



Megiddo Message

What will you do with Jesus?

Vol. 87, No. 4
May, 2000



Take Charge of Yourself

Have you ever had the experience of being in a store, quickly picking up several items, then not being able to find a salesperson to pay?

One day, after roaming around looking for such a person, I finally approached a young man who looked official, and inquired, "Are you in charge here?"

As I spoke those words, their deeper meaning struck me, and I found myself looking at my own life and asking: "Who's in charge here?"

There are external situations over which none of us have any more than limited control. But if we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that we don't control as much of our lives as we are able to control.

Everywhere are scores of people whose lives are tragically out of control. Whether the problem is drugs, or alcohol, or passion, or pride, they simply haven't taken charge of their lives to an extent where they are able to say "no" to things that are damaging to health and well-being. The result is a moment of pleasure—and years of suffering and loss.

What is the solution?

Self-management, self-control, the art of coping—these qualities of human behavior cannot be purchased, nor are they the result of achieving such goals as more money, more knowledge, better position or a better job. They are acquired only as we take charge of ourselves. When we fail to take charge of our feelings, our behavior, our lives, we fall victim to the forces of depression, cynicism and defeat.

The apostle Paul was taking charge of himself when he wrote, *"I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong"* (2 Cor. 12:10 NASB). He was content because he was in control. He was doing it for Christ's sake.

He wrote again, *"Don't you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can choose sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive his approval"* (Rom. 6:16 NLT). In other words, take charge and turn that charge over to God's control.

The quality and success of our life depends on who is in charge, whether the forces around us or the God who created us. When we choose our master, we choose our destiny. When we choose God for our master, we choose life eternal.

The ultimate good will result from taking control of our lives and then turning that control over to the law of God. When we do this, chaos will yield to order, hate to love, fear to faith, defeat to victory, weakness to strength, and ultimately at Jesus' coming—he will change our lowly mortal state to the immortal.

Yes, the benefits of taking charge of our lives mean receiving the approval of God. And who has more to give, even *"riches, and honour, and life"* everlasting! (Rom. 2:7). ♦

*When we choose our master,
we choose our destiny.*



What Will You Do With Jesus?

Picture Jesus standing before the Roman governor Pilate. It is a critical moment.

If we read the story superficially, we see Jesus arraigned before Pilate. If we read the story to discover its deeper meanings, we see Pilate arraigned before Jesus.

At that moment, Jesus was the prisoner at the bar of Pilate, waiting for verdict and sentence. In the longer view, Pilate the Roman governor stood at the bar of Jesus.

The governor asks, *"What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?"* as though the disposal of Jesus were in his hands. What conceit to think that he, an earthly ruler, could interfere with the plans of Providence!

Was Pilate deciding what to do with Jesus? In the greater reality, Pilate was deciding what Jesus would do with *him*!

The Bible tells us nothing of Pilate beyond this incident, but it is likely that he acted to save his position, and probably after a number of years he lost it. And all the while, can't we imagine that the memory of the faith of that regal Man lingered to haunt him?

What spiritual values does this bit of history have to teach us?

In the Gospel according to Matthew, we see Jesus in the purple robes of His sovereign royalty. We see Him first in relation to our world: He is Jesus, one born like His brethren. Yet He is one sent of God. We hear the Divine acceptance of Him: *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* Then follow the years of ministry, as He preaches in the Temple, on the mountain, by the sea, as He walks and ministers among the people. The King is supreme in all matters

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Note: If you wish to remove label on cover, warm with hair dryer and carefully peel off.

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

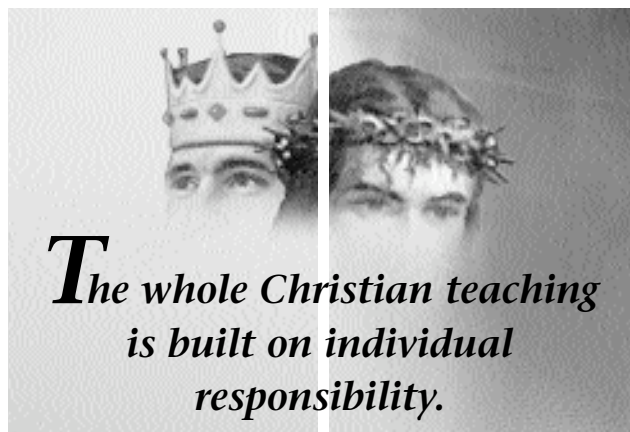
OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great 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.

What Will You Do With Jesus?

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that He teaches. He is also the perfect pattern in things moral and spiritual, the perfect demonstration of the life



that pleases God, holy, humble, patient, kind, forgiving, compassionate, and at the same time courageous and bold, loyal and true. Always He is in conflict with the rulers of the people, those who take selfish advantage at the expense of the commoners, and oppress them.

Who is He, this Man among men? In Caesarea Philippi He puts the challenge to His disciples, and Peter makes this splendid confession: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." But it is only a little while, and His enemies are seeking His life. Soon they have captured Him and are doing the worst that they can design. At this point, Pilate projects his question: "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"

To answer that question, let each of us put ourselves in the presence of the King of Glory. Let us make Pilate's question our own, and answer it now: "What will I do with Jesus?"

And let us realize that our situation is like that of Pilate: We are not judging Jesus, He is judging us. And how He judges us depends on what we do toward Him.

The whole Christian teaching is built on individual responsibility. God is looking for character: strong, proven, unflinching character. We cannot claim any merits from our parents, our teachers, our friends, our neighbors, or a very good person whom we happen to

know. We cannot even claim credits from Christ. We are on our own in His indomitable presence, with only our character to witness for us.

What Shall I Do with Jesus?

What are the options?

I can crown Him, or I can crucify Him. There are no other options.

But what if I do not feel like making Him King in my life, and neither do I want to hurt Him? Perhaps I just wish He would go His way and I could go mine. Such a choice is not open to us. There is no middle course, because His

claims are supreme. He either is all He claims to be and all His followers have

claimed for Him, or He is the most stupendous fraud that has ever been foisted upon human credulity. We must crown Him, or we crucify Him.

Where is there any halfway point in His teaching? Have we ever really considered the depths of His words, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free...If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"? (John 8:32, 36). If we believe Him, if we accept these words as indeed the truth, it is the truth that we must live for and die for. He is either truth, and we should accept Him altogether; or He is falsehood, and we should reject Him. Either we crown Him, or we crucify Him.

Or consider His teaching, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 12:30). What is a half obedience to this command? How can we love

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*Jesus is standing in Pilate's hall—
Friendless, forsaken, betrayed by all:
Hearken! what meaneth the sudden call!
What will you do with Jesus?*

*Jesus is standing on trial still—
You can be false to Him if you will,
You can be faithful thru good or ill:
What will you do with Jesus?*

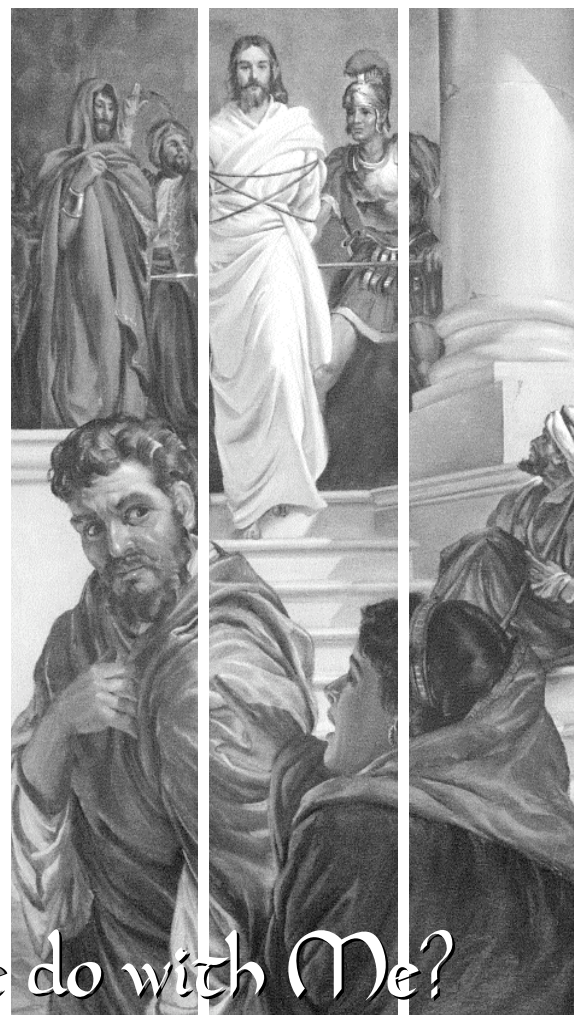
*Will you evade Him as Pilate tried?
Or will you choose Him, whate'er betide?
Vainly you struggle from Him to hide:
What will you do with Jesus?*

*Will you, like Peter, your Lord deny?
Or will you scorn from His foes to fly,
Daring for Jesus to live or die?
What will you do with Jesus?*

*"Jesus, I give Thee my heart today!
Jesus I'll follow Thee all the way,
Gladly obeying Thee!" will you say,
"This will I do with Jesus!"*

*What will you do with Jesus?
Neutral you cannot be;
Some day your heart will be asking,
"What will He do with me?" —Selected*

What will He do with Me?



FAITH in Action



Bible Text: Acts 1:1-14 NIV

Acts 1:1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach.

2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

3 After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.

5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

6 So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.

11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

JESUS' WORK, CONTINUED


A famous Hollywood producer once said that for a movie to be successful, it should start with an earthquake and work up to a climax.

That wasn't exactly the formula the author Luke followed in the book of Acts, but it comes close. In the first chapter, the disciples see Jesus ascend—bodily—into heaven. Think about it: Here is a mortal man you have been acquainted with for some time. Suddenly, as you are walking with Him, He takes leave of you, and starts to rise. And as you watch He is carried up, up, up into the heights of heaven. Isn't an earthquake rather non-spectacular beside this?

In the second chapter of the book, a sound "*as of a rushing mighty wind*" sweeps through the house where they are gathered. No, it isn't a hurricane. But this very special "wind" brings Divine power to each of them, and as a result the waiting disciples are all "*filled with the Holy Spirit, and [begin] to speak with other tongues.*" What a day to remember!

