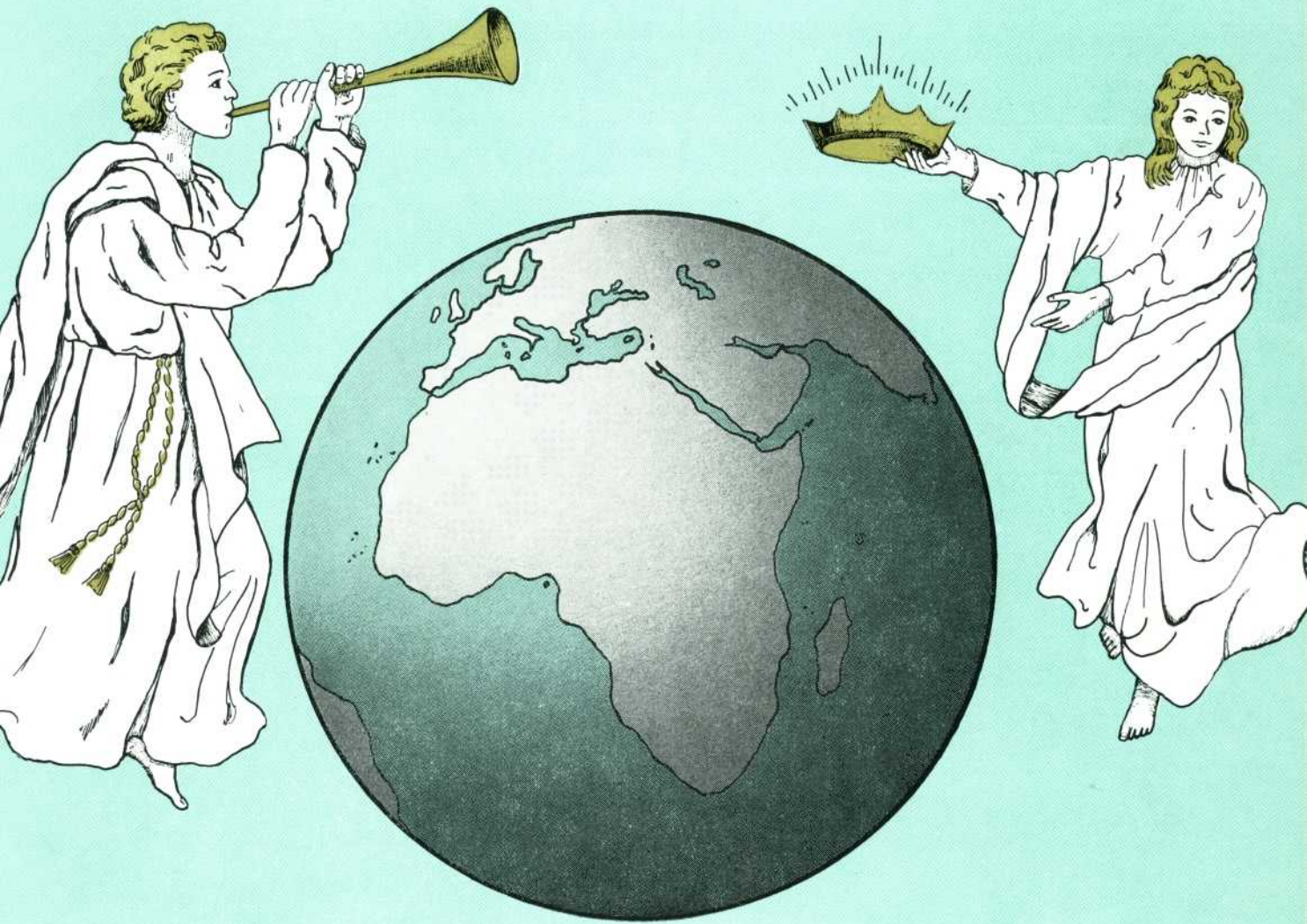


Megiddo Message



Peace on Earth

Megiddo Message

Vol. 57, No. 4

APRIL, 1970

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF
THE MEGIDDO MISSION CHURCH
L. T. NICHOLS, *Founder*
KENNETH E. FLOWERDAY, *Editor*

A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

- Strengthen your faith in the Bible
- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God
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PUBLISHED monthly by the
MEGIDDO MISSION CHURCH, 481 Thurston Road
Rochester, N. Y. 14619

● SUBSCRIPTION RATES: One year, \$2.00; six months, \$1.00. Make checks or Money Orders for all literature payable to the Megiddo Mission Church. Please notify promptly of any change of address. Foreign subscribers, please make all payments by international money order, available at most banks and post offices.

Second Class Postage paid at Rochester, New York.

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Editorially Speaking . . .

Facing the New Year

NEW YEAR'S Day is a solemn time. It is like facing on Monday morning the problems and responsibilities of a week—multiplied fifty-two times. What I mean is this: Each Monday morning, the whole week's work lies ahead, and you feel a certain amount of apprehension as to how much will be done, and how smoothly all will progress. The same is true at the beginning of the New Year, only instead of one week's work, responsibilities, frustrations and apprehensions, there are fifty-two.

Jesus gave us a solution to this problem. He said, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow" (Matt. 6:34). The translation "take no thought" is misleading. We *are* to take thought for the morrow and all tomorrows. Consider these words: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise."

When Jesus said "take no thought," what He meant was "do not be anxious about tomorrow." There is a vast difference between preparing for the morrow and being apprehensive about it. Jesus was not condemning our planning for tomorrow; He was speaking about anxious care for tomorrow.

Jesus said further that "the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." What did He mean? Will tomorrow's problems solve themselves? No.

The last sentence in the verse explains what Jesus meant: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." He was saying in effect, "Why worry beyond today and burden yourself with the misfortunes of two days?" By "evil" He meant misfortune.

Each day as it comes to us this year will have its share of misfortune and adversity. Today has it. Tomorrow will have it. But each day will have only the measure of adversity which God has allotted for our development—no more. Has He not promised: "No temptation has come your way that is too hard for flesh and blood to bear. But God can be trusted not to allow you to suffer any temptation beyond your powers of endurance. He will see to it that every temptation has a way out, so that it will never be impossible for you to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13, Phillips). Ours is the blessed assurance that "as thy days, so shall thy strength be." God knows how much we can endure (Deut. 33:25). When we burden ourselves today with worries and anxious concern for the New Year, we are taking upon ourselves more than God asks us to bear; we are adding tomorrow's problems to today's 364 times! And if it proves too much for us, we ourselves are to blame.

We repeat Jesus' words: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." God in His infinite wisdom has apportioned to each day only those things which we can bear in that day. We should plan, but then lay our plans on the shelf and wait for tomorrow's trials to challenge them or for tomorrow's strength to bear up under the strain of that challenge. In other words, live one day at a time. ●●



"Peace On Earth...

Good Will to Men"

We shall know each other better
when the world-wide peace has come:
Many voices shall be loosened
that have heretofore been dumb;
Many backs in age-long servitude
shall throw off the heavy load;
Many feet toil-worn and bleeding
shall be shown the freedom road;
And the soul itself in bondage
Shall rejoice to find the way
For the dawn of truth must ever
usher in a righteous day.

We shall know each other better
when we know the "Prince of Peace,"
And He leads us out of warfare
to a plane where strife shall cease;
Where we hold a common viewpoint
and a common brotherhood,
And the sword of selfish struggle
turns to plow each other's good;
For the "peace that passeth knowledge"
shall envelop all mankind,
Once the Prince has swept the lust-love
from the kingdom of the mind.

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

LONG AGES ago the angels sang of peace on earth, good will toward men. But does our world today, with all its poverty, greed and warfare, its crime, immorality and vice, answer to the beautiful ideal which angelic hosts described to the shepherds on that night when Jesus was born? God forbid!

Yet, in the heavens the sun is shining; the rain falls upon the earth, and the balmy breezes sweep across the land; stately mountains rise serenely above green landscapes, and clear, peaceful waters reflect the blue sky. All the elements of nature breathe of peace.

What is the source of the tremendous upheaval, the discord and unrest among men? It lies in man's refusal to co-operate with God. Men are, as the Scriptures predicted they would be, "utterly self-centered, greedy for money, full of big words, . . . proud and contemptuous, without any regard for what their parents taught them, . . . utterly lacking in gratitude, purity and normal human affections, . . . men of unscrupulous speech and having no control of themselves, . . . passionate and unprincipled, treacherous, self-willed and conceited, loving all the time what gives them pleasure instead of loving God" (II Tim. 3:1—4, Phillips). As long as such a conglomeration of evils war in the human breast, there certainly cannot be peace on earth or good will toward men.

"None of us liveth to himself," said the apostle Paul. And how true are his words! So involved has society become in this warfare of the elements of human nature that men's hearts are "failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." And the powers of the political heavens are shaken.

But it is vain to weep over the state of the world, the war and the strife among nations. These traits that make for worldwide unhappiness and misery rest within our own *individual* hearts. "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?" wrote the prophet Ezekiel (18:31).

During this present phase of the plan of salvation God is selecting out of the masses of humanity men and women willing to make themselves worthy of living with Christ in that approaching Age of peace, when moral law shall be enforced. We, as Christians, are ambassadors of that good time coming, even as was our Lord and Saviour in the days when He walked among men. "Ye are the light of the world," said Christ. And His earnest entreaty of His followers was, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works,

and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Peace on earth, good will toward men. This is our message to the world—a message of hope and cheer in these troublous times. We can preach it in a thousand seemingly insignificant ways. We can preach it by practicing the Golden Rule. We can preach it on every hand as we daily take up our cross. We can preach it by accepting criticism kindly and profiting thereby, living the life of a wholehearted, dedicated disciple of Christ. We can preach it by comforting words and cheering smiles, radiating from a soul overflowing with kindness. Our life can be as the well by the roadside, where weary travelers stop to drink, and as the shade of the tree whose branches, laden with fruit of a pure and wholesome life, extend over all that pass beneath.

As a bright surface will reflect the sun, so we may reflect the light of that brighter Day so soon to dawn. Peace on earth *is* coming, and we must live as though we really believed it by making peace with God and, as far as possible, with other men, in our own lives now. Kind, thoughtful, helpful deeds are never lost. Like the ripples from pebbles dropped into the water, they spread on and on and on.

We, as ambassadors for Christ, are not only responsible for ourselves, but there is always the matter of our example to consider. How does our life touch upon that of our brother? Does the effect of our example move him toward the swamps of transgression, or lift him toward the heights of holiness?

A hasty tongue, an inconsiderate act—these are the causes for many a secret heartache. But how much happiness is wafted with the kind and thoughtful and inspiring word!

There are times when we face the necessity for restoring a brother "overtaken in a fault," one crippled in his moral and spiritual going, the victim of his broken vows. It becomes our responsibility to rebuke him, but in the spirit of meekness, with the kindness prompted by the realization that often we ourselves need to be restored.

The essence of true peace lies not in conciliation but in strength, in our power of endurance, our purity, our self-renunciation. Selfish is that motive that prompts us to seek peace without giving peace, to seek to be consoled instead of consoling, understood instead of understanding. It is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned. It is in making peace that we find the greatest joy and happiness.

Jesus said, "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward."

