

# Megiddo Message

*I am the...*





# No Insignificant Christians

ONE of the weightiest thoughts to strike the human heart is the insignificance of the average person. Against the long procession of the ages and the countless multitudes who have walked upon this earth since time began, we are each one no more than a grain of sand upon the wide seashore.

In the sight of "Him who inhabiteth eternity," before whom a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is passed, we are even less. "All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. . . . Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance" (Isa. 40:17, 15).

We need to reflect upon these thoughts to see our life as it really is, and ourselves as we really are—to realize what we really are *not*. There is little danger in undervaluing. The human ego instinctive in us may be counted on to accent our individual worth fully enough and to give a false permanence to what is anything but permanent. A man in his pride may feel himself so important that it is hard for him to visualize the world as continuing to endure after he is removed from the scene; but all we need to do is to wait. Time will do the rest. Only a few generations, and he will be as nameless as those who lived a few generations before him, of whom he knows nothing.

These reflections should bring us with open hearts and minds to our Great Creator and all that He holds out to us of dignity and worth. Here is the way to recognition! Here is the way to permanence. For in His sight, there is no such thing as an insignificant faithful servant. *Every one counts—* and counts highly!

No matter how insignificant one may have been as part of the world at large, when he joins himself to the family of God he attaches himself to the Source of infinite power, infinite life, infinite knowledge, infinite expansion. The moment one is accepted on a serious working basis, that one ceases at once to be ordinary; he immediately becomes

extraordinary in God's sight. His life takes on cosmic significance; even the angels in heaven take notice of him and go forth to be his ministers (Heb. 1:14). Though the man had previously been one of the faceless multitude, a mere cipher in the universe, an invisible dust grain upon the endless wastes, now he is on the way to "a name, and a praise, and a glory," even "an everlasting name that shall not be cut off." He now has a place in the scheme of meaningful things, if he is prepared to stay with it and see it through to a successful finish.

There are no unknown Christians, no insignificant sons of God. Each one signifies, each one is a "sign" drawing the attention of God and all who are part of His family. Each one is a "jewel" destined to shine eternally in His new world, a precious treasure never to be set aside, a loving child never to be forgotten. The faceless man finds a face, the nameless man a name, the man facing hopelessness finds real hope when God picks him out of the multitude and calls him to Himself.

In ourselves we are nothing; but we do not have to remain nothing. We are born into this world helpless infants, but God forbid that we remain helpless even in a spiritual sense. We are here for growth. We are here for improvement. We are here to reach out of ourselves and into the great beyond, to think God's thoughts and experience life on a higher plain than the animal level from which we come.

When we are adopted into God's family, our relationship to the whole world is changed. If we prove faithful to our calling and become in deed and in truth a part of His family, we inherit a right to all our Father may choose to give us. And we can be sure that inheritance will be ample. We can look forward to sitting with Christ, at His table, in His Kingdom, and sharing the wide reaches of His inheritance for evermore.

In the family of God, we signify. ●●

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## Megiddo Means

"a place of troops"

—Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon

"a place of God"

—Young's Analytical Concordance

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

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

Special New Year Issue

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April, 1976

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# *I Am A King*

**T**HE Roman world into which Jesus came needed a king. There was misery and to spare in the great days of Augustus Caesar. In spite of all that has been written of the glories of Imperial Rome, it was not a good world in which to live, and very little good living was done. There was a semblance of peace and order, but it was the Pax Romana, which "made a desert and called it a peace." The vulgar fraud of Roman civilization, founded upon violence, armed conquest, pillage and human slavery, had been forcibly established in Asia Minor, North Africa, and most of Europe; but with greatness came moral decay. The sturdy virtues of the early Republic had disappeared in a putrid welter of immorality, political corruption, and universal pauperism. A symptom of the world's desperate sickness was the growing popularity of the gladiatorial shows, which year by year became more elaborate and more brutal and bloody. The provinces were bled ruthlessly for the profit of a few millionaire landlords and imperial favorites, for the adornment of a capitol which produced nothing and consumed all.

Behind the iron curtain of military might was discontent and rebellion, ineffectual but real and stubborn. Nowhere was the spirit of revolt more chronic than in Judea, that narrow strip of land which has made history out of all proportion to its size. Lacking even the protection of Roman law and justice, it was ruled in Oriental absolutism by Herod the Great, a native prince who maintained his throne by collaborating with the conquerors. Human rights did not exist; human life was cheap

—even worthless—in the hands of a tyrant who cloaked the most monstrous cruelty with lip-service to religion, who murdered, tortured and robbed at will even as he restored the Temple of Yahweh in magnificent fashion.

It is small wonder that a proud and patriotic people like the Jews constantly dreamed of deliverance. While their tradition of freedom was not impressive, nor had they ever demonstrated their ability to make use of liberty, there was in them a fierce nationalism which made slavery intolerable, and also made them a perennial problem to their masters. From the days when they demanded of Samuel a king so as to be like the nations around them, their desire to be big in the eyes of the world led them to forget that their real superiority and advantage lay in the realms of the spirit—their custody of the Law and the Prophets.

Through the centuries the cord which bound the Jewish people in their incredible unity was the hope of the Messiah. Revealed through the prophets of Israel and Judah, this hope of a divinely sent deliverer and king had comforted them in captivity and supported them in persecution. What they overlooked, or forgot, or did not like to believe, was that this Messiah was to enter the world as all men, to prove Himself and develop His character and work out His salvation, His kingly power being reserved for His second advent at a time far distant, and that the blessings of His reign were not for the Jews alone but for all mankind.

Misunderstood and perverted, this hope had fallen into disrepute with many who had grown im-

patient and become advocates of direct action. Self-styled Messiahs had arisen from time to time and taken up arms for liberation, but the inevitable result was a quick collapse of the rebellion, and then the wayside crosses with their hundreds or thousands of nailed and drooping victims.

Still there were those who hoped, even with a distorted and discolored hope. The priests and scribes, at least, must have known of the "seven weeks, threescore and two weeks," or 483 years, which, according to the prophet Daniel began with the return from Babylon and should end with the arrival of "Messiah the Prince." Surely they realized that the time was at hand. This knowledge may well have accounted for much of the foment in Palestine at that time; for to a people in hopeless, galling bondage, the time was ripe for a deliverer, a king, who should forcibly break the power of Rome and restore the throne of David in multiplied glory.

True, they had the prophets to the contrary. But as in every other age, the prophets of deceit were preferred by the masses. Those who had sound hope for the future were few and obscure.

Came a spring night when a few humble honest-hearted men saw and heard that which was not believed in their day, but which has grown in wonder and beauty with the passage of the centuries. The setting was simple, almost crude. A band of shepherds guarded their flocks on a lonely Judean hillside. It was the eve of the New Year, and naturally, they would have liked to be in the town with their kindred, keeping the feast. But sheep had to be tended.

And as they watched, or slept, or talked, or brooded in silence, suddenly there was a great light shining round about them. And while they stood wondering, trembling, a mighty angel, glowing like the sun, stood above them and spoke to them the deathless words:

"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Was this *the King*?

Those mysterious Wise Men (of whom we should like to know more) thought so, for they came to Jerusalem inquiring, "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?"

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Thirty years passed, thirty years of obscurity, thirty years of intensive preparation and discipline and training as the King proved Himself worthy of His divine destiny. And then He appeared publicly among men, a Prophet, a Priest, the Messiah. He knew the ground whereon He stood, and He knew the fact whereof He spoke. For three crowded years He went about doing good—healing the sick, feeding the hungry, cleansing the lepers, even raising a few from death, all the while preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Avoiding politics, refusing worldly honors, He fled more than once from forcible coronation by the worshipping multitudes who could not and would not realize that this was the time for repentance, not for restoration.

Was this *the King*?

Yet all the while He constantly affirmed His future kingship. And when He faced the Roman Procurator, with His life hanging upon His answer to the question, "Art thou a king?" He reaffirmed His claim with the quiet dignity of true royalty. "It is you who say it," He answered. "Yes, I am a king. I was born for this, I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice" (John 18:37, JB).

