

Megiddo Message

A large wooden water wheel is partially visible on the right side of the cover. The background is filled with white blossoms, and the foreground is dominated by a dense patch of pink and yellow flowers.

As the earth puts forth
her blossom, or bushes
in the garden burst into
flower...

... so shall the Lord God
make righteousness and
praise blossom before all
the world.

—Isaiah 61:11

Attitudes CAN Be Altered

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

William James once observed, "The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind." The Bible supports this, only in an imperative tone: Human beings *must* alter their attitudes of mind. "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). Other versions are even more direct: "By the new ideals that mold your minds...transform yourselves" (Williams); "let God re-make you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed" (Phillips); "let your minds be re-made and your whole nature thus transformed" (NEB).

Naturally, we have attitudes that seek to dominate, attitudes of haughtiness, spiteful attitudes when we are wronged, attitudes of pride and satisfaction with our own standards of self-righteousness. How unlike Christ are all these. How important that we change them!

Jesus said it in many of His parables. And the apostle Paul wrote it several times. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31). This includes having a right attitude toward people, things, and experiences. How we feel toward the issues of the day, the people we are with, and even toward ourselves, is tremendously important.

Many things in life affect us according to our attitude toward them. Someone has said that ninety-three percent of success is attitude; only seven percent is skill and knowledge.

We should check up on our attitudes frequently, to see that they are in line with the example Christ set, for so easily they can get off course. We cannot possibly be *on* course when our attitudes are off.

Our attitudes show as we act or react to others. How easy it is to react in an ill-disposed manner when someone seems unkind to us. But when we do, we are letting another determine our actions;

we are yielding ourselves as bondservants to sin instead of copying Christ. If we keep an attitude of being subject to God at all times, another's ill-seasoned disposition will have no ruling effect on our composed and controlled spirit.

In the area of our work we have more attitudes to watch. Are we always motivated by principles of honesty and fairness, doing to others as we would be done by, performing our tasks as to the Lord—who sees and knows all? Do we think of ourselves—first, last and always—as servants of Christ's Kingdom?

Perhaps our attitudes present the greatest problem at home, where others may be cool or indifferent to those things which mean the most to us. How do we react? What is our attitude? Are we always kind and considerate and examples of what we believe? Have we learned how to keep the fires of the spirit burning brightly even when the atmosphere is damp? It may require extra diligence; but our efforts are sure to be rewarded, and we may even see someday a reflection of our spirit in the lives of others.

Whenever we are with others, there are attitudes to watch—and alter. When our idea happens to be accepted, there is danger of feeling superior. Again, we may feel defeated when what we have recommended and supported is turned down. Both attitudes are off-center and are deadening to spiritual life. If our whole concentration is to please God, we will learn to keep *our* feelings out of the matter and think only of the long-term good of the cause. And then, we will scarcely notice whether or not the idea that carries is our own. Our attitude will be, "Thy will be done." We will trust all into the hands of God.

Mastering our attitudes is a long-term project, but it is sure to save us many hours of misery that result from hurt feelings, sour dispositions and sharp reactions.

Thank God, attitudes *can* be altered!

MM

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 life, all men, and all things.

We believe

—in the Bible as our only source of knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for the salvation of humankind.

We believe

—in Jesus Christ the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was born of a Virgin, ministered among men, was crucified, resurrected, taken to heaven, and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, 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 humankind 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 applying the precepts and principles of the Word of God in our own lives, in this way 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
- NASB—New American Standard Bible
- 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
- AAT—The Bible: An American Translation

About Our Cover

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Megiddo Message

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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.

In a Moment

Time, even in its smallest segment, is precious.

We are caught in the irresistible tide of time. It is said in some instances to fly, and in others to drag, but these are only psychological reactions, prompted by circumstances. All measuring devices from the sundial to the most delicate chronometer attest that time is as constant in its course as the sun. Its velocity cannot vary an iota. Schedules are but human instruments to utilize this precious and priceless commodity, as we crowd into our fleeting moments myriads of appointments and seemingly endless programs.

Time in its Biblical presentation is mentioned first in Gen. 4:3, and last in Rev. 22:10. There are several chrometric divisions of time: a moment, a second, a minute, an hour, a day, a week, a month, a year and a millennium, and there are impressive Scriptural events and symbols for each of these designations. We shall mention the significance of only the smallest of these segments—a moment.

OVERTHROWN—in a Moment

“Sodom...was overthrown in a moment” (Lam. 4:6).

So reads the Biblical account of a city that forgot God. Abraham, the pleading patriarch, in his compassionate search failed to discover ten righteous people among its populace. The inevitable came to pass. Sin was the cause, ruin the result, and the downfall was marked by breathtaking suddenness and cataclysm. This is the universal characteristic of disaster. A mighty heave of the deep, a lashing wall of water—and a coastal town disappears. A

puff of smoke, a belch of lava—and a village in the valley is no more. A plane streaks through the sky, a lever is pulled, a bomb whistles earthward—and Hiroshima is bereft of 78,000 residents. This is the spontaneous stroke of tragedy—all in a moment. Such was the destruction of Sodom.

In the moral and spiritual realms, tragedy strikes with equal suddenness. A subtle temptation, a lustful urge, a violation of Christian ethics, an ill-considered act—and a reputation is blasted. In the case of a Christian, a testimony is destroyed. Many years of painful labor were required to construct the city of Sodom, yet it became extinct in a moment. Reputations and testimonies are likewise long in the making, but may be lost in a moment.

During this coming year let us keep these essential facts always before our mental vision.

DISCIPLINE—for a Moment

"For a small moment have I forsaken thee...in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment," said the Eternal (Isaiah 54:7-8).

Discipline is not always intended to be a lengthy process. To the impressible soul only a short lesson may be needed. The rod may be pronounced, but not of long duration—if productive. Although the One who watches over Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, yet His "eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men" (Ps. 11:4). This is only a momentary test—a disciplinary measure for the good of His people, to teach them dependence and devotion.

Even a brief perusal of the prophets will convince one of Jehovah's reluctance to give up His rebellious people to the rod of judgment. Hosea 11:8 illus-

trates the point: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?"

Again sounded the word of God to Israel: "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye" (Ezek. 18:31-32). It must be borne in mind that such forsaking by the Lord is only temporary, and He is ready to forgive when we turn to Him.

God's long silence, and His long-suffering with the workers of iniquity may seem endless to us, but from God's point of view it is only for a moment. And let us always be aware of the dangers of procrastination. God's chastenings are for our profit. It may suit the purpose of the great Potter to work on one side of our vessel for only a moment. If during that brief period we refuse to yield to His warm hand, He may choose to leave us in our negligence.

TRIED—for a Moment

To the Christian, trial and temptation is only for a moment.

Of Jesus' temptation we read: "And the devil, taking him up into a high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time" (Luke 4:5). What was this the evil one flaunted before the Savior? The same glittering appeal as flesh flashes before the eyes of the life-seekers today: the glory and the glamour of the world. The text says it all can be surveyed in a moment of time. This is convincing proof of its emptiness. While it dims the vision of many and diverts the devotion of their hearts, in comparison with eter-

I *f serving the gods of self-aggrandizement and self-pleasing, even in a limited way, our satisfactions will be but for a moment.*

nity's values the glory of the world with all its sinful pleasures is but for a season (Heb. 11:25).

The glory of the world is a thin veneer to hide unreality and thereby delude the seeking hearts of people. Moses turned from it and is listed in the Divine Record as a man of discernment, decision and faith—a worthy example for all in every age.

Through every day and hour of this year let us remember that "life's longest, grandest story, fills but a moment in earth's little while," and so set our affections on things above, things that cannot disappoint us, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal."

The evil one took Jesus to a high point to employ his deception, and it must be remembered that the mountain of temptation always seems high. Those who yield find the plunge to be painfully precipitous. The eye of faith must discern between the momentary and the eternal.

JOY—for a Moment

"The joy of the hypocrite [is] but for a moment."

So reads Job 20:5. This is a disclosure with a timely warn-

The moment of our sojourn lessens; the moment of our glorification nears. It will be the moment of all moments.

ing. It is said that there is a broken heart for every light on Broadway. Yet the Broadways of the world continue to be crowded by those who seek the god of pleasure. More lamentable by far is the undeniable fact that there are empty hearts in many church pews.

Herein lies a challenge to each of us: If serving the god of self-aggrandizement and self-pleasing, even in a limited way, our satisfactions will be but for a moment.

"The joy of the hypocrite [is] but for a moment." But what is a hypocrite?

A hypocrite is one who, wittingly or unwittingly, pretends. His is a profession without possession. He puts his money into a "bag full of holes" (Hag. 1:6). He spends his money for that which is not bread, and his labor for that which does not satisfy (Isa. 55:2). He contents himself in unreality. He has only a form of godliness (II Tim. 3:5). His pleasure has shallow roots and is short-lived—but for a moment. The Word of God confirms all this.

