

# Megiddo Message



## Jesus' Legacy to Us



# EDITORIAL



## Where Are the Heroes Today?

WE HAVE no trouble calling to mind the heroes of the past. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob stand high on the list of God's heroes. We do not have to think long to bring to mind such names as Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, Samuel, David, Elijah, Elisha, Hezekiah and others. Then there are the writing prophets: Isaiah and Jeremiah must surely be remembered, also Daniel and Ezekiel. Christ Himself stands highest among the heroes, as head above all. Then there are His apostles and their brethren.

But we do not know them all. Even if we were to list all who are named in Scripture, we would still have only a very small part of the number who are to be saved from this first six-thousand-year period of time during which God has been working with our planet. There are still more heroes, unknown and unnamed, awaiting the great Day of revealing.

But even if we could know all the heroes who have gone before us, if all could be named and numbered, the sum would still be incomplete. Why? Because there are *some* heroes *today*. Unknown, unsung at this point, unnamed in the annals that men keep, they are heroes nonetheless, and their identity shall someday be disclosed.

We talk about the pioneers, the great warriors, the great historians, authors, scientists, inventors. Each is a hero in his field and time. But the heroship to which we aspire surpasses all these—it is a position of lasting honor.

We all can be heroes. Of course, not all *will* be. But that depends on us. One does not just set out to become a legend or a hero and suddenly arrive. Often those who have left their imprint on the pages of history were persons of small beginnings who, patiently, by little and little, worked their way to success; and because of their commitment to a great cause that outlived them they are highly respected. Looking back, we cannot fail to see them.

The question for us, however, is, Who are the

heroes today? Who is the model today for a son or daughter of God? Are you willing to be? Am I? What is our mental picture of these heroes of God? Someone who walks with God in humility, whose soul is stirred by the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, who is willing to put God's interests first, come what may, and to press steadily on to make that calling a reality? Who is ready to be a hero of the faith today in this wicked and adulterous generation? Who is ready to act as the counterpart of the apostles of old? Where among us is the likeness of Paul, or Silas, or Stephen? or Mary, or Phoebe, or Hannah?

We may not be able to equal them in accomplishments, but we *can* copy their uprightness, their holiness, their purity of heart, their meekness, patience and love for God. We *can* be heroes in these qualities, just as they were. We not only *can* be, we *must* be if we would ever have our names inscribed on God's honor roll and receive His "exceeding great and precious promises."

There *are* heroes in the making today. Let us make it our life task to identify at least *one* of them. ●●

## Abib Calendar - 1980

Abib 1	From sundown April 15
Bible New Year	through sundown April 16
Abib 13	April 27
Christ's New Passover	
Abib 15	April 30
Christ's Resurrection	
Christ's Ascension	June 8
Pentecost	June 18

## 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*

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

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## Jesus' Legacy to Us

Introducing A Series of Articles on Jesus' Passover Sermon

**T**HE KEEN, tender eye of Jesus picked up the shadow that His words had cast across the faces of those He loved. "Yet a little while I am with you." A little while, and He would *not* be with them. The reality of it all, the certainty, the finality of it was just beginning to register in their preoccupied minds. Could it be? Could it be that soon they would be seeing their Lord and Master for the last time?

Yes, time was running out. Jesus knew it, and because of it He seemed to compress even more of admonition and instruction into the moments that remained. Each moment was precious. Only a matter of hours, and all would be changed. No more would He be walking among them in the solitude of the hills of Galilee, teaching, preaching, healing, ministering as He went. No more would He be among them as one that served. His time for service was drawing to a close. He must suffer; He must die; He must be resurrected; and then—then He would be leaving them for a long, long time.

Jesus had told His disciples several times before, but they did not seem to understand. It seemed too unreal, too impossible to consider seriously. "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day" (Luke 9:22). Yes, He had told them.

Now the hour grew imminent. Still the disciples did not perceive it. He told them plainly: "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified" (Matt. 26:2). There was not even time for them to partake of the Passover on the appointed day! Accordingly, He arranged to keep it with His disciples one day early. And this would be the last, for, said Jesus, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until

that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29).

Then, as they were gathered for that Last Supper together, Jesus said it again: "Verily, verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me" (John 13:21). *Who?* Who would do such a dastardly, cruel, inhuman thing to their own Lord and Master whom they loved? Who? In shock each one asked, "Lord, is it I?" Then Jesus made clear that it was Judas that should betray Him, and Judas went out.

What a night! But in the midst of the tensions Jesus was in full control. Calm, pensive, trustful, Jesus proceeded to deliver what are perhaps His richest treasure of words. "Little children," He began, "yet a little while I am with you." He said it again—only a "little while." "Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you" (John 13:33). He was leaving them.

The thought struck a certain pain and deep uncertainty into the hearts of the disciples. But Jesus was not pained. He would be leaving them, true. But this was no cause for sorrow or fear. It was all according to His Father's purpose. "I will come again," He told them, not saying how or after how long.

But the thought of His departure was much more with His disciples than the thought of His return. So Jesus proceeded to tell them of the treasures He was leaving with them. Theirs was a heritage never before equalled among men. Theirs had been the opportunity of seeing and knowing the Son of God, the Messiah, the future King of the whole earth. Could any heritage be greater?

Jesus spoke on, His words touching those things nearest His heart. He spoke of the bond between Him and His Father, and between His disciples and Himself. He spoke of faith and



devotion that His disciples had yet to discover and explore.

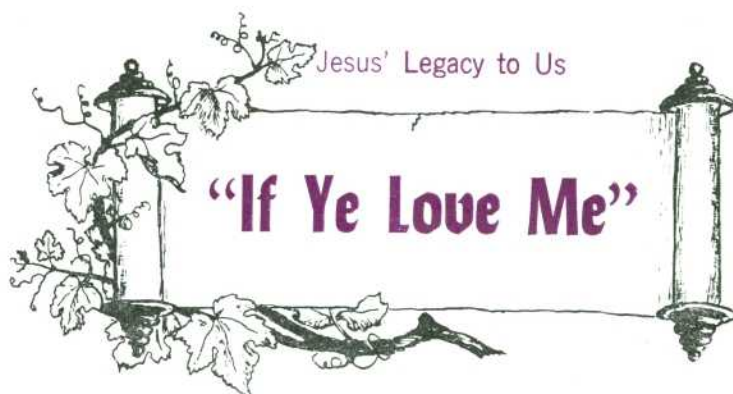
He spoke of His departure. Yes, He was leaving them. But He was not leaving them helpless, hopeless, or friendless. A great legacy was theirs, a legacy of riches unsearchable. As *they* thought of pain and loss, Jesus spoke of gain and triumph. If only they could realize it, they would not be sorrowing—their hearts would be filled with joy!

The very sermon He preached that last Passover night they spent together was in itself a rich heritage.

We want to think more about this great sermon. In it are lessons for every day of our lives. In a series of articles we will explore some of its rich legacies, not in any effort to improve upon it but to stir *our* hearts with its messages. By meditating on its deep truths, we

should be able to draw more personal and spiritual edification from this masterwork of the Master Himself. It is a heritage too precious to lie silent. Let it speak to each of us today. Let Jesus' words penetrate our hearts; let them stir, awaken and alarm us—lest we fail in *our* hour of testing.

Jesus left His disciples—and us—a rich legacy. It is a legacy of love, of peace, of hope, of joy no man can take from us however joyless the world around us. In this legacy is solid comfort, firm support, and the highest type of example. Let it come to us with a force and power that will transform us hour by hour, day by day into the moral likeness of Christ that we may be prepared to suffer with Him and someday live with Him when He keeps His promise and comes again. Then, having shared His sorrows, we shall share His triumphant joy. ●●



*"If ye love me, keep my commandments"*  
(John 14:15).

**I**F YE LOVE ME, keep my commandments," said Jesus. Turn from sin and from every evil. Nourish your soul with the bread of life and with holy volition and lovely deeds honor God in your daily life. Do not pretend affection when the heart is cold but go cultivate godliness, goodness, patience, meekness, sincerity, love. Above all, keep my commandments. Confession from the mouth without obedience from the heart means less than nothing. Failure to hearken to the Father's every command cannot be offset by any amount of words. All the outward expressions of which we are capable only serve to cloak the insincerity within if we are not living in obedience.

How serious is the pretense of being a spiritually-minded Christian when it contradicts one's actions. In such a one there is no love for Christ.

Love is by its very nature divine. And if our love be divine, genuine, from the heart, it must be strictly honest in every sense of the word and conduct; it must be stimulated from a deep love of truth which wells up in the inner resources of a heart brimming-full of goodness.

As in days of yore, the gospel of light and love is still speaking to us through the recorded words of Jesus. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Christian, take heed. Make every effort to live what you believe in your daily life with heart and hand and feeling all true. God's instruction Book has been opened to you; study it, obey it, live it.

Jesus, our guiding star into perfect obedience, was wholehearted in His devotion to God. He never deviated from the keeping of God's commandments. Through discipline, self-sacrifice and prompt obedience He became the beloved son of the Father. His was not the half-a-mind to serve God and half-a-mind to please self. He

led all the way to be like God, doing His Father's every bidding. Without any hesitation He could say and mean it: "I always do those things that please my Father in heaven."

Trained in all the wisdom of God, our Master had a profound knowledge of human emotions and traits. More than any other man He knew how the love of God does not lie in formal piety and loud avowals of "Lord, Lord," so very often voiced by believers as a cover-up for the evidence of deeds that are lacking. Looking past the man into the very depths of the soul, He placed His finger not upon the externals but upon the internal attitude, the real source of good or evil. Outward love never scored anything with Him. What He was most concerned about was the inner man, the original, hidden center of every human love or hatred. Strong, tender attachment for God and goodness must be there or vain is our worship. "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself . . ." (Mark 12: 30-31). Here is the commandment. And what is it? Love. Love the Lord. To this, Jesus says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

What is it to love God? It is to keep or do each of His commandments.

Intensely practical, Jesus believed man was made for tasks and duties, self-denial and service. His very words are suggestive of this: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Verbal love never did much good in the world at any time. It never lifted any burdens, never turned a sinner right-about-face or made a man more conscious of his love for God and his fellowman. Only genuine, applied love can do these things.

