

Megiddo Message



"By Many Infallible Proofs"

Megiddo Message

Vol. 61, No. 4

April, 1974

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF
THE MEGIDDO MISSION CHURCH
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A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone.

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

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

Second Class Postage paid at Rochester, New York.

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Editorially Speaking...

Temporary or Permanent?

TIME may show that one of the greatest weaknesses in modern civilization has been our striving for quantity rather than for quality. Costly buildings are constantly being erected with no expectation that they shall outlast the present generation. So poor are many of the materials used and so fast do our tastes change that the natural enthusiasm for the new is saddened by the fact that soon this, too, shall be old.

In our present world there is nothing permanent but impermanence itself. The extreme is defined by the beauty parlor ad which reads, "Permanent Waves. Guaranteed to last three months." Permanence is the quality of lasting three months! How aptly this illustrates the transience of men's hope and the brevity of their dreams apart from God.

Many a modern church suffers from a left-handed acceptance of this philosophy of impermanence. What used to be known as "Christianity" is blighted by degraded values. The church is brought to the level of the world; and the two merge in their desire to impress, to gain fleeting attention, to appear well in comparison with those who have no higher aspirations.

All this is completely foreign to the Word of God, which ignores size and quantity and lays all stress upon quality. Christ more than any other man was followed by the crowds, yet He resisted the temptation to please them and rested His success upon those eternal qualities which He was able to plant in the hearts of a chosen few.

We who aspire to following Christ are men and women of eternity. We must put no confidence in the passing scenes of the disappearing world. We must resist and control every claim upon us of that which belongs to mortality. Nothing less than forever is long enough for us. We can view with sadness the frantic scramble of the world to gain a brief moment in the sun as we strive for an eternal position in the Kingdom of our Father. "The book of the month," for instance, has a strange sound to one who has taken his values from the Almighty Creator. "The man of the year" can hardly be expected to impress very deeply those men who are making their plans for that long eternity when days and years have passed away and time is no more.

We must learn to keep our perspective in terms of ages and millenniums rather than in days and years. And as a church, we must test foundations, rather than count numbers. We must work for permanence rather than for appearance. We must inspire our children to seek those enduring values which shall never be touched by mortality. We can well afford to rate low as the world measures success if we have laid up credits with God.

It will cost something to walk slowly in the parade of the ages, while excited men of time rush about confusing motion with progress. But it will pay in the long run—and the true Christian is not much interested in anything short of that.●●

"By Many Infallible Proofs"

PRAYER

O God, Thou mighty Being who hast brought us to this holy morning when we renew the memory of our Saviour's resurrection, fill our hearts with the same adoration and rejoicing that the disciples experienced on that first Resurrection Morning. May nothing disturb the beauty and glory of this day. Help us to keep our vision clear, our insight true, our communion with Thee pure and lovely.

O Thou who didst make the stars, and who can turn the shadow of death into the morning, we praise Thee for the resurrection of Jesus, for the certainty of His victory over pain and death.

Give us the faith to believe that every truth that is trampled down by evil and every Christian ideal that seems to be buried in darkness will rise again. We know that right will one day prevail over wrong, and life will overcome death.

We bless and thank Thee for all the helpful things Thou hast done and art doing for us. We praise Thee for the insight that we have of Thy great plan for the earth and mankind.

Awaken our minds to the glory of Jesus' resurrection. And as He conquered the shadows of the tomb, so may we overcome the evils that keep our lives from being what they ought to be.

Attune our hearts to songs of victory, that we may one day be in the company of those who live with Thee in eternal joy.

Inspire us to give words of encouragement, words of comfort, words of warning; helpful words, words that will build faith and overcome doubt. And help us always to live the life that will please Thee and fit us for perpetuation in the world to come.

Bless and preserve all who are striving for perfection of character, and give us the strength to continue steadfast to the end, that we may share with our resurrected Lord and the good of all ages, life in the world to come. In Jesus' name. Amen.

DISCOURSE

"IF Christ be not risen"!

Everything in vital Christianity and victorious living depends upon the fact of the resurrection. If Christ be not risen, the keystone has gone from the arch, the foundation from the edifice, the saving power from the gospel.

The calamitous implications of a dead Christ in a tomb are too appalling to contemplate. Paul dared to look at this possibility and declared: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised, . . . your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (I Cor. 15:14-19).

From this gloomy contemplation the Apostle bursts into the sunlight of the resurrection morning: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (v. 20).

Paul's positive assurance concerned the literal, physical resurrection of Christ—the vital essential in the gospel he preached: "That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (vs. 3-4). Then the Apostle adds this evidential testimony: "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also. . . ." (vs. 5-8).

Confirmation of faith in the supernatural in God's Word is always timely. In these days when assault after assault is being made upon the fundamentals of the faith, it is well for us to survey the

impregnability of the Rock of Ages. No atheistic onslaught or suggestion of unbelief can stand before an unbiased study of our Lord and Saviour in His life, death and resurrection.

After a close scrutiny of the four Gospels, Simon Greenleaf, an authority on evidence, whose books law students study, declared: "The Man whom the Gospels present as Jesus is the promised Christ. . . ." Gilbert West, in utter contempt for Christianity, studied the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ with the determination to disprove the Bible. He ended in a humble faith in the Christ of the resurrection. The Bible stands the test.

The resurrection proves Christ to be what God's Word claims Him to be; that is, the Son of God, the resurrection and the life, the Saviour of the world, and its future King.

Some years ago an Englishman named Frank Morison, an unbeliever in the resurrection of Jesus, made a study of the last seven days of His life for the purpose of determining His qualities as a man; he finished a staunch believer in the resurrection.

The Evidence

Here are some of the evidences:

Christianity began to be propagated in the very city where its Founder had been crucified, and where the hatred of Him was deepest and where the memory of His death was the clearest.

Had the resurrection been only a guilty secret of the disciples, it would most assuredly have been exposed by those who hated Jesus Christ. Defectors from the faith could also have refuted the disciples.

The resurrection was, confessedly, entirely contrary to both the hopes and the fears of the disciples. There is therefore no reason to doubt the Gospel statement that they were astonished and, at first, skeptical of the news of Christ's resurrection.

It was asserted that the body of Christ was stolen from the tomb. If Christ's enemies had removed the body, they could easily have crushed the new faith. One open procession in the streets, one exhibition of the mangled form, and the new faith would have been at an end. Or, as Paley remarks: "It is evident that if His body could have been found the Jews would have produced it as the briefest and most complete answer possible to the whole story. The attempt of the apostles could not have survived this refutation a moment."

Why should the disciples steal the body? No reason for it is suggested. How could they steal the body? They were weak and fearful; the boldest had denied the Lord. There is nothing to sug-

gest that they overcame the Roman guard by guile or by force. It would be most improbable that the whole guard fell asleep. And if they were asleep, how could they know how the body actually disappeared?

If the disciples had stolen the body, would they have given themselves up to shame, suffering the loss of friends and even death in order to preach what they knew to be false?

If the disciples had made up the story of the resurrection, they themselves would have remained unchanged; if it re-created them, then the change in them can be fully explained.

Who can believe that men would band themselves together in evil for the purpose of doing good? That they could be, through life, a band of hypocrites without ever letting the mask fall? That they could preach virtue and live virtuously with a damning lie perpetually on their conscience? That they could profess to hope to be with Christ in perfect bliss when all the time they knew His body lay corrupting in some obscure grave?

By their conviction that it had happened and their consequent undertaking of a worldwide mission to proclaim it, the disciples had nothing to gain and everything to lose. All hope of personal advantage in life was yielded up. All that human nature most seeks to avoid—shame, suffering, persecution, death—was their inevitable prospect.

They commenced their ministry so soon after the events, that is, Christ's death and resurrection, that there was no time for a myth to grow.

The first converts were from among the Jews, including priests and other religious devotees. Paul is a prominent example of the men who were most tenacious of the faith of their fathers and most hard to convert to new opinions. We will let him speak for himself, in his defense before King Agrippa:

"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. . . . Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It

is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee. To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision. . .

"For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead" (Acts 26:8-10, 12-19, 21-23).

The Church Triumphant

Believers in the resurrection multiplied in the very place where it was alleged to have occurred, and from thence it spread until the world of that day knew the doctrine of the resurrection. From Paul's unchallenged Epistles we know that a full and unhesitating belief in the resurrection was established within twenty-five years of the crucifixion.

At the tomb of Christ the angel spoke assuringly to the women: "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead" (Matthew 28:5-7). Paul later declared positively: "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept" (I Cor. 15:20).

What tremendous consequences follow in the wake of the mightiest event in history! The Church was born the other side of the empty tomb. The one incontestable result of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, is the emergence of the Christian Church. After that, the message and ministry of the Church was Jesus and the resurrection.

Something wonderful happened on that first Resurrection Morning which lifted the gates of empires off their hinges, and turned the stream of civilization into new channels. As a result the believing Christian is freed from cynicism and defeat, and his life has become a sacred trust and a magnificent adventure. *

The Living Christ

The religious world are very vocal about the death of Jesus and its benefits to the believer. Paul placed Christ's death in the secondary position, giving His life the *first* place, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10). It is a *living* Christ who beckons us on to live above the world, the flesh, our worst selves. It is the hope of the *life* that can be ours in the world to come through Christ's instrumentality, that impels us to completely renounce self, to take up our daily cross of self-denial, surrender everything of self for the joy set before us, as did Christ.

We are living in a time when the masses of the people must be reckoned among the living dead. Remember, you do not need to die a physical death in order to be dead, nor do you need to be translated to experience the hope of a life which is eternal. Said Paul the apostle, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:1-4). But to live with Him in glory, we must die with Him completely now.