A hypocrite may chalk up an imposing record. He may be faithful in church attendance, may sing as lustily as a saint, may show religious devotion, maintain a commendable standard of morality. But he will miss eternal salvation in the end because he was not sincere. Disillusioned and doomed, such will inevitably cry, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? ...and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will [he] profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:22-23). Then the ill-founded, superficial enjoyment of feigning will have ceased for ever. It was but for a moment.

AFFLICTED—for a Moment

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," said the great Apostle (II Cor. 4:17).

Can eleven years of bedfastness be a moment? Can twenty years in a wheelchair be a moment? Can forty years of blindness be a moment? Can a whole lifetime of self-sacrifice and surrender to God be a moment? Yes, when contrasted with the glory that shall be revealed in us; if we are worthy to hear the

Master's "well done," it can be. All the time of one's life is but a drop in the ocean of eternity.

The Greek word *thlipsis* appears forty-five times in the New Testament—twenty-one times translated "tribulation," seventeen times "affliction," three times "trouble," once "burdened" and once to "be afflicted."

However, God does not "afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men" (Lam. 3:33). The gracious promise is, "the blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it" (Prov. 10:22).

Tribulation, whatever its type or character, its extent or severity, "endureth but a moment, ... weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Ps. 30:5). The "night" is the duration of trial; the "morning," the dawn of eternal deliverance when there shall be neither sorrow, nor crying, "neither shall there be any more pain" (Rev. 21:4). Therefore let us trust Him in the moment of darkness as we contemplate the endless rejoicing in the realm of ceaseless bliss.

CHANGED—in a Moment

All worthy of the reward of eternal life "shall...be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (I Cor. 15:51-52).

This is climactic! This is the adoption for which we all groan! This is the moment of triumph!

Of what does the change consist? When will the change take place? By whom is the change accomplished? How is the change effected? What are the results of the change? Who will be changed? Is this change literal? All of these questions are fully answered in the Scriptures—except for the time. Knowledge of the time is withheld as an

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inducement to constant readiness and spiritual alertness. The rapidity, however, is emphasized.

When in the wise and wonderful economy of God this certain, marvelous event occurs, it will happen "in the twinkling of an eye." The change from mortality to immortality will immediately follow the "well done" of the great Judge; and while the winners in the struggle for life will continue to go from "glory to glory" as the years of eternity roll, the initial change will take place in a moment. Neither death, nor the powers of evil, nor the lack of readiness on the part of the tardy covenant-makers will enforce a delay. The trump will sound. The shout of the Lord

will be heard. The members of Christ's body, whether living at the time or resurrected, will be caught up to meet Him in the air. And for the faithful, *it will be glory!*

There will be (1) a change in physical nature, for "when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2); and (2) a change in body, for our blessed Lord shall "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). We will breathe a new atmosphere! We shall join the glad chorus, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy

blood [word] out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10).

The moment of our sojourn lessens; the moment of our glorification nears. It is the moment of all moments. Let us during the coming year act like sensible men, not like thoughtless. Let us make the very most of our time, for these are evil days. Let us redeem the time as we wait for God's Son from heaven. Let us make every moment count in getting ready for the kingdom.

Time, even in the significance of its smallest segment, is precious. MM

O Master Workman of the Race

*O Master workman of the race,
Thou man of Galilee,
Who with the eyes of early youth
Eternal things did see;
We thank Thee for Thy boyhood faith
That shone Thy whole life through;
"Did ye not know it is My work
My Father's work to do?"*

*O Carpenter of Nazareth,
Who built a life sublime
And shaped it right by God's own law,
The only true design,
Build us a tower of Christ-like height,
That we the land may view,
And see like Thee our noblest work
Our Father's will to do.*

*O Thou who dost the vision send
And gives to each his task,
And with the task sufficient strength,
Show us Thy will, we ask;
Give us a conscience bold and good,
Give us a purpose true,
That it may be our highest joy,
Our Father's work to do.*

Out Where the **NEW** Begins

Each moment provides the opportunity for the fresh start, to live better than ever we lived before.

A full page newspaper advertisement by a national business magazine had this lead-line: "Out where the new begins." Beneath was the story of a successful merchandiser of heavy machinery who joined a new company to sell a new metal fabricating machine, and in so doing introduced a new approach to the problem of successful marketing.

The story is incidental, but the headline has appeal because we know, as every spiritually transformed person must know, that out where the new really begins is not Pittsburgh, Detroit, Lima, or Moline, but where a man meets God. Into this realm of radical spiritual newness each of us has been—or can be brought. Paul states unconditionally, "If anyone is in union with Christ, he is a new being; the old state of things has passed away; there is a new state of things" (II Cor. 5 :17, Goodspeed).

Just now we find ourselves at the place where a new year begins, and we have the best of reasons for making this the beginning of a new and higher level of effort at Christian living. Whatever we may have done in the past we should be concerned with bettering our effort for the year to come. The Christian life is a growth, and stagnation is not growth. The Christian cannot stand still. We cannot continue to live on the record of our past. Without advancement we find ourselves going backward—and time is short.

The practical James was making a timely observation when he said: "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life, it is even a vapor which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." It

would be equally prudent for us to remind ourselves often:

*Make haste, O man to live,
For thou so soon must die;
Time hurries past thee like a breeze,
How swift its moments fly!*

*To breathe, and wake, and sleep,
To smile, to sigh, to grieve,
To move in idleness through earth,
This, this is not to live.*

*Up, then, with speed, and work;
Fling ease and self away;
This is no time for thee to sleep,
Up, watch, and work, and pray."*

Each new day gives us a new opportunity for spiritual improvement. In this way we are given an opportunity to begin anew, to live through new experiences which we never met before, new testings that never tested our mettle before. It gives us new opportunities to speak the kind word, to show the Christian attitude, to exhibit the right example that will encourage and alert another. Each moment provides the opportunity for the fresh start, to live better than ever we lived before.

The New Creature

In II Corinthians 5 Paul not only speaks of getting out where the new begins, but also gives directions how to get out to that vital point in our Christian living. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (vs. 14, 15). Here is pictured the beginning of a new life. "If he died for all, then were all dead." Christ did not die so that all other members could escape the process but so that all others might also die, with the result: "then were all dead." If Christ died for all as an example, then

all must die. And once a person dies, he is dead, if he lives again it will be a new life—he will be out where the new begins, and Paul is going to point this out with vividness (v. 17): "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." When anyone is really united to Christ he is a new creature: his old life is over; a new life has already begun.

Our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, once said that the transformation in the Christian life should be so great that someone knowing our disposition in early life, would not recognize us as the same person should they make a second acquaintance after a lapse of many years. The harsh disposition must become mellowed; the trend to talk at random must give way to obedience to the command, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God,... therefore let thy words be few" (Eccl. 5:2). Self-centeredness must be replaced by concern for others; godly humility must take the place of pride and self-assurance. Hate must be replaced by love, good will must supplant malice, and we must be ready to work as wholeheartedly in second place as in first place, if that is God's will for us.

Another translator renders II Cor. 5:14-15, "For the love of Christ leaves us no choice, when once we have reached the conclusion that one man died for all and therefore all mankind has died. His purpose in dying for all was that men, while still in life, should cease to live for themselves, and should live for him who for their sake died and was raised to life."

Human personality is the sum of two factors, heredity plus environment. Christian character is the sum of these two elements

Out where the new begins" is where a new relation to God is established and a new regard for others is created.

plus a third, and more potent force: God directed, self-imposed discipline. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17).

In Christ

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). To many people the words, "In Christ," or "in union with Christ," are meaningless, which of course indicates that the new life has never invaded them. Yet these people apparently know what you mean when you say that you are in politics, in law, in business, or in advertising.

If, for example, a man says that he is in politics, you know that

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politics has become the ruling interest, the controlling passion of his life. You know that in his dedication to politics may be found a decision and a commitment. He has decided to make politics his career, giving it the preference over other careers, and this decision was followed by his commitment of himself—his time, his energies, his training—to his chosen field of action.

In principle it is the same with conversion and the spiritually changed life. The person who is "in Christ" is the person who has familiarized himself with Christ's life pattern, His teachings, His demands. He is one who has counted the cost, placing the things Christ offers over against what He demands, and has decided for Christ. For him there are not a dozen major interests, but just one, "that [he] may

know him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death"—the death to sin.

With one so committed, each new day the new begins, each hour the new begins, each minute the new begins. The Christian life cannot be static. We must "press," "run," "flee," "hasten our escape." Each day presents new opportunities for doing right; for right living, right thinking, right acting. It is for us to live in the perspective of eternity.

Of what does this *newness of life* consist? Paul's answers deserve our consideration.

First, a new relationship to God: "all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 5:18). The Bible is blunt and stubborn in its insistence that the natural man is in rebellion against God. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). It is plain to be seen however, that this rebellion is not primarily against the idea of God, or even against a sentimental recognition of God; it is fundamentally against the reign of God, against the control of God, the will of God. We don't like to be told what to and what not to do.

In the words of the patriarch Job, man says: "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him? Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways" (Job 21:15, 14). The Psalmist observes what unregenerated men say, "With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" (Ps. 12:4). And Jesus in parable reveals that this will be the attitude of man-

kind at His second coming: "But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14).