Only as we are converted from the self-loving life into the God-loving life do we get to be of immense importance to our God in promoting true love, in keeping His commandments.

Love inspired by the Word of God is beautiful; most of all, it is sincere. It is not the kind that calls everybody by an endearing name and agrees with them whether they are right or wrong. Love commands and it also reproves. It is not a sentimental affable idea. Bible love *gives* of oneself, is self-sacrificing, self-denying. It lays down its life for others. It does this, because it has tasted of the goodness and knowledge of God. All we have and are, our money, our abilities, our strength, we turn over to God's management when we love Him. Thus, love issues in action,

doing all the good we can for *His* sake. It is love which issues from every pore of the fully consecrated life.

We must heed the sayings of Jesus and do them. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." It is an exhortation much easier to read than to observe and do. The business of living the Christian life is exacting in its standards and lofty in its highest ideals, yet commands such as these must not be overlooked: "Wash you, make you clean; . . . cease to do evil; learn to do well" (Isa. 1:16-17). "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (I Pet. 1:16). These are not ideals unattainable, but were given because they are within the power of everyone who will to do them.

Let us willingly and obediently obey, thus demonstrating our love for Him. It is for our eternal good. ••

Jesus' Legacy to Us

## The Eleventh Commandment

*"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34).*

THERE HAD been ten commandments for generations; now there were eleven. The ten had been mostly negative, "Thou shalt not's," but Jesus' new commandment, like His other revisions of the old Law, was positive: "Thou shalt love as I have loved you." And this love was to be the mark of Christian discipleship: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

The Ten Commandment law had been given for the specific purpose of civilizing people. It did not call for perfection, only outward obedience. Jesus' teachings added a new dimension—a heart quality. One might keep the old Law inviolate and not be in sight of the Kingdom of God. The rich young ruler thought the Ten Commandments were enough—these he testified he had kept from his youth up. But Jesus said something was yet lacking. His way had superseded the old Law.

On that memorable night before His crucifixion, Jesus sought to explain this new way to His disciples. It was not really new, for it had been a part of the royal law from the beginning that a man should love God with all his heart and soul and his neighbor as himself. It was new in that Jesus had given it a higher priority; He had lived His ministry showing its meaning. This love wasn't just something to talk about, it was something to do. His life was to be their example. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10). "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21).

In that one little word "love" is summed up the whole duty of a Christian. It is the cornerstone of Christian character. A man might be famous, successful, wealthy, generous and of an affable disposition—and still be a failure in God's sight. He might give all his goods to feed the poor and give himself as a martyr and yet have it count for naught in God's book. This love means more than to be affectionate to one another. It takes in the whole of life—every act must be governed by it.

Writing his first Epistle some thirty years after Jesus had ascended to heaven, the apostle John dwelled further on Jesus' command to love. He had been there in the Upper Room when the command was given and had received the message firsthand. The impression gained had been so great that it had stayed with him through the years. Now he sought to impress others: "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (I John 3:18). Love as commanded by Jesus was not to be from the lips outward, but it must issue in obedience. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. . . . whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (I John 3:7, 10-11). Love meant doing, and doing meant love.

Paul took up the theme and expanded it further in I Corinthians 12:31. He called it the "more excellent way." To use one's gifts is good, said Paul, but to cultivate Christian love is better. One might speak in tongues; he might have faith that could move mountains, yet these

are nothing if this love is lacking. He depreciated the gifts that accompanied the Holy Spirit power in favor of Christian love. The gifts would pass away, but love would endure. Paul's message was as much for us as for the Corinthians. Gifts count for naught with God, but Christian character counts much. It is character that God wants above all else, and it is to be gained by obeying this eleventh commandment—the love commandment. The apostle tells us this in chapter 13.

*Christian love is patient.* It is not always easy to have perfect patience—but Christian love demands it. Does someone else's disposition or manner rub us the wrong way? Patient love can overcome it. Look for the good qualities in that person rather than dwelling on the one little characteristic that is irritating. Soon the rub will disappear; the irritation will be forgotten.

*Christian love is kind.* It has been said that to be patient is to be Christlike in forbearance; to be kind the more active expression of Christian love. Love that is patient shows itself in kindness. Paul emphasized kindness throughout his epistles. "See that none render evil for evil unto any man. . . . Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, . . . put on the garments that suit God's chosen people, his own, his beloved: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience. . . . To crown all there must be love, to bind all together and complete the whole" (I Thess. 5:15; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12-14, NEB).

*Christian love is not jealous or boastful.* "Jealousy," says Song of Solomon 8:6, "is cruel as the grave," hence it can be no part of love. All are not naturally endowed with an equal amount of intelligence or "things," but there can be no envy or jealousy among Christians. Christ's disciples are to be patterns of Christian love before the world.

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15). The good fortune of another should cause rejoicing, not envy. True Christian love rejoices more in spiritual gain than in material; its affections are set on things above, not on things on the earth.

*Christian love does not seek to draw attention to itself.* Rather, it seeks to excel in humility. To be puffed up, to be proud, is to be of the world. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). To be proud is to be of the world, and love of the world is forbidden the Christian.

(Continued on page 20)





## "My Peace I Give Unto You"

*"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).*

**P**EACE! what greater legacy could Jesus leave in our troubled world. However turbulent the world around us, Jesus offers peace. However warlike and restive the nature within us, Jesus offers peace. It is part of His legacy, part of the rich treasure He has left to each true follower.

Everyone longs for world peace, national peace, family peace. But the true source of peace is in the individual. "A better world begins with me"; so does a peaceful world. Genuine inner peace is a most coveted possession.

Nearly everyone admires those rare individuals who are able to retain a calm self-control under extreme duress. Without doubt, association with such a person is far more enjoyable than association with a "pepper pot," one who is inclined to fits of temper at the least provocation. Also lacking in peace are the "touch-me-nots," who have a tendency to wear their feelings on their sleeves. But, you say, no two people are alike; temperament varies with the individual. Not everyone is of a calm, peaceful disposition. Some are just naturally more sensitive, or have the misfortune of possessing a nervous disposition which renders them incapable of coping as effectively with difficulties.

Does this mean that Jesus' promise of peace is limited in its scope? Is it impossible then for some types of persons to obtain peace?

Most certainly temperament and personality differ greatly in all of us; but the inflexible law of the Creator recognizes no such alibi—which is no more than fair. These all-too-human feelings need not hold one in abject slavery unless that person wills that it be so. With God's help

we *can* change if we only *will*. Temperament and its many idiosyncrasies can, in the hands of a determined life-seeker, become as pliable as potter's clay. We *can* be changed, we *can* have peace even now, the peace which Jesus left.

Would you acquire that perfect peace and calmness of soul that nothing can offend? Then learn to recognize the situations within your daily activities and associations with others that are liable to breed those uncontrolled outbursts of temper or the inner turmoil of impatient thought with its resultant hasty word or action. Granted, many are the times when aggravating circumstances confront us so suddenly and so completely without advance warning that it takes an almost super-human effort to remain level-headed and in control of ourselves and the situation. But, let us remember, we are not dealing with impossibilities; rather, we are dealing with opportunities, yes, glorious opportunities to become so immersed in Christ's divine peace that we will not even feel the friction of daily living. We *can* have peace!

Do not the words of Jesus remind us of those of the prophet Isaiah spoken centuries before, that promise of sublime peace? "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Here is the secret of peace: Trust. This was the source of Jesus' peace. On that last night, when He knew that Calvary and bitter suffering awaited Him, only hours away, how could He have peace? Because His trust was in His Father, and full well He knew that the suffering was but for a moment; the glory would



be everlasting. He could look forward with peace because He was in His Father's care.

What of us? Do we really trust God? How often have we been guilty of the foolishness of crossing bridges before we came to them? What benefit have we ever derived from worrying about misfortunes or trials which have not yet occurred—and may never occur! Is there anything to be gained by such action? Do we not by yielding to our distrust show that we doubt our heavenly Father's promise that "as thy days, so shall thy strength be"? Oh, to be still and know beyond a shadow of uncertainty that this God is our God forever and ever, and that He knows full well the path we take and the strength that we possess. Isn't it time we were enjoying a greater measure of this perfect peace which He has left for us? What are we waiting for?

As we look even deeper into the complexities of human nature we stumble upon yet another impediment to securing Jesus' peace—our inborn desire for the approbation of man. This tendency can readily be seen in the infant. It becomes even more apparent in the youth, and flourishes, either hidden or openly—unless strongly restrained—in adults. To seek acceptance and approval is as natural as to breathe; but the time comes when the aspiring Christian must prayerfully and honestly search his own heart to redirect that ambition and seek the praise and goodwill of God only. What is the incentive in this? James provides an excellent guideline. Listen: "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Paul likewise is very concise in his comment: "For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." We see, then, that the line of demarcation is crystal clear. We cannot seek the honor of men and be servants of Christ. And the peace "which passeth understanding" will be the result of a total parting of the ways with the world and worldliness.

Does such a high standard of holiness appear impossible to us, at present unattainable? Do we feel the legacy of peace was not intended for us? Is it difficult to believe that it is possible to progress to a point where it will be second nature to do right and feel right, no matter what the circumstance or how severe the temptation? Yes, thank God, this blessed condition *can* be reached. The choice is ours. The peace is ours for the taking. *We* can have peace, if only we will submit ourselves, our will, our inner desires, to Christ. Peace can be ours if we live

as Jesus lived and seek the goals that Jesus sought. Constant, earnest application of heart and mind toward this end can work wonders. This is not to say that the desired godliness of life is acquired in a day, a month, or a year. Rather, it is the end result of years of strict discipline, cross-bearing and self-denial. But, every victory over self and sin brings its own quick reward in the ever-increasing peace of a completely dedicated life.

Are we experiencing more and more of Jesus' peace in our lives as the days and weeks speed by? If not, *why* not? Remember, it may be later than we think.