Where now were His popular supporters—the adoring thousands who a month ago would have placed a crown upon His head, who a week ago had shouted and strewed palm branches in His path as He entered the city? There were many of those of His own nation who had consistently opposed Him, rejected Him, persecuted Him. Shortly afterward the mob was howling for His blood. "Crucify him! We have no king but Caesar!"

So they crowned Him with thorns, and mocked Him and scourged Him. And at high noon of that day they crucified Him.

Was this *the King*?

Pilate did not know, but the title He placed above Jesus' cross was a badge of glory, a testimony to an eternal truth. "Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews" gave no shame or scorn to true nobility. This was *the King*.

Centuries have passed, and the great day of coronation has not yet arrived. But it *is* coming. The truth of that noble statement lives on: "I am a King." The day when He shall take the throne of earth and execute judgment and justice worldwide is coming. It is near, very near. It is a prophecy on the verge of glorious fulfillment, for when He takes the throne He shall be "King of kings and Lord of lords" for ever, even for ever and ever! ●●



# I am the...

## Bright and Morning Star

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**“THE HEAVENS** are telling the glory of God.” All solemn and quiet these brilliant luminaries shine down upon us. Indeed, if the stars should appear one night in a hundred years, how men would believe in God and worship Him, and how they would preserve for generations to come the sight of the handiwork of God.

What pleasure they afford the mortal eye, what repose! Naught disturbs their eternal peace. Thousands of generations have been swallowed up by time, and forgotten, yet Arcturus, Orion, and the Pleiades are still shining in their courses, clear and young as the newborn morning. There they are, the innumerable stars, boundless in magnificence, constant in light, preachers of omnipotence, lighting the world.

But there are some bodies that are not really luminous, but only reflect brilliance from other celestial bodies.

Then, there are stars outstanding in beauty, fixed stars. Among these there is a special one that is visible in the early dawn. It shines with unusual brilliance as it ushers in a new day. It is perhaps the most beautiful object in nature and seems so joyous and cheery after the darkness of night.

In natural life, people who have outstanding qualities or are preeminently successful are referred to as stars. Stars are also used as an ornament, worn as a badge of honor, authority or rank.

Stars are also a symbol of purity and light. Saints are called stars to denote their glory and usefulness. The ministers of the seven churches in

Asia (Revelation, chapters 2 and 3), were called “stars” in Christ’s right hand. They were servants of Christ. It was their duty to convey light, knowledge, and comfort to others. When those who labor in the Lord apostatize and fall into error and sin, leading others astray, they are represented as wandering or fallen stars.

Daniel tells of the glory that awaits the wise and righteous, “... they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, ... as the stars for ever and ever.” The holy and righteous will one day cause this earth to shine.

Figuratively speaking, our little earth at present is but a dark and murky satellite. It is a chaotic place of sin, trouble and turmoil. But this darkness of night is far along. The dawn is coming fast. Soon the Bright and Morning Star will appear! There is no message so cheering as Jesus’ own words, “I am ... the bright and morning star. ... I am coming very soon” (Rev. 22:16, 20).

In His life, Christ was a star surpassing all mortals in brilliance and wonder. He was intense in learning and knowing His Father’s will. And with His whole being He forged His life accordingly. He was tempted on every point as we are, and on every point He proved Himself a star of surpassing magnitude. In Him was no deceit. When He was reviled, He did not revile back, when He suffered He uttered no threats. Though often unappreciated, He always went about doing good. In simple language He fed the multitudes. He quenched the thirsty with the water of life. He did no sin. He furnished mankind with a perfect ideal. He is in-



deed the Bright and Morning Star, a star that outshines all others. And soon He will usher in a bright new Day.

But what was the occasion and why did Jesus thus testify of Himself? Why did He assign to Himself this luminous title?

It was at the time when John was drawing to a close the words of the Revelation which Jesus had commissioned him to write and to send to the churches in Asia. Under the Roman power, the Christians were suffering great trials and persecutions. Their faith needed to be strengthened. They needed to be warned. They needed to be encouraged. They needed to be reminded that the true Church would triumph at last. John's message was for a time of crisis. We, too, are living in a crisis time. John's message is for us!

The climax of John's writing was the wonderful vision of the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, emblematic of that blessed and eternal abode of the redeemed. John's message was urgent. He wanted all Christians everywhere and in all ages to know that that great eternal Day is surely coming. It is the Day when the saints triumph! The enemies of light are gone forever. War and trouble are gone. Sickness and pain are no more. Death is gone. Light and beauty are there. Peace and prosperity are everywhere. The fountain of life is there. There the saints experience great felicity and unmeasured happiness. The King is in the midst of them. Time is merged into eternity.

John was about to close his long letter and perhaps was looking over it from the beginning when Jesus intervened. It was as if to guarantee that all John had written was true and faithful—the revelation of Jesus Christ. Then, as it were, He who is the Light confirmed it by His credentials: "I am... the bright and morning star." Jesus was saying, As the morning star ushers in the day, so I will usher in that glorious eternal Day.

It will be a Day that will never wear to evening; the light will only increase from glory to glory. It will be everlasting blessedness.

O what joy, what hope, what faith and courage Jesus' testimony gives to every earnest Christian.

"I am the Bright and Morning Star.... I am coming very soon." ●●

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Actually the Christian's warfare is not over till the last battle is won, and that is not until he has been faithful, even unto death.

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## We Pray Thee...

**O** LORD our God, we lift heart and voice to Thee in adoration and praise. We worship Thee, our Creator, and give thanks for the precious gift of life that Thou hast bestowed upon us, and for the part Thou hast given us in fulfilling Thy divine plan in the world. We thank Thee that Thou hast opened our eyes to Thy glory and hast called us into Thy glorious plan for the world and mankind, and hast called us into the fellowship of Christ. Mindful of all Thy mercies that flow into our daily lives, we offer to Thee our praise and thanksgiving.

As we stand upon the threshold of a new year, help us to re-dedicate ourselves to the task of living the higher life. May our desire to share the boundless blessings of the world to come be so real, so compelling that it will act as an irresistible force, thrusting us onward and upward to the goal of perfection of character. Remind us that Thou wilt never be satisfied with anything less than perfection, that no unworthy thing will ever be perpetuated, and may we never be content to render to Thee less than our best.

Train our hands to war and our fingers to fight, that we may live each day triumphantly, making no compromise with sin but banishing it completely from our lives. Help us to add the Christian virtues of faith, courage, determination, patience, meekness, temperance, longsuffering. May we never grow weary of taking up our daily cross of self-denial, aware that without a cross there can be no crown, and that trials are steppingstones to perfection. May our example shine forth as a beacon guiding others in the strait, narrow path that leads to Thee. And may our light so shine before men that they may see our good works, and glorify Thee in the day of visitation.

Grant Thy mighty protection to those in any kind of danger, and may those in sickness or trouble be aware of the support of Thine everlasting arm, confident that all things will work together for good to each one who truly loves Thee. And may Thy Kingdom come and Thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven. In the name of our coming King we pray. Amen.



I am the...



# LIGHT OF THE WORLD

TO THE assembled group of pious, hypocritical Pharisees, Jesus' claim must have sounded preposterous indeed. Just who and what did this young upstart think He was? It was common knowledge to all of them that He was nothing more than an obscure carpenter from the little town of Nazareth. That He should for a moment claim to be the Messiah foretold by Israel's prophets, the brilliant Light they had sought for centuries, was absolutely unthinkable.

But this man came with high recommendations. John, His illustrious cousin, described Him with words fraught with meaning and reverential awe. "There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose." This man had even received the commendation of heaven: "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

An obscure carpenter from an obscure village, yes. But what a carpenter! Within the walls of that humble shop had been molded the greater portion of the unequaled character of this perfect Light. However, not in a moment did the Light burst forth in its full radiance. Rather, day by day and year by year, with the aid of heavenly guidance and through the commonplace routine of daily toil, this Light grew brighter and brighter.

