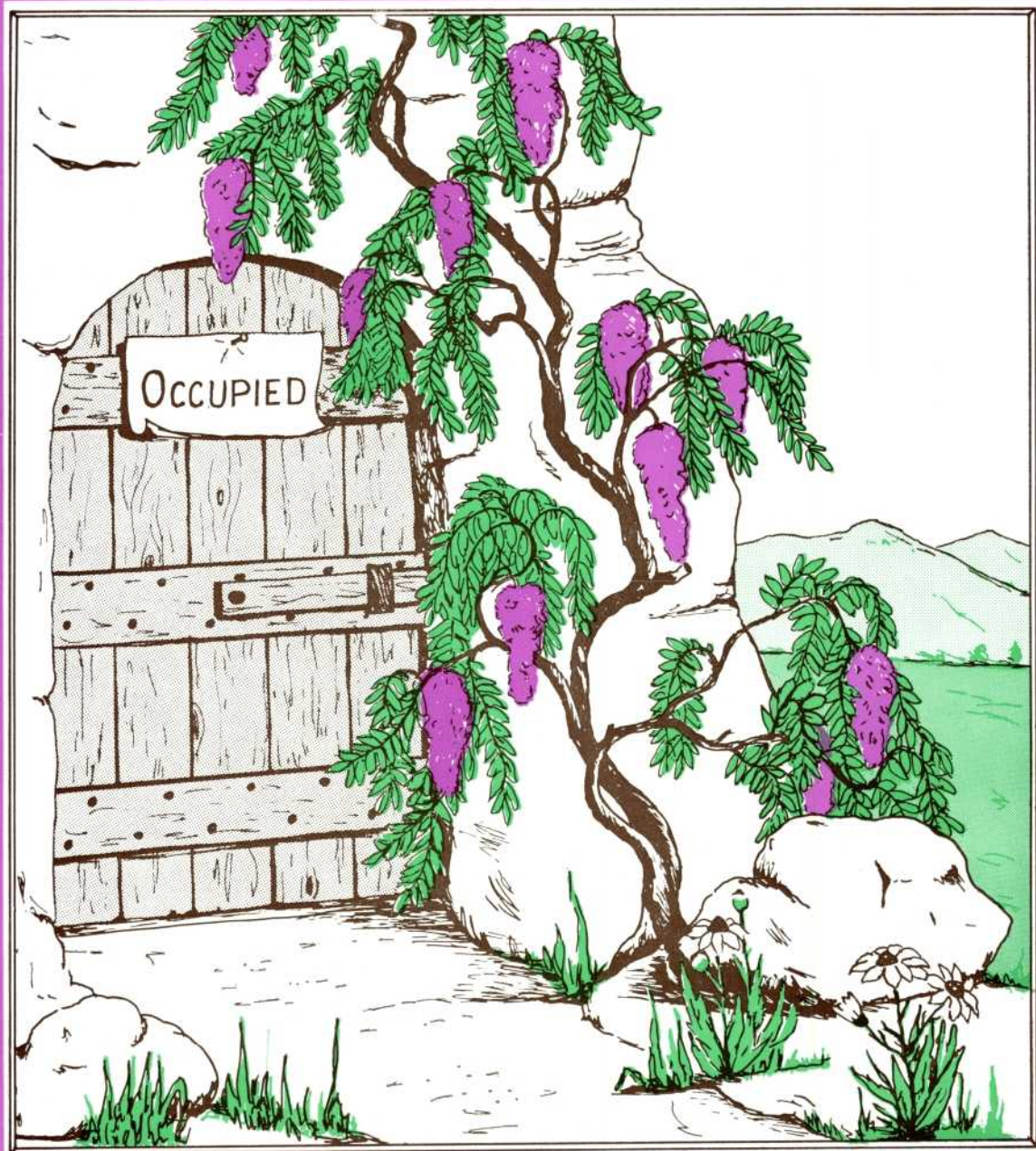


Megiddo Message



Are YOU Still Living In the Tomb?

Backward, Christian Soldiers?

BACKWARD. The word strikes us cold. We freeze in our tracks. Who wants to go backwards? We would rather stand still than retreat; rather go nowhere than go back. Nothing good is associated with going backwards. Wasted energy, wasted time, wasted strength and all the misfortunes of yesterday are all that we can associate with going backwards. When did any good come from retreat?

Imagine yourself in church. The opening hymn number is announced, and you recognize it as one of your favorites—it is “Onward Christian Soldiers.” You leaf through your hymnal to find the page, and—immediately you discover that the title has been changed to read “Backward, Christian Soldiers.” What is your reaction? Do you still feel like singing with heart and soul? Can you rejoice in the thought of “Backward, Christian soldiers, backward into war”?

We do not want to sing it; we do not want to say it; yet, how many times have we showed by our lives a desire to go backward rather than forward? This was what was written of the stubborn Israelites, “They went backward and not forward, . . . they did worse than their fathers” (Jer. 7:24, 26). No high-sounding recommend is this, no honor to attain unto. How did they do it? “This thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you” (v. 23). The entreaty was earnest, and the recompense would have been tremendous—“that it may be well unto you.” But—

They actually preferred going backward. They preferred to persist in their own stubborn, hardhearted way. “They hearkened not, nor inclined their ear”—they would not even listen!

What of us? As we pause at this point of new beginning and take a backward glance, what do we see in ourselves? Is ours a steady onward march with our one goal

the Kingdom of God, or are we occasionally distracted by those things we have left behind—with the result that we look backward, and are tempted to *go* backward? There is no denying it; we are tempted to do the things we know we should not; we are tempted to build again those walls we worked so hard to knock down. We have been tempted in the year that is past; we shall be tempted in the year that is ahead.

And what shall we do? Let the words of the Wise Man ring in our ears and burn deep into our hearts: “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil” (Prov. 4:25-27).

If our eyes are looking straight before us, we shall have no inclination to go backward—who would attempt to go backward while looking ahead! And what lies ahead is too spectacular to forget. Everything of glory, honor, praise, happiness, beauty and love lies ahead, with everlasting life in which to enjoy them. How can we draw our eyes away from all this? If we keep this thought in our minds, how can we even glance backward?

There is something else about “Backward Christian Soldiers” that multiplies the problem. Loyal soldiers of Christ do not go backward, for Christ never orders a backward step. The only command they ever hear is “Forward.” So “Backward Christian Soldiers” becomes a contradiction; we are either moving forward as a soldier of Christ, or we are not one of His soldiers.

What kind of soldiers will we prove to be—strong, enduring, faithful? Or will the tests of conflict show that we have other loyalties, other desires, other interests that come ahead of faithful service to Christ?

Let’s make “Onward Christian Soldiers” our theme song for the coming year, and make every day show that we are actually moving on. We have no reason to stand still, and much less to go backward. ●●

MEGIDDO means

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

Bible Quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—*New English Bible*

NIV—*New International Version*

NAS—*New American Standard*

RSV—*Revised Standard Version*

TLB—*The Living Bible*

TEV—*Today's English Version*

Phillips—*The New Testament in Modern English*

Berkeley—*The Modern Language New Testament*

Weymouth—*The New Testament in Modern Speech*

Moffatt—*The Bible, A New Translation*

Megiddo Message

Vol. 66, No. 4

April, 1979

EDITORIAL

2 Backward, Christian Soldiers?

An impossibility, for Christian soldiers were never ordered to retreat.

SPECIAL FEATURES

4 The Tomb Is Empty!

There is life, light and hope—beyond the tomb, because Jesus is alive.

8 To the Seven Churches—and Us:

Lost—Your First Love?

"I Know Thy Works"

17 How Did the Galaxies Come Into Existence?

by George R. Knight

Both great and small declare the glory of our Creator.

21 Prayer Upon Entering Church

27 The Abib Calendar

REGULAR FEATURES

13 Bible Study Hour: *The Angels Are Active*

What do the angels do?

20 Our Readers Write

22 Scriptural Spotlight: *Thy Speech Bewrayeth Thee*

On Matthew 26:73. It is possible to deny our profession by the words we speak.

26 Questions

Discussing Jesus' eating with tax-collectors and sinners; the twelve apostles; also the choosing of the twelfth apostle.

28 Cover Feature: *Renew Your Resolutions*

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

The MEGIDDO MESSAGE is published monthly by the Megiddo Mission Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619. Second Class postage for the MEGIDDO MESSAGE (USPS 338-120) paid at Rochester, New York. SUBSCRIPTION RATE: One year, \$2.00.

The Tomb Is Empty!

Jesus Is Alive!

IMAGINE the gloom that hung over the disciples of Jesus while He, their Leader, Lord and Master, lay lifeless in the tomb. They, who had shared in His earthly life and ministry; they in whom He had confided the glorious prospects of the future; they whom He had taught in the ways of God, who had followed Him as He went about teaching and preaching the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God—it had all seemed like a marvelous dream. And now, suddenly, like a dream, it was gone. They were masterless. They were sheep without a shepherd. It was all over. The mission had failed. Hope, which had soared so high, plunged to the depths of despair. Jesus was dead. What were they to think? What could they do? What of the salvation and deliverance He had proclaimed? The glowing moments were gone forever; life could never be the same again, with Jesus lying in the tomb, dead, defeated. The disciples dispersed to their several homes to rest, to reflect, to weep. It was all over.

Then dawned the morning after the Sabbath, with its peculiar reports. Despite what Jesus had told them, that He would die and rise again, they were not expecting a resurrection. Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, went early to the sepulcher hoping they might somehow be able to move the stone and embalm the body. They brought sweet spices “that they might come and anoint him,” reads the account in the gospel of Mark. And what did they find? The stone was rolled away, and the tomb was empty! They were astonished. At once, fear gripped their hearts. What had happened? Had some thieves removed the body? Even then they did not suspect a resurrection. Mary ran off to tell Peter and John, who set out immediately to see for themselves. They raced to the tomb, and looked in. Yes, the women were right; the tomb was empty.

Still the gloom was not gone. Peter and John “went away again unto their own home,” for “as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead” (John 20:9-10).

But Mary stayed near the tomb, weeping. “And as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre,” and saw “two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.” They said to her, “Woman, why weepest thou?” She answered, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.” She was still in the gloom of the tomb. Jesus was missing, but still dead, as far as she could imagine. Then, as she turned away from the tomb, she saw a man whom she supposed to be the gardener. He spoke to her. “Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?” She replied, “Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.” Then this stranger spoke one word, “Mary.” She turned, electrified by the voice she knew so well. “Master!” she replied. It was Jesus Himself! He was alive! He was standing before her! Suddenly she realized what had happened; and the gloom was gone, gone forever. Jesus was alive! She hurried away to tell the other disciples that she had seen the Risen Lord, and that He had spoken to her.

It Is Empty!

Today, as we ponder anew this great event, on this the Resurrection Day of our Lord, we see something of beauty about that empty tomb. No other tomb in the whole world holds so much of meaning for us. Why? Because it is empty!

*Stone door ajar beckoning entrance and scrutiny,
Dawn's first glimmer on bare rock slab,
Linen shrouding void rather than still flesh,
Riven wax signaling death's unshackled bonds,
Angelic invocation, “Come, see”—a corpseless
tomb,*

*Hewn crypt radiating heaven's brilliance.
Grief's approaching plod turned to wonder's
breathless haste,
Preserving spice discarded to sweeten morning air.
Was emptiness ever so full of meaning,
Or nothing ever so eloquent?*

There is something haunting, something forbidding about a tomb. We shrink from the reality of death. It is a subject so final as to haunt the mightiest. Yet, in the normal course of events, death is inescapable; the day comes when every man must die. Death comes to us on the streets, on the battlefields, on our highways, often in our homes. There is no running away from it. It is one of the most real facts of life, and the most final.