We are living at the very edge of momentous days. Only a step are we from the culmination of the hopes and dreams of all the years. And if only we are found of Him dwelling in His peace, in the deep tranquility of an upright life, what joy shall be ours! Then life, glorious life, free forever from the cares and trials of mortality, will be our happy and eternal portion.

You will be there, won't you? ●●

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## Keep Thou My Way, O Lord

*Keep Thou my way, O Lord;  
My self I cannot guide;  
Nor dare I trust my erring steps  
One moment from Thy side;  
I cannot think aright,  
Unless inspired by Thee;  
My heart would faint without Thy aid;  
Choose Thou my thoughts for me.*

*For every act of faith,  
And every pure design—  
For all of good my soul can know,  
The glory, Lord, be Thine.  
Thy truth my pardon seals,  
As promised in Thy Word;  
Thy truth the full assurance brings  
Great peace with Thee, my God.*

*O speak, and I will hear;  
Command, and I obey;  
My willing feet with joy will haste  
To run the heavenly way;  
Keep Thou my wandering heart,  
And bid it cease to roam;  
And bear me safe at journey's end  
To Zion, my blissful home.*

## "Ye Are My Friends . . ."



*"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:14-15).*

**M**ASTERS had always had servants, and had treated them as such. The servant, the slave, was the master's property and was expected to do whatever he was told, without hesitation or question, and without any share in the master's plan or purposes.

Along came Jesus with a new plan. He was in every aspect a master of men. In divine wisdom and knowledge, in moral attainment and excellence He stood above. Yet how did He look upon His disciples, lowly fishermen and others accustomed to common toil, men not yet masters of their whims and passions? "This is your status with me," says Jesus. "I have something great to share with you." Then very tenderly He tells them of the new name He is giving them.

It is as if He said, "No longer do I call you bond-slaves, but *friends*; for the bond-slave knoweth not what his lord doeth; I have taken you into my confidence as *friends* to share with you all that I have heard from My Father."

A friend is a *partner*. Jesus did not call them and choose them only for the service they could render Him; He called them for *their* benefit, to be His partners. The slave could never be a partner. The slave was just a living tool. Jesus' disciples were His "friends."

It is perhaps the greatest title ever conferred upon men. "Friends" were treasured both in the courts of the Roman Emperors and in those of the eastern kings. In each court was a very select group of men known as the "friends of the king," or "friends of the Emperor." At all times

these men had access to the king. They had even the right to come into his bedchamber at the beginning of the day. He talked to them before he talked to his generals, his rulers, his statesmen. The friends of the king were those who had the closest and most intimate connection with the king.

This was the category in which Jesus placed His disciples. They were called and chosen for tremendous privileges. The ancient Greeks used to say that all friendship was based on one of three basic motives—pleasure, profit, or goodness. We have all known of those friendships which grew out of false motives. But there was none of this in Jesus' choice of friends. His choices were one hundred percent based on goodness, on genuine personal potential and worth.

Never was Jesus anything but transparently honest with His friends. Never did He tell lies or indulge in fantasies or pretend to be what He was not. Nor did He promise them more than He could give. But by this same honesty Jesus revealed a *cost* factor in His friendship. Friends of Jesus! Partners in His glory! Sharers of the divine nature! Could anything be more wonderful? Jesus gripped and stirred their hearts as He told them how they would be co-rulers with Him in His Kingdom, on earth made over new—and glory would be theirs, and honor, and length of days, even life forevermore.

But He did not disguise the price. All this was for His "friends," but *who* were His friends? "Ye are my friends . . ." then suddenly they were confronted by a gigantic proposition. "Ye are my friends *if* . . ." if, if—followed by what? The incredibly potent little word *do*. "Ye are my friends if ye *do*." Do what? "Whatsoever I command you." Jesus was making clear that He had not come to distribute crowns; first came the cross, a cross to be carried every day, a





## "Ye Are My Friends . . ."

*"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:14-15).*

**M**ASTERS had always had servants, and had treated them as such. The servant, the slave, was the master's property and was expected to do whatever he was told, without hesitation or question, and without any share in the master's plan or purposes.

Along came Jesus with a new plan. He was in every aspect a master of men. In divine wisdom and knowledge, in moral attainment and excellence He stood above. Yet how did He look upon His disciples, lowly fishermen and others accustomed to common toil, men not yet masters of their whims and passions? "This is your status with me," says Jesus. "I have something great to share with you." Then very tenderly He tells them of the new name He is giving them.

It is as if He said, "No longer do I call you bond-slaves, but *friends*; for the bond-slave knoweth not what his lord doeth; I have taken you into my confidence as *friends* to share with you all that I have heard from My Father."

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cross of submission, a cross of obedience. That was what He had to do, and if they wanted to be His friends they had to do the same. Such was the commission of His Father, and in absolute candor He made it known to them

What Jesus gave to His disciples that night He has given also to us. We, too, are called to be His friends. His offer still stands; if we are not His friends, the fault does not lie with Him but with us and our proud, stubborn refusal to comply with the conditions of that friendship.

Friendship is part of Jesus' legacy to us, but it is costly. It costs because it is love that involves a sacrifice. Christ calls us to this intimate and wholehearted relationship that He calls "friend," but mere verbal acknowledgment is not enough. A friend is summoned to obedience that is warm and spontaneous. Christ is searching for friends who like Himself are intensely interested in procuring for themselves an entrance into the kingdom of His Father. He wants those whose desire for His friendship is so great that they will allow no obstacle to stand in their way of obtaining it. He wants men and women completely absorbed in the work of their Lord, whose own ways are consumed in their burning zeal for their God, whose delight is to meditate upon His law and obey it.

Do we qualify? If Jesus were here among us today, would He select *us* to be His "friends"? Are we so fired with enthusiasm in His high calling that His word is our meat and drink, and the topic of our conversation? Is His friendship constantly upon our minds? Are we straining every nerve, working, running, fleeing from our ungodly selves that we may claim Christ as our friend?

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Here is the truest test of friendship with our Lord. Are we meeting it? We say Jesus is our friend, but we must demonstrate the truth of that claim by translating it into the substance of our daily conduct. When we do that, our whole being will be used to establish the things in which we profess to be most deeply interested; evil will find no dwelling-place in our lives.

Our friendship with Christ depends on a common commitment of our lives to Him. Once we lived to serve our own interests; when our own ends had been met, we were glad to share the surplus with Christ—if there was a surplus. We would give something to Him, and do something for Him. But against the background of the friendship He offered, such a half-commit-

ment was a poor and stunted thing. Nor have we been always frank and open with Him, as He has been toward us. Our prayers have often been stiff and formal, less than honest and less than wholehearted. We do not seem to realize how intimate our prayers ought to be; we do not speak frankly and freely "as a man speaketh to his friend." We have not qualified as His friends.

Every friendship has two sides, our side and the other person's. "All things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." Jesus was open and honest with His disciples; He is sure to do His part. The problem is on our side. There must be no reservations, no sheltered secrets, no private chambers where questionable purposes are hid. If we seek Christ's friendship, if we seek to walk with Christ, to follow Him, we must share His aim, His end, His goal. We must also keep step with Him and move neither behind or before. We mar the friendship by our haste; we bruise it by delay.

"Ye are my friends, if ye *do* whatsoever I command you." Here is the price. At times it may seem high. It may seem hard at times to give up, at His command, the earthly object dearest to our heart. It will sometimes take all the will-power we have to keep passion and appetite, desire and disposition in subjection. It will cost greatly to use all our interest in this world, all the possessions and occupations of our lives, in the service of our Friend. But in every case it is the cost which makes the friendship richer and the sacrifice the more acceptable. He wants our all, body and mind, a complete laying down of our own way and implicitly obeying His every command.

Shall we not be willing to give it all—and without reservation? Shall we not cease to linger over some insignificant desire that lies outside His will and say, "From this time forth, I will be wholly Thine?" Our lives are short at best and we need to spend every moment building our friendship with our coming King.

If He sees our desire to become His friend, can we not think that He will help us, that He will even intercede in the presence of His Father for us? "There is one," He might say, "out of whom I know I can fashion something of permanent worth, something that will be not of mere transitory value but that will abide and keep telling for good far down the centuries of time. He is one in whom I see infinite possibilities, if he will come to Me and claim the help that I can give him." Christ is our mediator, and with

*(Continued on page 23)*



# We Honor Him

**W**HEN IS the anniversary of the birth of Christ? and when is the beginning of the sacred year? Is it in December, or May, October, or January?

It is a widely known and acknowledged fact that December 25 is *not* the true date of the birth of Christ. It is the date which was appointed for the observance of the event during the third century, but no one with a knowledge of history claims it to be the date of the birth of Christ.

The origin of the festival date is historically plain. For more than two thousand years before Christ was born, the winter solstice season was celebrated by pagan Egyptians, Assyrians and Babylonians. In Rome, December 25 was hailed as Brumalia, the birthday of the new-sun after its long journey southward. The date was welcomed by kindled fires and lighted candles as tokens of festivity. It was a time of wild license, of gaiety, and of excited happiness, a time of revelrous and unrestrained idolatry.

Why the present-day connecting of *Christ* with this godless, pagan day of merrymaking? Did God arrange that Christ should be born into the world at such a time, and that His followers should celebrate Christmas then?

He did *not*. Christmas was a fourth century innovation. It was not among the holy days carried over from Judaism into the early Church (remember that the Jews were not even willing to recognize that the Messiah was born). The December 25 celebration was a "Christianized" festival added to the church calendar because of its universal attraction and irrepressible popular appeal. An expanding church wanted to worship Christ and to celebrate His birth. At the same time they wanted to win the favor of thousands of pagan worshipers who might, with a few concessions, come into the "fold." To limit church ranks by strict enforcement of narrow principles such as Jesus taught was unthinkable. Even some of the so-called "Christians" themselves wanted to celebrate it. The *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* tells us that the celebration of the winter solstice was "too deeply entrenched in popular custom to

be set aside by Christian influence. . . . The pagan festival with its riot and merrymaking was so popular that Christians were glad of an excuse to continue its celebration with little change in spirit and in manner."

