

Megiddo Message

The background of the cover is a photograph of several irises. There are two purple irises at the top left, and several white irises with yellow centers. The irises are growing in a garden setting with green foliage and a dark, reflective surface, possibly water, in the background.

I Know...

Vol. 86, No. 4
May, 1999

Do I *HAVE* To?

*Do we ever give
the idea that we
really do not want
what God is
offering?*

HAVE you ever heard a child say in a groaning tone, usually at the request of a parent to clean a room or wash the dishes—"Mom, do I have to?" Most parents look forward to the day when their children will take responsibility with a more pleasant attitude. But all realize that that kind of attitude comes only with time and maturity.

How does God feel toward us when we say by our actions, "Lord, do I *have* to?" when He asks us to do something we would rather not do, or give up something we would rather keep?

Try to imagine how you would feel if you had given someone a pleasant home and everything they would need for the rest of their lives—which they accepted—and then when you asked them to do some very small service they responded, "Do I have to?"

Do we give God the impression that we do not really want to do what He asks, when He has offered us more than "eye has seen," more than "ear has heard," more than our most extravagant imaginations can imagine? By our slow, halting obedience do we tell Him that we do not feel any strong obligation to Him?

Does He not long to speak sharply to those who should be mature—who are still in the "Do I have to" stage?

The apostle Paul and other New Testament writers expressed their relationship to God as slaves or bond slaves (which they rejoiced to be). Over their attitude toward serving Christ was not the slightest shadow of complaint. They thrilled to be Christ's slaves. It was an obligation and an opportunity. Paul demonstrated in his life that it was not forced upon him but that he loved to serve. It was his glorious privilege and continual joy to be able to live, work, serve, sacrifice, suffer, and even die for Christ's sake.

Why can we not have this same attitude today about our lives?

Are you a mature Christian like Paul, or are you still in the "Do I have to" stage, looking at every sacrifice or denial as a weighty burden? Do you see your responsibilities as obligations or opportunities? Do you look at life on a day-to-day basis as a burden or a privilege?

Yes, how do you view the giving of your time, abilities, and energy? When you pray, when you assemble, when you study, is it an obligation or an opportunity?

In other words, do you really love and long to serve God more than anything else in the world—or do you say by your actions, if not by words, "Do I have to?"

If we keep in mind the reward God has offered us, there will be no "Do I have to" obedience in our life. It will all be willing, eager, and loving. We will realize that serving God—whatever the nature of the service—is the most wonderful thing we could do with our lives.

And it is our only escape from the bondage of mortality, our only passport into the eternal Kingdom of Christ with all its eternal delights. ♦

MEGIDDO MEANS ...

"a place of troops" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon); "a place of God" (Young's Analytical Concordance). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

WE BELIEVE ...

- in God, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.
- in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- in ourselves as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.
- in the promise of God, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

The Herald and the KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: ...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

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May 1999
Volume 86, No. 4

Megiddo Message

The **Megiddo Message** (USPS 338-120) is published monthly (except March/April and September/October issues) by the Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619. Telephone: 716-235-4150. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, New York.

Publication Staff: Ruth E. Sisson, Editor; Gerald Payne, Executive Editor; Newton H. Payne, Senior Editor (emeritus); Artwork and design by Margaret A. Tremblay; Subscriptions Manager, Donna R. Mathias.

Subscription Rate and Renewals: One year (ten issues) \$5.00. Send to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619-1697. Or call 716-235-4150.

Address Changes? Be sure to notify promptly of any change in your address. Please include your old mailing label and your new address. Send to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619-1697. **Postmaster:** Send all changes of address to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, NY 14619.

URL: <http://www.megiddo.com>. **E-mail address:** megiddo@servtech.com.

Manuscript Policy: Unsolicited manuscripts for publication are not accepted.

The **Megiddo Message** is the official organ of the Megiddo Church, Inc., founded in 1880 by L. T. Nichols. Publication was begun in 1914. Maud Hembree, Editor-in-Chief (1914-1935); Ella M. Skeels, Executive Editor (1935-1945); Percy J. Thatcher, Editor (1945-1958); Kenneth E. Flowerday, President and Editor (1958-1985); Newton H. Payne, Editor (1985-1997).

The **Megiddo Message** is available in microfilm from University Microfilms, Inc.; Serials Acquisitions, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Indexing: The **Megiddo Message** is indexed annually, in December. Combined indexing available, 1944-1996.

Bible Quotations: Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version. Other versions are identified as follows: NEB—New English Bible; NIV—New International Version; NASB—New American Standard Bible; RSV—Revised Standard Version; TLB—The Living Bible; JB—The Jerusalem Bible; Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English; Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation; NRSV—New Revised Standard Version; NKJV—New King James Version; NLT—The New Living Translation; NCV—The New Century Version.

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"I Know..."

RESURRECTION

By RUTH E. SISSON



In a world trembling with fear and instability, Christian confidence shines like a light in the dark. The writer of the book of Hebrews described it in these words: "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast" (Heb. 6:19).

What about the Resurrection of Jesus brings such hope? It is the power of two words spoken so long ago and reaffirmed again and again by believers through the years: "I know." It is the confidence born of living, active, abiding faith in God.

Real hope is no cold facing of a far-away reality. It is the hope, the confidence, the renewed assurance in those words spoken by our Lord Himself: "because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19). There is no wavering in this claim, no hesitation or wondering; only positive, sublime certainty. "I know."

The resurrection of Jesus heightens our personal conviction, "I know that my Redeemer lives"—and who does not need a Redeemer? Who is free from the bondage of mortality? Who can say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15:55). Well we know that the things seen are all temporal, transitory, soon to pass away. Only the things not seen are eternal.

Job's Confidence

Speaking of the resurrection of Christ the patriarch Job wrote confidently some two millenniums in advance: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth" (Job 19:25).

There are two points to note especially in this text. First, Job was not expressing his belief in an event which had already happened, but only his trust in the God who had promised it would happen. Job's was a certainty born of an absolute faith in God. In Job's time, the Redeemer had not yet been born, much less resurrected. Yet he was able to say, "I know that my Redeemer lives." Then there is the second point of Job's personal belief in a personal resurrection. "Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God," (Job 19:26). Looking ahead nearly two millenniums, Job was confident. His Redeemer would live—and he himself would see Him. It was another positive "I know."

Shouldn't we share his faith, we who know of the birth of the Redeemer, His death and triumphant resurrection—and with such an abundance of confirming evidence? How can we still doubt in the face of abounding evidence?

A well known evangelical minister, when retiring from active ministry, told of a meaningful childhood lesson he had learned. It was his first job. His task: to assist a neighbor who was a painter. One particular task, in which he took great delight, was that of holding the ladder when his employer was working on very high build-

*"I know that my Redeemer liveth,
and that he shall stand at the latter
day upon the earth." —Job*

CERTAINTIES

ings. One day while his painter-employer was working high on a ladder, suddenly the ladder shifted to the left.

Alarmed, the boy immediately tried to right the ladder to its former position, thinking this was his duty. He recalls being relieved of his job so quickly that he hardly knew what had happened.

What is the lesson? That ladders sometimes shift, and trying to right them only makes matters worse. The only good solution is prevention, to lean your ladder on something so secure that it can never shift.

The lesson applies both to natural ladders and ladders of faith. Stretch your ladder of faith to the very highest height and lean it on unshakable Divine certainties, and no trembling of earth can alarm you.

What makes the Resurrection of Christ an unshakable reality? Just one word: evidence.

Evidence: From History

What historical evidence supports Christ's resurrection? What say historians of the great event?

Historians offer a strange treatment of the resurrection. Most history books use one of two devices. The first is silence. After mentioning the death of Jesus, they immediately shift to the growth of the early Church in Jerusalem, leaving the reader to wonder what the church had to "grow on." Their second method is to quali-

fy the report of the resurrection so as to withhold any personal endorsement. For example: "Jesus rose from the dead on Easter morning, so his followers confidently believed." Or, "according to the claims made in the Gospels,..." etc. But what a weak treatment of an event which carries so weighty a line of evidence!

Much Christian literature refers to Jesus' resurrection and the empty tomb as phenomena that can be approached only by faith, not through history. This, however, is not true, especially in the case of the empty tomb. Nor is all evidence for the resurrection phenomena confined to the New Testament.

Any ancient historian would have to admit that a profound religious explosion occurred in Jerusalem shortly after Christ's crucifixion, with repercussions that shook even distant Rome. A pagan Roman author who detested Christianity had to admit that only thirty-one years after the death of Jesus "a great number" of His followers in the distant imperial capital believed so strongly in His resurrection that they gave up their lives in Nero's great persecution (Tacitus, *Annals*, xv:44).

As the historian moves closer to Judea to examine the evidence, he is impressed with the variety of what might be called the fallout from the resurrection explosion. The psychological change in the disciples is striking.

What transformed Peter, the man who could be unhinged by questions from a servant girl, into so bold a spokesman for the faith that the whole Sanhedrin could not silence him?

If the disciples had deceitfully tried to string a new faith in the world—motivated by some hazy wish-fulfillment—would they have gone on to give their very lives for this fraud? Clearly, they deemed themselves eyewitnesses of the risen Christ, or they would not have been willing to die for it.

What transformed Jesus' doubting brother James and the great persecutor Saul into ardent believers and supporters?

The birth and growth of the Church, its survival and rapid expansion, offer telling evidence for a mighty launching. Could it all have been rooted in a fraud, or did something happen that resurrection morning that changed the whole picture?

Actually, in point of fact, the resurrection has much more supporting evidence than does, for instance, the assassination of Julius Caesar on the Ides of March in 44 B.C. Why will historians not give to the resurrection of Christ the same status of historical fact—especially with so many eyewitness reports in the four Gospels, the Acts, and the letters of Peter and Paul? Yet most historians today still quietly refuse to accept these.

Evidence: The Empty Tomb

There is another aspect of the evidence for the resurrection of Christ often overlooked. It is the phenomenon of the empty tomb. Both the Gospels and the early Church affirmed, "He is not here" and then immediately added, "He is risen," with this additional thrust: "Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

*I know the one in
whom I trust, and I am sure
that he is able to guard what
I have entrusted to him
until the day of his
return. —2 Timothy 1:12*

There is extremely important historical evidence for the empty tomb. It deals with the question: Where did the Christian church come from? To this the answer must be: Jerusalem. But this is the very last place it could have started if Jesus' tomb had remained occupied, since anyone producing a dead Jesus would have driven a wooden stake through the heart of any faith that was based on a supposed resurrection.