Such principles as these are the foundation for *peace on earth, good will toward men.* ●●

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

The Man Made

In God's Image

PRAYER

Our heavenly Father, Thou whose resources are greater than we may imagine, and whose willingness to share those resources with us causes us to wonder and to rejoice, we thank Thee for the happiness of life; for the sorrows and disappointments, too, when they teach us to trust in Thee instead of in ourselves. We are thankful for this land of our habitation, for the homes in which we live, for our families and Christian friends which make our lives so rich and meaningful.

We thank Thee for all things beautiful, and true, and good, which Thou hast made, and art always making. We honor Thee as Creator of the earth and everything upon it, but more importantly we rejoice to know that Thy interest in creating still continues, that that interest is not confined to inanimate things such as earth and sky, but it is Thy determination to make one new man in Thine own image and likeness, a church-dimensioned man, which when completed will be very good.

Help us, Father, to be all absorbed with our sublime purpose of creating ourselves into new creatures. May our effort be such that the old life of the flesh will be cleansed completely away, and only the holy traits of the new man remain. Inspire us to become a part of Thy workmanship created in righteousness and true holiness. Alert us that Thou art a God of knowledge and that by Thee actions and actions alone are weighed. We cannot fool Thee. Thou hast ordained that to be a part of Thy new creation we must practice doing works of righteousness, banishing all evil from our lives now. May we have the wisdom to engage in that greatest of all undertakings.

Thou art not a man that Thou shouldest err, a finite human being to plan and then fail in Thy plans. Known unto Thee are all Thy works from the beginning of creation. Thy plan for a new world and a new world of men dates back to the very time when the blueprint for the earth was drawn, and one day all the things planned will become a reality.

Father, hasten the day when Thy great project for the earth will be inaugurated by the return of Thy dear Son to earth as supreme Ruler and King. In His worthy name we pray. Amen.

APRIL, 1970

DISCOURSE

TO UNDERSTAND the man made in God's image, we need to understand man, men, mankind. What is man? Where did he come from?

James Ussher, a seventeenth century Irish archbishop, dated the creation of man precisely in the year 4004 B. C.

This was before the days when men dared to question the literal interpretation of the Biblical account of creation. The documented history of man as recorded by a Greek historian dated back to 700 B. C., and dim tradition of the Trojan War was thought to be about 1200 B. C. In comparison with these bits of "ancient" history, the dating of creation at 4004 B. C. did not seem too unreasonable.

However, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, archaeologists began to change the concepts of human civilization. Even as far back as 1669 a Danish scientist pointed out that lower strata of rock had to be older than the upper strata, and therefore petrified remnants of once living things buried deep had to be immensely older than those of a higher level of strata. But believers in the literal words of the Bible maintained that the fossils resembled once-living organisms only through accident, or that they were created deceitfully by the Devil.

Further studies of fossil records enabled paleontologists to divide the history of the earth into a series of eras, but Bible believers remained adamant. One outspoken Englishman tried to wriggle out of the dilemma by suggesting that the earth had been created by God complete with fossils to test man's faith. But to most people, the suggestion that God would play juvenile tricks on mankind seemed more blasphemous than anything science had suggested.

Exhaustive studies of fossil remains and carbon deposits of living things now lead scientists to believe that life may have originated some 2 billion years ago.

What Is Man?

And what of man? Historians are continually pushing the date backward. Discoveries of human

work and human remains have altered man's faulty concepts of history.

One by one earlier civilizations were uncovered—Hittite, Minoan, Indus, and so on—civilizations so comparatively advanced at such early ages that Hebrew civilization began to look “modern.” What we call civilization began perhaps around 6000 B. C., and man's earliest cities were at least several thousand years older.

In 1868 workmen excavating in France uncovered skeletons of five human beings, called Cro-Magnon men, unquestionably *Homo sapiens*, up to 35,000 or 40,000 years old. Anthropologists thus began to trace the beginnings of man further and further into the past. There was only one uncertainty: dating methods.

But in 1946 a startling technique was developed. The cosmic ray bombardment of the atmosphere produces neutrons. Nitrogen in the atmosphere reacts with these neutrons, producing radioactive carbon 14. These carbon 14 atoms, a component of carbon dioxide, are breathed in by animals and human beings and absorbed by plants in their growing process. In both animals and plants the ratio of carbon 14 to ordinary carbon is the same.

Like all radioactive substances, carbon 14 breaks down at a fixed rate, half of it disintegrating in 5300 years. Half of the remainder disappears in another 5300 years, and so on.

During life, the disintegrating carbon 14 is constantly replaced. After death the carbon 14 in the remains continues to disintegrate but is no longer renewed. Consequently the time that has elapsed since death can be measured by determining how much carbon 14 is still present in proportion to the ordinary carbon, which does not disintegrate.*

The accuracy of this method has been verified for objects up to 30,000 years old. Dating by other radioactive substances is more accurate for older specimens.

Cro-Magnon man was not the most ancient human life discovered. In recent years the so-called Neanderthal man, Heidelberg man, Java man and Peking man have been uncovered and dated between 200,000 and 900,000 years old.

In 1959 in eastern Africa was discovered the remains of a man (*Zinjanthropus*) whose age, dated by isotope data, is no less than 1,750,000 years. In 1965 even older relics were uncovered in Kenya, including an upper jaw of a primitive man perhaps 3 million years old.†

Such information is of special interest to the student of Scripture, supporting and reinforcing true Bible facts. A literal creation 6000 years ago? Impossible!!!

Who, then, is the man of Genesis that is made in

God's image? He is no more literal than the other symbols which we have studied, but is a figurative illustration of the moral development and ultimate glorification of the true Church of God.

Are Mortals In God's Image?

Can the mortal, corruptible human being possibly be created in the image of God?

Early in the Biblical record of history is a note of God's displeasure with mankind: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). Is the natural man, then, “very good” as God defines goodness?

The absurdity of such a theory is obvious, as a few comparisons between the natural man and God Almighty will demonstrate.

First let us look at the physical likeness. Which is in the express image of his Maker—the giant or the dwarf? And consider this: If flesh and blood cannot inherit even the earth's Kingdom of God, how could flesh and blood be the likeness of God Almighty? Here is another impossibility.

Differences in human intellects are also tremendous, and if we compare the best of these with the Divine Mind in which are “hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3)—there is simply no comparison. Human intellect varies all the way from the mental giants such as Einstein to the idiot who is incapable of coherent thought. Which is in the image of God?

Also in the realm of the physical unlikeness of man and God, we should observe that man is afflicted with all manner of disease, heart disease and cancer accounting for the major portion of all deaths. Is God Almighty—Creator and Sustainer of the universe—beset with such infirmity, or the possibility of it? Can the afflicted man be a specimen of His “very good” creation?

Compare also the life-span of man with that of God. Man's days are “as the grass,” as the “vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jas. 4:14). Man is a creature of the moment, fittingly likened to dust, a shadow, a fading flower—the most perishable and fleeting of symbols. God, on the other hand, is a Being who inhabits eternity (Isa. 57:15), to whom a thousand years are as but a watch in the night (Ps. 90:4).

Man is subject to fatigue. God “fainteth not, neither is weary” (Isa. 40:28).

Let us compare the human and divine on a moral level. God is a God of love, compassion, graciousness (I John 4:8—16). God is holy: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts” (Isa. 6:3). He is perfect in righteousness, in holiness, in justice. How can morally degenerate man—who robs, assaults and murders his fellowman in his greed, hatred and love of money—even begin to compare with such a God?

* *The National Geographic Magazine*, Dec., 1955, pp. 785—786.

† Scientific data from “*The New Intelligent Man's Guide to Science*” by Isaac Asimov, 1935, pp. 684—726.

And so we might continue *ad infinitum*. However, is not this sufficient for us to conclude that the natural man is not in the image of God?

Hope—through Change

A survey of the promises of Scripture makes doubly apparent the fact that man is not in the image of God. There we find oft repeated assurances to the faithful of a future time when men—all men—shall at last be made, created, fashioned, *changed* into God's image. Men shall be made equal unto the angels, to die no more (Luke 20:35, 36); changed from corruption to incorruption, from mortality to immortality (I Cor. 15:53); changed from a vile, mortal body and fashioned "like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20, 21). Such a change would be neither possible nor necessary if man in his present state were in the image of God.

Amid all the difficulties of this mortal existence, a future change into the image of God was David's sustaining hope. He wrote, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15).

Paul expressed the same hope, the realization of which he expected at the Second Advent of Christ: it would be the "crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:8). With quickened hope and living faith he could exult, "As we have born the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (I Cor. 15:49). If we are to bear the "image of the heavenly" in the future, we assuredly are not bearing it now.

The beloved John cherished this same sublime hope of a future change into the divine image, a change from mortality to immortality, for he said, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him" (I John 3:2).

If the promises of Scripture are reliable and if the hopes of such men as David, Paul and John were not a delusion, then it is certain that the reward to be bestowed at Christ's return is the only means by which man can ever be made into the image of God.

We have compared the human nature with the divine, and examined Scripture promises pertaining to a future change to immortality to show that the natural man is not now in the image of God. Now we shall delve deeper into the Book to determine who is this man, and what is the exact process—mental and moral—by which man in this present day of salvation is being fashioned into the image of his Maker.

Of Whom Is This Man Composed?

Genesis 1:26 is the text upon which the religious world have constructed the false premise that all

men are made in the image of God. Let us read the text analytically. "And God said"—the thought to follow is important, for God is speaking. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion." Immediately the man becomes plural. "Man" is made; dominion is given to "them." This at once eliminates the natural man from the focus of discussion and directs our attention to a multitudinous body, many in one, "them."

Colossians 1:18 gives clear definition to this "them." "He [Christ] is the head of the body, the church"—many members, but one body. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Rom. 12:5). Christ is the Head of the man made in God's image, and the Church forms the body of this corporate man. Paul speaks again of this special body of Christ in I Cor. 12:20, 27: "But now are they many members, yet but one body. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

With the Almighty there is no social or racial discrimination. Members of the true Church are selected from every nation, with only one basis for selection: character. They must fear God and work righteousness (Acts 10:34, 35). That Gentiles ("the nations at large as distinguished from the Jews," Webster) as well as Jews enter into the composition of the man made in God's image, we find by reading Eph. 2:14, 15. Weymouth's translation makes the passage more comprehensible: "He is our peace—He who has made Jew and Gentile one, and . . . has broken down the hostile dividing wall, by setting aside the Law with its commandments, . . . His design was to unite the two sections of humanity in Himself so as to form one new man, thus effecting peace, and to reconcile Jew and Gentile in one body to God." By abolishing the Mosaic Law, Christ broke down "the hostile dividing wall" which separated Jew and Gentile believers, making it possible for all to be unified members of His body, by compliance with the law of Faith.

How Is This Man Developed?