Sir George Frazer, in his book *The Golden Bough*, writes as he compares Christian and pagan religions and practices, that "it was the custom of the heathen to celebrate on the twenty-fifth of December the birthday of the Sun. Accordingly, when the doctors of the church perceived that the Christians had a leaning toward the festival, they took counsel and resolved that the true Nativity should be solemnized on that day. It would not be necessary for the newcomers to the faith who had grown up in a pagan world to give up the festive merrymaking of the December holidays."

In the *Encyclopedia Britannica* we find this comment concerning December 25: "This was the date of pagan festival in Rome, chosen in A. D. 274 by the emperor Aurelian as the birthday of the unconquered sun, which at the winter solstice begins again to show an increase of light. At some point before A. D. 335 the church at Rome (not the God of heaven) established the commemoration of the birthday of Christ, the sun of righteousness, on this same date." Here was their point of identification: Christ being called the "Sun of righteousness" could be symbolized by the physical sun; hence, the connection with the sun worship festival. This was how St. Augustine justified the selection of the date: Christians, he said, should celebrate December 25 not on account of the sun or any sun god but on account of the Sun of righteousness. Even he did not claim it to be Christ's actual birth date.

Is there anything whatever in the Bible to support the observance of December 25? There is nothing, *absolutely nothing*.

Many people who recognize that December 25 is not the true date of Christ's birth feel that the actual date is unknown, that the Bible does not tell us, and so we have no date to celebrate.

We must agree that there is no text of scripture which tells us precisely the date of Christ's birth. We must also remember that the calendar being used at that time was not the same as the calendar we use today, hence we cannot say Jesus was born on any one calendar date.

But even though we are not told an exact date, the Bible does give us some information, and the time of the beginning of the sacred New Year is known.

What do the gospel writers tell us about the time and circumstance of Christ's birth? We read the record of Luke: "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night" (Luke 2:8). This could never have occurred in Palestine during the months of December, for the shepherds, we are told, brought their flocks from the mountains and fields and corralled them not later than mid-October, so that they could have protection from the cold rainy season that followed. The sheep were not sent out again until the early spring. We are told also by reliable sources that the sheep were actually "watched" in the fields only during the lambing season, which is the spring of the year.

The account of Luke, then, limits the time of Christ's birth to the season between March and mid-October.

We have also the record of Cæsar Augustus' decree that all should journey to their own city to register, and that this was done about the time that Jesus was born. It would seem unreasonable to assume that a ruler would make such a decree at a season when the roads were for all practical purposes impassible.

But if December 25 is an impossible date, what season is likely?

We feel that the Bible evidence strongly points to a spring date. Let us see:

First, when does the sacred year begin, according to Bible reckoning?

From God's directions to His chosen leader Moses, we can easily learn the date of the beginning of the Hebrew year. At the time the Israelites departed from Egypt, God commanded (Ex. 12:2), "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you." And we read the name of this month in the next chapter: "This day came ye out in the month Abib" (Ex. 13:4).

Abib, or Nisan, the first month of the Bible year, is appropriately named, for Abib means by definition the "spring, sprouting month, the month of green ears, beginning with the new

moon of April or March; . . . the month of flowers." It is at the beginning of this month, the first new moon after the vernal equinox, that the Hebrews of old recognized the beginning of the new year. The command of God regarding the recognition of this month was specific: "Observe the month Abib, and keep the passover unto the Lord thy God" (Deut. 16:1). The month Abib, being the first month of the year, was to be remembered and observed; it was an important day; also the passover, which fell on the fourteenth of this month, the anniversary of the night when the Israelites left Egypt, was to be commemorated.

In First Samuel 20 we have a record of David's plans to be absent, for safety reasons, during the following feast days—which could easily have been the Abib or New Year feast, though we are not told. He said to his bosom friend Jonathan, Saul's son, "If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice [feast, margin] for all the family" (v. 6).

Psalms 81 speaks again of a significant new moon feast, which was a time of celebration and rejoicing: "Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob" (vs. 2-4). And verse 5 seems to connect this with the Abib season: "This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt," or as the Knox Translation reads, "when he left Egypt."

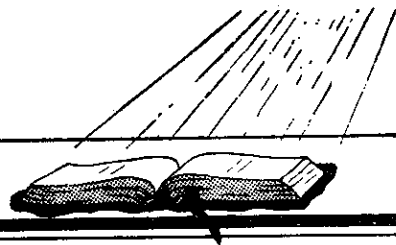
When Christ was born in Bethlehem, it might well have been the observance of a new moon feast, probably the feast of Abib, rather than the tax decree, which called both Mary and Joseph to the city; for the presence of only the male member of the house was required for registration. We read: "And all went to be taxed, everyone in his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David)" (Luke 2:1-7). Joseph went up with Mary, and it was at this time that Jesus was born.

Still another factor pointing to the birth of Christ in the spring is drawn from a parallel with the time of Moses. God commanded Moses specifically to set up the tabernacle on the first

*(Continued on page 25)*



# BIBLE STUDY HOUR



## Biblical Symbolism

**I**T IS A recognized fact that the Bible is not all literal. While the major portion of God's message to mankind is written in plain language, the Bible also contains parables, dramas, allegories and riddles—all of which are forms of symbolism.

*Question. Why do you think God used symbolism?*

*Answer. Object lessons are better remembered. We know it from our own experience. Probably we all have read or heard articles where the thing we remembered best was a story used to illustrate a point.*

*Q. That is just human nature—and people were just as human in Bible times as now. Symbols helped them to remember as they do us. It has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words—and it was just as true then as now.*

*Symbols are word pictures. They occur throughout the Bible, but could we have some from the Old Testament?*

*A. Jacob used symbolic language when blessing his sons. He was prophesying of the birth of Christ when he said, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:10).*

*Q. Yes. A scepter was a staff or rod used to indicate authority or sovereignty; Christ was to be a descendant of the tribe of Judah.*

*There is much symbolism in the book of Ezekiel. Could we think of some cases where it was used?*

*A. In the third chapter the Prophet was told to eat a roll—not a roll such as we eat for dinner, but the roll of a book. We know that could not have been meant literally.*

*He ate the roll and it was sweet as honey according to the 3rd verse.*

*Q. To eat the book was to read and study it until he understood it. Another Prophet spoke of eating God's Word. Who was that?*

*A. Jeremiah. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts" (Jer. 15:16).*

*Q. There was another instance where Ezekiel was called upon to act out a little drama to teach the people something. What was that?*

*A. It was regarding the captivity that was coming. In Ezekiel 12, the Prophet was told to go through all the motions of getting his goods together and digging a hole through the wall and carrying out his goods, in the hope of getting the message across to the people. They would not listen to his words, but they might get the message through this little drama.*

*Q. Yes. It was an interesting little drama. We will not take time to read it all, but the Lord told him to tell the people, "I am your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them: they shall remove and go into captivity" (Ezek. 12:11) Then in the 18th verse the Lord said, "Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness."*

*What was the message here?*

*A. There was to be a famine in the land associated with the captivity and God was showing the people by that symbol.*

*Q. There is also a spiritual lesson here. Throughout the Bible, bread and water are used to represent God's Word. We must eat this bread and drink this water with carefulness lest we fail to be ready when the Lord comes. What does another Bible writer have to say about this vital concern?*

*A. The writer to the Hebrews said, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Heb. 4:1). We must fear lest we miss the great reward.*

*Q. Can we have an actual instance when some-*

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

*one did fear the words of the Lord.*

A. When they found the book of the law in the house of the Lord in the days of King Josiah, and read its predictions, they trembled. The king "rent his clothes" because he knew that they had not been obeying what the book said. Immediately he destroyed the idols in the land and called on the people to obey the Law.

Q. *The Wise Man used symbolism in the Proverbs. Can we have a few examples?*

A. Wisdom is personified in chapter 8. That would be a form of symbolism.

"Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? She standeth in the top of high places" (Prov. 8:1-2). In Proverbs 3, wisdom is said to have long life in her right hand, and "in her left hand riches and honour" (Prov. 3:16). This is symbolism to impress the value of the knowledge of God.

Moffatt's translation of Proverbs 14:1 says, "Wisdom builds the house of life: frivolity pulls it down." That is symbolism—and also sound advice for the Christian.

Q. *Some symbolism is more difficult to understand. What about the cedar and the thistle?*

A. It is in II Kings 14:9. The message was from Jehoash (or Joash) king of Israel to Amaziah king of Judah. "The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle."

Amaziah challenged Jehoash, and the king of Israel replied with this parable. *The Interpreter's Bible* comments, "This is what happens to little thistles which set themselves up as being equal to cedars." Amaziah was the thistle that was trodden down in the end.

Q. *There was real-life drama in the Old Testament that caused considerable consternation. What was that?*

A. The handwriting on the wall. At Belshazzar's feast God caused a hand to appear writing His message on the wall of the great hall. It was interpreted by Daniel to mean the end of the king's reign. That very night the king was slain and another took the kingdom.

Q. *The appearance of the hand had the effect of attracting their attention; had the same message come in a letter it probably would have made little impression.*

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*I'm sure there are many more Old Testament examples, but let us go to the New Testament. Jesus did much of His teaching through parables. How would you describe a parable?*

A. A parable is the use of stories of things familiar to teach spiritual lessons.

The dictionary defines a parable as "a short narrative making a moral or religious point by comparison with natural things." In His parables Jesus used common, everyday objects to illustrate the truths He was teaching.

Mark says that "without a parable spake he not unto them" (Mark 4:34). And when we read the Gospels we realize how true that is.

Q. *One of the most familiar of Jesus' parables is the parable of the Sower. What was the seed, what were the four kinds of soil, and what did each represent?*

A. Jesus made it easy for us; He interpreted this parable. The seed is the word of God. Some seed fell by the wayside, some fell upon a rock, some fell among thorns, and some fell on good ground. The seed that fell by the wayside never took root. The wayside represents those who hear the word, but soon forget it.

The rock represents the class that hears and listens for a little while, but because the seed is so shallow rooted it soon withers away and they return to their old life.

That which fell among thorns is representative of those who hear and allow the seed to take root, but they retain their former associations and soon the "cares and riches and pleasures of this life" choke out the seed and it brings forth no fruit.