What happened in Jerusalem seven weeks after the first Resurrection could have taken place only if Jesus' body were somehow missing from Joseph's tomb, for otherwise the Temple establishment, in its imbroglio with the Apostles, would simply have aborted the movement by making a brief trip over to the sepulcher of Joseph of Arimathea and unveiling the contents. They did not do this, however, because they knew the tomb was empty. Their official explanation for it—that the disciples had stolen the body—was an open admission that the sepulcher was indeed vacant.

The objection will arise: But the supposed failure of the authorities to produce Jesus' body rests only on New Testament sources. True, it rests on them, but not on them *only*. There is also evidence from purely Jewish and Roman sources and traditions, ranging from Josephus to the fifth-century compilation. What is important about these references, which also admit an empty tomb, is that they are what historians term "positive evidence from a hostile source," which is the strongest kind of historical evidence.

Well into the second century A.D., and long after Matthew recorded its first instance, the Jerusalem authorities continued to admit an empty tomb by ascribing it to the disciples' stealing the body. Justin Martyr, who came from neighboring Samaria, reported about 150 A.D. that Judean authorities even sent specially commissioned men

across the Mediterranean to counter Christian claims with this explanation of the resurrection. And Justin Martyr lived close to New Testament Judea in both space and time. He was intimately enough acquainted with other details of the life of Christ that he could report that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and that he personally had seen some plows and yokes made by Joseph and Jesus in their carpenter shop up in Nazareth, which he thought of excellent, durable quality.

Does any early source, friendly or hostile, claim that Jesus' tomb was occupied after the time of the resurrection, that the sepulcher was not empty? Such a claim would have been an obvious slash through the Resurrection proclamations of the early Church. Yet no authority in any way close to the event in space or time makes this claim. And no shred of evidence has yet been discovered in literary sources or archeology that would disprove this statement. Is not all this tremendous evidence for the certainty of the resurrection of Christ?

Does this, then, prove the Resurrection? An empty tomb may not prove a resurrection, but a resurrection would require an empty tomb. Its occupancy, indeed, would have effectively disproved it.

What a contrast between the certainty of the Word of God and the uncertainty of the promises of earthborns. At the time of Jesus' crucifixion, when the body of Jesus was being laid in the tomb, Pilate told the soldiers, "Ye have a watch, go your way, make it as sure as ye can" (Matt. 27:65). "Make it as sure as ye can"—but how pitifully weak and feeble is such surety! How sure can anything be which has only human power behind it—and the God of heaven against it? What strength had Pilate's soldiers against the angels of God who came to resurrect Jesus? The record tells us they were "as dead men."

And what audacity for us ever to think that we have any power against God! If we are not willing to give up our ways for His and our thoughts for His, we shall find ourselves fighting against God—and just as effectively as did Pilate. Any power against God is no power at all.

The End of the Story

The one solid reality undergirding the Christian's hope of future life is the Resurrection of Christ. "Now is Christ risen from the dead" (1 Cor. 15:20), wrote the apostle Paul. There is nothing uncertain or indefinite about it. "Now is Christ risen."

A gentleman stood looking one day into a store window. Standing next to him and also looking in was a little boy. It was near Easter, and in keeping with the season the

shopkeeper had arranged a setting of the crucifixion. After a while, the boy turned to the man. "Them's Roman soldiers," he explained. The man said nothing, but kept studying the window. "And there's Jesus," the boy continued. Still no response. "They killed Him." By this time the man, having satisfied his curiosity, started to walk away. Then he heard a patter of young feet behind him and felt a tug on his sleeve. It was the boy. "Mister," he said, "I forgot to tell you the most important part. He's alive again!"

This most important part is indeed the focus of the whole event—even more, of the whole life of Christ. Had it not been for that Resurrection, death would have ended all and Jesus would have been as other men. But for Jesus, death was not the end. The road that led Jesus to the cross did not dead-end there. It kept right on to a triumphant reversal, to risen life, power, victory and immortality. Jesus is alive, and alive forevermore!

More Certainties — from the Apostle John

There are other strong certainties for the Christian believer. Let us look at a few expressed by the apostle John in his First Epistle.

Nothing in the whole world is so outspoken as the word of God. Philosophers have always taught people to think for themselves, to reason, to theorize and draw logical conclusions. But how far beyond this is the certainty that declares in no uncertain terms, "We know." This positive assertiveness occurs and recurs numerous times in Scripture. The apostle John notes three important points of certainty as his own personal testimony. The first is his opening description of Jesus Christ:

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life" (1 John 1:1). Here is John's subject. Could any more positive assertion be made? His words accent the vivid reality of his own experience. To this aged apostle, his days with Jesus were as real as if they were but yesterday. Time and maturity have only enriched the memory and added understanding to the experience. Now he realizes that when they heard, saw, looked upon and touched the living Christ, they were in reality touching the living Word of God, so completely did He exemplify that Word in His daily life.

And again: *"For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (1 John 1:2).*

"We know," John said. What do we know? The "Word of life," "the life," and "eternal life." All were meaningful terms to John because they reminded him of Christ. In Christ the "Word of life," the wisdom of God, became alive and visible as it had never been before. The heavenly Father had given Him the wisdom that is the way to life, and He spent His entire earthly life showing it to others. What better assurance could one ask? This is the same Jesus who was shortly to say, "I am he that liveth, and was

dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. 1:18).

John felt the richness of his experience in having known Christ, the perfect manifestation of the life God desires. So devoted was Jesus to the Father, so absorbed in doing His Father's will that He could say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Here is further connection between "life" and "eternal life." Jesus preached the good news of eternal life; at the same time He showed men that eternal life could be a reality for us—as we learn to love and live that same holy life.

John's strong personal testimony probably had two purposes as he penned it: to express the deeper insights into

Great God, create my soul anew,
Conform my will to Thine.
Melt down my heart, and let it flow,
And take the mold Divine.

Seize my whole frame into Thy hand;
Here all my pow'rs I bring:
Manage the wheels by Thy command,
And govern ev'ry spring.

O may my feet no more depart,
Nor wand'ring senses rove;
Nor let my unbelieving heart
Arraign the God above!

Then not the sun shall, more than I
His Maker's will perform;
Nor travel swifter through the sky,
Nor burn with zeal so warm.

—Selected

the meaning of Christ's life and example which time had impressed upon his own mind; and at the same time to let all know that Jesus was a real human being. Contrary to the heresies of the time, Jesus was real. John knew. He had been both an eyewitness and an ear-witness. He and others had enjoyed intimate friendship with the Master. Jesus was no incarnation of a deity; He was no phantom walking around in a human shell. He was real.

So John for the third time in his introduction repeats the certainty underlying his conviction: *"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).*

But this is not all John says about the certainty of his hope. Three other vigorous certainties form the climax of his letter.

The First Certainty

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he

Michael Faraday, a 19th century Puritan scientist and inventor, responsible for many significant discoveries, was also known for his non-orthodox religious views. Near the close of his life, an interviewer asked him about his speculations on the hereafter. Faraday answered: "Speculations? I have none. I am resting on certainties." And he quoted 2 Timothy 1:12, "I know whom I have believed..."

that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18).

John is not saying that it is impossible for the child of God to stumble or fall in his struggle to achieve this end; if this had been true he would not have needed to give frequent warnings all through his Epistle as he did. John is describing the ultimate quality of the child of God: a state of sinlessness.

This affirmation comes directly after his exhortation to pray for brothers who sin. Eternal life is the Christian goal, promised by God to overcomers. In his Gospel, John indicates that this is an achievement, not a natural endowment. Speaking of Christ he says, *"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God"* (John 1:12). Eternal life is not promised to all indiscriminately.

God calls us His sons and daughters even now while we are in the process of achieving this status. When we start in the way to life, we are said to be *"begotten"* or *"born"* into His family—not that we are saved or already immortal or perfected, but we are what Peter called *"newborn babes,"* ready to learn and grow in Christ (1 Pet. 2:1-2). Such an earnest babe *"keepeth himself"* so that the evil cannot overpower him. He utilizes all his mental and moral powers to keep himself free from sin. This does not mean that he never falls, but when he falls he gets up and goes on every time.

John's thought is the same as that of 1 John 3:9, which the New International Version translates: No one born of God *"will continue to sin."* It is a process of learning and growing.

The Second Certainty

The apostle declares, *"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness"* (1 John 5:19).

This is the Christian's assurance. The Elder does not say *"we think"* or *"we hope we are of God"* but *"we know that we are of God."*

But let us think carefully about who the *"we"* may be. We do not automatically belong. This *"we"* is no self-appointed class who make the law they keep. Only

the serious, committed, wholehearted, believing Christian can qualify, he who is continually renewing his sincere faith. His endeavors to follow Christ are real, serious, genuine. What assures him that he is of God? It is nothing less than the genuineness of his character in the sight of God.

In dreadful contrast John says that *"the whole world lieth in wickedness."* It is in the grip and under the dominion of that wicked one, the evil heart of man.

Moreover, the world lieth there; it is not represented as struggling actively to be free, but quietly lying. The world includes all who walk in darkness, all who are strangers to the living way.

If our own life is inspired by the world and its goals and ambitions and lusts, we are part of that realm.

John wastes no words, neither does he blur the issue. Everyone belongs either to God or to the world. He makes no distinction between the civilized and uncivilized, between the educated and the uneducated. Whether they be the refined Ephesians or the wild Parthians, his judgment is the same; if they have no interest in the plan of God, they are of the world. There is no intermediate class.

Today we live in a world possessed by evil in high and low places, evil so widespread and so powerful that only God shall be able to deal with it. Were John among us today, wouldn't he pronounce the same judgment in this time as he did long ago, *"The whole world lieth in wickedness"*? Wouldn't he urge us to realize the tremendous contrast, and the great need to make certain that we are of God?

The Third Certainty

Then comes a third certainty which the Christian holds—the certainty of believing faith, knowing of a certainty that Christ is, and that God is true. John writes,

"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

For centuries our race has tried to discover the Supreme Being and the destiny of life. Because they are easily satisfied with inferior substitutes, the majority are still in darkness.

