

Megiddo Message

MAY, 2002

Have this attitude
in you which was also
in Christ Jesus.

-Philippians 2:5

ALMOST Is Not Enough!

by RUTH E. SISSON

Lately I have become very disillusioned with the little word "almost." *Almost pure* is still contaminated. *Almost whole* is still broken. *Almost home* is still out of sight. *Almost done* still needs work. *Almost enough* still falls short. *Almost passing* is still failing. *Almost right* is still wrong.

Yes, *almost* is a word of disappointment. It says there is a condition, a standard, a limitation, a goal that has not been met.

In some segments of our society, "anything goes," yet in daily life we live by certain standards. If I pay for a new kitchen floor to be installed in my home, I expect it to be done—not *almost* done—at the time I pay for it. And if I am going to help my friend I have to more than almost do it, or she gets no benefit.

We find "almost's" in Scripture as well. There are few warnings in Scripture more solemn than that which is contained in these words of our Lord to us, "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32). It is a reminder of one who almost escaped from the doomed city, but not quite: she left too much of her heart behind.

When Jesus was preaching, certain of the Pharisees might have followed Him, but they would not—because "they loved the praises of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43). They could *almost* do it, but not quite. As a result, they lost everything.

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

How close one can come, yet miss all!

Remember the Rich Young Ruler who asked Jesus, "What must I do to be saved?" He felt that he had done pretty well, and should be commended. But there was something lacking. Said Jesus, "One thing you lack," and that one thing (his wealth) was more than he wanted to give up (Mark 10:21). See him going away with head bowed low. He *almost* made it, but didn't.

Look at the five foolish bridesmaids in Jesus' parable (Matt. 25:1–11). They had *almost* enough oil to last until the bridegroom came. For a good while, it looked as though all ten would be on hand to welcome the Bridegroom together. But then one lamp began to flicker, and went out. And another. And

another, until five lamps had failed. The problem: lack of oil. And while they went to get more oil, the bridegroom arrived, and the door was shut. They almost made it through, but didn't. That small deficiency in their supply of oil made the difference between being inside looking out, or outside looking in. *Almost* was not enough.

When Moses was leading his people out of bondage, they became thirsty.



*Almost
persuaded is
still an
unbeliever.*

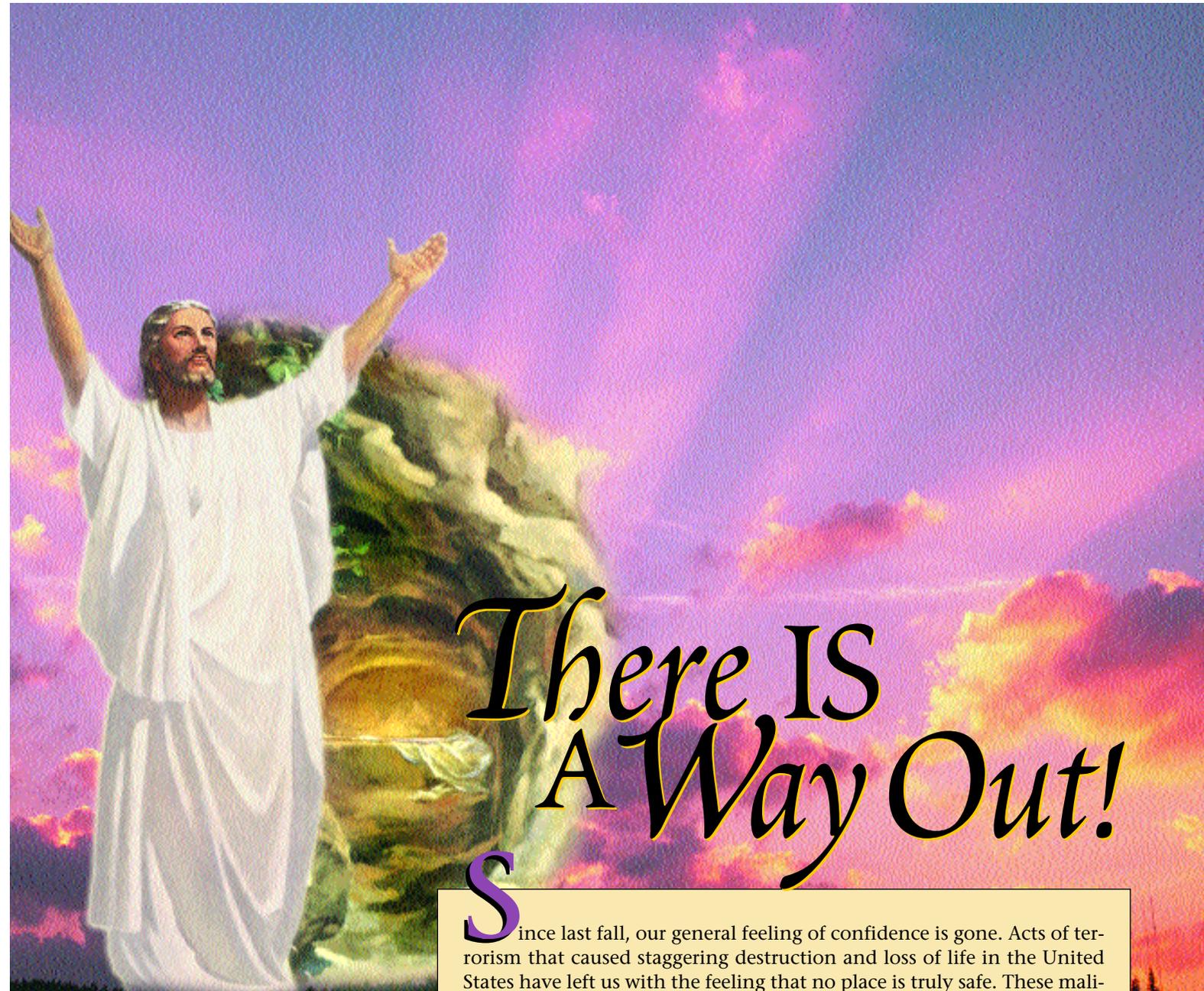
"Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink.' So Moses took the rod from before the Lord, just as He had commanded him; and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, 'Listen now, you rebels; shall

we bring forth water for you out of this rock?' Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank" (Num. 20:8–11 NASB).

Moses lifted up his hand and with his rod he struck the rock, as he had done many times before. The water gushed out abundantly. But the Lord had told Moses to speak to the rock, not strike it. Moses *almost* carried out God's instructions, but not quite. To speak was not to strike. And for not carrying them out precisely as God had told him to do, he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. A severe penalty? God does not honor *almost* obedient.

How many almost's can you discover in your life? How many times do you settle for what is almost right, or say what is *almost* true?

Check now, while there is still time to turn *almost* into ALL. ♦



There IS A Way Out!

*Christ's greatest
role in the affairs of
this planet will be
when He returns as
Judge, Conqueror
and King of kings.*

Since last fall, our general feeling of confidence is gone. Acts of terrorism that caused staggering destruction and loss of life in the United States have left us with the feeling that no place is truly safe. These malicious attacks were not directed solely against military personnel but toward innocent and unsuspecting men, women and children, who were simply going about everyday life.

They remind us that all of us are within the reach of death.

None of us like to think about death, our own death or the death of someone we love. Its utter finality and the sharp sorrow of separation causes us to avoid the painful subject as much as possible. But death is very much a part of the present arrangement.

But death need not be the end. There IS a way OUT, and that way out is *the way of resurrection*. The Apostle Paul, writing by Divine inspiration, said the "*dead in Christ shall rise*" (1 Thess. 4:16). The same God who gave life in the beginning can restore it—and will. This is the hope of resurrection, and it is vital to every sincere, truehearted believer. Christ has showed the way. Because He lives, we too may live. There IS a way out. There IS life beyond death. There IS hope, and that hope is just as real, just as certain, just as sure as that the sun will rise tomorrow morning.

It is sure because it is the promise of the God of heaven.

This is what our faith is all about. God has given us this life to get ready—not to DIE but to LIVE. He has provided a means whereby we

continued on page 5

Megiddo Message

MAY 2002
Volume 89, No.4

EDITORIAL

2 **ALMOST Is Not Enough**

FEATURE SECTION

3 **There IS a Way Out** The meaning of resurrection

HISTORIC INSIGHT

7 **Hanameel's Field** The prophet Jeremiah invests in Israel's future

ARTICLE

9 **The High Cost of Stubbornness**

IN MEMORIAM

10 **Former Pastor Sleeps at 92** by Ruth E. Sisson The Life of Newton H Payne

14 **"Teach us to number our days"**

BIBLE QUESTIONS

15 **Know Your Bible?** Rivers • Chariots • Anger

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

16 **Sunday Worship?** Do you believe the Jews are God's chosen people? Salvation

POEM

18 **Reaching Upward**

BACK COVER

My Prayer

The **Megiddo Message** (USPS 338-120) (ISSN 0194-7826) is published monthly (except March/April and September/October issues) by the Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619. Telephone: 585-235-4150. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, New York.