Man, having moved over from his true center in God to a false center in himself, finds that nothing comes out right. His rebellion is the fruitful source of all sorts of evil, conflict, strife, anxiety, and frustration. He is an alien in the company of the righteous where he should feel at home. He is a warrior where he should be a peacemaker. He is a slave to himself in a life where he should be Christ's freeman. He is a fool where he should be wise. He is a destroyer in an environment where he should be a builder. He is "time's vagabond in a universe where he should be eternity's pilgrim."

The glory of the gospel is that in such a confused world a way of escape has been provided. Our natural propensities and evil tendencies need no longer hold us in abject slavery. We are "out where the new begins," where the haughty position, "all of self and none of Thee," can be reversed to mean, "all of Thee, and none of self."

Under these changed conditions the rebel becomes a citizen, the alien is at home, the slave to sin is made free, the fool who had trusted in his own heart now sees the light, and earth's wanderer sets out for the Celestial City. In the center of this whole experience of change is a new relationship to God—reconciliation—which has come through our acceptance of His Son as our Mediator and Saviour, our Director, Judge, and King.

"Out where the new begins" is where we find, through our changed attitude, a new relationship to God. We stand no longer condemned, but forgiven; no longer "strangers from the cove-

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perspective of eternity.

nants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," but potential sons of God.

Consider, in addition, that to be born anew in Christ means a new regard for others: "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh" (II Cor. 5:16). To get a clearer picture of the meaning of this statement let us turn to other translations. The Revised Standard renders these words: "We regard no one from a human point of view." Goodspeed's translation reads: "I have estimated nobody at what he seemed to be outwardly." And still another translator renders it: "So from henceforth we appraise no man by human standards."

If you look at human beings through the eye of sinful, selfish, prejudiced men—or your own evil eye—you get one view. If you look at human beings through the eyes of Jesus Christ, you get a very different view. Naturally, the person to whom we take a liking looks good to us, whatever his life. When we dislike a person we are inclined to see no good, but only evil in that person. Whatever they do or fail to do we imagine a sinister motive was behind it. But if we look at them through the eyes of Jesus Christ, we judge them only by the fruits they bear, and we do not call evil good, nor good evil. Jesus pictures the Christian viewpoint in Matthew 7: "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit...Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (vs. 17-18, 20).

"Out where the new begins" is where a new relationship to God is established and a new regard for others is created. This is one of the challenges the new year brings to us. The words of Paul

Let Us Pray

Our gracious heavenly Father, at this the beginning of the New Year, we pause humbly before Thee in prayer, to register our thankfulness for Thy great goodness to us. Thou hast never failed to meet our needs. In gratefulness we turn to Thee this morning for Thy goodness toward us which is shown in countless ways.

We are surrounded on all sides by natural beauty. The laws of Nature never fail: the seasons follow one another in true sequence, the good Earth provides sustenance for all the human family. And were it not for the misbehavior of man himself, there would be plenty for all.

We rejoice that we can meet again to read from Thy Word, and get our hearts the more deeply impressed with the things we must do and refrain from doing if we would merit eternal life. Thou hast promised that, where "two or three are gathered together" in Thy name, Thou wilt make Thy presence felt in their hearts. May we experience this touching of our hearts this morning in this sanctuary. Let us not depart from this place without feeling deep in our hearts that Thou hast spoken to us, and may we humbly listen.

We rejoice to know that Christ our great Pattern and Example died to all worldly interests. And His love for us leaves us no choice; when once we have learned that one man died for all, it becomes obvious that if truly a part of His spiritual structure, we too must be dead with Him. His purpose in dying for all was not that men should not need to die but that men, while still in life, should cease to live for themselves, and should live for Him who for their sakes died and was raised to life.

Therefore grant that worldly standards will have ceased to count in our estimates of anyone; even if once they counted in our understanding of Christ, may they do so no longer. Help us to see and evaluate all by the lives they lead. May we never condemn the just nor condone the guilty, but know and rate every tree by the fruit it bears.

Alert us that if united to Christ we are a part of a new world, and the shallow interests of the old life must be completely replaced by something that is infinitely better. The old order has gone, and a new order has begun.

Be with us in this service. Be with those everywhere who are striving to learn and live Thy holy precepts. Be with those suffering distress of mind or body or spirit. Grant to them a quiet confidence that can mean their health. Forgive us for our foolish ways. Strengthen us to respond to Thy prompting today in love and service to Thee and others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

in Rom. 15:1-3 picture the Christ-life which we each must make a part of our lives: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but,

as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me."

Livelihood or Life

Paul tells us that those who belong to Christ's new creation have a *new reason for living*: "for the love of Christ constrain-

eth us" (II Cor. 5:14). "The very spring of our actions is the love of Christ," is Phillip's paraphrase of these words.

Almost anyone can tell you his reason for making a livelihood, but few can tell you their reason for living. We make a livelihood in order to have food to eat and clothes to wear, and homes to live in. But that doesn't make a life.

A minister talking with a group of college students in their fraternity house, turned to the chairman of the meeting and asked, "What are you living for?" The student answered, "I am going to be a pharmacist." The pastor said, "I understand that this is how you are going to earn your livelihood, but what are you living for?" The youth thought for a moment, and then in a manner that suggested both honesty and bewilderment said, "Sir, I'm sorry, but I haven't thought that through." And when asked the same question, only two of the thirty young men had seriously faced the central issue of existence, our reason for living.

The true Christian has an answer to that basic question. To be the channel through which the love of God flows to others, to obtain for himself eternal salvation, and help others to obtain it; to be placed forever beyond the power of death and the lim-

itations of mortality; to be made equal to the angels so he can die no more—all this is his reason for living. Can we imagine a more compelling one?

The Psalmist propounds the question: "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?" (Ps. 34:12). To gain life and see endless days in the world to come should be our chief purpose in life. And again, King David declares what he is living for in the following words: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15). To eventually look upon God's face was his chief desire, but to obtain that supreme privilege he must now attain to His likeness mentally and morally.

And the greatest Christian of the centuries has expressed his reason for living in a number of ways, for example: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14). And again in these appropriate words: "The love of Christ constraineth us."

Let us for a moment explore the thought embraced in the word *constraineth*: "the love of Christ

constraineth us." To constrain is to compel by physical or moral means; to urge, oblige. However God does not compel us by physical means. He leaves us free moral agents to accept or reject His leading, and His proffered goodness. His only compulsion is moral. He draws us with cords of love (Hos. 11:4). It is His goodness that leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). Paul's mind and heart are under the conscious control of Christ. The element of restraint involved in the control of Christ has to do with selfish desires, or with impulses that would waste our energies in secondary aims. We are not restrained from doing anything that is good.

If we would live "out where the new begins" we must be constrained by such all-embracing words of Paul as I Cor. 10:31: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." As mentioned earlier, the fact that Christ died means that we all have died, that is, in Him we are dead to sin, a death which is the condition of true life. The experience of salvation is one in which we pass from the death which is death indeed, through death with Christ into life with Him.

A Nineteenth Century theologian struck the keynote when he said: "Paul does not mean to say

Why Are We Living?

The true Christian has an answer:

- *to obtain for ourselves eternal salvation*
- *to be the channel through which the love of God can flow to others*
- *to help others obtain eternal salvation*
- *to be placed forever beyond the power of death and mortality*
- *to be made equal to the angels so we can die no more!*

that Christ died in order that men might *not* die, but exactly for this very purpose, that they *might*; and this death he represents in the next verse by an equivalent expression—the life of unselfishness: ‘that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves.’ The ‘dead’ of the first part of the verse are ‘they that live’ of the second.”

In the fifteenth verse of II Cor. 5, the Apostle enlarges upon the master motive in Christian living: Christ “died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.” Peter explains that he died for us “leaving us an example, that [we] should follow his steps” (I Pet. 2:21).

“Yield yourself to the love of Christ, and you will be swept out of the love of self. And His love will do more, for it will not only sweep you *out* but sweep you *on*.”

If during the coming year we would keep ourselves in the love of God, keep ourselves out where the new life begins, the words of our song should act as a means to direct us each day as it passes.

“Come, let us anew, our journey pursue,

*Roll round with the year,
And never stand still till the
Master appear.”*

We are at a time of beginning again, “out where the new begins.” Perhaps we have mustered the spiritual strength to make a good beginning, have resolved to live more for God and righteousness than ever we have lived before. But while this is a step in the right direction—a noble determination—good resolutions do not assure a year of growth. Our resolutions must be kept. Our good resolution must “roll round with the year,” must accompany us during every trial, every temp-

tation; through the ordinary days as well as the days of extraordinary stress and strain. We must deal so effectively with ourselves that we will “never stand still till our Master appears,” or our day of life ends.

“His adorable will, let us gladly fulfill,

*And our talents improve,
By the patience of hope, and the
labor of love.”*

His adorable will, let us gladly fulfill. We claim to take Christ for our great Pattern and Example. If we are sincere in our profession we will gladly surrender to His adorable will. He surrendered fully to His Father’s will, He did always those things that pleased Him. But too often we have sought to please ourselves. We have tried to find a cross that would be easy to carry, a path to travel that was smooth and always downhill; a life divorced from problems. Too often in place of saying—and meaning it—“not my will but Thine be done,” we have reversed the words and said, “Not Thy will but mine be done.” If this year we would keep ourselves out where the new begins we must our “talents improve by the patience of hope, and the labor of love.”

