

Megiddo Message



Check Yourself

THESE are questions which the members of John Wesley's Holy Club asked themselves each day in their private devotions over 200 years ago. How do you score?

- ☐ Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
- ☐ Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?
- ☐ Do I confidentially pass on to another what was told to me in confidence?
- ☐ Can I be trusted?
- ☐ Am I a slave to dress, friends, work or habits? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
- ☐ Did the Bible live in me today?
- ☐ Do I give it time to speak to me every day?
- ☐ When did I last speak to someone else of my faith?
- ☐ Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
- ☐ Do I disobey God in anything?
- ☐ Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
- ☐ Am I defeated in any part of my life?
- ☐ Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy or distrustful?
- ☐ How do I spend my spare time?
- ☐ Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisee who despised the publican?
- ☐ Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?
- ☐ Do I grumble or complain?
- ☐ Is Christ real to me?

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 precepts and principles given us in the Word 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

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version. Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—*New English Bible*

NIV—*New International Version*

NAS—*New American Standard*

RSV—*Revised Standard Version*

TLB—*The Living Bible*

TEV—*Today's English Version*

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

Phillips—*The New Testament in Modern English*

Berkeley—*The Modern Language New Testament*

Weymouth—*The New Testament in Modern Speech*

Goodspeed—*The New Testament translated by*

Edgar J. Goodspeed

Moffatt—*The Bible, A New Translation*

RV—*Revised Version*

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

Megiddo Message

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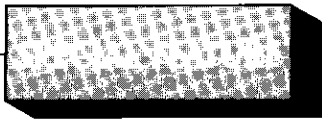
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The MEGIDDO MESSAGE is a religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ, and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Church. L. T. Nichols, Founder; Newton H. Payne, President and Editor; Ruth E. Sisson, Executive Editor.

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MEGIDDO is a way of believing and living, grounded solidly in the Bible as the reliable Word of our Creator. A total view of life, the world and the universe, it sees all events, men and nations moving together toward one God-ordained climax: the Kingdom of God on earth. This has been the plan of God since the beginning. Christ will return visibly, bodily, as King, and the governments of this world will be joined to form a totally new worldwide government. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants. This is the purpose and goal of all creation.



When life offers you an opportunity
to grow in grace,

Don't Be Sleeping!

*The word from God
is TODAY
NOW, while the
tide is still
rising.*

LET us go back some nineteen hundred years to a place called Gethsemane. Jesus has come there on this night, with His disciples, for prayer. Judas has already left on his dastardly mission to betray Him. Jesus invites the Eleven to join Him in a kind of inner fellowship. Eight of the disciples remain near the gate of the garden. Three—those closest to Him, Peter, James, and John—follow Him silently along the winding path that leads up the hill through the garden. Jesus stops and urges them to pray with Him.

Then He goes apart, throws Himself out flat upon the earth, and prays that the cup might not be His to drink. It is a moment of intense struggle and tremendous agony of spirit.

Having so prayed, He goes back to the disciples, hoping for some word of encouragement, some warmth of love, some comfort in this hour of supreme agony of heart—and finds them sleeping. Our hearts are pierced by the sinking disappointment in His words. “Couldn’t you watch with Me,” He asks, “even for an hour?” And then He adds, “Watch and pray, lest you yourselves enter into temptation; your spirit is willing, but your flesh is weak.”

Again He goes apart to pray. This time, the Scriptures say, His prayer is so intense that His sweat comes as it were like great drops of blood falling at His feet.

Once again He goes back to the disciples for some word, some gesture, even a look of support. But once again He finds them asleep.

A second time He leaves them to pray. This time it is a prayer of submission. “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.”

He returns a third time to His disciples, and they are still asleep. But this time the need is not critical; it has passed. And so He lets them remain asleep. It does not matter now, because the opportunity has gone by. His battle has been fought. And won. “Sleep on,” He says, “and take your rest,” and He goes back to pray alone.

Observing Jesus, what immortal lessons the disciples could have learned that night, . . . but they slept, and so missed the tide.

Only moments later He sees torches flickering through the branches of the olive trees. The soldiers of the high priest have come. He goes back to His disciples and says, "Arise. My betrayer is at hand." He is led off to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest, leaving the disciples among Gethsemane's bushes.

They are left in the shallows and they are left in miseries, because they have missed the tide.

The Power of Tides

During the troubled years of the Second World War the Italian forces were driven out of Eritrea in North Africa. In an effort to make the harbor unusable to the Allies, the Italians filled great barges with concrete, and then sank them across the entrance to the harbor. When the Allies entered, their problem was to remove the barges in order to make use of the harbor.

They did this in a very ingenious way. They sealed great empty gas tanks of the sort oil refineries use in storing fuel, and then they floated them in the sea above the sunken barges. When the tide was out, they chained the floating tanks to the barges. When the tide came in, the tanks exerted their tremendous buoyancy to tug the barges free from the bay's sucking sand. It was then relatively easy to clear the harbor for Allied shipping.

Think of the power in that! The barges were chained to the tanks. The tanks were dependent upon the tides. The tides were pulled by the gravitational attraction of the moon,

and the moon was moving in accord with the whole cosmos.

The tides exercise tremendous, unimaginable, dynamic power, power not unlike that which opportunity brings into the life of each of us. But there is a very serious consideration which comes to us with this, and that is the transitoriness of that opportunity. The tremendous tide-power of opportunity is at best fleeting, as the famous playwright Shakespeare so vividly pointed out in these words:

*There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood,
leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat;
And we must take the current
when it serves
Or lose our ventures.*

Not only should we recognize the power of these tides, but we should realize, too, that they cannot be stopped or retrieved. Their lifting strength comes for but a few brief hour, and then is gone. And if we miss the flood, we will be left in shallows and in miseries, having lost our ventures.

Growth in Character

Those disciples in Gethsemane missed the opportunity to grow in character.

Why is it that most people today give so little thought to growing in character? Probably there are several factors: one concerns the popular idea which says that character is nothing more than the influence

of our environment. Another is the effect of the teaching of many religious groups that the good life is the automatic result of accepting Christ and His power in your life. Then, too, the idea of moral relativism has settled across the land like a thick, stinking fog, saying that there are no absolutes, no solid "right" or "wrong." So it should not surprise us that there is so little serious talk of character, let alone focus on its growth.

But we all need to grow in character. We need also to recognize that such growth cannot occur at just any moment and under any circumstance. There are tides in the development of character. Opportunities come, and opportunities depart. Catch them and growth in character is yours; miss them and you are left in shallows and in miseries.

A small city in Pennsylvania was at one time famous for having the world's largest steel tube-rolling mills. These people had designed a seamless tube that was unparalleled in the steel industry. An observer tells of standing with the machine operator in the command module of one of the great machines that made the tube steel. "I would see a great serpent of molten metal come slithering down into the machine," he says, "where it would be chopped off. Then the machine would grasp it by its ends and begin to spin it; by centrifugal force that bar of molten metal would open from the inside out, forming a perfect tube of steel, without seam or blemish."

"What is the most important

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ingredient in the process?" he asked the operator of the machine. The answer was simply this: "It's the temperature of the metal. If it is too hot, it will fly apart. If it is too cold, it will not open as it ought. Unless you catch the molten moment, you cannot make the perfect tube."

"Unless you catch the molten moment"—there is the point. Just so with us. Unless *we* catch those molten moments when character can develop, we miss *our* opportunity. The disciples missed such an opportunity in Gethsemane. They could have seen firsthand how Jesus handled suffering, fear and faltering. Theirs was the chance to see Him face straight-on the most serious test of life—not run away from it, or attempt to deny it, but confront it headon and defeat it. Observing Him, what immortal lessons they could have learned that night, lessons about courage, and patience, and hope, and endurance, and mercy, and forgiveness, and fortitude. But they slept, and so missed the tide.

I do not know what will constitute the next molten moment for you. It might be your own suffering, or the death of someone you love very much. Perhaps it will be an inner urge or impression you cannot explain. Or a sacrifice you feel impelled to make. Perhaps just a word—or even a look—from one you love; the example of someone you admire; a Scripture; a letter; the words of a sermon. It is whatever suddenly causes within you a desire to expand your character beyond what you have known be-

fore. Claim that moment. Don't sleep through it.

Growth as Children of God

The disciples in Gethsemane also missed the opportunity to grow as the children of God. Any one of us can strike a match. Any one of us can light a candle. Any one of us can ignite a bonfire. But no one of us and no group of us, not all of us together can command the circumstances that produce the perfect opportunity for inner growth. But it will come, just as it came for those disciples that night in Gethsemane. It will come.

And it will pass. Notice that while Jesus wakened the disciples the first time, He did not waken them the second time. In Matthew 26:44 we are told that, finding them sleeping again, He went away. In other words, one cannot depend on God to interrupt in such dramatic fashion each and every time. If we turn away from the kindling opportunity, there will come a time when that opportunity is gone, and gone forever.

Think of this in terms of that great space shot when, a few years ago, our nation sent a sophisticated space vehicle out to take pictures of the planet Saturn. For seven years it moved toward its objective. Then came the time when it was closest to the planet it was sent to photograph. In those moments the cameras on board the vehicle took and sent back to us remarkable pictures of the planet, its rings, and its moons. Then, the time of its prox-

imity spent, the vehicle continued on out into space, and it continues so until this very minute. Never again will it come close to Saturn.

Just so in our lives, there are situations and events that bring unparalleled opportunities to grow in character, to expand in insight, to draw near to God and feel the pull of the higher life. At these times of closest approximation, let us take the step, make the sacrifice, claim the opportunity; for if we miss that moment, it may never come for us again.