Not so with those who know God. Christ came teaching a gospel of salvation. In His own life He manifested the holy principles of God. As Jesus said, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father" (John 14:7). Christ showed the way to God, who is the source of life and the Giver of eternal life through Jesus Christ (John 5:26, 21; 1 John 2:25). That is the glorious destiny that Christians are certain of if they abide with the Father and the Son. Or as John phrases it, "This is the true God, and eternal life."

Some religious people like to believe that John is in this passage giving unequivocal evidence of the deity of Christ. By the words "This is the true God, and eternal life," they say John is referring to Christ, thus stating that Christ is the "true God." While "Christ" is mentioned immediately before, it seems the most natural reference is to the subject not locally nearest but dominant in the mind of His apostle. John has been saying much about the true God in contrast to the many false gods.

Paul's Confidence

The confident tone of "I know" is sounded again by the apostle Paul in his letter to his son-in-the-faith Timothy. He writes: "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). Never was affirmation more positive or absolute. There was no chance for error. He had placed himself on deposit as security, persuaded that God was able to keep that which he had "committed unto him against that day." There was no question in Paul's mind. It was certain.

What was Paul certain about? That he was not traveling down a dead-end street. The cause to which he was giving his life was not going to fail. He knew whom he had believed, he knew whom he served, and he knew he would be rewarded for all that he was doing.

Is it not our sacred privilege today to share this same confidence? Yes, we know whom we serve. We know whereof we speak. We know whom we have believed, and that if we do on our part, that same future is secure for us! Is it not a glorious confidence?

Can we, you and I, truly share in this "I know"? The answer lies with us. Are we living each day so that we can claim this same positive assurance? Are we living so that we know our daily life is building for us a record for eternity? Can we say "I know" and mean it? Can we say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed," and with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth"?

Oh, our great God, who orders the universe and has given life to billions and quadrillions of shining angels, is able—abundantly able. He can do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think"—and He will, if we do our part. Our part. That is the only uncertainty to be overcome.

Let us add to our confident hope our own positive determination and say, "I know, God helping me, that I shall overcome," and then work to make that determination a reality.

We can, if we will. ♦

HOLY BIBLE

The Book of BOOKS

Within a nook there rests a Book
To which I oft repair;
A wondrous Book which all forsook
In ages of despair.

It is the Word by Apostles heard,
And Prophets, long ago;
As they were stirred, e'en by our Lord,
To write what we should know.

The Bible is my daily quiz—
The words found written there
Search deep within, to find each sin,
As no one else would dare.

A friend indeed it is to feed
My hungry, longing soul;
It fills each need with fruitful seed,
And teaches self-control.

It is a thorough furnisher
For ev'ry honest heart,
And gives a joy without alloy
As we from sin depart.

It guides aright, through day and night,
No matter what the hour;
And sends a light that pilgrims might
Find safety in its tow'r.

When I am sad it makes me glad;
Its promises ring true;
'Tis there I find that human kind
Can be made over new.

Its truths revealed—they are not sealed—
Proclaim Christ's coming near;
They say, "Make haste! no time to waste,
To ev'ry word give ear."

Oh, may I always heed its call,
And its commands obey;
For then I will God's law fulfill,
And live through endless day.

—Liot L. Snyder

Know Your Bible?

CONTAINERS

1. Where did the gold and silver vessels used at Belshazzar's feast come from?
2. What container was used to hold the oil with which Samuel anointed David?
3. What kind of vessel was carried by the man who led the two disciples to the upper room?
4. In what kind of a container did the widow of Zarephath keep her oil?
5. What did King Uzziah have in his hand when he offered incense at the altar in violation of the law?
6. What name is used in Revelation for the vessels from which the seven angels poured forth wrath?
7. What containers did Jesus mention in the parable about old and new wine?
8. Into what container did Gideon wring dew out of the fleece?
9. Complete Isaiah's statement with the proper container: "The nations are as a drop of a _____."
10. What container did Jesus use when He washed the disciples' feet?

COMPARISONS

Fill in the blanks with the names of the Bible characters to whom the following expressions are applied:

1. As patient as _____
2. As strong as _____
3. As wise as _____
4. As impetuous as _____
5. As brave as _____
6. As hard-hearted as _____
7. As skeptical as _____
8. As zealous as _____
9. As curious as _____
10. As old as _____
11. As cruel as _____
12. As friendly as _____ and _____

IDOLS

1. What heathen god fell down before the ark of the covenant?
2. What idol was ground to powder, mixed with water, and given to the Israelites to drink?
3. Who was the Jewish king whose wives turned his heart toward other gods?
4. What man, in the times of the Judges, had "a house of gods," made from silver he had taken from his mother?
5. Who wrote, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols?"
6. What was the name of the god of the Moabites?
7. What was the name of the fire that was worshiped with human sacrifices?
8. What goddess did the Ephesians worship?
9. Which king of Judah removed his mother from being queen because she had made an idol in the grove?
10. What city did Paul see wholly given to idolatry?

ART THOU?

1. Who asked, "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?"
2. Who asked, "Art thou my very son Esau?"
3. Who asked, "Art thou the King of the Jews?"
4. Who was asked, "Art thou a Roman?"
5. Who was asked, "Whose daughter art thou?"
6. Who was asked, "Where art thou?"
7. Who asked an angel, "Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman?"
8. Who asked Jesus, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"
9. Who was asked, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass?"
10. Who asked, "Who art thou, Lord?"

HOW?

Who asked these questions?

1. "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"
2. "How can he love God whom he hath not seen?"
3. "How is it that ye sought me?"
4. "How shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me?"
5. "How can a man be born when he is old?"
6. "How can I [understand], except some man should guide me?"
7. "How long halt ye between two opinions?"
8. "How can we know the way?"
9. "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord?"

(Answers on page 26)



Dear Father, I know that

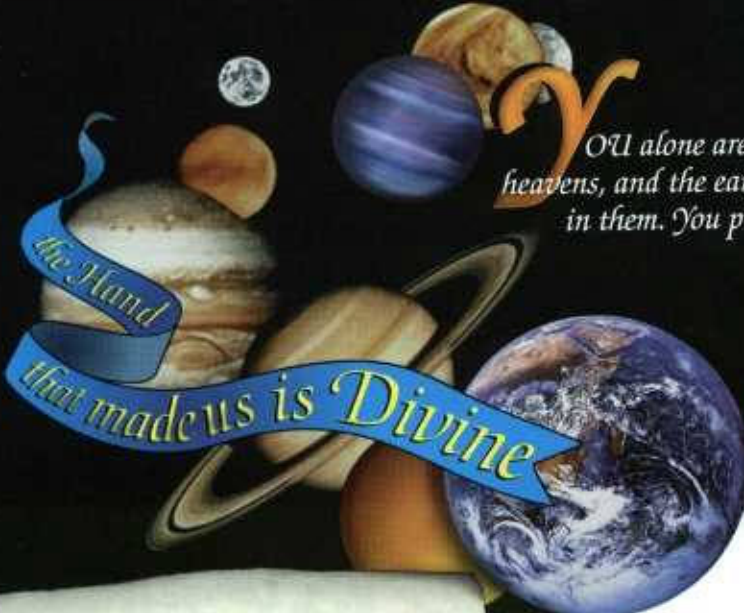
You are able to do more than I can ask, more than I can imagine, yes exceeding abundantly more than I can ask or imagine.

I thank You, Father, for the friends You have blessed me with. Help me to be faithful to them, and worthy of their trust. Help me to be an example at all times, an example of Your power to change my life.

Help us to challenge one another as we develop strength to walk in the footsteps of Your Son. May we sharpen each other as iron sharpens iron. Grant us honesty of heart, that we may love and encourage one another. And help us to be sensitive to the interests of each other, laying down all selfishness, thinking of others before ourselves.

Help me to live my life as You want me to live it, to please You and not myself.

And may the Word of Christ shine in my life, and will Your angels watch over and protect me from harm when I am serving You in sincerity and in truth. And help me to keep growing in knowledge of Your Word, so that I can be strong to defend it at all times. AMEN. ♦



YOU alone are God. You have made... the heavens, and the earth and the seas, and everything in them. You preserve it all. —Neh. 9:6 TLB

The Hand that made us is Divine

God's Whirling Winds

Did You Know...?

- ✓ ...that the tornado is the most powerful localized climactic force on earth?
- ✓ ...that the tornado can strike anytime, anywhere in the world, day or night?
- ✓ ...that the mighty twister can release kinetic energy at the rate of one billion watts?
- ✓ ...that the tornado's parent, the thunderstorm, has 40,000 times more power?
- ✓ ...that the average tornado is almost ten times more powerful than a 20-kiloton nuclear bomb?
- ✓ ...that the rotational speed of the most powerful tornado is nearly 500 mph?
- ✓ ...that no direct measurements have ever been made of the most powerful tornadoes because they destroy all standard measuring instruments?
- ✓ ...that the mathematical chance of the F-5 tornado striking any given acre of land twice is one in ten million years?

By GERALD R. PAYNE

*No matter how beautiful a day in spring
You never know what it may bring,
Buds unfolding into beautiful flowers,
Or storms with lightning and drenching showers.*

*No matter how beautiful a day in spring
You never know what it may bring,
The peaceful scent of spring's sweet perfume,
Or the tornado leaving destruction and gloom.*

*No matter how beautiful a day in spring
You never know what it may bring,
But never forget to kneel and pray.
And thank your God for every new day.*

The day seems so ordinary. A light and warm southerly breeze is blowing. It feels really good so early in the morning, a beautiful spring day, perfect for travel. Saying good-bye to friends we have been visiting, my wife and I start our trip homeward. Soon the clouds begin boiling up in the south.

About two hours into our trip, the wind becomes as still as death. The clouds turn from bluish gray to an ominous dense gray blue. Lightning flashes in the sky a short distance ahead. A huge rain drop spatters on our windshield. We feel a strong wind from the west.

Then the rain starts coming down in torrents. Our truck rocks with the force of the wind. Then it begins to hail. "If only we can make it to the bridge ahead," I think! But as we get nearer, we see there is no more space, it has all been taken. The hail is harder now, and we must pull over and stop. No bridge, no ditch, nowhere to turn for protection! Tuning into a local radio station, my wife and I can barely hear the weather report above the roar of the rain, wind and hail: a tornado has just been spotted in our area! The hail continues to pummel our light truck until the ground is white, as if it had snowed.

Then it all ends, as quickly as it began, with one last thud on our pickup truck leaving a baseball-sized dent.

We had narrowly escaped one of nature's fiercest storms—the tornado.