And so the story goes, from one exciting event to the next. Put yourself into the action. Feel it happen. Here is God working with His chosen ones like He had never done before.

"Dear Theophilus"

 READ ACTS 1:1-2

The book of Acts is volume two of a work that the author Luke addressed personally to "*most excellent Theophilus*" (see Luke 1:1-4). We don't even know if Theophilus was a believer, but we do know that he was acquainted with what Jesus had been doing and teaching, because Luke said that he was writing about the things Theophilus already knew. Very likely he was a Christian, or at least one carefully studying the Christian faith. His name means literally "dear to God" or "friend of God." We hope he lived up to his name.

The book of Acts is an important link between the Gospels and the Epistles. Without this little book we would not know what happened after Jesus' resurrection. We would have no idea how the Church started. We would read Paul's letters to believers in Rome, in Galatia, in Colosse, in Thessalonica, in

Corinth, in Philippi, and say, "How did the Church get there?"

But we do not have to ask. The answer is in the book of Acts.

Since the Gospel of Luke records what Jesus began "*both to do and to teach*," the book of Acts is a continuation of His work through His followers, His apostles, His Church. And even today their work continues as loyal followers carry on, demonstrating the power of the Gospel in our time.

JESUS IS ALIVE!

"Many convincing proofs"

 READ ACTS 1:3

One point Luke wishes to emphasize is the certainty of Jesus' resurrection. He leaves no doubt that it did happen.

The book of Acts is a post-resurrection chronicle. Without the resurrection there would have been no book of Acts, no Holy Spirit, and no Christian Church.

The Apostles didn't merely *suppose* or *surmise* or *hope* that the resurrection was true. They *knew* beyond all doubt that it was a fact, that Jesus was alive! They knew because His tomb was empty. They knew because they had *seen* the risen Christ. Jesus was with them *forty days* after His resurrection. They were eye witnesses.

Jesus had already pointed out the Old Testament prophecies that spoke of Him (Luke 24:44–49).

Now there were other lessons to be learned, so that they would be ready to launch a new ministry. It was a time of intense preparation.

Luke does not tell us all "*the many convincing proofs*." But we know a few of them.

1. What evidence did the disciples have that Jesus was alive? _____

*When Jesus met His disciples, He even invited them to touch Him.
He ate with them.
He talked with them.
He walked with them (Luke 24:15–17, 38–43). They were convinced.*

Belief in Jesus' resurrection is at the heart of the Christian faith. And it was at the core of their faith also. "*Jesus Christ crucified...resurrected...ascended...and coming again!*" was their Gospel.

The resurrection is absolutely essential to belief in a future life. All of us will die, in the natural course of events. Without the resurrection there is no hope, because "*the dead know not anything...there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave*" (Eccl. 9: 5, 10).

2. How did the Jews who were responsible for Jesus' crucifixion get around admitting His resurrection? _____

The official Jewish position was that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body from the tomb (Matt. 28:11–15). The believers had to refute this as they testified to the resurrected Christ.

Jesus' crucifixion was no secret. It was known throughout Jerusalem, but

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The apostles did not suppose Jesus was alive—they KNEW!

About the Author

No personal details are available about Luke, author of The Acts of the Apostles. But major portions of the book are written in the first person "I"—which tells us that Luke was much more than a normal historian. He believed the message he was writing. His heart burned for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Luke is a historian, careful and exact, and thoroughly familiar with the historical data. Scholars consider his history as a primary source of the first order.

Luke also had the rare privilege of being eyewitness to much of what he was reporting. And even when he could not say "we" did thus and thus, he had direct contact with those who were eye witnesses.

The result: a reliable, Divinely certified report that informs, inspires and convinces.



A closer look

Have You Ever Thought...

Have you ever thought what would have happened if Jesus had not risen from the dead? His work would have been limited to one spot, one lifetime, and one small group of disciples, who scattered at the time of His crucifixion. When His brief life was over, His ministry would have been terminated. And that would have been the end of it.

How different when we realize that Jesus Christ, the One who was crucified, is indeed alive, and alive for evermore!



Insight

WITNESS

Jesus' disciples were to be His witnesses. A witness does not deal in hearsay. A witness doesn't tell what he thinks or suspects. A witness tells what he knows—because he has actually seen or experienced it firsthand.

The word *witness* is used 29 times in the book of Acts. Peter and John testified that they were speaking only what they had “seen and heard” (Acts 4:19–20).

When we read the Book of Acts, we are not reading fiction but actual testimonies of those who were witnesses of Christ's resurrection, ascension, and power.

Jesus told His disciples to “wait” when they were bursting to act!

★ It is never easy to wait.

many did not know that He had been raised from the dead. This was the special mission of the disciples: to preach the resurrected Christ.

3. What was the largest number of believers to see the resurrected Lord at one time? (1 Cor. 15:5–8) _____.
4. The physical resurrection of the body was a belief firmly established long before Jesus was born. Who was the earliest person in Scripture to testify to his personal belief in a resurrection? (Job 19:25–27) _____

“Wait”



READ ACTS 1:4–5

Jesus' last command to His disciples was perhaps the most demanding: “Wait!” “Wait for the gift my Father promised...in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4–5 NIV).

Wait? when they were bursting to speak, teach, travel, anything to fulfill the commission they had been given!

5. *Think about it:* How would you have responded to Jesus' command to “wait”? _____
6. What were the disciples waiting for? _____
7. Why would the disciples of Jesus not naturally choose to wait in Jerusalem? _____

Once the disciples had seen their risen Lord, they no doubt wanted to go back to Galilee. Jerusalem was the last place they wanted to stay. The city was full of enemies of the cause. The scribes were there, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the multitudes who had just rallied to “Crucify Him!” (Matt. 27:20). It was not easy to wait in Jerusalem.

But then, it is never easy to wait. Not as long as we can see something we would like to do.

This trait is sometimes called drive, ambition, initiative, or plain “get-up-and-go.” This time, it was required. Obedience meant waiting.

What was the Holy Spirit they would receive? It would be Divine power to do miracles and to foretell future events, power sent by Jesus for the specific purpose of confirming the message they would be preaching.

THE KINGDOM—WHEN?



READ ACTS 1:6–8

As the disciples walked with Jesus after the resurrection, they sensed that things were different. Would life ever return to normal? When would the Kingdom come?

They had asked this question before, now they asked it again: “Lord, are you going to free Israel now and restore our kingdom?” (Acts 1:6 NLT).

8. What did Jesus' disciples expect Him to do? _____
9. What was Jesus' answer? (Acts 1:7–8) _____

Like other Jews, Jesus' disciples disliked the Roman rulers. They wanted Jesus to free them from the Roman power and become their King.

Jesus did not give them a flat "No." He did not reprimand them for asking. Were they waiting for the Kingdom to be set up? That was the Father's concern, not theirs. And only the Father knew the timing (Mark 13:32). Right now they had a big task ahead of them, a task so great that they were going to be given special "help" from heaven to do it.

10. What were the disciples to do when they received the promised power?

"When the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8 NLT).

Instead of enjoying political power, they had work to do. Very soon they would receive power from *"on high"*—power to heal the sick, raise the dead, and teach in tongues which they had never learned. Through them God was going to work mighty wonders, and everywhere they went their message would be confirmed by open demonstrations of the Power of God. *"You will be my witnesses,"* He said, borrowing a figure from the Old Testament, where the prophets were called to witness for God and Israel (Isa. 43:10; 44:8).

They were to be *"baptized with the Holy Spirit"* very soon. With this power, ordinary people would be able to do extraordinary things because they would have power from God.

The Holy Spirit was not a luxury. It was an absolute necessity guaranteeing the success of the task to be done.

JESUS ASCENDS!

 READ ACTS 1:9–11

As surely as our Lord ascended into heaven, so surely will He return. *"This same Jesus shall so come...as you have seen him go into heaven"* was the promise of the angels that stood by as He ascended.

A New Message

No sooner had Jesus disappeared from sight than the disciples started talking about His return. And of course it is about 2000 years nearer now than it was then.

11. What effect should the anticipation of Jesus' return have on us? _____

Shouldn't we be keenly interested in this *"blessed hope"*? Shouldn't it motivate us to personal purity, diligence, and faithful service?

***"This same Jesus...
will come back
in the same way
you have seen
him go into
heaven."*** — Acts 1:11 NIV

**★ His return is about
2000 years nearer
now.**



Take heed

We want to be thinking about and planning for the Second Coming, and above all letting this belief change our lives, so that we are ready when He comes. This was Jesus' message: *"Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh"* (Matt. 24:44).

Can you imagine how the disciples felt when Jesus suddenly was gone—to heaven?

“A cloud received him out of their sight”— What Was the Cloud?

At the transfiguration, “there came a cloud overshadowing them: and there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son” (Mark 9:27 YLT)—was this cloud merely a fluffy white mist?

Jesus, speaking of His second coming, said that they would “see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luke 21:27). He said on another occasion that He would come “with all the holy angels” (Matt. 25:31). Doesn’t this also suggest that “clouds” can be angels?

The transfiguration, the ascension, and His second advent are all accompanied with these special “clouds.” Jesus said later of His coming, “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him” (Rev. 1:7).

What was the “cloud that received Him out of their sight”? What “cloud” brought Him safely on His way to the Father’s throne? Here is a cloud that directs, protects and transports. A literal cloud stays very close to the earth. It is nothing more than earth’s moisture turned to vapor. Said the Psalmist of the clouds of the Lord, “He maketh the clouds his chariots” (Ps. 104:3) and then explains, “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels:” (Ps. 68:17). The “cloud” that covered the tabernacle in Moses’ day was a cloud of angels (Exodus 40:34).

Yes, God’s clouds are His ministering angels!

To be continued

Are You Able...?

- ✧ To think more about what you can be than what you can enjoy?
- ✧ To esteem integrity above personal gain and loyalty to principle above being well thought of?
- ✧ To never criticize what you cannot improve?
- ✧ To value principle above appearance, and being above seeming?
- ✧ To change your opinion when it has been proven wrong?
- ✧ To be thankful for what you have and stop wishing for what you have not?
- ✧ To close your book of complaints and open your book of praise?
- ✧ To stand by your convictions even though it be at the cost of personal suffering?
- ✧ To strengthen your moral muscles by giving up your own ideas?
- ✧ To put your love of truth and right above your love of comfort and ease?
- ✧ To think more of what you can give than what you can get?
- ✧ To think more of your character than of your reputation?
- ✧ To think first of others, and second of yourself?
- ✧ To value eternal gain above temporal loss?



