changed his entire life, and he became a powerful leader of God’s people. When God called, Moses responded.

Not that Moses was ready for heroic action. On the contrary, his response—“Who am I that I should go?”—reveals how lacking in confidence he was. Like many Bible heroes, Moses seemed extremely unheroic until something happened that touched the center of his life. This is often true with us mortals. We are quite content to go our own way, until something happens to stab us awake. For Moses, that something was the angel of God at the burning bush. While this experience cannot be ours, there are times when we, too, are moved to more

profound and serious thinking about God and are inspired to courage and confidence by Him. Let us thank God for all of these experiences.

What did God do for Moses? Whatever Moses lacked, God was able to supply. Did Moses fear to go alone? Forth came the divine assurance of companionship. "I will be with you," says the Lord.

With God we cannot fail; without God we cannot succeed.

Then Moses protested that he was not able to lead so great a people because he was "slow of speech and of a slow tongue." Again, God was able. "Who hath made man's mouth?" was His reply. God is our maker and He knows our frailty and our potential. His answer to our need is the promise of His help. "Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth." **God is able** to supply where human resources fail.

Moses was powerless, until he met God. And then, how changed was his whole outlook. With God in his plans, the living God, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," everything was different. Is not this true in our lives also? When we see His strength manifest in His wonderful works of old, when we look to Him for our inspiration, and when we accept His commission for our lives, we become His colleagues in doing His will and His work. Isn't it marvelous that we, finite creatures of a moment, can have such an opportunity, to be workers together with infinity? And let us not fail to observe how God deals with us—with concern, attention, understanding, compassion, providence, mercy, creative love and discipline—giving a glory to our lives that the world can neither give nor take away. Truly, **our God is able**. And when we work with Him, we, too, are able.

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## *Let Us Pray...*

O Lord, Our God! King eternal, immortal, invisible, dwelling in the light which is inaccessible to us mortals, we draw near Thee this morning to seek guidance from Thee and knowledge and inspiration from Thy Word.

O Lord, we bring to Thee our humble supplications. We thank Thee that Thy Word is so sure, Thy statutes so right, Thy commands so pure, Thy judgments so true, and Thy rewards so abundant. We rejoice that Thou art able, abundantly able to perform what Thou hast promised; that in Thee is power and goodness beyond our ability to imagine, that in Thy presence is fullness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.

Father, we appreciate deeply that we, of all earth's multitudes, have been given an insight into Thy plans for this earth. May we never take this privilege lightly, but conduct ourselves as becometh children of Thine, making the very most of our every opportunity.

We marvel, our Great Creator, at the design through which Thou dost shape all the vastness of the universe in which we exist, and at the minuteness of those unseen particles and forces of which all things so marvelously consist. We wonder at the mystery which implants the potential of a giant redwood in each of its tiny seeds. And we bow in a humility greater yet when we realize the potential that Thou hast placed in us frail creatures of dust, that within each of us are such possibilities of

thought and behavior as will qualify us to receive Thy eternal bestowments, even life forevermore.

We regret the halfhearted interest we have shown in this stupendous proposition, that we have been more in bondage to ourselves than to the designs of the Kingdom of Thy Son, more interested and absorbed in things temporal than in the eternal verities. But may the record of what we have been never hide from us the possibility of what we yet may be. We know Thou dost not ask what we cannot give, with Thy help.

We pray for quickened understandings, for trusting hearts, for more fixed purposes, for a brighter faith, for a more vivid glimpsing of our sublime hope, and for strength to be and to do what Thou dost command and to accept what Thou dost appoint. And may we have always the unwavering courage of those three Hebrew children of old, who in the face of the most desperate temptation would not compromise their convictions whatever Thy will.

Lord, we are grateful for the ties of love that bind us to one another and to Thee, for the roots and tendrils that feed our faith; and for the caring circle within whose safety we have been called to grow in knowledge and in love.

We pray Thee to be with our brothers and sisters everywhere who are seeking to be part of Thy family. We pray for those of Thine who are in the throes of sickness or trouble. Be Thou the Light of their lives, their Solace and Companion, their Power and their Portion ever more. Confirm us all in Thy never-failing trust, justice, peace, and when we have overcome every sinful way, Father, forgive. So may we all share together a place in Thy Kingdom forever, for which we pray. Amen.



## God Knows Our Limit

I Corinthians 10:1-13 (RSV) recalls the story of Moses and rises to a climactic declaration of faith that has true heartening power. "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."

How important is this divine promise to us, that God knows our ability and helps where we would fail. So often in times of testing we forget this. We feel alone. "Why does this happen to me?" But we are not left alone. If we are one of His, if we are doing our best to live as one of His children, we can know that He has tested each trial before it comes to us, to be sure that it is not beyond our strength. He understands our nature and our needs. He knows our load limit. Just as engineers place a notice on a bridge, "Load Limit—10 tons," so God knows our load limit and will not let us be tempted beyond our strength. Here is the answer to one of the most persistent problems of life—how to "cope," as it is often described today. So easily work becomes over-work, effort becomes strain, and the moment of accomplishment the moment of breakdown. Testings would seem to exceed our load limit. But no, God knows "our frame," our limit, and our need. And when our strength would fail, He is there.

God gives more than strength. He gives also the inner peace that enables us to sustain the outward stress. His presence and His sustaining promises make a tremendous difference in our ability to endure. His promises, His strength, His divine certitudes are for us a spiritual adrenalin that multiplies our power to cope with what would be otherwise intolerable—"that ye may be able to bear it."

Sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that God's promise of a way of escape means freedom from trouble. This is not the case. God, knowing our need, knows also that we need the testings to develop and train us for His purposes. His promise is not utter escape but the ability to endure, "that ye may be able to bear it." With God, the burdens and testings of life are not tragedies but opportunities for triumph. And because we believe in God, we are stronger, freer, better persons. We are able to endure because we know that "the slight trouble of the passing hour" will result in a "solid glory, past all comparison" (II Cor. 4:17-18, Moffatt). And, the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. This is our confidence, because **our God is able**.

### The Experience of Three Hebrew Children

Three Hebrew children in the city of Babylon long ago proved their faith in the ability of God. There is no more

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**God never asks us to believe without evidence, solid, convincing evidence.**

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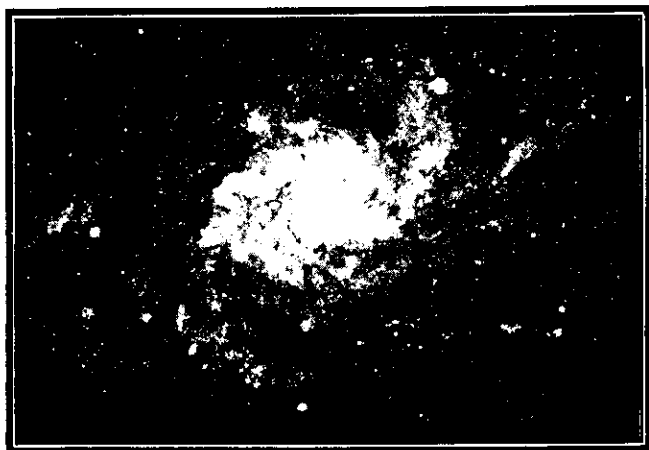
thrilling account in all Scripture than that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and the fiery furnace. If saints in tight places need patrons, these three qualify. Here were three men who, along with Daniel, were continuously serving God. Though they were in a foreign land, they were not controlled by its rules. They were citizens of another land. They listened to another Voice and ate of the fare of heaven. Their persistence under pressure should at once be a challenge and a comfort to us.

There were many children of the captivity in Babylon at the time, but almost immediately, four of them distinguished themselves in the palace of the king for their faithfulness to the God of Israel. They refused the finery and the fare of the king's table. They purposed in their hearts that they would not defile themselves with the portion of the king's meat. Thus, it is written, "God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom" (Dan. 1:17). Truly, they were come to the kingdom for such a time as this.

All was looking good for them—the king had accepted them, Daniel had interpreted a dream for the king, and the king had rewarded them. Then a strange thing happened. The king constructed a gigantic image of gold, placed it on the plain of Dura, and demanded that when certain music was played all the people should fall down and worship the image. Violators were to be punished by instant death in a great fiery furnace.

And who refused to worship the image? Three high-up cabinet officials, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, wouldn't bend, wouldn't bow, and wouldn't break. Immediately they were accused and hauled in before the King. The King was willing to give them another chance but reminded them that if they would not worship the image they should be cast the same hour into the fiery furnace. "Who is that God," he challenged them, "that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (Dan. 3:15).

The response of the three Hebrew children is worthy of note: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Dan. 3:16-18). There wasn't anything indefinite



**"He . . . bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might" (Isa. 40:26)**

about that stand, was there? Their God, they were certain, was *able* to deliver. Whether He would *choose* to deliver, they did not know. But in either case, they would *not* bow down to the image.

Here was an irrevocable commitment to the trustworthiness and ability of God. The three Hebrew children did not stutter or hesitate when they made their stand known to the king. The whole basis of their commitment was, **"Our God is able!"** If that is settled in our minds also, should not our commitment be as firm? Should not our response in the face of every temptation be just as irrevocable as theirs? No indecision here, no vacillation, no maybe-yes, maybe-no, but a definite "We will not." As long as that is our response, faith has a firm basis. **Our God is able.** This is the issue. And this is the certainty.