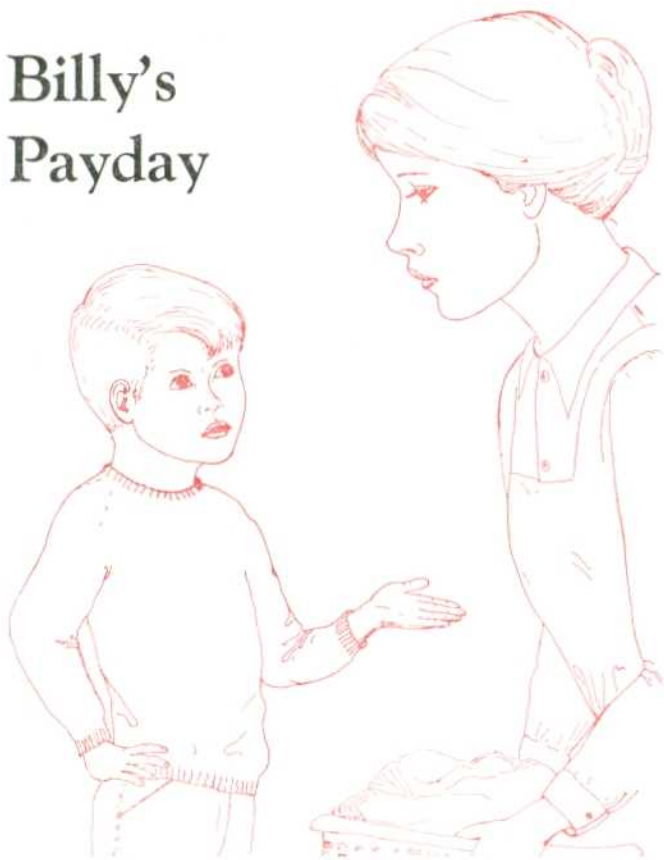
Men and women, when selected from the raw material of mankind as prospective members of the man made in the image of God, possess the ordinary weaknesses to which flesh is heir. By nature they are not "very good."

Let us recall that the text states, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." A superior quality, in fact, the superlative in mental, moral and physical excellence, is implied: "after our likeness."

Men and women whose aspiration is to be a part of the man made in God's image must subject themselves to a program of rigorous development. Three steps are required.

(Continued on page 24)

Billy's Payday



BILLY! Mother called. "Billy, come here, dear!"

Billy frowned and got up from the ground where he was playing in the sand. "Oh, all right!" he said crossly. "I'll come."

"I wonder if you would run to the store for me and get a bottle of milk, Billy," Mother said when he came inside the kitchen.

"Do I *have* to?" he asked.

Mother looked surprised. "Well—no. I suppose you don't *have* to."

Billy thought for a minute. "If I go, will you pay me for it?"

Mother looked even more surprised. "Well, all right, Billy. I'll give you a nickel if you will get the milk."

So Billy ran to the store and got the milk. As soon as Daddy came home, he would get his nickel.

Soon Mother called him again. "Would you watch the baby while I go out and hang up the washing?" she asked him.

"Will you pay me?" he asked. "When Daddy gets home?"

Mother frowned and looked as if she would say no. But she was in a hurry, and she was tired. "All right, Billy. I'll give you ten cents."

So Billy watched the baby.

In the afternoon, after Mother had done all of her baking, she called Billy again.

"I have to hurry to get supper for you and Daddy. Would you dry the dishes for me?"

"Will you give me fifteen cents when Daddy comes home?" asked Billy.

Mother looked tired. "All right," she agreed.

So Billy wiped the dishes. And soon Daddy came home and they ate supper.

After supper Billy went to Daddy and showed him a slip of paper. "You owe me this much," he told Daddy, and explained all of the errands he had done for Mother.

Daddy looked at the list and then at Billy. "All right, Billy," Daddy said and gave Billy the thirty cents for his day's work.

"Now tell me something, Billy," Daddy said. "When you got the milk, whom did you get it for? Who drank it?"

"Why—me," Billy said.

"And when Mother hung up the clothes, whose clothes did she hang up?"

"Why—mine," Billy said, and he began to feel a little ashamed.

"And when you helped with the baking dishes, whom were you really helping? Who ate part of the pie? Who ate two cookies?"

Billy looked at the floor. "Me," he said softly.

"Did you pay Mother for all this?" Daddy asked.

Billy shook his head slowly. "No." And he gave Daddy back the thirty cents. "I guess I pay Mother by helping out when I can. So she really doesn't owe me anything. I owe her a lot!"

Daddy drew Billy up on his knee and gave him a big squeeze. "You see," said Daddy, "you help Mother and Mother helps you. That's the way God planned families to be."

Does *your* mother owe *you* anything? ●●



Something *each* day—a smile;

It is not much to give,
And the little gifts of life

Make sweet the days we live.

The world has weary hearts

That we can bless and cheer,

And a smile for every day

Makes sunshine through the year.

Something *each* day—a word;

We cannot know its power,
It grows in fruitfulness

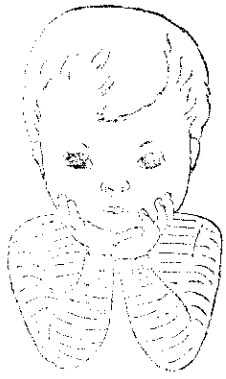
As grows the gentle flower.

It brings the sweetest peace

Where all is dark and drear!

For a *kind* word *every* day

Makes pleasant all the *year*!



I'm thinking

COLUMBUS, homeward bound after he had discovered the new world, was overtaken by a terrible storm. He suffered indescribable agony, not because he feared to lose his life or the lives of his crew, but he was afraid that his magnificent discovery of a new world would all go down irrecoverably into the abyss, and that, too, not far from land. He therefore hurriedly committed to the deep entries of his discovery in sealed bottles, in the hope that someday they might reach land. He had made a splendid record, and he didn't want it to be lost.

I have been wondering whether many of us care to have our record of this past year preserved. I believe many of us would be exceedingly glad to lose much of our record. Many things we have said and done have not been right.

A German youth once dreamed he saw a long procession of men and women passing by his window. Looking more closely, he was startled to find that all were companions of his childhood. They were all respectable and had done very well in life. He himself was old, infirm, diseased; his whole life had been wasted and wrecked. In agony of despair he cried out, "O God, give me back my youth!" and in his terror he awoke—it was only a dream! He was still young, his life was yet before

him, and he resolved to live that life better than he had commenced it.

Thankful I am that you boys and girls are still young, with your life work still before you.

It is not too late to correct your mistakes and begin your lives on right lines—lines of truth and righteousness.

Do not continue sowing seeds that will provide you future misery. Tom Hood wrote in his poem of regret:

And yet it never was on my soul
To play so ill a part;
But evil is wrought by want of thought,
As well as by want of heart.

I dare say many of the undesirable things you have said and done during the year that is almost gone have been done in the same way. God will forgive you of these mistakes, if during the coming year you show that you will not do them again.

But you also have many things that you would be glad to have preserved—the kindnesses shown, loving words spoken, helpful deeds done, little courtesies paid, helpful words read. All these good things are a joy to us. When you have looked back and made notes of the good things you have done, ask yourself whether a whole year and a whole life of such deeds would not be worth striving for.

You should review your golden hours not to glory in them but to project them all into next year as a standard for all your hours.

Titus, a heathen Roman Emperor in the time of Paul, used to examine himself every day as to what he had accomplished. If a day slipped by without his having redressed some wrong, or without doing some good thing, he used to say to his courtiers, "Alas! I have lost a day."

Whatever you see, or hear, see to it that you get *all the good* out of it that is possible, and when you see opportunities for usefulness, *never hesitate* to use them. ●●

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Timely Topics

WE ARE about to welcome another Abib season—and more—a new era!

As we refresh our minds on the tremendous accomplishments and glorious destiny of our Saviour, we look forward with greater expectation than ever before to His return. He is coming, Christ Jesus, our Lord and our King. The promise is real. It is firm. It is as certain as the arrival of the spring. *Christ will come.*

But as we rejoice in His triumph, past and future, we cannot evade the reality of the present. We live in a world of tumult. We observe the month Abib in a world torn by war, racial strife, unprecedented crime and lawlessness, drugs and their menace, pornography on a scale that would make the people of the days of Sodom and Gomorrah blush, a student rebellion that threatens the very foundations of the educational process, and in the midst of dress rehearsals for revolution and the overthrow of established governments.

What of the angels' message nearly 2000 years ago to the shepherds outside Bethlehem: "Peace on earth, good will toward men." What is wrong? Has the plan of God failed? Were the angels mistaken?

Many of our modern writers think so! In the words of Billy Graham the Evangelist, "Modern literature is full of despair and pessimism. As the modern man looks at the world on his television screen or in his newspapers, he sees little to cheer about. To millions of our young people life has little meaning or purpose. Ours is an age of paradox. While the world talks about peace, it prepares for the opposite. We are contradicting ourselves at every turn. War preparations, unparalleled in world history, are now going on. At the present moment more than forty little wars are being fought from the plains of Angola to the mountains of Colombia."

Many people unfamiliar with the plan of God are confused, perplexed, bewildered. It seems that the message of the angels was only an illusion, a dream, a mirage.

But no. The plan of God has not failed. The answers lies in a careful study of the Scriptures. The angels *did* announce "Peace on earth," but that peace was not to be a reality at Jesus' first coming. Nor would the world find peace as a result of its own efforts during the years between His ascension and His return; for, said Jesus of this time, "ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars" (Matt. 24:6).

And even at the second advent, when Christ arrives as the Prince of Peace, the world will not

willingly submit to His righteous rule. All nations shall gather against Jerusalem, His chosen metropolis, to battle (Zech. 14:2, 3), to resist His authority. Forcefully—and to their own destruction—many shall reject his terms of peace. "These shall make war with the Lamb," but they shall not prevail against Him—"the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev. 17:14).

But after the wicked and rebellious element has been subdued, there will be peace. The Bible abounds with promises:

"They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2:4).

"And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isa. 32:17, 18).

"In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth" (Ps. 72:7).

"I will also make thine officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness" (Isa. 60:17).

"Behold, I will bring it [God's city] health and cure, . . . and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth" (Jer. 33:6).

The angels were *not* mistaken.

Jesus Christ *will* bring peace on earth. ●●

In Honor of Our Coming King

You Are Invited

to attend special services and programs at the Megiddo Church in Rochester, New York, in which we will observe the following:

- April 6, 7:** The Bible New Year, Abib 1, beginning at sunset April 6, at which time we will also commemorate the birth of our Saviour.
- April 18:** Abib 13, the evening observance of the Lord's New Passover.
- April 21:** Abib 15, the anniversary of the morning of the resurrection of Christ.
- June 9:** Pentecost, seven weeks after the resurrection.

The principal programs (April 6, 7) will include a religious drama "The Choice," featuring scenes from Christ's ministry; orchestra and chorus selections; and recitations and action numbers by the children. Visitors will be cordially welcomed.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

Master of Men

...and still He teaches



*He comes to us as the Master of Men,
the Son of God
Divinely voiced,
as of old by the lakeside
He came to those
who "knew him not."*

*He speaks to us
the same word:
"Follow thou me!"
and asks of each of us
those tasks which must be done
to fulfill His will.*

*He commands.
And to those who obey Him,
whether they be mighty or humble,*

*He offers
the glorious fellowship of
His sufferings,
His toils,
His conflicts*

*And more--
He offers of His life--
abundant
eternal
ineffable LIFE!*

"Unto You Is Born . . . A Saviour"

IT WAS the birth of a Saviour, Christ the Lord, an event of such supreme importance that God sent His angel to announce the glad tidings to the shepherds watching their flocks in the fields by night. These were his words:

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

Indeed, it was of such importance that the birth of the Messiah had been foretold hundreds of years in advance. What other birth over the ages was announced by an angel and joined with a mighty chorus of angels? Of whom else could the angel say, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest"? To whom else could God entrust a kingdom of which "there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32, 33)?