But the resurrection of Christ has changed all this. There is light within *this* tomb; Christ's tomb is empty, empty forever. Jesus is alive!

The reality of the resurrection alters our entire perspective of life. Here is hope which is as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast. Grasp its significance and the life you experience here can never be the same again. In the darkest hour of suffering or trial, God is still in control, and that life which is wrought in Him shall someday know the workings of that same power which "wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:19-20).

Here is the point at which our faith touches each of our lives personally. We all are mortal creatures of earth, subject to all the woes that beset humanity. But *you* and *I* can have hope; you and I can someday experience a higher type of life, even be made equal unto the angels, never to die anymore. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" will be the ringing triumph of that Day. It is the promise of God, and shall surely be fulfilled. We have hope, radiant hope. And the surety of this hope is the resurrection of Christ. Jesus is alive! The resurrection is God's guarantee of all these promises to us. "Because I live," said Jesus, "ye shall live also." Without the prospect of resurrection, the future is dark and hopeless. But Jesus has showed us how death can be defeated, and this makes the future radiant with hope.

"Jesus Defeated . . ."

In June, 1815, all England was awaiting news of the outcome of the Battle of Waterloo, in which the Duke of Wellington opposed Napoleon Bonaparte. In those days there were no telephones or telegraphs, so watchers were stationed along the coast to catch semaphore signals which were waved from sailing vessels. From the top of the Cathedral in Winchester, a watcher spied a sailing vessel wig-wagging its message. The signals, translated into words, were "Wellington Defeated." The fog closed in, and the rest of the message could not be read, so these words were re-

layed across England from messenger to messenger, and all the nation was plunged into gloom. Defeat, defeat. Then, back at the Cathedral of Winchester, the fog cleared, and the watcher was able to read more of the message. It read like this: "Wellington defeated the enemy." In a moment, sorrow changed to rejoicing, for England had been victorious.

So it was when Jesus died. His disciples, reading only the first part of the message, could see nothing but defeat. Jesus had been crucified. The sun was blotted from sight, darkness covered the face of the earth, and there was an earthquake. The events caused even the Roman centurion to exclaim, "Truly this was the Son of God!" Jesus died, and they took His body from the cross and laid it in Joseph's new tomb. Now the Pharisees rubbed their hands in satisfaction, as if to say, "Well, that's that." It looked like "Jesus defeated," "Jesus defeated," to anyone watching for a signal. Then—

Then came the startling word of resurrection. News of victory flashed from watchman to watchman. "Jesus defeated the enemy; Jesus defeated the enemy." Death was vanquished. Jesus was alive! Gloom changed to glory, sorrow to triumphant joy, "for now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."

Resurrection Impact

Most of us believe in the resurrection of Jesus, and speak of it with an assured confidence. We readily confess that the evidence is abundant, that the living Christ is the center of our faith. But what is its effect upon us? Have we felt the full impact of Christ's resurrection and realized what it means to us? Are we living as men and women who believe fully in the power of God to give us life beyond our normal span? Or are we living in the gloom of hopelessness and despair, as though this life were all there is?

Unless we can see life beyond the tomb, this world has only sorrow to offer us in the end. If Jesus be still held within the grip of death—and He is our Perfect Example—then that is all we may expect. As the apostle Paul reasoned, "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and 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: and if Christ be not 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. 15:13-19). Why? Because we have nothing here, and no hope of anything beyond, not even a false hope.

But no, we are ready to testify with Paul that Jesus lives and that resurrection *is* a possibility: "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. . . . But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (vs. 20, 23). The fact of the resurrection of Christ stands a living testimony to an eternal victory over suffering and death. The pain was but for a moment; He lives forever and ever. We can look back at the empty tomb and rejoice with the apostles, testifying indeed that "he that was dead now liveth."

Transforming Confidence

Being so well authenticated, the resurrection of Christ provides us with fullest confidence in the future. However full of uncertainties the present may seem, our hearts are warmed with

the prospect that someday *we* may be clothed upon with a body "like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21). When He shall appear, we—if faithful—may be "like him, for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2).

What a transforming effect this confidence should have upon us. With such promises guaranteed to us by the God of the universe, depending only upon our fulfilling our part of the contract, we can have hope. If we fully believe that these heavenly endowments can someday be ours, we cannot remain the same. Life is brief and filled with adversities; without the hope of the resurrection and life beyond, we exist from day to day in the tomb of our uncertainties, without God and without hope in the world. But why go on living in the shadow of the tomb when there is evidence of light beyond—when the tomb of Christ is empty! Jesus lives! Knowing this, we see all life in a new light; life becomes a challenge to the best that is in us, the best that God can use in the world to come.

When the apostle Paul eloquently declared His lifelong ambition in his letter to the Philippians,

Let Us Pray . . .

Eternal Father, this morning brings us under renewed obligations to thank and praise Thee that our lives are still spared, and for the degree of health and strength we are enjoying, and for Thy continued goodness and mercies to us.

We thank Thee for the abundant evidence that we have of Thine existence, and of the truthfulness of Thy Word, and the verity of Thy great and precious promises. May we know beyond the shadow of uncertainty that Thou art, and that Thou wilt amply reward all who diligently serve Thee. We thank Thee for the great buttress to our faith and hope the resurrection of our Lord and King provides. Death could not hold Him. He rose triumphantly over death and the grave, and now is alive forevermore.

And we know the same cause will produce the same effect each time the process is repeated. A well-lived life, a character free from any defilement of sin, is certain to be rewarded with immortality, eternal life. In giving to Thy Son to have life within Himself, Thou also hast delegated to Him the authority to impart that life to whomsoever He will. May we so live as to be worthy of that gift.

We thank Thee for the outline of Thy glorious

plan here upon earth, that the time is now imminent when Thou wilt break Thy long silence, and revive Thy work in the midst of the years; that Thy beloved Son shall return to earth to take the reins of government into His own hands, destroying the forces of evil and inaugurating Thy glorious Kingdom.

Alert us that if we ever awake with Thy likeness at the dawn of eternity's day, we now must awake to righteousness and sin not, put on the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill any of its unlawful desires and aims.

Grant that our intimate association with self may not blind us to our true character, but may we see ourselves as Thou dost see us, learn to abhor the evil, loathe ourselves for the many, many times we have transgressed Thy holy law, and resolve here and now that the sins which have held us back shall hold us back no longer.

Be with us in this service. Be with all who are striving to learn and live Thy blessed precepts. Be with those in sickness or trouble, with those who are carrying on under adverse circumstances, strengthen and sustain them as Thou hast promised.

Forgive us for the sins we have turned from and forsaken, and lead us in the way everlasting, for Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, forever. In Jesus' name. Amen.

it was the resurrection of Christ that he emphasized: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:10-11).

The resurrection had a strong personal effect upon Paul. It was not a cold fact of history. Jesus had given him a purpose and a goal toward which to strive. Quite miraculously he had seen the Risen Christ; and now his whole desire was to so live that he might someday live again.

Resurrection viewed in this light involved more for Paul than a mere profession; in his way of thinking, belief meant hard experience and struggle. There is no automatic progress in the spiritual realm. Hear his words: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." These words reflect the deep yearning and desire he felt to so conduct his own life that he might merit the eternal favor of the One to whom he had dedicated his life. To Paul, believing Christ arose meant more than acknowledging a fact of history; it was an event to be shared, followed by a challenge to be answered. There was in Paul an intense longing to get out of the gloom of the tomb, out of the life that ended in hopelessness, and into the condition where his whole life and outlook could "be radiant with hope" (Rom. 15:13, Phillips).

This devoted, mature minister of Christ, nearing the end of his remarkable career, knew he had spent his life serving Christ; he knew he had given years of faithful service. Still, hear this almost agonized aspiration: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, . . . if by any means I might attain" (Phil. 3:10-11). Here is desire that is intense. Does it not rebuke our sometimes wavering, vacillating faith? If Paul, after years of earnest striving, was still yearning "if by any means" he might attain, what of us who have so much less to give?

Out of the Tomb

Paul's earnestness of determination and concern show that real belief in the resurrection is difficult. Far easier is it to go on living in the tomb, than to get out of it. Far easier is it to follow on blindly in the way with the masses—and find death in the end—than to strike out upon the path of sacrifice and service to God. Paul's earnestness in his faith shows us that the resurrection is something that can be apprehended, or something that can be allowed to escape. It is something that can be pressed for, or tragically neglected.

How did Paul hope to attain? "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Phil. 3:10). Here is the way to resurrection: by "being made conformable unto his death." The Apostle is using Christ's death as a symbol of the death which every believer must conform to, must share, must participate in. Each must die to sin, even as Christ did. Is not "death" a fitting symbol for a surrender so complete?

Paul has no simple formula to offer, no seven easy steps to victorious living, but the solemn measured stages leading to the death of self and out into a new and resurrected life in Christ. After we die to our old ways and thoughts, we can begin life anew on a higher plane—with the resurrected Christ. "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" (Col. 3:1-2).

Again and again in his Epistles, Paul taught this truth. It is what he described in Romans 6: "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Rom. 6:4-5). Paul is referring here to the rapturous experience that was Christ's in being delivered from the grave; and he is using "resurrection" as a figure of the believer's new life in Christ. Every believer must die to his former life, then get out of the tomb of his old desires and habits, leaving behind everything that ends in the darkness of death, and begin life anew in faith and hope.

Newness of Life

Apparently very few people even in Paul's day really understood the meaning of this great transformation from the old to the new, that "newness" of resurrected life which is for the daily walk and the "newness of spirit" which is for daily service; for the Apostle begins each passage relating to them with "Know ye not?" (Rom. 6:3; 7:1). Apparently they did not understand fully what should be new about resurrected living; do we?

Just what is this "newness of life," and how may we create it in our own practical daily experience?

This consideration is vital, for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are
(Continued on page 24)

TO THE 7 CHURCHES

-- AND US

HEARKEN! A message is thundering from Patmos. To believers of the first century it sounded first, and now it continues to sound, even to us. It is the "revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass, . . . sent and signified . . . by his angel unto his servant John." It is a message of warning, of love, of promise, of faith. It is a message that thunders with authority. It should make our ears ring, our feet fly—and our hearts rejoice.

How is this possible in a time of so much turmoil and unrest, when crisis follows crisis and men's hearts are failing them for fear? It is possible because all that we see is but the prelude to a *better* time, the darkness before the dawn. This is the time to "look up, and lift up [our] heads." Never before was our redemption so near. Never before was deliverance so nigh.

Are we seeking something sure, something solid, something certain? Hear the authority behind this message. It is "the message of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him." These are not merely the thoughts and imaginings of men about merely human matters. These are words that bear the authority of God Himself, and every word is laden with heavenly meaning.

The authority is divine; every part of the message is literally packed with phrases that indicate the glory and power of God and of Christ, in contrast to the proud and fading glitter of human establishments. Rome—or any other power of this world—may shine, but its light cannot continue. And long after its glory has been reduced to ashes, the Kingdom of God will still be growing in splendor. The future belongs to Him whose position is entirely impregnable. Would any assault the power of God? Let him first open his eyes and see himself as the worthless speck his Creator sees. Let him see his weakness, his limitations, his utter inability to do anything without God, and then let him humbly acknowledge the glory of his Maker.