Our church, in which we congregate every week, is now more than 78 years old. This sanctuary has heard tens of thousands of prayers and admonitions from the Word of God. If these walls and rafters could chorus together, they might well speak to us of scores of well-intentioned comers who sat here and were impressed by the truth they heard. They recognized a call to be answered, a duty to be fulfilled, a work to be done, a promise to be claimed, a character to be attained. But for most of them, that is all there was to it. The moment of opportunity caught them sleeping, and for them it will never come again.

We have heard the story of how Satan once called together the emissaries of hell, and told them he wanted to send one to earth to aid women and men in the ruination of their souls. He asked who would volunteer. One creature came forward and said, "I will go."

And Satan said, "If I send you, what will you tell the children of men?"

He said, "I will tell the children of men that there is no *heaven*." And Satan said, "They will not believe you, for everyone knows that there is a heaven, and that right and good must have the victory. You may not go."

Then another came forward, darker and more foul than the first. And Satan said, "If I send you, what will you tell the children of men?"

And he said, "I will tell them that there is no *hell*."

And Satan looked at him and said, "Oh, no; they will not believe you. For in every human heart is a conscience—an inner voice that testifies that not only will good be triumphant, but that evil will be defeated. You may not go."

Then one last creature came forward, this one from the darkest place of all. And Satan said to him, "And if I send you, what will you say to women and men to aid them in the destruction of their souls?"

And he said, "I will tell them that there is no *hurry*."

And Satan said, "Go!"

The spirit of "no hurry" is still abroad on the face of the earth. "There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." If it is missed, we are left "in shallows and in miseries." The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Awake, because the tides may be running for you at this very moment. Don't miss those tides.

Growth in Service

Those disciples in Gethsemane also missed the opportunity to grow in friendship with Jesus. It is wonderful to have friends, especially in time of trouble. When we are battered by the hammer of hardship, we need our loved ones close. That

is the reason Jesus, who is most often recorded in the Scriptures as going off to pray alone, on this occasion took His disciples with Him. If ever He needed their help and encouragement, it was now. He knew the deep agony of spirit that was going to be His, and He wanted their comfort close; He wanted to feel their shoulders beside His own. But they slept.

When He came back the first time from His prayer, He wanted comfort, assurance, support. But for this one who had given so much to others, there was none to help; there was none to give Him any words of love or encouragement. To all His other burdens was added this pain of loneliness.

Yet He was not alone—far from it. He was not forsaken or forgotten. His Father was watching; the angels were watching, and after His second agonizing prayer we read that God Himself intervened and sent His angel from heaven, "strengthening him."

Jesus was strengthened and triumphed, but the disciples had missed that opportunity for service. And never would it come again. Never again did those disciples have such an opportunity.

Don't miss the tide that gives you the opportunity to serve others. On this same date next year, if it be granted us, some whom we know will no longer be with us. Perhaps there is on your mind right now someone to whom you ought to speak; a word of encouragement, a word of reproof, a word of witness,

a word of apology. Don't miss that opportunity. Don't neglect the tide that might be flowing in your heart of hearts at this very moment. Claim this day, with all the growth that it can give you; for in very truth, there will never be another like it again.

We have been considering a message that addresses the human soul. We have looked at growth in character, growth as children of God, and growth in service.

Don't respond by thinking about what you can do about it tomorrow. "Tomorrow" is the word the Bible does not know. Its word is *today*. "Now is the accepted time." "Now is the day of salvation." "Today, if you will hear my voice, harden not your hearts." Don't say tomorrow!

*Tomorrow, and tomorrow,
and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from
day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded
time;
And all our yesterdays have
lighted fools
The way to dusty death.*

Yes, the word from God is *today*. Now, while the tides are still rising. Now, while the day is still extended. Now is the time to live, and love, and serve, and give—for God, for holiness, for life!

It is now or never. MM

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**Don't miss the tide
that gives you the
opportunity to serve others.**

Ways to Work **7** Your Resolutions

THE story is so familiar. Good resolutions don't last. They start out well, backed up by plenty of good intentions. But then, for one of a thousand reasons, our good efforts gets frustrated, and we set them aside.

Yet this does not *have* to be the way. What can we do to make our good resolutions work? Here are a few key principles to try.

1 Start by telling yourself "I can!"

More than likely when we make a new resolution we start in the negative. This point where we have made the new resolution is one on which we have failed many times before—that is the very purpose of the resolution, to break the routine of failure. We have practiced failing so long that it is by far the easiest and the most likely course to take. And—of course—we *might* fail again.

Making this provision for failure is one sure way to fail again. The purpose of the resolution we make is to *remove* that allowance for failure, to tell ourselves that others have done it, and *we can, too*. Whatever the nature of our problem, it *can* be conquered. Simply because we *have* failed is no evidence that we *must*.

Defeat is *not* inevitable if we apply ourselves while time and opportunity are still ours. If we are sincerely serving God, He will help us; there is no need to fail.

2 Make today a new start, a new point of beginning.

Separate the past from the present. Opportunity past is out of our reach, and we might as well forget about it. But the present is very much *within* reach. The present is our responsibility, and we are accountable for what we do *right now*.

The proper division of time matters greatly in the battle against temptation. Perhaps we need to stand aside and look at ourselves. What *are* we accomplishing? where do we hope to arrive? and by when? A new start may well mean the difference between victory and defeat, and if we win a small victory today it will be easier to win another victory tomorrow.

We should learn to face all our problems one day at a time, one hour at a time, one minute at a time. This is all the Lord requires of us, and this is all we are really equipped to handle. When we try to do more, we are attempting something we should not, and are sure to fail.

3 Use your will power, and won't power.

How strong are you? Perhaps that is hard to measure. But ask yourself a few questions:

How much strength does it take

not to speak the word that is in your mind?

How much strength does it take to force one thought to give way to another thought?

How much strength does it take *not* to walk to a place where you want to go but where you really would not want Jesus to come and find you?

How much power does it take to look the other direction, away from something you know will tempt you?

Are you strong enough? Can you do it?

Do you have the strength *not* to open a book that you know is interesting, but not edifying?

Are you strong enough to smile and encourage another when you feel discouraged?

How much strength does it take to speak when you would rather be quiet but when you know it is your duty to speak?

How much strength does it take to hold back the unkind word?—or perhaps this is not enough. Perhaps Jesus would have us stop still further back, at the point where we first frame the thought in our mind.

Yes, "from within, out of the heart of man" is the source of all unholiness. That is why Jesus would have us check our feelings, our motives, before they become words. The first little germ of evil should be crushed in the mind before it develops into either word or action. Jesus taught that *all* sin begins in the mind.

This means that it can *end* there also.

4 Strengthen your motivation.

Ask yourself: What is my real reason for making—and keeping—these resolutions? What do I want to accomplish? Where am I planning to arrive within the next month, the next twelve months?

If we let ourselves lose sight of our goal, we are sure to be defeated. And conversely, if we keep our mind's eye fixed on the goal, and keep developing the picture of the goal in our minds, no power in the whole world will be able to defeat us. No pressure can be too great, no temptation too strong, no evil from within too powerful to withstand—if we remember our high calling in God.

What is our real motivation? What position are we working for? Where do we hope to arrive? Have we pictured ourselves in the presence of Jesus, receiving His smile of approval? Have we visualized the triumphant saints standing on Mt. Zion—and *we ourselves* among them? Have we let the strains of the new song, the song of Moses and the Lamb, run through our mind, and felt the joy of triumph? Have we paused long enough to hear the angels shouting "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Rev. 19:6-7).

Can we picture ourselves stand-

Are you strong enough to hold back the unkind or hurtful word?

ing there among the Bride of Christ—and then fail to do the little God asks of us?

We need to strengthen our motivation not once a year, or once a week, or even once a day, but continually. We simply can't afford to let the bright picture of future glory fade from our sight. If we lose sight of our goal, how can we expect to reach it?

5 Keep busy.

No truer words were ever spoken than, "The devil finds work for idle hands." While we know that there is no literal devil, we do know that there is nothing worse than doing nothing. God means for us to be actively engaged with something useful, whether it be useful work, or simply useful thinking. He does not want us to be idle. The idle mind does no good—and much evil.

Our daily routine, our ordinary work, be it ever so commonplace, is a blessing in the battle for life. The routine is a protection against the pitfalls of idleness. It forces us to take our minds off ourselves and focus on specific situations around us. It forces us to do what we often may not feel like doing. But this is all for our development, for our long-term good. And even if we are not able to do what we would like, we must still engage our minds in useful activity and maintain an active watch over our inner selves. In reality, there is no such thing as an idle mind. We are either building ourselves up, or tearing ourselves down.

Our minds left to themselves will produce no good. Left to wander without conscious direction, propelled by instincts rather than goals, they are sure to come to naught.

A ship on the ocean must be steered if it is to reach a destination; an airplane must be piloted; a car must be steered. Only the wind can travel without direction—and what does it accomplish? Where does it arrive?

Whatever we do we must at the same time be building up our spiritual resources. We must take our minds off smallness and direct them toward greatness. One woman told of her resolve to make every comment encouraging. She was astonished to discover that she had been deriving some sort of perverse pleasure from finding fault, and in this way had been harming herself and those around her.

The sooner we can discover—and correct—these traits in ourselves, the better.

6 Help one another up, not down.

When we get together with other people, or even our own family, what do we talk about? We may blame a lack of upbuilding or edifying conversation on others. But if we are present, we are equally as responsible as the next person—and equally at fault.