The Kingdom of God

- Real
- Literal
- Worldwide
- Eternal

IS THE CHURCH THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

HAS THE KINGDOM COME?

IS THE KINGDOM HERE NOW?

WHAT DID JESUS MEAN WHEN HE SAID,
"THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU"?

DID GOD HAVE A LITERAL KINGDOM IN ISRAEL?

WHEN WILL THE KINGDOM COME?

HAS THE KINGDOM COME?

SECTION TWO

I hope you have an honest heart and will be honest with yourself. Please consider these scriptures direct from God's Word.

"Surely you will agree with me that the Bible is written in mystery form. We have to figure it out and put it together correctly to receive the greatest reward ever. For those who do not will be the greatest horror ever.

"Surely you agree that God will send an honest heart the truth, that he will not believe a lie. If He sends those who do not want truth a strong delusion, why would He not send those, who want truth, the truth?

"Here are scriptures to show you the Kingdom has come. If you disagree, please send me scriptures that prove these wrong."

—E. C., DeLeon, Texas

"1. Jesus said in John 18:36, 'My kingdom is not of this world': His kingdom was not going to be an earthly rule."

When Jesus answered Pilate that His kingdom was *"not of this world,"* He was not in any way suggesting that His kingdom would be a spiritual or non-physical entity. The word translated *"world"* in this text is not the word for the earth or the physical planet but is *kosmos*, which means, "the present order of things, the secular world." When Jesus said to Pilate, *"Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world,"* He was solidly affirming that He was indeed born to be a king, but His kingdom was not to be of that present arrangement, not of that *kosmos*. It would be a physical kingdom, but in no way belonging to that political arrangement.

"2. Jesus said in Matthew 16:28, 'Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.' (KJV) Are the people still alive that Jesus was talking to? Jesus said some of those people he was talking to were going to still be alive when the kingdom came."

What could Jesus have meant?

In the next chapter the question is answered. Only a few days later, some of those in His hearing did see Him coming in His splendor and glory—they saw it in vision. *"After six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light"* (Matt. 17:1–2). Jesus was giving them a preview of His future glory, as He would appear when He would return as king.

Could the kingdom have arrived without the disciples realizing it? It could not, for on another occasion Jesus indicated that His coming would be spectacular like lightning: *"As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be"* (Matt. 24:27).

The apostle Paul spoke also of the *"brightness of his coming"* (2 Thess. 2:8)—it will be an event clearly visible to those who are living. Revelation says *"every eye shall see him"* (Rev. 1:7)—such a widely visible event could not be missed.

"3. The Pharisees were demanding to know when the kingdom was going to come. They were awaiting an earthly kingdom also. Jesus told them in Luke 17:20–21, 'And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.' (KJV). The kingdom is not going to be something we can see. It is not going to be earthly, but rather, it is within you. It dwells within each person. It is spiritual. It is something we see only by faith, like many other things that pertain to God."

We cannot agree with your conclusion that the Kingdom is "right here now, in my heart, and your heart, and the hearts of all the believers." In our Lord's Prayer, Jesus

Could the Kingdom have come without the disciples realizing it?

taught us to pray, *"Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven,"* indicating that when the Kingdom has come, God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. Is this the present condition of our earth?

Consider, too, that if we are to take this passage literally and say that Jesus meant that His kingdom is literally in our hearts, He was saying that the Kingdom was in the hearts of those self-righteous Pharisees—they were His audience!

On the surface, Jesus' words might seem to lead us to the conclusion that the Kingdom was present in His lifetime, hence is here now. But since the church and the hearts of men both fall short of the Bible description of the Kingdom, we must look further. The Greek word, *basileia*, translated "kingdom" in Luke 17:21, has also for its meaning, a "king; his royal majesty." *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott* renders the verse, "God's royal majesty is among you." *Harper's Greek Testament* states in a footnote that Jesus was "alluding to His own presence in their midst." The Berkeley Bible translates the verse, *"Indeed the kingdom of God is in your midst,"* and then adds a footnote: "The translation, 'within you' is equally possible, but could hardly be our Lord's meaning regarding the Pharisees. More likely it means, 'I am in your midst.'" In our common King James Version, a marginal reference suggests "among" instead of "within"—the King was *among* them. This agrees with the teachings of Scripture. The King was among them, but the time when He would set up His Kingdom was yet future.

"4. In Matthew 16:15–19, Jesus asked Peter who he thought He was. Peter answered, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' In Matthew 16:18–19, 'And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' (KJV) Jesus gave Peter the keys to the kingdom. What does a key do? Does it not give entrance into whatever it fits? Jesus gave Peter the authority to open up the kingdom."

If we say that Jesus "gave Peter the authority to open up the kingdom" and base this upon His words in Matt. 16:13–19, we overlook the intent and meaning of the passage in its context.

Reread the passage and you will see that Peter first affirms that Jesus is indeed *"the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

Then Jesus goes on to say, *"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matt. 16:18). In this passage is a significant play on words. The two words translated "rock" in our Common Version are not the same original word in the Greek. Jesus said to Peter, *"Thou art Peter* [Greek, *petros*, meaning "a stone, a splinter of a rock"], *and upon this rock* [Greek, *petra*, meaning "huge mass of rock"] *I will build my church."*

Each individual who will be part of the kingdom of God becomes a *"petros,"* a stone or splinter of the great rock

(*"petra"*) of Divine truth. But the foundation of the kingdom is the great mass of rock, i.e., Divine knowledge. Jesus is describing the triumph of righteousness. God's plan cannot be defeated. He is making a statement about the people who will comprise the Kingdom, not about the Kingdom itself.

Jesus continues by giving Peter a solemn charge concerning the standard which must be maintained among all who truly comprise Christ's church: *"Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."* In other words, the same high standard must prevail within the true church that will prevail

***Both the human heart
and the Church fall short of
the Bible's description of the
Kingdom of God.***

when the Kingdom is established. There is nothing here about Peter opening the doors of a church which is literally God's eternal kingdom.

"5. Jesus told Nicodemus the way to enter the kingdom in John 3:3–5. 'Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' (KJV)"

When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus of being born again, He was speaking of a birth which is necessary before one can live in the Kingdom of God. He was not saying that the Kingdom of God was a then existing entity which one could enter by any immediate physical process.

When Jesus said, *"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,"* Nicodemus questioned His reasoning, and Jesus went on to explain, *"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"* (John 3:3–6).

In these words Jesus is expressing the same thought which Paul stated in 1 Cor. 15:50, that *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."* Before we can live in God's eternal Kingdom, we must receive the physical change from the mortal to the immortal state; our bodies must be physically transformed, made immortal, like the angels, like Christ's glorious body (Luke 20:35–36, Phil. 3:20–21).

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As the Day Dawns

by GERALD R. PAYNE

1 Imagine for a moment that you are a prisoner locked in a dark cell under a rustic castle, where you hear the drip of water day after day and night after night. Finally your eyes grow accustomed to the darkness, and the light of day becomes only a fond memory.

One night you awake suddenly from a deep sleep. It is the silence that arouses you. The rats have stopped gnawing. As you listen, you hear the steps of soldiers, and the clang of armor as they approach your cell. The rats, having heard their coming, are gone.

Your heart is racing. What could it mean? The guards approach, unlock your cell and....You hesitate to even imagine what will happen next. Then all is quiet. No one comes forward. Could it be that the executioner is having problems coming to grips with his duty? Could he be new on the job?

Every new dawn comes as another reminder of the greater new Day that is soon to come.

As your eyes become accustomed to the light from their torches you see one dressed in a captain's uniform motioning for you to come forward. Your feet feel like lead, but you manage to take a few steps toward the cell door as the guards slowly turn and walk away. You follow them as they lead you outside the prison into the fresh morning air. One of the servants hands

you enough supplies for perhaps a couple of days and the captain shows you to the city gate.

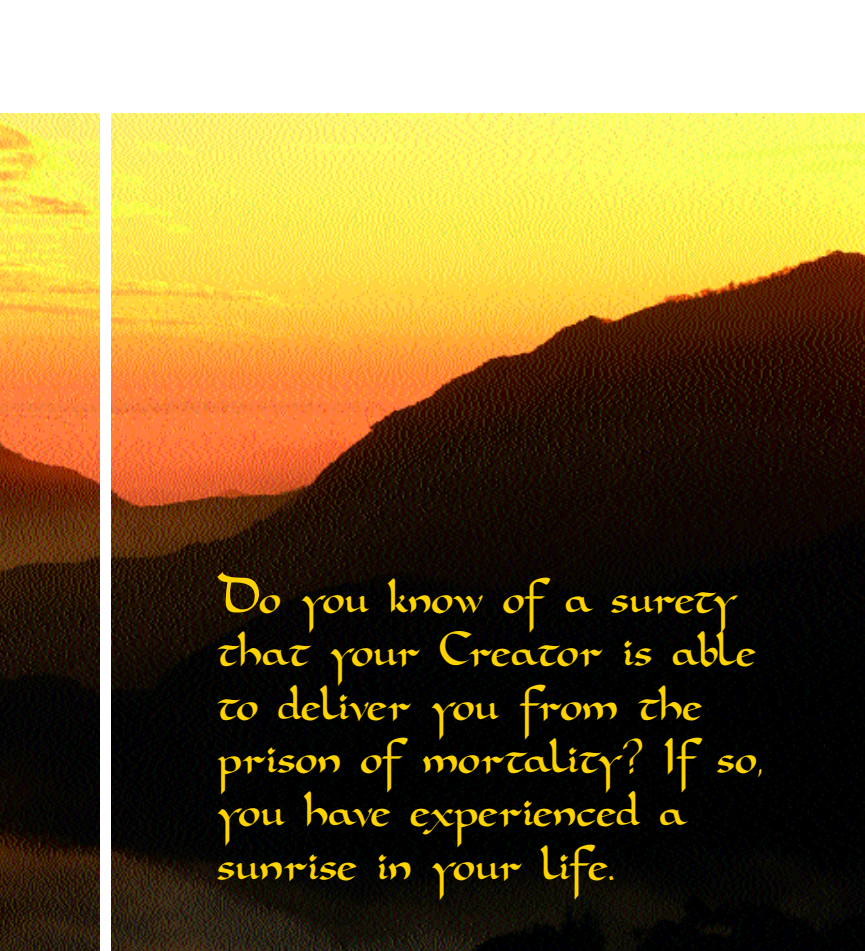
Your feet, like lead only moments earlier, now seem to have wings as you leave the city. Not far from the city, you notice the horizon is growing brighter and brighter. The dark shadows begin to come alive with color. The dark orange gives way to golden hues that creep across the landscape. Soon the golden glow is overcome by the silvery rays of the sun, while the landscape turns to every shade of brown, gray, green, yellow, orchid and violet. Everywhere are little spots of morning light reflected from the dew. And the sky! Oh, it is a crystal clear blue, like you have never seen before. For the first time in your life you have witnessed a sunrise, the making of a new day as you have never seen it before. Yes, you have seen many sunrises, but this was the first you have *really* seen.