When was this glorious event? on what day? Many people today recognize the fact that Jesus was not born on December 25. The celebration of the event on this day was not established until several centuries after Christ. The purpose of the December 25 date, according to history, is plain. "December 25th was observed as a specially important festival in honour of the sun god, and the emperor Constantine the Great pursued the deliberate policy of uniting the worship of the sun with that of Christ," writes the historian Oscar Cullman.

"Constantine was not so much a Christian as a conscious syncretist; he strove after a synthesis of Christianity and the valuable elements in paganism. Christianity was the religion he most favoured simply because its organization made it the best able to unite the empire. But Constantine may well have thought that the multifarious religions of the empire could somehow be carried on within the single framework of Christianity. We hear nothing of any deliberate attack on paganism, nor did he renounce paganism until he received baptism on his death-bed. All his life . . . he promoted the worship of the sun. He allowed himself to be represented in two statues as the sun god with shining rays, and permitted the following inscription to be placed on the pedestal: 'To Constantine, who brings light like the sun.' It was certainly Constantine's intention to combine the worship of the sun with the worship of Christ; and that was possible because the sun was itself one of the Christian symbols of Christ."

Christ was not born on December 25. So let us ask, What day was the birth of Christ?

One clue is found in Luke 2:8. "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night." This could not possibly have taken place on December 25. "Since earliest days, it is only in the spring, when the new lambs are being born, that the shepherds of Judæa have ever watched their flocks at night. In December, in Judea, the rains fall, and shepherds are not likely to be out; the sheep are then in corral. It was probably in the spring of the year that Jesus was born." (Roy K. Marshall, *The Star of Bethlehem*. The Morehead Planetarium, 1949, p. 13).

"Meteorologists have made exact recordings of the temperature changes in Hebron. The temperature readings at this spot in the southern part of Judea are representative of climatic conditions that prevail in Bethlehem, which is not far distant, and these readings show the greatest incidence of frost to be in the months of December and January. These same two months also have the greatest rainfall in the year, approximately 6 inches in December and nearly 8 inches in January. According to all existing information, the climate of Palestine has not changed appreciably in the last 2000 years; consequently, modern accurate meteorological observations can be taken as a basis.

"On December 25th, Bethlehem is in the grip of frost, and in Palestine no flocks would have been pastured in the fields in that temperature. This fact is borne out by a remark in the Talmud to the effect that in that neighborhood the flocks were put out to grass in March and brought in again at the beginning of November" (Werner Keller, *The Bible as History*, pp. 343, 344).

This fact brings up another point: A census for the purpose of taxation, such as Mary and Joseph were attending when Jesus was born (Luke 2:1—7), would not have been ordered for a time of year when travel would be the most difficult.

While calendars have varied from one nation to another and changed at various periods of history, one date has not changed, and that is the beginning of God's year. It is plainly stated in Ex. 12:1, 2, "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year unto you." And in Ex. 13:4 the name of the month is given: "This day came ye out in the month Abib." The observance of this date was commanded Israel in Deut. 16:1, "Observe the month Abib."

When is Abib? Literally the "sprout," defined
(Continued on page 25)

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

Jesus Christ

IN OUR study of Earth's brightest star, Jesus Christ, we are nearing the end of an illustrious life—yet not the end, only the end of the beginning. The brightest and the best is yet to be. Received and glorified by the Father and sent back to Earth, He shall stand forever, the highest among faithful earthborns, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings. Ages to come shall laud His supreme accomplishments, and a planet of people yet unborn shall praise His sovereign right.

In our last lesson we surveyed the purpose of His life, the meaning of His role as Messiah, and the significance of His achievements. Finally, we verified His existence by secular and sacred history.

Now we shall see Him in His last hours among men, as we conclude our outline of study:

- VII. Jesus' Last Days
 - A. In the Hands of Sinful Men
 - B. Death
 - C. Resurrection
 - D. Ascension

Before commencing this final study, you may find it helpful to read again the concluding chapters of each of the Gospels. Ponder especially the words of Christ's last sermon to His disciples, recorded in the Gospel of John, chapters 14—16. Notice His earnest concern for His own, His complete resignation to His Father's will, His serenity in the face of a supreme trial, His steadfastness, and His hope. What other mortal has matched His nobility?

And as we see the Son of God scorned by the multitude, condemned, scourged, and crucified, let us lift our eyes above a human viewpoint. Let us try to see the whole ordeal as Jesus saw it—not a voluntary sacrifice for the sins of all humanity, but a final act of obedience in a life of total submission; not a bloody and cruel act of an angry God, but a dastardly deed of an ignorant and hateful multitude, which a just and loving and righteous God could defeat and turn to triumph.

VII. JESUS' LAST DAYS

A. In the Hands of Sinful Men

1. Background of Jewish Hatred. We should recall that at the time of Jesus' ministry Judea and

Syria formed a province ruled by the Roman government under the authority of a Roman governor named Pontius Pilate. Rome permitted the Jews to have their own governing council known as the Sanhedrin, and this council consisted of 71 members who had general control over the internal affairs of the country—religious, as well as civil. The highest office in the Sanhedrin was that of high priest, occupied at this time by Caiaphas. The actual capital of the province was Caesarea; but to the Jews the real capital was Jerusalem, and it was from here that the council governed the people. The council bore full responsibility for the political as well as the spiritual safety of the nation.

From the beginning of His ministry Jesus was at odds with the Jews—and for very good reason: "It was a leading aim of Jesus to teach men that true piety consisted not in forms, but in substance; not in outward observances, but in an inward spirit; not in small details, but in great rules of life. The whole system of Pharisaic piety led to exactly opposite conclusions."* Such was the attitude of the Pharisees, a strong and vocative sect of the Jews; and the Sanhedrin was heavily weighted with Pharisees—here was the source of the plot against Jesus.

a. Early Jewish Hostility. Early in His ministry Jesus was confronted with vigorous opposition. When He taught in their synagogue, the Jews, angered at His words, "thrust him out of the city" (Luke 4:15—30). Had it been within their power to put Him to death at that time, they certainly would have done so. On another occasion they tried to kill Him because He healed a man on the sabbath (John 5:6—16). Still seeking grounds to slay Him, they falsely accused Him of "making himself equal with God" (John 5:18).

But Jewish hostility, however determined, could not interfere until Jesus' mission and work were accomplished. They were powerless against Him because "his hour was not yet come" (John 7:30; 8:20).

Nevertheless, because of their continued harassment, Jesus was forced to avoid Judea and carry on His teaching elsewhere, principally in Galilee. "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for

* *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 855, 856.

he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him" (John 7:1). In Judea the Pharisee-dominated Sanhedrin was the Supreme Court of Justice, with officers of its own who could arrest accused persons and carry out its sentences and decrees; but in Galilee, Jesus was beyond the power of the Sanhedrin.

b. Jesus' Foreknowledge of His Death. Throughout His ministry Jesus had divine foreknowledge of His death and resurrection. Three times He made forthright statements "how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."

We should observe that each time Jesus spoke of His death was a time when the disciples might easily have been carried away with hopes of His establishing a kingdom for Himself at that time.

1) His first such prophecy follows Peter's statement: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16).

2) The second follows the descent from the mount of transfiguration (Matt. 17:22, 23).

3) The third is just before His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matt. 20:18, 19); and the parable foretelling His death follows immediately the entry into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:33—46).

c. Jesus' Attitude Toward Death. Jesus showed no fear of death. He saw it merely as a short interval of sleep, as in the case of Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:52) and Lazarus (John 11:11). Death was only a brief interruption, after which He would rise, ascend to His Father, and be glorified in His Father's presence. "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame," knowing that in due time He would be rewarded.

2. The Plot against Jesus begins. Had Jesus remained in Galilee where He had sought refuge from the Jews, His ministry might have been prolonged. But that was not the divine plan. Word came to Him from Bethany that Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, was sick. In spite of the threat to His life, Jesus decided to return to Judea. With the words, "Lazarus, come forth," Lazarus came forth from the dead. The news spread quickly to the Pharisees, who hastily called a meeting of the council, and the plot against Jesus was on.

a. Why the council feared Jesus. There were several reasons why the council feared Jesus.

They feared that if He were let alone, all would believe "and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation" (John 11:47, 48). His miracles had already caused many of the Jews to believe. Many among the chief rulers also believed on Him, "but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue" (John 12:42). Among these believers would have been numbered the timorous Nicodemus, who came to Jesus by night (John 3:1, 2), who was "a ruler of the Jews," and Joseph of Arimathea,

also a secret disciple (John 19:38); both were members of the council.

It was the duty of the council to protect Judea from heresy. Their responsibility was for the whole community, rather than the individual, as Caiaphas indicated when he said, "You know nothing whatever; you do not use your judgment; it is more to your interest that one man should die for the people, than that the whole nation should be destroyed" (John 11:50, NEB). The council feared false Messiahs; they had had them before.

The Jews were divided on the subject of Christ's authority. "Many of the people therefore, . . . said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him" (John 7:40, 43, 46).

Jesus' healing of the man blind from birth raised further controversy. Because He healed the man on the sabbath the Pharisees said He was not of God. "Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. . . . Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing" (John 9:16, 32, 33).

The council believed that in rigid enforcement of its law lay its strength. They were willing to use any weapon against whatever might look threatening. Jesus obeyed the Law to some extent, but His law of highest authority came direct from His Father. The same had been true of the other great prophets, and they likewise had been persecuted by the Jews.

The Jews had a history of narrow-mindedness. They were convinced that they already possessed the full truth about God and that nothing could be added. For this reason they were bitter against the prophets God sent.

3. The Decision. The decision of the council was obvious even before they met. Their minds had been made up in advance. But it was not a unanimous decision. Luke makes special mention of Joseph of Arimathea saying that he "had not consented to the counsel and deed of them"; and John indicates in his Gospel that in addition to Nicodemus, who openly took the part of Jesus, there were others among the rulers who believed on him, although not openly, because they were afraid of being put out of the synagogue (John 12:43). This form of excommunication was one of the most feared, since it cut off the victim from association with his fellow Jews.

But the majority ruled and it was decided that a way must be found to kill Jesus, and "from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death" (John 11:53). There was but one condi-

tion: "Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people" (Mark 14:2).

4. The Last Supper, or New Passover. The time of the Jewish Passover was drawing near. According to one source, it began with the appearance of the first three stars on the evening of the 14th of Abib and ended with the first three stars on the following day, the 15th day of Abib. On the evening of the 13th of Abib, Jesus met with His disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem to partake of the Last Supper, or New Passover. This was a full 24 hours before the Jewish Passover. John is specific concerning the date: "Now before the feast of the passover when Jesus knew that his hour was come, . . . and supper being ended . . ." (John 13:1, 2). It was **before** the regular Passover and supper was already ended. The great haste showed by the authorities throughout the trial and execution of Jesus is explained by John as an attempt to have everything accomplished before the sabbath, "for that sabbath day was an high day [the Passover]" (John 19:31).

"And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

"And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22).

This was the New Passover. As the Jewish Passover had symbolized the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt to a new and better land, so the New Passover was Jesus' final Passover with His disciples until He should "receive for himself a kingdom" and "return," and partake with them in that Kingdom.