That on the good ground represents those who hear the word and having a good and honest heart keep it and bring forth fruit to eternal life.

Q. *The parable shows that there is more poor soil than good—and we find that to be true in our day. Many have heard the word, but few make any effort to really keep the commandments and bring forth fruit.*

*But can the poor soil be changed?*

A. Yes, it can. The prophet Hosea said, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you" (Hos. 10:12).

Q. *That is more symbolism, but the meaning is clear. Fallow ground can be broken up. What does "fallow ground" mean to a farmer?*

A. It is land that has been left idle for some time,

uncultivated. It must be worked to be brought back into production.

*Q. The prophet was not talking about literal fields; he was showing that we can go to work if we have been idle and bring forth fruits of righteousness. Jesus said His disciples should not just bear fruit, but should bear much fruit.*

To describe people as fruit-bearing or non-fruit-bearing trees is also symbolism. Just what do we mean by it? What type of fruit must we bear?

A. Paul gives us a good answer in Galatians 5: 22-24. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." These are the fruits the Christian must bear. To bear fruit is to add the Christian graces and to crucify or kill the old nature with its natural "affections and lusts."

*Q. What about the parable of the fig tree that didn't bear fruit? What did Jesus say to do about it? We find this parable in Luke 13:6-9.*

A. He said to dig around it and fertilize and give it another chance to bear. This fig tree represents a non-fruit-bearing believer. With a little "stirring up"—like Peter said in his epistle—he may bear fruit. But if not, he will be cut down and cast out of the garden.

*Q. What is the lesson in the parable of the importunate widow?*

A. The introduction to the parable gives us the answer: "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1). It shows the necessity of persistence—especially in prayer. The widow asked until the judge finally responded. We should apply the same principle to prayer. Ask and keep on asking—but we have to be sure we are asking according to His will, or God never will hear.

*Q. Yes. We have the example of the Psalmist who said he prayed evening, and morning, and at noon. Also of Daniel who said he prayed three times a day. These men lived close to God and knew the value of persistence in prayer.*

What lesson do we get from the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13?

A. The wheat represents the righteous and the tares the wicked. The parable indicates that both righteous and wicked should be allowed to co-exist until the second coming of Christ, the righteous Judge. Both will be on the scene at the Judgment, for we

read that He separates them "as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." Then they will be eternally separated.

*Q. Why is it so important that they grow together until the harvest, or the Judgment?*

A. The tares serve as protection for the wheat. If they are pulled up, some wheat might be pulled up also.

The tares also help to perfect the wheat through trials.

*Q. It is said that in Palestine there is a weed that very closely resembles wheat in its early stages of growth; thus it was very difficult to tell it from the wheat. It looked so much like wheat that it was not safe to try to pull out the weeds.*

This has a parallel in the spiritual: It is not easy to distinguish the tares from the wheat at the beginning of the race. When a person enters the race for eternal life we cannot know whether he will be a winner or a loser. We can judge by fruits only, but even then we cannot know what an individual will be at the end of the race. A man might make a grievous mistake, yet overcome his sin and in the end be among the faithful. Just so, a good man might fall into sin late in life and be counted among the unfaithful if he failed to overcome. ". . . The hour of reckoning has still to come, when the Lord will come to bring dark secrets to the light, and to reveal life's inner aims and motives" (1 Cor. 4:5, Moffatt).

What lesson was Jesus trying to impress with the symbols of the pearl of great price and the treasure hid in the field? (Matt. 13:44-46).

A. Both represent the reward that God has offered us. It is a reward of supreme value.

The Wise Man described the rewards of wisdom as "better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. . . . more precious than rubies" (Prov. 3:13-15).

*Q. So when we learn about this pearl of great price, or this treasure, what are we to do?*

A. Sell out all and buy it. It requires all that we have and are to meet the purchase price. We cannot reserve anything of self; we must surrender completely to God's will. The price is high, but even so it does not begin to approach the value of the treasure we may obtain. ••

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*Employ thy time well, if thou meanest to gain leisure; and since thou are not sure of a minute, throw not away an hour.*



# Did God Forsake Jesus?

## NEVER!

IN THE 27th chapter of the gospel of Matthew we find Jesus' last recorded words spoken shortly before He died. The translation of these words, as rendered in our Common Version and most of the newer versions is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (v. 46).

Were we to read these words without any previous knowledge of Bible teaching, we would be horrified. Could a loving, gracious, protecting Father *forsake* His Son at such a time? Could He possibly *forsake* one whose life of consecration had been flawless, whose obedience had been perfect, whose submission had been so exemplary and complete?

Theologians generally agree that God did forsake Jesus at this moment. We quote from an author in a current magazine: "There was feeling in Jesus' cry—a longing and more intense, unprecedented feeling than life could ever show us. Behind the dark feelings stood an awesome and distressing fact—Jesus *was* forsaken! . . . He went into His death as a God-forsaken man. This puzzles us, yes; but it is nevertheless fact."

Why? we ask. *Why* would God forsake Jesus at so critical a moment? Again theologians have an answer. How could He do otherwise, when, and we quote again, "all the scum and filth of human life had settled upon his soul"! "He was bearing our iniquities, all of them; they burdened Him down and blocked His way to God. . . . The dereliction expressed in this outcry of Jesus was a real awareness on his part of the experience of lostness. As a voluntary victim, as our substitutionary sacrifice, Jesus' death consisted in suffering the penalty of our sins; He received, in our place, sin's wages. God forsook him. . . . His dereliction was real—because our sins were upon him." Other theologians go so far as to say that Jesus at that moment relinquished His "divinity" so as to be able to identify with our lowly humanity, so that the atonement could be effective. And He had to be left unsupported at

such a moment, or the redeeming power of His death would have been ruined. In fact, some add that the "keen edge" of His passion was necessary to "make His sufferings meritorious to us." If Jesus' agony had not been so great, and if God had not forsaken Him at that moment, we might be still under the condemnation of death for our sins!

Is not such teaching an outrage against a righteous, loving and holy God? How terrible the very idea of it! And how utterly foreign to the teaching of the Bible. The Bible does not even tell us that Jesus' death was necessary to deliver us from the punishment our sins deserve, much less to say that the more He suffered, the more meritorious that death would be! Such horrors belong to the imaginations of the pagan religions of long ago, not to the high ideals of Christianity.

But even if we remove the ideas that theology has attached, we still have the words of Jesus as they appear in Matthew 27:46: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What *are* we to believe? Did God forsake His Son at that moment?

Among the most cherished promises of Scripture are those of God's constant care and protection for His own. He is gracious, merciful, kind, an "ever present help in time of trouble" (Ps. 46:1). "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble: and he knoweth them that trust in him" (Nah. 1:7). Surely Jesus was as deserving of God's "ever present help" as any who ever lived, and He qualified fully as among those "that trust in him," for His confidence was complete.

The Psalmist spoke of God as his rock, his deliverer, his shield, his high tower, "and he in whom I trust" (Ps. 144:2). He cried to the Lord in his troubles, and that the Lord heard, he was confident (Ps. 66:18). Surely Christ would have been as deserving as the Psalmist. The Psalmist testified further: "When my father and my

mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up. . . . I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Ps. 27:10, 13). Again he declared, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken. . . . And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hath not forsaken them that seek thee" (37:25; 9:10). Could this be *David's* experience—and yet Jesus be forsaken?

It was God's promise to Joshua: "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Josh. 1:5). It was Moses' confidence for the people of Israel: "For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?" (Deut. 4:7). It was a confidence which the prophet Samuel expressed to his people: "Turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart; . . . for the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake" (I Sam. 12:20, 22). The prophet Jeremiah (51:5) uttered the same thought: "For Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the Lord of hosts." If *Israel* was deserving of such care, why not *Christ*?

Isaiah extended the promise in these words: "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, . . . I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. . . . I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not: I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do

unto them, and not forsake them" (41:17; 42:16).

The author of Hebrews repeats the sublime promise: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:5-6). Was this promise to "us" and not to *Christ*?

We are told still further that God forsakes only those who forsake Him. As the prophet Zechariah proclaimed to his people, "Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you" (II Chron. 24:20).

The Psalmist cried, "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. . . . Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him, for there is none to deliver him" (Ps. 71:9-11). His enemies claimed that God had forsaken him, but David avowed that such was *not* the case.

Where is the consistency in God's love, that He shows greater care and concern for others of His human children than for His own beloved Son? How could God promise His people, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," and then forsake Jesus in His last moments of mortal life? Is this consistent with His promises that *never* fail? Is this what Jesus was to expect from His Father?

Not according to Jesus. His message to His disciples spoken the evening of the Passover Supper ring with confidence and trust. "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. . . . Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto my Father; for my Father is greater than I. . . . If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. . . . Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone"—Jesus

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knew *they*, the disciples, would forsake Him. But did He expect the Father to forsake Him also? He did not. "Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things have I spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace" (John 16:32-33). Must we conclude that when the hour of trial arrived, God disappointed Jesus and did forsake Him? It is unthinkable.

This same confidence had been Jesus' all through His ministry. "The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29). And in His last prayer, recorded in John 17, Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee. . . . I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. . . . O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me" (17:1, 4, 25). Jesus knew His Father and all His attributes, and knew that He was not left alone. Even knowing what lay ahead, He could say, "O righteous Father, . . . thou lovedst me." How could He say it if His Father would forsake Him? And after He had prayed in the garden, and had uttered those immortal words of resignation, "Not my will, but thine, be done," we read that "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him" (Luke 22:42-43). His Father had not forsaken Him at this time.

If Jesus had been forsaken at the last moment, would not many a sufferer who followed in His footsteps have quailed at the last? What of men like Stephen, Paul, Peter, and many others who had to suffer—how could *they* have been sure God would be with them if He had forsaken *Jesus* in His suffering?

The reading of Psalm 22:1 is commonly used as proof for the doleful complaint with which Jesus is thought to have ended His last hour on the cross. However, a careful examination of the words used does give other possibilities of meaning.