The message of Christ is direct. It bears author-

ity, and it strikes. Squarely at the point where divine authority and human responsibility meet, it strikes. Not much longer now may men go on oblivious to the divine hand that is over them. The hour is critical, and action is needed urgently. If men are going to survive the days ahead, they must take heed—now! Why? Because the end of opportunity is near. "Lo," says He that "holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, . . . lo, I am coming very soon" (Rev. 2:1; 22:20, Moffatt Bible).

This is no fantasy, no dream, no vision of the night. It is real. Everything about this message rings with reality. In it, general principles come to life in a new way as they are associated with actual persons and actual times.

Here are seven messages from Christ to seven churches. The message sets the seven churches in their true perspective, against the background of eternity. The judgments upon them are in matters pertaining to their eternal existence; the blessings promised are in terms of eternity. The people of these churches are in the present world only by necessity. As they move through this world they are surrounded by an invisible glory—the promises of God. They belong not to anyone in this world but to Him who is the Alpha and the Omega of the new world, that glorious world which soon shall supersede the old and fill the earth with righteousness.

So the message comes to them—and to us. The message comes because we, like them, have not yet attained. There are qualifications to be met; there are warnings to hear and heed; there are sins to be put away and works of faith to be done. Here are messages which need to become part of the living tissue of every hearer, part of the life of every member.

In the series of articles to follow, let us see what some of the messages to the seven churches may be saying to us today, for Jesus is still speaking.

To the Church at Ephesus . . .

EPHESUS was one of the notable cities of ancient times. Its citizens called it the metropolis of Asia. It was wealthy and cultured, but utterly corrupt. It boasted the magnificent temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the world, which brought wealth to the city.

But here, amidst this vile setting, we find the little church of Ephesus. It was a church uniquely privileged in the galaxy of spiritual gifts possessed by its founder and successive pastors. Paul, Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila, Timothy and John

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

all contributed to the spiritual life of Ephesus. From the heights of spiritual meaning in the letter Paul wrote to the Ephesian brethren, it is evident that the church had grasped the great teachings of Christ.

But by the time Jesus sent His message to them, the church was forty years old, and the membership was of the second and third generation. The newness and zeal of the forebears had all but become commonplace. However, Christ still expressed His warm appreciation of the stability and strength of the previous generation.

In the opening sentence of the letter, the understanding of the Master stands out in clear relief. They were loyal in labor (Rev. 2:2). Sacrificial toil and unflagging patience in the midst of weariness was the whole life and conduct of the church. Theirs was a life of industry with an abundance of good works. There was no passiveness in their patience. Persistence to the point of exhaustion was a virtue Christ highly commended. It might

be even worthy to note that the three words used in this sentence occur also in Paul's letter to the Thessalonian brethren, where he commended their "work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope" (I Thess. 1:3).

Then, too, they were intolerant of impostors. The Ephesian church could bear anything except the presence of impostors.

Doctrinal discernment was also very much in evidence (v. 2). The recent crisis with the self-styled super-apostles—the Nicolaitanes—proved that the Ephesians believed in Christ. Forewarned by Paul in his parting words to them (Acts 20:29), they were alert and on watch for the "grievous wolves." But . . . but . . . Christ's penetrating eye saw a fatal defect beneath the fair exterior. He detected something missing, missing. . . .

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience. . . . Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2:2, 4).

LOST--Your First Love?

TO LOVE someone or something is as natural as to breathe, but how frequently we are astonished by love's brevity. Two individuals vow their love for each other is deep enough to carry them through a lifetime together regardless of the stresses that beset their way. Unfortunately such is not always the case. Unfaithfulness or dissatisfaction with circumstances all too often results in a deterioration of that first love. The same is true of the love of material things. Someone purchases a new automobile, equipped with all the fabulous "extras"; but how soon a little feeling of dissatisfaction creeps in and the first thrill begins to wear off. Another person acquires a "dream home" that is supposedly just "perfect." But is it? After a short time it becomes obvious that things could have been arranged differently; and the luster fades.

Have you ever stopped to consider how very applicable this all-too-human tendency is to things spiritual? We are exceedingly fortunate to have within our possession the pearl of great price; but has our love for it remained undimmed by the passage of time? Nay more, has its luster brightened as we have become better acquainted with the deep and wonderful words of wisdom and instruction? Do our hearts still thrill with the realization that these are indeed the words

of an eternal God? Does the thought of future glory and everlasting life, free forever from all the care of mortality, still fire within us such a white heat of determination that we will allow nothing to hinder us from reaching our goal?

Or, upon closer and completely honest evaluation of ourselves and our spiritual conduct, are we constrained to admit that Ezekiel's words of warning apply to us? It may be that our love for God and His demands for a continual, unabating endeavor toward perfection of character has become "a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for [we] hear [His] words, but . . . do them not" (Ezek. 33:32).

Jesus certainly was cognizant of this weakness of human nature. His words of warning to the church of Ephesus are just as timely now as they were when uttered centuries ago. He commended them for their many good works, but at the same time He warned them that they were falling short of the ultimate of achievement. Why? Because they had left their first love; they no longer loved Him as they did when it was all new and challenging—the luster had faded! They were working because they felt they had to, because they considered it was their duty; the deep abiding love that inspires unusual service was lacking.

TO THE 7 CHURCHES

And what was Jesus' remedy for their partial apathy? It was couched in one word—*remember*. They were to remember the time when their love for Him and the saving gospel was so strong

that they could—and did—willingly and gladly do and bear anything that His name might be glorified. He wanted them to remember their former fervor; He desired that they repent and rekindle again the love and devotion which had once been the source of their inner strength. He knew they had the potential for far greater service, for more consecrated living; consequently He stressed the absolute necessity for quick, decisive action. He warned them in no uncertain terms that unless they remembered and repented of their backsliding ways He would come unto them quickly with judgment.

And now, what about us? Just how well are *we* maintaining the luster of *our* first love? Is our consecration resolute, or do we continue to vacillate between various degrees of hot and cold? Remember, our very best efforts, or conversely, our halfhearted endeavors, are not hidden away in the dark. Angels are keeping a true and faithful record. They know whether ours is a labor of love or just a sham. True, there are times when we do first-rate at deceiving ourselves, and possibly our closest and dearest friends; but every thought and deed is open before the all-searching eyes of the angels. We cannot hide from God!

It might be advantageous to ask ourselves the same question Paul put to his Galatian brethren: "You were making splendid progress; who put you off the course you had set for truth?" (Gal. 5:7, Phillips). Who did it? Of course there are times when we would like to blame someone else for our failures, but most frequently the cause can be attributed to no one but ourselves.

Without doubt, lack of faith is one of the prime causes of indifference and apathy in our Christian endeavor. It is absolutely necessary that we make and take the time to continually revitalize our faith by careful reading and study of God's Word until it comes alive in us and is indelibly stamped on our minds. We need to read over and over again the plan of the ages as outlined in God's Word. Then we need to compare what we read with current events in the world about us and see how rapidly we are approaching the consum-

mation of that plan. Man's faulty and corrupt governmental system will fall and in its place Jesus, our future King, will establish a better Kingdom where peace, justice and righteousness will reign supreme. Realizing this will spur us in our effort toward holiness.

With such a bright future before us, it seems our love for God and His truth would increase daily. Everything, yes, everything worthwhile and eternal lies just beyond. Think of a life free from sickness, with never even a thought of being tired! Try to visualize what it will be to have an intellect ever expanding in its scope. And this is not all God offers those who love Him with heart and soul—indeed it will be exceeding, abundantly above all we can ask or think. Isn't it really well worth everything we put into it?

What was that about *losing* our first love?—can we possibly have *enough* love for something so grand?

"I Know Thy Works"

WHO is speaking? Surely it is not man addressing God, for what does man know? He has always longed to know the secret things of the Lord. Today he can openly view the heavens and openly declare what he sees without fear of persecution; even so, the shackles of superstition have not been completely cast off; man cannot yet say to God, "I know Thy works."

When Galileo made his telescope to view the heavens, it is said that people were afraid to look at the heavens through it, in case what he said was true. He was threatened with torture and burning at the stake if he did not sign a statement agreeing to the immobility of the earth. The old man lost his courage and signed it, but was heard to murmur as he laid down his pen, "and yet it moves."

Today man has invented many wonderful instruments to view the handiwork of God and to try to find out God's works. But Jehovah has declared, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further," so man is limited in what he can ferret out from God's storehouse of knowledge. We are told in Romans 11:33-36 that it is indeed limitless. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding

out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever." Again we read, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God" (Deut. 29:29).

In the Soviet Union a giant telescope has been made by which men can gaze into the heavens and see the wonderful creation of God. It is claimed to be the largest in the world, requiring sixteen years to build. Its twenty-six-million-dollar, forty-two-ton pyrex glass mirror was cast and ground in Leningrad and was floated on a barge twelve hundred miles through wandering canals and the Volga River, then carried three hundred miles on a special truck to the site where it was to be used.

The Russians have not officially acknowledged this, but apparently two small air bubbles in the glass have cut its viewing capabilities down by ten percent in some areas, so that its value is greatly reduced. There are plans to cast a new mirror; the faulty one will then probably be discarded—all because of a small flaw. What extreme cost it will involve, to discard the imperfect glass and cast another; but in such a case man wants nothing less than perfection. Should God require any less in His human instruments?

Man cannot know God's ways; even with so great a telescope he has only lightly scratched the surface of His magnificent knowledge. But how different it is with God and with those He has endowed with the power to read the thoughts and intents of the hearts of men.

When on earth, Jesus His only begotten Son had this mighty power given Him by His eternal Father. We are told in Matthew 9:4, "And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" And again in Mark 2:6-8 we are told that Jesus knew what the scribes were thinking about on a certain occasion. "Immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?" Jesus "knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (John 2:25).

Jesus gave this amazing power to His apostles—at least the apostle Peter had it, for without hesitation he could read the minds of Ananias and Sapphira, as told in Acts 5:1-10. Ananias and Sapphira had not lied to man but to the Holy Spirit and to God about the amount of money they had received for the sale of their property. The punishment was swift in this case

and ever so final. No second chance here to do better.

Oh, when the great Judge comes, how final it will be then for those who have not put all evil aside, for those who have thought to keep their own ways.

Who says, "I know thy works"? It is Jesus speaking to men, Jesus speaking through John the Revelator in a warning which He addresses to the seven churches. "I know thy works." This warning is equally valid for us today.

When Christ returns to this earth with all His holy angels from on high, He will have this same mighty power to read men's minds and all the secrets of their hearts. All will be as a sea of glass before Him.

What a sobering thought this should be for us, as fellow travelers to the fair Beulah land. We are to reflect God's pure light perfectly, and any flaw or bubble in our makeup will cause us to be cast aside as unacceptable. It may not be visible on the surface, but God sees what is underneath; "I know thy works."

God has always demanded perfection of His servants, and He will not accept anything less. Yes, it is the standard He has set up. We know this because we read in His blessed Word, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). Abram also knew what the Lord demanded, for we are told in Genesis 17:1, "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." God will accept nothing that is inferior.

We are told on every hand today that this cannot be done, but listen to what the Lord says—and not man who enjoys making excuses. We read in Job 1:1, "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." Could anything be plainer? We read also of Zacharias and Elisabeth, that "they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6). Let us throw away our crutches and walk with God.

When we stand before the great Assize, we will not be able to plead insanity and waste the great Judge's time, as is being done now in the courts of the land. All will be as an open book before Him; not a single spot or wrinkle in the innermost recesses of our hearts will escape His all-penetrating gaze. Who shall abide with Him? Only the pure in heart. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his

holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation" (Ps. 24:3-5).