A day is coming that will seem just like that spring day when the storm came by surprise. That coming storm will be like the coming of a tornado, with lightning, hail and rain, sweeping

across the whole earth. *"When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. In those days before the Flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. People didn't realize what was going to happen until the Flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes"* (Matt. 24:37-39 NLT).

What is a tornado?

"Tornado" is derived from *tronada*, the Spanish word for thunderstorm. It is a vortex of violent winds whirling around a concentrated area of extremely low atmospheric pressure. The most powerful localized climactic force on earth, it is the strongest of all surface winds.

The tornado is differentiated from other whirling winds by its size, strength and location. A twister becomes a tornado when its whirling vortex touches ground. If on water, it is called a water spout. A tornado is a rotating funnel-cloud air mass larger than a whirlwind but usually having a diameter of less than a mile.

Ask the residents of areas that frequently see tornadoes, and you will get an abundance of testimony about this incredible, destructive, energy-generating machine. There are even eyewitness reports of these whirling vortices being laced with a continuous web of lightning and wreaking with the stench of sulfur and ozone.

The judgments of God, which will soon come upon the earth, have been compared to a storm that brings hail, floodwaters, and destruction in its wake. Hear the words of God's prophets of old: *"Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place... And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein"* (Isa. 28:17; Zech. 13:8).

How is a tornado formed?

Moist, warm air collides with cold, dry air producing powerful thunderstorms, heavy rains and often hail. Cooling from the cooler air mass causes the moist air to condense quickly, releasing latent heat which warms the air, making it buoyant. The trapped warmed air finds an escape route and then rises rapidly at speeds up to 150 mph, rotating almost always counter-clockwise as it rises. Upper level winds tilt the thunderstorm creating the anvil common to this type of storm cell, and interactions of the air masses intensify the whirling updraft. As the spinning column of air rotates faster and faster it extends higher into the storm punching through an overlying stable layer and continuing upward into a zone of cool, dry air. The meeting of the warm moist air and the cool dry air causes the whirling warm air mass to spin faster as it becomes smaller in diameter. The action may be compared to a skater spinning on ice; when the skater pulls his arms inward his spinning speed is increased greatly. So with the up-rush of the warm

moist air. As the cool dry air plunges downward, a powerful vortex motion forms a funnel-shaped cloud. When the cloud touches the ground, it becomes a tornado.

The first visible indication of tornado development is usually a funnel-shaped cloud, which extends downward from the heavy dark clouds that accompany a severe thunderstorm. The tornado becomes darker when debris is forced into its intensifying vortex when it touches the earth. Tornadoes often occur in groups, and several twisters sometimes descend from the same cloud base. Some give no visible warning until destruction strikes.

What will bring about the storm of God's judgments when Christ returns? The God-decreed time will have arrived.

The time is fixed, *"Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained,"* even Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31). The storm will be amply announced, but few will heed the warnings. As Paul, in Romans 2:5-6 (NLT) explains, *"No, you won't listen. So you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself because of your stubbornness in refusing to turn from your sin. For there is going to come a day of judgment when God, the just judge of all the world, will judge all people according to what they have done."*

Spring, tornado season

Tornadoes may occur at any time during the year. In the United States, more occur during May than in any other month of the year; more than half occur in the months of April, May and June.

What time of day are tornadoes most likely to strike?

(Continued on page 24)



THE FIRST THING

An old-fashioned story

TOM AWOKE especially early. This Saturday was to be a big day. Ever since last Monday, when he had received that letter from Mr. Gerard Lieberman, he had been looking forward to it. The letter had requested Tom's presence at Mr. Lieberman's office Saturday morning at ten o'clock.

Tom carefully polished his shoes. He even pressed his best tie, the one his mother had given him for his birthday. Everything had to be just right when he went for his appointment with Mr. Lieberman this morning. After all, not every high school freshman in Wellington had received a letter from the owner of the city's largest grocery chain. Surely it could mean only one thing: that Mr. Lieberman was going to offer him a job. At least, this was what Tom had his heart set on. Tom wanted desperately to help his parents and his four younger brothers.

It was only eight-thirty, much too early to get dressed and start on his way downtown. Tom stood looking out the dining room window, his hands in his pockets, whistling a happy tune. This was to be the day!

Suddenly the song on his lips died and he turned from the window. He had caught a glimpse of the little old lady next door who they all affectionately called Aunt Sue. She was hobbling about her yard with the help of her cane, picking up some loose papers that the wind had blown in. For the past five years Tom had always done that for her every Saturday morning. And he had always done it before eight-thirty.

"She must think I'm sick, or neglectful, or extra busy today," Tom thought to himself. He felt very guilty as he stepped to the corner of the window and took one more quick look.

"Well," he said, shrugging his shoulders as if to convince himself that it really didn't matter, "I won't be able to do such jobs anymore. I'm going to have too many more important things to do on Saturday mornings from now on."

But such thoughts didn't make Tom feel good inside. All the papers of the neighborhood seemed to blow down the street and get caught in Aunt Sue's edge. She had always cleaned it herself, until one wintry day about five years ago when she had fallen on the slippery sidewalk. Since then Tom had done this job for her. And he had never missed a single Saturday, until this one.

Tom was still feeling uneasy as he got off the bus and walked down the street toward Mr. Lieberman's large office

building. When he turned the corner he stopped short, unable to believe his eyes. There was Mr. Gerard Lieberman himself, president of the largest grocery chain for miles around, all dressed in his smart business suit, carrying a small paper bag and picking up candy and gum wrappers along the sidewalk.

Tom decided quickly to turn and walk around the block so that Mr. Lieberman would not know Tom had seen him. But before he could turn, Mr. Lieberman caught his eye and waved at him.

"Good morning, Sonny," he said cheerfully. "The custodian who usually sweeps the sidewalks is sick this morning. So, I thought I'd pick up these scraps of paper. Don't like to have litter cluttering our sidewalks. Go right up to my office, and I'll be with you in a minute."

Tom was so surprised that Mr. Lieberman spoke with him, that for a moment he couldn't think what to say. Suddenly the picture of aunt Sue came before Tom's eyes. He felt so ashamed that he wanted to run home and help her. Quickly he stepped up to Mr. Lieberman. "I'll be very glad to finish this job for you, Sir. You must have more important things to do. As soon as I'm done, I'll come up to your office—if that's all right with you," he added quickly, slightly fearful of Mr. Lieberman's reaction.

"Very well," said Mr. Lieberman as he handed Tom the bag with a bright smile. "I'll be waiting for you," he added as he disappeared through the revolving doors.

When Tom arrived at Mr. Lieberman's office, he was surprised to find five other boys sitting there, all waiting to see Mr. Lieberman. They were boys from his high school. How many jobs were available? What if there was only one? Did he stand a chance? Tom's knees trembled as he took a chair and sat down.

Just then the door opened, and Mr. Lieberman stepped into the outer office. He smiled as he greeted them. "Young men," he explained, "since I am looking for the 'just right' young man for the special position I have in mind, I went to your high school last week and spent some time with your principal. He recommended each one of you, and since you are all fine appearing students and have good records, I did not know how to make a choice, so I asked each of you to come here today."

"But since I can use just one boy, and not knowing any better method, I decided to let you do the choosing. When you arrived this morning, you all saw me with the paper bag in my hand, picking up scraps of paper. You were all

willing to come up and wait for me here, while I continued to work—all of you except one." Tom could feel his face getting redder and redder. His chin dropped, but inside his heart leaped in excitement.

Mr. Lieberman continued, uninterrupted. "As I said, I have only one job opening right now, but I hope that all of you will learn from this. No task is too small for a big person to do. Only people who stay small in their thinking find small tasks beneath them."

Then speaking directly to Tom, he said, "We have much to talk about, Tom. Step into my office, and we'll get busy right away." And to the other five he said, "There may be other opportunities for you in the weeks to come. In the meantime, keep your eyes open. Look around, and get yourselves ready for a big job by doing little jobs willingly and well."

Tom could hardly wait to get home, so he could tell the news to his mother and father. But there was another and more important reason why he was so anxious for the bus to arrive at his street corner. As soon as the bus stopped, Tom bounded off, ran down the street as fast as he could, passed his own house, and knocked at aunt Sue's door. He wanted to tell her how sorry he was that he had felt too big that morning to remove the trash from her yard, but to assure her that she could count on him from now on.

"The first thing, the very first thing every Saturday morning," Tom thought to himself as he waited for the little old lady to answer the door. "The first thing." ♦

O HAPPY ZION

(Psalm 84)

*How lovely are Thy dwellings fair! O Lord of hosts, how dear
The pleasant tabernacles are where Thou dost dwell so near!
My soul doth long and almost die
Thy courts, O Lord, to see;
My heart and flesh aloud do cry,
O living God, for Thee.*

*There even the sparrow freed from harm hast found a house of rest,
The swallow there, to lay her young, hath built her brooding nest,
Even by Thy altars, Lord of hosts,
They find their safe abode,
And home they fly from round the coasts
Toward Thee, my King, my God.*

*Happy, who in Thy house reside where Thee they ever praise,
Happy, whose strength in Thee doth bide, and in their
hearts Thy ways.
They pass through Baca's thirsty vale,
That dry and barren ground
As through a fruitful watery dale
Where spring and showers abound.*

*They journey on from strength to strength with joy and
gladsome cheer
Till all before our God at length in Zion do appear.
Lord God of hosts, hear now my prayer
O Jacob's God give ear,
Thou God our shield, look on the face
Of Thy anointed dear.*

*For one day in Thy courts to be is better and more blest
Than in the house of vanity a thousand days at best.
I in the temple of my God
Had rather keep a door,
Than dwell in tents of rich abode
With sin and pelf galore.*

*For God the Lord both sun and shield gives grace and glory bright,
No good from them shall be withheld whose ways are just
and right.
Lord God of hosts that reignest on high,
That man is truly blest,
Who only on Thee doth rely,
And in Thee only rests.*

QUOTABLE QUOTES...

Fine Pearls

When you admire a row of glistening pearls, do you ever think of the story behind those pearls?

A tiny grain of sand finds its way inside the shell of an oyster. Because the sand is an irritation to the oyster, and it cannot remove it, the oyster covers this irritant with layer upon layer of mother pearl—transforming it into a beautiful pearl.