Several Bible commentators state the difficulty in translating the words used in Psalm 22:1 and in Matthew 27:46 with any degree of accuracy; several decline to comment. Adam Clarke suggests that the words may be "referred [more] to the wicked Jews than to our Lord, and are an exclamation indicative of the obstinate wickedness of His crucifiers; who steeled their hearts against every operation of the power of God."

*"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Was this promise intended for all God's people except His own Son?*

Thus it might be translated: "My God! My God! to what sort of persons hast Thou left Me?" He then gives another possibility: "Through the whole of the Sacred Writings, God is represented as *doing* those things which, in the course of His providence, He only *permits* to be done. Therefore the words, 'To whom hast Thou left or given Me up?' are only a form of expression for 'How astonishing is the wickedness of those persons into whose hands I am fallen!'"

The Lamsa Bible translates this text giving another thought: "My God, my God, for this I was spared"—which also removes totally the thought of God forsaking Jesus. And in a footnote, it suggests also: "This was my destiny."

In a book by J. Ralston Skinner, in which the author seems intent only on explaining certain peculiarities of the Hebrew language, particular attention is given to what he calls "the false rendering of the words of the Saviour as given in Matthew, chap. 27, v. 46." The author first quotes the Hebrew words, and then comments: "The Scripture of these words says . . . 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' . . . Now the words will not bear this interpretation, and it is a false rendering. The true meaning is just the opposite of the one given, and is—'My God, my God, how thou dost glorify me!' But even more, for while *lama* is *why*, or *how*, as a verbal it connects the idea of *to dazzle*, or . . . 'how dazzlingly.'" He further states that Ps. 22:1 also is falsely rendered.

From the Hebrew Lexicon (Gesenius') we find the word translated "forsaken" in Psalm 22:1 has for its first definition: "To loosen bands and to let a beast go free from its bonds. . . . Thus in the difficult passage, Ex. 23:5, 'if thou see the ass of thy enemy lying down under its burden, beware that thou leave him not, but that thou loose his bonds.'" The lexicographer further explains: "There is a play of the words in the double use of the verb which stands first in common signification of forsaking, then in the primary one of loosing. It is applied to a servant set free." This being



true, why could we not replace the word "forsaken" in Psalm 22:1 and in Jesus' quotation of that passage, with the words "set free"?

If we select the meaning that harmonizes the words of Jesus with the thoughts of God expressed elsewhere in the Word, are we not being fair to the Scriptures? We know that the Word of God teaches that He never forsakes the righteous; hence do we not do injustice to the Word when we choose a meaning that suggests that God forsook Jesus? How much better the thought that He was "set free." Historians inform us that it was customary for men who were crucified to linger several days before death ended their sufferings. Pilate, we are told, marvelled when informers told him that Jesus was so soon dead. He could not believe it and so sent a trusty centurion to confirm the report. But it was the mercy of God. Jesus was delivered from prolonged suffering, and was it not fitting for Him, as He felt the end approaching, to utter an exclamation of praise for relief?

Thus we might phrase Jesus' last words, "My God! my God! how greatly thou hast helped me! how wonderful has been my release!" Instead of thinking God had forsaken Him, Jesus breathes His last with words of thankfulness to His righteous Father who had relieved Him of suffering and would so soon raise Him from death's slumber to the glory of an endless life.

Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon gives another definition of the original word translated "forsake" in our Common Version: "to commit to anyone, to leave in one's care, as in Psalm 10:14, 'the poor committeth himself unto thee.'" Isn't this exactly what Jesus *was* doing at this time, committing Himself to the care of His heavenly Father? Far from being forsaken, He was in this helpless moment trusting Himself to the keeping of God.

Did God forsake Jesus, then? Never! And neither will He forsake any other faithful servant. His promise is sure. ●●

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## The Eleventh Commandment

(Continued from page 7)

*Christian love is not arrogant or rude.* It has been said that "manners maketh man." Manners do not make character, but they do identify a man. Jesus is the standard for Christian conduct, hence the Christian could do no better than to

emulate His manner. If walking in close company with Him, we will never be arrogant or rude.

*Christian love does not insist on its own way.* Jesus' life was the supreme example of unselfishness. He would have preferred to avoid the cross, but instead He said, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." He put His Father's will above His own at all times, so He could say, "I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29). That is the way of true Christian love—it was for Christ and it is for us.

*Christian love is not irritable or resentful.* There have been times in the life of everyone when it was extremely difficult not to be irritated by another's mannerisms. We resent being given orders. We bristle at suggestions as to how something should be done. All such feelings are not Christlike and must be overcome. The irritable, resentful spirit will yield to self-discipline. John, once identified as "a son of thunder" because of his noisy, boisterous nature, became known as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." The constant companionship of Jesus had smoothed the rough places and it had the same refining effect on Peter. By Pentecost his overconfidence had become needful self-confidence and he spoke boldly in the name of Jesus.

*Christian love does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.* "Love is never glad when others go wrong," is the Moffatt translation of this verse. "This is a weakness to which many professing Christians succumb," writes one. A sad commentary on any branch of society, and most of all the religious branch. Those who take pleasure in the mistakes and failures of others are sadly lacking in Christian love and have no part with Christ.

Paul said of the Church, "That there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it" (I Cor. 12:25-26, NIV). Christian love suffers with the suffering brother and rejoices with those who rejoice; it does not rejoice at wrong, it rejoices in the right, or as Moffatt renders it, "is always eager to believe the best."

*Christian love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* To "bear" is to forbear. Writing to the Ephesians, Paul said, "I beg you to live lives worthy of your high calling. Accept life with humility and patience, making allowances for one another because you love each other" (Eph. 4:2, Phillips). This is Christian love in action, "for-

bearing one another in love" as rendered in our Common Version.

The one who forbears does not seek retaliation or revenge. He shows restraint, not giving way to passion, holding back the sharp retort.

To "believe all things" is not to believe everything we read or hear. The ears of the Christian must be tuned to hear the Word of the Lord, but the noise of the world must be tuned out. Jesus said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 11:15). And again, "Take heed what ye hear" (Mk. 4:24). Gossip must also be tuned out. Passed from lip to lip, gossip can do much damage. Before repeating a story ask yourself: Will repeating this bit of information do anyone any good? If the answer is No, let it die an unlamented death. Believe only what is backed up by evidence.

Christian love hopes all things—it continues to hope even when there seems to be no ground for hope. That is one of the marks of the Christian faith. The Lord seems to tarry, all things seem to continue as they are—yet the Christian

continues to hope and wait for His coming.

Endurance is the test of Christian love. Hope and love must endure unto the end, for it is he that shall endure unto the end that shall be saved (Matt. 10:22). All who abide in this Christian love and walk the Christian way have for their example the One who endured the cross, despising the shame and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:2).

*Christian love never disappears* (Moffatt). It never fails (Weymouth), or as rendered by a free translation, Christian "love never falls down on its job." This is the love that bears, believes, endures, and hopes all things. Such was the love that Jesus left for our example. His whole life was a life of love in action. His command, the 11th commandment, was not just to do *no evil*, but to *do good*, and if we would be identified by this command as one of His disciples, we must possess this love that leads us to do what He commands, for said the Apostle Jesus loved, "this is love, that we walk after his commandments." ●●

## ~ A New Year Prayer ~

O God of the ages, the pages of another year have been torn from the calendar of our lives and cast into the wastebasket of time. One year ago they hung before us clean and uncluttered, holding in their crisply numbered days the golden gift of time. And now those days of promise have turned into memories.

For some of those memories, O Father, we are deeply thankful—thankful for the moments of love and joy and Christian friendship that we have shared; thankful for the flashes of success in our effort to combat the promptings of the flesh that have shown the stamp of Thine approval upon our efforts. We are thankful for the achievements in our growth into holiness that have brought a sense of real worth to our lives and that provide ground for hope that we may win in the race for life eternal. We are thankful, too, for the opportunities to bear crosses, to lift loads, to endure trials, aware that these are the stepping-stones to holiness, and are of Thine appointment.

But of some of our memories we are deeply ashamed—those moments of pride and prejudice when we thought to elevate ourselves by putting someone else down; those times of selfish indiffer-

ence when need sat by our side and pleaded with us for help and understanding and we refused to hear. We wish we could forget those instances of moral cowardice when we faced ourselves in the throes of transgression and shielded ourselves with slippery words or embarrassed silences and tried to daub our crumbling wall with untempered mortar.

For these and all our sins, O gracious Father, we are genuinely ashamed. And we plead for strength to grow above these petty human weaknesses, that it may be Thy good pleasure to let these memories be consumed along with the used calendar pages in the purifying fire of Thy forgiveness, that they may not stand against us when we appear before the Great Judge.

We thank Thee for the blessings the past year has brought, that a few hearts have been turned to Thee, and that there are a few souls that are hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

We pray Thee to forgive us for the sins that we have turned from and forsaken, and we pray for strength to continue steadfast to the end, that we may have an abundant entrance into Thy glorious kingdom so soon to be established on earth. In Thy holy name we pray. Amen.



# SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

*"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men"*  
—Luke 2:13-14

**T**HE WAYS of God are strange. Notice how they work out His purpose.

The time has come for the greatest event in the history of the earth. Nothing like it has happened on this planet since its creation. The long-promised Son of God, the future King of all the earth, is entering life. Heaven bends closer to earth to acclaim the sublime event which generations of inspired men of God have seen. Surely so momentous a happening merits a regal annunciation to the world which it is to bless.

The angelic host is mustered; rehearsed, perhaps (if immortal beings need rehearsing!). The sublime theme of the message is set to music, the language of happiness. Who is to be the audience of this angel choir? Where will the announcement be made? An event of universal significance would seem to call for universal publicity.

Below lies the ancient world—very modern to its proud inhabitants—with its populous cities, its commerce and industry, its schools and temples of religion—all the outward signs of a high degree of culture and civilization. Here slumbers Rome, the all-powerful mistress of the world, with its million inhabitants. Amid this vast multitude there must be a goodly number of honest and intelligent folk who are looking for a Deliverer. A fitting center, perhaps, for the proclamation of the message, a center from which the message might swiftly radiate to the limits of the Empire. Perhaps. But no, the message is not for Rome.