Tears of joy trickle down your cheeks. Dropping to your knees, you praise the Lord for your release, and thank Him profusely. It is a new day you will never forget.

Have you had a life experience like this? Perhaps. Let me explain.

Every one of us has experienced the prison of sin. We have all been prisoners of our own selfish ways—our lusts, anger, pride, jealousy. Those sinful ways were like heavy cables keeping us in confinement. Too long in such darkness, our eyes became accustomed to it. We don't even think about it any more.

Looking back on the experience, we realize that the one approaching our cell had a drawn sword in his hand. It was



Do you know of a surety
that your Creator is able
to deliver you from the
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God's way of telling us that if we wait too long to amend our ways, we may not see the dawning of that new Day of joy.

Those who have met the Captain of our lives have seen the Light of His Truth and stepped forward to follow it. But be careful, my brothers, my sisters, that you don't hesitate too long to step through the door to safety. Be careful lest you walk too slowly. And once outside the prison of sin, flee! Never look back. You have been led into the Light? Now keep in that Light. Follow it, and one day it will open into a new and better Day, a never ending day of beauty, peace and joy supernal. And this Day is yet future. Life today has its sorrow and pain, and deep dark valleys, too. That is why it is a must to keep our eye focused on that distant beacon, the bright shining glorious Day. It gives direction to our lives, a goal to reach, a purpose.

We should welcome each new day as a day of opportunity to serve our God, a new day to pay closer attention to the light we call the Gospel, the truth of the Word of God, than we have ever done before. When we consider the mighty works of our Creator—the wonder, the splendor, the vastness, the never-ending plan of creation and life—how can we forget it?

And how can we be unmindful of the never-ending joy and supreme happiness which He has offered all who will follow His Light, all who will transform their lives from sin to righteousness? Oh, never forget the miracle of each fresh new day given by the hand of God!

The dawn, with its grandeur, its opportunity, should challenge us to serve our Maker and our fellowbeings with greater wisdom and understanding than we have ever done before. Who can ignore the beauty of the sun bursting above the

radius of the earth like a giant sunflower?

Shouldn't we stand in awe before the majesty of each new day? Shouldn't we make every effort to use each one of its precious hours in a way that will please our Maker?

And shouldn't we look beyond the grief and suffering around us into the wonder of that coming new Day? Even though we may not understand, we can know that a mighty Hand is working all things together for our good. It is the promise of God, clear as the morning and bright as the day. *"With the loving mercy of our God, a new day from heaven will dawn upon us. It will shine on those who live in darkness, in the shadow of death. It will guide us into the path of peace"* (Luke 1:78–79 NCV).

If we pour out the evil from our lives like poison from a cup, and replace it with the crystal clear water from the Word of our Creator; if we walk where He has invited us to go, He will be pleased to walk with us. The road may lead through the deep valleys of sorrow, of pain, or even death. *"Yet we have this assurance: Those who belong to God will live; their bodies will rise again! Those who sleep in the earth will rise up and sing for joy! For God's light of life will fall like dew on his people in the place of the dead!"* (Isa. 26:19 NLT). Isn't that a new dawn, a most glorious new dawn?

Do you know of a surety that your Creator is able to deliver you from the prison of mortality? If so, you have experienced a sunrise in your life. And that sun-

rise makes every new dawn far more than something to be enjoyed, far more than just a series of pleasant, passing experiences that will end in the darkness of old age and death. Every new dawn comes as another reminder of our Creator, His work, His plan. It comes to give us a taste of what is ahead, and to show us His care for His obedient children. It comes as a new reminder to us of that great new Day that is soon to come, when all sorrow and care and pain will forever be gone.

Hear those longing words written by one who extolled our great Creator: *"Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"* (repeated four times in Psalms, chapter 107).

*Living today, I forge a golden link
That fuses with the bright chain of forever.
Lord, help me make it strong and weld it true,
That in some far-off future it may never
Corrode or tarnish, never tear apart
To wreck the perfect whole of light and beauty.
Moment by moment, hour by precious hour,
I shape a link by ardent work and duty.*

*O Master Goldsmith, view my workmanship;
Keep me strong, and aid me when I falter;
Make me to know the grave importance, Lord,
Of this brief day, my need of Truth and altar,
Where I lay down my will and wait to see
How You can link my life eternally. ♦*



Know Your Bible?

PROPHETS

1. Who hid one hundred prophets in a cave?
2. Which of the prophets was an herdsman?
3. What mighty man had his robe torn in twelve pieces by a prophet and who was the prophet?
4. What prophet bound his feet and hands with a girdle?
5. Who read the writings of a prophet while riding in a chariot?

QUESTIONS

What character do you associate with the following questions?

1. "Who art thou, Lord?"
2. "Who is on the Lord's side?"
3. "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"
4. "Understandest thou what thou readest?"
5. "Whom say ye that I am?"
6. "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"
7. "Whither shall I flee from thy presence?"
8. "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"
9. "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"
10. "What is that to us? See thou to that."
11. "What is truth?"

ANGELS

1. Who partook of a meal prepared by an angel, and was sustained forty days and nights while in the mountains?
2. Whose life was saved by giving heed to the warnings of angels?
3. Unto whom did an angel appear with a drawn sword?

NEW THINGS

1. "A new _____ I give unto you, That ye love one another."
2. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new _____."
3. "He hath put a new _____ in my mouth."
4. "I saw a new _____ and a new _____."
5. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new _____."
6. "May we know what this new _____, whereof thou speakest, is?"
7. "They shall speak with new _____."
8. "Neither do men put new _____ into old bottles."
9. "The name of the city of my God, which is new _____."

NEW TESTAMENT CHARACTERS

1. Give two references where we read of the "faithful and wise servant"?
2. What man thought the Holy Spirit power could be bought with money?
3. What was the name of Philemon's runaway slave?
4. What is the name of the only person mentioned in the Bible whose name begins with the letter Q?
5. What little girl was raised from the dead?
6. What man was beheaded in prison?
7. Who is described as "a man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews"?
8. What did James say no man could tame?

answers on page 22



HOW TO STAY Fresh and New

ized that life is temporary. It happens so quickly, too. About the time you realize it, your mind gets fuzzy.

Doctors tell us there is a predictable pattern to the aging process, which begins with the malfunction of the sensory apparatus. We become less able to see, hear, feel, taste, and smell. Then the cardiovascular system becomes less efficient, and our muscles and joints refuse to operate properly.

At this point the life that seemed totally carefree and unhindered as a child now feels captive inside a body that cannot serve it well.

But old age need not be a time of depression and disillusionment. For those who are investing their life in the new and better world to come, the gloom and pessimism are overshadowed by the brightness of hope and expectation. Eternal life in the kingdom of Christ is a real and thrilling prospect which consumes more and more of the aging Christian's thought life. The apostle Paul said it in these words: *"Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed everyday"* (2 Cor. 4:16 NLT). And in the next chapter he continues: *"For we know that if our earthly house, this tent is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with*

***"Though our bodies are dying,
our spirits are being renewed
every day."*** –2 Cor. 4:16 NLT

our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life" (2 Cor. 5:1–4 NKJV).

As we grow older, as we experience the inconveniences of aging, let that promise of God shine brighter and brighter in our mind, in all its glory and beauty.

And in the meantime let us focus on doing what God requires of us, and being what He wants us to be. Will I be one that He chooses to live in His eternal realm? Am I building into my life the qualities that will make me of eternal worth to my Creator, so He can make me eternally fresh and new?

This high level of commitment is expensive, but it yields the highest returns on the investment at maturity. ♦

A few months ago, I was driving near our home with my son and daughter and a four-year old friend, Daryl. As we turned the corner, we saw a man standing on the street corner who was so bent and crippled that he could hardly walk. I talked with the children about how that man must feel, how hard it was for him to move, how lonely and tired he might be. And I told the children that they would someday grow old, too.

That bit of news was shocking to Daryl, who outrightly rejected it.

"I'm not going to get old!" he said emphatically, as though insulted by my prediction.

"Yes, you are, Daryl," I said. "All of us will get old if we live that long. It happens to everyone."

His eyes grew big, and he protested again. "But it won't happen to me. I'm not going to be like that!"

Again I assured him that no one can escape.

There was silence in the car for a few seconds, then Daryl said with a note of panic in his voice, "But! But! But I don't want to grow old. I want to stay fresh and new."

I said, "I know, Daryl, I know how you feel. But don't worry, it won't happen for a long time. You have time to think about it."

But his words stayed in my mind, and I found myself saying, "I want to stay fresh and new."

Do you realize it is something beyond the power of you or me or those children or anyone else to control? All of us are caught in the process of aging, as long as we live.

The inability to stay "fresh and new" is a common source of depression. There is something distressing about watching yourself disintegrate day by day, especially after you have real-



Take That Step!

"I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you, begin to possess it." –Deut. 2:31

There are many ways to handle an overwhelming task. One is to keep putting it off, hoping that God will miraculously take care of it. A better way is to take that step in the right direction. In other words, *"do it."*

After forty years in the wilderness, Moses was told that it was time for the people to take possession of the land God had promised them. The first order of business was to decide what to do about a certain king named Sihon, who stood between the Israelites and the land of Canaan. God's command was: *"Begin to possess it and engage him in battle"* (Deut. 2:24). God certainly could have eliminated Sihon without anyone's help. But He commanded His people to take that first step.