The Lord's Supper, or New Passover, is not a magical performance in which the emblems become the literal flesh and blood of Christ, but a symbolic rite or memorial, a renewing of our covenant with God. The bread and juice of the grape are symbols of the Word of God and the living out of that Word. It is an annual, evening observance, to be partaken of on "the same night in which he was betrayed" (I Cor. 11:23), on the 13th day of Abib.

5. The Betrayal. Before the Last Supper was ended, Jesus had already been betrayed by Judas, the plan having been consummated sometime before. "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him" (Matt. 27:14—16). As

soon as Judas had left the room, Jesus began His long discourse to His disciples.

Jesus' words in His farewell address that night showed His deep concern for the disciples' welfare. He spoke words with a depth and breadth unequalled in the Scriptures. He showed no fear of His soon-coming death. Knowing that His betrayer was already away on his dastardly errand did not quench Jesus' buoyant spirit. He spoke of peace and love; of the vine and its branches; He showed them how to be His friends; He promised them another Comforter, the Holy Spirit, which they should receive after He ascended to heaven and was glorified. He told them of His glorification—He was looking ahead to His meeting with the Father.

His disciples had been with Him throughout His ministry, yet they did not comprehend His message. "Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?" (John 16:17).

Peter also questioned Him: "Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards." Jesus was facing physical death, and Peter could not follow Him at that time in death, because His work was not complete. Not until later—"afterwards"—would Peter be willing to sacrifice His life. But Peter did not understand. "Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake." But Jesus knew that when He would be arrested, Peter would forget and He answered him, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice" (John 13:36—38).

Jesus' attitude toward what He knew lay before Him was one of humble submission to His Father's will. He knew that even His disciples would forsake Him, yet He would not be alone "because the Father is with me" (John 16:32). He earnestly prayed the Father for the spiritual growth of His disciples, "that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13). He prayed not only for His present disciples to be sanctified (John 17:17), but He prayed also for those who would believe on Him in the future (John 17:20). His whole concern was for others, not for Himself.

After this discourse, which covers about 20 percent of the Gospel of John (chap. 13—17), they sang a hymn and went out into the Mount of Olives (Matt. 26:30), into a place where He and His disciples had often sought refuge. It was here in Gethsemane that He wrung out the last drops of His own life in surrender, saying, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:44).

6. The Arrest. While Jesus was still speaking, a crowd appeared and Judas, "one of the twelve,

went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:47, 48). The men that came with Judas to arrest Jesus belonged to the Police force of the Jewish council, a group of men assigned to maintain order and make arrests. John describes them as a "band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees" (John 18:3), while Matthew and Mark describe them as a "multitude."

Jesus' arrest was not conducted under Roman orders, for had it been He would have been taken to the military barracks. Instead, "then took they him, and brought him into the high priest's house" (Luke 22:54). According to John 18:13, He was taken to the house of Annas, father-in-law to Caiaphas, the high priest. It was here that Jesus' prophecy concerning Peter's denial was fulfilled as he sat by the fire in the house. After the third denial, we read, "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:61, 62).

7. The Trial. The questioning to which Jesus was subjected cannot properly be termed a trial but rather an examination. Jesus was first questioned by Annas, apparently an honorary high priest and a member of the council. He asked Jesus about His disciples and about what He taught. Jesus replied, "I have spoken openly to all the world; I have always taught in synagogue and in the temple, where all Jews congregate; I have said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask my hearers what I told them; they know what I said" (John 18:20, 21, NEB). One of the officers standing nearby struck Him in the face, saying, "Answerest thou the high priest so?" Jesus replied, "If I spoke amiss, state it in evidence; if I spoke well, why strike me?" (vs. 22, 23). Annas was unable to answer, and he sent Jesus bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Caiaphas, as high priest, was also head of the council and he immediately called a meeting of the council. Jesus' examination before the council was unjust because the leaders of the council had already made up their minds that He must be executed. The meeting was more for the purpose of trying to get some evidence that would convince the Roman governor that Jesus was worthy of the death penalty. The council itself had no power to condemn Him to death. "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death" (John 18:31). All this took place during the night of Abib 13.

Jesus was questioned by the council, then in the morning was led to Pilate and accused thus: "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King" (Luke 23:2), and to this they added, "He stirreth up the people" (vs. 5).

Pilate was not anxious to get involved with

questions concerning Jewish religious laws, but he did question Jesus about the one thing that was important from a Roman's point of view: "Art thou the king of the Jews?" (John 18:33). If Jesus had said that He was, He could have been charged with treason, a crime punishable by death under Roman law. Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:36, 37). Jesus was telling Pilate that He was born to be a King, but that His Kingdom was yet future. But Pilate did not comprehend it.

When Pilate discovered that Jesus was from Galilee, he thought he could rid himself of the unwanted responsibility by sending Him to King Herod, the ruler of that province. Herod was pleased when he saw Jesus, "for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing" (Luke 23:8, 9). Apparently Herod had nothing to say that Jesus considered worth answering.

After the unsuccessful questioning, Herod and his men mocked Jesus and dressed Him in a royal robe and sent him again to Pilate. Again Pilate called the chief priests, councillors and people together and said to them, "You brought this man before me on a charge of subversion. But, as you see, I have myself examined him in your presence and found nothing in him to support your charges. No more did Herod, for he has referred him back to us. Clearly he has done nothing to deserve death. I therefore propose to let him off with a flogging" (Luke 23:13—15, NEB). Matthew records that following this decision Pilate "took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it" (Matt. 27:24).

The Jewish council was not willing to accept defeat. Their one remaining means of attack was to threaten riot, and this weapon Pilate feared more than any other. If news of a riot came to the ears of the Roman emperor, he was sure to remove the governor as incapable of preserving order in his province. So when the mob began to shout their demands and cause a tumult, Pilate succumbed to their demands that Jesus be crucified. "And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required" (Luke 23:23, 24).

B. Death

1. Crucifixion. In those days death by crucifixion was a routine means of punishing the guilty. It is recorded in history that on one occasion Rome crucified 2000 Jews outside Jerusalem. Crucifixion was never used against a Roman citizen, because it was considered dishonorable; but it was the common sentence for slaves and the lower type of criminal.

Jesus was required to undergo the usual punishment of all convicted criminals—the scourging, the carrying of the cross and the actual crucifixion: “And they led him away to crucify him. . . . Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left” (Matt. 27:31, 38). The official charge against Jesus was that He claimed to be King of the Jews, so they wrote this title on His cross above His head: **THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS**. “And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the [land] until the ninth hour. . . . And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost” (Luke 23:44, 46).

Matthew states that just before Jesus died He cried: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). We cannot believe that Jesus ever uttered these words. In every age all who seek God have the promise that “He will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” This truth Jesus knew. The sentence is a quotation from Ps. 22:1, but the error lies in the translation. Of the Hebrew word *azab*, translated “forsaken,” Gesenius’ *Hebrew and English Lexicon* informs us that the first definition of the word is “To loosen bands and to let a beast go free from its bonds.” When Jesus realized that death was near, instead of reproaching God for having forsaken Him, He praised God that He was so soon set free, so soon relieved of the pain and suffering inflicted by the cruel mob. In thankfulness He said, “How great is my release.” The *Lamsa translation* gives no hint of forsaking: “My God, my God, for this I was spared.”

It was the “ninth hour,” or about three o’clock in the afternoon, less than 24 hours after Jesus had eaten the Last Supper with His disciples, and He was dead. It was common for men to live at least one day, and usually several days on the cross, but Jesus had been spared this suffering by His Father.

Anxious that the bodies not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, which was also the Jewish Passover (John 19:31), the Jewish authorities asked Pilate “that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. . . . But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs” (John 19:31, 33).

2. The Burial. Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish council and a believer of Jesus, as men-

tioned previously, asked permission of Pilate to give Jesus a decent burial. “And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.” “And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on” (Matt. 27:59, 60; Luke 23:54).

Many important events had taken place during the 24 hours of this 13th day of Abib. Jesus had eaten the Last Supper with His disciples. He had delivered His farewell message, had been betrayed into the hands of sinful men; had been brought before Caiaphas the high priest, Pilate the governor, and Herod the King. He had been condemned to death, scourged, and crucified. He had died and was now buried.

On the sabbath, all normal activity was forbidden the Jews, thus the day was quiet. Just one thing was done: The tomb was sealed and a Roman guard was placed at the entrance (Matt. 27:62—66).

C. Resurrection

The history of the life of Jesus Christ upon earth closes with a triumphant note, a miracle as great as that of its beginning. “He is not here, for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matt. 28:6)—these were the words of the angel. It was the morning of the 15th of Abib. Jesus had triumphed over the grave! The Roman soldiers that guarded the tomb had been as dead men in the presence of the angel; they were powerless to hold Him in the grave.

All four Gospels give a similar account of His resurrection, plus or minus a few details. The women early at the sepulchre (while it was yet dark, according to John); their concern about moving the great stone that they might enter the tomb; the angels that stood by; the empty tomb; the women’s haste to go and tell His disciples; the two that ran to see for themselves; the linen clothes lying by themselves—all are familiar details.

1. Belief in a Resurrection. The hope of a resurrection had been a firm belief of God’s people from ancient times. Job, David, Daniel, Hosea, Isaiah all voiced their conviction that the dead in Christ shall rise. Years after Christ had ascended, it was the teaching of Paul, “that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15). The Sadducees and Pharisees disputed this among themselves, the Pharisees believing in the resurrection, the Sadducees disagreeing (Acts 23).

2. Proof of Jesus’ Resurrection. Some of the best proof of Jesus’ resurrection is found in His appearances afterward. He revealed Himself first to Mary in the garden. She recognized Him by His voice when He spoke her name (John 20:15), proving that He was the same person as He had been before death.

Next He revealed Himself to the two disciples on the walk to Emmaus. Although He upbraided them for their unbelief (Luke 24:25—27), they did not recognize Him until He performed the familiar act of asking the blessing at their table. And while the two related their experience to the Eleven, Jesus appeared in their midst and said unto them, "Peace be unto you." But the disciples were frightened, unable to believe they were actually seeing Jesus.

Jesus wanted to make clear to them and us that He was the same man they had seen crucified. "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet" (Luke 24:39, 40). And to prove further that He was there in body He asked for something to eat. "And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat."

John relates that the first time Jesus appeared to the disciples Thomas was not with them, hence he would not believe Jesus was alive again. But eight days later when they were again assembled behind closed doors, Jesus came and stood in their midst. Thomas was with them, and acknowledged his belief in the Lord. Jesus said unto him, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). There will be a greater blessing to those who have believed the resurrection of Christ without having witnessed it.

Jesus again appeared to seven of His disciples when they were fishing on the Sea of Galilee. They had fished all night without success. In the morning Jesus appeared on the shore asking for meat. When He found they had caught nothing He told them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat—and "they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes" (John 21:5). Jesus again ate with them. John states that this was the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples since He was risen from the dead (John 21:14).

Speaking of Jesus' resurrection, Paul relates in I Cor. 15:6 that He was seen by more than 500 brethren at once, "of whom the greater part remain unto this present," but we are given no indication of where this took place. Paul states further that "he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (vs. 7, 8, see Acts 9:3—6).

Luke, writing in the book of Acts, adds further proof of the resurrection of Jesus, saying: "He showed himself to these men after his death, and gave ample proof that he was alive: over a period of forty days he appeared to them and taught them about the kingdom of God." Jesus also gave them further instructions concerning the Holy Spirit which they were to receive (Acts 1:3—5).