Just so life's trials and irritations can be transformed into "fine pearls" (Matt. 13:45). In His wise purpose each aspiring child of God has a part to play. We must cooperate by learning His way of "looking for fine pearls." This means seeing in all our difficulties a great opportunity. And so we learn to transform the hurts of life into something beautiful. Those who look at the beauty of such a radiant, triumphant life may not realize what lies behind the beauty; but by such an attitude, we shall be filling a part in God's great purpose. *"And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels"* (Mal. 3:17).

— Selected

"Do what is right and good in the Lord's sight, so that it may go well with you" (Deut. 6:18 NIV).

Right Is Right

Uncompromising right is the only route God approves. Every step of real progress has been from right to right; and every retrogression has been from wrong to wrong. Wrong is the problem, right is the solution.

Switching their appearances changes nothing. Reclothing wrong only primps it in new apparel. Sweeping it under the rug only hides it in deception.

Right does not tolerate wrong, dress it as you please or cover it as you will. Right centers on something worthier than semblance—principle not presentation.

God rewards right, but will ultimately defeat all wrong.

*Fools make a mock at sin, will not believe
It carries such a dagger in its sleeve.*

From a Child: A Candid Observation

Danny's father brought his boss home for dinner one evening. Besides being rather gruff and self-centered, nearly everything he said was a pat on the back for himself.

The boss hadn't paid much attention to young Danny, but the child was intently watching him. Finally, the visitor became so conscious of the absorbing look of the youngster that he turned to him and said: "Say, Sonny, why do you keep looking at me?"

Danny said brightly: "My Daddy says you're a self-made man."

After beaming at the boy's father, the honored guest then turned to the child and proudly admitted that he was.

His answer didn't completely satisfy Danny, who added with utmost candor, "But why did you make yourself like that?"

God allows us the freedom to help or hurt ourselves. If we use the portion of our thought and energy on ourselves that He intended for others, we not only damage ourselves but we deprive others of the support and encouragement that God requires us to give

— Selected

The Price We Must Pay

It takes about a ton of ore to produce a small ball of gold weighing only a fraction of an ounce (an ounce today is worth about \$279.00).

Extracting gold from the earth is a slow, hard, complicated process. It has to be blasted out of solid rock, taken with great difficulty from the depths of a mine, crushed, washed, blended with mercury, heated in a furnace and soaked with cyanide, before it can finally be sold at the United States Mint in the form of gold bricks.

Developing the beautiful character that God values is like extracting gold from the earth. It takes vision, diligence, patience, along with the fire of trial.

To fulfill the purpose of our existence means constantly exercising the will to be creative, to be selfless, to be wise, to be good. But who can put a value on having a place in the kingdom of God? Its price is "above rubies." It is the pure gold of the Spirit.

— Selected

Work Loyally

*Just where you stand in the conflict
There is your place!
Just where you think you are useless
Hide not your face!
God placed you there for a purpose,
Whate'er it be;
Think He has chosen you for a purpose,
Work loyally.
Gird on your armor! Be faithful,
At toil or rest,
Whiche'er it be, never doubting,
God's way is best.
Out in the night, or on picket,
Stand firm and true;
This is the work which your Master
Gives you to do.*

— Selected

They Did It—Their Way

INSIGHTS INTO THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Part Six



For God and for Gideon

Judges 7 & 8

Times of Testing

As Gideon's volunteers gathered for combat, they surveyed the cloud of human locusts spread across the plain of Esdraelon, one hundred thirty-five thousand of them. Suddenly stout hearts began to quake. What were the Israelites against such a throng? Could they do it, a mere thirty-two thousand against four times their number?

But at the same time that they were thinking of themselves as too few, God told Gideon that he had *"too many men."*

From a human point of view, the thirty-two thousand who had rallied around Gideon were the bravest in Israel. Their hearts had been stirred by what the Lord was going to do. They wanted to do their part in ridding the land of the Midianite oppressors.

But the army before them was intimidating. As they looked at the vast host, many of them began to have second thoughts. Did they really want to expose themselves to this danger?

God does not want those who are fearful, whose faith fluctuates according to the demands placed upon it. To God, great numbers are no guarantee of great success. God wants those with great faith. And this was to be God's campaign.

So God gave Gideon directions: *"Gideon, you have too many men.... Tell the people, 'Whoever is timid or afraid may leave and go home'"* (Judges 7:2-3). Can't we hear Gideon's response, *"What, Lord... too many men?... against so vast a host?"*

But God had a reason. If He gave Gideon victory when he had so many men, the men would vaunt themselves against God and say, *"My own hand has saved me."* They would take the credit for victory to themselves—especially when odds were so against them—rather than giving it to God.

Gideon obeyed God and told anyone who was fearful to go home—hoping against hope that at most no more than a few hundred would leave. Can't we imagine how his heart sank as he saw his volunteers melting away? Yes, they were gone, scores and scores of them, twenty-two thousand in all. Cold campfires and trampled grass were the only evidence of their brief stay by the spring.



The Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and camped in the Valley of Jezreel near the hill of Moreh. Gideon and his men camped at the spring of Harod.

With only 300 fighting men, Gideon routed the Midianite thousands, chasing them across the Jordan River into the desert beyond Peniel (Penuel). There in a surprise attack, the two Midianite kings were captured and slain.

Only ten thousand remained to face the enemy's one hundred thirty-five thousand.

Another Test

Gideon had decreased his army in a ratio from three to one, and now God saw that the odds against him were still not large enough. The men would still go home claiming that they had done it, probably all the more proud because of the greater odds against them.

So God dictated another test. Gideon was to bring his ten thousand men to a nearby stream and observe them. Those who drank by bringing water up to their mouths with their hand were to be retained; those who knelt on their knees to drink the water were to be sent home.

Why such a test? Those who passed this test showed an intense spirit, ready and eager to meet the enemy. They couldn't be *caught* off guard because they would never be off guard. Even when taking a drink they kept their eye on the enemy, just in case they should need to defend themselves. These men were chosen for select service.

Gideon did as ordered, and only three hundred of his precious ten thousand passed the test. This meant a differential of more than four hundred to one. This is the ratio that God



An enemy soldier dreamed of a loaf of barley bread tumbling into camp. Barley grain was only half the value of wheat, and the bread made from it was considered inferior. In the same way, Israel's tiny band of men was considered inferior to the vast forces of Midian and Amalek. But God would make the underdog Israelites invincible.

we like a promise direct from God that told us we had nothing to worry about, that everything was under control?

But God did not merely state it in words. He also arranged an incident to give support to those words. He told Gideon to go down to the camp of the Midianites, sneak past the sentries, and there he would hear something that would give him courage. If he was afraid to go alone, he should take his servant Phurah with him.

Gideon went, and heard a man talking about a dream he had had, in which a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp. The cake had struck a Midianite tent and made it fall. Gideon's heart jumped.

Then he heard the man saying that this cake of barley bread signified the coming of Gideon—what more did Gideon need!

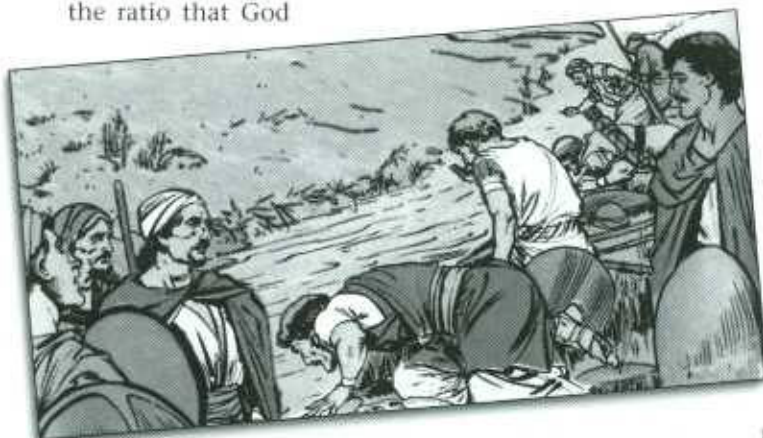
At this point, Gideon gave thanks to God and returned to his small band, ready to move forward.

Did God really need to do this for Gideon? Couldn't He have told him that he had enough evidence? After all, the angel had burned up the food—a dramatic demonstration of power. And what about the fleece test? Shouldn't these have been enough?

But God did not blame Gideon for asking for evidence yet again. And He does not blame us. He knows our need and meets it.

Three Tests for Gideon's Army:

- 1) 32,000 Volunteers
-22,000 Fearful, returned home
- 2) 10,000 Courageous: stood second test
-9,700 Drank by putting face to water
- 3) 300 Hand picked army: stood third test



accepted. Now the men would *have to* admit that God was the One who won the victory.

Encouragement for the Battle

By this time, can't we imagine that Gideon's faith once again needed reinforcement? However tremendous his faith, he also had fears. Talk about having the odds against him! It was a very real struggle of faith against doubt. In spite of all he had seen, in spite of all the assurances, Gideon still needed encouragement.

God was ready to give it. The next event in the story is a significant illustration of how God helps when His children are in need. Actually, God gave two forms of encouragement to Gideon at this point, one by a direct statement and another through a planned incident.

First, God simply told Gideon that "*with these three hundred men I will rescue you and give you victory over the Midianites*" (Judges 7:7 NLT). Isn't that enough? Wouldn't

The Battle

With courage renewed, Gideon prepared to attack. Every detail of the move was at the command of God. Truly, this was God's battle, not Gideon's.

GIDEON THE MAN

STATISTICS

- Where: Ophrah, valley of Jezreel, spring of Harod
- When: The thirteenth century BC
- Associates and relatives: Father: Joash; Son: Abimelech

Character (Strengths, Weaknesses)

- Declined an offer of temporal power, saying that God should rule
- Struggled with doubt, needed repeated faith-reinforcement
- Feared his own weaknesses and limitations
- Collected Midianite gold and used it to make an idol

Position

- Fifth judge of Israel
- Military leader, operated under Divine direction
- Hero of faith (Hebrews 11)
- Was offered a hereditary kingship by fellow Israelites

Lessons from Gideon's Life

- God does not withhold evidence to support our faith
- One—plus God—is a victorious majority
- God gives us our abilities to use in His service
- God's view isn't always our view
- God works with few as well as with many
- Obedience is the most valuable commodity in God's sight
- We are never free from the danger of falling
- God will be with us as we are with Him

And all that He needed were three hundred men who were willing to follow orders and maintain their composure.