Frequent communion with His heavenly Father strengthened and uplifted His soul. Even in early years He already manifested a nobility of character, patience, gentleness and compassion far surpassing ordinary men. His was the overwhelming

joy, the absolute faith, the unwavering trust of a steadfast heart wholly committed to the leading of a loving Father. Aware that He was pressed for time, He allowed no idleness, no wandering thoughts, no day dreams. It was imperative that He be ready for the responsibility that would be placed upon Him: that of being Light-bearer to a dark, sin-ridden world.

And what a brilliant Light He was! For three short but eventful years He lived and walked among men, showing them by perfect example a better, more meaningful life. So remarkably magnetic was His personality that large numbers followed Him. Patiently and tenderly He led them from the darkness in which they had been groping into the glorious light of new life and hope. He taught them gentleness, patience, purity and kindness by the influence of His own spotless life. He led them to the throne of grace where they too could experience the thrill of closer communion with the heavenly Father. So compelling and so fulfilling were the eternal principles of truth which met their fulfillment in His sinless life that it could truly be said: "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men."

However, a life so nobly lived was bound to have its enemies; and Jesus' was no exception. The Pharisees and chief priests, incensed by the truth of His sharp reproofs of their hypocrisy, would not rest until they had designed and executed a dastardly plan to destroy Him. Yes, they succeeded in taking the life of this Greatest Man; but they



could not put out the Light. True, it burned low during those desperate days; but just when the darkest moment seemed to have come, the Light burst forth with new brilliance. Jesus was alive! Death had no power to hold Him in its dark embrace. He arose, a victor over mortality, lighting the way for those after Him who would rest in the promise of their own ultimate triumph.

Today, this Light is gone from us. He was escorted centuries ago by celestial beings to His Father's throne. And there He waits, victorious over the darkness of sin, enjoying the glory of His eternal reward until the day when the promise of the angels will be fulfilled: "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

What of the Light during this interim of time? Are we to spend our days in darkness and despair because the Light is not among us? No, a thousand times *no*! The Light still shines. The Light of our perfect Example spans the centuries, leaps over the seas and penetrates the darkness of error and superstition today. The Light still shines.

What of us, who have been dwelling so long in darkness, wrestling desperately with this baffling puzzle called life? Have we tried to fit the pieces into some kind of pattern and still know nothing but a feeling of futility and failure? Do we grope in darkness?

Others have experienced such darkness. Yet, out of the darkness has dawned the bright Light of hope. They have come to know Christ as the Light, and His life to them is Light to illuminate their darkness of soul. That same light of an upright life can shine today in each of us, if we so desire.

Remember Jesus' words to His disciples that day on the mountainside when He preached what may well have been His greatest sermon? "You are the light of the world," He said. "A city which is situated on the top of a mountain cannot be hidden; nor do people light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a lampstand; and it gives light for all who are in the house" (Matt. 5:14-15, Barclay). Perhaps no greater compliment could be paid an aspiring Christian than this, "You are the light of the world." It proves beyond the shadow of doubt that it is within the scope of our abilities to reflect His great Light.

So then, what are we doing with this Light we profess to be reflecting? Is it visible to all we come in contact with? You know Jesus did not say, "You are the light of the church." No, He said, "You are the light of the world." His statement was all-inclusive. We have a double duty. Before

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our Christian associates our lives should radiate such a pattern of good works that they will be inspired to live richer, fuller lives. Think what it would mean in the future to have someone say to you: "Because of your radiant, godly example, I had the courage to exchange sin's darkness for truth's glorious light in my life."

How brilliantly does our light shine before the world? Are we unmoved by the indifference, the coldness, the doubt so prevalent today? Or does our light flicker and fade? Out there in the darkness may be some soul searching for the light. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." Are we able to show them that light in *our* lives?

Oh, let us keep our lights burning true and bright a little longer, for not much further down the lonely road of life we shall meet Him who could say, "I am the Light of the world." What a glorious day that will be for those who have faithfully followed His leading during life's day. To all such will be fulfilled those glorious words of our Great Light, our Redeemer and King, as He described the celestial city: "And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." ●●

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## The Abib Calendar

### The Bible New Year:

*Abib 1—from sundown March 30 through sundown March 31.*

Abib has been memorable since the days of Israel. On the first of Abib the tabernacle was set up; on the first of Abib the law from Sinai was given. The Lord told Israel, "Observe the month Abib." How fitting a time for Christ to have been born!

### The New Passover:

*Abib 13—sundown April 11.*

Israel's historic Passover fell on the 14th day of Abib. Jesus instituted the New Passover one day earlier and said, "This do, in remembrance of me."

### Christ's Resurrection:

*Abib 15—morning of April 14.*

"Because I live, ye shall live also"—because He arose triumphant! In His resurrection is *our* hope of life.

### The Ascension:

*Forty days after the Resurrection—May 23.*

He was "seen of them forty days" (Acts 1:3), and then He was "taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:10-11).

### Pentecost:

*Fifty days after the Resurrection—June 2.*

Pentecost was historic in Israel as a harvest feast. On the day of Pentecost the glorified Christ sent divine Power upon His disciples, the Holy Spirit.





# I am the...

## True Vine

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit"

—John 15:1-2.

WHEN Jesus referred to Himself as the vine, He was using a figure of speech which was perfectly familiar to those who heard Him. The vine had had its place for long centuries in the religious literature of the Hebrew people, and in their national life it had become definitely and positively symbolic.

The figure of the vine emerges in Psalm eighty. There in the midst of national declension David sang, "Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt." He was thinking of God's deliverance of His people from bondage centuries earlier.

But it is a curious fact that the symbol of the vine is most often used in the Old Testament with an idea of degeneration.

Isaiah pictured the vineyard as running wild.

Hosea cried, "Israel is an empty vine."

Now Jesus stood among His disciples and declared, "I am the vine, the true, the real, the genuine."

Not many hours before, He had made use of the same figure in its traditional, unfavorable setting. The twenty-first chapter of Matthew's gospel records the parable of the Vineyard. A certain householder planted a vineyard, which he entrusted to the care of husbandmen. When the time was right, the householder sent his servants into the vineyard to receive the fruits of it; but the husbandmen beat, stoned and killed them. So he sent more servants, but they received the same treatment. Finally he sent his own son, but he too was cast forth and killed. The Lord's vineyard, in the hands of unfaithful Israelites, was a national failure.

So what did Jesus do with the figure of the vine and the vineyard? He took the vine, the emblem of

Israel's national life, which the prophets had used to show national failure, and tore it loose from the position of responsibility and privilege it had held, and said in effect, "God has not failed, even if the nation *has*. The purposes of God are not abandoned. He who created the vine to bring forth fruit will yet see the fruits in their season."

Unlike the Jewish nation, whose lives consisted of profession without practice, of pious words without deeds, of useless branches, all leaves with no fruit, Jesus came a living, productive vine. He was the living vine because He kept in constant touch with His Father, the great Husbandman and owner of the vineyard. The thought of doing His Father's will was paramount with Christ. It meant arranging life, arranging prayer, arranging silence in such a way that there was never a day when He would give Himself a chance to forget God. So eager was He to draw strength from the Father that the Gospels record how He was often in prayer, arising a great while before day to pray, even spending whole nights in communion with His Father. Is it any wonder, being so devoted, that He could truthfully claim, "I am the true vine"?

The figure of the vine is especially meaningful as Jesus used it when we think of how the vine lives and grows. The union between the branch of a vine and the main stem is the closest that can be conceived; so close must be the union between Christ and every true believer. The vine is the branches' life, strength, vigor, beauty and fertility. The sap and juice that flow from the stem are the sustaining power of all its leaves, buds, blossoms, and fruit. Cut off the branch, sever it from the stem, and it soon will wither and die. The re-



lationship between Christ and His church is just that close and just that real and just that vital.