There lies Athens, decayed but impressive in its decay; still a seat of high culture and learning. Might not the sages of Greece, weary of unprofitable speculations, turn with relief to the promise of a new kingdom and a newborn Messiah? Or perhaps the message might find a welcome in Corinth, with its roaring markets

of trade and finance, its eager bustle and drive. But for both, the answer is no.

Southward sprawls Alexandria, where east meets west and a new culture is in the making. Among its hundreds of thousands of souls, wouldn't the King surely find friends? Evidently not, for the message is not given to them. Westward are the brilliant provincial centers of Spain and Gaul, Mauretania and Tunisia. Northeast and north is the heartland of the Empire—Asia Minor, studded with teeming centers of population and government and trade: Ephesus, Sardis, Antioch in Pisidia, Antioch in Syria, city after city. And far beyond lie the distinct but already ancient civilizations of Persia, of India, and Cathay. Everywhere is humanity—stumbling, groping, forlorn. With the field so broad, surely the message would be heralded far and near.

Ah! the heavenly concourse sweeps downward toward Jerusalem. We might have guessed it! Jerusalem, the Holy City, corrupt, apostate, unregenerate, yet now as for centuries past the center of all worshipers of the One God. Palestine may be a tiny country, but it has never been insignificant. Our message this night may sweep Jerusalem to a reformation greater than that of King Josiah. Surely this is the place!

Then—the course is changed. A few miles from the walls of the metropolis sleeps the little town of Bethlehem. Yes, Bethlehem. This is where the King is born. This is the town of which the Prophet wrote, "And thou, Bethlehem-Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel." No doubt about it. Before proceeding to the great cities this favored spot must be informed of the glory and honor which rests upon it. A pleasant thought—but stay! Even this town is avoided. Where now?



Around a flickering fire on a lonely hillside, eight or ten men in the rough garb of shepherds are keeping watch over their flocks. Some talk in low tones, some sleep, wrapped in their cloaks. Above them the leader of the angelic host halts and reveals his glory to their wondering eyes while he delivers his sublime message:

"Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

At his signal, the heavenly multitudes burst into song: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!"

Then the glory fades, and the immortal host go—not to Bethlehem, not to Jerusalem, nor Antioch, nor Alexandria, nor Rome, but back into heaven—home. Is this all? Yes, this is all. Their work is done, begun and ended above that lonely hillside outside a forgotten village in an obscure and turbulent province. Never did king or emperor witness a command performance to measure with that beheld by this handful of unlettered peasants that night—a performance planned in heaven and executed for them—and for us.

Why? We do not know. We cannot even guess. The ways of God are strange.

Or perhaps, it is our ways that are strange. Perhaps there is some type or shadow in it which we have not found. At any rate, it has left us one of our brightest gems of hope and promise.

The words of the angel-song are more than an idealistic longing or an expression of man's high yearning through the ages. In the light of inspiration they are pure prophecy, for peace on earth *will* come. Good will among men *will* come. And the Messiah who was born that night shall be the means of their coming. He alone can wield the physical might necessary to sweep away the evils of the ages and usher in the new age of ages when Isaiah's vision shall become a reality:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, . . . and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword

against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2:2-4).

The modern language renderings of our text give a slightly different idea to the closing phrase: "Peace among men of good will." "Peace among men in whom he is pleased," "to men whom he favors." How true. The men of good will, those with whom God is pleased, they shall have in this life the great peace which nothing can offend (Ps. 119:165), and in the world to come the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect thereof quietness and assurance forever.

This was the message of the angels that night long ago. Soon it will be glorious reality! ●●

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## "Ye Are My Friends . . ."

(Continued from page 11)

Him for our Friend, we can surely realize our possibilities.

But let us ever remember the condition: "Ye are my friends, if ye do." Something must be done. We must *do* it. And when we have done on our part, we can know that He will never fail or forsake us. He will be our Friend.

And then, when we stand at the Judgment scene and hear the "Well done" of our Friend, we will hear Him confessing our name before the Father and all the holy angels, saying, "This is a very dear friend of mine. I want Him to be with Me through eternity." ●●

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## New Year Thoughts

All the past is shut up within us, and is a sort of perpetual present. All the future is before us, and though duty is a present thing it is constructed out of the past and runs endlessly into the future. We thus have the past with its memories, the present with its duties, and the future with its anticipations—one for wisdom, one for action, and one for hope.

If we are with the right and for it, troops of beautiful angels shield us from all wrong.

Every time the thought of Christ puts from us one temptation, every time an impure thought is suppressed by the thought of His purity, . . . every time some self-indulgence is put aside by the thought of His self-denial, the very life of God gains depth and power in our souls.

## The Unrecognized Tool

"DAD'S home!" shouted Keith, as he bounded down the stairs two at a time, thoughtless of the danger of making a misstep.

Neal was climbing out of the car as Keith arrived at the front door.

"Tired, Dad?" Keith asked as he greeted his father.

"Yes, Son. But it was a good trip."

"Did you come all the way from New York today?"

"All the way."

"No wonder you're tired, if you had to carry *this* very far!" said Keith as he lifted his father's suitcase from the car and started for the house.

By this time the whole family was on hand to welcome Dad. The questions came thick and fast. "Were you anywhere near the harbor?" "Did you see the Statue of Liberty?" "How did you like the subway?" "Did you see any of the museums in New York?" "What was the airport like?" "Did you get lost?" To children who had never traveled, the thought of the big, bustling city was awesome, almost frightening.

"It's a big, big city," admitted Neal. "But I didn't get lost. I followed a map. You can get almost anywhere with a map."

"What was the most wonderful thing you saw, Dad?" queried Janet.

Neal paused a moment before answering. "Well, I think perhaps it was a certain tool I saw a man using."

"A tool, Dad?"

"Yes, a tool, an instrument—yes, call it a tool. It surely is."

"What is it? Is it a new invention, Dad?" asked Keith all in a breath.

"I don't know how long it has been around, but it has been a long, long time. It can be used

for so many, many purposes, that's why I think it so wonderful. It's a tool I've seen before, but I never really appreciated its wonders."

By this time the children were thoroughly confused.

"Did *you* ever use this tool, Dad?" Keith had to ask.

"Yes, I would say so, but probably not as well as I should have used it. I never realized how much it could do."

"What can you do with it, Dad?" asked Keith eagerly. He had a natural yen for tools, and didn't want to let the opportunity to learn a little more go by. Surely this had to be a very singular tool, for Dad to have discovered its value in New York City!

"It can be used," began Neal, pensively, "for a paddle, a mallet, a thimble, a gasket . . ."

"Now, Dad, there's no such thing. Really!" Keith was getting skeptical.

"Oh, yes, my son. And more than this. It's used for a brush, a press, a dipper, a pair of scales, a dipple—

"What's that, Dad?" asked Janet.

"Why, a dipple is a pointed stick used to make holes in the ground."

"Anything else about this tool?"

"Yes, it's been used as a pair of tongs, a stopper—it does very well for a corkscrew."

"One tool, Dad, for all that?" Keith was still unbelieving.

"Yes, and for many, many more things."

"It must cost a lot, Dad," interjected Janet. "You surely didn't bring such a tool home with you, did you—?"

"I did," Neal replied. "And tomorrow I will show you."

Keith was not ready to settle for that. "Tomorrow? Why not tonight!" The thought of waiting until tomorrow was just too much.

"You may see it tonight, if you want to. Here it is—" and Neal held out—his hand!

Keith's face fell. "Is that all you're talking about!"

"But Dad's right!" exclaimed Janet to Keith, as she thought about what her father had been telling them.

"But Dad, why—why so much fuss just about our *hands*? *Everybody* has two hands."

"No, Keith," replied Neal, smiling warmly, "everybody does *not* have two hands like we do. That is what impressed me so much on this trip. I had told you I was to meet with this man in New York who represents a large firm. Well, he is a fine gentlemen to talk with—we had talked

many times on the phone. But when I met him, I found he has no hands."

"No hands!"

"Not even one. He has apparently had some accident, and one arm ends at his elbow, the other is just a little longer. Instead of two hands he has two hooks."

Janet and Keith were silent.

Neal continued. "But he does really well using them. It is amazing, but it certainly isn't like having two good hands. I was never so thankful for my hands as I was after spending several days with Mr. Morrison. And on the way home I tried to think of all the ways we use our hands."

"You sure thought of a lot of them, Dad," complimented Janet.

"I'm sure I thought of only a very small part of them. If a machine were invented that could do all the simple tasks our hands do, people would probably come from every part of the world to get a look at the wonder. And our hands are self-repairing. If we cut a finger, it heals. God has created such wonders right in our own bodies. After watching Mr. Morrison so happy to be able to do even the simplest little thing with his hooks, I realized I had never really thanked God for my two good hands."

Kathy, who had been overhearing from the kitchen, now stepped to the doorway. "Our hands can perform the greatest acts of mercy. And remember those praying hands?"

Standing up and straightening himself to his full height, Keith held out his hands and gave them a long examination. "I'm sure thankful that I have *hands* instead of hooks. I don't know how I'd ever do anything."

"Just make good use of those tools, Son," said Neal. "Remember, God made them, and they are really His, not yours." ••

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## We Honor Him

(Continued from page 13)

day of the first month. We read, "On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent" (Ex. 40:2). Christ being the reality of that which the tabernacle typified, is it not reasonable to believe that God arranged that His birth should occur on the same significant day of the year? Christ is the head of the spiritual house of the Lord (Heb. 3:6), the first stone to be completed for the eternal temple,

April, 1980

even the "chief cornerstone" (I Pet. 2:5-6).

For these reasons, the members of the Megiddo Church set aside the first day of the sacred New Year, Abib (which falls on the first new moon after the spring equinox, this year on April 15-16) to thank God for another new beginning and to honor our coming King.

Why do we do this?

Some people who recognize the paganism of the December 25 celebration feel that it is wrong to celebrate Christ's birth at *any* time. They point out that the only birthdays mentioned in the Bible are those of Pharaoh and Herod.