The same was true when they came to the Jordan River. God could have opened a path right through

and just led them along, but He told them to take the first step. The priests, bearing the Ark of the Covenant were to step in, then the waters would divide.

Difficult circumstances or broken relationships often seem to defy solution. When they persist for months or years, we feel like nothing we can do makes any difference. But the Lord says: *"Begin."* Take that move, speak a kind word, ask for forgiveness, pay what you owe. We have to be the initiators.

Joy lies not in attaining some distant goal but in taking the step today that will lead us toward it.

God says: *I have begun to give, begin to possess it.*

Isn't there some step you should be taking? Take it today.

*It's easy to procrastinate
And leave good work undone.
But such a course will bring regret
When life's short race is run.*

**Nothing can be accomplished until we
take the first step.**

What Will You Do With Jesus?

continued from page 5

with “all our heart,” without doing exactly that? How can we love with all our mind, and reserve some desire to gratify our selfish nature? How can we give Him all our strength, yet save some energy to oppose Him? Again He brings us to the ultimate decision: We either crown Him, or crucify Him.

What will you do?

Hear Him again: “*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly....I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life*” (John 10:10; 8:12). Who but Jesus could make such a claim? He is either a fraud, or He is of God.

Or hear Him again: “*Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you....For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.*” (John 6:53, 55). Here is again the ultimate claim. The only way to have spiritual life is to eat this “*flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood.*” What is He saying?

Here is Jesus talking about a commitment that is all consuming. His very flesh and blood are symbols of the life-

dience to His words can satisfy this demand. Nothing less can sustain the spiritual life which is the way to life eternal (John 6:54). Either we sustain our souls by feeding on His spiritual flesh (His life-giving words—John 6:63), and drink His blood (by making them a part of our lives), or we die, spiritually speaking. There is no middle course.

We either crown Jesus, or crucify Him.

Hear Him again: “*I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever*” (John 6:51). It is but another statement of the same total devotion. The spiritual bread is the nourishment of the new nature, the wisdom of God made visible in this Master of life. Of Him, this living bread from heaven, one may “*eat and live for ever.*” Jesus is no idle philosopher speculating about ideas which have no real-life basis. His words are “*spirit, and they are life*” (John 6:63), because they point the way, the only way to eternal life.

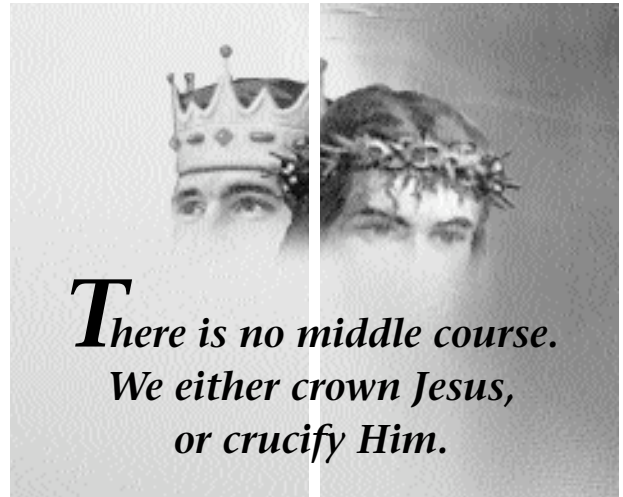
And so the question becomes: Shall I let Him be Lord of my life? or shall I reject Him—shall I crown Him, or crucify Him?

What have others before us done? What did the apostle Paul do? Even before Paul knew Jesus, he showed splendid quality: He was true, consistent, earnest. Though he was making havoc of the Church of God, he was doing what he

believed in. Out of pure honesty of heart he was determined to stamp out what he believed to be heresy. But when Jesus appeared to him, it was as if a new light broke upon him, and with the same honesty that before he had denied Him he now pledged himself to

labor in His Name. Anything, so long as Jesus could be crowned Lord of all.

Or consider the apostle Peter. The night of the crucifixion he was a bro-



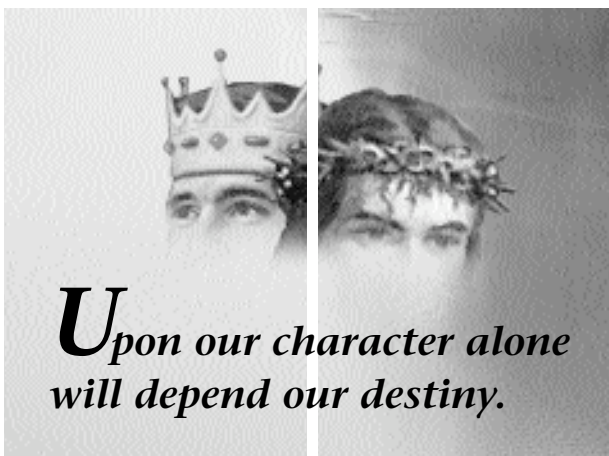
ken man, defeated, the victim of his own fears and faltering faith. When he could have defended his Lord, he lied. When he could have stood by, he ran. When he could have affirmed Him, he denied Him. But see him after the resurrection, the new Peter, with new determination, vigor and vitality. He who had failed so miserably was grateful for forgiveness and another chance. And in the next few years he became the indefatigable defender of Jesus Christ—crucified, resurrected, ascended to heaven. He even rejoiced to suffer for the cause of his Lord. Crucify Him? Never again! Peter was crowning Him.

Am I ready to do the same? Am I ready to relinquish my fears and let Him direct my life? Am I willing to give up any aims or ambitions for this world's greatness and focus all on promoting Him by my life, my conduct, my example?

I must. I must crown Him, or I crucify Him.

What Difference Does It Make?

What difference does it make whether I crown or crucify Him? Are there not many who have not crowned Him, yet they seem to do very well? They have an abundance of this world's goods, fine homes, autos, good jobs, plenty of money. In the words of the Psalmist, they have “*everything that heart could*



giving substance of the new man. His very being represents the truth by which He lives, the words of life which He personifies. As He said another time, “*My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work*” (John 4:34). Nothing less than a full and all-out obe-

What Will You Do With Jesus?

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wish." Why bother about spiritual values and Christlikeness?

Why? Because it makes all the difference. It makes all the difference to your character, your influence, and—most important of all—your eternal destiny. We are not chance creatures on a distant bit of matter floating in space. God created this planet, and the Bible tells us *"He created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited"* (Isa. 45:18).

God has a plan for this earth which shall shortly affect everyone who lives. Jesus is coming to take the reins of government and set up the best, the very

you have no focus, no pattern, no guide except your own judgment and your own opinion, and who can say that yours is any better than the next person's?

What does Christ look for in us? Does He judge us by our natural abilities? No, God gave us all that we have. Nor does He judge by our appearance. Again, our debt is to God. Christ is concerned with our character. We are reminded again of the words of the ancient Prophet: *"The Lord seeth not as man seeth...the Lord looketh on the heart."* We may ask whether one is well educated, a well rounded citizen, a good family person, one with a successful career. None of these count with Him.

Upon our character alone will depend our standing before Him.

We cannot reject any part of the Gospel of Christ without suffering a loss of character. We cannot crown Jesus Lord of our life without ennobling our character. For if He is Lord of our life, He must be in control, and all decisions and judgments and actions will be

framed by His judgments. This means we must be scrupulously honest and upright in all our dealings. We must be seeking His goals, and fashioning our lives according to His high and exalted standard. If He is King in our life, this means that He has the final say in whatever we allow.

Crowning Jesus changes our outlook, our attitudes, and our reactions, so that in no respect are we as we were before. As we crown Jesus, our character becomes one of purity and love, grace and truth. We crown Him as we try to match His peace, His holiness, His mercy and forbearance.

How patiently God bears with us as we turn again and again to the impure, the unholy, the untrue. But Jesus has set the example, the pattern of character which we must match, for Jesus is King.

Exactly what change does Jesus' authority make in our lives?

First, it frees us from a slavish attachment to the entertainments of this world and the pursuit of pleasures which neither satisfy nor enrich.

If Jesus is king in our lives, we will not be spending time viewing anything on television, video, or any media which Jesus would not endorse. Nor will we allow ourselves to read anything which we would not read if Jesus were at our side.

If Jesus is king in our lives, we will not be using the language of this world, its slang, or its God-dishonoring vernacular. Our words will be representative of the cause we espouse, our yes a plain "yes," and our no a plain "no."

If we are crowning Jesus king in our lives, we will not go anywhere that we would not be glad to have Him find us.

It is not the easy way, but it is the only way to obtain His favor. And when He returns, there is nothing we shall want more than His favor.

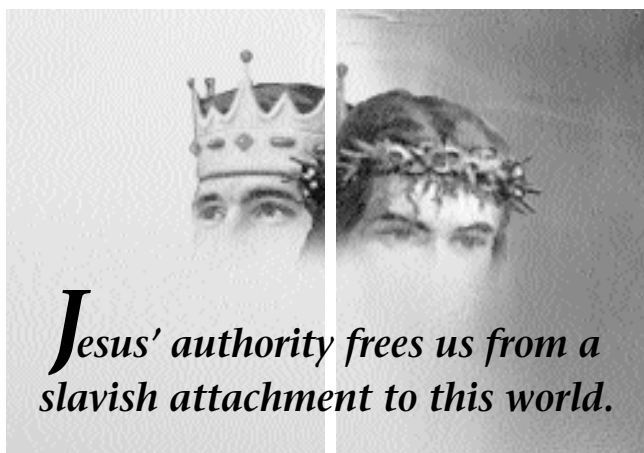
Reject Jesus, and you can do as you please. But gradually your character is worn away, and you depart from the high ideals and accept the lower standards of those around you. Gradually you descend from the respectable to the low and godless. It is not usually one quick plunge. Of course not. Did a bad habit ever grab one in an instant? Not at all. But gradually, little by little, character deteriorates, until it is ruined.

And just so, character is built, little by little, as we show the spirit of Jesus in our lives, as we are kind to husband, wife or child. It is built as we practice being honest in our dealings with friend or stranger. It grows as we spend our time building ourselves up in our most holy faith, and as we speak of God's goodness in offering us such *"exceeding great and precious promises."*

Yes, crowning Jesus in our lives makes a difference to our character.