What were their weapons? Only lamps, pitchers and trumpets. The lamps were to be hidden inside the pitchers, which being made of pottery, could be easily broken. They were to move in three groups (100 each) at the midnight hour, just after the setting of the middle watch, following their leader Gideon.

When all was ready, Gideon gave the appointed sign and all three hundred blew their trumpets, broke their

pitchers, and shouted: "*The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!*" (Judges 7:18). The Midianites, suddenly awakened from sleep, hearing the noise and seeing the lights, believed that an immense force was moving down on them. In complete panic and disarray, they began to flee in the direction of the Jordan. Their one thought was to move homeward (Judges 7:22). It is likely that even their herds of camels stampeded because of the noise and confusion.

Victory by the Few

God does not depend on numbers to win His battles. Outnumbered four hundred to one, the Israelites could not possibly have won, even with the advantage of a surprise attack or a clever strategy. But they *did* win, because God was on their side.

What does this tell us? That the most important factor is *being on God's side*. With God fighting for them, three hundred dedicated men could do what thirty-two thousand could not.

Those who took part in this campaign were also singular. They first had to be willing, even though the odds were great. Second, they needed great courage to move with confidence and efficiency. And third, they had to be exact in their obedience. Timing was of primary importance. These are the same qualities God looks for in soldiers in any day.

The battle won and the enemy in flight, and Gideon preparing to press further, he was suddenly and rudely hindered by an outbreak of jealousy. The Ephraimites, whom he had not invited into the battle, now felt slighted and came to Gideon with a serious complaint (Judges 8:1).

Gideon might have reacted with emotion, because the Ephraimites were wrong. But it is to his credit that he did not. Instead, he sought a way to assuage their feelings and settle the controversy peaceably. Using a bit of strategy, he complimented them on what they had done earlier, in killing two Midianite captains, Oreb and Zeeb. The technique worked, their feelings were quieted, they ceased to press their charge, and Gideon was able to move on with the more important task of pursuing the enemy.

This was the first outbreak of Ephraimite jealousy, but it was not the last. They were a proud people. Joshua had been of their tribe, the tabernacle was located in their city Shiloh, and their progenitor Ephraim had been an honored son of the distinguished Joseph (Gen. 48:8–20). They had come to believe strongly in themselves and their importance, and felt that they should be involved in all important matters. The problem would surface again during the time of Jephthah (Judges 12:1–6).

What is God's view of jealousy? It brings only harm. It is "*cruel as the grave*" (Song of Solomon 8:6).

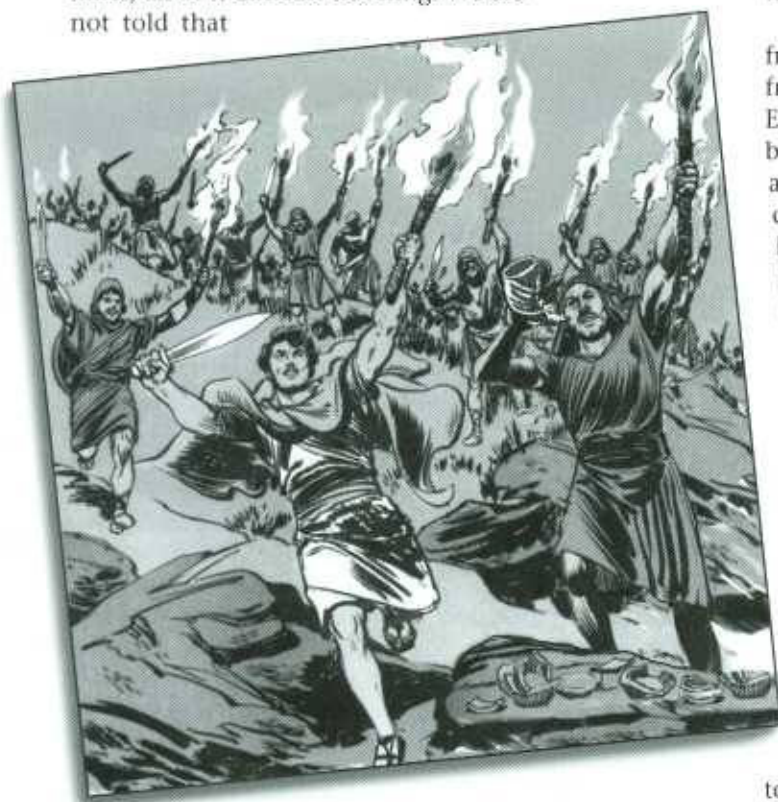
Gideon is to be commended for his wise handling of

the matter. He might have replied with emotional heat, telling them they had no reason to be hurt, that they were hindering the cause by their criticism. The result would only have been an extended delay, and the Ephraimites were in no mood to be put off.

Can't we benefit from the lesson, to keep our emotions under control, to put everything in God's hands? As Gideon saw it, God's work of pursuing the Midianites was more important than giving vent to his feelings. In this Gideon set an example for all time.

Faint, Yet Pursuing

Not only did Gideon defeat the foreigners, but he also chased them a distance of approximately one hundred fifty miles, all of it difficult traveling. We are not told that



God commanded this effort, but Gideon apparently saw it as necessary to rid Israel from the threat of the Midianites. As it turned out, he had to chase them all the way into their home territory.

He did so with only his faithful three hundred (Judges 8:4). But it was not easy. Needing provisions for his men, Gideon stopped at two cities, Succoth and Peniel. The leaders of both cities turned him down, on the pretext that since he had not captured the two kings of the Midianites, they were not about to endanger themselves by giving food to his troops. Gideon warned the leaders of the two cities that he would bring reprisal action on them after he had captured the two enemy kings (Judges 8:7-9).

We are not told how Gideon obtained the food he needed, but other cities must have provided it. In any case,

he continued through nomadic territory to the area where the enemy "*dwelt in tents*," attacked them and won a decisive victory, taking both kings, Zebah and Zalmunna, captive (Judges 8:12). Returning by way of Succoth and Peniel, he punished the citizens just as he had warned (Judges 8:16-17). Following this, he killed the two Midianite kings and returned home, fully victorious in the task God had assigned him.

Lessons for Us

God's work often calls for persistence. Gideon persisted in chasing the Midianites until he had captured and killed the two kings. This was not easy but it was a necessary part of the victory, because had they been allowed to remain they could have again renewed their oppression of Israel.

Gideon's principle source of discouragement came not from the enemy but from those who were supposedly friends. His main opposition came first from the Ephraimites, who had come to complain that they had not been invited to help. Then, the two Israelite cities, Succoth and Peniel, had refused him food. At such a show of non-cooperation, Gideon could easily have quit and gone home. After all, hadn't he done enough? If his fellow Israelites were no more interested than this in getting rid of the enemy, why should he put himself out? But Gideon was serving God, and he would not quit. He had been called by God to do this important work, and he intended to finish it.

God honors this kind of persistence and faithfulness.

Were the people of Succoth and Peniel right in not helping Gideon? No. The cause was God's and Gideon was God's servant. It was only their proper duty to support him. But they would not. They should have felt a common cause with Gideon. They should have been willing to do their part. They should have been delighted that one like Gideon was willing to take the lead in battling the foe at God's command, and have helped in the pursuit. They should have been ready to help Gideon not only with food supplies but with volunteer help to meet his other needs. But they did not.

Instead, they were afraid of the enemy that was being pursued. All they could see was a possible reprisal upon them if Gideon was not successful. They had more faith in the power of the enemy to recover than in the power of God and Gideon. They were not willing to trust that the God who had already miraculously delivered them from a host of one hundred thirty-five thousand would be able to complete the victory He had begun. Their action demonstrated disbelief, disloyalty, and outright cowardice. They put their own safety and comfort ahead of God's work.

Is it not a lesson for all time? As matters worked out, the course they chose was not even the best for their personal safety. In refusing to help the hand of Gideon, they were hurt by him. ♦ (To be continued next issue)

How Many Apostles?

"Why do you say there were just twelve apostles? It seems to me that there were at least fifteen (see Acts 1:25, 14:14; Gal. 1:19)."

The word apostle is translated from the Greek *apostolos*, and is defined in the Enhanced Strong's Lexicon as "a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders." The term is used 81 times in the New Testament, 78 of which are translated "apostle."

Why do we say that there were only twelve apostles?

In Matthew 10 we have the record of Jesus choosing His apostles. It reads: *"Now the name of the twelve apostles are these..."* (Matt. 10:2). Luke's parallel account of this passage reads, *"And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles"* (Luke 6:13). Frequently throughout the Gospels they are called *"the apostles"* (Mark 6:30; Luke 9:10; Luke 11:49; 17:5; 24:10) or simply *"the twelve"* (Matt. 26:14, 20, 47; Mark 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; Luke 8:1; 9:12; 18:31). After Judas defected, they were called *"the eleven"* (Matt. 28:16; Mark 16:14; Luke 24:9, 33). These twelve apostles (or later the eleven) were especially chosen by Jesus, and sent out to be His messengers, His witnesses, bearing His message.

It is also clear that Judas by transgression forfeited his privileged position, as was prophesied (Ps. 109:8), *"His bishoprick let another take"* (Acts 1:20).

After Jesus' ascension, the apostles, feeling the need for a twelfth member, took upon themselves to choose one. In doing so, they sought the guidance of God through prayer, then cast lots to make the choice.

We are not told directly whether this action, initiated by Peter, was right or wrong, but we do know that Jesus Himself appointed Paul to be an apostle. In Acts 22:14-15 we have Paul's own account of his conversion and call to the apostleship, along with his qualifications.

After Paul's dramatic meeting with Jesus, when he was blinded, Ananias was instructed in a divinely inspired vision to open Paul's eyes and to reveal what his work was to be in these words: *"Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel"* (Acts 9:3-6, 15).

Numerous times in his Epistles he affirms his appointment as an apostle. Nine of his Epistles open with this salutation: *"Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ..."*

Jesus' command to His disciples just before His ascension, as recorded in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4, was, *"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye*

in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." They were told to tarry, and to *"wait for the promise of the Father,"* the Holy Spirit, which they should receive *"not many days hence"* (Acts 1:5). It seems that Peter, in view of the definite command to *"wait,"* or *"tarry,"* overstepped his authority and went ahead with official business which he was not commissioned to have undertaken in the absence of the Holy Spirit. This may be supported by the fact that we do not hear any more of Matthias after this time. Matthias may have been a faithful brother and follower of Christ, even if he was not properly appointed to the special office of an apostle.