OUR Source of Life

When the New Testament speaks of life, it doesn't always picture an extension of the life we now enjoy beyond the inevitable, but often a quality of life here and now—with life eternal in the world to come as its sequence. Such a life, however, is no accident. It cannot be achieved by wishful thinking, but is the result of diligent application on our part. The life of Christ, if it is to be maintained, must have its roots in several vital experiences.

1. *There must be spiritual nourishment.*

We sometimes wonder why we so easily lose interest in the things of God and the spiritual program to which He has called us. The solution to the mystery could be found in the form of spiritual anemia which afflicts such a large portion of those who have attempted to follow the way of holiness. If one is to attain to a spiritual stature,

* Preceding portion of this article is from *The Alliance Witness* of March 29, 1972, "Many Infallible Proofs," by J. B. Rowell. Reprinted by permission.

he must learn to reserve sufficient time and give sufficient thought to those activities which give nourishment to the human spirit.

An article was once written on how to become spiritually bankrupt. The formula was simple; just stop reading your Bible, slacken your interest in prayer, allow your thoughts to browse where they will without making a definite effort to bring them into subjection, and you will find yourself experiencing spiritual decline. If we would keep spiritually alive and growing, we must "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." We must "meditate upon these things, give [ourselves] wholly" to these life-inducing activities (I Tim. 4:13, 15).

2. *The triumphant Christian life requires intellectual enrichment.*

Again and again in the missionary journeys of Paul we are told that he visited the synagogues and reasoned, or persuaded, or sought to convince the people that Jesus was the Christ. There is every indication that his ministry was pitched upon a highly intellectual plane. The growing Christian who would possess an indestructible faith must also see to it that his mind is being constantly enriched by the inspiring Word of God. Paul's command to Timothy is direct: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

3. *The Christian who would maintain a vital spiritual life must give to his faith some practical exercise.*

The ability to do a thing is ours only as long as we exercise that ability. Any degree of proficiency in the art of being a disciple of Christ rests upon that disciple's willingness to translate into every area of life the ideals which have come to him through copying the life of Christ. "Copy me as I copy Christ," said the great Apostle. And again: "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil. 4:9). And he advised Timothy to close his mind to old pagan myths, and "exercise thyself rather unto godliness" (I Tim. 4:7).

4. *The Christian life must develop through the means of cooperative activities.*

Someone has said that it is impossible for a person to be a Christian alone on a desert isle, because being a Christian involves so much more than one's own lone relationship to God, however vital and meaningful that relationship may be. Every follower of Christ is under an inescapable obligation to translate his Christianity into all of life's

relationships. The gospel which Christ came to share with men has social implications. No man liveth to himself. Each must be a brother's keeper. The command in Eph. 4:32 is: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

5. *The Christian who would bring his spiritual experience to a full fruition must also provide for it some sacrificial expression.*

It is eternally true that "whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:25). The rich young ruler stood on the threshold of a tremendously rewarding experience; but because he could not grasp the full impact of the sacrificial element in the Gospel, he went away sorrowful. Paul, on the other hand, came to sense the wisdom of placing all he had upon the altar of Christ: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8).

If we would show forth the life of Christ in our everyday living, we also must be prepared to render our bodies a living sacrifice, to exhibit the death of a living man. And this sacrifice must be continual. Said Jesus, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

In Conclusion

We rejoice in the resurrection not only because of what it tells us concerning Christ, or our own future destiny, but also because of what it implies concerning life for us in this strategic hour of the world's history. In order for the resurrection to have its full meaning in the Christian's life, it must be a constantly unfolding experience, producing in those who share it the manifold fruits of God's indwelling spirit of truth. The Christian's life is a series of new beginnings. Each day provides the opportunity to improve on our best of yesterday, and tomorrow must be still better. The formula is to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," and "he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

It is the believer's responsibility and privilege to proclaim the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and to live this message to the glory of God. ●●

**Coming together is a beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success.**



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

"Behold, A Beam in Thine Own Eye"

"DON'T criticize people, and you will not be criticized. For you will be judged by the way you criticize others, and the measure you give will be the measure you receive. . . .

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye, and fail to notice the plank in your own? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me get the speck out of your eye,' when there is a plank in your own? You fraud! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you can see clearly enough to remove your brother's speck of dust" (Matt. 7:1-5, Phillips).

With only a superficial analysis, Jesus' comparison seems rather absurd, bordering on sarcasm or satire. Some might even think He was trying to be witty. But Jesus was never light, as are modern writers. His words were weighty and were intended to teach a great lesson. His few words contain a whole volume of meaning.

"Judge not that ye be not judged." The multitude that assembled to hear these words was no doubt sprinkled with the hyper-critical Pharisees. To those who so freely judged others and objected when others judged them, Jesus was saying, "Judge not," or, "Don't criticize people, and you will not be criticized."

Newer translations of the New Testament carry the meaning of criticism rather than of judgment. Criticism among the Jews was cynical. It flattered their spiritual pride to condemn a brother. When they said, "How bad he is," what they really meant was, "How good I am!"

God forbid that there should be any Pharisees among those who hear the words of Jesus today!

Jesus would not have us accept the thought of not judging others in too literal a sense, else He would be forbidding us to discern between good and evil, a task with which the Christian is faced daily. Rather, our discernment must be according to the Scripture rule: "Judge not according to

appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). Appearances can be misleading; we must judge by fruits. Jesus said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:16).

"The measure you give will be the measure you receive," is but another way of saying that we reap as we sow. It is a well-known fact of life that as one thinks, speaks and acts toward others, others will react toward him. The story is told of a man moving to a new neighborhood. He inquired of the real estate agent concerning the people who would be his new neighbors. "What kind of neighbors did you have where you lived before?" queried the agent. "The best neighbors in the world," replied the man. "Then that's just the kind you will find here," answered the agent.

To have good neighbors, be a good neighbor. To reap kind words, sow kind words; to generate a smile in another, smile yourself.

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and fail to notice the plank in your own?" asked Jesus. How much easier to see the faults of others than our own! Human nature has not changed; it is today as it was in Jesus' day.

A student in far-off India came to an American missionary and told him of a new society they had formed, "The Society for the Confession of Sins." The missionary was interested in such a novel society and suggested that it must be very difficult to confess their sins to each other. "Oh, no," replied the youth, "it is not difficult, for we don't confess



"Let me get the speck out of your eye."

our own sins, but other people's sins." The "Society for the Confession of Other People's Sins" has many members throughout the world, but no Christian can belong to it.

The words "beam" and "mote" as the above verse is translated in our Common Version appear nowhere else in the Bible. Newer translations render these words as a girder, a plank, or a log, versus a splinter, a speck, or a speck of sawdust. But with any of these renderings, the contrast is striking. It is something huge, a massive piece of timber compared to a bit of dust or a tiny splinter that one might get in his eye. The sharp contrast was intentional; Jesus was teaching a lesson, a very important lesson, and He wanted to make the meaning so obvious that no one could miss the point.

The beam or the plank is that which blinds one to his own shortcomings. It is spiritual pride such as exhibited by the Pharisee as he prayed his self-righteous prayer: "I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I possess" (Luke 18:11-12).

The Pharisee had compared himself with others and not with God's standard. Just because he didn't do the things his neighbors did, he thought he was righteous. He could see their faults, but not his own. He looked good to himself, a sure sign of a declining spiritual life.

Like the Pharisee of the parable, we are apt to see the faults of others and not our own. But Jesus says, "Take the plank out of your own eye first." Our moral judgment should be turned inward, directed toward our own heart. Using the mirror of God's Word, we should make a complete self-analysis, criticize ourselves and correct our own spiritual defects. We must set a standard of conduct for our own lives that is above criticism, one that will serve as an example to others.

The most effective criticism of others is to demonstrate the opposite in our own lives.

If we give ourselves to criticism, criticism will come back to us with deadly aim. Sow criticism, and you will reap criticism. "He that hath friends must show himself friendly," is as true today as ever. Be an example of what you would like others to be. If someone failed to return your pleasant "Good morning," go out of your way to greet him the next time you meet; if someone spoke an unkind word to you, show extra kindness to that person at every opportunity.

We cannot always know what is behind the actions of others. Perhaps the person who gave us a short answer, or none at all is under a severe strain. Extra kindness from a friend may be just

(Continued on page 21)



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

"Blessed

"BLESSED"—that is the word Jesus used to describe the eternal happiness reserved for the high achievers in God's school of character. Such are the peacemakers. They hold the supreme privilege of becoming members of the heavenly Father's family. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9).

What divine commendation is in store for the peacemaker—"blessed"! How urgent, then, how vital the question: What kind of man is the peacemaker? Can you and I become true peacemakers?

A peacemaker has two sides to his qualifications: negative and positive.

What the Peacemaker is NOT

The peacemaker is no product of nature or of chance. His is a title well-deserved and carefully won. His every thought and act is disciplined and directed.

The peacemaker is not one who speaks whatever vagrant thought may wander into his mind. Nor is he stirred by every whim and passion of the day. He is a peacemaker because he has made "perfect peace" the object of his life—first in his relationship with God, and then in his daily relations with his fellowmen. He has merited his title by attacking and overpowering every force that would assault the cause of peace.