Our Character Determines Our Influence

Our character makes a difference to our **influence**. It is the difference between a man coming from another country, who is simply a citizen of that country, or one coming who represents that



best system of government and social order ever to be known on this planet. It is now our singular opportunity to get in on the ground floor of this plan, to be part of that new world that will soon displace the present mismanagement. When that Day comes each person living will be given the ultimatum: submit or perish. Crown Him—and live; or oppose Him—and die. When that Day comes we will want to be on Christ's side. We will want to have on our record that we crowned Him.

How do we get on His side? How do we crown Him? Let us look at the first fundamental point of difference our faith makes in us: **character**.

The Place We Give Christ Determines Our Character

There is close relationship between Christ and character. Without Christ,

country's government. One comes with power to do nothing, the other comes with the authority to make decisions in behalf of his government.

Influence is that part of our character which affects others. Jesus said it in these words: *"Ye are the salt of the earth."* If we are serving Christ, our influence can prevent the spread of corruption, and help to preserve and promote all that is good and useful. Again Jesus said, *"Ye are the light of the world."* Here is a brave and courageous statement, and a high responsibility. He did not say, You *carry* the light, but You *are* the light. What responsibility! What high privilege! In other words, you are to be *the light* wherever you are. By your very presence you are to make a difference—in the office, in your business, in your study, in the factory, in the marketplace, in your home. Wherever you go, the light of Christ must shine through you to others. Here is penetrating influence which we cannot disregard.

What will you do with Jesus? Grow in character, and you crown Him; and wherever you live or work you will help others to do the same. Neglect your character, live to satisfy every whim, gratify every desire, and you crucify Him; and by your influence you pull others away from Him.

Our Character Determines Our Destiny

This is a critical point to consider. On the small decisions of every day depends our destiny.

Every life is soon spent, and the difference is this: a life spent for self and *without* Christ ends in death from which there is no waking. Life *with* Christ, with Him on the throne of our heart, has the prospect of receiving *new* life in the coming Kingdom of Christ, where He can bestow the greatest blessings, and honor, and happiness that the human mind can imagine. Can such compare with the satisfactions of this world, its honor or fame; its small goals and pleasures?

This life need not be all there is. Use this life as your time of probation, and your God-given time to develop. Grow in Christ's likeness, and this life will be only the introduction, the first chord,

as it were, of a beautiful symphony that will go on and on through eternity. Or use the present to get whatever you can, make self your god and pleasure your goal, and what lies beyond for you? Nothing. Nothing but nonentity and oblivion. This is not fiction. Here is solid fact, stated plainly in the Word of the Lord. Future life is available, but it is reserved for those who prepare for it, who are willing to forego the honors of the present and invest the little they have now in prospect of greater—and eternal—blessings to come.

Do we realize what incalculable value this fact places upon our lives today? For this is **my** opportunity to have something lasting. If I squander it, it is gone forever. When this life ends for me, my character will be fixed, and so will be my destiny. What I have written will be written.

What lies beyond for me? That all depends on what I am doing right here and now. As I choose in these days of opportunity, so I shall receive in the time to come.

As those who know Christ, our lives should be uplifted and transformed, our gaze set on heavenly things, and we be living representatives of Christ and all that He stands for. Everyone we meet should know by our conduct that we do not belong to this present realm, that we are citizens of another world, and that all our interest and desire is for that world.

The place we give Christ in our lives changes our character, our influence and—most of all—our destiny.

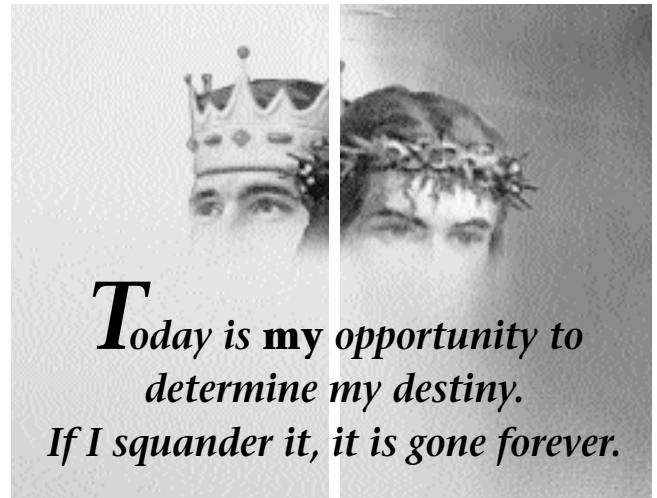
It does matter.

So what is our answer to Pilate's question? No one can decide for us. The friends of Jesus cannot decide that I shall crown Him. Nor can His foes compel me to crucify Him.

Pilate washed his hands in water, and said, I am innocent. Pilate, you

can't do it. Are you trying to shift the blame upon others? Are you trying to blame the mob which is crying for His crucifixion? You cannot do it.

Pilate, you have asked a question more profound than you know: *"What then shall I do?"* Each has power to choose. No one can evade it. The



friends of Jesus can only entreat as far as the apostle Paul when he said, *"We plead with you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."*

If the New Testament is true—and we know that it is—Jesus Christ will appear again. There will be a second advent as surely as there was a first. The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father, with all the holy angels (Matt. 16:27; Mark 8:38).

We are living right now in the era of His return. And He will not come as He did the first time, lowly and obscure. He will come as Judge, Conqueror and King. When that hour arrives, everyone who lives will feel His authority. And the question will be reversed. It will not be, What will I do with Jesus?

But what will Jesus do with me?

Are you young? You may say, "Don't bother me now. I want to live my life first, *then* I'll think about the demands of Christ." You can do this, but not for long. Someday soon *He will be here*. Neither you nor I nor anyone else can hinder the plan of God. What He has promised **WILL BE**, and when that time comes you will want to be on His side.

Are you middle-aged? You may say,

What Will You Do With Jesus?

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"I'm too busy enjoying life to think much about these things." But life is short, and the King may come at any time. Every God-given day is rich with opportunities. Why not USE them, instead of just letting them go by?

Are you older? Now is the time, right now, to crown Him. Now, in these few remaining days or years. And if He is the controller of your life, think of the peace and freedom you can enjoy.

He came, and they crowned Him with thorns. But He is coming again, with the diadem of glory on His brow. He is coming with Divine authority to put down evil and bring in righteousness. *"And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever"* (Isa. 32:17).

Christ bids us crown Him at all costs. Shall we do it? That is the question.

To crown Him will take *courage* of the highest order. For we shall have to stand firm against those who crucify Him. We shall have to stand firm against those who ridicule, or scorn, or deride.

To crown Him will also take *faith*, faith that can see clear through to the goal ahead; faith that can see us sitting with Christ on His throne, showing the glory and joy and bliss of achievement.

Do not think that you can crown Him and yet hold to some selfish, petty way that He opposes. Do not say that you are crowning Him, yet by your actions crucify Him. Rather, crown Him by all that you do every day.

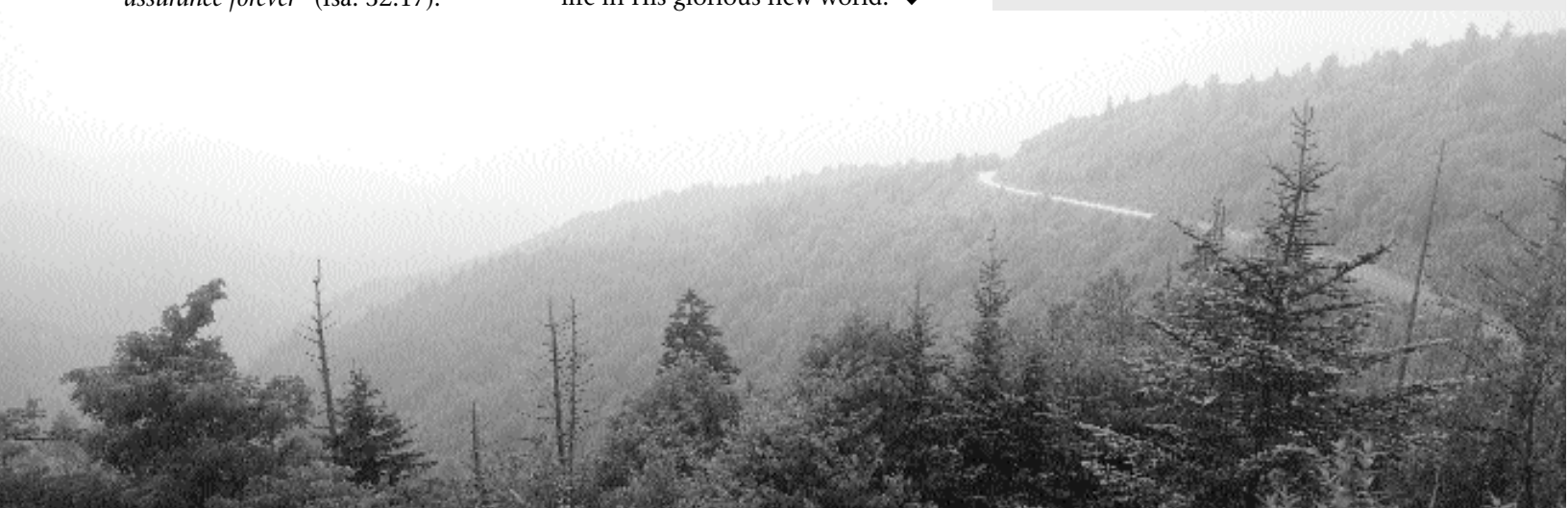
And then, when the time is ripe, when He returns in His glory, He will give you a crown of immortality and life in His glorious new world. ♦

The Kingdom of God

continued from page 13

But we cannot receive this change to immortality, we cannot be born of the Spirit until we are first *"born of water,"* i.e., the water of life, by learning of the knowledge of God and applying it to cleanse our lives morally from every sin until we become *"pure even as he [Christ] is pure"* (John 4:14; Isa. 1:16; 1 John 3:3). Being born of this water is the first step toward being born of the Spirit. Jesus did not say that anyone could be born of the Spirit at that time. He was only outlining the steps which must be taken before one can live in the Kingdom. One born of the Spirit has the ability to move with the freedom of the wind. *"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit"* (John 3:8). There is nothing here to suggest that the Kingdom was then in existence. ♦

to be continued



answers to questions on page 16

PROPHETS

1. Obadiah (1Kings 18:4)
2. Amos (Amos 1:1; 7:14-15)
3. Jeroboam by the prophet Ahijah (1 Kings 11:30-31)
4. Agabus (Acts 21:10-11)
5. The eunuch of Queen Candace (Acts 8:26-31)