It is so easy to waste valuable time talking about secular issues, petty notions, the daily news, and trifles of little or no consequence. If our hearts are set on the future and the quality of character we are working to develop, our conversation will reflect these goals.

It is impossible to have the Kingdom the central goal of our lives and not to have it the central topic of our conversation. What we are interested in, we will talk about.

7 Pray for God's help, and work with God.

Asking God's help is one of the best ways of diverting our minds from smallness. We cannot think with God and think small. We cannot open our minds to His direction, and worry about tomorrow. We cannot take Him as our guide, and fail.

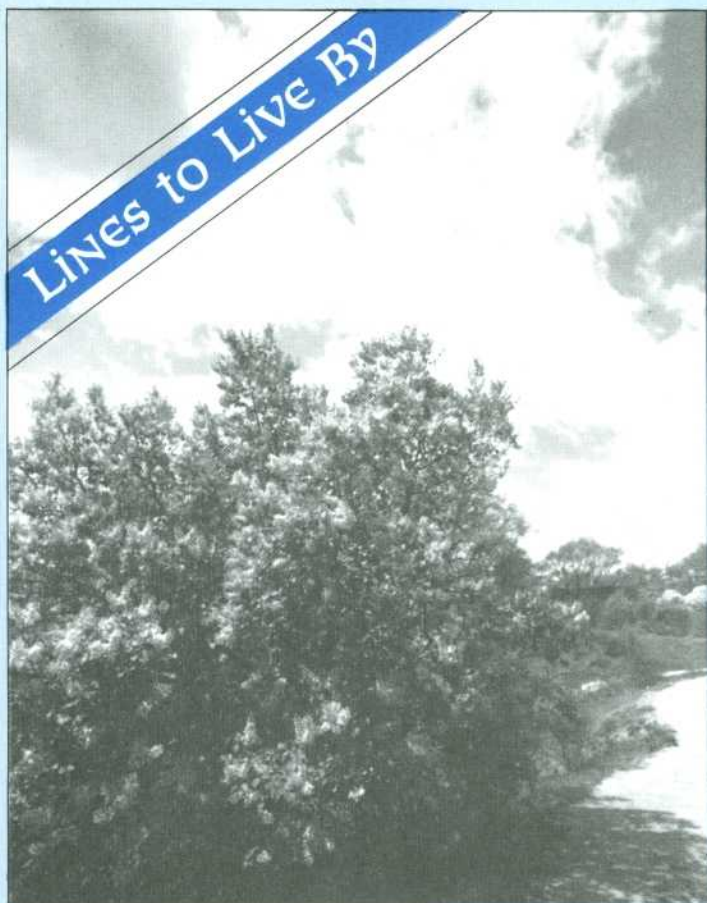
As we see our lives a part of God's purpose, as we draw nigh to God, He will draw nigh to us. This is the promise. And what a gracious promise it is!

If we truly belong to God and our lives are linked to Him in a loving, gripping bond of dedication, we simply will not be able to live without thinking of Him and His will for us. There will be a bond that will be with us continually, wherever we are, whatever we are doing. Our communication with Him will prove a steadying, transforming influence in our lives, changing our attitude from one of proud self-reliance to one of humble submission. We will find ourselves asking, Is this what God wants me to think about? is this what He wants me to do? is this how He would have me feel?

No problem that comes to us will be too large or too small to share with Him. And remember, a problem shared is only half the problem.

The nearer we live to God, the less the things of earth, the temptations of the world, and even the inclinations of our own hearts, will affect us.

Only seven steps. Take them, and you will find the power to make your resolutions work, and will be preparing for yourself a place in the glorious Kingdom of Christ. MM



*Hem your blessings with
praise lest they unravel.*

*Praising God for blessings ex-
tends them. Praising God for
troubles ends them.*

*Faith keeps the man who
keeps his faith.*

*The more of heaven there is in
our lives, the less of earth we
shall covet.*

The New Year

*What shall I ask for the coming year?
What shall my watchword be?
What would'st Thou do for me, dear Lord?
What shall I do for Thee?*

*Lord, I would ask for a holy year,
Spent in Thy perfect will;
Help me to walk in Thy very steps—
Help me to please Thee still.*

*Lord, I would ask for a year of trust:
Grant me Thy faith divine,
Taking my full inheritance,
Making Thy fulness mine.*

*Lord, I would ask for a year of love
Oh, let me love Thee best!
Give me the love that faileth not
Under the hardest test.*

*Lord, I would ask for a busy year,
Filled up with service true;
Doing with all my strength and might
The good that my hands can do.*

*Lord, I would ask for a year of prayer,—
Teach me to walk with Thee:
Breathe in my heart Thy Spirit's breath;
Pray Thou Thy prayer in me.*

*Lord, I would ask for a year of joy,
Thy peace, Thy joy divine,
Springing undimmed through all the days,
Whether of shade or shine.*

*Last, I would ask for a year of hope—
Lord, may Thy will be done;
Hastening on that year of years
That brings us Christ and Home.*

Emmanuel! God with Us

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25

Israel had many a noble son, but only one qualified to bear the name Emmanuel.

“GOD with us.” The perception of God dwelling among earth-borns has intrigued worshipers of nearly every faith in every age. Instinctively we want to be close to that in which we place our confidence. We want to be able to see and touch that in which we believe. This was the reason underlying all belief in idols and idol worship, for idols were gods near at hand.

How does “God with us” apply within the bounds of true faith? We know that the great God of heaven will not leave His throne and dwell among us. We know, also, that Christ did not leave a high estate in heaven to be born in Bethlehem as a human child. Christ is *not* God, and God did not leave heaven to be with us.

God's Presence Among Men

How can we realistically think of God dwelling *with* us? Let us look into the Bible for our answer.

In Old Testament times the presence of God was a coveted experience. To see God, feel God, know God was among His people the highest of high aspirations. To have God near at hand, within the sound of one's voice, within the reach of one's hand, to help in time of need; to save, succor, or sustain—this was the longing of each of His loyal servants.

Abraham's encounter with God's angel on Mount Moriah turned the

supreme trial of his life into a remembrance of joy and promise of eternal reward. Jacob treasured the memory of Bethel because, as he said afterward, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not” (Gen. 28:16). For the youthful Joseph, the presence of the Divine messenger transformed the prison into a portal of hope. God's presence was the assurance Moses needed to face an unpredictable Pharaoh and an irresponsible people: “Certainly I will be with thee” (Ex. 3:12). “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you” (v. 15).

The presence of God was David's strength. “The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him” (Ps. 28:7).

The Lord Himself gave this assurance to Isaiah: “Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee: yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isa. 41:10).

How, then, was God's presence known to His people? There are several ways revealed, and probably many more that are not revealed. We know of numerous times in Scripture when

Note: *Emmanuel! God With Us* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

Only Christ could bear the honor, only He could fulfill the glowing meaning of Emmanuel, "which being interpreted is, God with us."

angels came to men with specific messages. We know also of times when "the angel of his presence saved," protected and assisted those who were to be heirs of salvation. God's presence came through His representatives, visible or invisible.

God's Presence in the Coming of Christ

With the coming of Christ, the presence of God took on a new dimension and new meaning: it was the special mission of the Son to reveal the Father.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise." In these few words the gospel writer Matthew introduces the story of the Man who changed the course of history. But Matthew does more than relate history. He gives meaning and beauty to the account by setting the event in the framework of the Divine plan. Jesus' birth, according to Matthew, was not a chance occurrence in the course of nature but a striking fulfillment of a Divine prophecy given some 700 years earlier by the prophet Isaiah.

This is Matthew's understanding of the event: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:22-23).

Emmanuel! Matthew comprehended its profound meaning: "which being interpreted is, God with us."

How appropriate the name for Him who was born to be the Son of God with power, the Savior of men, the Master that Matthew himself was privileged to know. Doubtless as he wrote his gospel, he pondered long on the meaning of that name: Emmanuel.

During the years since Isaiah made that prophecy, many sons of Israel had been born—among them some great souls—but none worthy of bearing the name "Emmanuel." There was a Jeremiah, mightily declaring the word of the Lord to an apostate people; Ezekiel and Daniel, stalwart prophets of the captivity; Haggai and Zechariah and Malachi, brave men of God during the time of the restoration; besides all the unnamed servants of God during this time. All were loyal servants of God, bravely standing for truth and right. But none were named Emmanuel, because none measured up to the full and exacting qualifications of that name. That name, with its highest of high standards, was too big for them, too demanding.

Of none before Christ could God truly say, "Here in human flesh and blood is the perfect character image of Myself; here is the exact pattern for you to copy; here is One to whom I have given My Name, to be indeed My representative among you." Only Christ could bear this honor, by virtue of His life of perfect obedience; only *He* never sinned once He knew the law. Only *He* could fulfill the glowing meaning of Emmanuel, "which being

interpreted is, God with us."