What is there in the New Testament to suggest that Jesus had only twelve apostles? One evidence is that the Holy City, symbolic of Christ's faithful bride or church, had a wall which had *"twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb"* (Rev. 21:14). Twelve, and only twelve.

Other Apostles?

If there were only twelve apostles, why is Barnabas called an apostle (Acts 14:14)? Or why is *"James the Lord's brother"* called an apostle (Gal. 1:19)?

The definition of *apostolos* in the Greek suggests that the term was used *"specifically of the twelve apostles of Christ,"* but also *"in a broader sense applied to other eminent Christian teachers"* (Enhanced Strong's Lexicon). Both Barnabas and James qualified as eminent Christian teachers, though they were not of the original chosen twelve. In this broader sense, any disciple could be an apostle, though technically the definition is still limited, as Paul said, to those who had seen *"Jesus Christ our Lord"* (1 Cor. 9:1).

◆ In the Spirit of Elijah?

"When God's prophet said, 'Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet,' isn't it possible to think God could mean that someone would come 'in the spirit of Elijah' just as John the Baptist did?"

The Jews were expecting Elijah to return personally as forerunner of Christ's coming. When they were aware of the works John the Baptist was doing they sent priests and Levites to investigate. *"And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No"* (John 1:19-21).

John's words were plain: he said he was neither Christ nor Elias (Elijah).

"Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias [Old Testament Isaiah]" (John 1:22-23).

What does the Bible say about Elijah's return? *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal 4:5).*

Notice that Malachi does not quote the Lord as saying He will send some man or group of men in the spirit of Elijah, or someone to do the work of Elijah, as many have claimed. He says definitely, *"I will send you Elijah the prophet."*

Notice also that Malachi places this coming *"before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."* This great and dreadful day of the Lord did not take place at Christ's first coming. The whole 4th chapter of Malachi is placed in the context of the time when Christ returns to earth and calls on all nations to submit, when *"all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly"* shall be destroyed. This has never happened in the history of the earth. There has never yet been a time which could be described in these words: *"For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. . . . And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 4:1, 3).* The righteous do not have the wicked *"under the soles of their feet"* today. In fact, the situation is quite the reverse.

And there was nothing about the first coming of Christ that could be called the *"great and dreadful day of the Lord."* Christ brought no judgments on the world at that time. We have no other alternative, then, but to conclude that the prophecy is at this time unfulfilled.

Some may still protest that John the Baptist came as Elijah. In Luke 1:17, the angel Gabriel told Zacharias that John would go before Him (Christ) *"in the spirit and power [not "form"] of Elias."* In Matthew 11:14 Jesus confirmed this prophecy's fulfillment when He said, *"And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come."* As Gabriel predicted, John did come in the spirit and power of Elias.

In Matthew 17, after Peter, James and John had seen Elijah and Moses in vision, they asked Jesus, *"Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things" (Matt. 17:10-11).* Note that Jesus' statement was of something yet unfulfilled: Elias literally *"is coming"*—he has not yet come—and he *"shall restore [future tense] all things."* Note also that this statement was made after John the Baptist was dead. How could Christ have meant that John the Baptist was still coming when he was already dead?

Now if Christ meant the same person in both the 11th verse, where Jesus said Elijah was still coming, and in the 12th verse where He said, *"That Elias is come already, and they knew him not,"* then Jesus contradicted himself and we cannot possibly know what He meant. But if we realize that in the 11th verse Jesus was telling His disciples that Elijah would return before His second coming (as Malachi had foretold) and that in the 12th verse He referred to John the Baptist in the spirit and power of Elias who had already come and gone, we have harmony. Otherwise Jesus' statements are meaningless, one canceling the other.

It has always been God's plan to warn the ones who would be affected before He took action. Will it be different when Christ returns? In the parable of the Ten Virgins, Jesus tells us, *"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. . . . And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (Matt. 25:1, 6).* The arrival of the Bridegroom (Christ) was announced.

We see the same announcement in the 3rd chapter of Malachi: *"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 3:1).* At Christ's second coming the messenger shall prepare the way of the Lord. *"But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap" (Mal. 3:2).* It was not difficult to abide Christ's first coming. No one had difficulty to stand when He appeared. He did not come as a refiner's fire or like fuller's soap. He came as *"...a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth" (Acts 8:32).*

Jesus' first forerunner was John the Baptist, and we believe He will have a second forerunner—Elijah the prophet—when He returns as Judge and King. *"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes" (Mal. 4:5 NIV).*

If Elijah had been transported to another place on earth what would prevent his return if God desired it?

One of Elijah's attributes seems to have been his sudden appearance whenever God needed him to deliver a message or demonstrate His power. For example, while he was on Mount Carmel *"the power of the Lord came upon Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel"* (a distance of perhaps 20 or 25 miles) (1 Kings 18:46 NIV). Surely nothing would prevent Elijah's return if God desired it. But the question is, was Elijah taken up to heaven or deposited some place on earth. We believe the Biblical account that he was taken up *"into heaven."* ♦

God's Whirling Winds

(Continued from Page 13)

They may strike at any hour of the day or night, but most frequent incidences are between 3:00 to 7:00 PM, the time most favorable for the development of severe thunderstorms.

No one knows when a tornado will strike. Likewise, "no one knows the day or the hour" when Christ will return (Matt. 24:36 NLT). But it is not a matter of knowing whether the storm (Christ's judgment) is coming, the only unknown is *when*.

Where do tornadoes strike?

The most frequent and fierce tornadoes strike the United States. But they can occur anywhere in the world.

Every state within the United States has experienced twisters. But the greatest concentration have struck what is called the "tornado belt" which embraces the Great Plains of the United States and the southeastern portion of the country. "Tornado alley," considered the breeding ground for the most violent tornadoes, is a section of the Great Plains, including parts of Oklahoma and Texas, and including the lowland areas of the Mississippi, Ohio, and lower Missouri River Valleys.

Unlike the tornado, destruction that will accompany the coming storm of Christ's judgment will be worldwide. "The whole world [of the ungodly people] will be consumed" (Zeph. 3:8 NIV). "He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth" (Ps. 96:13 NIV).

How strong is a tornado?

Tornadoes are rated on what is called the Fujita scale,* ranging from F-0 to F-5 depending on the amount of damage caused by the tornado. An F-5 tornado is one which strikes a residential construction and the foundation is swept clean. An F-5 tornado is likely to be produced only once in every 100,000 thunderstorms. And the chance of a given acre of land being hit by a tornado of any strength, even in what is called "Tornado Alley" is one in 700 years. When it comes to the mighty F-5 tornado, the mathematical chance of it striking the same place twice is one in 10 million years.

Fortunately, most Americans have never seen or experienced the tremendous power of a tornado, and remain oblivious to its potential. But even among those who have experienced it, no one knows just how strong a tornado really is. Tornadoes destroy all standard measuring instruments in their wake; hence most values given for velocity, pressure, and energy distribution have depended on theory and engineering damage estimates. Since the 1940s, radar, instrumented aircraft, and photogrammetric techniques have provided some data for analysis; even so, the data is incomplete.

The forward speed of a tornado is normally 30 to 40 mph, but may range from near zero to 70 mph. And the twister's path may average only several hundred yards in



width, and as much as 16 miles in length. But large deviations from these averages do occur. On March 18, 1925, a tornado devastated a path through Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana, in a path at times one mile wide and extending 219 miles in length. It claimed the lives of 689 persons. How destructive is tornado wind? A wind of about 50 mph strips leaves and small branches from trees. As it approaches 80 mph, it can topple shallow-rooted trees or snap weaker ones, blow down thin walls, shift roofing materials, and occasionally lift a whole roof. A wind of 81 mph may blow in large glass windows, commonly lift roofs and snap trees. Winds of hurricane strength may exert a pressure of more than 82 pounds per square foot and can flatten weak buildings on impact. The difference between a hurricane and a tornado (both are twisters) is the size and rotational speed of the tornado. The rotational speeds within a tornado are estimated to be about 300 mph, but may occasionally exceed a screaming 500 mph. The extreme rotational speed within a tornado can cause as much as a 20% drop in internal pressure in less than 30 seconds. Because normal pressure inside a building does not have time to respond to the sudden drop, an explosion results. Roofs are lifted and walls are blown outward. Fortunately, only one tornado in a thousand is classified among those which sweep clean anything they touch.

What does a tornado sound like? Its voice is said to be unlike anything else on earth. Someone has described it as a thousand express trains roaring at full throttle.

An F-5 tornado produces the most violent winds known on earth. Born of massive atmospheric thermal forces, it comes alive with great fury, spewing debris up to three miles high as it exhales into the upper atmosphere with a devastating updraft of as much as 200 mph.

*The Fujita scale, ranging from F-0 to F-5 is assessed by analyzing the amount of damage from a tornado. F-5 is the worst. An F-5 tornado is one which hits a residential construction and the bare foundation is swept clean.

A typical tornado (not one of the strongest) contains about 10,000 kilowatt-hours of energy. By comparison, the total energy (including radiation) of the 20-kiloton nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima was about 107 kilowatt-hours.

Tornadoes and thunderstorms

Tornadoes are a frightfully powerful force of nature. But have you ever thought about its progenitor the thunderstorm? A tornado, says meteorologist Davies-Jones, which has winds in excess of 200 mph, will release kinetic energy at the rate of 1 billion watts—about equal to the electricity output of a pair of large nuclear reactors. But the large thunderstorms that spawn these tornadoes are even more powerful, releasing latent heat at the rate of 40 trillion watts—40,000 times as powerful as the twister.

Even more powerful than the thunderstorm is the hurricane which is said to contain energy in excess of 10,000,000,000 (10 billion) kilowatt-hours, about the same as a Hydrogen Bomb. Yet, the energy density (energy per unit volume) of a tornado is about 6 times greater than that of a hurricane. In terms of density of energy, a tornado is the strongest of nature's storms.

The storm of God's judgments that is coming on the earth will be far, far greater than an F-5 tornado, and it will be worldwide. But it will be selectively destructive. Nothing that defiles will remain; and nothing good will be harmed. It will sweep the earth clean of all evil. How long will the coming storm last? Until all who oppose the new King are destroyed, and all who remain submit to His righteous rule. Altogether about two-thirds of the world's population will be removed before the remaining third will submit (Zech. 13:8).