But so often the question is not God's ability but His willingness to act. To that we can reply with Job's commitment: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." This is what Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are saying in effect: "O King, we know that God is able. That is a settled fact. Whether he delivers us from the furnace and from your hands is not ours to decide. But that does not change our conviction. And if he does not deliver us, we will still refuse to serve your gods or bow down to worship your image." If our commitment is to be irrevocable, we too must settle the possibilities of the "but-if-nots." If we profess to keep the faith, we must make provision for these.

The glory of the commitment of the three Hebrew children was that it was not conditioned on any circumstances. God was not on trial. His reputation was established. They knew that **God is able.**

### **Daniel's Experience**

Years later Daniel had another singular opportunity to affirm his faith that **God is able.** A full seventy years he

had spent in Babylon, all the while loyal to his God. Now under the new regime, in the kingdom of Darius the Mede, Daniel had risen to a position of power and prestige (Daniel 6).

It was more than his rivals could stand. Envious of this alien and conspiring to entrap him, they persuaded the king to sign a decree stating that for thirty days no one should pray to any except to the king himself. The penalty was the fiercest they could conceive: to be cast into a den of lions.

Daniel no doubt heard the decree, but he was not intimidated. Three times a day he prayed to his God—and in front of an open window—just as he had done before. The conspirators observed and were pleased to report against him. The king, we are told, loved Daniel and was grieved, but was powerless to change the law. So the severest punishment they had conceived was levied upon Daniel.

The next morning, after a sleepless night, the king arose early and in haste made his presence known to Daniel. He must have had at least a degree of faith in Daniel's God, because his first words addressed to Daniel that morning were: "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee?" He was anxious to know if Daniel had been protected—and seems almost to have assumed that Daniel's God had protected him. As far as the king was concerned, the matter was not a test of Daniel but of Daniel's God. Thus the question of the king was not "Are you alive?" or "Have you survived?" but, "Is your God able?"

For Daniel, it was not a question of God's ability but whether it would suit God's purpose and long-range plan to intervene. Daniel knew God *could* if it suited His divine and all-knowing purpose.

It did not suit God's purpose to spare Daniel the test, but God did deliver, and the test only added to Daniel's stature and increased his qualities of endurance and faith, those noble qualities which everyone of us needs if we would be men and women of God.

### **God IS Able**

**Our God is able**—able to deliver, able to save, able to help and guide and protect us through all our earthly situations. We do not have to worry or fear, because **our God is able.** Men and nations may fight and contend, economies may rise and fall; human institutions may succeed or fail; but we do not have to fear; **our God is able.** Men may build bombs more fearsome and more horrible than our minds can conceive, nuclear weapons capable of destroying whole nations of people. Thinking people may fear for the safety of their children, and wonderingly lament the futility of life. But with God, why

need we fear? **Our God is able** to control, to save, to bless, to protect. He will not allow anything that will defeat His plan. He is able. And the very situations that cause others to fear can give us the greatest of hope and encouragement, for did not Jesus say, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh"?

### **The Challenge to Us**

**Our God is able**—we know; and yet, there is in this a challenge and the serious question: How are we meeting it? Does our daily conduct glorify God? Is our daily life and deportment such that we show we trust the ability of our God to sustain, to bless, and to reward eternally our every effort toward His holiness?

We say we believe in God and we speak bravely about His power; but let trials and hardships come, and is our faith such that we are saying by our actions in all confidence, "Our God is able to deliver"? We need adversities to test the quality and depth of our faith and prove whether our trust is such that we have implicit confidence in His ability to deliver. The one whom God upholds cannot be overthrown.

Oh, to reach the high standard where we will thank God in the midst of every trial and feel privileged to share the lot of those who are His tried and true servants! Oh, to give our God the privileges in our lives that He deserves—to discipline and train us for His Kingdom, to be His representatives and His children forever! Oh, to give Him the opportunity to prove that He is able—able to deliver, able to save, able to preserve, able to reward! Underneath are His "everlasting arms," to uphold and support us. How often would we have fallen, but for this gracious support.

Yes, **our God is able**. When we walk with Him, we can walk with confidence because we know that He is able to "keep us from falling." And if we continue to walk with Him, He will someday present us "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24-25).

### **Our Responsibility**

However, we must realize that His promise to deliver us is conditioned upon our obedience. We will find time and again that we cannot do the things that we would (Gal. 5:16-17). There are places from which He will not deliver us. If we sin wilfully and go our own way, if we seek a lower level of life to find a few moments of our own pleasure, can we expect God to deliver? We know we cannot. But when we have tasted the higher pleasures of life, why do we even desire that which He forbids? Are we not spoiled for anything less? Let us thank God for His

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## **The stars are firsthand evidence of the existence of our Great God and His vast ability to create.**

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restrictions and keep well within them, so that He will be our God.

God's chosen and choice few are not Christians plus something else; they embrace but one objective and possess one perspective: that **our God is able**, abundantly able, and that all their hopes and prospects of life are in Him.

From one who was strong in His conviction of God and His promise come these encouraging words: "You are all sons of light, sons of the day, and none of us belongs to darkness or the night. Let us then never fall into the sleep that stupefies the rest of the world: let us keep awake, with our wits about us. So go on cheering and strengthening each other with thoughts like these as no doubt you have been doing" (I Thess. 5:5, 11, Phillips).

Soon, very soon, we shall be seeing visible demonstrations right among us of the power of our great God. His Son shall return with power to remake these mortal bodies of ours and fashion them like unto His glorious body. This He is able to do—if we have done on our part now.

This is the God of Daniel. This is the God of Moses. And do we not rejoice to say that "this God is our God, forever and ever." Is He not able also to deliver us, to save for time and eternity? He is able to do for us what no one else can. He has promised us more than eye has seen, or ear has heard, or the heart of man has imagined. Yes, **our God is able**. MM

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## **Who Ever Found—**

- The friendship that was wrecked?
- The opportunity that was thrown away?
- The time that was wasted?
- The money that was thrown to the winds?
- The faith that was abandoned?
- The day that was lost?
- The life that had no difficulties?

# Getting Acquainted



**Kenneth E. Flowerday**

*For those who would like to be more acquainted with the work, mission, and activities of the Megiddo Church, we are beginning a series of "Getting Acquainted" articles and pictures. We could think of no better place to begin than with a brief summary of the lifework of our present pastor and president, Kenneth E. Flowerday.*

## Meet Our Pastor

by Newton H. Payne, Assistant Pastor

**B**ROTHER Flowerday has had a lifelong involvement with the Megiddo Church, its founder, its leaders, its missionaries and its work, both temporal and spiritual. Even now, in his ninetieth year, blessed with remarkable health for his years, he still carries on, inspiring everyone to a deeper dedication, a firmer stand for right and principle, and a clearer vision of the goal ahead.

Brother Flowerday was just four years old when his parents became persuaded of the worthwhileness of the efforts of our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols and decided to cast their lot among his followers.

His childhood memories center around time spent with Brother Nichols and his wife, to whom the Flowerday family lived neighbor. (His parents arranged this, by building a house right next to Brother Nichols' in Ellington, Minnesota when young Kenneth was just five years old.)

In fact, Brother Flowerday enjoyed almost constant association with our founder until the time of our founder's death, and many were the personal lessons he derived from this acquaintance. The early association left a permanent impress upon his life, and when he came to maturity he decided to give his life to furthering the work of God to which Brother Nichols had been devoted.

When he was ten years old, the Flowerday family, among members of the group, sold their property and moved on board the Mission Ship Megiddo. Together they shared all the delights, disciplines and adventures that came with more than two years of floating home life and intensive missionary work, as they traversed the Mississippi and its tributaries. When the boat was sold in 1904 and the group located permanently in Rochester, New York, Brother Flowerday was among them.

Through his young adult years he was active in all aspects of the group's missionary activities, being one of their most zealous missionaries. His means of financial support, as interior decorator, was at best part-time, as he contributed major portions of his best working years to the missionary field. Between 1915 and 1924, he was boat builder, mechanic, and pilot of the three yachts used by the organization.

After the yachts had accomplished their purpose, he was among those who conceived a new mode of missionary work, a Gospel Car, capable of housing the missionaries and also serving as their vehicle of transportation. This was before the days of mobile homes, and the Gospel Car was a unique invention. Brother Flowerday contributed largely of time and effort to the design and construction of this body, which served as their home away from home. He also participated actively in the many meetings which they held in churches and halls around New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and New England.

Years later, when this mode of missionary activity seemed no longer practical, he used his own funds to build a house trailer with which he made yearly trips to the southern part of the United States. There was just one purpose in all of the travel and missionary effort: to encourage people to study the Bible and to prepare for the coming of Christ.

Brother Flowerday also served many years as a member of the choir and band, giving freely of his talents in the praise of God. The last time the church was redecorated, he contributed a major work of art to the interior of the church auditorium by handpainting ten large Scripture murals on the walls.

