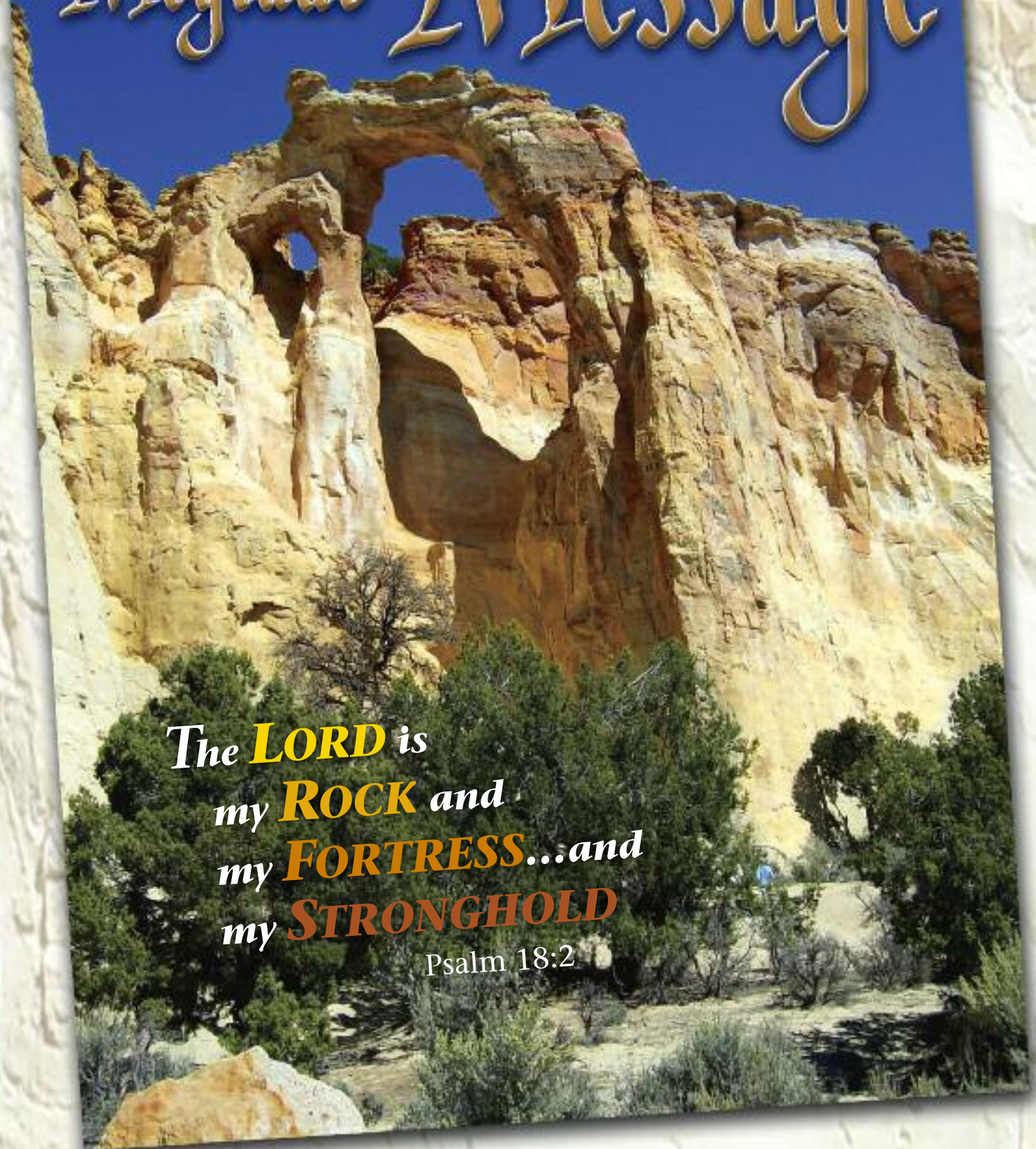


Winter 2013 • Volume 100, No. 4

Megiddo Message

The **LORD** is
my **ROCK** and
my **FORTRESS...and**
my **STRONGHOLD**

Psalm 18:2



The iPad—Obsolete?