Publication Staff: Ruth E. Sisson, Editor; Gerald R. Payne, Executive Editor. Art 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 585-235-4150.

Note: For the protection of our subscribers, we do not sell, rent, lease, publish or distribute our mailing list.

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: www.megiddo.com

E-mail address: megiddo@megiddo.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 Bell & Howell Information and Learning, 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 or the New 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; NLT—The New Living Translation; NCV—The New Century Version.

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.

There IS A Way Out!

continued from page 3

can escape mortality and ultimately triumph over death so that we can say with the victors, "O death, where is your sting? O hades, where is your victory?" (1 Cor. 15:55).

Yes, there IS a way OUT!

A young bomber pilot in World War II just before taking off on a critical mission is said to have lighted a match in the presence of his chaplain. After blowing it out, the young man asked the chaplain, "Now tell me, man to man, is this what happens to us when we die?"

A modern song writer a few years ago put the same question to music, in these words: "Is this all there is?"

The question was on the mind of Job centuries ago when he asked, "If a person dies, will he live again?"

It is a question that touches each of us. We breathe and eat and sleep and wake and work day after day after day, in the blind expectation that everything will always continue as it is. We know, of course, that it will not. But we think somehow that by closing our eyes to the facts we can keep them from happening—at the least, postpone them.

Ours is a death-denying culture, as though pretending it does not exist would do away with the reality. We treat death as an unmentionable catastrophe which only happens to "other" people. It is the old truism that "All men think all men mortal but themselves."

Cosmetics, face lifts, the frenzied search for the mythical "fountain of youth," the idolizing of youthfulness—all are visible evidences of our culture's inability to deal with the orderly process of decay.

What is wrong with this philosophy of denial? Precisely this, that it is dishonest. Beside that, it is bound to fail. The philosophy has nothing to offer but disappointment and frustration. And these are hardly assets in any life.

Facing the Facts

There is just no virtue in denying the facts of life and death. At the very

least, truth has a persistent way of challenging those who ignore it; and the sooner we face the facts as they are, the better for us. The sooner we face the facts about death, the sooner we can come to grips with the real issues of life and use our *present life* to prepare for more life.

This is what God intends us to do. Given the normal course of time as we know it, each of us will die, and the world will go on without us, much as it did before we were born. To acknowledge this is not to be morbid; it is simply to see life as it is—so that we can grasp our opportunities before too late. In fact, an honest facing of our own personal mortality is the strongest single factor in bringing us to seek God and the reward He offers. We know that we shall die; we know that we shall need a way OUT. And if we have not taken the proper steps in advance, we shall find we do not have a way out when we need it most.

God knows us mortals. He knows how to get our attention. He knows how we are repelled by the idea of death. He knows how much we love life, and it is to this inborn love of life that He appeals. "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech" (1 Pet. 3:10 NIV). In other words, He says, "You who love life, you who want to live many days, do this...and this...and you will live—forever!" Could He possibly offer more than this?

Apart from this message of hope from God, what have we? What do we have to look forward to apart from God? The answer is *nothing*. Apart from God, about all we can look forward to is the meaning we can cull from our daily routine, the short-lived pleasures we derive from work and rest, from challenge and achievement, from winning and losing. It is all good while it lasts, but when it is over, what then? For we know where it all inevitably ends—in decline and death.

The more deeply we root ourselves in this world, the more deeply we root ourselves in the soil of despair. Our salvation lies in being able to trans-

plant our affections from the present into eternity. We attach ourselves to despair if we attach ourselves to the things that are seen. But the more we become friends of God and righteousness, the more clearly we see the things we hope for, and the more strongly we are drawn to their reality. In the light of this hope, the present becomes a time and place where we have our one and only opportunity to prepare for the *real* world which lies ahead, the "world to come, about which we are speaking" (Heb. 2:5 NIV). The sooner we grasp that fact and go to work in earnest, the better.

To acknowledge our human condition and face the facts honestly and squarely will benefit us even now. For as we attach our lives to that which is infinite, as we give ourselves wholly to God and His cause and the development of the character He requires, we gain immeasurably in present happiness, besides securing a place in the eternal future God has in store for all His faithful servants. For "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9 NLT).

After Death...

The Bible positively asserts that we are mortal, that when we die we are dead—every part of us. We read:

"For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom" (Eccl. 9:5, 10 NIV).

"Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing" (Ps. 146:3-4 NIV).

The patriarch Job describes man as mortal, subject to death: "Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?" (Job 4:17 NIV).

The dead cannot praise. "It is not the dead who praise the Lord, those who go down to silence" (Ps. 115:17 NIV). Isaiah also was specific: "For the grave

cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness. The living, the living—they praise you, as I am doing today; fathers tell their children about your faithfulness” (Isa. 38:18–19 NIV).

The book of Ecclesiastes gives statement upon statement as to the vanity of life, comparing human life to that of the beasts. There is no enduring profit without God. “Man’s fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return” (Eccl. 3:19–20 NIV).

The belief that we possess an immortal soul has been handed down for centuries. Long before the time of Christ, the Greek and Roman philosophers believed it. “All men’s souls are immortal” stated Socrates of Greece. He believed death to be the soul’s great friend, a deliverance from bodily entanglement. At death the immortal soul is ‘freed’, said Socrates, “to roam in the world of ideas to which it belongs.”

But Socrates had no evidence beyond his own feelings.

Plato likewise wrote, “The soul whose inseparable attribute is life will never admit to life’s opposite, death. Thus the soul is shown to be immortal, indestructible.” There is only one problem—it again has no foundation.

On the contrary, the Bible consistently declares that the soul is the living being, the whole person (see Gen. 12:5; Ex. 1:5; 12:4). And man is mortal. Souls die (Ezek. 18:20), and the soul that sins will die. More than a century ago our founder offered \$1000 to anyone who could find any statement in the Bible that the soul of man is immortal or undying; and the offer still stands—unclaimed.

The Way Out: RESURRECTION

What is the Christian’s reply to death? Is there a way out? Yes! Thank God, there is! It is the way of Resurrection.

All hope of future life hinges upon a physical resurrection.

This was the hope of all of God’s people in ages past. In the words of the patriarch Job, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19:25–26).

The prophet Isaiah looked forward to a personal resurrection: “Your people have died, but they will live again; their bodies will rise from death. You who lie in the ground, wake up and be happy! The dew covering you is like the dew of a new day; the ground will give birth to the dead” (Isa. 26:19 NCV).

When the prophet Daniel wanted to know more of future events, the brief outline of which he had been shown, he was told, “But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days” (Dan. 12:13). He would rest (in death), then stand. In between would be the physical resurrection.

This same Prophet foretold more about the Resurrection: “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2).

The hope of the Resurrection was the anticipation of the Apostle Paul. “If by any means,” he said, “I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Phil. 3:11). He said in another Epistle that the Resurrection was the believer’s only escape route. “If there is no resurrection of the dead,...all our preaching is useless, and your trust in God is useless,...all who have died believing in Christ have perished” (1 Cor. 15:13, 14, 18 NLT).

The Resurrection is the true believer’s way—and the *only* way—out.

This is what faith and true Christianity is all about. It is the one and only effective way of dealing with meaninglessness and nonentity. It is the one and only true way of obtaining something more than