Upon the death of Rev. P. J. Thatcher in November, 1958, the pastorate of the Church fell to Brother Flowerday, and he has served ably and with distinguished insight and dedication in this capacity ever since. A student by nature and as editor of the Megiddo Message, he has spent many hours clarifying our understanding of difficult passages of Scripture. All of us are grateful for his inspiring exhortations, his deep personal concern for the spiritual welfare of each of his brethren, his lively missionary spirit and his generous encouragement to all aspects of the church effort. And all who know him cannot fail to be impressed by his exemplary, disciplined Christian life, his serious attention to the command to "first save thyself," his undisturbed and undisturbable calm, his vision and long-range perspective, and his constant awareness of the ultimate goal of all our efforts: eternal life.

We can indeed thank God for providing us such a pastor and teacher in this turbulent time.



# UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

## APOSTASY: Departing from the Faith

"**H**UMAN NATURE is weak and needs stimulating." This astute observation of our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, gives us the root cause of all apostasy, and the reason why religion during the centuries after Christ gradually drifted away from the "faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

Human nature has ever been weak, tending toward the path of least resistance. This was demonstrated in Eden when Eve yielded to temptation and tasted the forbidden fruit. Given the opportunity, mankind has continued tasting the forbidden fruit. For the children of Israel, the constant temptation was to follow the low, sensual practices of the nations around them. Under the strong, godly leadership of such men as Moses and Joshua the tendency was ever present. But when such leadership was absent, how quickly the people abandoned the dictates of the law from Sinai.

In the centuries immediately following the ministry of the Messiah, human nature still had not changed. Even under the dynamic leadership of the apostle Paul, men preferred the forbidden fruit of their own minds to the pure, simple truths of Christ's teachings and delved into the philosophies of men, with the result that many were turned away from true religion. Thus they fulfilled the prophetic words the Great Apostle had spoken at Ephesus: "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). But this was only the beginning.

The process was to continue through the centuries until *all* had turned away from the doctrines of Jesus, the prophets and apostles, and true religion had become extinct.

But it was not something that happened in a fortnight. Several centuries passed before the lamp of the true faith was totally extinguished.

Issues of church doctrine were the basic cause of the apostasy of the church. Reading the history of the period (which bears the descriptive title of "Dark Ages") one is appalled by the gullibility of humankind.

Superstition was rampant. The Christian religion degenerated until it was not worthy of the name. With no Moses to remind them of "all that the Lord had spoken," and no Paul to "declare...all the counsel of God," and no fiery judgments descending from heaven, the church hierarchy was able to hand out whatever they pleased and call it right. Consequently, a totally new doctrine was evolved, as ideas inherited from their ancestors were adroitly combined with their own and those of the ancient philosophers which they so diligently studied.

Acceptance for these new "creeds" was by no means unopposed. During the earliest centuries, a faithful remnant held fervidly to the teachings of Jesus and His apostles; but as time passed, more and more church leaders accepted the new "faith" without question. And for good reason. The new was far less demanding, more mysterious, and much more popular. In the words of Mosheim the historian, "victory declared itself in favor of the patrons of philosophy, and those teachers came to be most respected who, in unfolding the doctrines of religion, called in the aid of philosophical precepts and principles."

### C. Philosophy Victorious

As noted in our last lesson, philosophy began worming its way into Christian doctrine at an early date. The historian Gibbon relates how "a chosen society of philosophers, men of a liberal education and curious disposition discussed complex questions of metaphysics," and how their "lofty speculations" were embraced by many, including not a few who professed to be Christians. "These speculations," he writes, "instead of being treated as the amusement of a vacant hour, became the most serious business of the present, and the most (supposedly) useful preparation for a future life. A theology, which it was deemed incumbent to believe, which it was impious to doubt, and which it might be dangerous to mistake, became the familiar topic of discussion.

Here is the reason why the apostasy was complete—because the new "religion" was deemed "incumbent to

believe, . . . impious to doubt," and "might be dangerous to mistake." In a time when people were uneducated and uninformed either in religion, science, or civil affairs, such a set of beliefs was easily broadcast.

These discussions centered around such basic topics as the nature of God, the Holy Spirit, the nature of Christ (whether He was God or man, and whether He existed before He was born). The "new" thinking on these topics came to be the new theology.

**1. The New Theology** The influence of philosophy on this new theology was noted by many people. One such person was Eusebius, a bishop of the church in the fourth century. Mosheim notes that Eusebius "censured severely those who neglected the study of the Holy Scriptures," who instead devoted themselves "to the cultivation of philosophy and the logic of Aristotle, endeavoring to find support for their errors respecting Christ." Imagine seeking the basics of religion in the writings of Aristotle, the pagan Greek philosopher who lived centuries before Christ. They studied, he says, not to understand the Scriptures but "to obscure and deprave the simple religion of the New Testament by encumbering it with the . . . precepts of Aristotle and other vain and impious men." Bishop Eusebius could not approve of such.

But censure by the bishop did little, if anything, to discourage the "new" methods or to return men to the unadulterated Scriptures. In fact, so completely victorious was the new method that, according to the historian, "but few points of Christian doctrine" were "left untouched." Whatever the Scriptures said with respect to "God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, was so expounded as to render it consistent with the doctrine of the three natures in God as maintained by Plato (who also lived four centuries before Christ) and other philosophers." Other doctrines were "so explained by these teachers as to make them accord with what was taught by Plato and the Stoics (a school of Greek philosophers)." Different passages of Scripture were "with great ingenuity made to correspond with what was taught by most of the Egyptian and Platonic philosophers of the ancient as well as the modern schools with respect to death"—and this meant the teaching of the "separation of the soul (and) . . . body" at death.

The writings of these philosophers were in the libraries of all the schools of the day, since the schools were operated by the philosophers. How did the teaching of these philosopher-operated schools get into the churches? Those who were attempting to expound and interpret Christian doctrine had been educated in these schools. And, quite naturally, like teacher, like pupil. This is why the writings of the so-called "church

fathers" are tainted with the ideas of philosophy.

Of Clement of Alexandria, one of these prominent early "fathers," Mosheim writes, "His attachment to philosophy was such as to lead him into many and very great errors. . . . Without doubt he imitated the Egyptians, and unquestionably followed the example of Philo, while Origen (another early church father) clearly trod in the footsteps of both. And the more recent Christian teachers formed themselves upon the model of these teachers." Thus the pyramid of error grew. The historian Gibbon, like Mosheim, recognized the trend, for he comments that the "study of philosophy . . . was . . . as often the parent of heresy as of devotion." Quoting Eusebius he writes: "They presume to alter the Holy Scriptures, to abandon the ancient rule of faith, and to form their opinions according to the subtle precepts of logic. The science of the church is neglected for the study of geometry, and they lose sight of heaven while they are employed in measuring the earth. . . . and they corrupt the simplicity of the gospel by the refinements of human reason."

A minority protested, but the protests fell on deaf ears and in a matter of a few centuries the Christian doctrine was completely corrupted by philosophy. Many philosophers were supposedly "converted" to the Christian faith, but the reverse was true. As Mosheim writes, "those who were philosophers before they embraced the Christian faith remained so still, notwithstanding their conversion, and continued as before" in the study of philosophy.

How complete was the effect of philosophy upon the true Church? According to the "new" theology, "Christ is the same in God that reason is in man." Further, "all souls or minds originally were part of and sprung from the Logos or Divine Reason (an opinion derived partly from the Egyptians and partly from Plato)"; hence, Christ was present in the minds of all men "as operating and acting in all who followed the dictates of right reason."

A few doctrines provoked much—often bitter—controversy. Let us look briefly at a few of these:

**a) The Trinity.** Probably the one doctrine that stirred up the most debate was that of the Trinity. Today, belief in the Trinity is accepted as a "cardinal doctrine of the Christian religion" and upheld by nearly all Christendom. But it was not so in the early centuries. In fact, it is interesting to note that the idea did not even appear until the third century after Christ and can in no way be traced back to Christ or His apostles. Not until philosophy had been arduously studied and assimilated by the "Christians" did the tenets of this doctrine work their way into the church creed.

Belief in the trinity was officially adopted by the

church at the Council of Nicea, a council convened and presided over by the Emperor Constantine in 325 A.D.

Where is found the basis for the trinity? Not in the Scriptures but in the writings of Plato. Plato expounded three different theories regarding the three natures of the Supreme Being. The idea was nothing more than a product of human reasoning, but it appealed to "philosopher-Christians" and by long and involved discussion was evolved into the present belief.

Gibbon describes the reasoning of these philosopher-Christians who saw this idea through its early stages of development: "Three distinct and infinite minds or substances, three co-equal and co-eternal beings, composed the Divine Essence; and it would have implied contradiction, that any of them should not have existed, or that they should ever cease to exist...Three beings, who...possess all the divine attributes in the most perfect degree; who are eternal in duration, infinite in space, and intimately present to each other...as one and the same being"—all separate beings, but all "one and the same being"! And interestingly enough, he describes it further as a "hypothesis"—not a fact—that these three-in-one/one-in-three beings "subsist only in the mind which conceives them...and the incomprehensible mystery which excites our adoration eludes our inquiry."

How truly can such reasonings be termed "incomprehensible incomprehensibility," as the trinity has been called. Suffice it to say that the doctrine is only fiction and has no Biblical basis whatever. It was added to the doctrine of the church by the apostate hierarchy and has no place in true Bible faith. (For further discussion of the subject, see our booklet, *Treatise on the Trinity*).