The symbol of the vine is particularly fitting because the vine, unlike most cultivated plants, requires relentless pruning. When Jesus compared Himself to the vine and His Father to the husbandman, He knew the arduous work, the severe pruning and purging required. He knew the great deal of attention the vines must have if the fruit is to be harvested. A vine left to itself will grow—vigorously. But into what? A few years of neglect, and it will be a tangled mass of vegetation, choked with its own dead and worthless branches, and capable of producing little or no fruit. Worse still, it will tend to revert to its original wild stock.

So along comes the husbandman with the pruning knife. Jesus knew it; and He was not afraid of the severe pruning which every fruit-bearing vine must have. He welcomed the keen blade which removed from His life all that was worthless. When God disciplined Him, when His heart's desire was denied Him by the higher demands of His Father's will, He remembered that the Husbandman makes no mistakes, that nothing worthwhile will ever be removed but only that which would hinder greater yield.

Just as the vine-dresser prunes and cuts back the branches of a fruitful vine to make it still more fruitful, so does God purify and prune believers by the circumstances of life in which He places them. Trial is the instrument by which our Father makes Christians more pure and holy.

Fruit is what He desires to see in us, the fruits of the Spirit. These are sure evidence that a man is a true branch of the true vine. The disciple that "abides in Christ," like the branch abiding in the vine, will always bear fruit. Where there is no fruit there is no life. Good fruit will always be evident in the daily conduct of those who are part of the true vine.

The Great Husbandman wants fruit. And He will not spare the pruning knife if He sees it is needed. The pruning may seem severe, but in the last day we shall see that all was done well.

Would we be true branches of the true vine? Then why not welcome the keen blade which God uses to separate us from all that is low and mean and base and selfish?

God demands of all His true branches every moment of their time, every thought of their mind, every word of their mouth, every beat of their heart. When He has all this, we may be sure that we are living, active, thriving, fruit-bearing branches that will be permitted to draw life-sustaining sap from the True Vine forever. ●●

April, 1976

## December 25-- Why Not?

PROPHETIC insight enabled Daniel to describe future events with as much accuracy as historians describe the past. He foresaw the rise and fall of the empires of earth when only the first was in existence (Dan. 2, 7). After Babylon should follow Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. From the declining Roman Empire should arise a power human in intelligence (7:8), beastly in nature (7:21), yet assuming divine authority in such measure as to "alter the sacred seasons" (7:25, Moffatt). Daniel looked ahead centuries of time and knew that the sacred seasons would be altered. We of the latter days can look back upon the history of the Roman Empire and see the conditions which led to the fulfillment of his predictions.

The early Christians were surrounded by a sea of paganism. The whole Roman world bowed to gods of wood and stone. In the first century after Christ, the story of Christianity tells of a people apart from the Empire, adhering loyally to the principles of their Founder, though this often subjected them to bitterest persecution. But the Christians were not long content to be a separate people. Forgetting the sacred warning to have no part in the affairs of the nation, either politically, religiously, or socially (II Cor. 6:17-18; II Tim. 2:4), they mingled more and more in the daily life of the Empire. This contact proved infectious. Gradually they conformed to the manner of life which at first they had spurned.

To the laxer Christians, the pagan festivals held strong appeal, principal among them the birthday of the god Mithra, also the nativity of the sun known as the Winter Solstice, and the Roman Saturnalia, all of which fell in late December. These festivals were a time of license, revelry and drunkenness when the customary restraints of law and morality were laid aside, and all the darker human passions were given unrestrained liberty. Trees were lighted, gifts exchanged, homes decorated with evergreen.

The church fathers protested the Christians' eagerness to join in these festivals; but their voice could scarcely be heard above the clamor of popular



appeal. The battle between paganism and Christianity raged hotly, such eminent men as Hippolytus and Tertullian thundering their protests against the growing laxity of the Christians. Hippolytus' tombstone, with its engraving, "I say that Jesus Christ was born April 2," still survives as his testimony on the subject.

But the apostate church fathers were not to be outdone by their heathen rivals. If truth would not hold their congregations together, they would adjust the truth to make it more attractive. If pagan festivals could not be suppressed, they would retain them, adding a Christian significance.

At this time and for this reason they altered the sacred seasons, placing the birth of Christ (whom His followers recognized as the "Sun of righteousness") at the time when pagans celebrated the birth of the sun. This compromise met with popular approval: the apostate Christians could indulge in the December festivals; and the pagans could become Christians without surrendering the holidays which they had observed from time immemorial.

Thus today, because apostate Christians of the third and fourth centuries altered the sacred seasons, the world at large celebrate Christ's birth at the winter season of the year when Mary and Joseph would not have gone to Bethlehem, and when no shepherds would have been on the Judean hillside.

History contributes an abundance of information on the subject. According to William Dawson, in his work entitled, *Christmas, Its Origin and Associations*, we read: "The feast of the Nativity, and most of the other ecclesiastical anniversaries, were originally fixed at cardinal points of the year, without any reference to the dates of the incidents which they commemorate."

In *The Paganism in Our Christianity* by Arthur Weigall we read, "The first known reference to December 25th as being the birthday of Jesus occurs in a Latin work of about the year 354; but here no festival is mentioned, and the date is only recorded as a piece of supposed history. The Emperor Honorius, however, who reigned in the West from 395 to 423, speaks of this date being kept in Rome as a new festival; and an imperial rescript of about the year 400 includes it as one of the three great feasts of the Church. . . . It did not become a *dies non* in the law-courts in Rome, however, until the year 534."

Clement Miles, in *History of Christmas*, adds this testimony: "We have traced the evolution of the festival, seen it take its rise after the victory of the Catholic doctrine of Christ's person at Nicea, and spread from Rome to every quarter of the Em-

pire. We have seen the Church condemn with horror the relics of pagan feasts which cling around the same season of the year; then as time went on, we have found the two elements, pagan and Christian, mingling in some degree. . . . The conflict is keen at first, the chief authorities fight tooth and nail against these relics of heathenism, these devilish rites; but mankind's instinctive paganism is insuppressible, the practices continue as ritual, though losing much of their meaning, and the Church, weary of denouncing, comes to wink at them. . . . We find, then, many pagan practices concealed beneath a superficial Christianity. . . . But side by side with these are many usages never Christianized even in appearance, and obviously identical with heathen customs, against which the church thundered in the days of her youth. . . . Grown old and tolerant she has long since ceased to attack them."

A writer in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* admits that because of tradition the Latin Church decreed that Christ's birth should be observed forever on December 25.

Which shall we accept—tradition or truth? ●●

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## The Eternal Struggle

In addition to the struggle for existence against outside forces, we are constantly at war with ourselves.

This internal turmoil is the struggle between the mean and the generous, the positive and the negative, the ugly and the beautiful, the virtuous and the vicious, within ourselves.

Upon the outcome depends our character, what we shall finally turn out to be.

If we win most of these battles, we become self-conquerors, real people, worthwhile to ourselves and to God. If not, we slide slowly downward—and may end near the bottom in the moral muck heap. God does not expect us to be sinless from the beginning, but the fact remains: If we would be rewarded, we must win; if we lose, we lose all.

Winning means taking the apparently hard way, but what is the alternative? Only death and destruction.

It all boils down to a simple, hard, practical fact: Only as we have the will and the determination to win in this struggle with ourselves can we obtain anything of eternal worth. ●●

# The RESURRECTION

## Not An Idle Tale

CHRIST'S resurrection! Do we consider that we are commemorating the most stupendous event in all history—that if our Lord had not risen from the grave there would have been no Christian church, and that the very name, Jesus of Nazareth, would have long since been forgotten? It is the miracle of the first Resurrection Day that has changed the course of history, that has changed the world.

Re-read the story of the Resurrection, as told so simply yet so effectively in the Gospels, and you will be struck by the fact that it was all so unexpected. Nobody expected it to happen! It is true that Jesus had said quite emphatically that the grave could not hold Him—that on the third day He would rise again, but no one had really believed Him. Such a thing was unthinkable. Some of the Pharisees remembered this prophecy of our Lord's and while they obviously did not take it seriously, they did take the trouble to go to Pilate and say, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people he is risen from the dead." While they did not think such a thing possible, they wanted to make sure that the disciples should practice no deception.