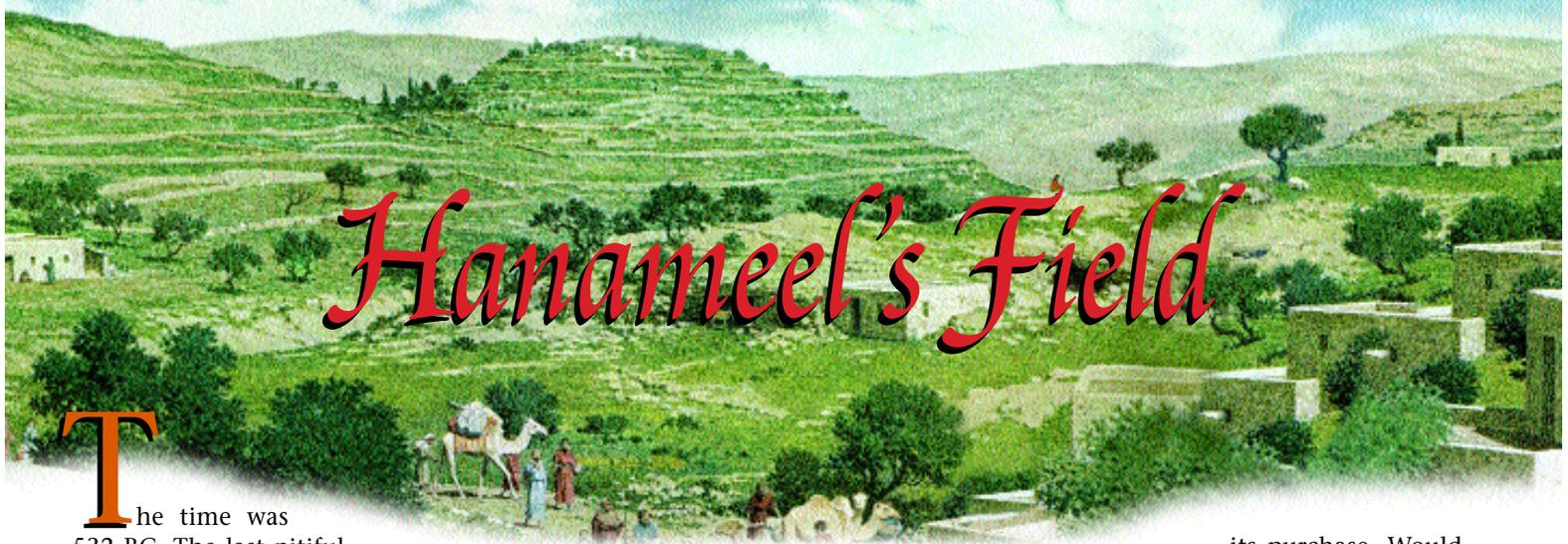
what we see. For Christ tells us—rather, *shows* us—that what we see is *not all there* is, that our experience is not the whole story. And when we turn to the Bible we hear the voice of God calling us away from a life of immersion in the present, calling us to attach ourselves in faith and hope to seeking God and His eternal Kingdom. Why? Because this is the only way to obtain that which is sure, lasting, and which will never disappoint us.

Christianity offers us the one reality that does not let us down. We do not need to be preoccupied in pettiness to be happy.

Whatever our present circumstances, we can live triumphantly. We can think and live and plan *with God*—because we know there is an eternal life ahead for us if we have now served God with all our mind and strength. Animals may have to take life as it comes, from birth to death, but not *homo sapiens*. God has given us minds which we can use to our eternal profit. We can live beyond ourselves. We can live beyond this life. We can live—in the eternal Kingdom on earth. It is a real, sure hope.

Yes, there IS a way OUT! ♦





Hanameel's Field

The time was 532 BC. The last pitiful remnants of the once good little kingdom of Judah were going to pieces as Zedekiah, the puppet king, was about to pay the penalty for rebellion against his lord, the king of Babylon. A ten year siege had reduced the unhappy city to the last extremity; the hoped-for assistance from Egypt had failed to come, and famine made its slow kill day after day. Vain and unreasoning national pride was giving way to despair. It looked like the end of all things; the nation was doomed and would never rise again. How could it?

Still the futile resistance went on.

In this very bad spot was the Eternal's watchman, the heroic prophet Jeremiah, sticking to his unenviable post for the sake of the very small remnant of honest men and women who lived in Jerusalem. He had consistently advised submission to the inevitable as the only sane course and the one approved by the Eternal, but his counsel was not popular. The machinations of a hostile nobility and military clique and the influence of a very few friends in high places kept him in an uncertain position, the inveterate king imprisoning or releasing him according to the pressure of the hour. Just now he was "in," with little prospect of getting out until the city should change hands. But his counsel was unchanged. Jeremiah was too big a man for that.

Into the prison one day comes a visitor named Hanameel, Jeremiah's cousin, with a little proposition. He has a field in a suburb of Anathoth which he wishes to sell, and according to the ancient Jewish land-laws, Jeremiah has the first right to

JEREMIAH'S HISTORIC ACT OF FAITH

(Read Jeremiah 32)

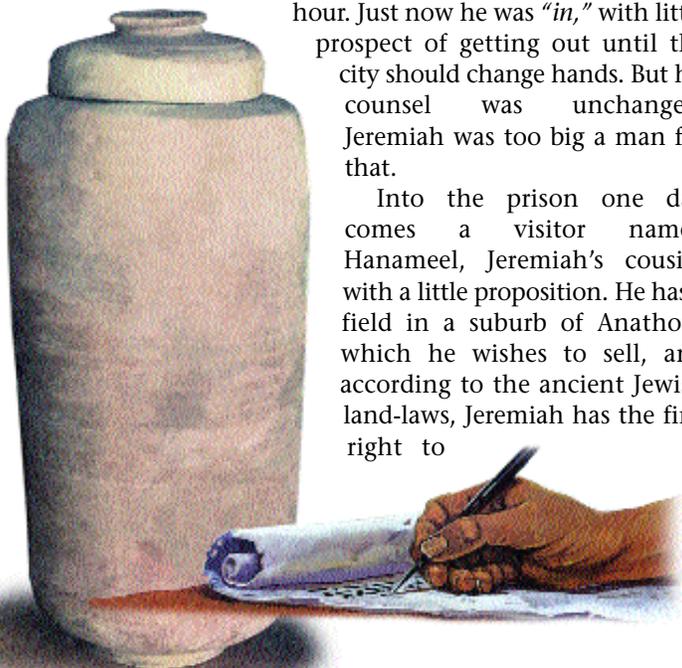
its purchase. Would he buy it? Without hesitation, and probably to Hanameel's surprise, Jeremiah buys.

The transaction is conducted with the utmost formality, with signatures before witnesses and the deeds carefully recorded and filed (in a jar), just as in the happier days of peace and prosperity. Jeremiah returns to his cell, and Hanameel goes his way with a broad smile, no doubt, at his cousin's gullibility. Money you can spend, but land—why, with Chaldeans overrunning the country for the last ten years and the city about to fall, the best of fields were not worth a farthing a dozen. It was almost a shame to take the money. It was something like finding seventeen shekels of silver. It certainly looked like history's craziest real estate deal. Jeremiah must be losing his wits in his old age.

But Jeremiah was not mad; he was the sanest man in Jerusalem in those mad times. He knew what he was doing. He knew perfectly well that he was buying a regiment of heavily-armed Chaldeans along with the field, men whom it would be rather hard to evict. More, he knew he would never claim or cultivate or reap any profit from the purchase. Never would he build a house on it. His last days were to be spent far, far away, in the land of the Nile. Why, then, in the name of reason, did he make such a worthless investment?

The fact is, he was by example, preaching a sermon of hope and cheer, one of the most cheerful messages ever delivered by this much-maligned Prophet. Jeremiah is commonly considered a prophet of gloom and desolation, "doleful Jeremiah." To be perfectly frank, there wasn't much in his day—externally—to be cheerful about. He told them the bold and unpalatable facts when he prophesied of the inevitable desolation to come as the result of their disobedience, and the people wouldn't believe him. He also offered them consolation and hope, and still they wouldn't believe him. Yet he stuck to his post and refused to be silenced, even at the risk of his life.

What made Jeremiah cheerful amid such cheerless surroundings? His foresight. Through Divine inspiration he could see at least seventy years farther ahead than any other man of his day. He knew that the Captivity was a fact and had been for twenty-one years, although his stubborn countrymen were reluctant to admit it. He knew that the complete destruction of the city was inevitable. But he also knew that the dark night would have an end, that when Babylon was a memory Israel would inhabit the old familiar places.



"For the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Someday people will again own property here in this land and will buy and sell houses and vineyards and fields." (Jer. 32:15 NLT).

Things would come out right after all. The Captivity with its miseries was but an interlude. To show publicly his faith in the future, he bought a field, a share in the country.

"Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah,...for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the Lord."

Multiply conditions in Jerusalem in the tenth year of Zedekiah by the breadth of the earth, and you have the world of today. Desperation and hopelessness are everywhere.

Yet even in the darkness and chaos we hear the cheery voice of the watchman and see a gleam of light, the same light kindled by Jeremiah when against all common sense he purchased Hanameel's field. For there is a field to be bought today, and right now is the time to make the investment. The price will never be lower. *"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field—and to get the treasure, too!"* (Matt. 13:44 NLT).

"The kingdom of heaven"—that's our earth, our earth made over new. *"He created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited"* (Isa. 45:18). That is His purpose, and it will be carried out. The treasure is eternal life. *"Someday people will again own property here in this land and will buy and sell houses and vineyards and fields."* (v. 15). The blessings of immortal life shall be enjoyed right here in America, in Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and the isles afar off. Peace, plenty, stability and justice shall cover the earth, eternally.

This is no mere pleasant dream; the Eternal has given His word. He has taken His oath, and it will happen. And soon! Through the dark and bloody history of our planet the Divine Plan has been silently working out; all else is incidental or accidental, man's own doing, misdoing and undoing—not reckoned. The present state of confusion is but an interlude, the darkness before the dawn. The sort of thing we have been having since creation is not going on and on and on. A change is coming and things are going to get better and better and better. All will be well. Will our faith in these trying times match that of Jeremiah?