**b) The immortal soul.** Another doctrine that came via the apostatizing "church fathers" and which has no more Biblical a foundation than the trinity is the widely accepted belief in the immortal soul. Here again we are indebted to Plato for a theory which antedates Christ and the Christian Church by some four centuries.

Men have always been loathe to admit the finality of death or accept the fact that they are of themselves destined to nonentity. For this reason the philosophers speculated. Belief in the immortal soul was a natural result. According to Gibbon, the belief was the outgrowth of "a more exalted" reasoning of "a few sages of Greece and Rome...though it must be confessed that, in the sublime inquiry, their reason had been often guided by their imagination, and that their imagination had been prompted by their vanity."

Gibbon writes further of their reasonings concerning the soul: Since none of the properties of matter can be applied to the human mind, "the human soul must

consequently be a substance distinct from the body, pure, simple, and spiritual, incapable of dissolution." He says further that it was from these basic reasonings that "the philosophers who trod in the footsteps of Plato deduced" an assertion of what he calls "the past eternity of the human soul."

The historian notes that the doctrine was not well received at the time (during the second century after Christ), but was "piously rejected as an opinion that received no countenance from the divine Book, which they revered as the only rule of their faith." However, only a few years and the church raised the authority of tradition to the level of the authority of Scripture. Then the doctrine could be readily accepted; and it was.

**c) The nature of Christ.** During the centuries immediately following the establishment of the Christian Church, the nature of Christ was debated vigorously. While there were yet living witnesses of His birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection, there was no occasion for debate. Men who had known Him personally could easily override the reasonings of the younger set who speculated. There was no question in their minds as to whether Christ was half God and half Man, or all God and all Man, or part of each. They knew Him as a man like themselves, one raised up "from among his brethren" (Deut. 18:18).

But when the last witnesses had died and men who had been educated in philosophy took positions of leadership in the church, those who accepted the thoughts of the philosophers as true wisdom aroused a great debate among the church hierarchy as to who Jesus Christ really was. Some said He was a man. Others that He was God. Others that He was part of each.

According to the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, the controversy erupted in the second century. We quote:

"In the (writings of the apostles), only simple, practical, Biblical statements are found, with reminiscences of apostolic preaching for the purposes of edification." Simple, practical, Biblical edification was what God intended men to obtain from His Word. But the Encyclopedia states further: "...theological speculation on the person of Christ began with Justin Martyr, and was carried on by Clement of Alexandria and Origen, in the East; by Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Tertullian in the West." Justin Martyr (166 AD) conceived of Christ being the "logos" of John 1, and the idea proved to be a "very fruitful germ of theological speculation." Justin conceived the idea that the pre-existent Christ "scattered elements of truth and virtue among the heathen philosophers and poets, although they did not know it"—what an adept method of justifying their desire to

draw their beliefs from the pagan philosophers (*Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. III, pp. 51-52).

Origen, who lived about one hundred years after Justin Martyr, added his contribution to the doctrine. According to the historian, he "felt the weight of the . . . problem, but obscured it by . . . bringing the Son into union with the essence of the Father, and ascribing to him the attribute of eternity." Origen thus became the author of the Nicene doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son from the essence of the Father." He was the first to use the term so widely used now of Christ: "God-man." (*Schaff-Herzog*, Vol. III, pp. 51-52).

Irenaeus also added his bit. He used the terms "Logos," "Son of God" interchangeably, picturing the two as distinct in the same sense that the inward thought and the uttered word are distinct in man. At the same time he applied both terms to God, "who is above all antitheses, absolutely simple and unchangeable, and in whom before and after, thinking and speaking coincide."

While rejecting some aspects of the doctrine of the nature of Christ then accepted, Irenaeus defined the actual distinction between Father and Son by saying that the former is God revealing himself; the latter, God revealed. The one is the ground of revelation; the other is the actual appearing revelation itself. Hence he calls the Father "the invisible of the Son"; and the Son, "the visible of the Father." The confusion is obvious—entirely removed from the plain, simple teachings of Christ and His apostles.

The contributions of the other church fathers only added confusion to confusion. Tertullian propounded "a threefold existence of the Son: 1) The preexistent, eternal Son in the Father, they being as inseparable as reason and word in man; 2) the coming forth of the Son with the Father for the purpose of the creation; 3) the manifestation of the Son in the world by the incarnation." Tertullian is regarded by many as the real father of the doctrine of the trinity as accepted today.

Speculations continued over a period of several centuries, as the darkness deepened. The issue was finally settled at the Council of Chalcedon in the year 451 A.D. To "clarify" the doctrine, a one-sentence statement was issued. It read in part:

"Following the holy Fathers, we all with one consent teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in Manhood; truly God and truly man, of a soul and body; consubstantial (co-equal) with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial (co-equal) with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin, begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter

days, for us and for our salvation; . . . one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved and concurring in one Person, and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two Persons but one and the same Son, and Only-begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Words, words, words. Can we fully appreciate our deliverance from such "incomprehensible mystery"? How strange that no one asked, "What hath the Lord spoken?" for the above statement reveals a glaring lack of Scriptural support. Like Israel in the time of Jeremiah, they "perverted the words of the living God, of the Lord of hosts our God" (Jer. 23:35-36). They turned from the simple truths of the Bible, and were turned unto fables.

Do we wonder that the apostle Paul warned his brethren: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ"? (Col. 2:8).

MM

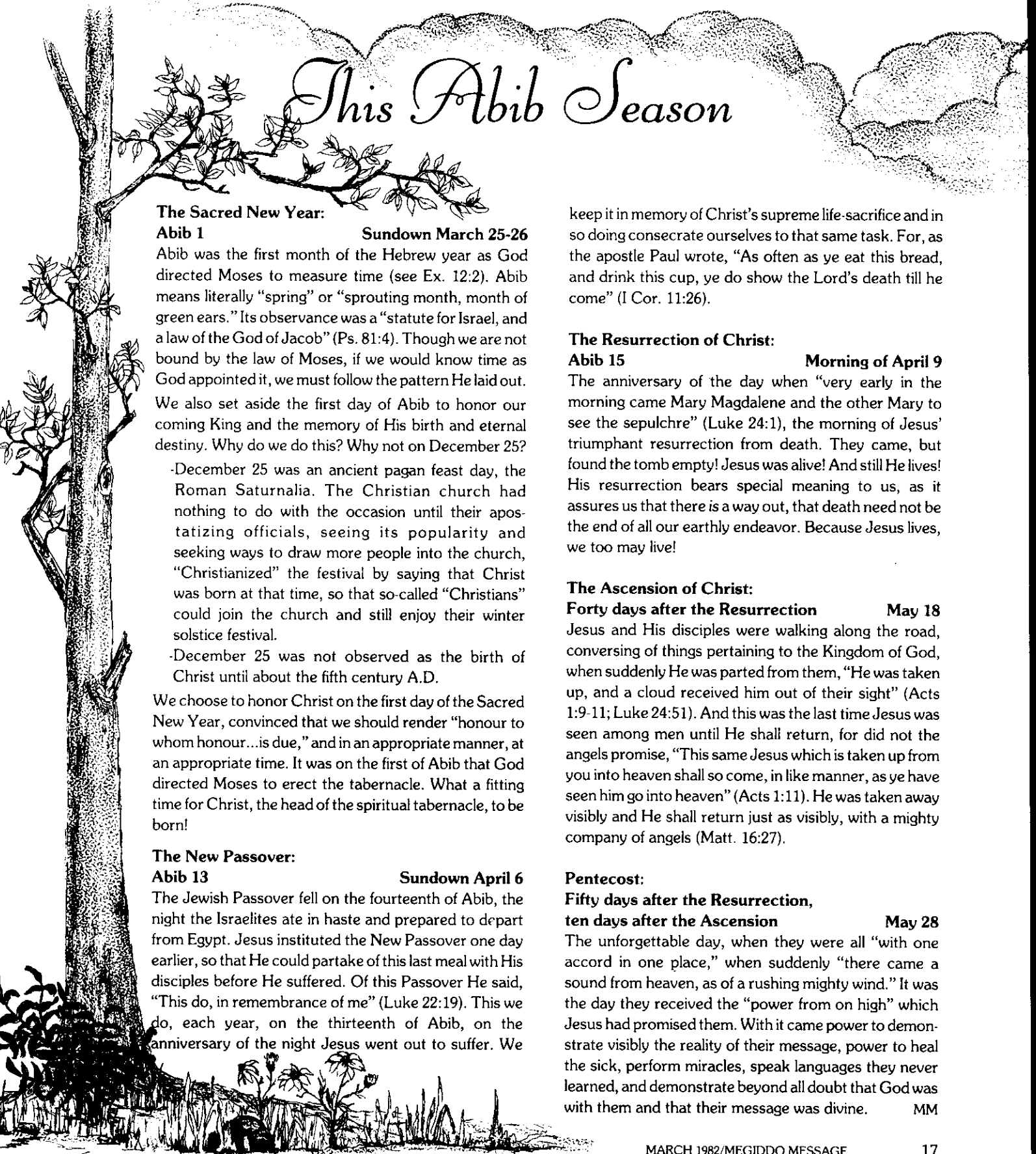
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# This Abib Season

## **The Sacred New Year:**

**Abib 1**

**Sundown March 25-26**

Abib was the first month of the Hebrew year as God directed Moses to measure time (see Ex. 12:2). Abib means literally "spring" or "sprouting month, month of green ears." Its observance was a "statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob" (Ps. 81:4). Though we are not bound by the law of Moses, if we would know time as God appointed it, we must follow the pattern He laid out.