And having this power, they were to go forth and "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name

of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). The Greek word here translated world is *aion*, meaning "age," in this case the Jewish age, which history records ended in A. D. 70. The Holy Spirit was not to remain forever. Its powers were to cease (I Cor. 13:8) at the close of that age and be restored again at the time of Christ's return (Acts 3:21; Matt. 17:11).

D. Ascension.

After Jesus had given His last instructions to His disciples, He "led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them" (Luke 24:50). He knew that the hour had come when He should depart to go to His Father. From Bethany, where He had made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, foreshowing the time when He should come as King, He would now make His triumphal entry into heaven to be at His Father's right hand. He was taken up visibly and the promise was that He would return in the same way—visibly. And that promise is for us: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

IN SUMMARY

We have studied briefly the life of Jesus Christ, our prophet, our priest, and the soon-coming King of all the earth. What shall be the impact of that life upon us? Just one word: transformation. He is our example of the flawless purity to which we also must attain if we would belong to Him. If He could do always the things which pleased His heavenly Father, so can we.

May His life be our constant inspiration to transform our ugly, earthborn inclinations into pure and holy virtues until every aspect of our character reflects the perfection of Christ.

To be a messenger you must know the message.

TEST YOURSELF

1. Describe the government of Judea.
2. On what three occasions did Christ foretell His death?
3. Why were the Jews bitter toward Jesus?
4. What is the significance of the New Passover?
5. Describe Jesus' trial.
6. Who saw Jesus after the resurrection?
7. In what manner will Jesus return to earth?

Reprints of these studies are available upon request.

Let's Get Acquainted!

King Josiah

THE KING is dead. Long live King Josiah!" Louder and more jubilant the cry echoed and re-echoed through the surging mass of humanity as each man struggled for an advantageous position in the courtyard of the royal palace. Even the tightly closed ranks of the King's guard threatened to collapse before their advance. They had come to witness the coronation of a king, and nothing could deter them from their purpose.

Above them, upon an open marble balcony stood the king, surrounded by a small retinue of high officials. A handsome young lad he was, his eyes sparkling with excitement. Upon his head glittered the jeweled crown of his high office, and about his shoulders was draped the royal robe. For a boy of only eight years, he bore himself well; indeed, he appeared every inch a king. Though young in years, encouraging reports of Josiah's kind and gentle ways, his studious nature and keen interest in Jehovah had revived a degree of hope in the hearts of some.

Though the boy king presented a calm, unruffled poise before his subjects, his young mind was bewildered and troubled. Although a determined effort had been made to shield him from the harsh realities of life, his sharp eyes and keen ears had seen and heard much that was not good. Of course he was too young to understand fully the utter moral and spiritual degeneracy of Judah during the reigns of King Manasseh and his own father, but he knew that something was terribly wrong. Assyrian influence had corrupted the minds of the people, making them dissatisfied with their circumstances, and leading them to the vain and foolish worship of gods of wood and stone. From infancy Josiah had heard of those glorious years of Israel's triumph, when Jehovah was the key figure in their lives. He longed for the same condition to prevail once again, and to this end he had vowed to devote his life.

The years that followed were busy, formative ones for Josiah. But by the time he had reached his mid-teens, he was displaying an increasingly zealous effort to revive the worship of Jehovah.

And surely a campaign of this sort could not have been better timed. The Assyrians, who had to some degree exercised political control over Judah, did not seem at all concerned by the reform movement. They were preoccupied with serious problems of their own—barbarian Scythians were storming their borders.

Now was the time for decisive action, and Josiah assumed his rightful place, strong in purpose, de-

termined to right the wrongs so prevalent about him. His plans were many and ambitious, but foremost was the abolition of idolatry; and with a carefully selected group of men he rode through the length and breadth of Judah destroying the images and altars to strange gods. So thorough was the cleansing ordered by Josiah that even the dust of areas defiled by idolatrous worship was removed and cast into the valley of Kidron.

But to the sincere young ruler this was only the beginning. The long forgotten House of the Lord had to be refurbished. Knowing full well that Judah's depleted treasury was insufficient to meet the cost, he turned to the people for voluntary contributions. His plea was met with wholehearted, generous support; even the poorest of his subjects offered willingly.

Under the competent supervision of skilled craftsmen, the extensive repairs to the temple progressed rapidly.

Meanwhile, in the inner court of the temple, Hilkiah the high priest endeavored to set things in order after the many years of disuse. One day while searching a little-used chamber he came upon an old, dusty scroll—a book of the Law of Moses! Quickly Hilkiah called Shaphan the scribe and instructed him to carry the manuscript to the king at once.

As Shaphan read the scroll to the king, and God's many promises, as well as stern warnings were recounted, Josiah's heart was filled with fear. Those promises were forfeit, so far as wayward Judah was concerned; they had earned a curse rather than a blessing. The question now was, what should Josiah do? There were several possibilities, but to his everlasting credit the humble young ruler turned to the only real source of help—God.

Living in Jerusalem at the time was a prophetess by the name of Huldah, and it was to her that Josiah turned in this dark hour, confident that Jehovah would speak to him through her. "Go," he summoned his messengers, "inquire of the Lord for me, . . . about the words of the book that is found. For great is the wrath that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord to do all that is written in the book."

Was all hope gone? Shortly Hilkiah returned and recounted to the king the words of the Lord as spoken by the prophetess. Judah's doom was sealed. The people would never really reform, their hearts were set to follow other gods, and the wrath of God would be poured out upon them.

But God's message to Judah's king was loving and reassuring: "Because your heart was tender

and penitent and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and its inhabitants, and humbled yourself before Me, and rent your clothes, and wept before Me, I have heard you. Behold I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the evil that I will bring upon this place and its inhabitants" (II Chron. 34:27, 28, Amplified Bible).

A man of lesser stature would have given up all thought of trying to reach the stubborn, rebellious minds of the people after hearing the Lord's edict. Not so with Josiah; he would at least try to make them see the error of their ways. Certainly some would repent. But how?

Once again Josiah proved himself a man of quick action. Using the recently discovered book as a wedge, perhaps he could open a few hearts.

Responding to Josiah's proclamation, people by the hundreds converged on the House of the Lord at Jerusalem. And then, eloquently and with sincere conviction Josiah read to them the stern admonitions of the Book of the Law, pleading with them to amend their evil ways and turn to God with a willing mind. And there between the pillars of the temple the king renewed his covenant and that of the people to keep the statutes of the Lord their God.

With repairs to the temple completed, and worship once more firmly established, Judah's king proclaimed a passover feast, the like of which had not been known since the days of Israel's judges. Even though the majority were not inclined to serve God, he was thankful for this measure of success.

Of the succeeding years of Josiah's life we have no record until that tragic day when he rode out to battle against the Egyptian forces and fell mortally wounded. Judah had lost more than a king; she had lost a spiritual guide. For "there was no king like him before or after who turned to the Lord with all his heart and all his soul and all his might."

Josiah, the fragmentary record of your eventful life fills us with a lively curiosity to know more. What of your childhood years? What impelled your respect and dedication to God at such an early age? Could it have been a godly relative, perhaps your mother?

The record of your consecrated, determined effort toward holiness of character during those early years of manhood leaves us very humble indeed. What was your secret? How did you maintain your steadfast purpose? Surely you must have met many a strong temptation. We honor you, Josiah, for the keen wisdom you displayed, and shall try to emulate your example.

We have often wondered if you might have been personally acquainted with the young prophet Jeremiah. Certainly you must have known of him,

as his home was not far distant from the palace. Undoubtedly he was saddened by your untimely death at the hand of the Egyptians. But we are content to wait—someday we shall know more.

Noble Josiah, you have done your work well. Now it remains for us to rededicate our lives to God's service, that we may meet you in the Kingdom on earth made over new. Until then—

Farewell. ●●

The Meaning of the New Year

The new year's chief value to us is its spiritual opportunity. A year from now we may be richer or poorer than we are today; stronger in body or weaker; more famous or more obscure. But these do not matter. The real significance of the year will only be revealed by the application of finer tests.

If the year makes us more patient and courageous, with a purer zeal for righteousness and a deeper consciousness of our own responsibility to God, it will have brought us the richest harvest it can bring.

Whatever else the new year may mean to us, it surely means the opportunity for spiritual attainment. If we go forth into it with the full appreciation of that fact, and the purpose and prayer to redeem the time, we shall estimate our experiences by a true standard, and be certain not to fail to gather the choicest fruitage of the days. *Selected.*

That life is most holy in which there is least of petition and desire, and most of waiting upon God, that in which petition most often passes into thanksgiving. Pray until prayer makes you forget your own wish, and have it or merge it in God's will. The Divine Wisdom has given us prayer, not as a means whereby to obtain the good things of earth, but as a means whereby we may learn to do without them; not as a means whereby we escape evil, but as a means whereby we become strong to meet it.

THE GUIDING LIGHT

The light God gives directs the man. To some that light comes with blinding brightness, as to Paul. To others it comes only after long searching.

Sometimes the light shines far into the future. More frequently, we find just enough light to take the next step. That one step is enough, however. The lamp will move on ahead when we must step again.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

APPLES of GOLD

for the NEW YEAR

For two thousand years Jesus Christ has been the one central character of human history. —Anonymous

Resolutions

I am going to try to live each day, each hour
With all the force and all the loving power
Which the Creator gave me to apply—
I am going to try.

I am going to strive to live along life's way,
To sing, to praise, to work, to watch, to pray,
To let all envy and all malice die—
I am going to try.

I am going to try to feel the life in me
Is but a trust, which in my custody
Must be accounted for to One on high—
I am going to try.

The sole purpose of life in time is to gain merit for
life in eternity. —St. Augustine: Letter 130

For a Happy New Year

To leave the old with a burst of song,
To recall the right and forgive the wrong,
To forget the thing that binds you fast
To the vain regrets of the year that's past,
To have the strength to let go your hold
Of the not-worth-while of the days grown old;

To dare go forth with a purpose true,
To the unknown task of the year that's new;
To help your brother along the road
To do his work and lift his load;
To serve your God with a heart sincere
Is to have and to give a glad New Year.

Christianity can be condensed into four words: Admit, Submit, Commit and Transmit. —Samuel Wilberforce.

Nothing will do except righteousness; and no other
conception of righteousness will do except Christ's con-
ception of it. —Matthew Arnold

To the NEW YEAR

One song for thee, New Year,
One universal prayer:
Teach us—all other teachings far above—
To hide dark hate beneath the wings of love;
To slay all hatred, strife,
And live the larger life!
To bind the wounds that bleed;
To lift the fallen and set free
Some heart from sin's dark thralldom—
To live this year, O God, for Thee!

The VICTORY

He was dead—the man of sorrows—
Dead, dead! And His work was o'er.
They had thought Him the King of Glory,
But closed was the tomb's dark door!
And they bowed their heads in sorrow—
Peter and all the rest—
He had warned them in words plain spoken,
But their meaning they little guessed.

And so their hearts were aching,
As the Sabbath came and went:
'Twas for naught they had followed Jesus,
For naught that their love was spent!
But listen! The glorious morning
Saw a risen Christ enthroned
In the hearts of His true disciples,
Their triumphant Lord they owned.