*“Our life is a dream, Our time, as
a stream,*

*Glides swiftly away,
And the ongoing moments refuse
now to stay.”*

How earnestly we should echo the beseechment of the Psalmist, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” The ability to properly evaluate the time identifies one as a wise man, the absence of this ability identifies one as a fool. The great Apostle said: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeem-

Y*ield yourself
to the love of
Christ, and you
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love of self. And His love
will do more, for it will
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but sweep you on.*

ing the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16). The wording in the Moffatt Bible is even more forceful: “Be strictly careful then about the life you lead; act like sensible men, not like thoughtless; make the very most of your time, for these are evil days.”

Indeed, “Our life is a dream, Our time, as a stream, Glides swiftly away, And the ongoing moments refuse now to stay.” Time, as pictured by the ancient Greeks, was a fast running youth with his hair long in the front but close shaven on the back of his head. To capture him one must be prepared to take him by the forelock. Failing in that it would be impossible to capture him. Let us demonstrate that we have left the abode of the fools or thoughtless, and that we are living out where the new begins by redeeming each precious moment.

*“No time for us now, to idle away,
The millennial year rushes on to
our view*

And eternity’s near.”

As in the days of Noah the ark was ultimately finished, the heavens grew dark, the fountains of the great deep were broken up, the long-expected deadline arrived, and the Flood came; as
(Continued on page 24)

Get Ready To Welcome



The King!

*A servant of Jesus am I,
To you this message I bring:
The night is far spent, the day dawns
at length,
Get ready to welcome the King!*

*Dark evil has long held its way,
Its end is coming and near;
For Jesus, God's Son, shall come
to His throne,
And gather His children so dear.*

*Then lift up your heads, O ye saints,
Your great redemption behold;
The night is far spent, the day is at hand,
The Day by the prophets foretold.*

The King is coming! Jesus Christ, earth's long-awaited Messiah and Redeemer, is coming. It is the bright anticipation which Jesus Himself voiced in the prayer He taught His disciples to pray: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

The coming of the King is the promise of God Almighty, proclaimed by every sacred writer. It is the culmination of God's plan for this earth, the hour for which all creation is even now on tiptoe, eager "to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own" (Rom. 8:19, Phillips). Earth's rightful Ruler will arrive. The hour is near, the end of the age is upon us.

What should we as believers be doing at such a time as this?

It is time to get ready—*get ready to welcome the King!*

How can we do this? What can we, in a practical everyday situation, do to welcome our King?

If we look closely at the Scriptures, we will find what we can—and must—do to get ready for our King. These messages were recorded for us to hear and heed, and for this very purpose—lest the day of the Lord come upon us unawares.

What are they?

#1: Get Serious!

"Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals.' Come to your right mind, and sin no more" (I Cor. 15:33-34, RSV).

Do we hear what this great Apostle is saying? "Come to your right mind, and sin no more." The Greek word translated "come to your right mind" means "to arouse out of stupor, awake," as out of a drunken sleep. The Apostle is comparing a lack of spiritual alertness to the repulsive condition of drunkenness—in order to shock us to our senses. *Get serious*, he is saying, about your standing before God, about the hope which God has set before you, about the Word of God and its effect upon you and its power in your life. You know these things, he says; you know what God is going to do, and you go about as though you were drunk! Get serious! Come to your senses and "sin no more."

Paul was rebuking their thoughtless, heedless, unwary attitude toward sin. Real believers must be alert to every possibility of wrong in their lives,

everything that might bring the disfavor of God upon them. Sin shuts us out of the presence of God. Sin keeps God from hearing our prayers. God hates sin in its every form. Sin will prevent us from receiving anything eternal from God.

What can we do about the sin that plagues us? Just this: *Stop it!* Whatever it is, stop giving in to it. What if it is a weakness of the flesh that continually tempts us? Resist it! What if it is a useless thought that we simply can't stop thinking about? Displace it. Overpower it. Flood it with a host of heavenly thoughts of things that are true and noble and upright and good, until there is no place for it to lodge.

There can be no real faith without a corresponding change in one's life, so "come to your senses." *Get serious!*

#2: Wake Up!

"Try to find out what would please the Lord; take no part in the barren deeds of darkness, but show them up for what they are. And so the hymn says: 'Awake, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine upon you.' Be most careful then how you conduct yourselves: like sensible men, not like simpletons. Use the present opportunity to the full, for these are evil days" (Eph. 5:11, 14-16, NEB).

Paul was out to attack spiritual sleeping sickness and anything related to it that might be afflicting his brethren and keeping them from wholehearted obedience to God. And so he admonishes, "Awake!" "Be most careful how you conduct yourselves...use the present opportunity to the full." It is so easy to let slip the little opportunities of every day. While we are waiting for some great and heroic test, the little things that could be the making of us go by unused. Don't let this happen, he says. The present opportunity is ever with us, and must be redeemed. "Use the present opportunity to the full." Here is a continual obligation, from which there is no escape.

It is so easy to be caught in the whirlpool of this world, its thoughts, its cares, its interests. But as Christians we do not belong to this world. We are looking for our King, preparing, getting ready.

Don't wait for better days. The days are evil, and will get worse. Use the time that is now, and you have done all that you can do. Let the evil of

the times confirm your faith. The good news of the Gospel is that the worst will give way to the best. In the midst of trouble and tumult, the King *will come! So wake up!*

#3: Stay Awake!

"But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son; no one but the Father. Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!" (Mark 13:32-37, JB).

Jesus is teaching by means of a parable. The subject is His return, and the warning: that all who would welcome Him must not only wake up but *stay awake*. There would be danger—great danger—of falling asleep.

In other words, some will be nodding, some will lose faith. Some will grow weary of the apparently prolonged delay. This is why the special warning: keep awake. His coming will *seem to be late*, though in reality it is not. This is why the prophet Habakkuk gave the warning, as it is translated in the Moffatt Bible: "The vision has its own appointed hour, it is ripening, it will flower; if it be long, then wait, for it is sure, and it will not be late" (Hab. 2:3). Also the writer to the Hebrews: "Yet in a very little while, he who is coming will come, and will not delay....Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised" (Heb. 10:37, 35, 36, NAS).

It is a time requiring supervigilance. All of us know how hard it is to stay alert when others are napping. Just so the present hour—it is a time for endurance.

Notice particularly the possible hours of His return: "At evening,...midnight,...cockcrow,...dawn"—all are times when people are least alert, if not asleep. His words are a sharp warning against spiritual listlessness. It is as if He said, "I

am coming when most people will be spiritually unaware, but you must stay awake. Be alert to the signs of the times. Be alert to the condition of your inner life. Let others doze—**YOU KEEP AWAKE!**"

Also in this parable is a call to faithfulness in stewardship. Every servant is responsible for something, every servant is accountable. Be awake, He says, and vigorous in the use of whatever has been entrusted to you!

In every way, Christ's servants must be different. When others are dozing, His servants *must stay awake*. While others take life thoughtlessly as it comes, His servants *must be busy, active, getting ready*. While others "eat, drink and be merry," His servants *must be intent on their duties*. Like soldiers on the watch, they must stand out from the hapless hordes who will be shocked at the sound of the last trumpet.

"If he comes unexpectedly he must not find you asleep." He must not—*He will not*—if we stay awake.

#4: Do—Speak—BE Right!

"Why all this stress on behaviour? Because, as I think you have realised, the present time is of the highest importance—it is time to wake up to reality. Every day brings God's salvation nearer. The night is nearly over; the day has almost dawned. Let us therefore fling away the things that men do in the dark; let us arm ourselves for the fight of the day! Let us live cleanly, as in the daylight, not in the 'delights' of getting drunk or playing with sex, nor yet in quarrelling or jealousies. Let us be Christ's men from head to foot, and give no chances to the flesh to have its fling" (Rom. 13:11-14, Phillips).

Could words be plainer! Could warning be sharper or more direct for us in this late hour! The Apostle is shouting across the centuries to us to wake up to reality. Time is more critical than ever before. The coming of the King is imminent. The great Day is nearer now than when we first believed.

How can we get ready? Paul is direct: *Fling away the things that men do in the dark...arm [yourselves] for the fight of the day!...be Christ's men from head to foot, and give no chances to the flesh to have its fling.*

Getting ready for the coming of our King involves our whole being—what we do, what we say,

what we think about, how we feel, what we enjoy—everything in and about us that is within our power to control. From “head to foot” we must show that we belong to Christ, and “give no chances to the flesh to have its fling.”

If we are getting ready to welcome our King, we will not talk about topics of no spiritual benefit. We will follow the admonition of the Apostle and speak only to edify, upbuild, instruct and encourage (Eph. 4:29). Our words will never show any trace of foolishness, uncleanness, anger, or impatience. Nor will we ever speak to build up ourselves in the sight of others. Rather, we will speak to promote the interests of Christ and His Kingdom.