There are, however, other considerations. By setting aside the first day of the year for spiritual observances, in memory of the New Year and of the birth of Christ, we manifestly declare our protest of the December 25 observance in a positive manner and take an observable stand for God and His cause. Also, by recognizing Christ's mortal birth we reinforce our belief in Christ's *mortal* (not divine) nature, that He did not pre-exist but was in "all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." We honor His birth as the *beginning* of a life and not the incarnation of a life that had been existing for centuries. At the same time we honor the King, He whose greatest work in our behalf is yet future when He shall "come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (II Thess. 1:10).

We feel that a life so pure and holy and dedicated, and so essential to us, is worthy of special honor, and the Bible tells us to render "honor to whom honor" is due. Should not a day spent honoring Him and refreshing ourselves in the principles He taught be of benefit to us in our effort to become *like* Him? And living in an age when His return is imminent, we feel our obligation the more keenly, to do all we can to stimulate ourselves in our effort to prepare for the great Day of the Lord.

We honor Him not as a babe in a manger but as a mortal being who went the whole way, and in whose steps we may follow. If God sent angels to announce the glad tidings of His birth, can we be wrong in our little echo of those tidings? ••

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I hope that I shall possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain what I consider the most enviable of all titles, that of an "Honest Man."

—George Washington



# Our Readers Write...

## Discussing

I was discussing religion and Christianity with some people on the LSU campus just recently, and as has been the usual pattern they thought I was really "cracked" in the brain. Yet they never have read or studied or devoted any time to the Bible. On the one hand they feel they should be rewarded for the things they do on their jobs or any special efforts they put forth elsewhere; but when it comes to living a Christian life the shoe is removed and they say this is all done by Christ. Faith in a literal devil or Satan is rockbound. Yet when I ask them why the devil never makes any appearances at their football games or at the campus during high noon, they haven't any answers. Yet a false idea like this is perpetuated by TV and movies and fiction, without a shred of real proof from the Bible!

I have tried and tried earnestly to think of what is taking place and to put reason and logic into all of the waste, stupidity and suffering that exists presently, and the only conclusion I have reached is that God's thoughts are indeed further above our human thoughts than the heavens are above the earth. We see things from a very small point of view. We have lived, by the Father's yardstick, just a few moments in time. There is no way we can even approach His greatness; but we can have faith and assurance that whatever is taking place is under His all-knowing eye.

*Baton Rouge, Louisiana*

D. K.

## No Excuses

How many times we try to find a scapegoat when we make mistakes. But it won't do us any good when we come to the end of the way. We used to have a hymn that went, "All your excuses will utterly fail you, if unprepared—Sinner, what will you do?" Well, there is something we can do now, and that is to "give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." We will be left without excuse if we fail to come up to the standard God has set for us.

Although we live so far away, we have all those wonderful sermons on cassette every day; they are worth far more than thousands of silver and gold to us. We have been wonderfully blessed.

May the Lord help us to be more awake to our responsibilities and help us lay aside every weight and besetting sin so that we may win the race for eternal life.

*Port Au Port, Newfoundland*

G. W.

## Ordering

I want a copy of the hard cover volume of the *Megiddo Message* 1979. I read the messages over and over, have read all about twenty times each. So I think the hard cover will last a lot longer.

*Holley, New York*

C. V. B.

## Only A Few

We must take heed lest we fall. Even Brother Paul, who ran with a clear goal before him, and could say, "I am like a boxer who does not beat the air; I bruise my own body and make it know its master," even he feared that after preaching to others he should find himself rejected.

It is good to be "put in remembrance" of the help and strength God provides, if we on our part put our trust in Him and obey His commands as we strive to walk this narrow way. Because it is strait and narrow, few there be that find it. However, no other way will lead to eternal life. Righteous people have ever been in the minority. Even in the time of Moses, the people whom God chose to set His love upon were the "fewest of all people," and it is the same today. "Only a few"—because God will have the very best.

The stone that will grow and grow until it becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth is at first only a small stone. This indeed should fill us with enthusiasm, especially, too, when we know the end of Nebuchadnezzar's mighty and exceedingly bright dream image which was struck on the feet by this little stone. All the fine gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay will be swept away "like the chaff of the summer threshing floor." But the stone that grows will fill the whole earth and remain forever.

*Swansea, South Wales, Great Britain*

R. B.

## Learning

It seems I'm having to learn the hard way, but I am finally learning to accept the things I cannot change, to have courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. I'm finally learning to be happy even when things don't go my way. God's way is the best every time. Why are we so stubborn and rebellious and learn the long, hard way? But what a feeling of freedom when the old man starts to break. What a long, lifetime struggle of conquering self! My sister-in-law told me a good thing is to face yourself in the mirror and admit to yourself just what you are. It's hard to cover up when you are staring yourself in the eye.

*Pelkie, Michigan*

D. J.

## A Great Work

In this present world of darkness it is very important to watch ourselves at all times in everything we do, that we never live merely to please ourselves. It is a great work to keep our thoughts in subjection to God's law. Yet this work is not beyond our ability to perform, nor are our daily trials too strong to endure. In all ages God's faithful servants endured many hard trials joyfully, keeping that great prize in view. Brother Paul encourages us to fight a good fight of faith to lay strong hold on eternal life, and never to grow weary in well doing.

We have failed too many times to grasp the great importance of giving the more earnest heed, to keep pressing on more strongly to overcome our old natural evil ways. Yet for all our many failures we have not been cut off. Our loving Father has been very longsuffering towards us here and we are very thankful that we are still allowed to live and make that great change from old to new man.

*British Columbia, Canada*

Z. S.

## Choosing

I have been thinking of the choice Pilate gave the crowd who shouted "Crucify him, crucify him!" He asked them, "Whom do you choose to be released unto you, Barabbas or Christ?" But the people preferred a thief and a murderer to the anointed of God.

People today have the opportunity to choose between Christ and all that He stands for and the things of this world, but most choose this world.

Even though the crowds in Jesus' day chose Barabbas, that was not the end of Jesus. He who was so cruelly condemned to death came out of the tomb and rose in triumph to His Father's side. Now it is Christ's turn to do the choosing of who will be with Him in His Kingdom, and who will sit with Him in His seat of government.

*Worsop, England*

H. L.

## Attending Classes

It was strange to read of your schools opening in September! Our school year begins at the end of January or February 1st. Many will begin their education and soon will go out into their chosen vocations; education is essential for advancement and growth in life.

We who have chosen to join God's High School of Learning find we have to attend "classes of learning" every day, that we may grow in grace and in a knowledge of Him who has called us to leave the darkness of the broad way and walk in the saving light of the narrow way. We know from experience that not many will choose to walk this way, but we are assured of the grand Hope set before us in Christ Jesus. If we strive to be consistently true, we know He will never leave us nor forsake us. He will help us on to triumphant victory.

*Queensland, Australia*

A. B.

# SO WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

## ABOUT BIBLE DATES AND TIMES

1. On what feast day did the early church get its start? \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 2:1)
2. Every fiftieth year under the law of Moses was the year of \_\_\_\_\_ when mortgaged property was returned to its owner and Hebrew slaves were freed. (Lev. 25:10)
3. The New Passover was observed by Jesus and His disciples on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of the first month instead of on the traditional passover date of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. At what three great feasts were all healthy Israelite males commanded to present themselves to God at the sanctuary? (Deut. 16:16) The Feast of \_\_\_\_\_, the Feast of \_\_\_\_\_, and the Feast of \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The Jewish calendar is a \_\_\_\_\_ calendar; accordingly, each new month begins with a \_\_\_\_\_ (Ps. 81:3-4; Num. 10:10)
6. Jesus ascended to heaven \_\_\_\_\_ days after He was resurrected. He sent the Holy Spirit \_\_\_\_\_ days after His resurrection. (Acts 1:3; 2:1)
7. Every \_\_\_\_\_ year under the law of Moses, the land was to lay fallow. This \_\_\_\_\_ year, as it was called, was intended to benefit laborers, land owners, farm animals, the land and strangers. (Lev. 25:4-6)

8. Jesus was resurrected on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of the first month, which was the day of waving of the \_\_\_\_\_. (Lev. 23:11)

### 9. Which Feast Was Which?

Several of the Feast days under the law of Moses were known by several names. Can you identify them? Below is a list of these names. Put a "PS" in front of each feast which was another name for the Passover, a "PT" in front of each which identified the Pentecost season, a "T" on each name which identified the Thanksgiving feast of the seventh month, and an "O" before each other minor feast day or other observance.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ Feast of Purim (Esther 9:21-28)
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ Feast of Booths (Neh. 8:14)
- c. \_\_\_\_\_ Feast of Harvest (Ex. 23:16)
- d. \_\_\_\_\_ Feast of Ingathering (Ex. 23:16; 34:22)
- e. \_\_\_\_\_ Day of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:6)
- f. \_\_\_\_\_ Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29; 23:27-32)
- g. \_\_\_\_\_ Feast of Firstfruits (Ex. 34:22; Num. 28:26)
- h. \_\_\_\_\_ Passover (Lev. 23:5)
- i. \_\_\_\_\_ Feast of Weeks (Ex. 34:22)
- j. \_\_\_\_\_ Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:34)
- k. \_\_\_\_\_ Feast of Trumpets (Lev. 23:24-25; Num. 29:1-6)

### Answers:

1. Pentecost
2. Jubilee
3. 13th, Abib
4. Unleavened Bread, Weeks, Tabernacles
5. lunar, new moon
6. 40, 50
7. seventh, Sabbatical
8. 15, Firstfruit (First Sheaf)
9. a. O b. T c. PT d. T e. PS, f. O g. PT h. PS i. PT j. T k. O

## *When the Year Is New . . .*

*This is the time of endings,  
But of new beginnings, too . . .*

*God sends us another year  
And maketh all things new . . .*

*Another hope, another chance,  
Another road to take . . .*

*Another star to follow,  
And another start to make . . .*

*New beginnings, new adventures,  
New heights to attain . . .*

*Golden opportunities  
To work and build again . . .*

*New and higher aspirations,  
For the future days . . .*

*Seeking, dreaming, moving on  
Down bright and better ways.*

*—Selected.*