One prime target of the peacemaker's efforts is that "little member" of the human body so often guilty of violating the peace—the tongue. And it is not someone else's "little member" that is his primary concern, but *his own*. The peacemaker must not be quarrelsome, and well he knows that no quarrel ever raged long in silence. The peacemaker finds his greatest victory in cutting out of his life all evil speaking, all slander, all malice, all angry words, all bitter retorts, all vicious criticisms. "For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and

Are the Peacemakers . . . ”

his lips that they speak no guile” (I Pet. 3:10-11). The peacemaker is not afraid to do anything that will promote peace.

The peacemaker's second target is the feelings of resentment and revenge that rise almost instinctively within the human breast, the desire to get even for the wrong another may have caused. Such feelings are so easily converted into words that stir up more strife and mar all that makes for peace. The true peacemaker follows Paul's formula, addressed to the Christian churches under his charge: “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone; aim to be above reproach in the eyes of all; be at peace with all men, if possible, so far as that depends upon you. Never revenge yourselves, beloved, but let the wrath of God have its way; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will exact a requital—the Lord hath said it. No, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for in this way you will make him feel a burning sense of shame. Do not let evil get the better of you; get the better of evil by doing good” (Rom. 12:17-21, Moffatt).

The peacemaker cannot be sensitive, he cannot be touchy, he cannot defend his own selfish interests. He must learn to see every situation as God sees it. And knowing that God is in full control, he can enjoy perfect peace.

What the Peacemaker IS

The peacemaker capitalizes on everything that promotes peace in his own life and in the lives of others. So intensely does he desire peace with God and peace among men that he permits absolutely nothing to disturb his own peace of mind. Emotions and reactions which might seem vital to the preservation of his own interests he suppresses in the greater interest of making peace with God.

What does this mean? It means that the peacemaker is a graduate of God's school of self-control.

He is a new creature with a new outlook on life. The main obstacle to peace, according to the Scriptures, is the heart of man. And until the heart is changed, surface manipulations are of no effect. If a stream is found to be impure and the trouble is in the spring from which the stream originates, is it not a waste of time and energy to pour chemicals into the stream in an attempt to cure the condition? Better to go directly to the source of the problem.

And so the peacemaker has a new heart, a *pure* heart. His is a heart that allows nothing that is evil; for envy, jealousy, and all uncontrolled emotions disturb true peace. Only when the heart has been cleansed of all such can it follow after the things that make for genuine peace (Rom. 14:19).

Strange, isn't it, that peace, the inborn longing of every heart, must be *made*! And stranger still that genuine makers of peace are few! But peace-making is difficult business. Far easier is it to fan the ashes of an ancient feud into new fire than to allay warfare. Far easier is it to smooth the surface of a disagreement than to dig up every little root of bitterness. Far easier to cover the flame and call it peace than to isolate and extinguish every last smoldering grudge and hatred.

And this is the peacemaker's task—not only to achieve peace in his own life, but to do all he can within the sphere of his influence to promote the peace of others. This, however, is a task which requires keen, mature discretion; for by interfering in other people's strifes, one can easily make matters worse.

Examples of Bible Peacemakers

The Bible contains some outstanding examples of men and women who did what they could to promote peace, even at the expense of their own interests. Moses, when he came upon two of his own countrymen fighting, cried, “Why do you in-

jure one another? You are brothers!"

Another example is that of Abram. Faced with an awkward situation, grand peacemaker that he was he said, "Lot, let there be no strife, I pray, between me and thee, and between my herdmen, and thy herdmen; for we be brethren."

Like his father Abram, Isaac also walked in the ways of peace. Upon leaving Egypt, he dug again the wells of water his father had dug in the land of Gerar. But when he saw that the inhabitants of the land wished to contend with him for the water, he moved to another location and dug another well, rather than have strife. He did this three times.

Jesus' whole life was one of peacemaking. He went about doing good, helping others in every way possible, teaching and showing them the way to lasting peace. The result was His own matchless peace with God. Whatever was the Father's will became His will, and He performed it willingly.

Even in what might have been the darkest hour of His life, Jesus had peace to give to others. "Peace I leave with you," were His consoling words to His disciples; "my peace I give unto you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. . . . These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 14:27; 16:33).

Peace—or Else—?

Actually, there is never any justifiable cause for anything except peace between Christian brethren. As Christians we enjoy a special relationship—we are brothers, sons of the same Father, seekers after the same inheritance. We face a common danger, and need each other's help. Why should we have any desire to hurt one another? Why should we ever let feelings of jealousy and revenge mar our peace?

The story is told of two divers who came to blows on the ocean floor. They were drawn to the surface by the lifeline, still fighting and struggling. One had damaged his helmet in his anger, and was nearly dead. We would censure them severely for their childish behavior in the face of danger. Yet, are brothers and sisters in Christian service any less deserving of censure when they cannot serve the cause of peace in harmony?

"Peace," urges the apostle Paul. "Peace, then, and the building up of each other, these are what we must aim at" (Rom. 14:19, Moffatt). We are not here to bite and devour one another. We are not here to compete, or to dispute, or to quarrel. We are here to make peace! Ours is a "ministry

of reconciliation," making peace with each other and with God. We must be peacemakers—or miss God's blessing.

Peace—If It Be Possible

It is our Christian obligation to promote peace. But this does not mean "peace at any price." The Christian is not the sort of man who says, "Anything to avoid trouble." There are times when the claims of peace have to submit to the claims of principle. Christianity is not an easy-going tolerance which accepts anything and shuts its eyes. There are times when peace must follow strife—strife with sin and wrong. And when that time comes, it is every Christian's duty not to shrink from the battle. There can never be true peace until evil has been removed.

At times we may be tempted to postpone a battle by appeasement; but postponed war does not mean real peace; it does not solve the problem.

Nor will it always be possible to solve the problem. David wrote of a time when he was ardently working for peace; "but when I speak," he wrote, "they are for war" (Ps. 120:7). Peace involves the cooperation of two sides—which may or may not be possible. It is for this reason that Paul qualified his command to live at peace with all men. He said, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). Note: "If it be possible. . . ."—there may be times when it is *not* possible. Nevertheless, even then it is every Christian's duty to promote peace "as much as lieth in you."

They Shall Be Called the Children of God

What is the blessedness of the peacemakers? God is a God of peace; and the God of peace begets sons of peace. The peacemaker, therefore, manifests the Father's resemblance when he promotes peace. This gives him inner satisfaction and happiness even now.

But the greatest blessedness of the peacemaker is future. When Christ returns to gather His own servants to reckon with them, He will say to each true peacemaker among them, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit My kingdom of everlasting peace. You spent your life making peace with God. You gladly gave up your peace-destroying thoughts and filled your mind with the wisdom that is from above, that is pure, peaceable, gentle, and noble. Come, enjoy peace from the weariness of the battle against your lower nature; peace from the ravages of sorrow, sickness, pain, fatigue and death. Come, ye blessed peacemakers, for you have become the children of God." ●●

Reaching For the Stars

A New Year message from our pastor

FROM the time of his birth until the end of his earthly existence man is always reaching for something—first the milk bottle, then toys, food, books, sports, money, pleasure, position, power, popularity.

As he matures and develops, however, the intelligent man realizes increasingly his own insufficiency. He becomes conscious of a deep, consuming desire for something more than the material and the temporal. Sooner or later he comes to realize that all such things he has sought for (and may have obtained) will only crumble into dust and ashes.

Then, if the light of God's grace and truth has shined into his soul, he will heed the divine command to seek "the kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33), the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found," exhorted Isaiah. This is what all men ought to do; but instead, many are running away from God. Paul says, "There is none that seeketh after God." They "seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Rom. 3:11; Phil. 2:21).

An old divine used to exhort: "Reach for the stars—not for the mud!" This is not so foolish and unreasonable as might be thought at first glance. The prophet Daniel declared, "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" (Dan. 12:3). Was not that the great objective of the apostle Paul when he said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"? (Phil. 3:14).

Today a literal "reaching for the stars" is not idle speculation nor fanciful imagination. Man has already reached the moon; and sober scientists, serious-minded statesmen, energetic engineers and daring astronauts are working and planning with might and main to reach for the stars.

But even if we should be able to land a man on some near planet or star, only an infinitesimally small number of our race would be able to participate in such a costly venture. Furthermore, we might well ask: what benefit, either moral or spiritual, would he or anyone derive? Would a man

on another planet be any holier or closer to God than a man here on earth? Certainly not.

More than two thousand years ago God said, through His prophet Amos, "Though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down." And Obadiah says, "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." It is still true that God's way *up* is *down*, and the only way sinful man can draw near to the most high God is to humble himself in deep contrition and repentance and approach the throne of grace and mercy in full assurance of faith.

Destiny for Man

Man is a strange and wonderful creature. He is both animal and spirit, and his potential for both good and bad is startling. Pascal says that man is both "the glory and the shame of the universe." Made of the lowest dust, he has the potential to be made into the image of the most high God. Though we see man today, because of his own sin, living on the low level of carnality and materialism, let us remember that he was originally destined to live and walk in the high and holy ways of God. We boast of our common sense, of our down-to-earth practicality, while we are ignorant of the "wisdom that is from above," and blind to the greater realities of life and eternity, towards which we should strive.

In our national space program there have been some very costly failures and doubtless there will be many more. But the prodigious cost in money and materials and men and energy does not deter the steady progress of this great program. Is there not a parallel to this in our personal lives? Have not we also experienced some heart-rending failures as we have striven for greater perfection and true holiness in God? Have we not sometimes recoiled at the cost of discipleship, stumbled in our weakness and fallen far short of the divine goal and standard set before us? But if we can learn and profit by our failures and mistakes, they will not have been in vain. God can make them work together for our good. But spiritual desire must be without egotism, and for the glory of God alone.