And the Marys with their spices,
Found the stone e'en rolled away,
And an Angel said, "He is risen—
Come, see the place where He lay."
He had risen! The chains were broken
Of death and of sin and shame;
And the bells of the Resurrection
Pealed forth a Redeemer's name.

And still do the bells of vict'ry
O'er hill and plain ring out.
In the hearts of His disciples,
No shadow of fear or doubt.
He has burst the bonds asunder—
Come forth to reign for aye.
He's returning to Earth in splendor
Some glad, triumphant Day!

Jesus Christ the Same Yesterday, Today, and For Ever

WE ARE prone to speak of "our changing world" as though change were something new and strange, even terrifying, something peculiar to the twentieth century, and especially the present decade. Yet the fact is that our world has been changing ever since its creation. The long, deliberate changes of physical evolution—the climatic cycles that changed tropical swamps to polar wastes, the volcanic periods, the rising and sinking of continents and mountain chains, the ebb and flow of forgotten seas, the grim march and retreat of the glaciers, the changing conditions that bred and destroyed the dinosaurs—our planet became what it is through constant change, and it is still changing. It is well said that nothing is permanent except change.

Yet in man's immediate world, it often seems that the more things change, the more they remain the same. The centuries bring altered conditions, but no basically new vices or virtues, no new problems. Yet since we are creatures of a moment and each of us has his life to live and his lessons to learn in so short a time, the problems are so new to us that we cast about in desperation for a fixed point, a solid rock to which we may tie amid the tempest of life which buffets us so grievously.

This craving is ageless; through the centuries myriads of inarticulate men and women have eaten their hearts out in the silent, lonely quest for mental and spiritual security; inspired singers and prophets have phrased it in words which even yet move us to tears by their sheer beauty. "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Times have always been bad; civilizations have always been collapsing; old values passing away and new, strange ideas invading the scene.

It was in such a time that the immortal Epistle to the Hebrews was composed. We do not know to whom it was addressed, but it is altogether likely that it was to the mother church in Jerusalem. When the letter was written, the catastrophe of A. D. 70, which overthrew the Jewish state, had not occurred but it was impending. If the war was not actually in progress, it must have been close at hand. The oldest church in Christendom

was inevitably touched by the confusion and alarm which always accompany such a disaster.

The duration of that church in Jerusalem had not been a long one. In years, it had not stood as long as our own Megiddo Church. Thirty or thirty-five years was a brief life for a church, yet it was the oldest Christian Church in existence. By comparison, the mixed churches of Galatia, of Corinth and of Rome were young. Every Gentile community of believers felt like a daughter to Jerusalem. It was entering its second generation, and the past to which it could look back was, to say the least, an honorable and a memorable past. It contained the richest and the longest list of departed worthies. Founded by the very Master Himself, its original officers had been the twelve apostles. Peter and John were its first leaders, James was its first president, Stephen its first martyr. Upon its roll of membership there had stood, if they did not still stand, the names of Jesus' own relatives and closest friends; names like Lazarus and Martha, Nicodemus and Joseph, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother, blessed among women.

It is small wonder that the unknown writer exhorted this noble church to remember those who had spoken to them the word of God, and to consider the final issue of their Christian warfare. Yet already it must have seemed to him as though the early force and bloom of the young faith were in danger of passing away from it. The men who saw and handled the Word of Life; the men whose energy founded, whose fervor warmed, whose blood watered the new Church of Christ—where are they? Gone, most of them, to the congregation of the dead. Is, then, the force they wielded gone likewise? Must this young faith grow old and change with the changing generations? Shall its splendid promise fail; shall it prove a prey to mutation, and vanish at last as its predecessor Judaism?

The misgiving was a natural one, but it was dispelled as the writer reflected who and what is the sum and substance of this new-old faith, the heart and soul of this young society. A dead man? Never! A dying man, like himself? A changeable man, over whom the years have power? No. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.

But to attain this conviction, at that distance, required a train of evidence beginning in the nation's past. His readers were peculiarly receptive to this line of argument, for the Jewish memory is long—too long, sometimes. One should not despise the past, for in it is our wisdom, the experience of our race, the only criterion of human thought, the only basis of human progress. The Church of Christ is the heir of her own past. That inheritance she never ought to disown. The present grows out of that which has been, and the generation which is now alive has lessons to learn from the generations now dead.

The backward look can be carried too far, as the apostle Paul pointed out vividly to the Judaizing Christians in his own churches; yet somewhere between the extremes of contempt and superstitious veneration lies the right course, the way of salvation, which is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. Christ, the true teachings of God exemplified in a human life, the bread which came down from heaven, the eternal principle of which is, Obey and live, disobey and die. Jesus Christ of Nazareth so perfectly exemplified the Word of God in His character that the two Christs, the man of Galilee and the truth of Jehovah which He taught and lived, are inseparable.

It is fortunate for us in our human weakness that we have such a pattern in human flesh to be our tower of strength, for we comprehend persons far better than abstractions.

So it is to the high priest of our profession that the writer of Hebrews points us as an unchanging rock in a world of transition. More than that, he goes far back in time and brings before us the long, glorious procession of the heroes of faith, the mighty "cloud of witnesses" by whose example and inspiration our race has to be run. These are the men and women, flesh and blood like ourselves, who do the impossible by faith in a principle which is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. Consideration of the course of their warfare will lead us to a certain divine conservatism, a loyalty to the best of our heritage, an assurance that we shall not be carried about with divers and strange doctrines.

For the church of Jerusalem, the Christ of yesterday reached back to righteous Abel, all the virtues of past generations being embodied to perfection in their Master, He who was dead but now was alive for evermore. Their today is our yesterday, and our heritage is enriched by the travail of their souls, the struggles which to them seemed so uninspiring and unromantic and ordinary. Today we are in their place; the times are evil, and today no voice from heaven is heard; timid hearts are quaking. But today, as yesterday, Jesus Christ abides the same; passed into the heavens, able to save to the uttermost, preparing a Kingdom which cannot be moved. New times bring new perils and

impose new labors; but no time can rob us of Him in whose strength all past souls grew strong, or quench or dim the deathless presence which burns on through all the ages. When the procession of the saints has passed from view and we see only the stones and dust of the highway, the voice of the Christ of today rings in our ears: "Go, and do thou likewise."

Our problems are peculiarly ours, or so we imagine. But the Word of God, Christ and the truth which He proclaimed and lived, can provide the answers we need, as it always has. Our world is not that of the past, it is true, but human needs and human emotions are unchanged since the dawn of history. The more complex life becomes, the more we are bewildered, and hearts break just as they always have. No matter how sophisticated we become, the peasant-carpenter of Galilee has a word and a heartbeat for every step of the way. The believing, contrite spirit of a man weary of sin stands as close to the Christ of today as did the soul of John the Beloved.

If Jesus Christ be the same yesterday and today and for ever, there is no reason why His people should not be the same likewise. The challenge is obvious. Old generations had no advantage over us. The fountain of their holiness is open to us. The secret of their success is the secret of ours. The moral principles of the gospel have always worked, and always will. Honesty will always be better than deception, kindness than cruelty. The Golden Rule has never been improved upon and never will be. Those few simple words have leaped across conventional gulfs, across the deep chasms which yawn between race and race, between class and class, between sex and sex, between age and age. In the Christ-world, character is more important than talent; responsibility is measured according to endowment; neighborliness is to be defined by the circle of necessity and not by the limitations of race; the success of life is to be measured by its secret fidelities and not by its popular triumphs. The consummation of His ideal is in the pregnant word of our Lord: "One is your Master, and all ye are brethren." Who in any age has ever devised a more perfect formula for society?

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The aim of Christ is a man made whole, liberated to his full capacity in body, mind and soul. Any social conditions which thwart this ideal should be changed, and the Christ of yesterday, today and for ever intends to change them—peaceably, if the world will; violently if they will not—when He comes.

It is the Christ of today who walks beside us, strengthening us with the memory of our heritage, and leading us on to a brilliant eternal future, interpreting His eternal truth in terms of today's needs. His religion is rock-like in its strength, yet it is a pliable, adaptable, spiritual religion, never

out of date or out of order. Because He changes not, therefore He is the source of all mobile life, of such change as goes with life and progress. This is a part of the paradox of God. New light He gives; new plans He suggests; new forms He finds or makes; new efforts He inspires; and while the past remains for ever, a growing heritage of instruction, of example, of encouragement, yet in the living present and the men of it He forever lives as the Overseer of our activities and the Rewarder of our toil.

For a blind and slavish worship of days gone by there is no room, because new occasions teach new duties. For a cowardly bewailing over changed times and departed guides, as though heroism, or truth, or Christian success had been buried in their graves, there is again no room. With us, alive and active and working, is the Christ of today, who was, and is, and is to come. For He is also the Christ of tomorrow—of forever.

The old dilemma, presented by John the Baptist to Jesus, is still the same: "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" We come to Him today, consciously or unconsciously, with the same query. Either He is the answer to the yearning cry of our souls and to the problems of a world in trouble, or else we must look to somebody else. We look around and see no other. If He is not the one, then there is no one, and hope is dead. But He *is* the one, and the only one. We need no other, for He fills the horizons of the past and the future, and for our present needs He is all sufficient.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be," but we know that He lives, Christ is not an anachronism. The passing of the centuries does not leave Him far behind. He not only keeps abreast of the times; He goes before. As soon as we have grasped one achievement, He is striding toward another. He is always out in front. There is no final goal in this leader's journeyings, this old Leader on the new road. He is ever ahead. He is not dead, but alive for evermore. The Word of our God shall stand for ever; His mercy endureth for ever; His truth can never die; His kingdom shall never be destroyed; He shall reign for ever and ever. His righteous laws and His reign of love shall bless generations yet unborn, as He has blessed and still blesses, for He is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. ●●

As long as there are homes where virtue reigns,
And peace and joy shine through the window panes,
Where faith and love and discipline combine
To make a little world of trust divine:
Where home is harbor of our heart's desires,
And family prayers renew faith's altar fires,
Though nations war and men in darkness grope,
Where there are homes like this, there still is hope!

The Man Made In God's Image

(Continued from page 7)

First: MENTALLY LIKE GOD

Here is the beginning of the program toward which the whole of man's creation and development through the ages has been directed: the mental enlightenment of man. God has knowledge to impart to man, knowledge of Himself, knowledge of His plan, knowledge of His promises, knowledge of His demands, and knowledge of the man himself. Man aspiring to be like God must know who he is, why he is, and what he may become. And all this comes through knowledge.

How can we learn? "Whereby when ye read ye may understand my knowledge," wrote the apostle Paul (Eph. 3:4). "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). Jesus had to learn (Heb. 5:8; Isa. 7:14), and we have to learn. "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind" (I Pet. 4:1). We must learn the knowledge of God, discarding all error and believing only what can be harmonized with the truth of God's Word. This accomplished, we are one step ahead: We are mentally like God.

Second: MORALLY LIKE GOD

Here is the step which reaches the ultimate of human possibilities. We may read the Word of God, may agree wholeheartedly with its teachings; we may hear and understand. But this second step is vital: We must make ourselves morally like God by applying what we have learned. We must cease from all evil and actually perform all the commandments of Him who declared, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Pet. 1:16).

How do we accomplish this? Paul again has specific instructions: "That ye put off concerning the former conversation [manner of life] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22—24). This man now in the process of development is not made of putty or mud, but is "created in *righteousness and true holiness*." Only those who conform their lives to these specifications can attain the moral likeness of God, and ultimately be made in His image physically.