We used to protect our choicest tools from wearing out. Now with some of our most used tools our problem is not wear and tear but obsolescence. Remember cassette tape recorders? Not long ago they were cutting-edge. So were the giant computers that had "removable platters." And did you have one of those IBM computers that could actually save your document on a floppy disc? Amazing!

Fast forward through a myriad hi-fis, PCs, cameras, calculators, and cell phones to the day when Steve Jobs, then CEO of Apple, unveiled the new iPad. That was in January, 2010. Now, 4 years and several revisions later, the iPad is still cutting edge. But one thing is certain: that in spite of all the buzz and the thousands of apps that are increasing the iPad's capability, it will one day be added to the scrapheap of the obsolete.

It is an on-going saga. Change is continual. Faster, more efficient, more capable tools and toys displace what was once the latest and greatest. Yes, one day the iPad will take its place with the typewriters and the washboards of the past, another victim of obsolescence.

Obsolescence is not limited to high tech. The Bible tells us that the governments of this world are also destined for history's scrapheap. Long, long ago God revealed this fact in a night vision that He gave to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The narrative is recorded in Daniel 2.

What was the meaning of the dream? The king did not know, nor could he even recall the dream! He called in his wise men, who were, of course, no help at all. Exasperated, the furious king ordered them put to death. At this point a young Hebrew captive named Daniel emerged. The next morning Daniel explained to the king that his dream was from the God of heaven, and that God had revealed to him both the dream and the interpretation. In his dream, the king had seen a great image. *"The image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay"* (Dan. 2:32–33). Quite a spectacle!

What did it mean? *"You, O king, are the head of gold."* Can't you picture the king's chest swelling with pride!

Daniel continued: *"After you shall arise another...." "After you..."?* obsolescence already?! The great king was to be displaced by *"another kingdom inferior ... then ... a third kingdom of bronze....And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron"* (Dan. 2:37, 39, 40). One—two—three—four kingdoms.

And then? In his dream the king had seen a little stone, cut out of the mountain without hands. With a mighty force the little stone struck the feet of the image, breaking to smithereens the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold. And *"the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found"* (Dan. 2:35).

Instant obsolescence.

And then? Then that little stone disappeared in the dust of obsolescence and was seen no more? No! Then that little stone started to grow, and grow, and *"it became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth"* (Dan. 2:35).

For how long? How long would the fifth kingdom last, the

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.

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).

*Obsolete
or eternal:
what makes
the difference?*



Front cover photo:
Grosvenor Arch in Utah,
by Patricia Fleming

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COME BEFORE WINTER

By RUTH E. SISSON

There is a sadness and poignancy in these words. Through the little window of this sentence from Paul's last letter to Timothy we can see a truth vividly portrayed. At the time it was a loving request, a heartfelt desire, along with a serious facing of reality. The great Apostle had at this point "finished his course" and won; we are still in the running.

Paul's words come down to us as a warning against procrastination, that deadly enemy of all accomplishment. It is a warning that time is not an endlessly gushing torrent of energy.

Time is limited. Circumstances change constantly. Opportunities may come only once, and they must be grasped promptly, or slip into the irretrievable past.

The apostle Paul is writing this letter from his prison cell in Rome. The letter is filled with expressions of personal regard and affection for Timothy. Listen to its opening words:

"This letter is from Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will,...It is written to Timothy, my dear son. May God our Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy, and peace. Timothy, I thank God for you. He is the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did. Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. I long to see you again, for I remember your tears as we parted. And I will be filled with joy when we are together again" (2 Tim. 1:1-4 NLT).

Tenderness and affection then change to a kindly reminding of the obligation of duty. *"This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you....So you must never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, either, even though I'm in prison for Christ. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the proclamation of the Good News."* Timothy must carefully guard *"what has been entrusted to [him]"* (vs. 6, 8, 14 NLT). *"You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"* (2 Tim. 2:1 NIV). Paul appeals to him to face the stern conflicts manfully.