We also set aside the first day of Abib to honor our coming King and the memory of His birth and eternal destiny. Why do we do this? Why not on December 25?

-December 25 was an ancient pagan feast day, the Roman Saturnalia. The Christian church had nothing to do with the occasion until their apostatizing officials, seeing its popularity and seeking ways to draw more people into the church, "Christianized" the festival by saying that Christ was born at that time, so that so-called "Christians" could join the church and still enjoy their winter solstice festival.

-December 25 was not observed as the birth of Christ until about the fifth century A.D.

We choose to honor Christ on the first day of the Sacred New Year, convinced that we should render "honour to whom honour...is due," and in an appropriate manner, at an appropriate time. It was on the first of Abib that God directed Moses to erect the tabernacle. What a fitting time for Christ, the head of the spiritual tabernacle, to be born!

## **The New Passover:**

**Abib 13**

**Sundown April 6**

The Jewish Passover fell on the fourteenth of Abib, the night the Israelites ate in haste and prepared to depart from Egypt. Jesus instituted the New Passover one day earlier, so that He could partake of this last meal with His disciples before He suffered. Of this Passover He said, "This do, in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). This we do, each year, on the thirteenth of Abib, on the anniversary of the night Jesus went out to suffer. We

keep it in memory of Christ's supreme life-sacrifice and in so doing consecrate ourselves to that same task. For, as the apostle Paul wrote, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come" (I Cor. 11:26).

## **The Resurrection of Christ:**

**Abib 15**

**Morning of April 9**

The anniversary of the day when "very early in the morning came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre" (Luke 24:1), the morning of Jesus' triumphant resurrection from death. They came, but found the tomb empty! Jesus was alive! And still He lives! His resurrection bears special meaning to us, as it assures us that there is a way out, that death need not be the end of all our earthly endeavor. Because Jesus lives, we too may live!

## **The Ascension of Christ:**

**Forty days after the Resurrection**

**May 18**

Jesus and His disciples were walking along the road, conversing of things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, when suddenly He was parted from them, "He was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9-11; Luke 24:51). And this was the last time Jesus was seen among men until He shall return, for did not the angels promise, "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come, in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). He was taken away visibly and He shall return just as visibly, with a mighty company of angels (Matt. 16:27).

## **Pentecost:**

**Fifty days after the Resurrection,  
ten days after the Ascension**

**May 28**

The unforgettable day, when they were all "with one accord in one place," when suddenly "there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind." It was the day they received the "power from on high" which Jesus had promised them. With it came power to demonstrate visibly the reality of their message, power to heal the sick, perform miracles, speak languages they never learned, and demonstrate beyond all doubt that God was with them and that their message was divine. MM

# "They That Be WISE Shall Shine"

By the Rev. L. T. Nichols

**O**UR LIFE is a vapor; but the life at the end of the race is eternal. That new life will always be filled with everything of the grand goodness of God.

We are commanded to talk of God's goodness, and of the glorious majesty of His Kingdom all the day long. How majestic will be the sight of our Master, and how great will be our pleasure in the ages to come! How exceedingly grand and ecstatic will be the pleasures we will experience. To think of vying with Gabriel!

To think of viewing the angels, those lovely forms! But if we had the idea taught by so many of the churches, that God only commenced His work six thousand years ago, we could not comprehend what we now do.

How meager would be God's glory if this teaching were true! But His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting; from an eternity past to an eternity future. It suggests to us at once that there were living, intelligent beings, who lived and received the mercy of God in the eternity past and gone. Someday we shall be acquainted with them.

To think of the unnumbered shining worlds revolving in the immensity of space, worlds inhabited by glorified beings—and the Lord has revealed that the plan for this earth is according to the plan of those glorified worlds. It is all according to His eternal purpose. This is what caused the apostle Paul to exclaim: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. 3:14-15).

I thought tonight, as I was looking out of the window, viewing the wonderful planets on high, "Why do the stars shine, and how?" And I thought to myself, "Those who believe God's Word are the only ones who know what makes them shine."

What is the cause of their shining? There is only one thing in the mighty universe that makes anything shine, and that is the mighty Spirit of God. His spirit must be exercised in some way, somehow, and somewhere, in order to have any light whatever. Job 26:13 tells us, "By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens." He sent forth His Spirit and lighted (or garnished) the heavens. And thus it is done.

## When Moses Shone

I thought of this, and then my mind went back to Moses when he stayed with the angel on the mount for

forty days, and the glory of the angel made his face to shine. He was happy, for he was learning from a wonderful angel. We have no way of knowing how long that angel had lived, how old he was. The secret things belong to God.

Well, I would like to have some of these secrets revealed to me, and some day I shall. I have often thought that Moses' being with the angel had something to do with his great age, when at one hundred and twenty years old his natural force was not abated and his eyes were as good as in the flower of youth. That meeting with the angel might have had a good effect on him. His face shone so much when he came down from the mountain that he had to put a veil over his face, because the children of Israel could not steadfastly gaze upon him. They could not behold him for the glowing beauty of his countenance. And that was just a miniature of the glory and wondrous workings of God.

It was not the sun or moon that made that light; when every one who lives is immortal, and all shine, there will be no need of the light of the sun or moon. We are told that that day of the Lord is coming, and Zechariah says "His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley" (Zech. 14:4).

Now it is all barren and desolate, but when that Day comes the rocks will jostle, the mountains will thunder and roar, and the alluvial soil will come to the surface, and the wilderness will become a fertile plain. And it shall come to pass in that day "that at evening time it shall be light" (v. 7).

Oh! What a change it will be! In that day there shall be no night. Jesus and all those who are made immortal, shall shine. Yes, every individual there shall shine with a brightness so much greater than that of Moses; they will be each a light within themselves. Oh, this wondrous light, and the glorious things of God!

It seems that this promise alone would cause you to become all wide awake, become pure in heart that you may see God.

Here we are tonight; what a contrast between that time and the present! Who would not gladly change off? Who would not want to reach that age when it will be always light, one eternal day, because we are a light within ourselves?

Yes, we shall shine some day. But we must get rid of the natural mind and natural thinkings of the human brain in order to "shine as the brightness of the firmament" and "as the stars forever and ever" (Dan. 12:3). Oh, we can see there is an undercurrent, a depth to this. When Moses went up into the mountain, when he was there with the angelic being—not with God, for it says that the angel came unto the mountain—he had such shining power within him; he was covered with light and beauty and glory, and Moses absorbed enough of this light that his face shone. And this was while Moses was still in his mortal condition. If he had stayed there long enough I wonder if he might have become immortal; yet he was there long enough to have his face shine so that the people could not look steadfastly upon him (Ex. 34:29-35; II Cor. 3:7).

Just think of all those millions of angels; what a light they will make! That is wondrous physical light shining out; all we now have on this earth is the spiritual light. But when the earth is glorified, it will then shine as the stars of heaven, shine by virtue of its spiritual light and also the physical light. We shall be changed into His very image. Moses gave us only a little sample of what is to come.

### When The Sun Shall Not Be Needed

We read in Isaiah 60:19, "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." The Lord will give us an everlasting light by our getting so energized that we shall have a present light with us. We shall not need the sun to shine out; we shall have a glory that will be greater than the sun. Yes, there will be no need of the light of the sun by day or the moon by night.

If we are a part of that golden city we shall not need their light, for the Lord will be a physical light unto us. We shall always need the spiritual light, His Word which, we read, "abideth for ever." There will not be a time when we shall not need that; it will be a constituent of our very being. But the literal light that we are receiving, the light of the sun by day and the moon and stars by night, we shall no longer need. We shall be like Moses, only a thousand times greater. Our countenance will glow with such glory that men in their natural condition will not be able to look upon us. We shall be part of that great Power. Yes, we shall form a part of it. The glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

We are laboring to be part of that city that is to come, a city whose Builder and Maker is God. When you see that city, you will behold a glitter and a glow and a beauty that you have never seen in any other city; a grandeur and glory surrounding it that you have never imagined. We are looking for a city of which it declares unto us, "And



**"They that be wise shall shine... as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:3).**

the Gentiles (the nations) shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." When the sun begins to rise in its grandeur and beauty, all nations will come to view that wonderful city.

The Lord says through Isaiah the prophet, "I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise" (60:17-18). That is when "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" (v. 19). You will not need them; you will have light within yourselves.

Some people say, "It would be impossible to have light without the literal sun." But they are mistaken. Is not He who created the sun greater than the things He created? He that gave the sun light has more in Himself, light that can eclipse the light of the sun and moon.

Turn over to Zechariah 14. I would not know anything about it if I did not find the word of someone who is greater than myself. So turn over here to this 14th chapter, verse 9, and read of the very time when the Lord is going to arise and shine. "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one."