Buy this field, brother! Buy a share in the Kingdom of God, sister! Buy a share in a glorified earth. It will be the greatest investment you ever made; you'll never regret it. It will take all you have and are, from this time on; but it is worth it. The price is a consecrated life, *"a new creature,"* every thought, act, word and feeling subjected to the will of God. Put off the *"old nature"* and put on the new.

The new order of the ages is only for those who prepare for it. The field at this moment is still occupied by the enemy, but his power is brief and the Eternal will reckon with him. We need have no fears. When He takes a hand, He will make a short work of it. Buy it; the title is sound and sure. When every other investment, every other value has crumbled, its development will have just begun.

Every truth will some day be accepted, every right will some day be established, every wrong some day will be righted, and every evil some day will be abolished. In praying, in working, and in hoping, we must not faint. The delays may be many, the obstacles often seem insurmountable, but nothing is impossible for God who holds the destiny of the nations in His hand.

Buy this field! Buy it for joy! There's a treasure in it. ◆

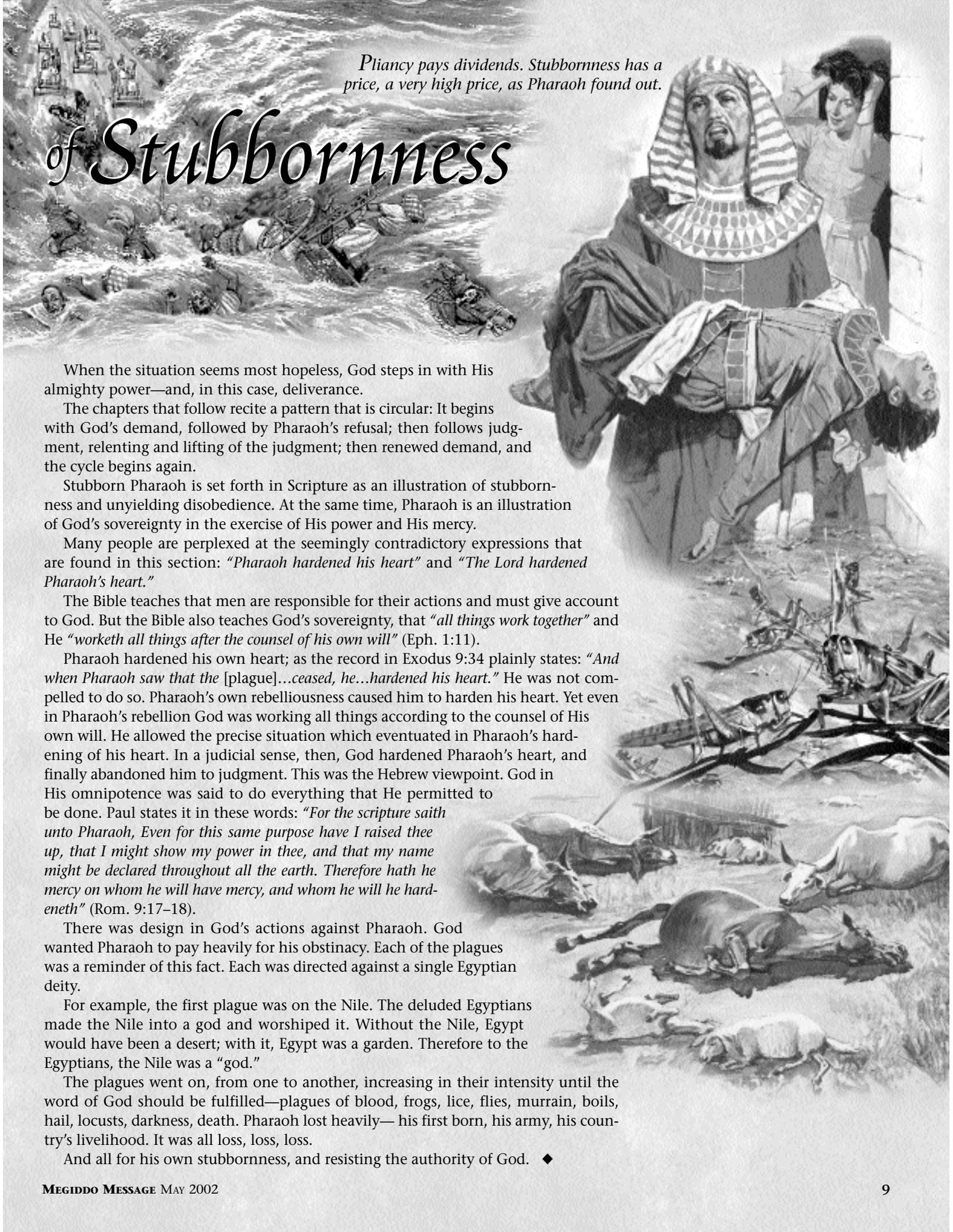
The High Cost

Pharaoh had a genuine opportunity to listen to God, and reap the benefits; but he refused. When Moses and Aaron first approached him, delivering the word of the Lord: *"Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go,"* Pharaoh replied, *"Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."* True enough, at that point he knew not the Lord. But he was soon to learn.

Moses and Aaron pleaded: *"The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword."*

But the king of Egypt would not listen. *"Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get you unto your burdens."* And he commanded that the taskmasters of the Israelite slaves no longer give them straw to put into the brick; henceforth they would have to gather straw for themselves—and still produce as many bricks. *"For they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God. Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words"* (Ex. 5:1-9).

Hardhearted, stubborn and unreasoning, he had no pity for the cries of the Israelites that resulted from his burden of mistreatment. But the Lord assured Moses that He had a plan for His people, and that all would eventually work out. *"I am the Lord: and I...have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. Wherefore...I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God"* (Ex. 6:2-7). God was fortifying Moses for the battle, assuring him that eventually Pharaoh not only would let the people go but would actually drive them out (6:1).



Pliancy pays dividends. Stubbornness has a price, a very high price, as Pharaoh found out.

of Stubbornness

When the situation seems most hopeless, God steps in with His almighty power—and, in this case, deliverance.

The chapters that follow recite a pattern that is circular: It begins with God's demand, followed by Pharaoh's refusal; then follows judgment, relenting and lifting of the judgment; then renewed demand, and the cycle begins again.

Stubborn Pharaoh is set forth in Scripture as an illustration of stubbornness and unyielding disobedience. At the same time, Pharaoh is an illustration of God's sovereignty in the exercise of His power and His mercy.

Many people are perplexed at the seemingly contradictory expressions that are found in this section: *"Pharaoh hardened his heart"* and *"The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart."*

The Bible teaches that men are responsible for their actions and must give account to God. But the Bible also teaches God's sovereignty, that *"all things work together"* and He *"worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"* (Eph. 1:11).

Pharaoh hardened his own heart; as the record in Exodus 9:34 plainly states: *"And when Pharaoh saw that the [plague]...ceased, he...hardened his heart."* He was not compelled to do so. Pharaoh's own rebelliousness caused him to harden his heart. Yet even in Pharaoh's rebellion God was working all things according to the counsel of His own will. He allowed the precise situation which eventuated in Pharaoh's hardening of his heart. In a judicial sense, then, God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and finally abandoned him to judgment. This was the Hebrew viewpoint. God in His omnipotence was said to do everything that He permitted to be done. Paul states it in these words: *"For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth"* (Rom. 9:17-18).

There was design in God's actions against Pharaoh. God wanted Pharaoh to pay heavily for his obstinacy. Each of the plagues was a reminder of this fact. Each was directed against a single Egyptian deity.

For example, the first plague was on the Nile. The deluded Egyptians made the Nile into a god and worshiped it. Without the Nile, Egypt would have been a desert; with it, Egypt was a garden. Therefore to the Egyptians, the Nile was a "god."

The plagues went on, from one to another, increasing in their intensity until the word of God should be fulfilled—plagues of blood, frogs, lice, flies, murrain, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, death. Pharaoh lost heavily—his first born, his army, his country's livelihood. It was all loss, loss, loss.

And all for his own stubbornness, and resisting the authority of God. ♦

Former Pastor Sleeps at 92

by RUTH E. SISSON

On April 18, 2002, Newton H. Payne, pastor of the Megiddo Church from 1985 to 1997, succumbed to the debilitating effects of Parkinson's disease at the age of 92. I will refer to him as "Brother Newton," as he was known to the people of the Church.

Brother Newton was the eldest of two children born in Rochester, New York, to William and Harriet Payne.



Evelyn (left) and her brother Newton (right) in their Sunday best.

While the family was living on Gorsline Street near Lake Avenue, a Megiddo missionary came by selling books. His mother purchased a set. This was their earliest introduction to the Church. At that time they were attending a Methodist church on Lyell Avenue, where his mother Harriet played the organ.