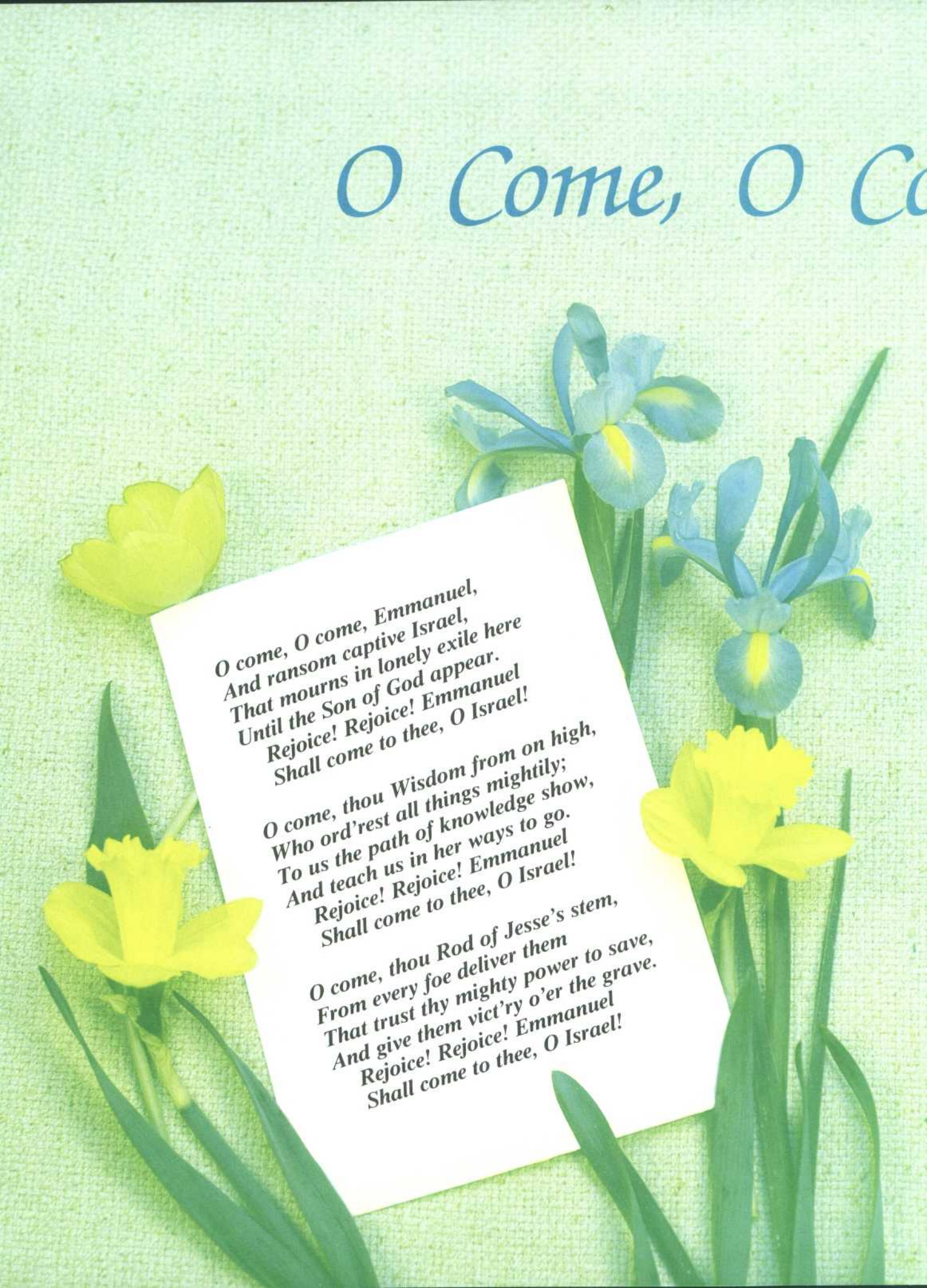
How the thought of Emmanuel fortifies our faith and inspires our courage, as we consider the right of our Lord to bear this title. Emmanuel—the word slips easily from our tongue, for centuries of use have dulled our sense of its wonderment. But what it says must not be undervalued, for He who bears that name is "God with us." A mortal man like ourselves, tempted in all points like unto His brethren, yet He is "a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God," a perfect pattern of the life that pleases God, one bearing the character likeness of God Himself, whom the Heavenly Father has arranged to be "God with us."

The Message of "God With Us"

The thought is stimulating, elevating, enlivening. "God with us" tells us that we, lowly mortals, *can* be worthy of the presence of God. It brings the Divine into the ordinary settings of our lives, and makes faith real and vital. It tells us in clear and certain terms that *we ourselves* can please God, that *we* with all our human limitations can meet the standard, that *we ourselves* can overcome, that we can create the environment in which God's representative will desire to dwell, so that Christ can actually be Emmanuel to us and "dwell with us." Now that Emmanuel has come, we know *how* to create that environment, now that we have the finished pattern, the godlike life actually lived.

(Continued on page 16)

O Come, O Come

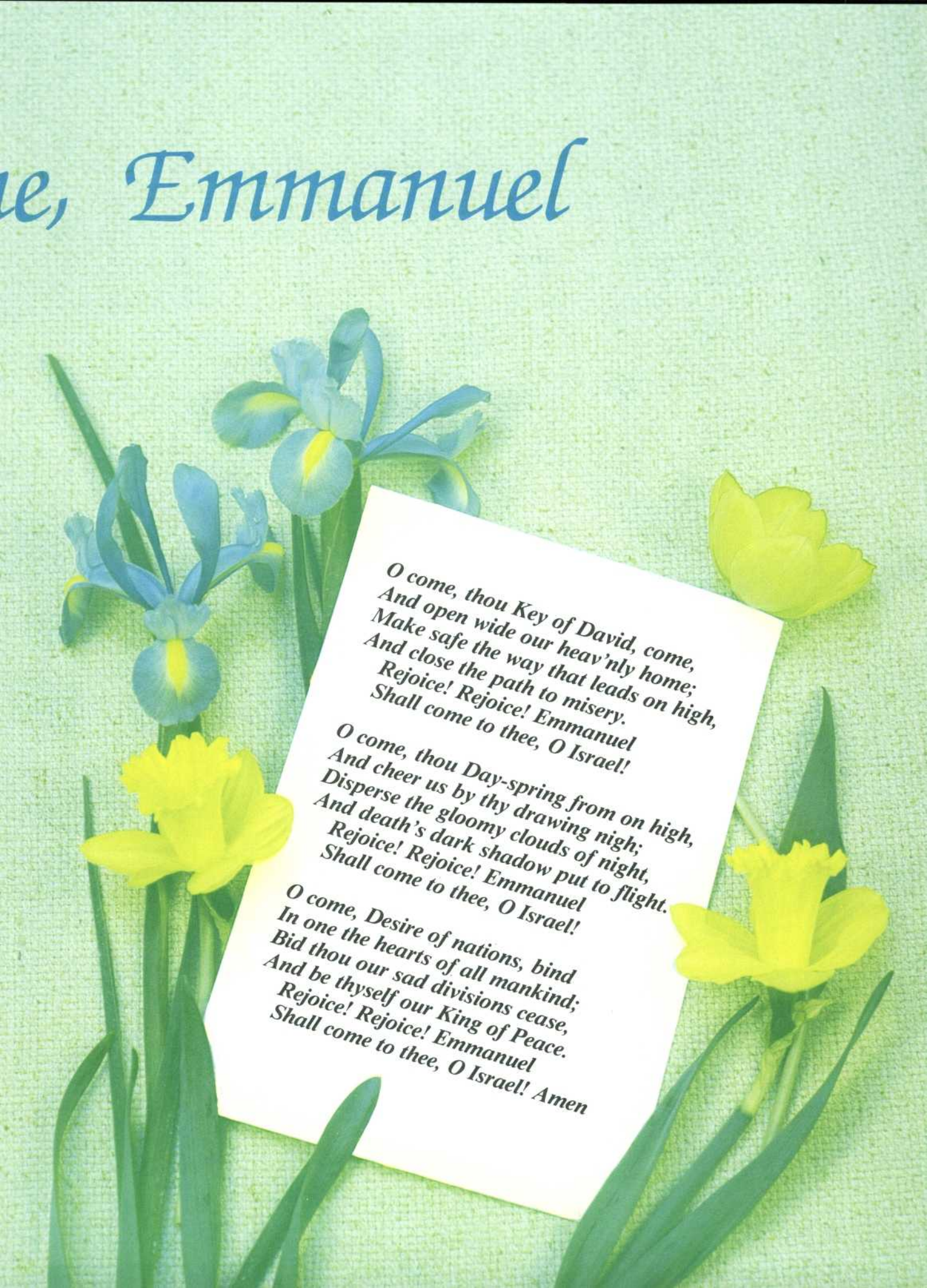


O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, thou Wisdom from on high,
Who ord'rest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, thou Rod of Jesse's stem,
From every foe deliver them
That trust thy mighty power to save,
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

...e, Emmanuel



O come, thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, thou Day-spring from on high,
And cheer us by thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadow put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid thou our sad divisions cease,
And be thyself our King of Peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel! Amen

God sent Christ as a perfect illustration of the life that pleases Him, that in seeing Christ we may see God; in knowing Christ we may know God; in obeying Christ we may obey God.

The Role of Christ: "God With Us"

Theologians through the centuries have gone to great lengths to convince the world that Jesus Christ was both Divine and human, that He was literally God incarnate, the great eternal God in human flesh and form. But in doing this they have changed the truth of God into a lie. God is God; and Christ is Christ, the Son of God. Nowhere do we find Scripture teaching that Christ is co-equal or co-eternal with God. Christ being "God with us" in no way suggests that He is God Almighty or that He is the great Creator of the universe. Christ is "God with us" in that He fills the role of God to us, meeting our needs for strength, protection, guidance, and instruction as lowly aspiring mortals. In no way is He part of an eternal triune Godhead or co-existent with the Father.