If we are getting ready to welcome our King, we will be holding our thoughts to the same line of obedience. This is what we are commanded: to take captive every thought and make it obey the law of Christ (II Cor. 10:4-5). We have no time or place to let our minds wander at will. Our thoughts must be regimented, tracked, and directed at all times.

What will their topic be? Will we spend hours ruminating on an unkind comment, a petty hurt, or something we can neither correct nor change? Or will we waste precious time in daydreaming, in a land of fiction and fantasy? Not if we are getting ready for our King! We have an interest too large and too serious to allow any of these. Rather, we will again follow the advice of the apostle Paul and see that our mind is filled at all times with “all that is true, all that is noble, all that is just and pure, all that is lovable and gracious, whatever is excellent and admirable” (Phil. 4:8, NEB).

Our feelings, too, will be under the same strict control if we are sincerely getting ready for our King. We will not allow ourselves to be submerged in a dozen minor interests. Our one overpowering thought in all that comes will always be, How can I use this to prepare me to welcome my King? Nor will we allow ourselves to be annoyed or unduly stirred by what does not please us, but will view all in relation to our coming King and the part we will be able to share in His new world. In that penetrating light, petty annoyances, small hardships, and even suffering and pain will be viewed as a passing thing, not worthy of too much concern, if only we can make sure our place with our Lord in that New World.

Do we wonder that the Apostle said, “The present time is of the highest importance”? There is no time for drowsiness, no time to relax and take things easy.

Using a different simile, Jesus’ parable of the Ten Virgins is another warning to be prepared. The King is coming, and those who would welcome

Him must get ready. In Jesus’ parable, ten virgins went out to meet the bridegroom; but only five were ready when he arrived; the lamps of the others, the foolish virgins, had gone out.

The lesson: Jesus will find some sleeping. Jesus will find some ready to welcome Him. Which will you be? Will He find you wide awake, alert, watching, ready? Or will He find you weary...yawning...asleep?

How many will He find truly alive and full of faith (Luke 18:8)? Jesus wondered. We wonder. If the King should suddenly drop in on us this very hour, how would He find us, you and me?

The words of Scripture echo and re-echo in our ears: Get ready! Get ready to welcome the King! Fix your mind on what God has promised. Live more intensely, more fervently according to the demands of your faith. This is no time to play with any evil, any waywardness, any lust of the flesh. This is the time to be “Christ’s men from head to foot, and give no chances to the flesh to have its fling.”

Our days of preparation are fast drawing to a close. *The King is coming!*

#5: Put On Christ's Armor

“But as to the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.... But you are not in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all sons of light and sons of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation” (I Thess. 5:1-8, RSV).

Again the theme is Christ’s sudden return and the right attitude for believers. They must be getting ready to welcome the King. Again there is a warning against falling asleep. Each must walk and act like a child of God, their lives beaming with the light that represents Him. By active obedience and moral watchfulness they must overcome the tendency to any negligent disregard.

The passage indicates that Christ’s coming will be “like a thief in the night” to some. How can

this be avoided? Simply this: keep awake.

Then Paul reminds us of another resource God has provided: armor. To be able to stand and continue standing, we need the whole armor God has provided—the sword of the Spirit, the breastplate of righteousness, the sandals of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation (Eph. 6:10-11). Without these, we are defeated before we start.

But *with* these, we *will* be able to stand.

Protect yourself! Put on the heavenly armor—by giving serious attention to righteousness, peace, faith, and the hope of salvation—now!

#6: Be Intense!

Jesus has yet another description for the proper end-time attitude. It is found in Matthew 11:12: "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

The word translated *violence* means "to force, compel, carry a point by obstinate perseverance." As used in Luke 16:16, it means "sought with burning zeal" (Arndt & Gringrich).

We should notice Christ's remark as it is phrased in two other translations: "They are pressing into the realm of heaven—these eager souls are storming it!" (Moffatt). "The kingdom has endured violent assault, and the violent seize it by force [as a

precious prize]—a share in the heavenly kingdom is sought for with most ardent zeal and intense exertion" (Amplified).

No drowsiness here, no sleepy, half-alert condition.

It is an opportunity to be excited about, to be intensely alert, industrious and aroused by! The true Church is a band of dedicated soldiers ready for invasion! eager! pressing! forceful! coming on strong for the Kingdom of God!

Sleep is for those in the night. Christ's men are men of the day, moved! zealous! alive! energetic!

What should we do while others slumber and sleep? How shall we keep awake? What is our strategy for coping with the yawning, sighing stupor that surrounds us? How shall we overpower the deadening effects of those who are immersed in the interests of this world, or materialism, or secularism, or just plain day to day dullness?

There is only one answer: Keep your faith active, working, alert, living more intensely, more fervently according to its demands. Our preparation days are fast drawing to a close. If we don't get busy and do it *now*, the King will be here before we're ready.

We have no time to waste, no time to get comfortable, relax, doze or despair. There is only time for action and vigilance. Try the Matthew 11:12 attitude—positive, daring, vigorous, alarmed, coming on strong for the Kingdom of God! It is for your life! The day of the Lord is imminent.

Get ready—now—to welcome the King!

MM

Questions and Answers

Was Jesus the Son of Joseph?

"Matthew took great pains to prove Jesus' lineage was through Joseph, to prove He was of the 'Scion of David'—the Messiah. Yet Matthew says Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. How do you account for this? Who was Jesus' father?"

You are correct in stating that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Matthew records that Mary was "found with child of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 1:18), hence Jesus was truly the child of God. Luke confirms this by recording the words of

the angel, "Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

Matthew, chapter one, does record the genealogy of Joseph, from which one might easily assume that Matthew was relating the ancestry of Jesus' descent from the lineage of David through Joseph. However, Matthew does not say this. He says only, at the end of the genealogy of Joseph, "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (Matt. 1:16). Matthew carefully states that this

genealogy is of "Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus." Notice that Matthew identifies Joseph as "the husband of Mary," not the father of Jesus. Luke also confirms this fact by saying that Jesus was "(as was supposed) the son of Joseph" (Luke 3:23), after which he recounts the lineage of Mary.

If Matthew truly recognized that Jesus was the Son of God, as he stated, and not of Joseph, what was his purpose in recounting Joseph's lineage? He did it because Jesus was considered to be legally the son of Joseph, because of the wedlock of Joseph and Mary. But Matthew is very clear in explaining that Jesus was not biologically or physically the son of Joseph, even though this was commonly assumed.

Luke 3:23-38 records the genealogy of Mary, through her father Heli (who was actually Joseph's father-in-law) all the way back to Abraham and to Adam. (Joseph's own father was Jacob, not Heli—see Matt. 1:16). Although both Joseph and Mary were of the lineage of Abraham, Jesus' being of the tribe of Judah and of the family of David was through his mother Mary, not through Joseph. Mary's line of descent came through Nathan, the son of David by Bathsheba (I Chron. 3:5).

Jesus' being of the lineage of David was a fulfillment of prophecy. "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isa. 11:1). Again, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper..." (Jer. 23:5).

The fact that Jesus was truly the Son of God is confirmed many times in the Gospels (see Luke 1:35; 4:41; 11:27; John 10:36; 20:31). The Apostles also confirmed this fact (see Acts 8:37; 9:20; Rom. 1:4; Gal. 2:20; I John 5:5, etc.).

MM

What is in the well of your heart is bound to come up in the bucket of your speech.

The Abib Calendar

ABIB means...

"month of green ears," "spring or sprouting month." God commanded Moses to "observe the month Abib" (Deut. 16:1; Ex. 12:2; 13:4) in remembrance of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. The month Abib begins with the first new moon of spring.

Abib 1—the New Year

begins this year on Thursday evening, April 6, and continues through Friday, April 7, Bible time being measured from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32). It was the pattern of the Hebrew people to begin the new year with the first occurrence of the new moon after the Spring Equinox. Accordingly, Abib First is the first day of the sacred New Year, and the day on which we observe the anniversary of our Savior's birth.

Abib 13—the New Passover

is the anniversary of the night when Jesus partook of the Last Supper with His disciples before He suffered. It falls this year on the evening of April 18. At this time we partake of the emblems (unleavened bread and grape juice) in obedience to the command, "This do in remembrance of me." It is a sacred rite, symbolic of the renewal of our covenant relationship with God, the bread representing the knowledge of the law of God and the juice the offering of ourselves in total dedication to do the will of God in our lives.

Abib 15—Resurrection

is the anniversary of the Resurrection of Christ, occurring this year on the morning of April 21. In ancient Israel, this was the day of the waving of the first sheaf of the harvest before the Lord. On this morning, Christ the first-fruits from death rose triumphant over the grave. On this morning, after the crucifixion, even "very early in the morning," certain women found their way to the tomb. Finding it empty, they heard those immortal words that still stimulate us today: "He is not here, for he is risen! Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Pentecost, which came fifty days after the waving of the first sheaf offering, falls this year on June 9.