Ambition without humility is dangerous, even fatal.

As we look up into the starlit heavens, we are awed by the mystery and the glory of the planets, stars and constellations. Astronomers tell us of burned-out stars, of "exploding stars" and of "shooting stars." Jude also speaks of "wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." They are stars that should shine, but they are out of orbit! We have the potential to shine, to reflect the glory of God, but too easily we disregard our spiritual opportunity. God, in His infinite mercy and love, has taken action to prevent us from being stars forever lost in an eternal night. He sent His Son, Jesus, to bring us to Himself, to deliver us from the gravitational downward pull of sinful propensities, and to fill us with that holy, heavenly light so that we may shine for His glory.

True believers in God have been drawn upward to their proper spiritual orbit around the Christ who states unequivocally: "I do always those things that please" my heavenly Father (John 8:29). He is our great High Priest who is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26). No wonder Christians love to sing and rejoice! The Lord has given us a new song, even praise to our God. With hope in our hearts, and Christ's example of a perfect life before our eyes we may not only "reach for the stars," but "sit together in heavenly places in Christ." That is far better than being on Venus or Mars or the Moon!

Dedication

The cost of our national space program is not reckoned simply in billions of dollars, in vast amounts of materials or in the energy of hundreds of thousands of people. The astronauts voluntarily accept the necessary rigorous training and strict discipline which often deprive them of the comforts of normal living. More than that, they know that they are risking their lives. But these intelligent, dedicated men and their families make no complaint about the great risks and sacrifices they face and endure. They consider it a high honor and privilege to be chosen for this great task. They are prepared to pay any price, run any risk and make any sacrifice to attain their objective.

Does not this dedication remind us of Paul? He testified, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse that I may win Christ." Does it not remind us of Christ's command to deny ourselves, take up our cross and fol-

low Him? Does it not remind us of Moses who chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season"; or the great company of faithful witnesses listed in Hebrews 11 who were "stoned, . . . sawn asunder, . . . tempted, . . . slain with the sword, . . . wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented"; "not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection"?

Salvation is not without cost. It took effort on God's part to raise up holy men of old and endow them with His Spirit that they might record His saving knowledge for us; and it took effort on the part of these dedicated men and women to answer His call and accomplish this great work in our behalf.

Jesus our great Example and Pattern did not merit the highest station as future King of the entire earth without effort; "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5:8). It cost Him the outpouring of His life blood: He said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, . . . no man taketh it from me, I lay it down of myself" (John 10:17-18). The life Jesus laid down was the freedom to think, speak and act as He naturally would have done. And this included His final act of obedience—His death on the Roman cross.

God has every right to require that we give full proof of our faith and love and loyalty and devotion to Christ. We do this by standing firm in the faith, by being obedient to His will and by suffering for His name's sake as God in His wisdom and grace permits.

Our Goal—the Stars!

Mere external conformity to religion is only vanity, self-delusion and hypocrisy. Jesus says, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (the very religious people of that day), ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20).

Some of the "stars" for which we are to strive are: "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (1 Tim. 6:11). These are some of the shining stars of our spiritual firmament which reflect the glory of the great Sun of Righteousness. The eternal beauty and reality of these spiritual stars must be communicated into our deepest souls, leading us on to a more perfect obedience to our Lord.

RIGHTEOUSNESS is one of the most important of these stars. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." "Let no man deceive you: he that doeth

(Continued on page 23)

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

Three Classes of Humanity

FROM the beginning of our record of mankind upon the earth there have been noticeable differences among men. There have been those who are classed as righteous, those that are exceedingly evil, and many more upon whom no judgment is passed. We read of righteous Abel who pleased the Lord with his offering, and wicked Cain whose offering was not accepted and who in anger slew his brother. At the same time people existed of whom we know nothing—except that they "dwelt in the land of Nod" and from them Cain chose a wife.

A righteous Noah preached to an unbelieving multitude, but only his wife, three sons and their wives were counted worthy to survive the deluge. We also learn of righteous Lot who, with his two faithful daughters, heeded the angels' warning and escaped the burning city while their intended husbands spurned the warning and perished.

So it has been through all ages. Men have separated themselves by their actions. In the Biblical allegory of the creation God is said to have divided the light from the darkness. The light represented those enlightened; the darkness, the unenlightened. There was to be a distinct separation between them. God has been in the dividing business ever since, separating between those who serve Him and those who serve Him not. He divides men as men divide themselves—by their own actions.

God does not see men with human eyes. Social standing, heredity, wealth or poverty do not weigh in God's scale of values. Rather, God judges men or classifies them according as they fit in relation to His eternal plans and purposes.

In the beginning of His working with mankind on the earth, God made a proposition to all men: Obey and live; disobey and die. He knew from the beginning that all humankind would not be interested in what He had to offer, yet it was open to all. Some listened and agreed, hence became covenant-makers.

We have alluded to three classes in our title. What we call the three classes include all humanity—all that have lived since God first turned His

attention toward the human race. We first identify them as covenant-makers and non-covenant-makers. Then in the final analysis the covenant-makers are divided into two groups, those who keep their covenant and those who fail to keep it. These two groups or classes, who we will identify as "faithful" and "unfaithful," plus the large masses of humanity who never knew God or made a covenant to serve Him, whom we identify as the "ungodly," compose the three classes of our title.

God is directly concerned with the covenant-makers, those who have heard and have learned of Him and have promised to serve Him. The third class, such as the inhabitants of the land of Nod, is composed of the many who live and die oblivious to God and His plan.

In this series we will discuss these three classes and how they relate to God's plan for the earth, following our outline:

- I. The Faithful Covenant-Makers
 - A. Who Is A Covenant-Maker?
 - B. Qualifications of the Covenant-Makers
 - C. Titles Given the Faithful Covenant-Makers
 - D. Rewards for the Faithful

Throughout the Scriptures the emphasis is upon the righteous, those whom we identify as the faithful covenant-makers. We find them promised blessings without measure and characterized by many endearing terms.

How did they gain such favored status? Were they predestined to be faithful? Was it a chance happening? Or did they of themselves do something to prove that they were worthy of such favored treatment? In this issue we will take up the subject of the faithful covenant-makers, showing who they are and by what means they are classed as faithful. Because they are to be judged according to God's standard, our only source of information is the Bible and to it we will go for our answers.

I. THE FAITHFUL COVENANT-MAKERS

In comparison to the great multitudes of humanity, but few have ever covenanted to serve

God. And of those who do covenant to serve Him, still fewer fulfill their obligations and earn the "Well done" of the Master in the end. The reason is obvious; God's standards are high and men do not naturally seek the things of God. The things of earth, the here and now, which men can more readily see than a reward afar off, are more appealing. Men prefer the praise and honor of other men above the praise of a Heavenly Father they have never seen.

A. Who Is a Covenant-Maker?

Is everyone that ever heard of God in heaven a covenant-maker? How can we determine who is under covenant and who is not?

A study of the Bible reveals that it is not by mere chance that an individual becomes a covenant-maker. Each one who is classed as a covenant-maker has exercised his or her own free will in choosing to enter the race for eternal life and by so doing has become subject to God's law.

When God first chose Israel He informed them of His plan: "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey..." (Deut. 11:26-28). The commandments had been given to Israel by God on Mt. Sinai and had been recorded in a book by Moses according to the instructions of God. "And he [Moses] took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Ex. 24:7).

Those who heard the words and agreed to do them became covenant-makers. This principle has continued in effect from the beginning, hence is applicable today. Only those who have heard and learned of God's plan and His requirements and have subsequently agreed to do what He commands can be classed as covenant-makers.

Being a covenant-maker does not of itself guarantee an entrance into the Kingdom of God. Not all prove true to their covenant, hence the division of the covenant-makers into faithful and unfaithful.

B. Qualifications of the Faithful

God's major concern is with the covenant-makers, those who have heard His call and have promised to serve Him. Of those who promise, only a small percentage live up to their vow. For this reason the faithful constitute the smallest of the three classes, nevertheless the Scriptures abound with information concerning them.

God set the standard for the faithful in the

words spoken to Abraham: "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). At the time Jesus began His ministry the standard had not changed and in the familiar Sermon on the Mount He reiterated the Old Testament standard: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). Still later Peter voiced the same imperative: "Be ye holy; for I am holy," quoting the words Moses had received from God (I Pet. 1:16; Lev. 11:44).

God's standard is and ever has been perfection of character. When His kingdom has been established no evil will be allowed in any of its inhabitants. Thus those who aspire to be a part of that Kingdom must remove all taint of sin from their lives. The faithful are those who have done this, who have lived up to this standard of perfection, adding the Christian graces until their character is above reproach.

We will list some of the qualifications of the faithful covenant-makers:

1. They are overcomers. To overcome is defined as "to get the better of in any conflict or struggle; to defeat; to conquer." The overcomers have won the battle against sin and evil, they have conquered their natural inclination to evil. In Jesus' last message to mankind we find much promised to the "overcomers." "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God"; "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death [penal death]"; "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations"; "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 2:7, 11, 26; 3:21).

2. They are "holy and without blemish." To be holy is "to be completely devoted to the service of God." Those who earn this appellation are in other words, perfect. They have heeded the words of the writer to the Hebrews: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," and the counsel of the apostle Peter to be "diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (Heb. 12:14; II Pet. 3:14).

The great apostle Paul gave further instructions concerning holiness: holiness is perfected by cleansing "ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh" (II Cor. 7:1), "with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:27). Paul was instructed by Jesus Himself who earlier said, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).