What a terrible loss it will be for us if we are cast aside and another takes our place—when we could have viewed God's handiwork for all ages to come!

The recording angels are watching and recording—every word, responsible or foolish; every thought, pure or base; every action, kind or unkind. Let us resolve this God-given new year to grind out all the flaws and bubbles in our characters, get our hearts cleaned up and our works right so there will be no evil for our Master to find at His return.

Oh, there is a grand time coming for those who are found without spot or blemish. Let this thought make us pull forward in the yoke as we have never done before, for our Judge is even at the door and there is no doubt of the truthfulness of His statement, "I know thy works." ●●

(MORE ON THE 7 CHURCHES NEXT ISSUE)

Beware of Trivia

ONE of the biggest hindrances to spiritual growth is "trivia." It is a nonsense plant that thrives everywhere; there are always those little trivial things that come in and take up the time that should be spent on important growth.

As in Jesus' parable of the Great Feast, they all began to make excuse. Like many people they were prisoners of the unimportant. They allowed themselves to be completely absorbed with trivial pursuits and thus missed the kind of life which would bring the greatest reward. No one can be made such a prisoner against his will; each makes his own decision by his choice of activities. The shackles which he forges for himself are forged strand by strand.

We can also become prisoners of the unimportant by putting off doing what we know is best for us, what we should be doing. That is why Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." First things must come first. That is the only way we can make the growth to spiritual excellence. ●●

Turning From, Turning To

When the power of divine Law touches our lives, it changes us—our moods, our objectives, our dispositions. It banishes fear and worry. It provides a new force, a new power, a new purpose to our lives, a new joy and peace that petty everyday trials cannot destroy.

Of course mere turning is not the full answer: there is something to be turned *from* and there is something to be turned *to*. Turning from the old life could be only a resolution—and the street of broken dreams is paved with good resolutions. It is not enough to turn *from* the old life; one must turn *to* the new, adding to faith the courage to live out God's Word.

Life is too short to be always in a commotion about things. These worldly possessions make life easier to live, but we cannot put our affections on such things as houses and money. It is our eternal life—a chance to live forever in God's Kingdom—that we must work and study for.

We need to face a new direction, to break completely with the old life. Then God will turn His face toward us.

— From a Reader in Davenport, Iowa

A New Year Prayer

The year is gone, beyond recall,
With all its hopes and fears;
With all its bright and gladdening smiles,
With all its mourners' tears;

Thy thankful people praise Thee, Lord,
For countless gifts received;
And pray for grace to keep the faith
Which saints of old believed.

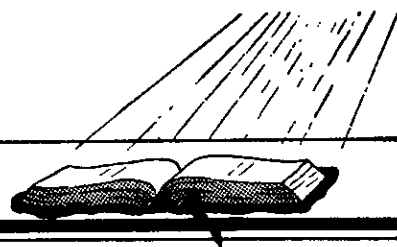
To Thee we come, O gracious Lord,
The newborn year to bless;
Defend our land from pestilence;
Give peace and plenteousness;

Help us, we pray, to honor Thee
The growth of vice restrain;
And help us all with sin to strive;
And crowns of life to gain.

From evil deeds that stain the past
We now desire to flee;
And pray that future years may all
Be spent, good Lord, for Thee.

—from the Latin, tr. by F. Pott.

BIBLE STUDY HOUR



The Angels Are Active

WHEN you hear the word "angel" what comes to your mind? A spirit-being, a mere phantom? Something you can neither see nor touch? Or do you think of angels as human-looking beings—except for their huge wings? Or do you visualize them as white-robed youths with halos around their heads and playing harps?

The majority hold to one or more of the above ideas—none of which accord with what we can learn from the Bible regarding angels. Such misconceptions have come about from printed pictures made by humans—none of whom have ever seen an angel.

In the Old Testament, the word "angel" is the translation of the Hebrew *malak*, and in the New Testament it is translated from the Greek *aggelos*. In both Hebrew and Greek the same word is translated "messenger" as well as "angel." In general, when the messenger was a heavenly one, the word "angel" was used; in the case of humans, it was simply "messenger."

Question. Angels are God's messengers. They have filled a very important place in the plan of God, so today we are going to devote our study to them.

First, we should find out just what angels are. Are they just spirits, like a puff of wind?

Answer. No. They are actual beings, not just spirits as people today think of spirits. Three of them came to visit Abraham and the Bible calls them "men."

Q. Yes, that is right. Can anyone tell us more about these three angels?

A. They talked with Abraham like men. Abraham prepared a meal for them and they washed themselves and ate.

Q. But how do we know they were

not just three men—like men of today?

A. By the things they did. Men cannot prophesy and have it come true, but they said Sarah would have a son, and it came to pass just as they said. They bore God's name. We read in Genesis 18:1, "The Lord appeared unto him [Abraham] in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day." The great God Almighty did not come down to earth; it had to be His angel.

Q. Do we have any other proof that these men were angels?

A. Yes, after they left Abraham they went to Sodom, to Lot's house, and the Bible says that they were angels (Gen. 18:22).

Q. Do we have any further proof that angels are men?

A. The angel Gabriel was called "the man Gabriel" when he came to Daniel.

Q. Yes. How did he come? Would somebody read Daniel 9:21-22?

A. "Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me. . . . and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding." And in the next verse he told Daniel that he was greatly beloved.

Q. Wouldn't you like to have an angel tell you that! What else do we know about the angel Gabriel?

A. He was the same angel that appeared to Zacharias to tell him about the forthcoming birth of John the Baptist. He also came to Mary, the mother of Jesus. In each case he identified himself as Gabriel.

Q. He is called the "man Gabriel" in Daniel and the "angel Gabriel" in Luke, so we know definitely that he resembled a man. But how do we

know that angels are not flesh and blood as we are?

A. Angels would have to be immortal to be able to come from some other heavenly realm to this earth. A person with a human body could not travel without a space vehicle—and then they couldn't travel that distance!

Q. Yes, angels enjoy a higher level of life than we know—they are immortal beings. But how do we know that they were not just created that way?

A. Jesus gives us the answer in Luke 20:35-36: "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." The fact that we can be made equal to the angels would indicate that they started out like us. If they started out like God, we could never be equal to them, since we are human.

Q. Are angels always visible as men? Or are they sometimes just unseen spirits?

A. They are not always visible, but they are not spirits. Angels apparently have the power to make themselves visible or invisible to the eyes of men.

Q. Yes. There is no such thing as a spirit as most people think of spirits. The idea of spirits came from the Greeks, not from the Bible. The Jews did not think of angels as spirits, but spiritual—or heavenly—beings. They are part of God's family. How do we know this?

A. It is in Exodus 23:20-21. "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will

not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him."

Q. Yes, the angels are God's voice. They speak for Him with His authority. Would anyone have any idea how many times angels are mentioned in the Bible?

A. Maybe 500 times?

Q. No, not quite, but according to one source they are mentioned a total of 345 times—180 times in the Old Testament and 165 times in the New. This should give us some idea of their importance. Why should we consider them seriously? What is the most important reason?

A. They keep the records of our lives.

Q. That is a very serious thought: The angels know our every thought. Angels fill an important place in the divine plan. They are God's workmen, God's messengers. They have been used in many important places in the past and they have more work to do in the future. Let us see how many different types of service we can think of that they perform, or will perform in the future. How can we prove that they test a person's faith?

A. They tested Abraham's faith on Mount Moriah. The New English Bible says that "God put Abraham to the test" (Gen. 22:1).

Q. Yes, it surely was the angel of God, for he was there just when he was needed to deliver Isaac. That is another very important task angels perform. Could someone tell us a little more about Isaac's deliverance. How did it come about?

A. Abraham had prepared the altar and the wood and had bound Isaac, when the angel of the Lord called to him out of heaven and said, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him" (Gen. 22:9-12).

Q. Can we have another example of when the angels delivered someone?

A. They delivered Peter from prison twice. The first time the angel opened the prison doors and told Peter and John to go back to the temple and preach. Another time Peter was put in prison alone and the angel let him out and he went back to the church where they were praying for him. The first time is in Acts 5:17, the second time is in Acts 12:7-8.

Q. That would be quite an experience, wouldn't it? Someone else had

a most remarkable deliverance by an angel. Can anyone think of it?

A. Are you thinking of Daniel in the den of lions?

Q. Yes. Can you tell us more about that deliverance?

A. Daniel refused to obey the king's decree and was cast into the den of lions. The next morning the king himself came hoping he might find Daniel still alive. He asked, "Is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" And Daniel answered, "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths that they have not hurt me" (Dan. 6:20-22).

Q. God had further work for Daniel, so He delivered him. There was another great deliverance in Daniel's time.

A. Do you mean the three Hebrew children that were Daniel's friends?

Q. Yes. They survived the fiery furnace. What does it say the angel was seen doing?

A. Walking in the fire. The king asked his counselors, "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O King. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (Dan. 3:24-25). The fourth man was the angel of God. It could not have been Jesus the Son of God, for He was not yet born.

Q. There are a great many more instances in the Bible where angels delivered God's servants, but we must talk about other things angels do. What else do they do?

A. Angels minister.

Q. What proof do we have?

A. Hebrews 1:14: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

Q. That promise is still good. It affects us today. Just what is this "ministering"? Can we have some Bible evidence of their ministering?

A. An angel came to Jesus in the garden, just before the crucifixion. Luke 22:43 says, "And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." And after He had been tempted "angels came and ministered unto him" (Matt. 4:11).

Q. They came to help one of God's prophets long before Jesus' day. Who was that?

A. Elijah, when he slept under a juniper tree. They brought him food.

Q. Yes, so angels feed men. Would somebody like to read 1 Kings 19:8?

A. "And he [Elijah] arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God."

Q. That angel's food must have been very nourishing to sustain him forty days! If we had that kind of food, we wouldn't have to eat so often. There is another instance I can think of when angels came to minister. This one was way back before Elijah.

A. Was it Hagar, in Genesis 21?

Q. Yes; would you read verse 17, also verse 19?

A. "And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, . . . And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink."

Q. Angels also warn. Can we have an example?

A. An angel warned Joseph in a dream that he should take Mary and the infant Jesus to Egypt to escape the wrath of the wicked Herod. Then when Judea was again safe, the angel informed him that they should return home (Matt. 2:13, 19).

Q. I'm sure there were many other warnings, but there are so many things that angels have been involved in. Can we mention another of their activities?

A. Angels transport. The chariots of God took Elijah to heaven (II Kings 2:11).

Q. Yes, angels transport, but how do we know that angels are God's chariots?

A. It is in Psalm 68:17. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels."

Q. Did they ever transport anyone besides Elijah?

A. Yes, angels took Jesus to heaven. Luke says that He was "carried up into heaven" (Lk. 24:51), and in Acts he says that "he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9). No doubt it was a cloud of angels that carried Him up into heaven.

Q. Why do you think the cloud was angels?

A. There is a verse that says He "maketh the clouds his chariot" (Ps. 104:3), and if the chariots are angels, as we just had, then the clouds may be angels. And if Jesus was "carried," someone had to carry Him.

Q. Angels took Jesus to heaven, and they will also escort Him back to earth. Can we have some proof for that?

A. Matthew 16:27: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

Q. Does someone have another verse?

A. Mark 8:38 says he shall come "in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." Also, Matthew 24:30 says, "Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Q. There is another instance in the Bible concerning a cloud and angels. Can anyone think what that is?