Christ fills a unique position in the plan of God. Being Emmanuel, He determines our understanding of God. The perplexing question, "What is God like?" can be answered by "looking unto Jesus." As the apostle Paul put it so dramatically, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6). There is no confusing of the two personalities. But Jesus does reveal the Father. As Jesus Himself stated it—simply but no less profoundly, "He that hath seen

me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Why did the prophets place this important aspect on the life of Christ? Why should Christ be so linked to the relationship of God to men? Because God sent Christ as a fulfillment of His promise to men. God wanted us to have a paragon, a perfect illustration of the life that pleases Him, so that in seeing Christ we may see God; in knowing Christ we may know God; in obeying Christ we may obey God. In Christ we have our clearest, fullest, truest possible revelation of God, a living transcript of the love, wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, holiness and perfection of the Omnipotent God of the universe! What a privilege! What an honor!

God's Supreme Gift to Us

No higher concept of God's work in behalf of His human family is conceivable. Indeed, there are three essential roles in God's plan for our salvation: God's role, Christ's role, and our role. The apostle Paul phrased it in these words: "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, . . . and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (II Cor. 5:19-20). How was God "in Christ"? In a symbolic sense, God's power, His truth, His word, His law governed, motivated and impelled Christ His

entire life. Jesus thus became the personification of man's persistent quest for the knowledge of God. God was indeed "in Christ" as He had never been in or with any other human being.

What is the effect of His life upon us? It opens to us the avenue to life, glorious, immortal life, for it is through the living Christ that we, too, may find life. It also brings us face to face with the issue of our own future. We can take heed to His message, amend our lives, and live; or we can go our own way, be satisfied with the paltry benefits of this life, and die. We can live to please Him and receive His recognition, or we can live to please ourselves, and perhaps a handful of others, and receive His disapproval. This was the reason behind those pointed words of Jesus: "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (John 5:44). It is an impossible combination. We cannot be seeking and receiving honor of one another and be eligible for the honor that "cometh from God only."

When we consider "Emmanuel, God with us" and all He has done for us, pleasing people should not be our concern. Our concern is with pleasing Jesus and thereby pleasing God, seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Holding First Place

Jesus being Emmanuel, God with us, tells us one more important fact

about Jesus: that He is not simply one among others; He is one *exclusively*. That exclusiveness may offend some, but it cannot be changed. He, Emmanuel, God with us, if He is to be with us, must have our undivided attention. No other interest or authority in our lives can compete for this first position, nor can any even approach its value. The claims of Jesus upon us are absolute. He is more than teacher, or prophet, and His words are more than mere human opinion. He alone can say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

Whence comes His right to such authority? It comes from the fact that He is the one "declared to be the Son of God with power," our Judge, our Master, our King. It comes from the fact that He is the "author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." It is He who offers us *life*! "I am come," He said, "that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly."

The author of Hebrews adds emphasis and insight to the unique position of Jesus in the plan of God in a thoughtful review of God's means of ministration to men. We quote from the opening chapter of the book: "At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son, the Son that he has appointed to inherit everything. . . . He is the radiant light of God's glory and the perfect copy of his nature" (Heb. 1:1-4, JB). Here we have Christ's role established: He is Emmanuel, God with us, the perfect copy of the nature of His Father.

The Tabernacle and the Presence of God

At certain times in history God made special arrangements whereby

Let Us Pray

Thou Almighty Lord our God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, who hast chosen us and hast called us that we should be holy and without blame before Thee in love, we come before Thee this morning seeking Thy wisdom and Thy way. We come that our souls may be enlightened, our wills addressed, our attitudes challenged.

Lord, we thank Thee for this season that reminds us of the exemplary life of our Master. We confess our tendency to covetousness, pride, and stubborn self-will. Our priorities become confused when we forget the Lord of life, the life He lived, the teachings He taught, the death He endured.

Help us never to belittle the consequences of our sins or think that Thou wilt overlook some imperfections in us. Make us mindful that each decision of each day carries with it eternal consequences; that it makes a difference to all eternity whether we do right or wrong today.

Lord, this sacred season of the year is pervaded by Thy presence. Thou art the guardian of our lives, our refuge and our rock. Thou art our strength, our joy, our light, and our salvation.

Thou hast done for us more than our finite minds can fathom. Thou hast called us to glory and honor and virtue, and hast given us the example of Thy Son, Emmanuel, the example to us of the perfect life actually lived, Thy will actually done. And Thou hast promised that someday He will be "God with us," dwelling among us, fulfilling all Thy great and precious promises to us.

Help us to appreciate the supreme accomplishment that was His, and now give Him the honor that is His due. And may His goodness inspire us to a deeper commitment in our own lives; His holiness move us to holiness, and His consecration stir us to a more complete giving of ourselves, that He may someday be Emmanuel to us.

Father, we pray Thy blessing upon all Thy people wherever they may be. Keep and direct us in all our ways. According to Thy most gracious will, deliver Thou our soul from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. So shall we walk before Thee in the land of the living and dwell in Thy presence all the days of our life. In the name of our coming King Emmanuel we pray. Amen.

His presence could be visibly known among His people. One of the earliest examples of this was the tabernacle. The tabernacle was a tent especially designed to serve as a portable place of worship for Israel. With all its singular appurtenances, it was meant to bring God into the presence of His people. Even the

Hebrew word for "tabernacle" suggested this purpose, its literal meaning being "tent of meeting"—meeting between God and men. It was a place where God's glory could be seen, His power felt, and His presence known.

The whole design of the tabernacle and the religious life that cen-

tered around it was to teach reverence and honor for God, and all the directions and laws concerning the tabernacle reflected this purpose. Every detail of material and construction was specified, and all parts were to be assembled according to precise directions. Nothing ordinary could be used in this special tent, nothing inferior, nothing but the very best, for this tabernacle was no ordinary building. This was *God's* tabernacle.

There is something else that is singular about the tabernacle. God instructed Moses to set up the tabernacle at a specific time. We read, "On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation" (Ex. 40:2). We read also how precisely Moses complied: "And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up" (v. 17).

This directive seems especially significant. Christ being the antitype of the literal tabernacle, the provision of God for His people; their Example, the Mediator between Himself and them; the one God chose to bring to fruition His promises to His people; the one who was to be the presence of God among them, even Emmanuel, God with us—is it not fitting that Christ should be born on the anniversary of the setting up of the tabernacle?

The tabernacle symbolized the presence of God among Israel, and into that tabernacle came the actual glory of God. We read of this in Exodus 40:34-35, "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." Can we imagine that sight—the tab-

ernacle literally *filled* with the glory of the Lord! How fitting, when the tabernacle symbolized the presence of God!

The Temple and the Presence of God

The temple of Solomon filled a similar purpose to the people of God, another visible representation of His presence. And when it was dedicated there was no question in anyone's mind—God's power was there. We read: "And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the

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priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord. Then spake Solomon, The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever" (I Kings 8:10-13).

He prayed, and when he had finished his prayer, "fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house" (II Chron. 7:1). Can we not imagine how knees shook and hands trembled at the sight of that demonstration of the Divine presence?

But neither temple nor tabernacle could equal the presence of God's

own Son, Emmanuel, God with us.

More Promises

The promise of God's presence gives warmth and reality to many a Divine assurance. What could be grander than the vision of dwelling in God's presence forever, belonging to His family, sharing His wealth, reveling in His delights! And all these are among the rapturous promises to the saints. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:8-9). Again, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11). How much closer to the Divine could we ever seek to come, than to be at the right hand of the Father, enjoying pleasures forevermore!

The prophet Zephaniah shared the same bright hope of the presence of Emmanuel. These are his confident words: "The king of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee:"—what is the consequence of His majestic presence? "Thou shalt not see evil any more" (Zeph. 3:15). Oh, the power that will come with that Presence!—power, glory and joy, as the following verse outlines: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (v. 17). Can we imagine God, Emmanuel, God with us, rejoicing over us with joy? What greater incentive do we need, to make our lives pleasing to Him!

Zechariah the prophet shared the same prophetic picture of joy. "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord" (Zech. 2:10). Here again is the pres-

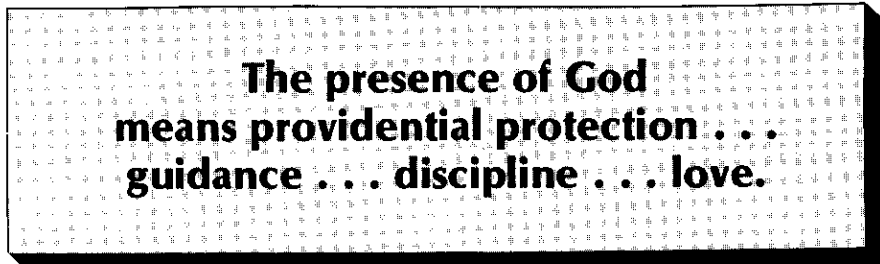
ence of Emmanuel, God with us. "And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee" (v. 11). Who sends Emmanuel to dwell among us? It is none other than "the Lord of hosts," the God of heaven. And oh, the glory and joy that will accompany that holy presence!

The prophet Isaiah, too, had glorious glimpses of the future day when Emmanuel should dwell among men, fulfilling His mission as "God with us": "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isa. 25:9).

Jesus, knowing full well what delights would attract far-sighted mortals, pictured the reward for heart-purity in these transcendent words: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). And He provides even more details of His own presence among men in His post-ascension message. The picture is vibrant with life: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:3-4). They His people, and He their God!—what blessings come with the presence of Christ, Emmanuel, God with us!

The Significance of God's Presence

God among us! The picture is glorious beyond anything our mortal minds can fathom. But what is its



significance? What does this Divine presence mean to us?

Foremost among the benefits of the Divine presence is protection, safety, surety from harm. When God's protecting presence is near, "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Ps. 91:10-12).