A short time later, while the children were still very young, she saw an ad in the paper that the Rev. Maud Hembree of the Megiddo Church was going to speak on the subject of baptism. Her sister had recently joined the Christadelphians, and baptism was a key subject. So she, with her sister and father, went to hear Rev. Hembree. Returning to her home after the meeting, the three had an extended discussion. Harriet wanted to know who was right. What were the differences between the Megiddoes and the Christadelphians? Her father put it simply: "The Megiddoes have all the truth that the Christadelphians have, only the Megiddoes go *further*." Harriet decided she wanted the "further" part. Within a short time the

family had relocated to the environs of the Megiddo Church and soon after built their own residence on West Sawyer Place. Young Newton was at this time only four years old.

The family's decision to be part of the Megiddo Church was a lasting one, and Brother Newton's father, mother and sister all remained loyal members of the Church until separated by death.

Brother Newton had three main areas of interest: music, electrical wiring, and sound recording—all of which he used for the benefit of the Church. In each area he gave total dedication, without regard to the cost to himself in energy, time, or money.

As Minister of Music

Perhaps his most continuous contribution was as minister of music where, meeting the challenge of ever changing resources, he kept music a continuous part of all Church services and programs. How was it possible? His own comment was, "We have been blessed with many cooperative players." He did not mention his own ingenuity, which was needed in generous amounts.

Brother Newton was responsible for the musical organizations of the Church during most of his life, including band, orchestra, and choir at different times. Though he was an accomplished flutist, his greatest talent was rhythm—in fact, he had so much rhythm that it was very hard for him to understand those who didn't have it!

His most continuous effort was with the band. I am quite sure we can say he spent thousands of hours copy-



A Payne family portrait

ing and arranging parts and making scores even when he was in his eighties.

The music ministry was a career he hadn't planned on. It all started one evening when the band was ready to rehearse just before October 1st in 1935, and the director was unavailable. Brother Newton was asked to conduct. It proved to be his debut, and the band was his from that day forward, until he was forced to retire 60 years later because of failing health.

ously been foreman on large electrical projects. Brother Newton saw it as his opportunity to learn, and Brother Sawyer was happy to teach the young apprentice. It was a perfect match. Brother Sawyer would complete his inspection duties while Brother Newton was in school, and the rest of the day, Saturdays and evenings he would devote to wiring on the Church grounds, his young apprentice always "on hand."

Their first project was an addition recently built onto House No. 1 to

old enough. The two readily found themselves with plenty of work because of a reputation for dependable and high quality work, Brother Sawyer continuing in the capacity of mentor for a number of years. "I'm sure I pestered him with questions," Brother Newton said, "but he never complained."

One side story of his electrical adventures might be of interest here, which Brother Newton told. These are his words: "The Church put on a major play twice a year. They needed some dimmers for the lighting in the



Brother Newton with the Megiddo band (above) about 1955 and with the orchestra (right) about 1966

Brother Newton was also involved with the Church choir for most of 30 years, from about 1967 to 1997. Though not trained in choir, his directing added life and quality to the group.

As Master Electrician

Brother Newton, along with his sister, spent his entire school days in the Megiddo Day School, under the direction of Sister Thatcher. When he was about 13 or 14 years old, he volunteered to be "helper" to a new Church member, Brother George Sawyer, who was then an electrical inspector for the City of Rochester and who had previ-

ously been foreman on large electrical projects. Several major pieces of new equipment needed new wiring.

At the age of 15, before he was old enough to drive, Brother Newton was beginning his own electrical business, in partnership with LaVerne Burrows, his classmate and friend from Megiddo Day School, who was one year older so was able to be "driver" until Brother Newton was

Church, but the budget did not allow for the purchase. Again Brother Sawyer came to the rescue. He improvised a dimmer by using a gallon oil can filled with water and lowering a short section of brass pipe into the can of water. The lower the pipe in the can of water, the brighter the light. The invention worked well for several seasons—until one of the cans sprung a leak during a program. Needless to



Philip Fleming helps Brother Newton with "business call" about 1970

Lovingly Grateful

(written to him shortly before his death)

Dear Brother Newton Payne:

You have always been an inspiration for me, right from the time I first visited you and we went to the park and had dinner there, and you gave me your coat to wear as it was a rainy, wet day. I love the memories that God has blessed me with. I felt that I had come home.

You have taught me so much about how I should do things, no matter how hard it may be to make it right, always do it to the glory of God, and believe me when I say, it is a beautiful way to live this life.

When we look at the signs of the times, we conclude that this could easily be the year that Elijah comes.

Words are such a wonderful part of life. Some have a way of using words that they need very few of them to communicate, while others make one feel bored. It takes a quick mind to pick the exact word that should be used. Paul and Jesus were exceptional, and their statements were spoken with authority. The only way that I know of that a person can speak this way is to study and practice. Then they would sound like "a word fitly spoken," which is "like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25:11).

Ed and Lorna Shayler

say, that was the end of the improvised dimmers."

He became a licensed master electrician, and continued to own and operate an electrical contracting business, Payne Electric Corp., until he retired in 1975. His greatest contribution to the business was his example of uncompromising Christian ethics, a fact which was recognized by his employees, customers, and vendors alike. He absolutely refused to take advantage of anyone in any situation. If it ever happened, it was without his knowledge. When there was a question about price or quality, he always wanted to give the advantage to the other person. If it meant taking a loss, that was a small matter beside the bigger issue of being fair.

Payne Electric was a blessing to our Church and community. For a number of young Church members, including Sisters Peggy, Patty, and Ruth, it was an ideal place of employment, good environment, convenient and challenging. Many brothers also found employment in the electrical trade through his company. In the early 60's, he was fortunate to find a capable manager in Clifford Carlson, who grew the company and relieved Brother Newton of many responsibilities. When Brother Newton retired in 1975, he sold Payne Electric to Mr. Carlson, who carried it on for a number of years.

As Sound Engineer

In the field of sound engineering, Brother Newton also made a continuous contribution for more than 50 years, keeping abreast of advancing technologies for the benefit of the Church work. He was responsible for setting up the Church's recording

preaching in 1935, he had made numerous attempts to record her voice. He said one time that he didn't think she was too happy with him, because she never knew when she came to Church on Sunday morning what new contraption might be on the pulpit to record her voice. All attempts failed, and she died that year, but he did not give up.

A few years later the Church installed a successful RCA recording system, by cutting lacquered discs. The discs were noisy, but they would play back dependably.

The 1950's saw the development of recording to magnetic tape on large reels, then on cassettes, and in most recent times CD's. In each of these areas, the Church was cutting edge with technology because Brother Newton kept the industry researched, and did his best to acquire each improvement that seemed useful. Due to his continuing efforts, outlying members have been able to hear recorded Church services in their homes since the early 70's.

One unique contribution was the design and installing of a broadcast-



Brother Newton was active in the young men's organizations of the Church.

equipment from its most rudimentary beginning to modern day. It was a small beginning, but he kept the Church's recording capabilities parallel to those of the amateur recording industry as a whole.

Before Sister Hembree retired from

ing-by-wire system that delivers Church services directly into the homes of local members. He designed this system with the help of some local suppliers almost as soon as the equipment became available, and the system is still in use today.

Other Contributions

Brother Newton also served the Church in other areas. In 1960 he was appointed assistant pastor to Brother Flowerday, and took on many of the administrative duties of the Church. In 1985, when Brother Flowerday died, he was appointed pastor and president, a position he filled until he retired in 1997.

Brother Newton was generous and outgoing, always ready to help where there was need. In the year 1964, he and his father suffered a double loss. In August his mother died suddenly of a heart attack, and in December he lost his sister Evelyn to breast cancer at the age of 53. Through these crises they deeply appreciated the help of Sister Edith Heywood, who was a close friend of Sister Evelyn and cared for her during her illness. After Evelyn's death, Brother Newton and his father gratefully made a place in their home for Sister Edith.

In 1971, Brother Newton invited Sisters Peggy and Ruth, who were his employees at the time, to move into the Payne homestead. It was an extremely generous offer. The only available space was the attic and the basement, but he did his best to make them feel "at home," and within four months the decision was made to

Assurance in Christ

When we give thanks to God for Brother Newton's life and call to mind all he meant to us, we are confronted with the horror of death, both his and our own. But though death the enemy still stings us, it need not have the last word. Though dying can be fraught with horror, the end need not be hopeless. The Bible gives the remedy: faith in Jesus Christ. By faith in the One who died yet stood victorious in resurrection power, we can believe that Brother Newton will share in that victory. By faith in Jesus, we can trust that we, too, will share his destiny. Only as we trust in the Son of God, Christ Jesus, can we bridge the bottomless chasm of death.

This is what Brother Newton believed. It is the faith I commend to you his friends and loved ones when we give thanks to God for his life.

Russell Hamby to the Church Family

build a new, larger home on a vacant lot on West Sawyer Place. In October of 1972 the house was ready. It was a happy and spiritually beneficial situation, which lasted for the next 25 years, and which Sisters Peggy and Ruth still appreciate.

One of Brother Newton's latest contributions to the Church was the organizing and setting up of a Church Home Care Facility for members needing care either temporarily or long-term. He benefited directly from his efforts during the last four and one-half years.