A. I believe you are thinking of the pillar of cloud that led the children of Israel. It was a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night.

Q. Do we have any proof that the angels were always there?

A. In Exodus 23:20, God promised to send His angel before Israel to lead them into the Promised Land, and Exodus 14:19 shows that the angel and the pillar of the cloud were the same thing: "And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them."

There is another place that says that the cloud covered the tabernacle by day and had the appearance of fire by night. And when the cloud stayed, they stayed in camp, but if the cloud was taken up, they journeyed on. That is in Exodus 40:34-38 and again in Numbers 9:16-21. And in Exodus 13:21, we read "The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night."

Q. We know the Lord Himself was not there; it had to be His angels, and those verses are very good proof that it was the angels.

Now can we have another service that the angels perform?

A. Angels protect.

Q. Yes, that is a service that reaches down even to our day. Can we have some Bible proof for this statement?

A. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Ps. 34:7).

Q. There is another good verse in the Psalms. Can anyone think of it?

A. "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Ps. 91:11).

Q. It is a comforting thought that God's angels are watching over us. But that promise is qualified. We must remember that the angels encamp around those that fear Him—and what is it to fear God?

A. "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil" (Prov. 8:13). Unless we hate the evil and are working to rid ourselves of it, we will not have that protection.

Q. That is a good point to remember. Angels also bring good news. What proof do we have that they bring good news?

A. They came to announce the birth of Jesus. An angel appeared to the shepherds in the field and announced the good tidings; then the Bible says that "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" (Lk. 2:9-14).

Q. Angels were sent to men many times, but their messages were not always of joy. Many times they brought messages of doom. Can we think of some angelic visits in this category?

A. They came to Lot telling him to escape, that they were going to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:13).

Q. The angels did more than warn Lot. What else did they do?

A. They rescued him from the wicked neighbors who assaulted his house.

Q. Do we know for certain that these men were angels?

A. Yes. Verse 15 of Genesis 19 says that in the morning "the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city." Then the angels took them by the hand and led them out of the city.

Q. Yes. We might say that the angels escorted them out of the city. But

Lot's wife looked behind her and lost her life—and Jesus said, "Remember Lot's wife." Can we think of another instance—even before this?

A. Are you thinking of the warning before the flood?

Q. Yes. It doesn't mention angels, but when God speaks to man it is through His angels. God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth" (Gen. 6:13). Angels are God's voice. There is another outstanding case—it happened in a heathen court.

A. The handwriting on the wall.

Q. Yes. That must have been the hand of an angel that was seen writing that message of doom. Will someone read Daniel 5:5?

A. "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote."

Q. The angel did more than write the message on the wall. He also gave the interpretation of the message to Daniel. We might say that it was prophecy—and when was it fulfilled?

A. That same night. Belshazzar was slain and Darius took the kingdom. (Dan. 5:30-31).

Q. The angel dispensed knowledge to Daniel on this occasion and at other times as well. That was one of their chief functions in Bible times. Can we have some other instances where they dispensed knowledge?

A. It must have been an angel that spoke to Abraham and told him to leave his homeland. Genesis 12:1 says, "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." Several times we read that "the Lord appeared unto Abram" over a period of many years, and in each case it would have been His angel.

Q. Yes, it had to be an angel. Can we have an example from the New Testament?

A. The angel spoke to Philip in Acts 8:26, and told him to meet the Ethiopian eunuch and teach him. And afterwards, "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip" (v. 39). That must have been the angel too.

Q. In this case, he was using a hu-

man instrument to give the knowledge. That was often the case. It was the same with Cornelius. The angel sent him to Peter for instruction. What else did the angel do in this case?

A. He showed Peter a vision to teach him that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35).

Q. How do we know that angels appoint men to certain positions?

A. An angel called Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. Exodus 3:2 says definitely that it was the angel of the Lord that appeared in the burning bush.

Q. How about Moses' successor?

A. The Lord chose Joshua to succeed Moses in Numbers 27:18. It would have been His angel speaking for Him.

Q. There are several other quite notable appointments mentioned in the Bible. Can we name a few?

A. Gideon was chosen to deliver his people (Judges 6:12).

Saul was chosen to be the first king of Israel. He was anointed by Samuel, but he said that the Lord had anointed him to be their king. As in other cases, it had to be God's angel acting.

Q. The angels have some work that is yet future. What might that be?

A. They will gather God's servants to the Judgment. Matthew 24:31 says that "He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds."

Q. What else will the angels have to do with the Judgment?

A. Daniel 7:10 says that "thousand thousands ministered unto him." We know it is the Judgment scene that is pictured because it says "ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened." Angels are also mentioned many times in the book of Revelation in connection with God's judgments on the nations.

Q. There is a special angel mentioned in Revelation that we must not forget.

A. Do you mean the angel that appeared to John on Patmos?

Q. Yes. That was a very special angel, wasn't it?

A. The first verse of the Book of Revelation says that it is the words of "Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and

he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John." And near the end of Revelation, He says again, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things" (Rev. 22:16).

Q. Angels were prominent throughout the whole book of Revelation. They are mentioned more than 65 times, so we can see how important they are.

We haven't mentioned the many times angels assisted in battles.

A. I was thinking about the time when the king of Syria sent his army to Dothan to capture the prophet Elisha, and his servant was frightened when he saw the king's army.

Q. Would you like to tell us more about it? Where did the angels fit in?

A. The account is in II Kings 6:16-17. Elisha answered his servant, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." The chariots of fire must have been angels, like the chariots that took Elijah to heaven. They were invisible to the servant until Elisha's prayer was answered.

Q. Yes. I'm sure they were there. Can we mention some other times when the Lord helped His people in battle?

A. It must have been the angels that brought down the walls of Jericho. Certainly neither the shouts of the people nor the blowing of trumpets could have accomplished it!

Q. That is true. Even though the angels are not mentioned, they must have been there. Can we mention another time?

A. The angels must have helped Gideon and his army of 300 when they routed the hosts of Midian.

Q. It was the angel of the Lord that helped Gideon choose his army. He had 32,000 volunteers, but the Lord's testing reduced them to 300. There is something else in this story that the angel must have had a part in.

A. Do you refer to the dream Gideon heard one tell another when he went to spy out the Midian camp? After he heard that, Gideon knew that the message was from the Lord, for he went back to his army and said, "Arise; for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian" (Judges 7:1-15). When it says the Lord says something, we know it was through His angels. There are a great many instances we might mention where the Lord fought for His people. He helped Jehoshaphat against Moab and Ammon. The people went out singing and praising God, and "the Lord set ambushments against" the enemy—and the army didn't even have to fight!

Q. Do we have any evidence that angels sing?

A. It would appear that they joined in singing the new song in Revelation 5. The Revelator said that he heard the voice of many angels around the throne of God. And in Revelation 15 they sang the song of Moses and the Lamb.

A multitude sang at the birth of Christ. The New English Bible renders Luke 2:13: "All at once there was with the angel a great company of the heavenly host, singing the praises of God."

The singing of that new song is yet future. It is one of the things held in store for us when the great Day of the Lord comes. Surely we all want to be there when the angels sing. And let us remember, that whatever we do or whatever we say, angels are watching and listening.

"Angels a record are faithfully keeping,
Of every word that we speak;
Whether we're watching our conduct or sleeping;
Whether we're haughty or meek.
Known unto them are the thoughts that we cherish;
Nothing is hidden or sealed;
Their record tells if we live or we perish
When at the judgment revealed."

Many scientists believe that the billions of stars and galaxies gradually evolved into their present form from giant clouds of space dust. Others see a Creator in the marvelous symmetry and beauty of the heavenly universe. Which view is the most credible? Which view is Biblical?

How Did the Galaxies Come Into Existence?

by George R. Knight*

IMAGINE racing around the earth's equator seven and one-half times in one second; traveling the 240,000 miles to the moon in one and one-fourth seconds; or cruising the 93,000,000 miles to the sun in about eight and one-half minutes. You could accomplish these feats if you could travel at the speed of light, 186,000 miles a second. Yet, at this tremendous speed it would take you some 2,000 million years to travel to some of the star galaxies gazed upon by modern astronomers.

As men behold the heavens they are inspired to search for meaning. They are led to inquire concerning the purpose of both universal and personal existence. From earliest times men have been fascinated with the meaning of the stars. Wise men and philosophers have spent their entire lives contemplating the significance of these heavenly bodies. Modern man, sheltered by his cities, is probably less familiar with the night sky and other aspects of his natural world than were his ancestors. Yet I doubt whether even the most hard-bitten soul can look up at the sky on a clear, dark night without wondering where it all came from and what it all means.

The astronomers and astrologers of the ancient Near East had calculated that there were some 5,119 stars that could be seen with the naked eye. They were awed with their view of the heavens.

AN incomprehensible universe.

If the ancients were so impressed with the visible heavens, we can only wonder how they would feel if they were alive in the twentieth century. Today we know that as we gaze upon the Milky Way we are beholding a cluster of over 100 billion stars or suns. The Milky Way

galaxy is shaped like a giant disk, with our sun near one edge. To get some idea of the size of the Milky Way you can plan a trip through its center. At the speed of light, 670 million miles an hour, it would take 30,000 years to make the trip. By this comparison you can begin to grasp the vastness of our galaxy. Yet this is just the beginning of the universe. Astronomers now believe that there are at least one billion galaxies and that our Milky Way with its 100 billion flaming suns may be only medium-sized.

The size of the "known" universe is beyond the range of human imagination. We are faced with an apparent infinity in both time and space. But still man has not fathomed the extent of the universe. Newer techniques of investigation continue to push out the boundaries.

There is nothing more frustrating to the human mind than infinity—time and space without end. These are realities that the human mind cannot cope with or grasp. Our lives are finite, and we seek limitations and boundaries to such things as time and space without end. (An interesting line of thought leads one to wonder what would lie beyond the boundaries of space—except more space.) In universal terms, man is but a speck on a speck (the earth) near a speck (the sun) in a speck (the Milky Way). Thinking men are faced with the problem of meaning for both their personal lives and the existence of the universe.

Not only are we faced with the problem of

* This article is reprinted from *These Times*, September 1, 1978. Used by permission of the publishers and also of the author, George R. Knight, who is Assistant Professor of Educational Foundations at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

infinity in the largeness of the stellar universe, but we are also faced with infinity in the smallness and orderliness of atomic and molecular structure. For example, let us suppose that you filled a pint jar with air and that you were able to count the molecules of air as you let them escape out of the jar. If you let out 10,000,000 molecules each second, it would take you about 40,000,000 years to empty your jar of air.

HOW did it all begin?

As you seek meaning in life, as you behold the infinity of the universe, you are faced with a basic question: Where did all this come from? You must choose one of two answers. First, it all came about by chance—the universe just happened to come into existence and organization by accident after ceaseless ages of evolution. Or second, the existence of the universe points to a Creator who planned, designed, and made it. In other words, the very infinity of the heavens points to an infinite Creator—God.

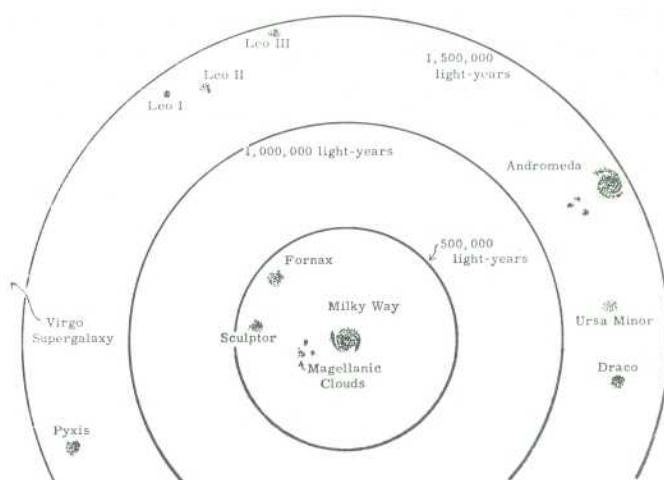
1. Let us first look at the chance theory.