We read (vs. 6-7), "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light." Do you know why it is not going to be clear nor dark, but at evening time it shall be light? The Lord will have only a little handful—144,000—when He comes; but when He has developed a great number that no man can number, how the light will increase until gradually it reaches its climax so that at evening time there will be such a glow that we shall no longer need the light of the sun or moon.

The shining of the stars was a problem to me until the Bible solved it, until I found that the God of heaven had solved it; and some day, by and by, when the glory of the Lord covers the earth as the waters cover the great sea, what a wonderful light will shine out, what a stream of light will shine forth from the earth!

We shall be a body of light glowing so that our rays will shine forth; yes, we shall be a body of light, not a dark body, but a body of light shining in its beauty and glory. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43). In Daniel also we are told that the wise shall shine as the stars of the firmament, "and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever."

### **When God's Glory Is The Light**

This matter was of such importance that Jesus tells us of the wondrous city, New Jerusalem, and says in the last letter He ever wrote to us, "And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst." My! Did you ever see such a collection of shining glittering stones in your life? "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. 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 they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it." Yes, all the silver, and gold, and honor of nations shall be brought into it. "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." Watch out!

If you defile it, you shall never enter there—"neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." You know the Bible says, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." A man who will not listen, who will not assent to God's Word and say Amen to it, is an abomination to the Lord.

Every obedient, faithful one has the assurance of entering there, and we know that we shall not need the light of the sun or of the moon to shine; but the glory of the Lord shall be the light thereof.

I have been reading in Revelation 21, and now we read further in the 22nd chapter what will be the cause of our planet shining as other glorified worlds shine.

"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. 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. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light." We shall no longer need the light of the sun or the moon for the Lord God will give us light.

There is nothing new under the sun, and what hath been shall be (Eccl. 1:9); and we know our earth will be like other planets. "As truly as I live," saith the mighty God, "all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14:21). He took His oath to it, and it will surely come to pass. The question that should arise in our minds, brethren, should be, Are we really bringing ourselves into such a condition that we may rest assured that we are really going to be ready to be the ones to enjoy this wonderful blessing when it comes, that we are going to be among the ones to shine in eternity? You remember that the angel Gabriel came to Daniel, right from the courts of heaven, and informed him in reference to these wonderful things. It was he who spoke these words of promise: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

Jesus said it, Isaiah said it, the angel Gabriel said it. Can we not depend upon their word? MM

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**THE GREAT APOSTASY**

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# A GOOD UNDERSTANDING

**S**AUL and his sons were dead. David was now to be declared king over all Israel. Thousands gathered to Hebron for a great feast in his honor. And among those who came were 200 men of the tribe of Issachar whom the Chronicler describes as "Men that had an understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (I Chron. 12:32).

The military turned out strong—"a great host, like the host of God"—more than 350,000, according to the record. The tribes of Judah, Simeon, Levi, Benjamin and Manasseh sent thousands of "mighty men of valour" with their captains; Zebulun sent men "expert in war, with all instruments of war, [men] which could keep rank: [men] not of double heart." Naphtali, Dan, and Asher as well as Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh from the other side of Jordan, sent the best of their fighting men in full battle dress with their weapons ready for combat in order "to turn the kingdom of Saul to [David] according to the word of the Lord."

So many regiments, divisions and corps of military men all in league must have cheered the heart of the newly-crowned king. All came of their own free will with but one object: To make David king over Israel. There is strength in numbers, and such formidable array of troops, should have given Israel's enemies second thoughts about attacking. They were men who could keep rank, men in step with their com-

mander-in-chief. They were "not of double heart"; they were of one heart and mind to do David's bidding. He had no place for men of a divided heart or of double mind; such are of no use to man or God. To succeed in establishing his kingdom he needed a wholehearted army.

But of those that came, none were more valuable than those "children of Issachar,...that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do:...and all their brethren at their commandment," or as rendered in the New English Bible, "men skilled in reading the signs of the times to know what course Israel should follow, 200 chiefs, with all their kinsmen under their command." These 200 chiefs were outnumbered more than a thousand to one, yet they were indispensable to David. They were men that had insight and foresight, men with military and political sagacity, men of unquestionable moral character. They had the wisdom to see beyond the events of the day, to turn a deaf ear to the outcries of the mob, to visualize the end of the matter and see what really ought to be done. David was a military man and a capable leader, but he needed men such as these to manage so great an army and to oversee the kingdom.

A man with an understanding of the times, a man with the fear of God in his heart, is a man of wisdom. He need not be educated in the wisdom of this world, nor a man who understands astrology or astronomy. He

need not know who won the battles of history, nor understand the sciences. "Wisdom is the principal thing," said David's wise son, Solomon: "Therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." And David himself described the means of gaining that good understanding: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever" (Prov. 4:7; Ps. 111:10).

This good understanding that leads to the understanding of the times begins with the fear of the Lord—not fear of punishment but reverence for God and respect for His Word. Those who fear the Lord look to God in prayer and to His Word for the answers to life's complex problems. Understanding God's Word issues in obedience to His commandments and in knowing what ought to be done.

There has always been a need for men and women who know what ought to be done. Statesmen need to know what we as a nation ought to do. Military planners need to know what ought to be done to protect our country. Businessmen need to know what ought to be done in planning for the future. We need to know what we ought to do as Christians. Would that we had that good understanding that we would always know just what we ought to do!

Among God's faithful servants of the past there are some who stand

out for possessing that extra measure of good understanding to know what ought to be done. In the days of the Exodus we find Jethro paying a visit to his son-in-law Moses in the wilderness where the children of Israel were encamped by the mount of God. With so many people in such a close encampment, difficulties were bound to arise, and they came to Moses in an almost endless procession. Jethro stood by as the people came to Moses from morning till night for him to arbitrate their differences. He could see that the task was wearying both to Moses and the people.

"This is not the best way to do it," he said to Moses. "You will only wear yourself out and wear out all the people who are here. The task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it by yourself. Now listen to me: take my advice, and God be with you. It is for you to be the people's representative before God, and bring their disputes to him. You must instruct them in the statutes and laws, and teach them how they must behave and what they must do" (Ex. 18:17-20, NEB). Then Jethro went on to explain how Moses should divide the work with the elders and others of the people, appointing God-fearing men from among the congregation to decide the simple cases, leaving only the difficult matters to himself.

A lesser man than Moses might have said, "I guess I can handle the matter in my own way. Just how I do it is not for you to say." But Moses was not such a man. He graciously accepted the advice of his foreign father-in-law Jethro and "did all he had suggested. He chose capable men from all Israel and appointed them leaders of the people, officers over units of a thousand, of a hundred, of fifty or of ten. They sat as a permanent court, bringing the difficult cases to Moses but deciding simple cases themselves" (Ex. 18:24-26, NEB). Jethro's understanding of what ought to be done proved a

blessing to Moses, saving his strength for the things that mattered most.

Thanks to the good understanding of Abigail, David was saved from the humiliation that would have recoiled upon him had he been allowed to vent his anger upon her husband Nabal. Abigail knew what ought to be done and she did something about it.

David's shepherds had suffered insults at the hands of Nabal; and David, stung by the insult, reacted in true human fashion, with a rash oath to take vengeance on the man. Under most circumstances David was a man of prayer, patience and forbearance, but in this instance he failed to take his case to God and vowed to avenge the evil done his men. In the heat of anger, he may have thought it was right for him to take revenge for the wrong done his men. We are all liable to such self deception.

Abigail, being warned in advance of David's anger, hastened to prevent the massacre, bringing with her a substantial gift of food for his herdsmen. Meeting David on the road, she appealed to his better self, saying that it was the Lord who sent her to prevent him from shedding blood. Would he want to have such a sin laid to his charge? Was it not beneath the dignity of one destined to be king over Israel to commit such a rash act? Would he not come to regret such action? Would it not mar the joy of being king to have to reflect on it in time to come?

Abigail's attitude was humble, but she was both brave and courageous to address the anointed, but not yet reigning, monarch. And it is to David's credit that he accepted her wise counsel. Knowing that he was destined to be king, he might have assumed a proud and haughty attitude, refusing the advice of a stranger, the wife of a farmer. But he answered, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept

me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand" (I Sam. 25:32-33).

"A woman of good understanding," (I Sam. 25:3), Abigail knew what ought to be done and had the courage to do it. By her action she proved that there is more satisfaction in a conquered passion than in a conquering one. David might well have afterward prayed, "Blessed be the God who cast hindrances in the way when I was tempted to sin."

No one ever regrets the evil he did not do because he listened to sound advice.

There have been others throughout the Scriptures that understood given situations and gave sound advice—some of which was heeded and some that was not. Micaiah advised Ahab the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah not to go to battle at Ramoth-Gilead. It cost the king of Israel his life, and only a stroke of good fortune saved Jehoshaphat.

There had been three years of peace between Israel and Syria, and Ahab was itching for another campaign. He asked Jehoshaphat, king of Judah to take part in the encounter, and Jehoshaphat agreed. But on second thought, Jehoshaphat thought it would be a good idea to inquire of a prophet of the Lord first. Ahab's prophets (400 of them) had all prophesied that he would do well in the battle, but when Micaiah was called, Micaiah spoke the word of the Lord that they should not go to battle at Ramoth-Gilead. Because his prophecy displeased the king, he ordered him put in prison "until I come in peace." But Ahab was defeated and slain in the battle—because he failed to heed the words of the man who understood the situation.