Holiness is not perfected without conscious effort; there is nothing miraculous about it. One who attains the standard has applied all his mind, might and strength, taking up his cross daily to follow the Master.

3. They are "doers" of the word. To be a "doer" is to do what the Word says, **DO**. James commands: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only. . . . Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (Jas. 1:22; 2:17). **To be a doer of the word is to keep the commandments, to obey in all things.**

4. They are "without fault." This is just another way of saying that the faithful have attained perfection, for to be without fault is to be perfect.

John the Revelator saw in vision those judged faithful and described them as those who "follow the Lamb [Christ] whithersoever he goeth. . . . And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God" (Rev. 14: 4-5). More than the keeping of the Ten Commandment law is required to meet this standard. It requires "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5).

To reach the point where we can be said to be "without fault" will require the use of the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:13), "taking the shield of faith . . . for without faith it is impossible to please [God]" (Eph. 6:16; Heb. 11:6), and "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," which is "quick, and powerful, . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12).

This will require diligent effort on the part of the covenant-maker. "Glory and honour and immortality, eternal life" are for "patient continuance in well doing" (Rom. 2:7).

5. They have added the Christian graces. Peter gave detailed instructions about forming a Christian character. We refer to these particular verses as the "additions." "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. . . . give diligence to make your calling and election sure: . . . For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1: 5-7, 10-11).

The covenant-maker who makes the necessary additions to his character is assured an entrance into the Kingdom. Only through diligent effort does one become faithful.

C. Titles Given to the Faithful

God's high regard and respect for those who keep His commandments is evident from the many titles given the faithful throughout the Scriptures. It is because of His love for the righteous that He has endured the wickedness of the wicked. It was written in the time of the kings that "the Lord would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and as he promised to give a light to him and to his sons for ever" (II Chron. 21:7).

1. **Old Testament titles.** There are many of these, hence we will not give them all. Often these endearing terms are associated with obedience.

a. **A peculiar treasure.** At the time the commandments were first given to Israel, God said through Moses, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people" (Ex. 19:5). This same term is also found in Psalm 135:4; and in Malachi those who hearkened and feared the Lord are referred to as "jewels," which is given as "special treasure" in a marginal rendering.

b. **A special people.** Again speaking through Moses God speaks of His people as "a special people," not "more in number than any people," but "the fewest of all people" (Deut. 7:6-7).

c. **Israel, God's chosen.** The term "Israel" is often used as representing God's chosen ones and not the nation of Israel. Speaking of spiritual Israel Paul said, "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6). The true Israel whom God has chosen are the faithful, and of these God says, "I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory" (Isa. 46:13).

d. **The redeemed, or ransomed.** Again speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God describes His chosen as both ransomed and redeemed. Isaiah 35:10 and 51:11 are almost identical in context with one exception, the former speaks of them as "the ransomed of the Lord" and the latter "the redeemed of the Lord."

e. **The city of the Lord.** God's people are sometimes described as a "city," meaning a group of people assembled together. Speaking prophetically, Isaiah said, "They shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. . . . And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken" (Isa. 60:14; 62:12).

Other Old Testament titles include "a handful of corn," "A few berries," "cedars of Lebanon," "trees of the Lord," "saints, sanctified ones," and "mine elect."

2. New Testament Titles. Titles showing God's esteem for the faithful are as numerous in the New Testament as in the Old. We will review a few.

a. Wheat. This testimony precedes the ministry of Jesus. John the Baptist was telling his disciples about the Great Teacher who was to follow when he said, "And he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:12). The separation of the wheat from the tares, i. e., the righteous from the wicked, will take place at the Judgment following Christ's second coming.

b. Sheep. The faithful covenant-makers are frequently referred to as "sheep"; and the Kingdom, the abode of the faithful, is figuratively spoken of as the "sheepfold" (John 10:1). Jesus, the future Ruler of the Kingdom, is pictured as the "Shepherd of the sheep." The sheep, the faithful, listen only to the voice of the Shepherd and follow Him.

c. Elect. The faithful are called the "elect" in both the Old and New Testaments. Isaiah speaks of "mountains" which "mine elect shall inherit," (65:9), the abode of the faithful. "Mountains" as here used and as often used in the Scriptures, has reference to places of power and authority.

The apostle John addressed his Second Epistle to this special group of loyal followers, whom he called "elect": "The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever. . . . I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth" (II John 1-2, 4). For the sake of the "elect," the long night of the apostasy from true religion was "shortened" (Matt. 24:22).

d. The wife or bride. The uniting of Christ and the faithful is described as a wedding with Christ as the Bridegroom and the faithful Church as His wife, or bride. The wife is described as "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white," the "robe of righteousness" of Isaiah 61:10, a robe the faithful bride has prepared for herself (Rev. 19:7-8).

e. Kings and priests. In the book of Revelation the chosen faithful ones are depicted as "kings and priests" unto God who "shall reign on the earth" (5:10), and again in Rev. 20:6 they are referred to as "priests of God and of Christ." The apostle Peter also used "a royal priesthood" in his First Epistle when describing the faithful believers.

f. Other titles. There are many titles given the faithful in the New Testament. Among these are others contained in the First Epistle of Peter mentioned above: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, . . . a

chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (I Pet. 2:5, 9). All these titles identify the faithful as people set apart from the rank and file.

Other titles include the "holy city," the "new Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:2), which pictures the meeting of Christ and the Church.

D. Rewards for the Faithful

Those who are judged faithful at the Great Assize at the return of Christ need have no fear for the future. God is a just Paymaster; He will do exactly as He has agreed. Everyone will be rewarded according to his works. "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." These words were spoken through the prophet Jeremiah (17:10) several centuries before Christ, but the principle still stands. The standards of men may change, but God says, "I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal. 3:6).

Jesus taught the same through the parable of the Laborers in the vineyard. The farmer is pictured as hiring laborers at different hours of the day and saying unto them, "Whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." At the close of the day all who were hired received a "penny." God does not give equal pay for unequal work. Rather, the penny is representative of the reward, which will be according to every man's work.

God's plan of reward is likewise made clear in other texts. It was well stated by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). Again, in his Epistle to the Galatians the standard is the same: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," (Gal. 6:7), and to the brethren in Rome he was teaching the same principle: "Who will render to every man according to his deeds . . . for there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2:6, 11).

To be a messenger you must know the message.

TEST YOURSELF

1. What are the three classes of humanity?
2. Every covenant-maker will belong to which class or classes?

Reprints of these studies are available upon request.

ISRAEL

Yesterday

Today

Tomorrow

Promises Fulfilled

THE years that followed saw the fulfillment of many of the promises God had made to the patriarchs. A great nation did come from Abraham. God had promised, "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth" (Gen. 13:16), "as the sand of the sea" (Gen. 32:12), "as the stars of heaven" (Gen. 15:5). Abraham's seed, through a unique sequence of circumstances, found themselves in the land of Egypt, where they "increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them" (Ex. 1:7). During the years of their wandering in the wilderness, a non-Israelite could exclaim, "Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" (Num. 23:10; see also Deut. 1:10; 10:22; 26:5).

God blessed Abraham. He gave him great riches (Gen. 13:2, 5), victory in war (Gen. 14:19), and a definite status (Gen. 24:1, 35). His name became great—the Hittites at Hebron called him a "prince of God among us" (Gen. 23:6), and his fame increased henceforward.

God gave to Abraham's seed the land of Canaan; this promise is specifically referred to as having been fulfilled in Joshua 21:43-44.

But the fulfillments of the promises to Abraham were not total at that time. Some prom-

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

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

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

ises involved blessings "everlasting" in duration upon people from every nation. Such promises could not be realized during the period of man's jurisdiction upon earth; nothing of the present cosmos could ever be termed "everlasting," nor could "all families of the earth" be included. The fulfillment of these promises is yet future (and will be discussed later).

A Second Covenant

God had selected a people to whom He purposed to give special opportunity—He was seeking soil in which the seed of His kingdom might develop. But the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob were slaves in a foreign land—in Egypt.

At this juncture God sent Moses to deliver them. And soon after they left Egypt and en-

tered the wilderness, God gave them His laws and a covenant, under which He promised to work with them as a nation and bless them as they were faithful to Him. This is sometimes called the Sinai Law and Covenant.

This second covenant is stated in Exodus 19:5-6: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."

The benefits of this covenant and law concerned the temporal prosperity and well-being of Israel as a people and a nation. But all are conditioned upon the inescapable IF. "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant." There was to be no special blessing except through the avenue of obedience.

Moses in his parting message to Israel enumerated the manifold blessings which God would shower upon them as a nation IF they remained loyal (Deut. 28:1-4). He listed also the curses that should befall them IF they disobeyed (Deut. 28:15-68).

Delivered from Egypt and established in the land of Canaan, Israel became a nation of prominence. To be like the nations around them, Israel desired a king; and God granted their request. Shortly, however, ten of the twelve tribes broke away to form a second kingdom,

called the kingdom of Israel; the two tribes took the name of Judah.

The two kingdoms existed in their divided state for more than three centuries. But the conduct of the Israelite people during these years was far from salutary. To warn the people of their transgression and its dire consequences, and to remind them of the conditions of His covenant with them, God sent prophets. Solemnly He affirmed that if they would repent and turn to Him they would be restored to their favored position; if they persisted in their evil, they would suffer. The lesson through the prophet Jeremiah is typical. God sent Jeremiah to observe a potter at work, and the prophet recorded his experiences.

"Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them" (Jer. 18:3-10).