His work is done, and his record

rests in the hands of Him who will reward everyone according to what they have done.

Looking Further...

Is this all there is, a life of active service with no future? Definitely not! The Bible is very clear that there is no consciousness in death. In the words of Scripture, "The dead know not anything." But it is equally definite that *this life is not all there is*. God has promised to reward every one of His servants for what they have done. "He will not forget" our work or labor of love. The day is coming when the dead in Christ shall be resurrected and judged, and receive for the things they have done. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Those who belong to God shall live again. Their bodies shall rise again! Those who dwell in the dust shall awake and sing for joy!" (Isaiah 26:19 TLB). Also the words of the Psalmist: "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for he will receive me" (Psalm 49:15).

It was the sure confidence of Job: "I know that my redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth...and after this my skin is destroyed, once more my skin shall clothe me, and in my flesh I shall have sight of God. I myself, with my own eyes...deep in my heart is this hope reposed" (Job 19:25-27 Knox).

With such a glorious hope in prospect, what matter one's losses or gains in this world, if only we have made a mark with God, if only we can be worthy of that glorious resurrection! ♦

We Have Hope

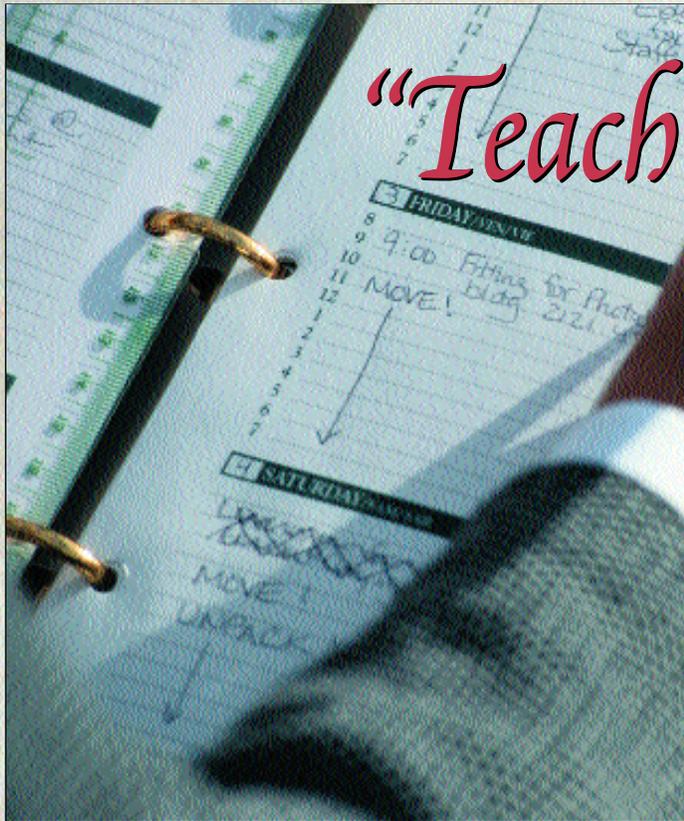
We are into another Sacred New Year, and as far as man's reckoning can measure we are about 2000 years beyond the greatest event of modern time, the birth of Jesus Christ. But the greatest and most glorious event of all time is in the very near future.

We who have turned to God for guidance and have fully accepted His Word as a guide in our lives have hope beyond our wildest dreams if we will but accept the Truth as delivered to us by His Son Jesus Christ and live this Truth every day in our lives. The process takes a lifetime to complete, but we know it can be done if we want it with all our being. God is just in all that He promises and He will not fail us. If any failure happens, we know that it is on our part.

Should the events of the past few days cause us any lingering sadness, God forbid. We have had sadness and great joy all within the New Year frame work of a few days. Jesus Christ is risen and is alive, so rise to the highest heights of joy. We know that all that die to sin and live to Christ will also rise with Christ's command and judgment to live eternally as He has promised. We will then live for ever with all those that have become saints with us. There is no room for sadness because Christ has arisen, so wipe the tears from your eyes and glory in Christ's triumph.

So on with our job of living now in the harmony of truth. Christ is the only way and we, as you, have hope as long as we stay on course in Christ.

June and Jesse Nall



“Teach us to number our days”

are to alert and warn us. There is grace in this warning. There is love in this warning. “Teach us,” he says, “to make the most of our time”—for very good reason: “that we may grow in wisdom.” Recognizing that our days are numbered gives us the possibility of days without number!

The value of a warning lies in the use we make of it. This warning should *wake us up*. Fear is good, if it moves us to escape to safety.

This warning should help us *grow in wisdom*. How can we find wisdom in counting our days? By making our days count! By remembering that in the end the things that count are the things you *can't* count.

This warning should help us *keep a balance in our lives*. It should alert us to put eternal things first and let temporal things come second. For the only real benefit of the temporal is in using it for eternal purposes.

This warning should help us *use the time*, literally *grab hold of it*. Only those who know Christ really know how to own their days.

“Teach us to number our days...” Why not give your time to God, and turn that count-down into a count-up? Doesn't the Bible tell us that “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one a day” (2 Pet. 3:8)? Here is something ultra-important. Here is a mathematical formula assuring us that each day is a chance to invest in a thousand years worth of eternity. God gives us a twenty-four-hour slice of time in which to make the most of every opportunity, opportunities that will have eternal repercussions. If a single day to us is equivalent to a thousand years on God's scale, just think how that adds UP. Every day we spend working for God lays up a *thousand years* of days of eternal investment. Every month we've added another 10 million years of life in Christ's Kingdom—years which will lengthen out into eternity. This puts an eternal dimension on our earthly hours.

Can we even begin to fathom the value of these numbered days? ♦

What counts is not the number of hours you put in, but how much you put in the hours.

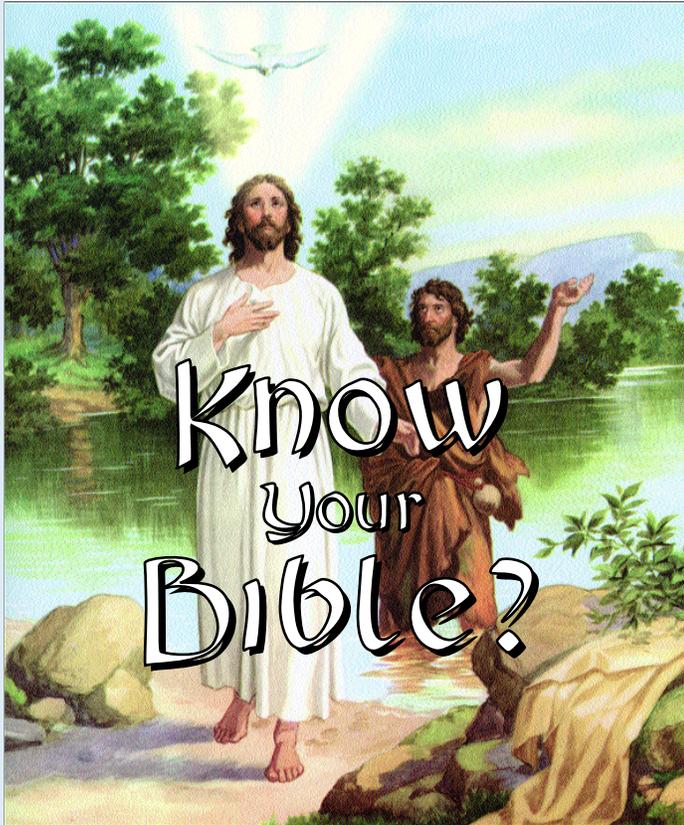
Can you imagine how you would feel if every morning when you woke up there was a large number on the wall of your bedroom, and every day the value of that number would be one less? If that number represented the remaining number of days you had to live, wouldn't you be aware of it? Wouldn't you be thinking, What can I do with this day?

The fact is that our days *are* numbered. The only problem, we do not see those numbers posted anywhere, nor do we hear the countdown. The days just keep coming, one at a time, and we forget that they are numbered at all. That is why the Psalmist prayed, “Teach us to number our days... teach us to make the most of our time, that we may grow in wisdom.”

God would have you and me conscious of the realities of life and death, because making good judgments depends on good information. He thinks that when you and I are old enough to exercise mature judgment, we ought to realize our days are pre-counted, and this fact should make us say our prayers a little more carefully, and spend our hours a little more wisely.

The Psalmist says it many ways. He compares our days to God's eternity, saying that a thousand years to Him are like one day to us. He says we are like desert grass, which springs up each morning green and fresh in the dew, only to dry and wither in the afternoon sun. We are like that dream we can't quite remember. “You sweep people away like dreams that disappear” (Ps. 90:5 NLT). “Seventy years are given to us! Some may even reach eighty. But even the best of these years are filled with pain and trouble; soon they disappear, and we are gone” (verse 10).