The fearsome tornado

Perhaps the strangest phenomenon about the tornado is its destructive force. Reports abound about straw being driven into fence posts and trees, people being carried several hundred feet without serious injury, 70-ton railway coaches being lifted off their tracks and carried over 100 feet, one house being completely demolished, while the house next door stands unharmed, buildings exploding while lightweight items inside were unmoved, lakes being vacuumed almost dry, and so on.

Reports about the phenomenal power of tornadoes abound throughout the tornado belt. The F-5 twister has been reported to pluck up trees, automobiles, and houses with equal ease and propel them like missiles into the air, at speeds ranging from 100 to 200 mph. It has also been reported that mature trees caught inside an F-5 twister appeared to have been baked inside an oven until they exploded outward into charred splinters. It has also been said that the low pressure inside the funnel boils the sap of a tree, then detonates the tree from the inside out.

Like the tornado that can destroy one house and leave the next unharmed, so the day is coming when "Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left" (Matt. 24:40-41 NLT).

Those living in tornado country are prepared for the

Behold, the whirlwind of the LORD
goeth forth with fury, a continuing
whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon
the head of the wicked." —Jeremiah 30:23



This tornado-like description of the judgments of God testifies to its terrible power and destructive energy involved.

worst of storms. Just so should everyone be preparing now, for this great storm is soon to come upon the whole earth. Jesus warned: "Be prepared, because you don't know what day your Lord is coming" (Matt. 24:42 NLT).

Protection from the tornado

Although much remains to be learned about tornado formation and movement, remarkable advances have been made in tornado detection and warning. These systems involve analysis of surface and upper-air weather, radar detection and tracking of atmospheric changes, and spotting severe local storms. Satellite observations by NASA have also aided early detection which is important to survival.

What is the difference between a tornado watch and a tornado warning? A tornado watch is when conditions are right for the formation of tornadoes. A tornado warning is when a tornado has been sighted. But no one can expect much warning of a tornado, because tornadoes can form very rapidly, in as little as five to ten minutes, according to Robert Davies-Jones, a meteorologist at the National Severe Storms Laboratory in Norman, Oklahoma. One can only rehearse with the family the best steps to take in case of a watch, and to keep an eye on the southern sky for unstable conditions. Severe lightning may be taken as a warning to seek shelter.

How does one prepare for the strike of a tornado? One option is to construct a storm shelter, and remain alert and watchful, ready to take cover at an instant's warning.*

What is the best refuge against the coming storm? What can you and I do to prepare for the time when God will use "justice as a measuring line and goodness as the standard," when the "lies you hide behind will be destroyed as if by hail. They will be washed away as if in a flood" (Isa. 28:17 NCV)?

God offers sure and safe protection. Said the Psalmist, "Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word" (Ps. 119:114). Again he prayed, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually" (Ps. 119:117). "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Prov. 18:10). "Whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe" (Prov. 29:25). ♦

Information for this article was obtained from the following sources:
Encyclopedia Britannica CD, 1999
The Why Files, /weather/wtorally.htm
Tornadoes! The Entity, by Norman Beerger Productions.

*Those who wish to learn more about tornado preparedness should contact their local weather officials or the Red Cross.

Forget It!

"Forgetting those things which are behind."—Phil. 3:13

Is your memory like mine? Doesn't it seem at times to keep bits of rags and straw, and throw away jewels? Yes, and there are so many holes where something I treasure is always dropping through!

But from another side, perhaps our wise Creator knew what He was doing in making us the way we are. Just suppose that we could not forget. If we remembered everything all the time—can you imagine how clogged and choked life would be? The past would be all the time overwhelming us, and we would have no mind for the present or the future!

How about having a memory manager, some mechanism for sorting out the old, throwing away what is worthless, and carefully keeping everything useful?

That is what God offers us through His word. *"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee"* (Isa. 26:3). By practice, and by the grace of God, we can clean house, clear out the rubbish, and keep only the valuables.

How can we do it?

First, it is no good hoarding injuries and irritations. They ought to be swept out immediately. They are not worth keeping; and only make us—and others—unhappy. Very precious things are ruined by keeping old grudges, resentments, and vexations in mind.

If they sting like bees, they need not stick like burrs.

An old mystic offered a wise prayer, *"Lord, help us to remember the things we ought not to forget, and to forget the things we ought not to remember."*

What should we do with them? Throw them into the trash can, be done with them. They keep us ruffled and feverish; they fill the chambers of the soul with heaviness, ugliness, and gloom. They shut out the sunlight and sour the feast of life. Order them out of the house, slam the door, let them be gone!

In the same way we should put our sins behind us, once we have repented and turned from them. Why unfit ourselves for a new life by rehearsing them in memory? If we have injured others, we must make amends, but we do nobody any good by brooding over blunders. Why dig up a past that is dead?

A defective memory may be annoying at times, but let us thank God for a good forgetter. Behind us is the closed gate, before us the open road!

Paul has the right advice: *"forgetting those things which are behind."* But he also adds, *"and reaching forth unto those things which are before"* (Phil. 3:13). For the glory of life is the glory of going on, all the way to the end.

Today, tomorrow, and to the end there are some things we must never for a moment forget. As we read in the glorious Psalm 103, every day, everywhere, and always we must remember God, who is the health and hope of our hearts. *"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies."*

Then follows a shining list of the things we ought to remember, and remembering, teach our hearts a hymn of thanksgiving and praise.

—Contributed

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 10

CONTAINERS

1. From the temple in Jerusalem (Daniel 5:2)
2. A horn (1 Samuel 16:13)
3. A pitcher (Mark 14:13)
4. A cruse (1 Kings 17:10-12)
5. A censer (2 Chronicles 26:19)
6. Vials (Revelation 16:1)
7. Bottles (Matthew 9:17)
8. Bowl (Judges 6:38)
9. Bucket (Isaiah 40:15)
10. Basin (John 13:5)

COMPARISONS

1. Job
2. Samson
3. Solomon
4. Peter
5. Daniel
6. Pharaoh

7. Thomas
8. Paul
9. Zacchaeus
10. Methuselah
11. Herod
12. David and Jonathan

IDOLS

1. Dagon (Philistine idol) (1 Samuel 5:2-3)
2. The golden calf (Exodus 32:19-20)
3. Solomon (1 Kings 11:4)
4. Micah (Judges 17:1-5)
5. John (1 John 5:21)
6. Chemosh (1 Kings 11:33)
7. Molech (Leviticus 18:21)
8. Diana (Acts 19:26-27)
9. Asa (1 Kings 15:11-13)
10. Athens (Acts 17:16)

ART THOU?

1. John the Baptist (Luke 7:19-20)

2. Isaac (Genesis 27:21-24)
3. Pilate (Matthew 27:11)
4. Paul (Acts 22:27-28)
5. Rebekah (Genesis 24:15-23)
6. Adam (Genesis 3:9)
7. Manoah (Judges 13:11)
8. The high priest (Mark 14:61)
9. Jesus (Luke 24:18)
10. Saul (Paul) (Acts 9:1-5)

How?

1. Joseph (Genesis 39:7-9)
2. John (1 John 4:20)
3. Jesus (Luke 2:49-52)
4. Judah (Genesis 44:18, 34)
5. Nicodemus (John 3:4)
6. The Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27-31)
7. Elijah (1 Kings 18:21)
8. Thomas (John 14:5)
9. David (Psalm 13:1)

LOST YESTERDAY:

Somewhere between sunrise and sunset, two golden hours, each set with sixty diamond minutes. No reward is offered, for they are gone forever.

Holiness is the ONLY pathway to everlasting happiness.

Every temptation is an invitation to an elevation.

Conquer yourself and your aspirations will be changed to eternal certainties.

Life is a quarry out of which we are to mold and chisel and complete a character.

Failure is not the end—it's the time for a new start.

JUST THIS MINUTE

*If we're thoughtful, just a minute,
In what'er we say or do;
If we put a purpose in it
That is honest thro' and thro'
We shall gladden life and give it
Grace to make it all sublime;
For, though life is long, we live it
Just a minute at a time.*

*Just this minute we are going
Toward the right or toward the wrong;
Just this minute we are sowing
Seeds of sorrow or of song.
Just this minute we are thinking
On the ways that lead to God,
Or in idle dreams are sinking
To the level of the clod.*

*Yesterday is gone; tomorrow
Never comes within our grasp,
Just this minute's joy or sorrow
That is all our hands may clasp;
Just this minute! Let us take it
As a pearl of precious price,
And with high endeavor make it
Fit to shine in paradise.*

A famous clockmaker pasted inside his clocks a sheet on which was printed a reminder of the rapid flight and proper use of time, as follows:

*"Lo! here I stand by thee upright
To give thee warning day and night;
For every tick that I do give
Cuts short the time thou hast to live.
Therefore, a warning take by me,
To serve thy God as I serve thee;
And thou shalt have a just reward."*

He who does what he should will not have time to do what he should not.

When a person gets into the habit of wasting his time, he is sure also to waste a great deal that does not belong to him.

We have the potential to accomplish much more than we are doing. A string broke on the violin of the master violinist but he did not stop. He finished the composition without missing a note.

We can make music from life's reverses. Those who keep on after the string snaps and meet God's challenge for perfection will at the end receive the greatest applause human ears have ever heard, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

"ME" is at the bottom of all sin. One little word perhaps, but in lust, pride, covetousness, self-will there is some form of "me."

The quickest way to correct the other fellow's attitude is to correct your own. Try it. It works.

*When you have thanked your God
for every blessing sent,
What time will then remain
for murmurs or lament?*

The elevator to success is not running; you must climb the stairs.



Who?



*Who put the colors in the rainbow?
Who put the salt in the sea?
Who put the cold in the snowflake?
Who made you and me?*

*Who put the hump upon the camel?
Who put the neck on the giraffe?
Who put the tail upon the monkey?
Who made hyenas laugh?*

*Who made whales and snails and quails?
Who made hogs and dogs and frogs?
Who made bats and rats and cats?
Who made everything?*

*Who put the gold into sunshine?
Who put the sparkle in the stars?
Who put the silver in the moonlight?
Who made Earth and Mars?*

*Who put the scent into the roses?
Who taught the honey bee to dance?
Who put the tree inside the acorn?
It surely can't be chance.*

*Who made seas and leaves and trees?
Who made snow and winds that blow?
Who made streams and rivers flow?
God made all of these!*

-PAGE BOOTH-

(Contributed by Jean Treharne of England)