TWILIGHT:

A Tale of the Apostasy

Chapter 1: Damascus

*In the midst of the all-pervading sea of corruption,
religious and social, true faith shone in its primitive purity
and beauty in this humble place.*

Night, heavy, stifling and black, brooded over Damascus. The trees lining the river bank outside the walls drooped dejectedly in the breathless heat, and no sound was heard save the lapping of the stream and the cry of the jackals from the distant desert. Within, the city slumbered like a place of the dead. No lights shone in the houses, the entire population having taken to the housetops to avail themselves of any refreshing breeze which might spring up; while in the narrow, crooked, deserted streets a few stray curs, gaunt gray shadows, ranged hungrily about or nosed in rubbish heaps for scraps of food.

The house of Simon, a comfortable dwelling in Dara street, was to the observer as lifeless and dark as its neighbors. But inside, in a lower room, lighted dimly by a few candles sat a dozen men and women, perspiring in the close and oppressive atmosphere. All windows opening

into the courtyard were tightly masked. From one corner of the floor a section had been lifted, revealing the first few steps of a passageway leading into subterranean darkness.

This little gathering on the night of June 1st, 605, was the regular meeting of the handful of Christians in Damascus who still held the faith in its Apostolic purity. Heretics they were in the eyes of the established church and civil power, and as such they had for years been forbidden the right of assembly and worship. They, however, feared the word of the Lord more than the imperial edict, and had continued to congregate in obedience to the command: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,...but exhorting one another." Espionage and persecution had imposed the necessity of utmost secrecy and caution.

Let's get acquainted with this stouthearted little band who dared defy kings and bishops for

the sake of their faith.

Simon, the leader, was a man nearing threescore and ten but still a capable ruler, guide and overseer. Years had not quenched the fire in his eye nor broken his strong body. By his side sat his wife Mary, some ten years younger, a gentlewoman in every sense of the word. Upon her face were the marks of care and responsibility, yet it was a face altogether beautiful, for it glowed with the beauty of holiness.

At the leader's left hand sat his assistant, Severian; more imposing in appearance and more eloquent of speech than Simon, but lacking that indefinable something which marks one of strong spiritual excellence. A man of considerable culture and worldly ability, one would say at first glance.

Then there were the little congregation: Arsacius, an old man, whitebearded but agile and erect; Perdix, a bronzed workman of thirty-eight or thirty-nine, with his wife Rhea; Ione, foster-

daughter of Simon and Mary, in her twenties, a picture of rare, unspoiled, unadorned beauty; Anna, a comely maiden of unmistakable Jewish ancestry; Theodore, a young man, pale, slightly built, with large brown eyes which glowed almost too intensely.

Near the door stood a flax-haired giant, his great height, tremendous shoulders and massive head and neck dwarfing the other members of the company. This was Wulf, for years the hired servant of Simon. What strange currents of destiny had carried him here? Born in Spain of a Gothic father and a Burgundian mother, he had entered the army at an early age. Upon being discharged he had drifted to Constantinople, then to Antioch, and finally to Damascus. A chance meeting with Simon resulted in his employment, and to him he had clung with unfaltering fidelity ever since. Converted to the faith by his master's godly example, he was sincerely striving to live down his violent past, to slay the "wolf" in him and prove worthy of the confidence of his employer and his employer's family.

Tenderhearted in his normal moments, fond of children, deeply religious, he was by nature a curious mixture of Christian, child and devil, recognizing and fearing what remained of the barbarian in him, worshipping Simon's household as the earthly representatives of his Master in heaven.

A knock at the door.

All present rose and moved toward the subterranean exit. Wulf placed a heavy foot against the bottom of the door and called in a low tone:

"Who's there?"

"Palladius." A pause. "Maranatha."

Wulf unbolted the thick oaken door and admitted Palladius, a tall, grizzled veteran of sixty or thereabouts, his ruddy countenance and bright, clear eyes testifying to his physical vigor and perfect health. This was his one fault; he was habitually late.

"Greetings, brethren!" he said, cheerfully.

"Welcome, brother," answered Severian. "I suppose it is a little late in life to suggest once more that you try harder to get here on time. We have delayed the meeting for you and Apollon and Selim and Epigrapchia. Do you think that is just right on such a warm evening as this?"

"Well, at any rate I am not the only one," said Palladius. "Apollon will not be here tonight. I stopped to see him and found him ill. In fact, that is my excuse for being late—this time. As for Selim and Epigrapchia, they could come if they would, but they seem to be losing interest. Shouldn't wonder if they quit entirely before long."

"Well, since you have been visiting the sick, I suppose we must forgive you this time. But next week it will be something else. The meeting will come to order."

"I wish," said Ione, wistfully, "that we might sing some hymns. I do get so hungry for some music; don't you, Anna?"

"So do we all," answered Simon, "but if we sang we should certainly be heard and reported to the Bishop. We shall have to be content to do as Paul suggested: 'Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.'"

Ione sighed. "I suppose we must. What a shame that we should be so persecuted that we dare not even sing, all because we cannot agree with the em-

What a shame
that we should
be so
persecuted that we dare
not even sing, and all
because we cannot agree
with the emperor."

peror. We do not interfere with them—nor would we if we could."

"True, daughter, but such is human nature at its worst. Intolerance is inherent in most, and today it is in the saddle, riding down all who dare think for themselves. But 'rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.' Severian, will you read the Scriptures?"

Severian read, and after a fervent and heartfelt prayer Simon expounded, exhorted, entreated, warned and encouraged. Heat and discomfort were forgotten as hearts bent before his impassioned eloquence like wheat before the summer gale. In the midst of the all-pervading sea of corruption, religious and social, true faith shone in its primitive purity and beauty in this humble place; and though the number of adherents was pitifully small, yet it was the largest congregation in all Syria—yes, in all the world in which the genuine, unmixed Gospel had been proclaimed. In fact, so complete had been the collapse and ruin of Apostolic Christianity, so thoroughly...had fire and sword and proscription and unpopularity done their work, that in only

Centuries of fiery trial had done much to eliminate the chaff, the faint-hearted, the opportunists. The few survivors represented almost the last word in moral hardihood.

two places had organized *ecclesias* survived. And this handful in Damascus was the larger of the two!

But centuries of fiery trial had done much to eliminate the chaff, the faint-hearted, the opportunists. The few survivors represented almost the last word in moral hardihood. And yet—and yet, when the final test should come, would it be said of this little group as of the Twelve, “Ye are not all clean”?

The meeting concluded, and one by one for the sake of secrecy and safety, the guests were departing. Simon touched Severian on the arm and whispered:

“Tarry a moment; I wish to speak with you.”

Alone, they retired to the housetop where a cooling breeze from the mountains afforded some relief.

“Severian, what is this I hear of you? Do you not know that the honors of the world are not for the servants of Christ?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean this. You have accepted a position in the Provincial Treasury, which compels you to maintain more or less political favor with your superiors and which cannot help being destructive to your Christianity.”

Severian bristled defensively.

“Why should I not accept it? I

must make a living somehow. Why is not this work like any other?”

“True, you must live; but you were doing very well at your own business. I believe, if you will be honest with yourself, that the real motive was to secure the honor and praise of men. Is it not true?”

“No; I do not believe that had anything to do with it. I wanted the salary, and, too, I thought that as a part of the government I might be able to mitigate our persecutions.”

“What! do you think that you, as second assistant to the Treasurer, might overcome the combined power of the Roman government and the official church? Severian, you know the Scripture is very plain on this matter. Paul says, ‘Come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing.’ Is not the Roman tax-collecting system an unclean thing?”

“Most assuredly it is, but I shall keep my part of it clean.”

“Do you not remember the principle of our beloved Paul, ‘Ye shall not do evil that good may come’? Jesus said of his disciples, ‘They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world’; and again, ‘How can ye believe which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only?’”

“Yes,” Severian expostulated, “but I did not seek this office, the office sought me. It makes a difference.”

“It makes no difference at all. Severian, temptation many times seeks us out; must we yield to it for that reason? If you had listened to the voice of James in the past, you would not have been sought by this office. ‘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.’ If you had not made worldly and influential friends you would not have been tempted.”

“But my friends told me that honest men were *needed* in the government service, and it seemed logical to me.”

“It may be logical, but not according to the Scriptures. Let the world take care of its own affairs, but ‘keep thyself pure.’ You can never keep pure by identifying yourself with a system of iniquity. You cannot reform or change it, but it will certainly change you. Besides, you have endangered the safety of the whole congregation. The history of our Church shows that safety lies in obscurity. As soon as Christians began to seek public office and to enter the army, persecution arose.”

“Oh, I assure you, Simon, that I shall use the utmost discretion. I solemnly promise that I shall never reveal any names, or betray our faith to the enemy.”

“You will find it impossible to do this, I fear, without denying it by works. Our ways are not the ways of the world, and the Bishop’s spies are everywhere. They see all and they spare no pains in heretic-hunting. Far better that you should have kept yourself clear in the first place. Why did you not seek advice before accepting?”

Severian was silent a moment, then spoke. “I thought myself capable of deciding a simple thing like this, and—”

“And you knew very well that I would not sanction it. No, Severian, you have done foolishly, and you had better resign before you get yourself and us into trouble.”