Pilate did not take the matter seriously. He said, with an obvious shrug of his shoulders, "You have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as you can." So, we are told, "they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch."

And what about our Lord's friends, those who during His earthly ministry had been close to Him and who had heard Him declare that He would indeed rise again on the third day? Did they expect such a stupendous thing to happen? Obviously not! Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, for instance, came to the sepulchre on that first day of the week, not to greet the Risen Lord but to embalm His body. They

brought sweet spices "that they might come and anoint Him," we are told. On that early morning journey to the tomb they discussed among themselves the problem of how they were to roll away the stone from the entrance to the sepulchre. They realized that it was so big and heavy that it would be impossible for three women, unaided, to move it. They wondered whether at this early hour anybody would be about who could help them to move the huge stone which stood at the entrance to the tomb.

### "They Were Amazed"

But, as things turned out, they need not have worried, for when they got to the garden sepulcher their problem no longer existed. "And when they looked they saw that the stone was rolled away. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting, . . . clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, be not affrighted; ye seek Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified: He is risen, He is not here; And they went out quickly and fled from the sepulchre, for they trembled and were amazed."

Amazed! Of course they were! They had started their journey with heavy hearts, intending to embalm their Lord's body and pay their last respects. They were faced with an empty tomb and one who said, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen. Remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." "And," adds the writer, "they remembered his words." What is surprising is that they should have forgotten them! But in any case they could not have taken them seriously, or they would never have taken sweet spices to the tomb.

What of His disciples—those who had shared His earthly life and ministry, those in whom He had confided, whom He had taught, and who, above all men, must have known quite well their Lord's declaration that on the third day He would rise again? Had they taken this assertion seriously?



Again, it is obvious that they had not, otherwise one would have expected to find them in the garden of Arimathea on that early morning, eagerly waiting for the miracle to happen. But none of them were there. They had dispersed, a broken, disillusioned, defeated little company. They were making plans to return to their homes and jobs. It had been a grand experience while it lasted, but now it was all over. Their Lord and Master was dead—lying there in the new sepulcher in the garden of Arimathea. No use hanging about in Jerusalem any longer. It was all finished. The influence of the religious rulers and the power of Rome had won in the end. Jesus and all that He stood for had been crushed and killed. So it seemed.

But that first Resurrection Day was to be to our Lord's disciples the most memorable day of their lives, for soon after daybreak they heard that the tomb was empty; they heard that Jesus had already appeared to Mary Magdalene. It was, to them, utterly incredible, and when they heard these things, we are told, "their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." But seeing is believing; and when they came themselves to the sepulchre they realized that it was not an idle tale they had been hearing, but an amazing, stupendous *fact*. Jesus had risen from the dead! And that evening while ten of them were together in an upper room, discussing the events of the day, they had another never-to-be-forgotten experience—Jesus Himself appeared to them.

We read, "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." And a little later even the skeptical Thomas was convinced that it was not an idle tale he had been hearing, but a world-shattering fact. The risen Lord was not a figment of the imagination, but real, convincing, undeniable.

### Christ, Conqueror of Death

The transformation which the Resurrection of Christ wrought in the character of Peter is one of the biographical miracles of history. It was so radical and profound that every subsequent chapter in the story of the Church has had the name of Peter written on it. In the courtyard of the high priest's palace he had whimpered in fear when a servant maid challenged his loyalty—the bravado of his stuttered curses was just a thin veneer over his frustrated and unhappy soul. Here was a man whose purpose was broken, a man whose dream had vanished, a man who would go back to fishing

because nothing of the new was left to replace the old. For Peter, the cross was right at the center of a personal and cosmic tragedy. Calvary had written Finish over all his hopes.

And now, just a few yards from the spot where that cross had been erected, Peter was preaching with a deep and steady certitude from which nothing could move him. No signs now remained of the startling shock which had sent him and his fellow disciples racing for security behind closed doors. Peter had seen Jesus alive! He had seen inside the empty tomb. In the room where Jesus had shown the disciples His hands and His side—stigmatic proofs which not even death could obliterate—the disciples knew themselves to be in the presence of an original, divine vitality that changed everything—even death. It could not retain its hold on One who was vibrant with death-defeating energy. "Now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep." That was the core of the challenge with which Christianity confronted the pagan world—it was the secret of the spiritual process that had remade the character of Peter.

### Life: Love: Purity

It is of course obvious that this truth about Jesus was not one merely of post-Crucifixion origin. During the whole of His ministry the disciples had become progressively aware of it. They had seen disease, reckoned to be incurable, recoil defeated and then cleansed by His touch. Blindness withdrew its shadows from the eyes He anointed, and lame men skipped at the music in His commands. There was in Jesus a vitality of being for which we have no definition.

This was not all. The disciples sensed in Jesus a quality of love in the presence of which death was compelled to bow resigned and impotent. Here again we are left without category or comparison. What event in time can arrest the outflowing of the eternal love that was summed-up in the life of Jesus Christ? Here is something that will recognize no barriers—something that will not submit to any restrictions. No. It will burst the rock-hewn sepulcher, roll away the stone, and proclaim itself to be possessor of the keys both of the grave and of death.

And here in Jesus, for the only time in history, death came into contact with a sinless life. In that life there was nothing to which death could hold on. The corruption of evil was not in Him. The taint and stain which, in other men, announce the predisposing causes of death, had neither relevance

*(Continued on page 25)*

Kathy  
Kandor's  
Korner

## Less Positive--More Thankful

"THERE must be some mistake," muttered Janet as the waitress set a steaming-hot chicken dinner in front of Janet and turned her back to serve the next table. Janet was looking at the large dish of french fries she hadn't ordered.

"She didn't hear you, dear," I said quietly, knowing how Janet loved mashed potatoes, especially when chicken was on the menu.

When the waitress came within speaking range again, Janet spoke kindly, though a bit timidly, "Ma'am, I ordered mashed potatoes—but it's all right. I'll take this."

"You ordered french fries!!" snapped the waitress, and without pausing she walked away.

Janet looked crestfallen at the sharp retort and her eyes grew moist. "She didn't have to be so cross with me," she remarked as she began to nibble at the mound of french fries. "She doesn't ever need to wait on *me* again!" The more than usual energy in Janet's voice showed that she was disturbed at the waitress.

"Maybe Janet *did* make a mistake in her order," interrupted Neal thoughtfully. "We can never be too positive."

"But that doesn't give the waitress any right to speak to someone like she did. It isn't even good business," I defended.

"No, but we need to think of *our* responsibility. We may so easily *think* we are right when we may be only *partly* right—or not right at *all*." Neal was calm and quiet, as always. "Great men are always gracious, you know."

Neal was right. It's an all-too-human trait to assume infallibility. After all, anyone can be wrong sometimes.

"And there may have been times when we have said in essence, 'You ordered french fries.' There are surely more Christlike ways of communicating, even when we think we are right."

April, 1976

I continued to observe the waitress as she went about tending the various tables. Was it possible that we were judging her too severely? Why, I wondered, was she on this job? One thing certain: she didn't enjoy her work. No smile, no greeting; slow to notice, slow to serve. Perhaps she was working only because of sheer necessity.

"Maybe her shift is about over and she is tired, eager to put her apron away and go home," suggested Neal as he glanced again at the waitress who was slowly making her way back to the kitchen with a load of dishes.

"That is just what I was thinking, Neal. And what will she walk into when she gets home? Perhaps a dirty house, a heap of dishes to wash, a meal to cook, and maybe even a cross husband to try to please. Everyone's life isn't easy."

"I'm sorry I was so critical of her," Janet's sympathetic voice conveyed a new message. This was something she had never thought of before. "Mother, I don't know whether I would want to be in her place."

"And perhaps, on top of everything else, she isn't well—or has illness in the home to cope with. Or she is bored with life. It never hurts us to be generous and tolerant in judging other people. I don't mean to say that she answered you in the right way, Janet, but be thankful for the advantages you have. She doesn't have the hope or purpose in life we have."