The mathematical odds are against such a happening. This has been illustrated by Dr. A. Cressy Morrison, a former president of the New York Academy of Sciences, in his book entitled *Seven Reasons Why a Scientist Believes in God*. Dr. Morrison says, "Let me begin by supposing you mark ten pennies from one to ten, put them in your pocket, and give them a good shake. Now try to draw them out in sequence from one to ten, putting each coin back in your pocket after each draw and shuffling them all again.

"Mathematically, your chance of drawing number one first is one in ten; of drawing one and two in succession, one in one hundred; of drawing the first three numbers in succession, one in one thousand. The chance that you might draw all of them, from number one through number ten, in that order, would reach the unbelievable figure of one in 10 billion."

If the element of chance is this great for a problem with ten factors, you can begin to grasp the implications involved in the evolution of the universe or of even the simplest living organism, which, it should be noted, is infinitely more complex than the task of picking up ten coins in a certain order.

An interesting common sense insight into the whole problem of the chance theory was made by the businessman who said, "It takes a girl in our factory about two days to learn how to put



Our LOCAL GROUP OF GALAXIES
—each galaxy containing billions of stars!

the seventeen parts of a meat chopper together. It may be that these millions of worlds, each with its separate orbit, all balanced so wonderfully in space—it may be that they just happened; it may be that by a million years of tumbling about they finally arranged themselves. I don't know. I am merely a manufacturer of cutlery. But this I do know, that you can shake the seventeen parts of a meat chopper around in a washtub for the next 17 billion years, and you'll never have a meat chopper."

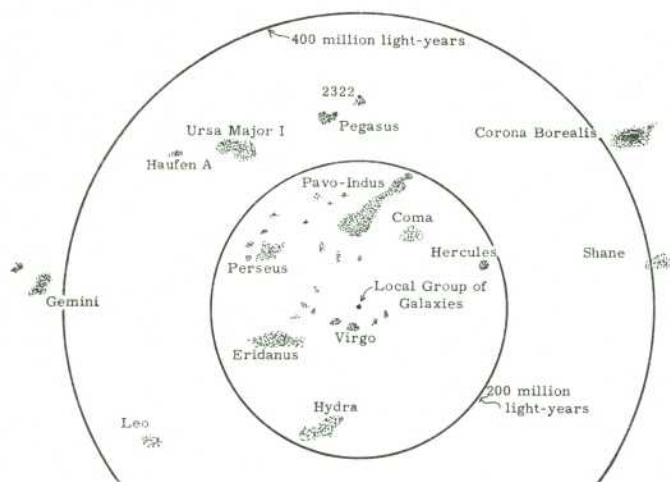
Even if a person is willing to believe in the odds of the accidental evolution of an infinite and orderly universe, he is still stuck with a bedrock question, Where did the raw material come from in the first place?

It is evident that it takes a great deal of faith to accept the chance theory, which is apparently built upon the belief that time, in itself, is a creative agent.

2. Now let us look at the Creation theory.

It seems that a study of the heavens and the natural world has always tended to make believers out of men because here they come face-to-face with an infinity in time, space, and complexity that they can both see and demonstrate. The ancients had a saying, "The undevout astronomer is mad." Sir Isaac Newton, one of the world's greatest minds, said, "The universe exists, and by that one impossible fact declares itself a miracle [and] postulates an infinite power."

It seems to be within the realm of my understanding (howbeit, fairly close to the edge) how some men of science might get involved in the evolution of this earth and lose sight of all else. But when they turn their eyes heavenward, they



But even our LOCAL GROUP of Galaxies (at center of drawing) diminishes to a pinpoint among the clusters of galaxies that make up the universes beyond.

are faced with an infinitely greater problem. It baffles my imagination how they can still hold faith in the chance theory, considering the infinity of the heavens. This very problem is one reason that I am a Christian today. For years I was an agnostic, but I could not get around the fact of orderliness and plan in both the universe and my personal body.

But, someone may ask, if the basic question underlying the chance theory relates to the origin of raw material, isn't there also a basic question that a sincere creationist must ask? That is, "Where did God come from?"

The Bible has an answer to this question—that God has always been and that He always will be; He is immortal. My first reaction to such an answer is that it sounds like double-talk. But the important point is that we cannot understand the infinity in time, space, and complexity that we can experience and demonstrate in the universe around us. We can't even answer the simple question of which way is up or down in relation to the universe. How can we ever expect to understand the infinite majesty and power of the Creator? We understand very little of the creation, and one would expect the Creator to be more complex than His works. If we could comprehend the infinity of God, He would obviously not be big enough to be the Creator. God has not revealed many things to us because our minds could not comprehend them.

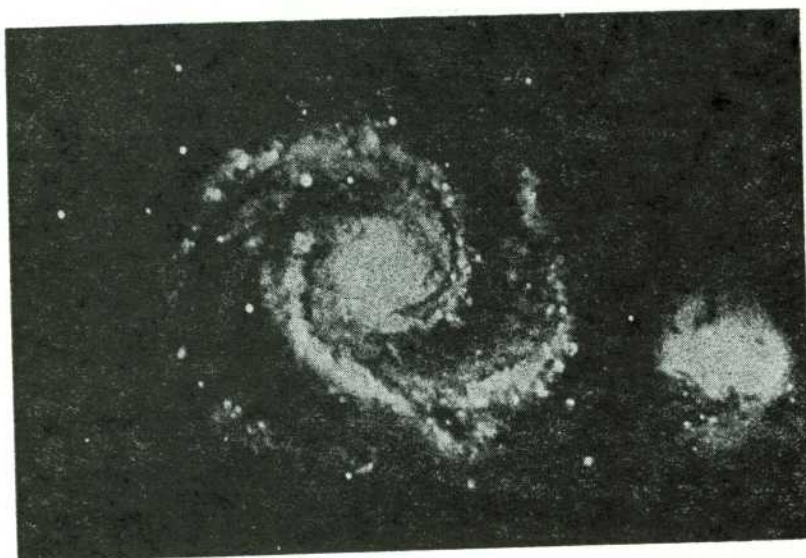
Our cramped little minds think in terms of distance and time rather than

on the plane of the infinite and eternal. Due to this fact, the Bible makes no attempt to explain the creative process. Rather, it merely declares it to be an accomplished fact. The Psalmist declares that "by the word of the Lord were the heavens made; . . . for he spake, and it was done."

It may be noted that the orderliness of the universe does not "prove" the existence of God. On the other hand, universal design certainly delivers a telling thrust in favor of His existence. Since limited humans would not be able to understand the proof, they must rely on faith in accepting God as the Creator. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God" (Heb. 11:3). Thus, all men live by faith. It remains for us to decide whether to focus this faith on design or accident.

Conclusion number one in our search for meaning is that an infinite and orderly universe manifests an infinite Creator—a Creator beyond our understanding, but One who has seen fit to reveal Himself to human minds in a way we can understand. The author of Hebrews wrote, "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.* He reflects the glory of God and

* The original word rendered "world" in this passage is *aionas*, which usually means "age," or in its plural form "ages." According to the lexicon, it may refer to a very long time; but it never refers to the physical earth or the literal creation. Christ is not the creator of the physical world; God is the Creator. It is through Christ that God is the maker of the coming "age," the "world to come, whereof we speak" (Heb. 2:5).



The 'Whirlpool Galaxy,' located just south of the handle of the Big Dipper, is so distant that none of the light of its myriad suns can be detected by the unaided human eye.

bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power" (Heb. 1: 1-3, RSV).

Another conclusion in our search for meaning leads us to realize that there are many things in our everyday world that are beyond our senses. We note that there are lights and colors that don't register on our eyes—that we see only a limited section of the spectrum of light. We accept the fact that we hear only certain types of sounds and that all our senses are limited. It comes as a startling surprise to realize that most of the reality of our world is beyond the grasp of our limited senses.

From this point it is not difficult to conceive of all sorts of things beyond our senses—including superhuman beings whom, in our present state, we do not perceive. It is no longer difficult to accept the Biblical idea of angels who have an existence and a reality of a higher order than our own. We see the results of their work in our daily life and in the world around us.

PURPOSE for our existence.

As we consider these ideas, another conclusion about meaning begins to come to the forefront of our thinking. It is evident that we are made for something better than an existence that terminates in pain, disease, and death—if such is our choice. Our lives are wonderful complexities of mental, physical, and spiritual attributes. Suddenly we realize the truth of the fact that the plan of salvation is as real as the mixed-up world in which we live.

We find that life is senseless when we try to live it without God or hope. We discover that universal existence and our personal life holds meaning only as we properly relate to the Creator.

As we search, we ponder the words of David, and ask, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Ps. 8:4). What am I, that thou art mindful of me, to give me an opportunity to become an integral part of all this vastness, this beauty, this glory that is Thy world?

And as we realize, we bow our heads in gratitude, in a humble resolve to live a life that is pleasing to our heavenly Creator, as He has planned for us to live, as He has revealed in the Book He has left for us and in the Example He has given us to follow. Only so can we join ourselves to that which is perpetual and become part of eternity itself, "world without end." ●●

The less a man thinks, the more he talks.

Our Readers Write...

To Be Trustworthy

It is a veritable truth that whatever we sow in time, that is exactly what we shall reap. Each generation makes the same dumb mistake over and over again, and no one seems to learn anything from experience. Now I know for a fact why men love darkness—and that is simply what Jesus said, "because their deeds were evil." The longer I live, the more I can appreciate the fact that there are so few who really put God first in their lives. There is a lot of chest-beating and a pretense at goodness, and some of it may be good; but it doesn't carry over into the everyday living. The Kingdom that Christ will establish will have none of this facade in it; only those truly sincere and devoted to real righteousness will be permitted to be part of it. And do I ever long for that Day to arrive!

As potential citizens of that new world, we will have to have proved ourselves completely trustworthy. We will have to be tried like silver and gold before we can live then. There is no shortcut or easy path to follow; the gate is quite narrow and the way is strait, and there are just a few of the earth's masses that ever find this gate. We must have resolve and determination to succeed that is as unbending as a piece of steel.

There is no doubt in my mind now that we have been called to serve the great and wonderful Creator, who is indeed our Father; and we will never be tried beyond our capacity to endure. But we must grow. It can't be done in one day, or a week, but we must make progress.

If there is anything I desire in this life it is to qualify for Christ to call me a profitable servant and say that I have done well! Then to live forever and ever and enjoy God's great and fabulous universe is breathtaking. Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

It is so uplifting to speak about the Kingdom, and how close it is—perhaps in our lifetime. I am striving with all my might to be so trustworthy that there will not be a single spot or blemish on my robe of righteous character.

—From Louisiana

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

Listening?

We need to be right on our tiptoes to hear every word of instruction the Lord has for us. We have to listen attentively.

It has been said by experts that good listening is not a relaxed and passive activity at all; it is characterized by a quickening heartbeat, faster blood circulation, and a slight rise in body temperature. It consumes energy and is hard work. Mere visual attentiveness is not listening.