“I’ll think it over. In the meantime, I shall be very careful. I must be going. Good-night!”

A stubborn and self-willed man,
(Continued on page 26)

ALMOST...!

How many times are you *almost* obedient?

ALMOST is a very simple word, also very sad.

How many "almost's" we find in Scripture. Cain *almost* did what God told him to do, but his sacrifice was not accepted by God because his life was not good (I John 3:12). As a result, his unconquered nature consumed him.

We read of those who believed Christ, yet because of the Pharisees they would not follow Him—they loved the praises of men more than the praise of God. They were *almost* ready to follow—but they couldn't make the sacrifice.

King Agrippa told Paul when Paul was on trial before him that "*almost* thou persuadest me to be a Christian." *Almost*, but not. In the presence of the greatest, most compelling, most persuasive Christian missionary of all times, he still held back—to his eternal loss.

How close we can come, yet miss it all!

Remember the rich young ruler who asked Jesus, "What must I do to be saved?" He felt that he had done pretty well, and should be commended. But there was something lacking. Said Jesus, "One thing thou lackest," and that one thing was more than he wanted to give up (Mark 10:21).

You can see him in your mind going away with head bowed low. He *almost* made it, but didn't.

Look at the five foolish virgins. They had *almost* enough oil to last until the bridegroom came. For a good while, it looked as though they would all be there to welcome the Bridegroom together. But then one lamp went out. And another. And another. And while they went to get more oil, the bridegroom arrived, and the door was shut. They *almost* made it, but that small deficiency in their provisions made the difference between being *inside* looking out, or *outside* looking in. *Almost* was not enough.

Are we intent on keeping our reserves of faith at the *maximum* point? Or will we be like the five foolish virgins, with *almost*—but not quite—enough faith to see us through?

When Moses was leading his people out of bondage, they became thirsty. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And

Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him" (Num. 20:7-9).

Moses lifted up his hand and with his rod he struck the rock, as he had done many times before. The water gushed out abundantly. But the Lord had told Moses to *speak* to the rock, not strike it. Moses *almost* carried out God's instructions, but not quite. And for not carrying them out precisely as God had told him to do, he could not go into the Promised Land. So Moses *almost* made it to the Land of Promise, but not quite.

We may consider ourselves obedient, dedicated followers of Christ. But are we? How many *almost's* can you discover in your life? How many times do you settle for what is *almost* right? or say what is *almost* true? How many times are you *almost* obedient? How many times is your submission *almost* complete?

God wants His people wholehearted, whole-souled; *none* of self and *all* of God. Not *almost* but *altogether*. If not, when the Day of Judgment arrives we will be found like Belshazzar, "weighed in the balances and found wanting." ALMOST, but NOT approved.

Almost is a simple word, but it is not enough. MM

Out Where the New Begins

(Continued from page 13)

in the days of Lot the last moment arrived before the fire and brimstone began to fall on the unsuspecting inhabitants of the wicked cities of the plain; so at this moment we may be living out the very last hours before the end of the age, when God will break His long silence, and His judgments will begin. There is no time for us to idle away. The millennial year rushes on to our view, and eternity's near. All the great things that God has spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began will soon begin to be realized. Then the new will begin on a grander scale than anything mortal man has ever seen, but to be in a favorable position when that new day dawns, we must keep ourselves out where the new begins each waking moment of our lives. Let us live expectantly, let us know beyond a shadow of uncertainty that the great things promised by Jehovah *will* come to pass, and now prepare for them.

*"Oh, that each in the day of His coming, may say,
I have fought my way through,
I have finished the work Thou didst give me to do."*

The Psalmist blessed the Lord that his hands had been taught to

war, and his fingers to fight. Too often we have been weaklings when required to fight against the onslaught of the flesh. A popular American clergyman made the statement that we have created the most marvelous mechanical devices to perform our mundane tasks, but morally we do not have the strength of a pigmy. If that is true of us we will never have the strength to fight our way through the maze of evils that dwell in our hearts, and come off "more than conquerors."

If we would finish the work God has given us to do we will need to be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," strong to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. If we would at all times keep ourselves out where the new begins we must now "awake to righteousness and sin not." We must "be alert; stand firm in the faith, be valiant and strong" (I Cor. 16:13, NEB).

*"Oh that each from his Lord may receive the glad word
'Well and faithfully done,
Enter into My joy, and sit down on My throne.'"*

The great Judge will never tell an untruth. He will never say "Well done, good and faithful servant" to one who has not actually

done well. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Now is the time to lay up for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come that we may lay hold upon eternal life. The five foolish virgins who failed to keep their faith-lamps trimmed and brightly burning arrived just after the bridegroom had entered the house and the door was shut. They had failed to keep out where the new begins. They had allowed the demons of doubt, discouragement, frustration, to enter their hearts, keeping them chained to their old ways, old habits, old sins.

No bliss that we can imagine in this our mortal state can compare with the bliss of hearing the Judge say to us, "Well and faithfully done, enter into My joy, and sit down on My throne."

*"Oh, then let us pray, Press on every day,
To gain this reward
When Jesus comes back to judge us by His word."*

Let us never forget the Day of reckoning. We have had the eyes of our understanding enlightened to know what God's will for us is; we have entered into covenant with God to serve Him with our whole heart; we have been given much time, and under these circumstances "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive

What You Sow... You Reap

If you sow thistles, ragweed and purslane in your kitchen garden, can you expect to find solid heads of lettuce, well developed radishes, or plump, well-ripened tomatoes? It is an inexorable law of the soil, that like produces like, that whatever we sow we reap.

Plant the seeds of unbelief, arrogance, pride, selfishness, wrath, sensuality, and laziness of mind in your mental garden, and can you expect a harvest of tranquility and a strong, abiding

faith; a humble spirit, love, patience under trial, pure thoughts; or that the law of God will be indelibly written in your mind to guide and sustain you through every trial of life?

To always sow to the Spirit and never once sow to the flesh is a "big" work. But then, we find our greatest pleasure in doing "big things"! So why not engage in this greatest of contests and apply every ounce of our mental and physical energy to winning the prize which God has set before us! MM

the things done in his body,... whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). We cannot fool God, whatever we sow we shall reap. The divine declaration is "he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

This statement is sufficiently clear and comprehensive that it should be readily understood by every person of average intelligence; yet many times we act as though we thought we could fool God, that we can go along through life thinking, speaking and acting as we please, sowing to the flesh to our heart's desire, and reap the harvest of eternal life in glory just the same.

Walk In Newness of Life

In Romans 6:4, Paul speaks of those who have been buried with Christ by baptism into the death to sin as rising to "walk in newness of life." And in vs. 12 and 13 he defines walking in "newness of life." "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." If we are to keep ourselves growing into holiness we must be alert to keep ourselves away from the old life, the things we would have done before God's saving knowledge invaded our lives.

And this surrender to the principles of the "new and living way" cannot be accomplished for the whole year in advance, as a year of growth all wrapped up in one neat package. The death to sin is a time consuming process. Paul also speaks of being renewed; there is need of being made new again and again. The greatest single

(Continued on page 26)

"By his faith he is speaking to us still"—Heb. 11 : 4, Moffatt.

Words for the Living

Excerpts from the sermons, talks and writings
of Rev. L. T. Nichols (1844-1912).

A man has an old dog, lame, blind in one eye, and can't see out of the other. Another man comes along with a fine span of horses, nickel-plated harnesses, and a fine carriage. He tells the man that he will trade them for his old dog.

The man refuses. "Oh, no," he says, "that old dog is a faithful old dog. I won't trade him; you can keep your fine span of horses and carriage."

The other man says, "I'll trade, and give you a thousand dollars besides."

"No," he says, "I will not trade."

Now this life is the old dog; eternal life is the fine horses and carriage. And you would rather have the old dog that is good for nothing? That is what you say by your actions. That is why so few will be saved.



How much is "eternity"?

Suppose Adam were here, he would be only about six thousand years old now, only a second compared to eternity. And suppose he had commenced counting 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, when he was born six thousand years ago, and had counted at the rate of one a second for all those years until now—he would still have to count another 25,000 years to finish counting a trillion!

Do you realize what God is offering when He says, I will give you eternity?

I could have prospered when I was young. There was a time when I was making \$100 some days; I averaged \$25 a day; but I left it all for the work of the Lord. The company offered to increase my wages if I would stay with them. I had had good success, and they offered me a large salary, and a commission besides. But I saw I could not carry on that work and do my duty to God. The question was, Which would pay more? What would a life in the kingdom be worth? I could read in the Word of God that it would be exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think.

I thought to myself, I don't want your paltry wages.



As I look around and see the wickedness, it makes me long for the time when the Mighty Potentate shall rule in righteousness; when the earth will no more groan under the tyranny of evil; when nothing but blessing will flow to all mankind. If it were a promise that some man had manufactured, it would come to naught; but seeing it is from the great and mighty God, we know it is sure. It seems too good for us poor mortals.



Never say, "I'm glad I'm not the only one in the wrong." Hope that you are.