"And that makes a *great* difference. When people are cross and difficult, we need to realize how easily we could be in their place, without God and without hope. If they had the hope of eternal life that we have, and the prospect of spending eternity with Christ in His Kingdom on this earth, their outlook would be so different. They would have something to lift their spirits above the trials of the day."

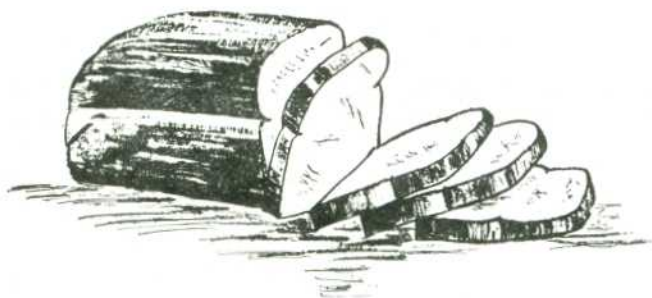
I thanked God that day for the lesson I had learned, the lesson that all started from a dish of french fries. And I wondered, what would my life have been if it were not for God's promises to live for and the blessings His providence had brought into *my* life? I thought of my family, and a kind husband who makes every effort to guide his family in the good and right way, and my heart overflowed with thankfulness. Especially was I grateful for that divine power of restraint I had learned that could keep me from snapping, "You ordered french fries!" So much to be thankful for!

*Yours determined to think of others more and more  
and remove the selfish spirit,*

Kathy



I am the...



## Bread of Life

WHAT do these words mean to us today?

As we read them on the sacred page, they are only words. But words can be powerful things. If they have meaning to us, they do something in us and for us. They are thought-stimulators. When we hear them, our minds immediately shift into action and call forth related knowledge which we have stored in our memories. Instinctively we interpret them against the whole background of our experience and previously recorded impressions. And in a fraction of a second we have formed a conclusion as to just what those words mean. This is the process we call thinking, and the more we practice it the more meaning we will see in what we read.

But let us slow down this lightning process of interpretation and think carefully about these words: "I am the bread of life."

First there is the speaker and subject, "I." Who is this? The whole meaning will be lost for us if our minds close against the subject. But this Speaker deserves our attention: He is no less than the Master of men Himself, the son of God, the man who could say, "I speak not mine own words, but the words of the Father that sent me." With such authority behind the statement, we need to think further.

"Am" is the next word. Not "was" or "should have been" or "will be" but *am*. Jesus uses the present tense. And He uses it as no one else can, for what He was then Jesus still is because Jesus is alive. After He was crucified, buried, resurrected and taken to heaven He sent back a message in

which were these words: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. 1:18). When Jesus says "I am," we can be certain He has something to say even to *us*.

"The Bread." This term suggests sustenance, the means of survival. The presence or absence of food, e. g. bread, means the presence or absence of life, both in a physical and in a spiritual sense. Spiritual bread is to spiritual life as physical bread is to physical life. There can be no life without that which sustains it.

But Jesus could not have been speaking of physical bread, or physical life. Jesus was not literally a loaf of bread, and no one thinks that He was. He was not literally something to eat. Jesus Himself made His statement meaningful by saying He is...

"The Bread of LIFE." Here is bread that means life in the deeper, fuller, spiritual sense of the word. Jesus is the bread which gives life to the inner man.

Man does not live "by bread alone" (Matt. 4:4). He has deep longings and hungers of heart which physical bread cannot satisfy. Jesus has a superior, spiritual type of bread to meet the needs of the spiritually starving. His is the bread of *life*—bread that saves from death; for spiritual starvation is just as deadly as its natural counterpart.

If a man is to know abundant, spiritual life, his mind must continually feed upon the right kind of food. Here is Jesus to meet the need: "I am the bread of life." Jesus, His words, His teachings, His life are the spiritual bread which, eaten and assim-



ilated in the lives of other men, mean life.

"Life." What is the life which comes from this "bread"? It is real life both now and future. It is life in the fullest sense of the word. First, it is the hundredfold of joy and blessing and hope in this world. Then, in the world to come it opens out into days without number and pleasures for evermore. It is life both through time and through eternity.

What then did Jesus mean when He said, "I am the bread of life"?

Jesus, by His perfect life and example, could identify Himself with that which gives and sustains life—He was the living image of the standard of character God requires of men. In His life the spiritual food which sustains spiritual life became more visible and more available to men than it had ever been before. He became the source of spiritual nourishment and sustenance unto eternal life. Hence He could say, "I am the living bread: . . . if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever" (John 6:51).

Jesus came bringing to men that which would supply their deepest needs. His whole life, teaching and testimony of faith was bread for starving, weak and famished men. He was nourishment for every man's inner soul.

And so He speaks to us today: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

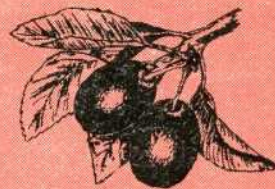
Jesus is the bread of life; all we must do to partake of it is "come"—forsake our ways and accept His, doing always the things that please the heavenly Father, as did He—and we shall indeed find that what He personified, the spiritual Christ, is the "bread of life"—even everlasting life! ●●

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*For all the gifts that Thou dost send,  
For every kind and loyal friend,  
For prompt supply of all my need,  
For all that's good in word and deed,  
For gift of health along life's way,  
For strength to work from day to day,  
I give Thee humble thanks.*

*For ready hands to help and cheer,  
For listening ears Thy voice to hear,  
For yielded tongue Thy love to talk,  
For willing feet Thy paths to walk,  
For open eyes Thy Word to read,  
For loving heart Thy will to heed,  
I give Thee humble thanks.*

## Fruitful Fragments



*What we live for is vastly more important than what we live on.*

*A shabby, inconsistent life denies the gospel; a transformed life preaches it.*

*The sacrifices we make for the cause of Christ should make us better—not bitter.*

*Is God the occupant of your guest room on occasion, or is He the owner and possessor of the entire house?*

*Don't concern yourself about who knows your name—as long as God knows it.*

*The brook couldn't sing if there were no rocks.*

*Fatal is the day when we become contented with the life we are living, the thoughts we are thinking, the deeds we are doing, when there is no great desire for something larger beating upon the doors of our soul.*

*The Bible doesn't offer a better-than-thou religion, but a better-than-yesterday progression.*

*Store your mind with the best. Think more of what you can be than of how you can appear.*

*Wise is the person who knows the difference between opportunity and temptation. Opportunity always knocks; temptation only needs to stand outside and whistle!*

*We need more warnings and less applause. No one ever puts out a sign, "Nice Dog!"*



*It Is the Lord's*

# Passover

**S**INCE its beginning, Passover has been regarded as a very solemn, sacred occasion by all who observed its ceremonies. To generation after generation it served as a reminder of a very solemn night, the night when all the firstborn among the Egyptians died; the night God spared, or "passed over" the firstborn of the Israelites; the night Pharaoh released the Israelites, and the night they made their escape under the leadership of Moses.

Passover was a night to remember, as the command stated, "throughout your generations."

The word "passover" means "a sparing, immunity from penalty and calamity. . . . This is a sacrifice of sparing (of passing over) unto Jehovah, who passed over the houses of the Children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians."

Thenceforward, the Israelites were to observe the day as a yearly feast to the Lord.

The command was heeded for centuries. Even in the time of Christ, loyal Israelites were still observing the Passover. We read in Luke 2:41-42, concerning Jesus, "Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast."

In Luke 22 is the account of the observance of the Passover by Jesus and His disciples. "Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.

"And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them,

With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

The time of the Jewish Passover observance was plainly set forth in their law: "And they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even" (Num. 9:5). Jesus, in engaging in the upper room ceremony with His disciples and partaking of the Passover memorial with them before He suffered, was instituting a new date for the observance, one day earlier than the traditional Jewish Passover. For Jesus ate with the Twelve, was betrayed by Judas, was arrested in Gethsemane, tried before Pilate, condemned, hanged on the cross, and His body placed in Joseph's new tomb *all in one eventful day before the customary Passover observance* on the second sabbath of the year (see John 13:1; 19:13-14; Mark 15:42-43).