Is the thought intended to depress us? Never! These words



CHARIOTS

1. In battle, who took 1,000 chariots from King Hadadezer and "*houghed [crippled] all the chariot horses*"?
2. Which prophet had a vision of four chariots, each drawn by a different colored horse, coming from between what looked like two brass mountains?
3. Who was made "*to ride in the second chariot*" of King Pharaoh?
4. Whose war chariots were lost in the Red sea?
5. Who kept his horses and 1400 chariots in "*chariot cities*"?
6. Who had 900 iron chariots, and made life unbearable for the Israelites for 20 years?
7. Who watched his friend depart heavenward in "*a chariot of fire and horses of fire*"?
8. Who had the reputation of driving "*furiously*"?
9. Which king, wounded in battle, died in his chariot and was brought to Samaria where "*one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria*"?
10. Who had chariots and horses and 50 footmen to run before him?

RIVERS

1. Naaman was cured of leprosy by washing seven times in what river?
2. Jesus was baptized in what river?
3. Daniel's vision in which he was by the river Ulai was of two animals fighting. What were they?
4. Pharaoh had a dream in which he saw some animals emerging from the Nile. What were they, and how many?
5. What creature is described in the Book of Job as one which "*can draw up Jordan into his mouth*"?
6. When Paul and his companion missionaries were at Philippi, they went to the riverside on the Sabbath and met a woman whom they baptized. What was her name?
7. What happened to the waters of Egypt in one of the plagues?
8. "*And he showed me a _____, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life.*"
9. Pharaoh ordered his people to cast the Hebrew baby boys into the river. This was because his first plan for getting rid of them had failed. What was the first plan?

ANGER

1. Which king became so angry with his son he hurled a spear at him?
2. Which king was angry because the man he had told to curse his enemies blessed them three times instead?
3. Who, when he saw the Israelites worshipping a calf idol, ground the graven image into powder, sprinkled the dust on water, and made the idolaters drink it?
4. Which soldier became angry with his young shepherd brother because he left his sheep to come and watch a battle?
5. Which prime minister became so angry when a man refused to bow to him, that he planned to destroy all Jews throughout his kingdom?
6. When a man refused to sell him a vineyard, which king became so angry he went to bed without eating?
7. Who, afflicted with leprosy, became angry with a prophet's suggestions for his healing?
8. Which king, angered because his dream could not be interpreted, ordered the execution of all the wise men in Babylon?
9. Who became angry because his father-in-law pursued him and searched his belongings?

ANSWERS ON PAGE 17

Sunday Worship?

“What is the right day of worship? Is it Sunday or Saturday? Could you give some Biblical texts (Old and New Testaments). Thank you!”

In answer to your question, my first thought is that every day is the right day to worship! God wants our best every day, not just one day a week.

But I know that is not your intent. You are asking whether Sunday or Saturday is the proper day for worship, according to the Bible. Our answer: neither Sunday nor Saturday is designated in the Bible.

As God gave the Law to Moses, He established that one day out of seven should be set aside as a day of worship. On the calendar that they were following, that day was the seventh day of the year, and each seventh day following through the year (see Lev. 23).

We today feel no compulsion to observe a law which was given expressly to the nation of Israel, and which the Apostle Paul indicates was terminated with Christ. Paul warned that no one should judge another *“in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come”* (Col. 2:16–17). The Israelite laws were a temporary institution, given to train and discipline a nation to become self-governing, but at the same time they had farther reaching significance as they revealed important aspects of God’s plan of salvation. Hebrews 4 speaks clearly of the significance of the Sabbath (Sabbath meaning “seventh”), that it was a type of a “rest” yet future: *“For if Joshua had given them rest, then he would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God....Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience”* (Heb. 4:8–11).

The Sabbath observance, the setting aside of one day in seven, was a type of God’s plan to give His people a thousand year rest, during which all evil will be brought under control and the earth will come under the direct supervision of God’s chosen rulers (see Rev. 20:4; Luke 1:31–33; Rev. 5:9–10). This is a rest far more significant than the literal Sabbath ordained under Moses’ law.

As far as what day we should observe, we do not believe that either Saturday or Sunday has any significance above any other day (every day must be lived as holy to the Lord), but we do set aside one day in seven for special worship services. The custom in our land being the observance of Sunday, we set aside Sunday, not because it is the Sabbath but because we want to adhere to the biblical principle of setting aside one day in seven.

“Do you believe the Jews are God’s chosen people?”

The term “Jews” is generally not applied in the Bible to the people of Israel until after the captivity, it is often used loosely to designate the entire race of Abraham’s descendants through Isaac.

Are they God’s chosen people today? No.

The Lord pronounced a blessing on Abraham and chose his descendants as a family, later a nation, to be a people whom He taught, guided, and to whom He gave special privileges. These descendants of Abraham, especially the twelve tribes which grew from the children of Abraham’s grandson Jacob, eventually became the kingdom of Israel, which soon divided into two nations, Judah and Israel. During all this time, up to the time of the setting up of the kingdom of Israel, the government was a theocracy, directly under God’s guidance, and the Jews were God’s chosen people at that time. He gave them special laws which, if they obeyed, promised to give them special benefits. After the nations became independent states they were still under God’s guidance, depending on the loyalty or disloyalty of the ruler in command.

Though the nation was fruitful in terms of the patriarchs and prophets, in general they forsook God and forgot His laws.

By the time of Jesus, the Jewish people had strayed far from their original laws, as the Lord had given them to Moses, and were no longer his “chosen people.” By rejecting Christ, the Messiah, they cut themselves off from the Divine favor.

When the apostles were commissioned, Paul was sent especially to “the Gentiles,” that is, non-Jews. God continued to accept Jews when they were willing to follow Christ (most of the Apostles were Jews by nationality), but He made it clear that character, not nationality, was the qualification for acceptance with God. There were no favored Jews who could be accepted simply because they had Jewish blood.

The Apostle Paul addressed the issue often, because the Jews in his time were contending that they were still the chosen people and therefore should have special privileges which should be denied to non-Jews. At this time God made His principle crystal clear, that there was no “special” blood which pre-qualified anyone for salvation. In the words of the Apostle Peter, *“In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him”* (Acts 10:34–35).

God does not rule out anyone because of nationality. From the perspective of the New Testament, the “Jew indeed” is anyone of any nationality who is a Jew inwardly, who worships God and lives by His law of faith (Rom. 2:27–29).

Salvation

"I am wondering what you mean by this. You say, 'Through our Creator's generous provisions, everyone at birth receives a preliminary free package (mortal life). Anyone wanting more may seek it on His terms (Rom. 2:6-7). To do this they must relinquish their normal "rights" in this world and live by His law of life as revealed in the Bible (Rev. 22:12, 14). In exchange, He will give them an unending life that will grow continually more productive, more useful, more challenging and satisfying (Rev. 21:6; 3:21; 3:11, 14).

"Are you saying that we earn salvation by living by God's law?"

We want to say only what we find taught in the Bible. When the apostle Paul says in Rom. 2:6-7 that God will "render to each one according to his deeds," that He will give "eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality," we feel compelled to believe it. If He will "render to each one according to his deeds," how can He give salvation on any other terms? Jesus Himself indicated that salvation would be at the end of the course, not at the beginning. He said, "He who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13). He could have said that He would give salvation to all who accept Christ, and then later reward according to one's doings, but that was not His statement.

Jesus described the way to life as a narrow road, traveled by very few; and the road to destruction as a broad thoroughfare having many travelers (Matt. 7:13-14). When His disciples asked Him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" He answered, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:23-24). Why would this be the case if each was given salvation when he was converted? Seven times Jesus said there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when the unworthy are thrown out of the Kingdom of God while the select remain, "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrown out" (Luke 13:28; See also Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).

You are correct in saying that we cannot "earn" salvation. We could not earn everlasting life if God asked us to serve Him for five hundred years or five thousand years. Any service we can give is far from an equivalent value to what God is offering. If God asked us to sit in prison our whole life, or to live on bread and water, or any other physical requirement, in

no way could the value of the sacrifice ever equal the value of what He is offering. His salvation would always be a gift out of all proportion to our service.

But He does have qualifications, minimum standards which He requires of those who will receive His salvation. There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that salvation is free for the asking. The apostle Paul compared it to running a race, where the prize is given to the winner. Only he noted the most important difference: That in this race for eternal life, everyone who runs can win. But he was well aware, too, that not everyone will want to run, and not everyone who runs will win. As for himself, he was giving his best effort, running full force, because he wanted to win. He said, "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

In writing to Timothy, he again expressed the requirements associated with salvation. He said, "Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10). Note that he says, "that they also may obtain the salvation"—Paul was stating conditions, it was not yet a surety. And notice the "if" in his next statement: "If we died with him [Christ], we shall also live with him. If we endure, we shall also reign with him" (verses 11-12). The opposite of this statement, in light of Scripture, is equally valid: If we do not die with Christ, we shall not live with Him. Paul wanted to die with Christ, i.e., die to his former life, his naturally self-gratifying instincts. He also wanted to suffer with Christ, to have the opportunity one day of reigning with Him. And he appealed to Timothy and his followers to do the same. It is the only way to belong to Christ. As he said a few verses further on, "Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'the Lord knows those who are his,' and 'let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity'" (2 Tim. 2:19).