Here is the inescapable IF. God's action toward Israel depended entirely on Israel's faithfulness as a nation in keeping their covenant with Him. The high honor which Israel might have enjoyed as God's special nation depended entirely on their obedience to Him. And God reserved the right to change His arrangements at any time He should decide that they did not meet the qualifications. How could the Almighty deal otherwise with His human creatures according to the terms of His covenant?

Israel as a nation enjoyed unparalleled opportunity. But did these natural descendants of Abraham under test prove worthy of the exalted position God had offered them?

There were times when the nation, under the leadership of faithful judges and kings, served the true God with a high degree of devotion. But generally speaking, the record was one continuous account of evil, unfaithfulness and idolatry. Only three kings had filled their terms of government when ten of the tribes revolted and separated themselves

from the two which remained under Solomon's sons. And the two independent kingdoms followed a similar course into the depths of evil, so little did they esteem the God who had founded their nation.

Finally the Lord declared that "the day is come, when iniquity shall have an end." The Lord allowed the kingdoms, first Israel and later, Judah, to be destroyed, and their people taken into captivity. Concerning the captivity of Israel we read the one cause: "And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, . . . because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them" (II Kings 18:11-12).

Here is the record of Israel's failure to obey God's law. They had broken the covenant which God through Moses had given them. He had promised to perpetuate them, and to make them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation—IF. But they had failed to qualify, hence the covenant with these natural descendants of Abraham terminated; they lost the inheritance God had promised them.

The kingdom of Judah (composed of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin) held together for a short while after the fall of Israel, but finally they were taken captive when Nebuchadnezzar in 606 B. C. completed his conquest of the Holy Land, destroyed Jerusalem, and took the king Zedekiah and the people captive to Babylon. Of Zedekiah the prophet Ezekiel declared, "And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end. . . . Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: . . . it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him" (Ezek. 21:25-27). Note the finality of this statement: "*It shall be no more, until he comes whose right it is; and I will give it him.*" The kingdom had failed, and emblems of authority were removed. They had alienated themselves from all association with the royal promise. Through their unfaithfulness they had brought upon themselves the curse of God; and as a nation under God's direction, they perished forever.

In due time the period of captivity ended, however, and God permitted those who wished to return and rebuild their homeland. Many did return, but never again did Israel regain prominence and glory as a respected nation.

With the first advent of the Messiah, God extended further opportunity to any of the Jewish people who would submit to His authority and recognize Him as the Son of God and the hope of Israel. God would not allow any to perish who

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Meditations

On the Word

LOOKING out upon a world where evil seems to have grown to unsolvable proportions, where tensions and strifes are the constant lot of all, whether nations or individuals, where men's hearts faint at the task of ironing out the innumerable impossible situations which man's disobedience to divine Law has brought upon the world, it would be easy to be a pessimist. It would be easy to go and sit under a juniper tree and, like the good prophet Elijah, conclude that since the whole wide world is evil we might as well give up.

The Psalmist was almost at this point, but above all the tangled affairs of the world, beyond all the difficulties and sorrows of his personal life, he glimpsed one sure and certain fact: God is good. On this we too may lay hold with confidence. In a world where evil seems always on the throne, God is good; in a world where hate predominates, God is love. His goodness shines above all earth's dim shadows with power to revive the most fainting heart.

Good men have always suffered mental agonies while beholding the filthy conduct of the wicked and have felt their helplessness to correct the condition, just as we feel inadequate for the task today. But like David, we cannot faint when we realize and believe that God is good. No amount of evil in the world can change that fact. David was therefore able to encourage others, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land and verily thou shalt be fed" (Ps. 37:1-3). His reasoning was simple and always timely: God is good; you also do good

"I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living"
—Psalm 27:13.

and all will be well.

This was Jesus' philosophy. His life was regulated by the sublime confidence that God is a Father, full of love and com-

passion for His creatures. With this assurance He faced the unbelief and hatred of His own people, those who should have received Him joyfully, not only believing but knowing that all the cup which the Father bid Him drink was for good.

It was His vision of the goodness of the Lord that enabled Him to imitate that goodness so perfectly. And so with us. The more perfectly we believe to see the goodness of the Lord the more perfectly we respond to that goodness. The goodness of God leads men to recognize and regret their own lack of goodness; it inspires them with the desire to be good as God is good.

You cannot force righteousness into a man's heart. All the laws in the world cannot make a man good. He may conform to the demands of the law outwardly, but no power can make him righteous inwardly unless he himself *wants* to be. God's goodness is the only power which can cause us to want to be good (Rom. 2:4). It lights the spark of desire and hunger without which true righteousness is impossible.

You cannot push, pull nor drive men into the Kingdom; they must be drawn. The goodness of the Lord is the attracting force. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31:3).

Like begets like. God knew this fact as well as we, and He sent His Son as an example to show us what true goodness is. As a result, His virtue has drawn others to follow in His steps. His love for

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CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

MANY years ago, the apostle Paul was a prisoner in the city of Rome; and a soldier was always guarding him.

The soldiers of that day were very different from soldiers today. They wore armor because battles were fought with spears and burning darts which were thrown at the enemy. The fighting was done by the soldiers who were opposing each other fighting close together, or man to man. In order to protect themselves, each soldier wore a suit of armor which protected him from head to foot. The armor consisted of a girdle about the loins, a breastplate, a helmet, sandals, sword and shield.

Without a doubt, the soldiers who guarded Paul were clad in their armor. Perhaps Paul glanced up at the soldier near him when he was writing his letter to the Ephesian brethren. Noting the armor which covered the soldier, he drew a mental picture of a spiritual soldier. "Yes," he thought, "a spiritual soldier must be clad in spiritual armor to gain a victory over his spiritual enemies." So Paul went on to describe the armor every true soldier of God must wear.

The Girdle of Truth

We will begin a study of a Christian's armor, and I think we can learn many lessons from the few verses which Paul wrote, as recorded in Ephesians 6. We will study the girdle of truth first, as it is the first piece of armor mentioned. It is fastened around the waist and protects the thighs.

The dictionary gives some of the definitions of *truth* as, "fidelity to a standard, honest, just, consistent, truthful." As Christian soldiers we must possess these characteristics. We must have fidelity



The Roman soldier's loin girdle

to the standard of God's Word. We must believe that His Word is true and faithful and that God will do exactly as He has said.

But the girdle takes in much more than this. We must be honest and truthful in our everyday life and in everything we say and do. We must be known as honest persons by our friends and those with whom we associate daily. People must be able to trust us in everything and under every circumstance. Absolute honesty and truthfulness is the only thing acceptable to God.

This is not an easy task because many people we have dealings with or are surrounded by feel that there is nothing wrong with telling a "little white lie" sometimes. But is that being really truthful? No! If we let *any* dishonesty come into our lives in *any* way we are not putting on the girdle of truth that every Christian must wear.

It is so easy to be just a little bit dishonest, but this will keep us from being a true soldier of God. It should be the height of our ambition to fight against the foes of sin and evil within ourselves. This warfare is a glorious warfare. Up, then, Christian soldiers, gird your loins with truth. Be prepared to put on the other pieces of the Christian armor that you may be ready to fight the enemy when he advances. And he will surely advance. Be prepared when the attack comes. ●●



"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

"Put on the whole armour of God...that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

"Above all, taking the shield of faith,...and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6: 10-17).

Showers of Blessings

The Blessing of Parents

CHILDREN, I am sure that you have all stood at the window watching the rain come down, pit-a-pit, pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat. Maybe sometimes you have been very disappointed to see the big drops come down so fast when you wanted to go outside to play. Has Mother told you that the trees and beautiful flowers would not grow if God did not send the rain? The fruits and vegetables that we like to eat would not grow either. The rain makes things beautiful and fresh and green. We should thank God for sending the rain to us.

There is another kind of rain that God sends to us, too. Perhaps you have never heard of "Showers of Blessings." The raindrops of these "Showers of Blessings" are all the good things God has given us. Let us talk today about *parents*. Parents are one of the biggest drops of blessing that fall on children. Think how many things your daddy and mommy do for you.

Mommy works hard to cook the food, wash the clothes, keep the house nice and clean and to take care of all the little things you need her for. She makes the beds, washes the dishes and is always there to take care of you and comfort you when you are sick, or when you fall down and hurt yourself.

And what does your daddy do? Your daddy works hard too, on the farm or in an office or factory to earn money to buy the food and your new clothes, to pay the doctor when you are sick and buy new things when your family needs them. Daddies also mow the grass on the lawn and shovel the snow and do lots of other things, too.

Of course, you children can help your mommy and daddy a great deal by doing small jobs and running errands, and I am sure you know that it makes your parents very happy when you obey them. Did you know the Bible says, "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord"? This verse is found in Colossians 3:20. If you don't already know it, why don't you learn it to help you remember to do what your parents tell you to do.

Yes, children, your parents are one of your many blessings. Have you ever thanked God for your



mommy and daddy? If not, why don't you thank Him the next time you pray, and ask Him to bless Mommy and Daddy, too. ●●

"Behold, A Beam..."

(Continued from page 8)

what he needs to lift him out of his despair.

After the plank is removed from your own eye, said Jesus, "you can see clearly enough to remove your brother's speck of dust." Without that plank of spiritual pride in our own eye, our brother's sins will not loom nearly so large—they may disappear entirely. We must remember always to judge our brother with tolerance and ourselves with rigor.

Someone once said, "Spiritual high temper toward others is usually a sign of spiritual low temperature in ourselves." Let us be sure that we always keep our spiritual temperature high and aim our criticism at *our own* weaknesses, living a life that is above reproach, a life that shall of itself be a light by which others may see to walk and judge themselves. ●●

Meditations on the Word

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us begets a responsive love for Him. "We love him, because he first loved us" (I John 4:19).