QUESTIONS

1. Saul (Paul, Acts 9:4-5)
2. Moses (Ex. 32:26)
3. Isaiah (Isa. 6:8)
4. Philip (Acts 8:30)
5. Jesus (Matt. 16:13-15)
6. Peter (Acts 2:37)

7. David (Psalm 139:7)
8. Nathanael (John 1:46)
9. John the Baptist (Luke 3:2-7)
10. Judas (Matthew 27:3-4)
11. Pilate (John 18:38)

ANGELS

1. Elijah (1 Kings 19:7-9)
2. Lot (Gen. 19:15)
3. Joshua (Josh. 5:13-14)

NEW THINGS

1. Commandment (John 13:34)
2. Creature (2 Cor. 5:17)
3. Song (Ps. 40:3)
4. Heaven, earth (Rev. 21:1)

5. Covenant (Heb. 8:8)
6. Doctrine (Acts 17:19)
7. Tongues (Mark 16:17)
8. Wine (Matt. 9:17)
9. Jerusalem (Rev. 3:12)

NEW TESTAMENT CHARACTERS

1. Matt. 24:45; Luke 12:42
2. Simon (Acts 8:18-20)
3. Onesimus (Philemon 1:10, 18)
4. Quartus (Rom 16:23)
5. Jairus' daughter (Matt. 9:18-19; 23-25; Mark 5:21-22, 35-42)
6. John the Baptist (Matt. 14:10)
7. Nicodemus (John 3:1)
8. Tongue (Jas. 3:8)

What if you could have only a few items, and you wanted to survive as a Christian? What would you include? Here are some suggestions:

MY SURVIVAL KIT

Ax or hammer—to remind me that I will need force to remove the rough edges from my naturally hard and stony heart. A polishing cloth will not suffice. Says the Lord, *“Is not my word like...a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces”* (Jer. 23:29)?

Flashlight with batteries—a reminder that I need light for the road, or I will be stumbling in the darkness. We need spiritual light to guide us at all times. Said the Psalmist, *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path”* (Ps. 119:105)—a God-provided lamp so that we can avoid stumbling. I want to keep this source of light always near... or I am sure to get lost. And I must keep the batteries always charged, and the flashlight turned on.

Cup—to remind me that God has provided me a mental cup which I must keep filling with the water of life, the words of His holy prophets, apostles and Jesus. I need to keep the supply fresh and new and always full, so full that it will overflow to others. If my cup is full of the water of life, its goodness will overflow to others as blessings of forgiveness, mercy, kindness, goodwill and joy.

Matches—to remind me that you need a source of “fire.” Fire suggests fervor, enthusiasm, warmth that will kindle others’ hearts and keep my own heart glowing with goodness. I cannot be passive and cool and be a successful servant of Christ. He wants those whose interest amounts to enthusiasm. Said Paul, *“Keep the fires of the spirit burning”* (Rom. 12:11 Phillips).

Rope—to remind me that I need a strong connection with others who are like minded. I cannot make it alone.

Map—to remind me that I need a sure guide. It is indispensable in reaching my goal. Remember *“that a person’s life is not his own. No one is able to plan his own course”* (Jer. 10:23 NLT).

Knife—to remind me that the law of God is sharp, and I must use it to cut away anything He forbids, sever it completely. No half-way measure will work. Anything that is not severed is still intact (Heb. 4:12).

Pencil—so that I can list my blessings every day (Eph. 1:3).

Eraser—to remind me that I will need to keep forgiving—and most of all, be forgiven. There will be wrongs that must be wiped out. I cannot carry along a lifetime of mistakes or injuries and survive (Gen. 50:15–21).

Compass—to remind me that I have to go in the right direction to arrive. I may think I am on the right course, but if it is not the road Jesus took, I will never reach His Kingdom.



Are the Dead Only Asleep?

"I have a question regarding the article, 'A soldier rests at 91.' This article appeared in Volume 87, No. 2 February, 2000 issue of the Megiddo Message. In the third paragraph it makes reference to a missionary telling Mrs. Porter that the dead are only asleep, unconscious, and Mrs. Porter found the same by studying her Bible.

"Is the Scripture you are talking about 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18? Is not Paul speaking to believers, not unbelievers?"

The Bible describes death as a "sleep," but it is not sleep as would imply a continuation of life. It is a state of total unconsciousness, oblivion, nonexistence. When the body dies, it ceases to function, it ceases to breathe, and there is no more life. In the state of death one can neither see, hear, taste, smell, feel, or think. There is no memory, personality, or intelligence. The Bible says, *"The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing"* (Eccl. 9:5). Again, *"That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again"* (Eccl. 3:19-20).

In fact, the Bible compares the death of persons to that of animals. *"Like sheep they are laid in the grave...man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish"* (Ps. 49:14, 12). Both man and beast expire, and when they cease to breathe, they are alike dead. God gives breath, spirit, and life to both man and beast, and when that breath is taken away, when the body ceases to function, they *"die, and return to their dust"* (Ps. 104:29).

This is why the Bible represents death as a "sleep." Many people in the Biblical record are described as having *"fallen asleep"* or *"slept with their fathers"* or *"sleep in death."* The Lord told Moses that he would *"sleep with [his] fathers"* (Deut. 31:15-16). Job said he expected to *"sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be"* (Job 7:21).

Among the kings of Israel and Judah, whether the king was a believer or nonbeliever, all *"slept"* with their fathers (1 Kings 2:10; 14:8-9, 20). However good or evil their lives had been, their state in death was the same.

Death is the end of thought. Wrote the Psalmist, *"His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish"* (Ps. 146:4). That is why this advice is given, plain and straight forward: *"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest"* (Eccl. 9:10).

Death is the state of silence. *"The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence"* (Ps. 115:17). King Hezekiah wrote the same: *"For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth"* (Isa. 38:18). Only a living being with knowledge of God can praise God. A dead man, with neither body nor brain functioning, cannot learn of God.

Is there any release from this sleep, any awakening possible? Yes. The Bible outlines a plan of resurrection. The prophet Daniel spoke of those *"that sleep in the dust of the earth"* (Dan. 12:2), and said that *"many of them...shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt"* (Dan. 12:3).

Jesus Himself awoke Lazarus from the "sleep" of death. Speaking of Lazarus He said to His disciples, *"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep"* (John 11:11). The disciples, failing to comprehend His meaning, thought that Jesus spoke only of Lazarus being asleep, as one would sleep at night. To remove their misunderstanding, Jesus said plainly, *"Lazarus is dead,"* showing that the "sleep" to which He referred was the state of death.

In the first letter to the Thessalonians, to which you refer, the apostle Paul wrote *"concerning them which are asleep."* He was speaking of those who had died, and mentions that those who *"sleep in Jesus"* will be resurrected. For *"If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"* (1 Thess. 4:13-14).

God has planned that at the Second Advent of Jesus, the sleeping servants of God will be resurrected, so that they can be judged and receive according to their works, whether good or evil (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:12).

Are you thinking perhaps that the body dies but the soul lives on as a separate entity from the body?

According to the Bible, the "soul" is the person, the living being. The Hebrew Lexicon defines the word translated "soul" as *"a living creature; a person; sometimes applied to animals; life; beast; body; breath; creature; man; mind; one; own; person."* It uses the word "soul" interchangeably with reference to a person. *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul"* (Ps. 19:7). Again, *"Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness,...they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered"* (Ezek. 14:14, 16).

At the time Jacob took his family into Egypt to find food during the famine, it is written that *"seventy souls"* went down into Egypt. Peter records that *"eight souls"* were saved in the ark (1 Pet. 3:20), referring to the family of Noah. The book of Acts records that two hundred seventy-six *"souls"* escaped

safely to land following the shipwreck (Acts 27:37).

Souls are individuals, persons. And souls die. Says the prophet Ezekiel speaking for God, *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die"* (Ezek. 18:20). A living person is a living soul. Death ends all consciousness.

The result of this belief is the Biblical teaching that the body rests in the grave, free from suffering or any consciousness, until it is restored to life by God, until it is resurrected. The idea that we are born with an immortal "soul" or personality or something is not Scriptural. We are not immortal until Christ changes us from this corruptible state to the incorruptible, to be made like the glorified Jesus (Phil. 3:20–21).

◆ Should Women Cover Their Heads?

"I have a question about this passage: 'For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of man' (1 Cor. 11:7). Isn't Paul saying that women should cover their heads?'"

To understand this passage, several issues must be considered: the context of the passage, the problem Paul was addressing, and the customs of the time.

The passage in question is part of a letter in which the apostle Paul was addressing specific problems in the Church at Corinth. The problem here was regarding liberties that certain women in the Church were taking. Paul begins the eleventh chapter by commending those who remembered him, and were keeping the standards he had set. Then he says: *"I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God"* (1 Cor. 11:3). Or, as translated in the New Living Bible, *"There is one thing I want you to know: a man is responsible to Christ, a woman is responsible to her husband, and Christ is responsible to God."* (*"But I wish you to understand that, while every man has Christ for his Head, woman's head is man, as Christ's Head is God"*—New English Bible.)

Did Paul teach that women should be subordinate to men? No, he taught that all are equal in Christ. *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Gal. 3:28).


What, then, could he have meant in 1 Cor. 11? The problem was the apparent permissiveness of the women of the Church as they would be viewed by those outside the Church. A principle of Bible teaching is *"to abstain from all appearance of evil"* (1 Thess. 5:22). However difficult this be to interpret, Paul was concerned that the women of the Church not use their Christian liberty in a way that would appear immoral to those outside. At the time, a veil, or wimple (as it was called)

was a "headdress worn by women over the head and around the neck, cheeks, and chin. From the late 12th until the beginning of the 14th century, it was worn extensively throughout medieval Europe, and it survived until recently as a head covering for women in religious orders" (1999 Encyclopaedia Britannica CD). From ancient times it had been a custom of women to wear a veil (see Gen. 24:65). A woman who did not wear a veil was considered to be of very loose morals, as only prostitutes went without them (Dake Annotated Reference Bible, footnote, see also Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament).