The executing of this command to be "created in righteousness and true holiness" is the work of a lifetime. Righteousness! The term implies unswerving rectitude, steadfast conformity of life to divine law. True holiness! The very phrase is a denunciation of all false holiness, that which is hypocritical, pretended. Holiness to be acceptable to God must be the spontaneous, voluntary expression of a sincere heart which overflows with noble desire.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

Heart holiness expels from one's life all the works of the flesh. It brings blessed relief from such disagreeable traits as irritability, discontent, jealousy, rivalry. In the final analysis at Judgment, "righteousness and true holiness" are the characteristics which will distinguish God's perfect man from all others.

Third: PHYSICALLY LIKE GOD

When the last member of this corporate body, the Church, has completed his mental and moral development, still the man of Genesis 1:26 is only partially created, for he has not yet attained to the physical likeness of his Maker. All who have aspired to the mental and moral likeness of God shall be brought to Judgment to determine the success or failure of that endeavor. And those who are proven successful shall experience the third and essential step: the change from corruptible to incorruptible, from mortal to immortal, to be made physically like God.

Why is the physical change necessary? Because "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (I Cor. 15:50). No one in the mortal state can live in the Kingdom of God. But when worthy mortals are changed into the physical image of God, "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (I Cor. 15:54, 55). Then shall the members of the true Church be endowed with a vigor of constitution that shall never decline, a strength of intellect that shall never weaken, a beauty that shall never fade, and life that shall never end. Then shall lowly earthborns be raised from the dust of mortality to

sit among princes and to inherit the throne of glory (I Sam. 2:8). Then shall Genesis 1:26 be fulfilled:

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Man, all the members of the true Church, united with Christ the Head, shall then be mentally, morally and physically in the likeness of God. ●●

"Unto You Is Born . . . A Saviour"

(Continued from page 12)

in the Hebrew-English Lexicon as "the month of green ears," Abib, the first month of the Bible year, began with the first new moon after the vernal equinox, or, as some historians believe, with the new moon nearest the equinox.

It would seem reasonable that a God of all knowledge would have selected an appropriate day for the birth of His Son, such as the first day of the year as Moses was instructed to measure time. This conclusion is supported further by the fact that the tabernacle of ancient Israel was reared on "the first day of the first month" (Ex. 40:2). Christ being the chief cornerstone of the spiritual temple, of which the tabernacle in the wilderness was a figure, it is appropriate that He should have been born on that day.

The place of the birth of Christ is another clue as to the time. It seems probable that Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem for the Abib new moon feasts which were held yearly for the descendants of David, Bethlehem being the city where the family of David gathered. ●●

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Meditations

On the Word

"The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise" (Proverbs 15:31).

One characteristic which more than any other sets man apart from a beast is his ability to learn from the experience of others. In countless fields contemporary man has been the recipient of a rich heritage of knowledge from the ages. In mathematics, astronomy, mechanics, the increase of knowledge is phenomenal. Compare, for instance, the George Washington bridge in New York and its marvelous engineering with a New England covered bridge of the 18th century. Contrast a modern jet airliner with the fragile plane in which Colonel Lindbergh first flew the Atlantic, only 43 years ago. The contrast is startling. Little by little man builds his base of knowledge, which expands in logarithmic proportion.

Yet with all of man's material achievements, he seems to be creating ever more serious problems for which he has no solution. These problems stem from an inherent weakness of human nature. Man is eager to improve his environment, his social or political position, to lessen his daily toil or increase his pleasure. But he is not as interested in improving himself, his own character.

If you should decide to improve your home, you could readily secure the services of an architect, a decorator, and a contractor to do the job for you. If you should decide to fly around the world, you would have no difficulty in finding an airline to take you. If you needed food for your body, it could be found in abundant supply within a few miles of your home, at least in this country. Even if you should desire to go to the moon and had the money, you could, no doubt, get there. But if you should decide that you as a person needed improving, that your character was not what it should be, that to abide among the wise you needed the reproof of life, where would you go to obtain this service? There is only one answer: to the Word of God and its human spokesmen.

King Solomon was reputed to be the wisest man that ever lived. He is the classic example of a man who could not take his own advice; nevertheless, he left some outstanding advice which, if heeded, will prevent the listener from making the same mistake he made. "The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise."

A hearing ear suggests a willingness or desire to hear. We are inclined to hear what we want to hear, what we are interested in. *Cruden's Con-*

cordance, under the word "hear," tells us, "This word is often used for listening to the word of God with a firm purpose, to obey his commands." Listening to the reproof of life with a firm purpose precludes idle or cursory listening. It implies hearkening, hearing with a purpose of acting on what we hear. It also suggests discriminative listening. Of the many voices constantly bombarding our ears, a fine sense of discernment is necessary. Wisdom's voice must be unerringly distinguished from that of the "strange woman" which "flattereth with her words; . . . for her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead"; while "wisdom giveth life to them that have it" (Prov. 2:16—18; Eccl. 7:12).

To hearken to the reproof of life is an indispensable characteristic of the wise. Deflating as this is to a man's ego, it remains the God-given prescription for correcting our naturally defective traits. The prophet Habakkuk spoke humbly when he said, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved" (Hab. 2:1).

When man has demonstrated his ability to build on the knowledge of his predecessors in so many areas, it is strange that he has manifested such a reluctance in the field of self-improvement. This condition will be corrected when Christ returns to earth as King. All schools, universities, and colleges will be devoted primarily to the one great goal of improving the quality of the inner man. A man will then not only have the ability to *do* great deeds—he will *be* a great person, a great character. He will be a wise man, a truly wise man, a man whom God considers wise.

Above all, he will "abide among the wise." This is what makes the whole procedure worthwhile. An endless life in which to continually gain knowledge to "fly" as did Gabriel with the freedom of the wind, to never suffer any pain, sickness, or disease: to be liberated from the limits of our solar system, and possess the ability to visit untold planets inhabited by other immortal beings who will share their vast knowledge—all this and much more is reserved exclusively for the wise who hear the reproof of life. ●●

MOMENTUM KEEPS YOU GOING!

A mechanical engineer will tell you that it takes six times as much power to start a flywheel from a dead start as it does to keep it going once it is in motion. In other words, it only takes one-sixth as much effort to keep going once you are on the way as it does to stop and then start over again.

When you are tempted to slacken your pace, remember the flywheel.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

LETTERS

Another Year

Another year is finished, and how much have we gained? How far have we traveled down God's pathway? Only we can tell, but whether a few steps or many, we now face another year to make greater steps toward that prize that even Jesus kept in mind at all times.

We are so blessed to have this prize to work for and to look forward to. The world has nothing, no matter what they do in life; they have only one thing in the end—death. And that is nothing to look forward to. We, too, were in the same position, but we do not need to be now unless we go backward and that we must not do. "Never look back."

Albion, N. Y.

B. B.

Greetings from Afar

We send you greetings at this time, as our thoughts go back to that glorious night so long ago, when God's earnest people gave praise to Him for Jesus' birth, and angels sang their song of rejoicing: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men."

May we rejoice in their message of song, as this new year breaks before us, knowing as we do that the time is almost upon us when the message will be fulfilled. At the time appointed, "He who shall come, will come and will not tarry."

What a wonderful new year that will be, when there will be peace abounding in the hearts of all people, and every man shall love his neighbor as himself, and praises of glory and honour will rise to our Father in heaven! when our King is established in Zion, and all things are made new!

We can imagine the unfolding beauty of the spring in the Promised Land! The hillsides are beginning to be covered with the red anemone and the ranunculus, and the Bible calendar says they are brilliant, beautiful and abundant. But what still greater, unending beauties and glories await us, if faithful, when the Sun of Righteousness arises on Zion's glad morning!

Warwick, Queensland, Australia

A. B.

At This New Year

We are near the beginning of the New Year. Let us redeem the time, for the days are evil. The signs of the Bible are before our eyes. And may we show our great gratitude to our heavenly Father for all the blessings we received in 1939, and work as we never have before in the new year.

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

C. T.

Stimulated

I have been in retirement for three years and have devoted much time to Bible study. Your publications have done much to undergird my faith and stimulate my desire for additional study and research.

I am sure that my joy and knowledge can be further enhanced as well as that of others, by disseminating the good news. Therefore I am requesting additional copies. Your complimentary copy is quite revealing and is prepared in such simple language that a child can understand its challenge.

Frankfort, Kentucky

J. E. M.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"What is the 'Abomination of desolation' in Matthew 24? It is mentioned by the prophet Daniel, chapters 8, 11, and 12."

The context in which Matthew 24:15 occurs associates the abomination of desolation with the destruction of Jerusalem, A. D. 70. The narrative begins with verse 14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." In compliance with Jesus' commission (Matt. 28:19, 20), His disciples went forth and preached the gospel to the then-known world (Mark 16:20). He was with them in signs and wonders unto the end of that "world," or age. The Greek word *aion* used here signifies "age." The RSV and others of the newer versions employ the word "age." The age in question in Jesus' statement was the Jewish age.

Romans 10:18 and Col. 1:23 testify that the gospel *was* preached to the then-known world before the end of that "age." (This approach runs counter to the conclusions of certain religious groups who believe the gospel still must be preached to all nations before the end of the Gentile age, which will terminate with Jesus' return to earth.)

Continuing with our analysis of the narrative in Matthew 24, we read in verse 15: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, . . ." and the following verses clearly picture the destruction of Jerusalem: "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the house top not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field turn back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day" (vs. 15—20).

The companion narrative in Luke 21 pinpoints the occasion even more definitely: "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh" (v. 20). This then is followed by, "Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains," etc.

The abomination of desolation has reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, both in Matthew 24 and in Daniel.

"Do you believe in baptizing infants?"

When Jesus gave the commission in Mark 16, it was qualified by "He that *believeth* and is baptized." It was always those of an understanding age who were baptized when baptism was in force. ●●

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He Arose

A Stillness lay upon the earth, as in the eastern sky . . . The signs appeared in coral tints that day was drawing nigh; . . . Yet 'neath the shadow of the hill there stood a Roman band, . . . to guard the tomb of Christ my Lord, as Pilate gave command.

But hark! an earthquake rends the rock, the guards fall to the ground; . . . An angel rolls the stone away and Death no more is found; . . . For 'tis the Resurrection day, and Christ in victory . . . Steps forth from out the shrouded tomb to live eternally.

In triumph now He treads the earth which had His blood received, . . . and fragrant beauty bursts anew like blossoms from the bud, . . . As men behold the mystery that He who once was dead . . . Is now alive for evermore just as the Scripture said.

And now the centuries have passed, the world in darkness lies; . . . Yet we behold the day unfold across the morning skies, . . . For Christ who rose to heav'n above is coming back again, . . . His own shall rise as He arose, and with Him they shall reign.

"The Resurrection and the Life" in Christ the Lord we see, for Life hath overcome the stroke of Death on Calvary. . . . Awake, O world, to welcome Him who, from the gates of pearl . . . Shall come "with healing in His wings," love's banner to unfurl.

Behold, He standeth at the door, then haste thy lamp to trim, . . . Lift up thine eyes in gratitude, O Christian, worship Him! . . . He breaks the fetters from the soul, new life through Him is born, . . . Then praise the living Lord of Life this Resurrection morn!