As Jesus took the unleavened bread on that memorable night and gave it to His disciples with the cup, He was giving new meaning to the old familiar acts which had so long been memorials of the deliverance from Egypt. By giving them the bread, He impressed upon them in symbol that His perfect life personified the spiritual bread from heaven, the words of eternal life, which they should eat and assimilate. For "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). He was giving them bread to sustain their inner lives.

Following the bread, Jesus gave them the cup, saying, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Under the Mosaic Law, blood was employed as being symbolic of life. In Leviticus 17:11 we read, "The life of the flesh is in the blood." The life is in the blood; just so the Word of God directing "The life of the flesh is in the blood." The life is the means to eternal life.

In John 6 we learn more of what it means to partake of Jesus' flesh and blood. "Then said Jesus unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink

his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (John 6:53-57). We must partake of Jesus' flesh and blood just as He lived by partaking of His Father's—the entire narrative is symbolic. So is the "blood of the new testament, which is shed for many," which Jesus gave His disciples that Passover night.

To eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood is to partake of the words of life which He personified and live by them, allowing them to transform our hearts and inner lives.

Jesus taught another impressive lesson that night with His disciples when He handed them the cup. He said, "Drink ye all of it." In other words, every commandment of My Father must be kept. By partaking of the Lord's Passover, they were consenting to keep every commandment of the

Father, and if need be, to die with Christ.

Should we today keep our Lord's Passover memorial? The apostle Paul gives us the answer. "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me" (I Cor. 11: 23-24). It was a memorial service to be observed once a year on the anniversary of the night that Jesus instituted it, the night that Jesus went out to suffer. Jesus delivered the memorial to Paul, and Paul has given it to us. And so we today partake of the emblems on the 13th of Abib, which falls this year on Sunday evening, April 11.

What a fitting time to meet, to renew our covenant to eat every word of God, to assimilate and live by them through all the days to come—on the anniversary of that evening so long ago when Jesus met with His disciples! When we remember it, we are remembering a sacred occasion—it is the Lord's Passover. ●●

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From Parent to Parent—

## We Need to Pray

"Mom."

I turned from the kitchen window, where I had been watching the snow fall, to see the earnest face of my six-year-old.

"Yes?" I knew it was something serious.

"Last night when I went to bed, I prayed real hard that God would make it snow today so I could wear my new boots. And He answered my prayer. Just like the other night, when the weather report said there would be a thunderstorm. I prayed to God not to send a thunderstorm, and He didn't!"

He was convinced. He had prayed, and God had answered. I was impressed by His child-like faith. For his problems are just as big and real to him as my grown-up problems are to me. I was pleased that he had thought to confide in God.

It reminded me of the importance of prayer for all of us. As parents, we need to pray. We have been entrusted with the job of guiding the next generation, and do we dare tackle it under our own power? For though we may find it a de-

lightful and rewarding experience, it has its full share of problems. And, as Christian parents, our duties multiply. We are preparing potential material for God's eternal kingdom!

A sobering thought. We have the greatest of responsibilities, and there are times when we feel so inadequate to meet it. But we must, and we can—with God's help. Through daily communion with our heavenly Parent, we can get the guidance, wisdom and strength that we need, that we in turn may be a source of these to our children.

Prayer can change us! It can make better fathers and mothers of us by helping us to become the kind of parents we know we should be, the kind of parents God's Word tells us we *must* be. We can become more confident in our parental duties, calmer during family difficulties, kinder and more patient to all.

Take your problems to God in prayer. You'll be drawn closer to Him and your whole family will benefit. ●●

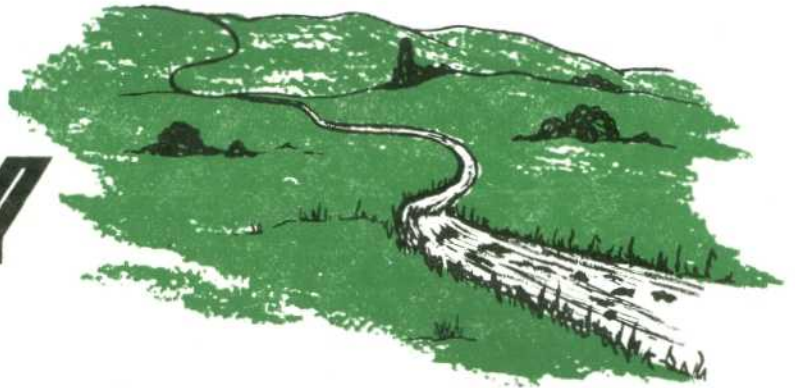
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Belittling those who have risen above the crowd doesn't work—it only shows how far you are below the top.



I am the...

**WAY**



**Y**OU are in a strange city, and you are lost. You stop to ask someone the way. He says, "I'll tell you where to go. Let me see. The street you want is the third left—no, it's the second left—after the first right from the light. There's a drug-store on the corner. Wait a minute, I think it's a gas station. Anyway, you can't miss it."

But unfortunately, you can, and it is no surprise when you *do*.

Now suppose you ask another person. He says, "I'm going that way. Just follow me, and I'll take you there." You cannot possibly get lost; this person *is* the way.

In our natural human condition, we are lost on the road of life, with no guide, no purpose, no direction, no goal. Some men are saying, "Go here." Others say, "Go there." How are we to decide? Our own sense of direction is faulty. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

Along comes Jesus and says, "I am the way." There is no confusion, no ambiguity, no danger of getting lost or misled. For Jesus doesn't merely point to the way, or tell us about the way—He *is* the way. All we have to do is follow.

What other man could ever say with such confidence: "I am the way"? None. But we must remember Jesus was no ordinary man. Nor do His words bear an ordinary message. His message is divine in its authority, for it comes from the lips of the Son of God Himself.

"I am the way," says Christ. The very suggestion of a "way" implies destination. Every way leads somewhere. And every man instinctively seeks some destination, whether it be near or far, temporary or permanent. We are attracted to Je-

sus because the destination He sets before us far surpasses any we could find of ourselves. Our own goals, at best, are limited to the boundaries of mortal life. What does Jesus have to offer at the end of His way?

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described the end of His way vividly by contrasting it with the end of all other human possibilities. "Enter by the narrow gate," He advised, "for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Matt. 7:13-14, RSV).

There are only *two* ways, He says. All human roads form the broad way, and they lead to death. There is only one other way, and I am that way. And my way leads to life. It is the difference between the easy, natural way and the hard, disciplined way. It is the difference between the short way and the long way. It is the difference between God's way with its limitless possibilities and our own, selfish way.

In this world we are constantly faced with the short, easy way which promises immediate rewards. The benefits of the longer, difficult way are in the far distance. But we must remember: Good things never come easy; lasting things never come soon. The long, difficult way is the best way in the end; for it is the *only* way that leads to eternal life!

How is Christ the way? "The words that I speak unto you," He said, "are life." By His words He taught men the way to life. And more—by His flawless example of holiness in an everyday flesh-and-blood existence like our own, He showed men

(Continued on page 27)

## Resurrection

(Continued from page 18)

nor meaning for Jesus. "He was declared to be the Son of God with power of the Resurrection from the dead"—it could not hold Him! That historical reality accomplished the transformation of the character of Peter and his friends in Jerusalem, until neither beatings or imprisonment, or the threatening possibility of martyrdom, could bend the steel-like quality of their convictions. That reality—and that alone—accounts for the incredible miracle we call the Church. Christ is alive!

No serious reader of the Acts of the Apostles can escape the impression that the men who move through its pages considered themselves in a supernatural drama—they were eye-witnesses of events God ordained them to proclaim. "What we have felt and seen"—that was the point from which their marching, militant crusade began, a crusade which will not wholly terminate until man's last enemy, death, is under the feet of his risen Lord.