We cannot earn salvation, but neither is it free for all. Jesus' words are definite: "he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13). Why? Because Jesus said it, and Jesus spoke only the words of His heavenly Father.

¹ The phrase, "that be saved" would be more correctly rendered "that are being saved." The Greek word, *sozomenoi* is a participle, and "The Greek participle corresponds for the most part to the English participle, reflecting "-ing" or "-ed" being suffixed to the basic verb form. The participle can be used either like a verb or a noun, as in English, and thus is often termed a "verbal noun."—Pierce, L. Tense Voice Mood. Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship. It is rendered "being saved" in the original Greek. (See the 26th edition of Nestle Aland Greek New Testament with McReynolds English Interlinear and The Complete Biblical Library.)

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 15

RIVERS

1. Jordan (2 Kings 5:1-14)
2. The Jordan (Matthew 3:13)
3. A goat and a ram (Daniel 8:1-7)
4. Fourteen cows (Genesis 41:1-3)
5. Behemoth (Job 40:15, 23)
6. Lydia (Acts 16:9-15)
7. Turned to blood (Exodus 7:20)
8. Pure river of the water of life (Revelation 22:1-2)
9. The Hebrew midwives were to kill them at birth (Exodus 1:15-22)

CHARIOTS

1. David (2 Sam. 8:3-4)
2. Zechariah (Zech. 6:1-3)
3. Joseph (Gen. 41:42-43)
4. Pharaoh (Ex. 14:23-28; Deut. 11:4)
5. Solomon (1 Kings 10:26)
6. Jabin, king of Canaan, and his captain Sisera (Judges 4:1-3)
7. Elisha (2 Kings 2:11-12)
8. Jehu (2 Kings 9:16-20)
9. Ahab (1 Kings 22:34-39)
10. Absalom (2 Sam. 15:1)

ANGER

1. Saul (1 Sam. 20:30-33)
2. Balak (Num. 24:10)
3. Moses (Ex. 32:19-20)
4. Eliab (1 Sam. 17:20, 28)
5. Haman (Esther 3:1-6)
6. Ahab (1 Kings 21:1-4)
7. Naaman (2 Kings 5:9-12)
8. Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:1-12)
9. Jacob (Gen. 31:26-37)

REACHING UPWARD

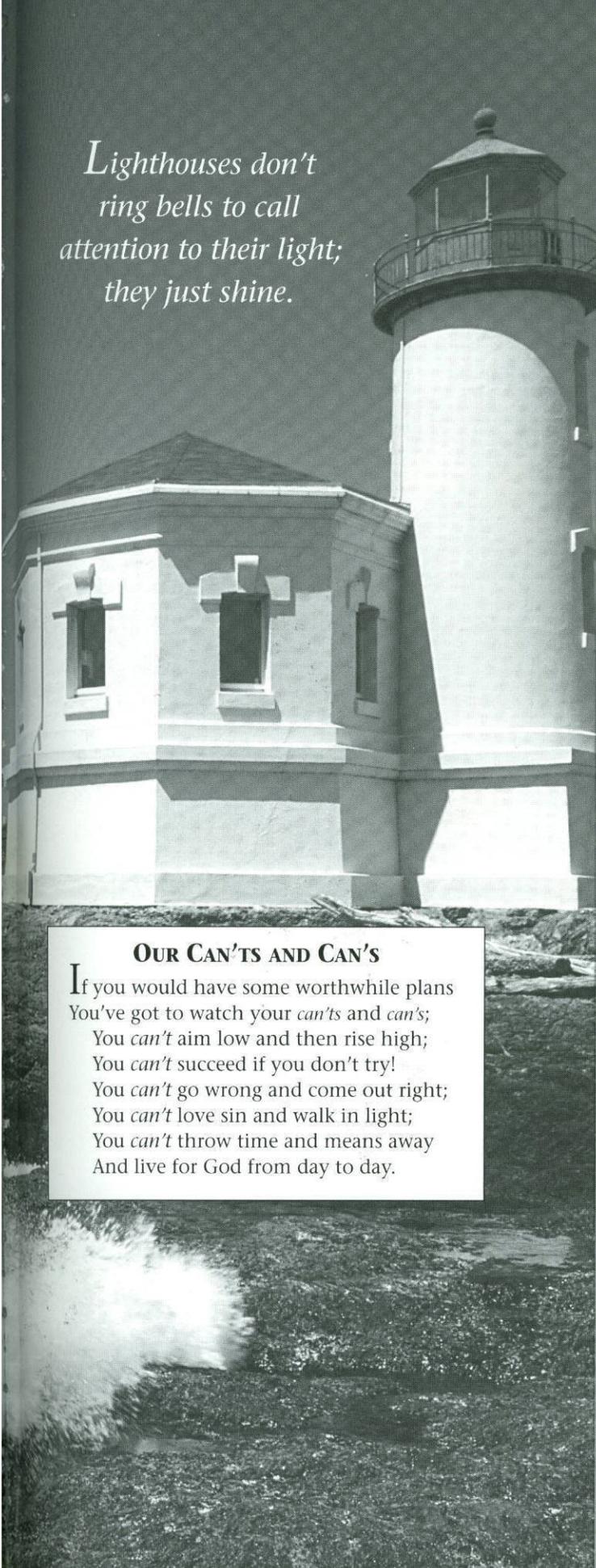
*I want a sober mind,
A self-renouncing will,
That tramples down and casts behind
The baits of pleasing ill;
A soul accepting pain,
Or hardship, grief, and loss;
Bold to take up, firm to sustain,
And daily bear my cross.*

*I want a godly fear,
A quick-discerning eye,
That looks to Thee when sin is near,
And makes the tempter fly;
A spirit still prepared,
And armed with jealous care
Forever standing on its guard,
And watching unto prayer.*

*I want a heart to pray,
To find Thy perfect peace;
Nor ever murmur at Thy stay,
Or wish my suffering less;
This blessing, above all,
Most earnestly I want,
Out of the deep on Thee to call,
And never, never faint.*

*I want a true regard,
A single, steady aim,
Unmoved by threat'ning or reward,
From Thee and Thy great Name;
A jealous, just concern
For Thine immortal praise;
A pure desire that all may learn
And glorify Thy grace.*

*I rest upon Thy Word;
Thy promise is secure;
My succor and salvation, Lord,
My refuge ever sure.
And let me still abide,
Unmoved from Thy care,
Till Thou dost change my faith to sight
And I Thy glory share!*



*Lighthouses don't
ring bells to call
attention to their light;
they just shine.*

OUR CAN'TS AND CAN'S

If you would have some worthwhile plans
You've got to watch your *can'ts* and *can's*;
You *can't* aim low and then rise high;
You *can't* succeed if you don't try!
You *can't* go wrong and come out right;
You *can't* love sin and walk in light;
You *can't* throw time and means away
And live for God from day to day.

The best level to live on is your level best.

God's Word still enables us to live straight in a crooked world.

God is with thee in all that thou doest" (Gen. 21:22).
What a beautiful testimony for Abraham to receive from the lips of his contemporaries as they watched his conduct from day to day.

"God is with thee in all that thou doest." Are we living before our neighbors, friends and acquaintances in such a consistent manner that they conclude that God is with us in all that we do?

A pint of example is worth a gallon of advice.

If we let the word of God burn in our hearts, it will consume the worn rags of self-righteousness, the dried leaves of empty profession, the worthless stubble of questioning doubt, the prickly thorns of bad temper, the filth of unholy desire, the chaff of useless endeavor, the gnarled roots of bitterness and the refuse of unprofitable talk.

Don't spend time, invest it.

Sin deceives, then defiles, then destroys.

God does not want those who are fearful, whose faith fluctuates according to the demands placed upon it. He wants those with great faith.

It's better to bite your tongue than to let it bite someone else.

Opportunity + Ability = Responsibility.

FAITH

Faith in God is dead to doubts, dumb to discouragements, blind to impossibilities, knows nothing but success. Faith in God lifts its hands up through the threatening clouds and lays hold of Him who has all power in heaven and on earth. Faith in God and His promises makes the future glorious.

My Prayer

*To grow a little wiser day by day,
To school my mind and body to obey,
To keep my inner life both clean
and strong,
To free my life from guile, my hands
from wrong,
To shut the door on hate and scorn
and pride,
To open it to love, the windows wide,
To meet with cheerful heart what
comes to me,
To turn life's discords into harmony,
To share some weary worker's
heavy load,
To point some straying comrade to
the road,
To know that what I have is not
my own,
To feel that I am never quite alone;
This would I pray from day to day.*