The early church was filled with this belief in the goodness of the Lord. They were overwhelmed and overflowing with the story of God's goodness to them. They were filled with wonderment at the great love with which God loved them even when they were dead in sins (Eph. 2:4-5). Realizing they had done nothing to deserve such love, they were eager and ready to show their appreciation by living up to His expectations of them. They hastened to put away the things which were an offense to His love and to extend to others the mercy and goodness which had been lavished upon them. They reasoned thus: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" and "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (I John 4:11; 3:16). And they went out and did that very thing.

Christ, the good Samaritan, found them perishing and helpless in the ditch of iniquity and He was not repulsed by their loathsome condition, as were the priest and the Levite, but rescued them from their plight and gave them healing. They felt impelled to go and do likewise. God offered them great and precious rewards, to which they responded, "Having therefore these promises dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Cor. 7:1). They wanted to be holy because God is holy; His holiness stimulated in their hearts the desire to be like Him.

When men believe to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, they are enabled to do things which were impossible before. The spirit of love begets a heartfelt obedience which the cold and unyielding demands of mere law could never produce. The apostle Paul is a good example of this fact. When by the goodness of God his eyes were opened to see that goodness, it produced entirely a different sort of person than the old Saul who, as touching the Law, was blameless. God's goodness to him placed upon him such a weight of debt and gratitude that it could be relieved only by lifelong consecration.

Experiencing the forgiveness of God, we are obligated to forgive those who trespass against us. As God had pity on us, we must have compassion on others (Matt. 18:33-35). Knowing what endless patience the Father has exercised in dealing with

us, gives us an incentive to show patience with each other. In short, because God is good it is easier for us to practice goodness also. Those who do not believe to see His goodness are helpless to accomplish any goodness of their own, but with the vision of His perfection before us and knowing that He has placed every advantage in our path, we find new power to battle with our own imperfections and new strength to copy His pattern. ●

ISRAEL

(Continued from page 18)

might prove themselves workable material. Jesus "came unto his own"—His own people, His fleshly kin, the descendants of Israel; but "his own received him not." In their final opportunity, they failed. Just a few days before His crucifixion, Jesus, weeping over the city, said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:37-38).

Their "house," their right to rulership which had been vested in the ruling family of Israel, was left desolate and without an heir. They had had the promise of divine blessing, but the promise was conditional upon their obedience. And they had not obeyed. Now they had rejected Him who was to be the future King. And so the Lord cast them off.

Their Rejection Prophesied

Even before this, Jesus had prophesied what would happen. He had told them that because of their unfaithfulness, the kingdom would be taken from them and given to a nation "bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). God wanted a nation which would bring forth the fruits of obedience and become the *faithful* seed of Abraham; but they did not qualify.

The prophet Jeremiah had also foreseen the termination of the covenant with Israel as a nation. Speaking for the Lord, he tells of the "covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord" (Jer. 31:32). The covenant *was* broken, and its promises became void.

The final demonstration of the end of the Law and Covenant with natural Israel was the rending

of the veil of the temple at the death of Christ. This one divine act showed beyond any question that the end of the system had come. The period of special opportunity for natural Israel had *ended*; henceforth all were to serve God on an equal basis, whether Jew or Gentile; neither was superior by right of birth.

In A. D. 70 the last of the prophecy concerning the end of Israel was fulfilled, when the city of Jerusalem fell and the Israelites dispersed throughout all nations. ●●

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

Reaching for the Stars

(Continued from page 12)

righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." Righteousness and holiness are basic elements in the character and nature of God. He also requires perfect righteousness and holiness in all His people. We are prone to excuse ourselves for our sins, failures and carnality. God does not! Behold the star—righteousness set before us in the example of Jesus Christ! Follow it, pursue it, copy it! And then go on to make it real and practical in your life.

GODLINESS is another spiritual star we are commanded to strive to reach. Godliness is far more than mere religiosity. It implies a holy reverence and love for God, a willing disposition to do all His bidding. It also implies a proper relationship with our brothers in Christ and with all our fellowmen. Godliness does not mean a holier-than-thou attitude, but rather Christlike compassion, unquestionable integrity and charitable understanding, even towards those who may be antagonistic.

The star of FAITH is vital to all Christian living. This faith is not a manufactured, synthetic product, not a synthesis of human opinion, not the product of a happy optimism or a reasonable hypothesis. It is the God-given faith of the Son of God, based upon the eternal, immutable Word which cannot be broken or bound. This faith enables us to approach to the very throne of God. It makes Christ present and real, although still invisible to the natural eyes. It produces victory over sin and over the world. It is a faith coupled with works. No wonder God tells us to "follow after . . . faith," and that "without faith it is impossible to please him" (I Tim. 6:11; Heb. 11:6).

The star of LOVE is one of the brightest stars in the spiritual firmament. God loves the world of

believers with a pure, holy, infinite, compassionate love. He expects us to love Him with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength. But do we? How often we have failed in this matter and so sinned against God. This love is not the erotic, fickle emotion that the world calls love. It is that strong, holy, compassionate and wise outpouring of the heart that brings life and blessing, joy and peace.

Finally, the star of HOPE. "Hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. . . . And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope" (Heb. 6:19, 21). Paul speaks of the hope laid up for us in heaven, also of "the hope of glory" being "in us" (Col. 1:5, 27). This hope speaks to us about the return of our Lord from heaven. Hope assures us that all the promises of God are absolutely true, and though "weeping may endure for a night" the day shall surely come "when he shall appear," and if we have purified ourselves even as He is pure, "we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:3, 2).

The days of our probation are passing. Each moment as it passes brings us one minute nearer the time when as covenant-makers we shall have to appear before the Judgment seat of Christ to give an account for what we have done or left undone. The shades of the evening are stretched out. Nightfall, the close of the day of salvation, will soon be upon us, a night in which we can no longer work. The year we are just entering could well bring the termination of Gentile times and the appearance of our Lord from heaven. What are our prospects of acceptance in that great Day? Are we all absorbed with our sublime hope of meeting our King with joy? Can we reasonably hope that that day will be to us a day of unspeakable bliss? Do we set our affections on things above and keep them fixed there?

Let us be up and doing for the sun is in the sky; let us be up and doing for the coming of the Lord draws nigh.

God never intended that His redeemed people should grovel on the earth and then vanish forever, but rather that they should live and reign with Christ through eternity. Therefore let us look up, and "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Let us reach for the stars! ●●

People who stretch the truth often find that it snaps back and hits them.



The Old Must Die

When I check out a religion to see if it is in accord with the Bible, I tend to be exact, according to Scripture.

However, I must truthfully admit that out of all the religions I have checked out, you are the only ones that really stand upon the Bible. Not many people want to talk about Jesus today, and I truly treasure more than gold or any earthly riches the opportunity and privilege to study God's Word.

I've decided to get down to business and start really over-coming. I've stopped smoking. It has been two months now, and I can study better, and I feel great just knowing I've been able to overcome this habit, for I felt guilty when I did smoke. I felt something wasn't right. I thank God I have overcome this. Also, I watch TV a whole lot less, and study the Bible a whole lot more. And I am learning not to listen to jokes among the people I work with. I would rather associate with people who love the Bible and use their mouth for the glory of God.

I want the old nature to die; I want the new man to live unto God.

Southbridge, Massachusetts

C. R.

Perfection Means Work

The world at large believe that God's mercy is the salvation of all, regardless of character. What a deception this is, as this does not have the people develop their character to be worthy of God's mercy. Good things never come easy, and this could well apply to obtaining eternal life.

What could be more plain than Psalm 103:17—His mercy is extended to those who "fear" Him. What a just God we have.

Whether we learn to speak or type or whatever, it must be practiced to perfection. Why then should we exclude Christian principles and the way of life? When Jesus said, "Be ye therefore perfect," He meant just that. He did not say, Do the best you can, and all will be well. Some of our "best" could be very poor. To be perfect is something like saying, You must be 100%; and if we strive for that, even then we will stumble; but Christ attained it and He is our Advocate, our Mediator and Intercessor, and He knows the limit of our strength.

To attain perfection, we cannot have a spot, wrinkle or blemish of any sin. To work up anger once a year, or speak a filthy word once in several months only suggests that we have not yet reached that 100% perfection. We can be right *most* of the way, but still not *all* the way.

Truly God's mercy is still extended to us, that we may strive for that perfection all the way.

Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada

J. G.

More Pressure

We are very forgetful naturally and need to be reminded of what the Lord requires of us to be worthy of His mercy and protection in that great Day of the Lord when He will come out of His place to punish the inhabitants of this world for their iniquity.

How very thankful we should be that our merciful Father has seen fit to reveal how we can make ourselves worthy of His great promises. It is all very plain that we have a great work to do, to put off this old man of ours and live a new and better life. Yes, this old man is always with us, our old carnal mind, so we have to watch our thoughts, words and desires, keep awake and put more pressure into our effort to conquer self.

Brother Paul tells us to be strong in the Lord and to remember that our labor will not be in vain in the Lord. If we desire a full reward our service has to be 100%, fully pleasing to Him who hath called us out of darkness.

Vernon, B. C., Canada

Z. S.

Opportunity in Action

Every day I see so many little things to help build my character and *try* to hold my tongue. I have one lady to work with who is a kind of shirker (which I feel is not right), but I have to control myself and think of that verse, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings," and "In everything you do stay away from complaining and arguing." So everything is happening for my growth, to watch and meditate and not let a little insignificant thing get the better of me. One can't realize how selfish and complaining he is and always eager to blame the other person until he takes a good hard look at himself. As one of our ministers once said, if you were offered a hundred dollars if you did not lose your patience for a week, you could do it.