### Not an Embalmed Memory

The gospel which Christ's true Church offers the world today is not an embalmed memory of something that lit up the screen of the past. It is vital, up-to-the-minute fellowship with a living Person—risen, radiant, triumphant. This is the explanation of the fact that believing men and women have been delivered from hopeless and final dejection. This is why they have quietly smiled when bereavement has whispered, "This is the end." This is why they have accepted the sorrows and assaults which circumstances bring to all, and then have risen up to live a life inspired and victorious. To them the belief that Jesus lives is as real as if they had talked with Him among the flowers in the garden on that happy first day of the week, or had been with the ten disciples that evening in the upper room when Jesus appeared and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be unto you."

And no amount of scientific shibboleths about the immutability of natural law, and no corroding doubt about the credibility of ignorant eye-witnesses, can destroy that belief.

### Relevance of the Resurrection

None of us are happy about the state of the world today. There are stresses and strains within the world situation which to many serious observers appear to be the intimations of ultimate destruction. Some of the truisms our fathers accepted

appear now to be trite and tawdry. Many creeds have cracked and many slick remedies are abandoned on the rubbish heaps of forgotten things. The world is looking for a spiritual factor, vital enough to counter both the fear and menace of atomic destruction.

The risen Lord provides that factor.

If Christ be not risen from the dead the Church of Christ is of all organizations the most miserable. But if, as the Scriptures declare—as the warm, intimate, victorious fellowship of believing hearts declare—Christ is alive. Here and now the Church can face her task with buoyant hope. Nothing in history can be more startling or revolutionary than the bringing of Christ again from the dead!

If we are left to ourselves, conditions will degenerate and overwhelm us. If we know the fellowship of the risen Christ in individual and corporate life—if life as we know it becomes a witness to His transforming power—then we too may one day help to turn the world upside down! This dynamic of life is available to us today! ●●

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## READ for Your LIFE!

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

GOD'S SPIRITUAL CREATION

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

THE GREAT APOSTASY

AFTER DEATH, WHAT?

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I am the...

## Good Shepherd

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AS with most of Jesus' teachings, the setting of the parable was familiar to those who heard it. When Jesus said, "I am the good Shepherd," His hearers immediately pictured in their minds a flock of sheep grazing contentedly under the watchful eye of the faithful shepherd.

Flocks of sheep and shepherds were a common sight in Judea. The Israelites had been an agricultural people from the beginning. Jacob went down into Egypt with flocks and herds, which he pastured in Goshen. And more than four centuries later a multitude of his descendants came out of Egypt, again with great flocks and herds.

The country of Israel is well adapted to sheep-raising, much of the land being hilly and unsuitable for anything else. The climate is ideal for producing grass. Winter rains soak the terrain while the flocks are kept in the shelter of the folds; and the warm spring sun quickly clothes the hills with a lush mantle of green. Then the shepherds lead their flocks once again upon the open pastures.

Jesus spoke knowingly of sheep and shepherds in His parable: The sheep enter the fold through the door; the shepherd calls them and leads them to pasture; the sheep will not follow the voice of a stranger. Jesus said: "He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, . . . the same is a thief and a robber. I am the door of the sheep. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. . . . I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:1, 7, 14, 27).

When the shepherds brought their sheep into the fold, as they frequently did, the sheep were let in through a small door so that each might be counted and examined. There was only one way in; all other doors were closed. Hence Jesus said, "I am the door," meaning, I am the way and the only way. "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Again, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24). The message comes to us: "I am the door." Only by learning of the Good Shepherd and living as He lived can we hope to enter His fold, His Kingdom.

The good shepherd's life is bound up in his sheep. To watch over them and to care for them is his whole life. He feels the responsibility of providing the best water and the best pasture. Likewise our Good Shepherd's whole care is for His sheep. He protects them. He guides them. He knows their weaknesses and their strengths, and He gives them the best food for spiritual nourishment now, and endless life in the future.

Good shepherds never drive the sheep; the sheep follow. If we call Christ our Good Shepherd, we likewise must be prepared to follow wherever He may lead. To new pasture or old, up rugged hills or on the level plain, we must follow. The Shepherd does not promise the traveling will always be easy and smooth. There are crosses to bear, obstacles to surmount and miles of traveling which require the utmost spiritual strength. The Good Shepherd trod it all, and so must we.

Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know

them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). If we do not hear, and do not follow, we are not one of His sheep. "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:47). They failed to hearken to His words; they were not His sheep. To know the voice of the Shepherd is to follow it.

All who are His sheep will hear His voice. Peter, quoting the words of Moses, said of the Good Shepherd: "You must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people" (Acts 3:22-23, NIV).

Jesus is the good Shepherd—and He is more. He is the Chief Shepherd. In Palestine, the "chief shepherd" was usually the owner of the flock, or a member of his immediate family. It is to our Chief Shepherd that we look for our reward. For "when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away" (1 Peter 5:4, NIV). We will—if we have followed the Good Shepherd all the way. ●●

## I Am the ... WAY

(Continued from page 24)

the perfection of total dedication to God. In Him the way to life became real and visible to human eyes like yours and mine. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again"—who else could have this written of him? Who else could say in the fullness of humble honesty, "I do always those things that please him"? (John 8:29); or, "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do"? (John 14:31).

When we outline the life of Christ, we describe the way to life for each of His followers. He led the way, being "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). "Holy, innocent, unstained, far removed from sinful men" (Heb. 7:26, Williams), Christ is indeed the way in which we strive to follow. Not only down the road of discipline and character-building do we want to follow, but clear through to the end until He awards us a place in His kingdom and a share in His immortal crown.

"I am the way," says Jesus. It is a warning: the way is hard. It is a challenge: the way is long. It is an invitation: the way is glorious, because it leads to life that is *full* and *abundant* and *everlasting*! "If any man will come after me"—remember, "I am the way"—let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Is it worth the journey? Are you ready to go with Him—all the way? ●●

April, 1976

## Our Readers Write...

### Inexcusable

It does my heart good to know that people can still go to a church that teaches and preaches what all mortal souls should know. All that is reaching the ears of the average church-goer is that God loves everyone, that He turns His eyes the other way when they do evil, and all that the poor gospel-starved congregation has to do is pay tithes, attend the parties, etc., and all will go well.

Romans 2:1 clearly tells us "Thou art inexcusable, O man." We know that God is so gracious and kind, but He will never overlook sin.

Silverspring, Maryland

C. B.

### A Blessing

Thank you for sending me regularly the copies of the *Megiddo Message*. I wish to let you know that I derive much blessing and my faith is strengthened through reading the Bible-based articles found in their pages.

I am also very thankful for the copy of *Trinity or Unity?* just received. I have read and reread it and am fully convinced of the truths presented in it to all who sincerely and prayerfully seek the truth.

In my country, where religious sects abound, many if not all proclaim the trinity dogma. I belonged to one of them for years. It is only now that I am coming to know that my foundation of Christian faith was anchored on an unsteady ground.

Isabela, Philippines

E. C. O.

### A Balanced Diet

We have much learning still to do, and we find learning a happy experience. I find the literature most satisfying and can read it over and over again, which helps me in talking to others about God's kingdom and the many blessings it will bring to those who obtain a place there. How we must strive for that.

We read from the *Message*, then three chapters from the Bible. In this way we get a balanced diet of spiritual food. Then we end with a run through one of the cassettes. This makes our evenings very satisfying to us.

Cheshire, England

N. T.

### Grateful

Just a few lines to let you know how much this month's *Message* means to me. I'm so thankful for all the wonderful articles in it. I keep all my copies to read and reread over many times.

Pasadena, Texas

R. W.



*Ye call me WAY*  
*and walk me not:*

*Ye call me LIFE*  
*and live me not:*

*Ye call me MASTER*  
*and obey me not:*

*Ye call me LIGHT*  
*and see me not:*

*Ye call me BREAD*  
*and eat me not:*

*Ye call me TRUTH*  
*and believe me not:*

*Ye call me STAR*  
*and follow me not:*

*Ye call me LORD*  
*and serve me not:*

**IF I CONDEMN YOU, BLAME ME NOT!**