Jeremiah the prophet received his understanding and his prophecies from the Lord, but like other prophets, his words were seldom heeded.

An outstanding example concerns the question of whether or not they should go down into Egypt. Representatives of the people came to Jeremiah and said: "Pray for us unto the Lord thy God,...that the Lord thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do" (Jer. 42:2-3).

Jeremiah answered: "Whatsoever thing the Lord shall answer you, I will declare it unto you; I will keep nothing back from you" (v. 4), and the people agreed, "Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the Lord our God" (v. 6).

Ten days later the answer came from the Lord and he called the people to give them the answer: "The Lord hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day....Now therefore know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go and to sojourn" (vs. 19, 22).

But when Jeremiah finished speaking the people answered, "Thou speakest falsely: the Lord our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there:...So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the Lord" (Jer. 43:2, 7). Because the answer

did not agree with what they wanted to do, they did not hearken and went into Egypt—to their own destruction. The Prophet knew from the Lord what they ought to do, but they would not listen.

In the days of the apostles, "Gamaliel, a Pharisee and a doctor of the law" showed his understanding when he advised the Sanhedrin. Peter and some of the other apostles had been put in prison, but the angel of the Lord had freed them during the night and they returned to the temple and continued preaching. The officers brought them before the council that they might reprimand them, but they were not easily silenced. Some of the council wanted to put them to death, but Gamaliel stood up and offered some sound advice: "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this...work be of men, it will come to naught: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." "And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go" (Acts 5:38-40). Gamaliel's understanding saved the lives of the apostles.

And what of us and our understanding of the times? Jesus chided the Pharisees because they could discern the weather but failed to recognize the signs of the times. Are we

cognizant of the signs that we see every day? If not, the words of Jesus should ring in our ears: "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" (Matt. 16:3).

There are signs all about us as clear to read as a stormy sky. They tell us the time is short more certainly than a red sunrise threatens a storm. Perhaps the most glaring red sign is the breakdown of law-enforcement—"sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily," and men do more and more evil deeds. "Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth has fallen in the public squares, and uprightness cannot enter,... and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey" (Isa. 59:14-15, RSV).

In the words of the apostle Paul, "It is time for [us] to wake out of sleep, for deliverance is nearer to us now than it was when first we believed. It is far on in the night; day is near. Let us therefore throw off the deeds of darkness and put on our armour as soldiers of the light. Let us behave with decency as befits the day" (Rom. 13:10-13, NEB).

The time is short! Recognizing the signs of the times, we know what we ought to do. Let us be up and doing, "throw off" the old ways, the old habits and put on the new ways, the virtues that will make for us a Christian character acceptable to Jesus Christ at His coming. MM

## Just for Today

**Just for today** I will be happy. Abraham Lincoln said that "most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be."

**Just for today** I will adjust myself to what is and not try to adjust everything to my own desires.

**Just for today** I will try to strengthen my mind. I will study. I will learn something useful. I will not be a mental loafer. I will read something that requires effort, thought, and concentration.

**Just for today** I will exercise my soul in three ways: I will do

somebody a good turn, and not get found out; if anybody knows of it, it will not count. I will do at least two things I don't want to do—just for exercise.

**Just for today** I will be agreeable. I will look as well as I can, dress becomingly, talk low, act courteously, criticize not one bit, find no fault with anything, and not try to improve or regulate anybody except myself.

**Just for today** I will have a program. I may not follow it exactly, but I will have it. In this way I will save myself from two pests: hurry and indecision.

**Just for today** I will have a quiet half hour all by myself and relax. During this half hour I will try to get a better perspective of my life.

# FAITH

## for These Trying Times

**E**VERY living person of sound mind has some degree of faith, whether in another, in themselves or in some religion. Webster defines faith as 1) Unquestioning belief; 2) Unquestioning belief in God, religion, etc.; 3) A religion or a system of religious beliefs, as the Catholic faith; 4) Anything believed; 5) Complete trust, confidence, or reliance, as children usually have faith in their parents; 6) Loyalty; allegiance to some person or thing.

What is our definition of faith? Do we unquestioningly believe God? Do we unquestioningly believe in a future life on this planet, a life of eternal joy, happiness and beauty? Do we believe that such a life can someday be our very own? Most importantly, do our daily lives prove that belief by our loyalty and allegiance in our everyday conduct, speech and action, making us ready for that "last day" when the great Judge shall call us to account?

These are questions which we should take to heart, for "...whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein," were the words of Jesus (Luke 18:17). A childlike faith is necessary for us to really believe. Of the Old Testament gallery of heroes (Hebrews 11), Abraham was highly esteemed by his descendants for his example of faith. Abram "...believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." God gave him great promises to reward his faith. "Look now toward heaven," He told Abram, "and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be" (Gen. 15:6, 5). The climax to Abraham's test of faith came years later when God called upon him to offer up his son Isaac, for we read that Abraham loved Isaac (Gen. 22:2); and through Isaac was to be the fulfillment of all of God's magnificent promises to him (Gen. 15:5).

But Abraham did not complain, "Lord, he is my only son in whom my seed shall be," or "Lord, I love my son, I can't bear to lose him," or "Anything, Lord, but not my son!" How many times have we felt or acted in this way when called upon to make a much lesser sacrifice of time or money for a godly cause. How many times have we excused ourselves with excuses like, "I just can't do it," or "I haven't the time or money to invest," or perhaps, "What will my friends or acquaintances think of me if I do

this?" or "Surely God doesn't really want me to do this?"

No, Abraham had unquestioning faith. He was God's loyal servant. And when God told him, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest,...and offer him there for a burnt offering..." (Gen. 22:2), Abraham did not delay. He was swift to obey his God. "And Abraham rose up early in the morning," to carry out this command (v. 3).

Are we preparing ourselves for any test of faith which the Lord may see fit to allow to come into our lives? If we are not faithful in the little tests of life, how shall we be faithful in greater? As Jesus said in Luke 16:10, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." No matter how small or insignificant the test may be, we must always be faithful to do our best.

Noah proved this faithfulness in his testings. Commanded by God to build an ark, he kept right on with the building in the face of ridicule and mockery which would have intimidated a lesser man. He kept on because he had faith that God would be true to His word and would send the flood just as He had promised. If we listen closely with an imagining ear, we can still hear the jeering and mockery of those faithless antediluvians: "Old man Noah, building a boat in the middle of the desert to lie. Where's the flood, Noah? Not a cloud in the sky!" But Noah saw plenty of clouds. A storm was brewing—he could see it in his neighbor's eye, actions and speech. He knew it would come.

Just so should we be watching for the signs that portend the end of our age. Do you hear that rumble, my brother? Sister, do you see those lightning flashes over yon mountain? Yes, the eastern sky is all ablaze, the warning has gone forth, and soon, very soon, it will be said that the Lord "ariseth to shake terribly the earth....The great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Isa. 2:19, 21; Rev. 6:17).

The time of the coming of the Lord is near, it is near and speeding apace. We can see the final phases of prophecy for our day fulfilling, ushering in the Kingdom of God.

Looking back only a century into history, we can see



drastic changes, especially in the moral condition of our nation. Then there are the changes in world conditions. Never before have the leaders of the world faced so many perplexing problems. Never has the strife between nations been greater in a time of "peace," and never has there been a preparation for war like there is today. A different kind of war, nuclear, now threatens the world. Worse still is the horror of the neutron bomb which is said not to destroy property but people.

How is our faith in these trying times? Is it strong and growing stronger? Or are we fearful? God's spokesman Job has the answer to fear: "If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him; if iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear" (Job 11: 13-15). If we prepare our hearts and put far away all iniquity, we need not fear.

Paul and Silas demonstrated their great faith when they were bound in stocks and thrown into a dark, smelly prison, cold and damp, with the pain from whip lashes still aching their backs, and with a good likelihood of infection. Do you wonder what the prisoners must have thought when the still midnight air blossomed into songs of praise from their cell? At first, they probably thought, "The poor fellows, they must be out of their minds with fever and don't even know where they are." But the jailer had dozed off to sleep when "suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed" (Acts 16:26).

All hope for the prison keeper was gone, for well he knew the punishment for letting prisoners escape. He drew his sword to kill himself; but "Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here" (16:28). It seems that the prison keeper would have immediately closed the doors and leaped for joy, finding that none had escaped. But no, his first thought was of his own salvation and the power of God which he had just seen manifest. Trembling, he came and "fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:29-30).

What was this faith that Paul and Silas had? The book of Hebrews tells us, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1).

Faith is generated when we hear the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). But we must be very careful and attentive to our faith, lest it become what James called a "dead faith." We can see lots of this kind of faith all around. "Jesus did it all for us," they say. "You can't be saved by what you do." Yet, the last half of the second chapter of James refutes this belief in no uncertain terms. James poses the question to those living in vanity: "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"

(v. 20). James wanted to be sure we understood this and he repeats it in the 26th verse: "Faith without works is dead." To be sure there is no misunderstanding, he compares faith without works to a body without breath. "As the body without breath is dead, so also the faith without works, is dead" (v. 26, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*). How useless faith is if it is dead! and how can it be more dead than a body without breath, with lungs collapsed and life-giving oxygen depleted from the blood? "Faith without works is dead." Did not Abraham obey to prove his faith? Had he not obeyed when God asked him to take Isaac with him to the land of Moriah and there offer him to the Lord, he would not be remembered as the father of the faithful. Abraham proved his faith in God by his obedience.