To be seen in public without a veil was also to disgrace one's husband, therefore Paul's comment, *"Let her also be shorn."* A shorn head was a punishment for prostitution (Dake Annotated Reference Bible, Footnote).

The same principle applied to the observing of Jewish laws. Paul did not tell the Jews not to observe their law. He only told them that obedience to their law could not bring them salvation, that to be saved they had to obey Christ's law. He even advised believing Jews to cooperate with Jewish customs (this was his underlying reason for circumcising Timothy, because he was part Jew, and Paul would rather remove an occasion for criticism). Never were the Christians in the category of social "rebels." He had the same attitude toward the observance of the Sabbath. Under Christ's new law, the keeping of the seventh day was not required. However, believers, who lived in Jewish communities—and Paul when he was traveling—attended the synagogue on the Sabbath day. It was a place to worship God, and God can be worshiped honorably on any day. There is some evidence that believers who were not associated with Jewish customs or communities observed the first day of the week as a remembrance of Jesus' resurrection.

Was Paul right in viewing Christian conduct in relation to the customs of the times? We can be certain his first obligation was to obey the law of Christ. But if there was no conflict between the law of Christ and the current custom, if following the custom did not result in any transgression of the law of God, it seems that Paul advised that the custom be followed. One example was the institution of slavery. The law of God, with its insistence that all men are equal, would not support the institution of slavery. But neither would believers be in a position to overthrow slavery. So it was prudent for Paul to advise believing slaves to be subject to their masters, and believing masters to treat their slaves as brothers in the Lord, recognizing that they too have a master in heaven (Eph. 6:5–9; Col. 3:22). Even though the basic institution was wrong, believers could honor God by conducting themselves according to His law. ◆



**THINKING WELL IS WISE.
PLANNING WELL IS WISER.
DOING WELL IS WISEST.**



The trouble with “if only” is that it can so quickly turn into “only if.”

“If only I had more time ...”

“If only I were younger (or older)...”

“If only I had a different job (or house, or friend, or car)...”

“If only I could do anything I wanted to do...”

“If only I didn’t have to work...”

We can think of dozens of “if only’s.” The trouble is, *they aren’t!* If we are depending on them, we are depending on un-reality, and unreality is always dangerous. Useless. Wasted thought energy.

We can dream, but if those dreams are to be helpful they must center around possibilities.

The big trouble with “if only” is that it so easily turns into “only if’s.” And “only if” says, “I will do such and such only if...”—and we have put a condition on our response which leaves wide open the door to refuse. We don’t do it *because of* what we lack. We would do it “if only”? Maybe what we really mean is, “I won’t do this unless I have such-and-such.” What has happened? The “if only” has turned into a solid stopper: “I can’t, so I won’t!”

Which means that “if only” can be dangerous. When you tell yourself something like: “If only I had a new computer I could keep my letterwriting up to date,” you are really saying, “I’m not going to do it because I don’t have a new computer.” Surely it would expedite the work to have the new computer (or a better job...or a bigger car...or better friends) or whatever you dream of. But aren’t you limiting yourself in the meantime? Aren’t you saying: “There’s no other way” except to get your wish?

Jesus did not say, I will please My heavenly Father if only He lets me live a long life. Rather, He accepted His Father’s will as it was handed to Him and said, *“Not my will but Yours be done.”*

Paul did not say to Jesus, I will do what you want, I will go and preach to the Gentiles if only you let me keep the favor of the Jews. Rather, he took on his new task wholeheartedly and immediately. He fell into disfavor with the Jews, but that did not stop him. Near the end of his career he said triumphantly, *“None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself...”* (Acts 20:24).

If we take the attitude of “if only,” we effectively cut out of our life many things we ought to be doing...which we ought to be becoming... and which we *can become*. In so doing, we cut ourselves off from the rich blessings God is anxious to give us.

Success is not reserved for those who wait for perfect conditions. Of course, if a situation is in your power to change for the better, then change it. Like the “Serenity Prayer,” pray for the wisdom to know when to accept present conditions. Achievement comes not by wishing for the reality of more “if only’s” but by working with what you have *right here and now*.

Challenge yourself to replace every “if only” that comes through your mind with: “Here’s what I have, and here’s what I can do with it.” Forget about the “if only’s.”

Take action with what you have. Now.

Forget about the “if only’s” and take action with what you have.

*Lord, for tomorrow and its needs
I do not pray;
Keep me, my God, from stain of sin,
Just for today.
Now, set a seal upon my lips,
For this I pray;
Keep me from wrong or idle words.
Just for today.
Let me be slow to do my will,
Prompt to obey.
Keep me, guide me, use me, Lord
Just for today.*



If today were your last day of living, do you know what would be your worth? It wouldn't be in the wealth you left but in what you did for Christ.

You cannot have a full and happy life with jealousy in your heart.

Wanting to make peace? First make peace within.

We have heard of many people who did too little for God; but have you ever heard of anyone who did too much?

Yesterday is a cancelled check.
Tomorrow is a promissory note.
Today is ready cash, spend it wisely.

We show our character in nothing more clearly than by what we like.

The most unprofitable item ever manufactured is an excuse.

Success is for those who will take it. It will be taken by those who are diligent, prayerful, ambitious and alert.

No one can do good work or think clearly when fires of jealousy or revenge are burning inside.

True prayer is not asking for what we want; it is asking for what God wants us to have.

Faultfinding is one talent that ought to be buried.

Common honesty needs to be more common.

*Do not say "Some other day
I will walk this narrow way"
For the Day of Salvation is now.*

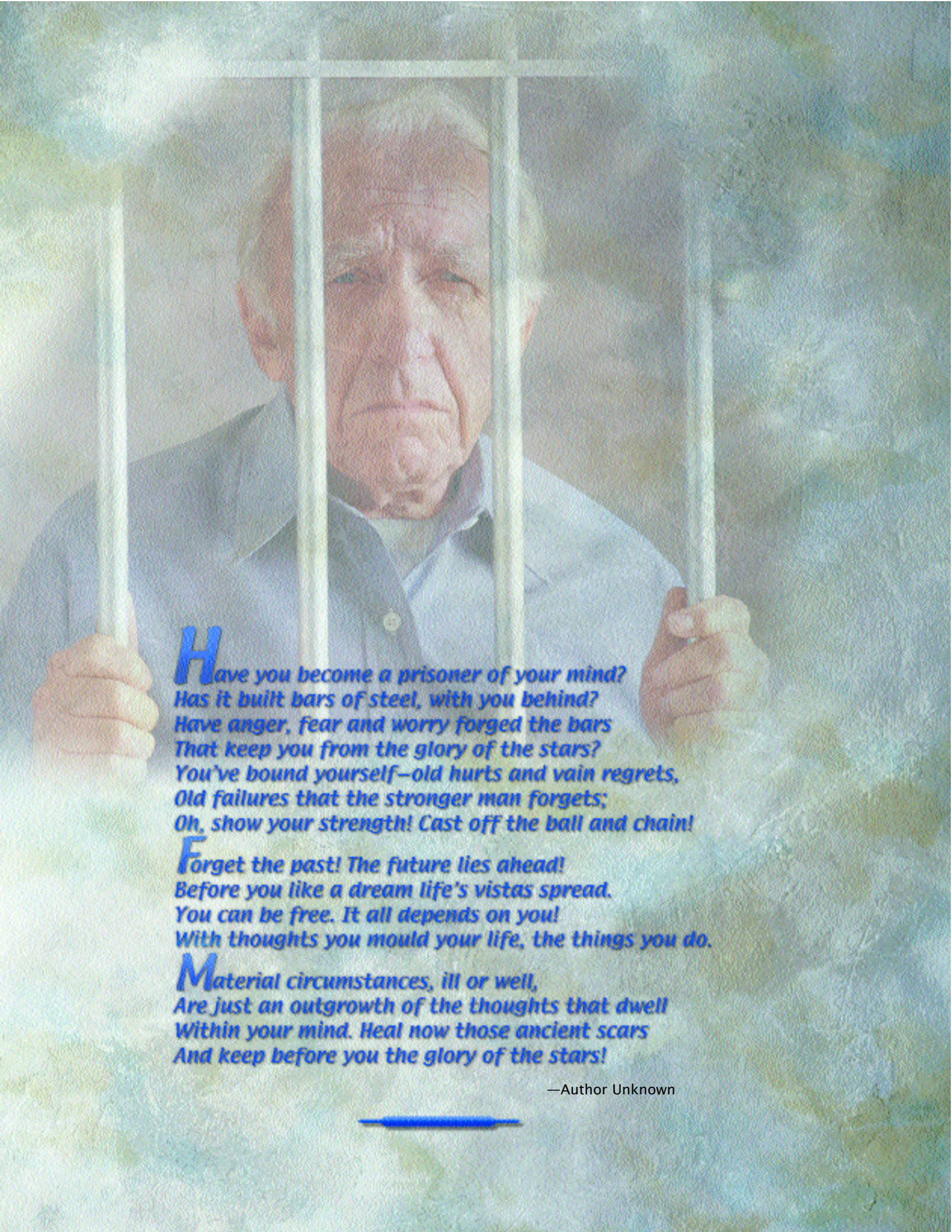
*Do not for the morrow wait,
For it then may be too late—
Soul, the Day of Salvation is now.*

Patience is the very soul of peace.

I give ME more trouble than anyone else I know.

Happiness comes from striving, doing, loving, achieving, conquering, always something positive and forceful.

God often tries us with a little to see what we would do with a lot.



Have you become a prisoner of your mind?
Has it built bars of steel, with you behind?
Have anger, fear and worry forged the bars
That keep you from the glory of the stars?
You've bound yourself—old hurts and vain regrets,
Old failures that the stronger man forgets;
Oh, show your strength! Cast off the ball and chain!

Forget the past! The future lies ahead!
Before you like a dream life's vistas spread.
You can be free. It all depends on you!
With thoughts you mould your life, the things you do.

Material circumstances, ill or well,
Are just an outgrowth of the thoughts that dwell
Within your mind. Heal now those ancient scars
And keep before you the glory of the stars!

—Author Unknown