(Continued from page 25)

factor in the Christian's life is *change*. With each new day the new life must begin. We cannot merit eternal life on the virtue of what we did last year, last month, last week, or yesterday. It is what we do today that counts. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." If this change has taken place in our lives we shall have developed new interests, new concerns for others, a changed attitude toward life, and we will cultivate that new growth diligently.

The Psalmist said, "The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver." No matter what is brought out of the word of truth, whether for or against us, it must be better, better to us than silver or gold; it must be "more than our necessary food." If our keen love of life is developed to this point, we will keep ourselves "out where the new begins" until old things have passed completely away and all things have become new.

O blissful thought, if we now complete this master assignment, we shall ultimately be privileged to share the bliss of that bright new day when Christ dwells with us, and the tabernacle of God is with men. We have the unequivocal promise of the great Jehovah Himself: "Behold, I make all things new,...these words are true and faithful." MM

Twilight

(Continued from page 22)

mused Simon. A self-deceived man. He was not always thus, but he has mixed himself among the people. Now the damage is done. "If I offend him by cutting him off, we are at his mercy. We can only hope for the best and do what we can to check his rash course."

Heavy of heart, he descended to his room. MM

(Next Issue: *The Coming of Lykas*)

Fresh as Dew

Every word of God which comes to us is as the dew of life sent from the Lord.

I have been talking with various people but all I meet are hard heads—so much so that even my own head cannot imagine why anyone thinks that way. I have arrived at the conclusion that coming to the understanding of God's Truth is a gift of God. It is His expression of exceeding favour and only a few receive it. Many young, intelligent people who hold doctors' titles think literally like children. They are ready to believe anything, no matter how absurd if only it stands on the authority of a large church. Great is the darkness of this world.

Poland

R. & E. K.

Thoughts for the New Year

We are about to cross the threshold of another year, and rejoice in remembering our Savior's birth. We can see God's bounteous hand as we look back over the days. What blessings and goodness have been bestowed upon us! For all we offer unto Him praise and thanksgiving.

What a glorious hope is set before us in Him, as we strive to follow in His steps and become like Him. Wherever God wanted Him to go, He went obediently, always doing His Father's will. So we, like Him, must die to sin, and live unto righteousness and holiness. May we step into the New Year determined to attain unto the full measure of the stature of Christ, that when He shall appear, we may be like Him.

May we look forward to the time just ahead, when He shall come again and the angels' song at His birth be fulfilled; when there will be peace on earth and goodwill among men; and to the great and blessed time of rejoicing when "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Australia

A. & J. B.

Still Climbing!

There have been many events lately—mostly tragic, but some good. I think with each happening how much closer we are to the appointed time. Every day it seems that more and more the Bible prophecies for the last days are being fulfilled. And, yet, it seems more and more people are getting further and further from the true way and God. Some people will exclaim when a tragedy happens that perhaps God is trying to tell those people something. But they don't stop to think that God might be trying to tell *them* something.

I hope someday I will be allowed the privilege of meeting Elijah, if only I can make myself worthy! The road up the mountain has many rocks and pebbles to stumble over. The climb is hard and at times very trying, but I must keep climbing. I do not want to stop now. All worthwhile goals in life are not without effort. The prize is too great not to keep struggling for it.

Maine

R. D.

Still Fighting the Battle

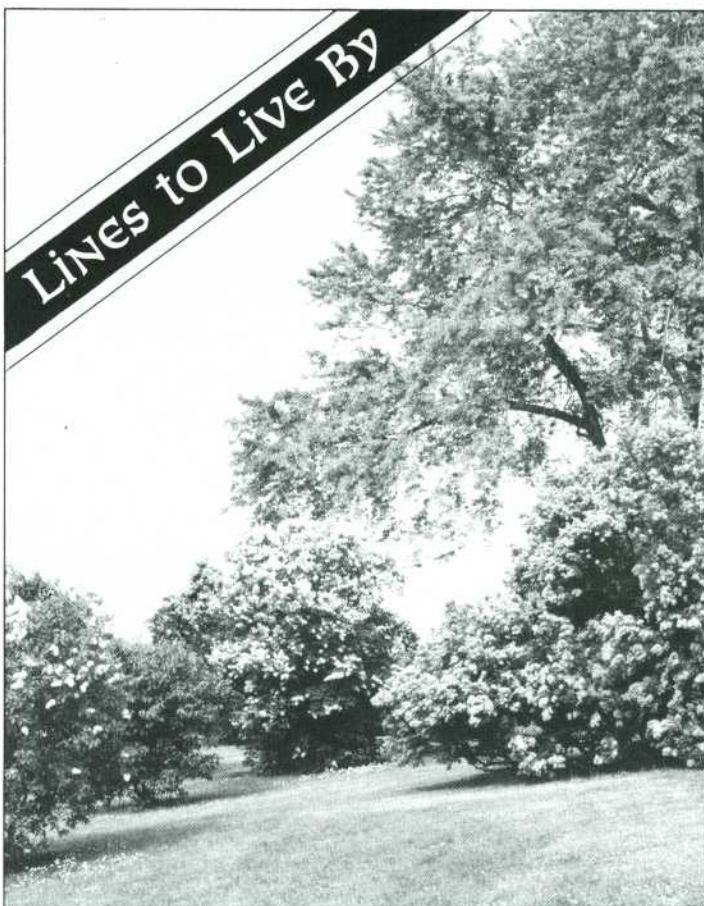
I am very thankful to God and the Megiddo Church, for knowing the way that leads to Life, but the battle is not over yet. If it were not for the knowledge of God and of the return of our Lord, I do not know what we would have to live for. I don't know why a person would want to pursue the fleeting things of this world.

We are a privileged people, and God is giving us a little more time to get ready. We are living at the close of this old year. We don't know, this may be the last year of man's rule. It is only God that knows; but we do know that we are nearing the time when God's will shall be done on earth as it is done in Heaven.

It does not seem too hard to conquer the big sins; it is not hard to love our neighbor as ourselves, but it is the little sins, our every thought, act and word of every day, every hour, and every minute, that we have to watch.

Newfoundland

D. T.



*The New year lies before you
Like a spotless track of snow;
Be careful how you tread it—
For every mark will show.*

Resolved, this New Year, to put
“first things first.”

*Let us renew our trust in God and
go forward without fear, with
hearts full of courage.*

An idle mind is the Devil's
workshop.

*Have you included Him in your
plans? Has He included you in
His plans?*

Not an Event but a Life

Everyone wants commendation. Almost everyone deserves commendation in something. But the big thing as far as a Christian is concerned is not any single act or event but the whole. A Christian life must be just that—a life. It takes consistent, day to day living from the beginning to the end to be truly Christlike.

What else can we conclude from Jesus' all-encompassing demand: “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”? (Mark 12:30). Can we achieve this level of dedication by giving anything less than our whole life?

What is the Christian life? From Paul's own account of his personal experience we may glean the following: he was in every respect subject to the power of God (II Cor. 12:9); patient in all circumstances (II Cor. 12:12); diligent in helping others (II Cor. 12:13); willing to give, though unappreciated (II Cor. 12:15). And his final admonition summarizes the whole: “Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you” (II Cor. 13:11).

Ready to Go, Ready to Stay

A distinguishing quality of a person of faith is that he has a stronger attachment to God than to his environment; in other words, he finds his reason for living in God rather than in his surroundings. For this reason, he is always “ready”—for whatever; ready to go, ready to stay.

This quality was outstanding in Abraham, and may be one of the chief reasons he came to be known as the father of the faithful. According to the writer of Hebrews, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go” (Heb. 11:8, RSV). He did not know *where*, but he knew *Who*, and so he went. This implicit sense of trust in God allowed him to be at home anywhere God led him, even on unfamiliar ground.

With this kind of readiness for the unknown, fear dissolves and the terrors that we thought were lurking beneath the surface vanish away.

As Christians, we are not permanent residents here. Our lives are to be lived with the mobility of tent-dwellers. Faced by afflictions, uncertainties and frustrations, we know that if we are faithful to our duties now we have a guaranteed share in the stability of that one kingdom that will endure

forever, the coming Kingdom of Christ. Ever on the move until we arrive there, we can ride out any storm of life without losing the larger perspective. Wherever we are in the interim, we are at home. We see this world for what it is: a place of temporary residence, a stopover, a depot, as it were. We are able to love and enjoy it appropriately, as God’s provision for our needs, yet never being possessed or captivated by it in the process. And whether it be pleasant, or if it seem unstable and not to our liking, we can relate to it most wisely, knowing that we have in the world to come a home that will be surpassingly wonderful, magnificent, and enduring.

God wants us to appreciate what He has given us in this world; but our real treasures are stored in a more permanent place. Always in our thinking we are “on the way.” We have no time to become too involved in or concerned with the status quo. What keeps us moving on? It is the persistent vision of the Kingdom of God. We have caught a glimpse of its beauties; we have heard about its wonders; whatever happens here matters not at all if only we can someday *be there!*

For this reason we are agreeable with whatever God’s plan may hold for us now—ready to go, ready to stay, but at all times **READY**. MM