If worthy of the Divine presence, we shall be protected. This does not mean we will not encounter sickness, pain, hardship, suffering; but it does mean we will be protected. Nothing shall befall us that would prevent our securing the reward upon which we have set our hearts.

Jeremiah described this same protection using another simile, that of a fruit-bearing tree. This tree "shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jer. 17:8). Come heat or cold, drought or fair season, nothing can prevent this tree from yielding fruit.

The Presence of God Means Judgment

There have been times when the reality of the Divine presence invoked a feeling of fear, not joy. Why? Because the people were not prepared. In the allegory of Genesis, Adam and Eve "heard the voice of

the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden" (Gen. 3:8). Why did they hide? Because they had been disobedient. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, unable to face the reality of his guilt and shame. Job felt "troubled at (God's) presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him" (Job 23:15).

The unfaithful in Jeremiah's time reacted to the Divine presence with fear. They may have been unwilling to admit any guilt, but in the presence of the Divine they were afraid. "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" (Jer. 5:22). The unfaithful Jonah "rose up" to "flee from the presence of the Lord," also in a vain attempt to escape Divine judgment.

What of Us?

The question comes to us: How shall we feel in the presence of Emmanuel, you and I? To know that we are in the presence of one to whom the thoughts of our heart are as visible as the lines on our faces—how will we feel?

The thought is sobering, for Divine judgment is not an idle speculation.

(Continued on page 25)

The End of the Age

Part IV

The Present Day Crisis

Narrator:

Now we come to the end of another age. It is our own. Like the ages before, its end, too, has been divinely decreed. Long ago the Word of the Lord was spoken concerning our day (thunder and lightning, curtain opens, partially).

Voice:

"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; . . . men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth; . . . And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

"As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man . . .

Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded:

But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, . . . lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

Narrator:

Time continues its course uninterrupted. The days pass. Suns rise and suns set, just as they have for thousands of years. Things seem to continue as they have from the beginning of the creation, just as they did in days gone by. And an unbelieving world sleeps on, just as it did in other ages.

But these seemingly unimportant days are exceedingly important, for one reason: they are numbered.

Unimpeded by human blundering, unrestrained by human petitioning, the hand of the Divine plan moves steadily forward. The crisis of the ages draws near and ever nearer. The end of all ends is at hand when earth shall behold her Judge, Conqueror and King. And just as other epochs in history ended tragically for those who would not heed God's warning, so tragedy will strike with God's judgments upon all whose names are not written in the Book of life. There will be deliverance for sure, but only for those worthy of it, and for the "remnant whom the Lord our God shall call." Destruction will be the fate of all who refuse to obey.

God has spoken. Who, oh, who will hearken and hear—now, before it is too late?

These are days to be alerted; these are days to work. These are days to keep Jesus' words of prophecy ringing in our ears: "Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping." We have been warned. And if our time ends before we have heeded the warning we have heard so often, can we think we shall escape any more than those who were heedless in other ages?

At this critical time of the end, it might be helpful to look in on ourselves and watch the battle that rages within us, the battle between faith and doubt, between spirit and flesh, between decision and indecision, between waiting and working.

In the following scene we will see that conflict depicted as though it were engaged between two persons. But in reality they are one. Each represents a part of ourselves. We will call them Mary and Jane, but they are in reality our better and our worst self, one pulling downward to death, the other ever struggling upward toward life. Which shall win?

(Curtain opens; a sister stands alone. Enter another sister, dressed identically. The first is Mary, the second is Jane.)

Jane: Time is passing, Mary.

Mary: I know it, and my lack of spiritual progress troubles me.

Jane: That's not what I meant. Think of what you are *missing*—!

Mary: Missing?

Jane: You are getting older all the time, and you are missing things you could be enjoying.

Mary: I am gaining *far more* than I am missing! What happiness can compare with the joy of knowing I am pleasing God!

Jane: But your kind of life takes so much effort, so much concentration.

Mary: What will that matter when it is over, if I can have the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" that is promised? I want to be ready for the coming of the Lord.

Jane: Suppose He does not come.

Mary: He *will* come. I believe the Word.

Jane: But suppose He does not come for a long time. You may grow old and gray *waiting*.

Mary: I will grow old and gray anyway. But if I have spent my years building character, I will be able to look forward to a better life, a glorious life in Christ's Kingdom.

Jane: That seems so far off, Mary, and so uncertain. Why not think more about the *certainities* of here and now, the pleasures and good experiences you can see and touch now—there's nothing really *wrong* with them—and not worry so much about the future?

Mary: What could be more uncertain than the things of the present? here today, gone tomorrow—perhaps tonight. If I set my heart on even the finest things of the present and spend my life getting more and more of them, I could lose out entirely! My spiritual life is bound to suffer if my heart is wrapped up in the present. (pause)

I might work hard so I could have anything money could buy, I might give my all for a family, a worthy career, and lose out in a moment. It has happened before. If I set my heart on anything here—and forget God—what do I have? How long can I enjoy this world at best?

Jane: Listen, Mary! I've heard the coming of the Lord talked about for a long, long time. And still He isn't here. Don't you think there could be some mistake, that we might not understand the

prophecies correctly? It's easy to be mistaken, you know.

Mary: The Word of the Lord is *right*. Recall how God's spokesmen foretold the rise and fall of nations, the coming of the great flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the collapse of the Jewish nation. All came to pass exactly as predicted. What reason have I to doubt anything He has predicted when I can see *all this*!

Jane: But can you be sure of the timing?

Mary: We do not know the time. We may have tried to hasten God's work, but there is no real delay; every hour brings us nearer the great Day. And every sign is pointing toward it.

Jane: But Mary, think of the talents you are wasting. You have abilities you cannot possibly use to their fullest in your type of life.

Mary: The Lord wants my all. He knows what I have. And if I turn it all over to Him, it is up to Him how He uses me. As far as I can see, I have plenty of opportunity to develop all the talents I have *time* to develop. No one uses *everything* they have.

Jane: But the strain you are under—being so different from others, being so strict with yourself, and so careful of everything you do. It just isn't *natural* to live that way. Aren't we supposed to be happy?

Mary: Indeed—with eternal life ahead how can I be anything but happy! And the more careful I am to discipline myself by God's law, the surer my prospect of living forever, and the happier I'll be! I'm *sure* of it.

Jane: Don't you think you'd be better off to let up a *little*, to do some of the things you have always wanted to do, and not take serving God so seriously?

Mary: God promises no reward to those who waste their opportunities. Get thee behind me, Satan! I am determined to do all I can *right now*. Great events are just ahead, and I want to be here to see them happen. (Jane disappears behind closing curtain)

Voice: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people"—

Mary: I want to be one of them!

Voice: "And God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears
(Continued on page 26)

Suffering with Christ

"I have heard that suffering makes Christians. Being a nurse by profession, I question this. What do you think?"

The idea that suffering makes Christians has been widely believed among so-called Christians, especially during certain periods of history. Some have even gone so far as to inflict physical suffering on themselves, that it would make them more holy.

But such thinking is without Biblical foundation. Asceticism, as it is called, has no place in God's plan for our salvation. It is, in reality, only another form of human pride, and those who practice it are a law unto themselves and are not following the law of God. The Bible classifies it along with "self-righteousness," "about to establish their own righteousness," etc. (Rom. 10:2-3; Isa. 30:1-2), and does not contribute to the purity of heart which God requires.

As you have observed, suffering alone does not make Christians. We have all known persons who suffered who were not Christians either before or after the experience. On the other hand, we may also have known persons who did become more patient, more compassionate, more humble, more God-fearing as a result of suffering.

However, the virtue lies not in the suffering itself but in the change of heart which it may produce in us. Suffering can cleanse us—just as any other trial or experience of life—by the

way in which we take it. If we keep a right spirit, if we allow it to soften and mellow us, to teach us the value of life and our need for God, it can produce in us a change of heart and spirit that is beneficial.

First Peter 4:1 is often cited to prove that physical suffering (especially the suffering of Christ) cleanses us from sin. The passage reads: "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin" (I Pet. 4:1).

Did Peter mean to say that physical suffering cleanses from sin? This is not the teaching of the Bible. How, according to the Bible, do we cease from sin? What cleanses us? Jesus said that the cleansing medium was His "word" (John 15:3). The prophet Isaiah gave this simple command: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well" (Isa. 1:16).

The apostle Paul spoke of Christ sanctifying and cleansing His Church with "the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26-27), that it might be "holy and without blemish."

If the apostle Peter was saying that Christ's physical suffering in the flesh cleansed either himself or us from sin, he was directly contradicting himself, for he wrote in the first chapter of this same Epistle, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth" (I Peter 1:22). They were purifying

themselves *through their obedience to the truth*.

What, then, does the apostle Peter mean when he says, "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin"?

The first point to clarify is the meaning of Christ's suffering for us "in the flesh." The word "flesh" used here can, according to the Greek Concordance, be used of flesh with either a literal or a symbolic application.

Since the stated result of the suffering is "ceasing from sin," it would seem reasonable to conclude that the symbolic application of the term was intended. This use of the term is reinforced by Peter's command to "arm yourselves likewise with the same mind"—another non-physical action. In other words, the result of Christ's suffering for us in the flesh is that we should "arm" ourselves with the same mind He had. Or as this is rendered in several of the newer versions, with "the same attitude," "the same thought," "a temper of mind like his," "the same inner conviction that he had," "the same resolution that he had" (TLB, RSV, NEB, Phillips, JB). All of these suggest a mental transformation, a radical redirecting of the mind, rather than the physical aspect of Christ's suffering in the flesh.