By faith we shall be able to endure the tribulations that will come into our lives and so conquer our sinful natures. By faith we will be able to endure unto the end. By faith we shall be able to obtain life eternal. MM

## Waiting

Watchman, waiting for the morning,  
Canst thou see its glimmering light?  
Canst thou tell by signs prophetic  
When will end this long dark night?

When we see the fig tree budding,  
Know we not that summer's near?  
So by prophecy fulfilling  
Know that Morn will soon appear.

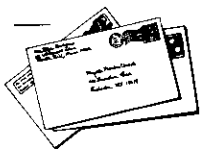
Christian, wait! The Day is breaking;  
O'er the hilltop Morning dawns;  
See! light streaks the east horizon—  
Wait and hail the coming Morn!

Night so long, so dark and dreary,  
Casts her sable garb aside;  
Morning breaks with rays transcendent,  
All her gates are open wide.

Marching through her portals glorious,  
Jesus with His convoy comes;  
Crowned with might, His robes resplendent,  
Brighter than the noonday sun.

List! His voice fills every dungeon,  
Ope's the prison gates of earth;  
And the pris'ners, then immortal,  
Shout the victory over death.

—L. T. N.



# Letters

## With Right Thoughts

God tells us the best things to think about to the exclusion of everything else; whatsoever things are lovely, honest, just, of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things. We will set our minds on things which are above, not on earthly things, when we contemplate how much higher are God's thoughts from our vain and contemptible thoughts.

We must cleanse all the improper thoughts from our minds and "let this mind be in you," which will be the only way to enable us to bring every thought to the obedience of Christ. The apostle Paul besought the brethren at Corinth to all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among them, but that they be perfectly joined together in the same mind and judgment. And that man should not live by bread alone but by every word which proceedeth from God. With this in mind, our every thought, our very being will be devoted to the one true faith.

*Swansea, South Wales*

G. S.

## Watch Your Tongue!

The heart indeed needs a daily cleansing as does also the tongue. How often evil thoughts well up within our hearts which is evil enough; but the tongue adds insult to injury by dispensing the evil to either hurt or injure another or tear down everything we have managed to build toward holiness. King Solomon, who was a very wise king, spoke in the book of Ecclesiastes, the 5th chapter, "Be not rash with thy mouth and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven and thou upon earth: Therefore let thy words be few."

Yes, we must be on guard to watch every word that proceeds out of our mouth, for by our words we are either justified or condemned. We must use our tongue to edify God for "he that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness" (Prov. 12:17), and "the mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom" (Prov. 10:31), and "the mouth of a righteous man is a well of life" (Prov. 10:11).

The Bible contains many verses which, if applied to our daily lives, are the best detergents ever sold on the market today; and they are free to all who are sincere in making over the old creature into a new one.

If we stand before the grand assize with a dirty heart and evil tongue, He will say unto us "Depart from me, I never knew you."

So let us get to work ridding ourselves of our evil nature before that great and dreadful day of the Lord.

*Carrollton, Ohio*

M. W.

## A Short Time

Our allotted time is swiftly coming to a close. What are we doing with our time? Are we making the very most of all the time we have or are we squandering it? Our time is precious, and so very short, so short that we cannot afford to waste even one moment of time.

God has given us this life as a free gift to work out our salvation, and we should work while it is today; the night cometh when no man can work.

*Carrollton, Ohio*

L. R.

## Keeping the Midnight Vigil

What a great man Elijah must have been, to have been chosen for that soon coming day to announce to the world the great news of our Lord's return. How many will heed the warning he will give? Surely with so much evil everywhere around us, the time is not far off. How we must watch and pray that we will be ready when he comes.

There is so much preparing to do, as far as our characters are concerned. How I wish I could study with you and have my faults pointed out. Being human, we tend to overlook our own shortcomings and see them in others. "The hardest place to keep up the midnight vigil is at home." We must be considerate, kind, patient and loving to those around us daily. Truly the time is too short and the stakes too great to take chances.

*Parksville, British Columbia*

L. S.

## So Thankful

I am sure we all need all the stirring up in spiritual works that we can get. Do we realize how easy it is to be lost by delay? If we would endure to the end, we must study, read, meditate and pray, very often.

It is so easy to think on this and that, but we can fill our minds with good thoughts and root out all evil thoughts.

We need to use more time to learn of God's will for us and all His commands pertaining to us, learn them so they are written on our minds.

We can all be so thankful that we have found the Truth in all its purity, thankful to God for His help, thankful for His faithful servant in these latter days who brought it to light for us. May we all be living the right way and doing the right things for we know these are evil days.

*Kinards, South Carolina*

E. C.

## A Prayer

Lord, help me flee all sin and shame  
Lest I disgrace your Holy Name.  
And may I live that all can see  
The Saviour's love revealed in me.

*Mt. Hope, West Virginia*

W. W.

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## Under Full Control

We are told that the first on the list of thirteen evils is evil thoughts; and if we can keep all our *thoughts* always under full control, we will, with God's help, be able to have our whole self in full control.

In Hebrews 11 we are told that without this one living faith we can never please God. We are very thankful that we are still given a little more time to make that great change from old to new. Our Heavenly Father in His great mercy gives us a little more time to overcome our old bad ways and habits.

As we see what is going on everywhere in this dark world, we are striving harder to impress upon our forgetful minds the very great need to wake up and watch self more closely, keep the great prize always before us, and never grow weary in well doing. If we are not very careful, it is very easy to depart from the living Way.

So as our Lord and Master commands us, let us take care that our hearts are not overcharged with worldly cares and that day takes us by surprise, like a trap. But let us be more and more watchful and pray always that we may be worthy to escape what is coming on the world and to stand before the Son of man.

Vernon, British Columbia

A. & Z. S.

## Appreciative

I have finished reading your publication, *The Coming of Elijah and the Great Battle of Armageddon*, which a good sister here loaned to me. Though we have hundreds of books and tapes regarding these times which we are living in, you had many facts and Scriptural interpretations I had not known before.

God bless your work for the Lord and the publications you have and are putting forth.

Danbury, Wisconsin

K. O.

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## OBITUARY

### John H. Myers

On January 18, 1982, funeral services were conducted for John H. Myers, assistant pastor Newton H. Payne officiating. Brother Myers became interested in the Megiddo Church about 1922 and was an eager missionary, voicing his convictions at every opportunity.

His wife preceded him in death in 1954. He has no surviving relatives.

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## Finally, Brethren

### About Giving (Or Taking) Advice

WE ALL know the sort of person who has plenty of good advice to share with others. He'd be happy to advise you on everything, from the best way to eat to the best kind of car you can drive.

There's only one problem. These people who love to give advice often hate to take it.

Of course, good advice is not always pleasant to listen to. In fact, very often it may be the very last thing we want. We resent interference from anyone, whether parents, neighbors, instructors, or managers. And, quite naturally, we don't want it from God either. This is why some people close their ears and eyes to the Bible—because they don't care about being told what they may or may not do.

There is no getting around the fact: God *does* give advice. He offers pages of it on dozens of subjects, covering almost every angle and aspect of life. And He does it in the most dogmatic way. He says "Do this, or you will die," or "Don't do this, or you will die." How dogmatic can you be?

However, God doesn't give commands simply for the sake of showing His superiority or for the satisfaction of telling someone what to do. He has higher purposes in view. He is doing it for our good, to make us persons He can use in His eternal plan. He is doing it not to hinder but to *help* us.

Even so, God's advice is not always what we want to hear. He tells us to do things that come right across our natural tendencies. We are to "Love not the world," and "Bless them that persecute you," and "Be of the same mind one toward another."

The Bible has so many commands that if we take them seriously, it might seem we could not avoid ending up frustrated and bitter toward God. But such is not the case.

His "commandments are not grievous" because God never asks us to do what we cannot do. A person might ask the impossible. Not God. He knows we *can*, or He would never ask us. He knows our resources, and our possibilities. He asks only according to these. And besides all this, He offers His help.

So His commands can be read not as harsh demands but as promises. When He says, "Love not the world," I can also read, "I love them that love me." When I read "You shall....," I am also able to read, "You *can*...."

Which still doesn't mean that I am always utterly delighted when I get advice. I am naturally a stubborn person. I like having things my way. But I'm learning to see that some advice is worth taking. If I want to live.

MM

*Come, let us anew  
Our journey pursue,  
Roll round with the year,  
And never stand still till the Master appear.*

*His adorable will  
Let us gladly fulfil,  
And our talents improve,  
By the patience of hope and the labour of love.*

*Our life is a dream;  
Our time as a stream  
Glides swiftly away,  
And the fugitive moment refuses to stay.*

*The arrow is flown,  
The moment is gone;  
The Millennial year  
Rushes on to our view, and eternity's near.*

*O that each in the day  
Of His coming may say,  
'I have fought my way through,  
I have finished the work Thou didst give me to do!'*

*O that each from his Lord,  
May receive the glad word,  
'Well and faithfully done;  
Enter into My joy, and sit down on My throne!'*