Winterset, Iowa

F. B.

First Things First

We should hold earthly things loosely, because they are ours for a very short time only. Perhaps tomorrow or even today our life could end and then why and for whom did we hold earthly things so dearly?

There is another prize far more valuable than anything we have here on earth—it is the prize God has offered us. And we should always keep it in sight and not let our daily work crowd it out. This life is so short and so full of heart-aches, pain and disappointments. It really makes one wonder why we work as hard as we do in our daily lives!

It really is not worth it, when you think about it. Of course, it is good to be able to work and be useful in this world; that is what we are supposed to do. But always we have to be on guard and make sure first things come first.

Ayr, Ontario, Canada

H.H.

Continue Faithfully

Nothing can even compare with what God has in store for those who serve Him always. So may we continue faithfully to the end. We can be Armageddon survivors; surely it is worth our every effort, as we put away every way of our own. Our watchword till that glorious Day dawns should be, "Thy way, O Lord, not mine."

Crewe, Cheshire, England

N. T.

Looking Ahead

I look forward to the time when the inhabitants of the land can go with the freedom of the wind. That will be a sure way of traveling, and safe, too. But as yet we will have to look to ourselves, that we lose not the things which we have wrought and so disqualify to inherit that promise.

Fort Plain, New York

V. V.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"In the August, 1972 issue of the *Megiddo Message* on page 15, I found the following: 'Jesus is called the "mighty God" in Isaiah 9:6. This appears to be a mis-translation, since newer versions use such phrases as "Father for all time" ("Father of a wide realm," margin), obviously referring to His future kingdom.'

"I must call this mistake made here to your attention. Please check again. I am sure you will find no reputable translation rendering 'Mighty God' as 'Father for all time.' Some translations do, however, translate 'Everlasting Father' as 'Father for all time,' or 'Father of eternity.'

"If there is any Bible translation that has 'Father for all time' instead of 'Mighty God,' I would be most interested in knowing about it."

You are correct. We know of no translation which renders "Mighty God" as "Father for all time," and we were mistaken in associating the two phrases. The "Father for all time" is, as you suggest, the appropriate rendering for "Everlasting Father," not for "Mighty God."

"All accepted Hebrew texts of Isaiah 9:6 have the word *el gibbor*, which is correctly rendered into English as 'Mighty God' (*el* is God; *gibbor* is Mighty). The 'son' in this prophecy, who would be called 'Mighty God' is none other than Jehovah God, as can be seen contextually by the use of *el gibbor* in Isaiah 10:20-21 (the very next chapter) as well as by its appearance in other passages of the Old Testament—Deuteronomy 10:17; Jeremiah 32:18; Nehemiah 9:32."

The term "Mighty God" as used in Isaiah 10:20-21 does apply to Jehovah, according to its context. The verse reads: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord. . . . The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the Mighty God." But because the same term is used to describe the "son" in the prophecy of Isaiah 9:6 does not prove that Jesus was Jehovah.

Jesus, being the Son of God, bore the Father's name, according to the word of the angel at the time of His birth: "...thou shalt call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23). But just as sons of men who bear their father's name are not the same individual as their father, so Christ was not God.

He was the *Son* of God. He was not the Father, for according to His own testimony they were two distinct individuals, two witnesses to the same truth, His Father being always the greater (John 14:28; 8:17-18).

Because Jesus was called *gibbor*, or "mighty," and because God is also called *gibbor* meaning "mighty" is no evidence that Jesus was God Almighty. Nor is it evidence that Jesus and God are part of the same divine essence. The same word *gibbor* is translated "mighty" 139 times in the Old Testament, and in a majority of these it describes persons other than God. Nimrod was a mighty (*gibbor*) hunter before the Lord (Gen. 10:9). All the men of Gideon were mighty (*gibbor*) (Josh. 10:2). Boaz was a mighty (*gibbor*) man of wealth (Ruth 2:1). David was a mighty (*gibbor*) and valiant man (I Sam. 16:18). Naaman was also a mighty (*gibbor*) man in valour (II Kings 5:1). The term is even used to describe the mighty foes which the Lord subdues (Ezek. 39:18; Amos 2:12-14). The term has no exclusive application to the Deity.

Jesus is destined to be the Mighty Sovereign of the new government which "shall be upon his shoulder," as prophesied in Isaiah 9:6-7. In Him will be vested supreme authority as pertaining to that realm. But this does not suggest that He will be, or ever was, the Mighty God Jehovah. ••

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

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD

THE GREAT APOSTASY

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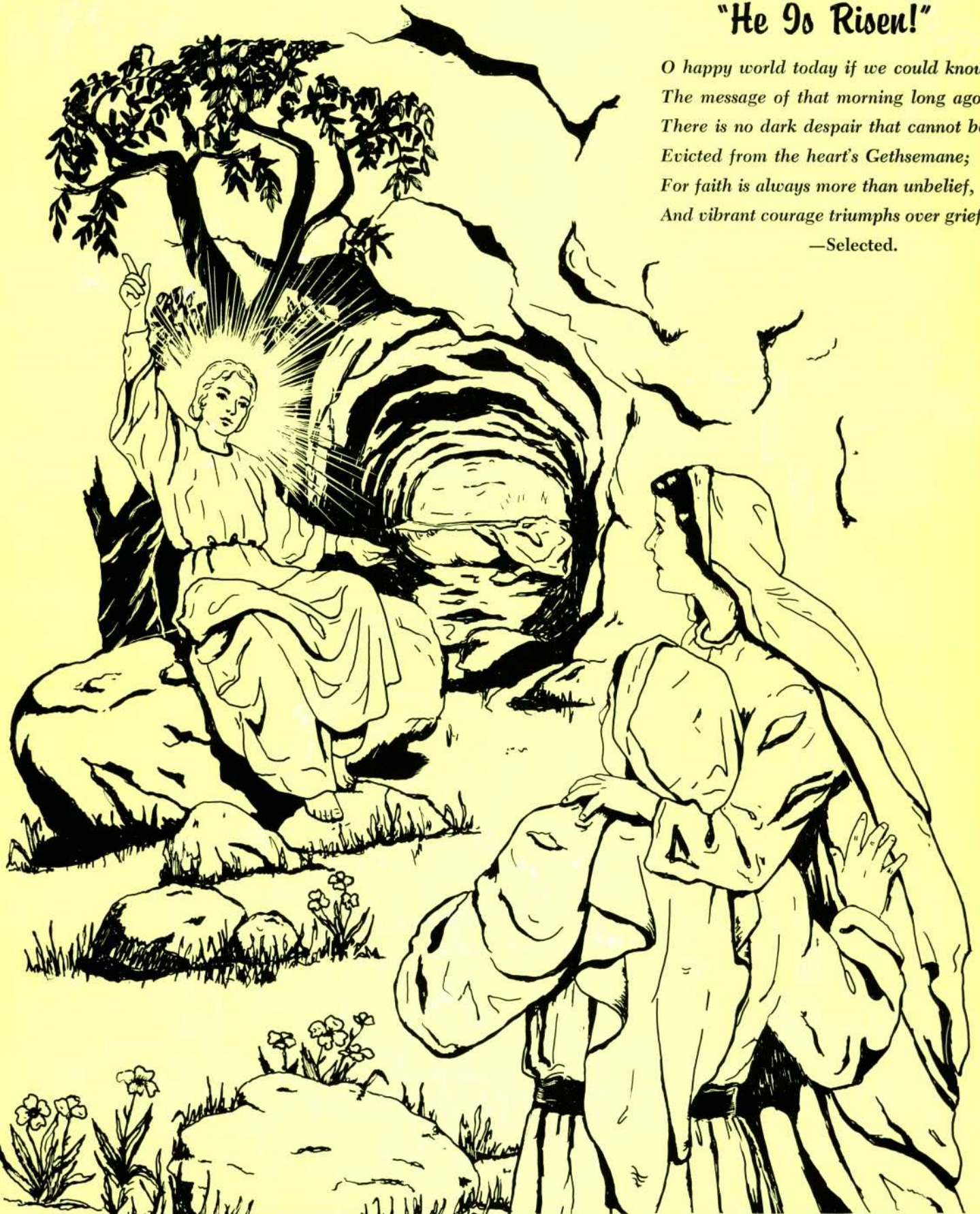
THE TRINITY

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"He Is Risen!"

*O happy world today if we could know
The message of that morning long ago!
There is no dark despair that cannot be
Evicted from the heart's Gethsemane;
For faith is always more than unbelief,
And vibrant courage triumphs over grief.*

—Selected.





"Behold, I Come as a Thief--"

*Oh, hark to the word of His warning,
He cometh, the Star of the morning
That heralds the light of the sun;
Far spent is the night of our sorrow,
New comfort, new hope, let us borrow;
For soon, on the glorious morrow
The great voice shall say: "It is done."*

*"Behold, I come as a thief—"
And ere the dull world shall awaken,
The treasure of earth shall be awakened,
That salt of the earth and its light;
The dungeons of death shall be riven,
The Bride to the Bridegroom be given;
Their names have been written in heaven
Through the silent and shadowy night.*

*"Behold, I come as a thief—"
And blessed are they that are watching,
So quick with their ears to be catching
The sound of His steps as they wait;
But woe unto them that are sleeping,
Who, careless, their garments are keeping,
The dawn on their slumbers is creeping—
They waken, but waken too late.*

—Selected.