What is it to arm ourselves with Christ's mind, to suffer as He suffered in the flesh, in His mortal state? It is to give up our own way or attitude of mind, for God's; to suffer the death of our own nature, which the New

Testament calls a "death to sin." In the words of the apostle Paul, "For in that he (Christ) died, he died unto sin once" (Rom. 6:10). It is crucifying the flesh, everything that God calls wrong, along with all our natural affections and desires that oppose God (Gal. 5:24).

This self-crucifixion, this giving up of our own way, may or may not include physical suffering. For Christ, it did include physical suffering. We cannot separate His final act of self-surrender in submitting to physical death from His lifelong sacrifice of Himself. Had He not been willing to submit His will to God's so completely as to submit to physical death and suffering, He would not have been our perfect example and would not have successfully completed His own career.

But the suffering which cleanses us from sin is not physical suffering. The only virtue in suffering lies in the lessons we may learn from it, just as we may learn from every other experience of life, to surrender our own will and way. The virtue in Christ's death and suffering was the same, as the climax of a lifelong sacrifice of Himself, as His final act of submission and self-surrender. It is in this spiritually significant suffering of Christ, this giving up of our will and way, that we are called to share (see II Tim. 2:11-12, Titus 2:11-12, Rom. 6:6-13, I Pet. 2:19-23), and all of these serve to strengthen our faith and trust in Him.

Peter's main point is that we must suffer as Christ suffered, with the same submissive attitude of mind—not that we must be physically crucified as was Christ. This thought is reinforced by Peter's conclusion: "for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." This type of suffering, says Peter, does cause us to cease from sin.

The book of Hebrews describes this same significant suffering in these

words: he "learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5:8)—a suffering that could not possibly be applied to His physical death.

Does arming ourselves with the mind of Christ produce suffering? The answer is Yes. The apostle Paul gave one very important reason for this: because the "carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7-8).

The next verse in I Peter 4 supports the thought that the suffering that cleanses from sin is the giving up of our own way, the offering of symbolic flesh, the offering of ourselves. We read: "That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." Physical suffering alone would not turn one from "the lusts of men" to "the will of God."

The Apostle continues: "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles"—in arming ourselves with the mind of Christ, we make a definite break with our sinful past, and live henceforth "to the will of God" instead of our own will. This self-sacrifice causes suffering; it is a life-and-death struggle.

It may or may not include physical suffering. God allows one person to be tested in one way, another in another way. But whatever He allows, we must use it to cease from sin. Whatever our situation in life, we are responsible to God for the way we use it. Suffering can bring virtue, just as any trial may bring virtue. *But it is not automatic.* Suffering has made some persons better; it has made others bitter, cynical, and hard to live with. All depends on the character and determination of the person.

I am reminded of the person who, visiting a sick friend, lamented that "it is amazing how suffering colors one's life"; to which the sick friend replied,

"But I intend to choose the color."

Suffering has much to teach us—it can make us more conscious of our finitude, our frailty, and the preciousness of life. But it is not an automatic passport to sainthood. As in any situation of life, Christians are not born but *made*. Whatever our situation in life, it is always easier to complain than to glorify God.

It may also be helpful, in reading the Epistle of First Peter, to remember that the apostle Peter was writing to Christians who were imminently facing physical persecution. Suffering could well be the lot of any one of them, and the Apostle was trying to prepare them for that possibility. They might have to suffer physically for the cause of Christ, and they should be prepared to glorify God in suffering.

In this, the example of Christ's suffering physical death was doubtless a solid inspiration, comfort, and encouragement to these people. Peter mentions it again later in the same chapter: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. . . . Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (vs. 12-13, 19).

Whatever the suffering we encounter, physical or mental, we should count it a rare and sacred privilege to be able to "suffer with Christ," "suffer for Christ's sake," knowing that in it all we can commit the safekeeping and oversight of our lives to God "as unto a faithful Creator" (I Pet. 4:19).

MM

No reward is offered for finding fault.

Religious Persecution Today?

"Why did Paul say 'all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution'? Isn't this the 'cool' of the day of salvation, a time of general religious indifference?"

In Matthew 20, when Jesus described the day of salvation, He pictured it extending over a long period of time, and including several times of the day, which we may assume to have very different conditions. If our assumptions are correct, we see the early morning hours of the day much like our own in general working conditions. Then follows "the heat" or the midday hours, the period of active persecution and religious intolerance. Then the time extends far into the evening to what Jesus called the "eleventh hour." We who find ourselves at the very end of the day are, as far as we are able to identify, in the eleventh hour, which is the cool part of the day. We do not find that we must confront serious religious persecution as the apostles and the brethren of the early centuries encountered, although even today only a small part of the world enjoys religious freedom to any great extent.

However, it would seem from the context of II Tim. 3:12, the verse cited in our question, that there is a persecution which would be encountered even in the cool hours of the day.

It has also been observed that the context of the verse in question is describing conditions in the "last days," the final hour of the day of salvation, near the second advent of Christ. The opening verses of the chapter describe the "perilous times" that we see today, a prophecy which we see vividly fulfilled today. Verse 13 describes "evil men and seducers" waxing "worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived," a condition which we also witness today.

It would seem in this context that Paul must be referring to a different type of persecution, one which was known in his day and also would be known right to the end of the day of salvation. For His statement is inclusive: "All that will live godly." He does not exempt any.

The question then becomes a matter of the meaning of the words "suffer persecution." The original word translated persecution in this text is *dioko*, and according to the Lexicon can be used in either a literal or a figurative sense. According to its meaning, it is action against one who is specifically a "Christian teacher, pastor, technically a deacon or deaconess; deacon, minister, servant." It means to suffer persecution, to persecute.

By applying this meaning of persecution in either a literal or a figurative sense it might include any suffering inflicted upon the earnest, dedicated Christian. The text has been paraphrased, "All who resolve to be Christians in real earnest will suffer persecution." True Christian earnestness does not vary from age to age; the means of persecution may. To Timothy, persecution may well have meant unjustly inflicted physical suffering at the hands of enemies of the Gospel, who were determined that Christianity and Christians should not survive. To us today the persecution may have a very different form but be no less real in significance.

Anyone who resolves "to be a Christian in real earnest" can expect to be persecuted in proportion to his earnestness. Jesus said the same when He said, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." The one truly in earnest will suffer the maligning of those who are not in earnest. It may or may not refer to taunts and jeers from those outside the faith. Persecution is, in a figurative sense, any type of suffering inflicted upon the true believer, whether intentional or unintentional. It is something to be expected, and should be used for one's own personal growth in character.

MM

*It's easy enough to be pleasant
When life goes on like a song,
But the man worth while
Is the man who can smile
When everything goes dead wrong.*

Emmanuel! God With Us

(Continued from page 19)

Someday we shall find ourselves directly in His presence, face to face with our Lord and Master. And how will it be with us then?

For this reality the ancient prophets advised preparation. Indeed, this was the whole purpose of life here and now, to prepare for that Divine inspection. "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel." Today's placid forgetfulness of the Divine is a far cry from Amos the prophet's conviction that the judgment meeting of men and God is the one inevitability in history. Amos wanted to arouse a general foreboding of Divine retribution among a careless people. God is going to give you, he says, a chance to show your worth. He is going to call you to answer for what you have done. You—I—we shall meet our God. How will it be with us then?

Jesus also warned, employing different speech, but with the same imperious accent upon the need for human penitence in the face of pending Divine judgment. The parable of the Ten Virgins projects the warning and also the fate of those not prepared. "And while they (the five unprepared virgins) went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut." What a message in those last five words: "and the door was shut." A closed door. Closed opportunity. The end. It is a solemn warning. Opportunity does not go on forever. The time arrives when the door is shut.

The Presence of Emmanuel Means Life!

For those who are prepared for His presence, for those who have fulfilled the terms of their sacred covenant with Him, the presence of

Emmanuel will mean the fulfillment of their highest longings, the realization of their lifelong quest: life. For "by humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life" (Prov. 22:4). "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11).

Oh, the glory of that presence! Oh, the joy of that moment when, if faithful, we shall realize suddenly that all sacrifice, suffering and strife are over and all eternity is ours! With such meaning in the promise of Emmanuel, let our constant prayer be, "O come, O come Emmanuel."
MM

Abib Calendar 1987

The Bible New Year:

Abib 1—from sundown March 29 thru sundown March 30.

Abib was the first month of the Hebrew year as God told Moses to measure time (Ex. 12:2). On the first of Abib the tabernacle was set up. Abib is the "spring" and "sprouting month" in Israel. How fitting a time for our Perfect Example and coming King to have been born!

The New Passover:

Abib 13—sundown April 10.

The Jewish Passover was on the fourteenth of Abib. Jesus instituted the New Passover on the thirteenth, at which He said, "This do, in remembrance of me."

Christ's Resurrection:

Abib 15—morning of April 13.

In Christ's resurrection lies our assurance that we too may someday triumph over death and gain *real life*.

The Ascension of Christ:

Forty days after the Resurrection—May 22. On that day some nineteen hundred years ago, He was "taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:10-11). This was the last time Jesus was seen among men, until the great day when He shall come again.

Pentecost:

Fifty days after the Resurrection—June 1. This was a day the apostles never forgot—Israel had been observing it as a feast day for centuries. But to the New Testament Church it meant great power to do a great work for God.

*Guard well your tongue from careless words,
Whatever else you do;
And ere you speak of anything,
Be sure you know 'tis true.*

The End of the Age

(Continued from page 21)

from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Mary: I want to be there when God does this!