This is the kind of listening we must do when hearing God's Word. Many times in the Bible our attention is drawn to the fact that we need to use all our powers of concentration when hearing God's commands and not let them run off us like water off a duck.

Poor listeners get overstimulated when they question or oppose an idea, and consequently they hear only part of it. They become too impatient to listen to the rest of the idea. Instead they are busy thinking up answers or opposing ideas or arguments.

In Luke 8:8 we are told, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." This does not mean casual listening or poor listening, as related above, but it means we should pay attention with every nerve and muscle in our being, for this is the word of God to us.

"Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many" (Prov. 4:10).

—From Canada

"March"

One of the men I work with is an ex-guardsmen from one of Great Britain's old "crack" regiments. In this regiment discipline is very severe. My friend at work tells me that when training to march, the drill-sergeant would measure each soldier's stride with a large rule; and woe betide any poor soldier who did not have the correct stride!

In my dictionary, the word "march" means "a regular measured walk, steady onward movement." If we are truly soldiers of Christ, then we are under severe discipline—and not from some sergeant-major but from our own will and determination to do that which is right, making a steady progress, setting ourselves a goal to achieve, growing daily.

What is the purpose of a soldier, but to fight the enemy? And our enemy is self. So let us with determination put our best foot forward, for the spoils of this warfare will be great indeed, even eternal life.

—From England

*What shall we take through the gateway of the year?
The staff of good hope and the lantern of good cheer,*

*A song in the heart and on the lips a prayer:
For dark is the road and great the load we bear.*

*What shall we need for the journey we must take?
Endurance and faith and a courage none can break,
Keeping in view the vision bright and clear,
Gladly we pass through the gateway of the year.*

Prayer Upon

Entering Church

Help me to have a good attitude and pure motives as I contemplate entering into that highest and most privileged of all human experiences—divine worship.

Eternal Father, as I come into Your presence today, I pray for an open mind, a tender heart, a sensitive spirit. In each silent moment, each portion of Your Word, each line of sacred music, in prayer and spoken proclamation, I pray for divine enlightenment and understanding.

Save me from caustic, self-righteous judgments; from going through habitual, empty motions, from careless disturbance of my neighbor in the pew; from being so wrapped up in myself that I sense neither my neighbor nor You; from leaving without a new feeling of my obligation to You and a new sense of urgency in fulfilling it. Amen.





SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

*"And after a while came unto him they that stood by,
and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for
thy speech bewrayeth thee"*
—Matthew 26:73

IT WAS that fateful night before the crucifixion. Supper had ended, and Jesus and His disciples had gone out to suffer—Jesus to suffer trial, mockings, and finally death; His disciples to suffer fear, loss and the dejection that follows weakness. "All the disciples forsook him and fled" (Matt. 26:56), we read—all, that is, except Peter. Peter "followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end" (vs. 57-58). He watched the proceedings with a mixture of fear and apprehension. But as the chief priests and all the council continued questioning Jesus and seeking witnesses to testify against Him, Peter apparently grew uncomfortable in his near position and removed himself to the outside of the palace. Here a certain damsel questioned him, and he denied that he knew Christ. Again he moved, this time to the porch. Again he was questioned, and again he denied that he even knew Jesus. It was then that another who was standing by said to Peter, "Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee." His Galilean accent had revealed that he was no native of Jerusalem.

Peter's speech "bewrayed" him in another way—that is, it showed his true identity; it told who he really was. And it did not bewray him as a follower of Christ but as one who had forsaken Him. His words confirmed the accusations against him; Peter *had* been one of the Galilean's followers; and by denying it, Peter was in reality accusing himself of disloyalty.

It was what Peter said more than the accent in his voice that accused him. But our words are also telltales of what we really are. How can others identify us as belonging to Christ if our

careless manner of speech tells otherwise?

We today need to be very careful of the words we use, lest others hear in our conversation a tendency to conform to the careless vernacular of the day. There are many words circulating today which are no part of our formal language and are not becoming to those professing godliness and uprightness. Jesus said, "How can ye, being evil, speak good things?" He could also have asked, "How can ye being good speak evil things?" The one is as impossible as the other. What we have in our hearts will proceed from our lips.

There is also the temptation to use words to sound "impressive." At all such times, "thy speech bewrayeth thee." By our falsifying words we deny our first loyalty—which should ever be to Christ.

It may seem strange, but we can betray our Master—and also bewray ourselves—by the words we do *not* say. Peter's only recorded words as he waited there by the fire in the high priests' hall were words of denial. He had no word of praise for Jesus at that moment, and none of devotion to Him. So not only the words Peter spoke bewrayed him but also those he left *unspoken*.

At times we know we would do better to keep silent. At other times, usually when it is so much easier to keep silent, it is our duty to speak. If we fail to speak, then we deny our loyalty to Christ. It may be a word that is needed in defense of right and principle; it may be a word supporting truth and equity. It may be a word of encouragement, warning or carefulness. Speak it. To keep silent is to deny Christ.

There is one other sure way to identify those who belong to Christ. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another" of those things pertaining to their eternal salvation (Mal. 3:16). "They shall speak of the glory of thy king-

* "Bewray" is an archaic word meaning "to betray, divulge."

dom, and talk of thy power" (Ps. 145:11). Both in speech and in conduct they will be "holding forth the word of life" (Phil. 2:16).

The way in which we use words is also important. Almost any words can be used to insult, criticize, or belittle, if such is the intent of the heart. It is easy to gossip under a guise of holy concern, to pry into the details of some trivial incident rather than to be constantly seeking the best interests of our brother and being watchful for his good.

How can we avoid compromising our high standards so that our speech will not bewray us? God's Word gives valuable counsel.

First, we should pray with the Psalmist, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Ps. 141:3). Think about what you plan to say; if it is of questionable value, better say nothing.

Second, remember that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34b). Keep the heart pure and the mind on higher values; watch that your attitudes are kept under careful control and strict surveillance at all times. Purity of heart promotes purity of speech. A pure mind cannot be behind an impure tongue.

Finally, keep the mouth and heart busy praising and thanking God. Make this vow: "I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Ps. 34:1). A person who is constantly dwelling with a feeling of praise to God will find that he has no time for words which bewray his love.

The Bible shows clearly that our speech is an indication of our nature. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (James 1:26).

Our speech can accuse us, as it did Peter, of not living close enough to our Lord. Right speech avoids the creating of serious problems: "Who-so keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles" (Prov. 21:23).

Wholesome and disciplined speech reinforces a Christian dedication and identifies us as a follower of Christ. Careless speech betrays us.

What does our speech do for us? "... He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile" (I Pet. 3:10).

Be careful, lest it be said of any of us: "Thy speech bewrayeth thee." ●●

When men speak ill of thee, live so nobody may believe them.

April, 1979

How God Supplies

GOD commits Himself only as regards our needs, not our desires, not our luxuries. We have no right to demand beyond our needs. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

God gives what is best for us; and though it may not be what we would desire, we must accept all in the spirit, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

God has met many human needs:

- 1) Water to quench thirst (Ex. 17:5-7).
- 2) Meat to enrich the diet (Num. 11:31-32).
- 3) Money to pay taxes (Matt. 17:24-27).
- 4) Capital to pay debts (II Kings 4:1-7).
- 5) A dry road through the river between two walls of water (Josh. 3:14-17).

- 6) Manna from heaven for food (Ex. 16:4).

If God met these needs, which He did, He still has power to meet any need we may have.

God is omnipotent. It is not for us to dictate to Him how He should care for us. He has promised never to leave nor forsake us. He will always give us strength in time of need.

We know God's Word is sure, and there has never failed one word of His promise. Oftentimes we say, Why did this happen to me? Perhaps there is a lesson in the experience for us. God permits trials to come, but He is always there to guide us through if we are earnestly striving to please Him. We have the wonderful hope of the Kingdom, when there shall be no more sickness, sorrow, death, or pain, but life, peace, joy and pleasure for all mankind.

Until then, our God shall supply all our need—as He in His wisdom deems best.

—From a Reader in Wisconsin

Twelve Booklets

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
HELL AND THE DEVIL
AFTER DEATH, WHAT?
TRINITY OR UNITY?
THE HOLY SPIRIT
THE ATONEMENT
THE SABBATH

ALL for \$3.00, Postpaid.

The Tomb Is Empty!

(continued from page 7)

passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). This new creation is not a matter for the future; it is a vital imperative for the present. We must become new *now*. We cannot expect to be crowned with life everlasting in the Day to come if we are the same old creature, living in the tomb of our own desires, finding our pleasures in those things that end in death. Our knowledge of Christ places us under obligation: we "*should* walk"; we "*should* serve." But it is not a "*should*" that is a burdensome responsibility. Rather, it is the glorious "*may*" of privilege, as several of the newer translations of Romans 6:6 indicate. The resurrection of Christ is the divine guarantee that newness of life and service await us in direct proportion to our appropriating faith. "For as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

What is this newness of life?

Newness of life, in its essence, is *applying* to our own lives those principles which governed the life of Christ, so that we can live the very life of Jesus Christ. This means we must replace our selfish, difficult dispositions with the mind and disposition of our Lord. It means gaining control of ourselves in a practical, moment-by-moment manner, so that we are masters of our tongues, our tempers and our thoughts. "For if we have grown into him by a death like his," a death to our own old ways and selfish habits, "we shall grow into him by a resurrection like his," a new life of holiness and virtue such as Christ lived (Rom. 6:5, Moff.). Then we shall experience the glorious physical change to immortality, which Christ will give to each faithful follower.

But there can be no "newness of life" until there has been an actual death, that death to self demanded by our Lord as the basis of true discipleship, that death which Paul borrows the symbol of the cross of Christ to describe, that death in which we identify ourselves with the Saviour and His self-sacrificing life and "our old man is crucified with him" (Rom. 6:6). It is the death which forms the magnificent paradox of Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Here is the new resurrected life which each of us may share now by

dying in self-sacrifice and living henceforth "by the faith of the Son of God." It is the life of the new nature.

Paul describes it again in Romans 12:1, "that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." It is a living sacrifice, the sacrifice of a living being. Again he said, "I die daily" (I Cor. 15:31); and, "as dying, and, behold, we live" (II Cor. 6:9). Paul was always "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest" in his body (II Cor. 4:10). The new life cannot live while the old survives; the old must die, hence the paradox of death-in-life, and life-in-death. The old must die, the new must be nourished and grow, and both at the same time.

The Meaning of the Resurrection

So overwhelmed were the apostles with the meaning of Christ's resurrection, that they went everywhere preaching it. It was their *certain* means of escape from the bonds of mortality which were *sure* to confine them. Christ had experienced a physical resurrection; so could they and so may we, if sleeping when the Day of Christ arrives. Christ will not forget any servant, whether sleeping or awake. Each will be called forth to receive for what he has done.

So meaningful was the thought of resurrection to the apostles that they applied it in a spiritual sense to the new life which vivifies each true believer in Christ. They thought of themselves and all their brethren as living testimonies for Christ, living as it were a life beyond the grave of their former ways. As Paul wrote, "Ye are our epistles, known and read of all men." Such may we be today, living testimonies to the transforming power of faith; and this living testimony of our lives is ever so much more important than lips can tell. "What you are speaks so loud that the world can't hear what you say"—it was true in Paul's day, it is still true today.

If we would impress others with the certainty of our faith, we must be living testimonials to its reality and effectiveness in our lives now. The new "resurrected" life can be *ours now*; it is our way of bearing testimony to Christ's resurrection, showing by our lives that we really believe future life is a possibility for *us*. It is our testimony for Christ today, and what a testimony it can be!