Voice: "And the ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Mary: I want to be there when the saints come marching to Zion with everlasting joy!

Voice: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."

Mary: I want to see it!

Voice: "And all the angels, standing round about the throne, worshiped God, saying, Amen; Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. Alleluia; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

Mary: I want to be there, oh, I want to be there to hear that chorus, and worship with them. Oh, I want to be there!

Chorus: (echo in background) Oh, I want to be there! I want to be there!

(music swells and fades as curtain closes)

The End

Not A Hodge-Podge

Yesterday I received my copy of the *Megiddo Message*. I enjoy reading every word in it. The articles in the magazine are always informative and right to the point, not a hodge-podge of doctrinal theology, just plain Scriptural facts.

I purchased a copy of *Millennium Superworld* and it has really opened my eyes. Please accept my thanks for a very wonderfully informative and well-written text on such a wonderful subject.

In the latest copy of *Megiddo Message*, I am particularly interested in the article, "Maturity in Christ," which I earnestly desire to attain. However, I realize that I need a lot more of indepth study of the Scriptures in order to attain that much desired maturity. I study every moment that I possibly can.

Once again, please accept my thanks for the literature sent. They were wonderfully informative and spiritually uplifting.

May the blessings of the Father also be with you as you continue spreading the message of Scriptural Truth.

Georgia

R. H.

Helped

I wish to renew my subscription to the *Megiddo Message* which I look forward to receiving every month.

When I thank God for my many blessings, I thank Him for helping me find the *Message*, that I need so much.

Tennessee

Mrs. J. H.

Beautiful Timber

I want to be worthy of becoming a beautiful timber in God's building. As the world around us delights to do evil, may we be determined that the setting sun of each day shall find us with something accomplished by way of moral growth.

We may not be able to leave for others a heritage of wealth or fame, but we can leave a shining example, a character worthy of emulation.

Georgia

S. J.

Lowly

Lowliness is the base of every virtue. And he who goes the lowest builds the safest.

Virginia

M. P.

Obituaries

Robert R. Switzer

On February 17 we met to pay our last respects to Brother Robert R. Switzer of our Rochester Congregation.

Brother Switzer first became acquainted with the Megiddo Church about 1932, when he saw an advertisement for the Elijah book in a *Grit* magazine while cleaning out a garage. He sent for the booklet, and that year was his last observance of pagan Christmas.

Brother Switzer was a recipient of the Church's monthly letters for many years, and was very faithful in replying. His family say he wrote a letter to the Church every month for forty years, never missing a single month.

Brother Switzer is survived by two sons, Henry Roscoe, of Rochester; and Paul Amos, of Oneida, New York; and three daughters: Ruth C. Jones, of Rochester, Margaret R. Russell, of Oswego, and Doris Dunn, of Rochester; ten grandchildren, and ten great-grandchildren.

Lillian Runyan

On February 25, death claimed another friend and long-time member of the Megiddo Church, Lillian Runyan, of Carrollton, Ohio.

Sister Runyan was always ready to share her faith and was an example of loving kindness, patience and long-suffering to her family and caregivers. With her brother she made several trips to the Church in Rochester until declining health prevented it.

Sister Runyan is survived by one son, John Walton, of Carrollton, and several grandchildren and great grandchildren. She will also be greatly missed by her daughter-in-law, Sister Melva Walton (widow of Homer Walton, who was a son of Sister Runyan). Sister Melva Walton, along with the rest of the family, tenderly looked after Sister Runyan for many years and did all she could to assist with her care.



IT IS time for new resolve, time to take stock of our spiritual assets or shortcomings, seeking ways in which to improve our service to God and add to our character.

The new year is surely a time for fresh beginnings. The problem lies in retaining that freshness throughout the year. Our natural tendency is to stagnate, to grow stale.

There are three words printed on many of the food products we buy which have some meaning for us: "Freshness preserved by. . . ." That's the ingredient we need, something that will preserve our spiritual freshness. There are certain ingredients which, if added to our daily lives, will keep us fresh for a long period of time.

Freshness preserved by RTW (Reading The Word).

This is the most potent preservative known. God's Word teaches us how to gain eternal salvation, and then continually invigorates, stimulates, and refreshes us to work at living out that Word.

Freshness preserved by STW (Studying The Word).

Surface reading will not suffice. Study is needed to gain a complete knowledge of God's plan. Through study we acquire the evidence which strengthens our belief. Study also enables us to learn things which give us a deeper understanding of Scriptures and a greater incentive to work for the glorious future God has

promised. Through study the Bible becomes real to us.

Freshness preserved by FIG (Faith In God).

If this preservative is used liberally, there is no danger of going stale. It blends well with STW and helps us to believe day in and day out.

Freshness preserved by SAS (Speaking And Sharing).

If we speak often of God's Word, His promises for the future, and what we must be doing to obtain these promises, we will be continually stimulating ourselves as well as others. Sharing with others the knowledge of God's plan is a wonderful privilege.

Freshness preserved by COB (Counting Our Blessings).

This is one preservative that works wonders. It will never fail to make us more reverent, more thankful, and more aware of our dependence on God.

Freshness preserved by FP (Frequent Prayer).

A most essential preservative—without it there can be neither freshness nor any method for preserving from spoilage. Our freshness is retained by contact with our Heavenly Father, who provides us with the strength and aid we need to be a working Christian.

Freshness preserved by CWOC (Contact With Other Christians).

This ingredient can be a real help in preserving our spirituality. Meeting

in group fellowship, visiting Christian friends, talking on the telephone, or exchanging tapes and letters are all good ways of using this preservative.

Freshness preserved by WG (Worshipping God).

Whether we must worship alone in the sanctuary of our own home, or whether we may worship in the company of fellow believers, worship is vital to our spiritual preservation.

Freshness preserved by SSOP (Singing Songs Of Praise).

Praise combines well with worship. It can do wonders to keep our spirits fresh and our thoughts on God. Singing really preserves our spiritual mood.

Freshness preserved by RITL (Rejoicing In The Lord).

Use liberally. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice!" Be happy. No matter what our present circumstance, we've got everything to look forward to.

Freshness preserved by DGC (Doing God's Commandments).

This preservative is vital. Using all the others but neglecting this one would not keep us fresh from one new year to the next. It is the crowning ingredient necessary to keep us spiritually alive even forever and ever.

These preservatives are all readily available, fresh from heaven. We really do want to keep spiritually fresh this year, because—Maranatha!—this may be the very year our Lord will come.

MM

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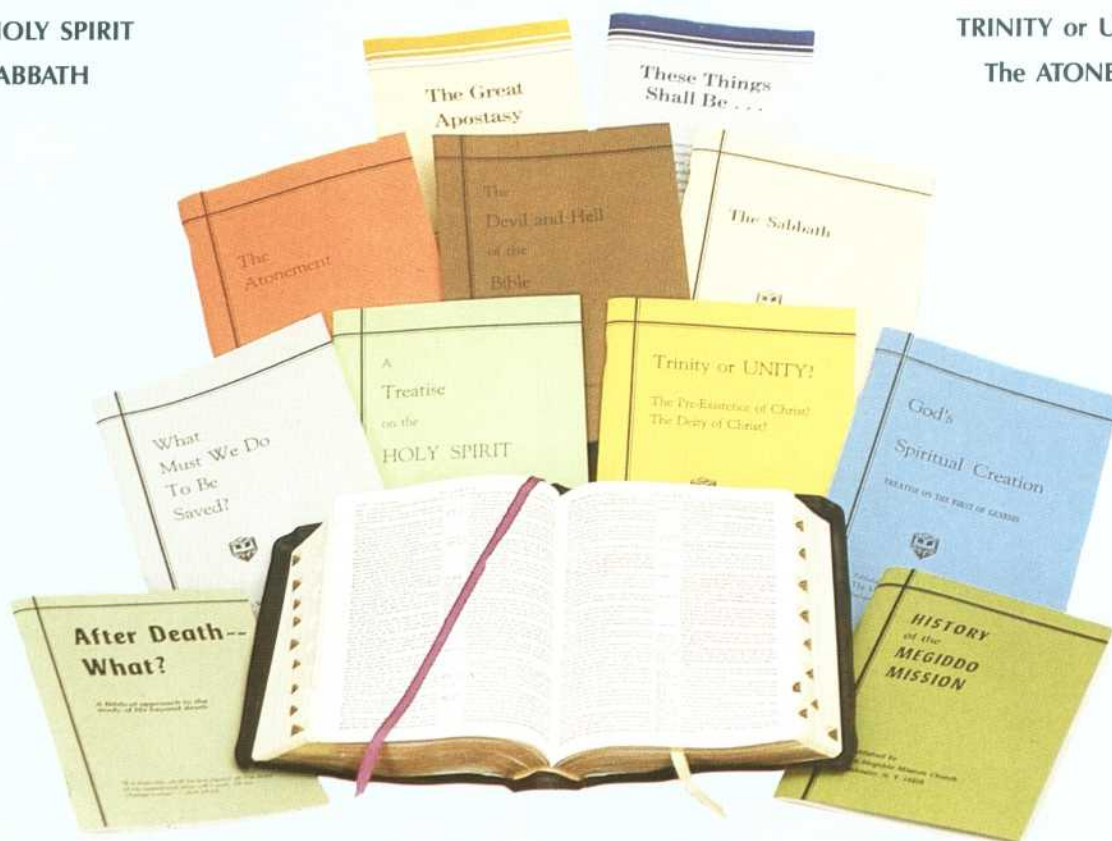
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