From Death Unto Life

Let us return to Paul's words in Romans 6 for another thought: "Like as Christ was raised

up from the dead by the glory of the Father . . ." (v. 4)—we have to walk in newness of life "like as Christ was raised up from the dead"; the change in us must be as drastic as the change between physical death and physical life. Before Christ could experience a physical resurrection, He had to die a physical death; before He could live the higher life of the Spirit, He had to lay down His own ways in full surrender, and do only the will of His Father. This He did, and He did it so perfectly that He became our Perfect Example and is destined to fill the highest role in the New World; indeed, it shall be *His* Kingdom, for the entire earth shall be under His righteous domain. His spotless life and fearless denunciation of evil brought Him into such disrepute with the people of His time that they crucified Him. But God was displeased with their cruel act and raised Him again from the dead; and now He is alive "unto the ages of ages," forevermore.

The ultimate in resurrected daily living will result in the same physical resurrection for us and the putting on of incorruption and immortality at our Lord's return. Herein lies our hope. Without a victory over death, none of the blessings God has promised could be ours. With death defeated, the way is open to everything beyond! Isn't this the message of the empty tomb?

This is the truth which Paul teaches again and again. There is only one way to escape from mortality, and it is through the intervention of the power of God and a physical resurrection; and the path leading to this is the path that Christ trod, the path of obedience and service. It is through the living of the resurrected life, new life *now*. We must put off the old nature, and put on the new. We must be renewed in the spirit of our minds.

Sometimes Paul speaks of Christ as of an inhabitant of the Christian's affections: "Christ in you," he says to the Colossians, "the hope of glory." This expresses the closeness he felt to the One who followed the way of His Father so perfectly; it seems to be the language of metaphor expressing Paul's longing to be like Christ. Paul was passionately committed to the Man Jesus Christ, and all the glory of character that Christ taught and attained; and his one overpowering desire was to be like Him and experience what Christ experienced—even to physical death for the cause, if necessary; and—above all—the glorious resurrection at the last Day. It was this hope that gave him inner power to surrender completely to Christ. Christ had died, and had been resurrected, and was alive forevermore; this was the hope that

lodged in the recesses of Paul's innermost soul; couldn't he follow Christ all the way?

Paul's faith was boundless; what of ours? Why are we sometimes so slow to grasp the reality and meaning of these things? Why do we go on living "in the tomb," so to speak, without the God who offers to go with us each step of the way and save us in the end with an "everlasting salvation"? Do we not need redeeming from the power of mortality as surely as did Paul? And here, in the resurrection of Christ, is our assurance of hope. But too often we are like our forefathers who lived all their days in a world containing the marvel of electricity and never guessed it was here. We do not keep ourselves aware of the potential of the faith we hold. We have in our possession the key to real life!—if we but realize it, if we but *use* it.

If only we would get out of the tomb and awake to our inner resources of faith and all their possibilities!

But before we can experience the full dynamic reality of our faith, one thing is needful. That one thing is self-surrender. There is no road to resurrected life in Christ except by the way of self-sacrifice; no way to experience the joy of the new except by renouncing the old. That is the condition. That is the way to get out of the tomb.

And then—then the way shall be opened up for us to experience real life!—life that is full, abundant, and lasting. Death shall have no more dominion over *us*—for we shall be like Christ, forever beyond the reach of mortality.

Does not this joyous prospect thrill us anew? Jesus lives! and because He lives, we too may live, and live, and live. ●●

I asked the New Year for some motto sweet,
Some rule of life by which to guide my feet,
I asked and paused; it answered soft and low,
"God's will *to know*."

"Will knowledge then suffice, New Year?" I cried;
But ere the question into silence died
The answer came, "No, this remember too,
God's will *to do*."

Once more I asked, "Is there still more to tell?"
And once again the answer sweetly fell;
"Yes, this one thing all other things above,
God's will *to love*."

Questions

"Did Jesus eat with tax-collectors and sinners, or only with people who had repented? Most churches teach Jesus ate with tax-collectors and sinners, and they quote Mark 2:13-22 and parallel Scriptures as proof. I disagree. Mark 2:13-16 could be paraphrased:

"Verse 13: Jesus went down again to the seashore, and taught the crowds that gathered around Him. Verse 14: As He went down, He called on Levi, a son of Alphaeus, at his desk in the tax office. Jesus said to him, 'Come and be My disciple.' Levi got up and went with Him. Verse 15: That night Jesus had supper at Levi's house, and many tax-collectors and 'sinners' were seated with Him and His disciples. (They were some who had joined Levi for the rally.) Verse 16: When the scribes and Pharisees learned Jesus was eating with tax-collectors and 'sinners,' they said to His disciples, 'Why does He eat with the tax-collectors and sinners?'"

In order to understand Jesus' actions, we must remember that no one naturally is a child of God. Or to put it another way, no one is naturally what God calls "good." We only become "good" by changing our life to conform to God's standard, by following Christ's example, and dying to sin. In the narrative in Mark 2, Matthew 9, and Luke 5, it seems certain that Jesus did eat with sinners (that is, people who made no profession of being His followers). But even those who are His followers are sinners until they are completely made over, and two of Jesus' own disciples were still sinners after the Last Supper, yet they ate with Him and He with them. Jesus even told Peter he was not yet converted that night (Luke 22:32), and Peter's actions proved Jesus right, for Peter swore and denied Christ. Judas betrayed Jesus and committed suicide, thus ending his life still a sinner. It seems highly improbable that all the publicans and sinners eating with Jesus at Levi's house were repentant sinners. In fact, to be free from sin requires forsaking as well as repenting—"whoso confesseth and forsaketh [his sins] shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13)—and that takes time.

Of course, Jesus had the ability to know what was in the mind of men. He knew who would reform and who would not. But even this did not

prevent His choosing as disciples and associating with men who were going to sin. Of the two (Peter and Judas) one would repent, and one would not.

Actually, the publicans were no more sinners at heart than the Pharisees, who were doing the complaining in Mark 2.

"Most churches think the last part of Mark 2:17 provides another proof that Jesus ate with people who hadn't repented. The Living Bible paraphrases it like this: '... I haven't come to tell good people to repent, but the bad ones.' Wouldn't a better paraphrase be, 'I've come to help "sinners" celebrate repentance, not these who have always been good'? Jesus wasn't at Levi's house to tell people to repent. They had already repented at the rally. He was extending His friendship to them and speaking to them. He was healing the brokenhearted. To me, the idea that Jesus eats with sinners before they repent and extends blessings to them is like the false idea that God saves people before they repent."

Although the Bible says Jesus did eat with publicans and sinners, you have a good point here. Jesus' eating with sinners is no justification for *our* associating with sinners, nor does it justify the idea that Jesus is eager to associate with any man however sinful he may be. The popular idea that Jesus wants me "just as I am" is certainly not Biblical. He does not expect us to be all "good" at the start, but He does expect us to be willing and ready to change as we learn.

Jesus' associating with sinners was certainly different than such associating would be for us. Jesus had the strength of character to resist temptation; He also had the power of the Holy Spirit by which He could know where He should go to do the most good. He was not like ourselves, who cannot know which "sinners" we should spend time with and which we should avoid. And we must be constantly watchful lest we fall into temptation by associating with evil doers. Paul wrote that "Bad company is the ruin of good character" (I Cor. 15:33, Moffatt Bible). Jesus Himself said, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them [His disciples] out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). The apostle John also left us a timely warning to be obeyed: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (I John 2:15); also these words by the apostle Paul: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" (II Cor. 6:17). There is certainly no justification for our associating wilfully with those who reject God.

"I do not understand why more than twelve disciples of Jesus are mentioned in the New Testament, when the apostles number only twelve.

"In Acts 1:13-15, we read that Jesus had more than twelve disciples, especially verse 15: 'And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty).'

I believe you confuse the word "disciple" with the word "apostle." They are not the same. The word "apostle" means "one sent forth." The word "disciple" means literally "a scholar, a learner; especially one who believes in the doctrine of his teacher and follows him." The twelve apostles were sometimes called by this name. In reality, the twelve apostles were also disciples, but not all disciples were apostles.

Joseph of Arimathea (John 19:38) is mentioned as being a "disciple," but he was not an apostle.

There were only twelve apostles; the number never exceeded twelve. Revelation 21:14 reveals this plainly: In the coming New Jerusalem, a

figurative term used to describe God's new authority upon earth after Christ returns, the city is represented as having twelve foundations under its walls, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb—only twelve.

In Peter's attempt to get another apostle chosen to take the place of Judas who fell in transgression, he was acting out of his place and in direct disobedience to Jesus' command, "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49), hence the step taken that day was not sanctioned by Christ.

Jesus did not leave so important a duty as choosing an apostle to fallible men. And it is revealing to note that Matthias's name is not mentioned again in the New Testament. To replace Judas the apostle Paul was Christ's own choice, and in appointing him Jesus appeared to him on the Damascus Road (see Acts 9). Paul was struck down by a light shining "above the brightness of the sun." Acts 26:13-18 records Jesus' commission to Paul. Jesus Himself appointed Paul to be His apostle.

The Abib Calendar

The Bible New Year:

Abib 1—from sundown March 27 through sundown March 28.

Abib was the first month of the Hebrew year as God told Moses to measure time (Ex. 12:2). Abib is the "spring" or "sprouting month" in Israel, the "month of green ears." It was on the first of Abib that the Lord directed Moses to erect the tabernacle. What a fitting time for Christ, the head of the spiritual tabernacle, to be born!

The New Passover:

Abib 13—sundown April 8.

The Jewish Passover fell on the fourteenth of Abib, the night the Israelites ate in haste and prepared to depart from Egypt. Jesus instituted the New Passover one day earlier so that He could partake with His disciples before He suffered; and of this Passover He said, "This do, in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). This we do, each year, on the thirteenth of Abib, in memory of Christ's supreme life-sacrifice and in consecrating ourselves to that same task. For, as Paul wrote, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26).

Christ's Resurrection:

Abib 15—morning of April 11.

"Upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning" (Luke 24:1) the women went to the sepulchre and found it empty. Jesus was alive! And still He lives. In His resurrection is our assurance that we, too, if sleeping, may triumph over death and inherit real life.

The Ascension of Christ:

Forty days after the Resurrection—May 20.

This was the last time Jesus was seen among men—the last time until He comes again, the great event which may happen any day; for He who went away "shall come again in like manner" as He was taken away (Acts 1:10-11)—gloriously, visibly, and with a mighty company of angels (Matt. 16:27).

Pentecost:

Fifty days after the Resurrection, ten days after the ascension—May 30.

This was the day the apostles could never forget—it was the day they received power from on high, power to preach, to perform miracles, and to demonstrate beyond all doubt that God was with them and that their message was divine.



Renew Your Resolutions

"Keep skid chains on your tongue; always say less than you think. . . .

"Make promises sparingly and keep them faithfully, no matter what the cost. . . .

"Never let an opportunity pass to say a kind and encouraging word to or about someone. . . . Praise good. . . . Be interested in others. . . . Be thoughtful. . . .

"Be careful. Keep the corners of your mouth turned up. Hide your pains, worries, and disappointments under a smile. . . .

"Preserve an open mind. . . . Deliberate, and never argue. . . .

"Let your virtues speak for themselves. Of ill-natured remarks about you, simply live so that no one will believe them. . . .

"Don't be too anxious. . . . Do your work, be patient and of good disposition. . . .

"Forget yourself, and let your rewards seek you out."

—From the desk of a Farm Insurance Agent