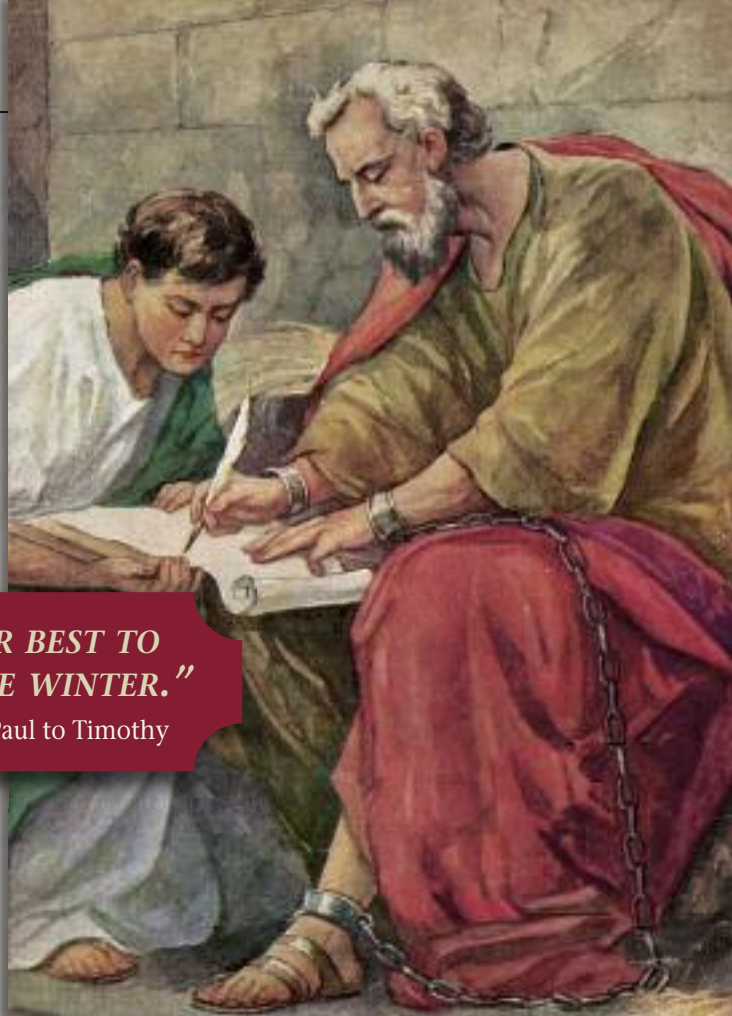
The letter is one of counsel and encouragement until—

Suddenly it changes. An autumn tang sweeps through the remaining passages. Perhaps in the midst of his writing, news comes which quenches the Apostle's last lingering hope of release. He has been condemned to die, and the sentence is final. He can never return to his beloved Ephesus. So he charges Timothy to leave Ephesus and come to Rome. *"Do your best to come to me quickly"* (2 Tim. 4:9 NIV).

He continues to write bravely: *"The last drops of my own sacrifice are falling; my time to go has come. I have fought in the good fight; I have run my*

***"DO YOUR BEST TO
COME BEFORE WINTER."***

— The Apostle Paul to Timothy



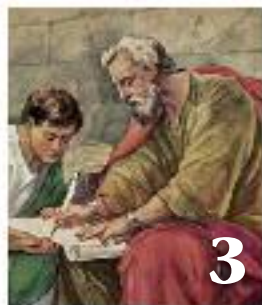
There comes a time in every life when the winter of passing years freezes shut the golden doors of opportunity.

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Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature; DBL—Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains; EDNT—Balz, H. R., & Schneider, G. (1990–). Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament; GES—Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures; HAL—Koechler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M., & Stamm, J. J. (1999). The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament; LSJ—Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996). A Greek-English lexicon; LN—Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains; SHG—Strong, J. (1997). The new Strong’s dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words. THAYER—A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1889).

course; I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:6–7 Moffatt).

It was as if Paul said, I was ever a fighter, Timothy dear lad, so one fight more—the last and the best.

As Paul approaches what he knows will be the end, his feeling is not fear but the joy of triumph. A fight well fought, a race course finished, a battle won—the next thing he will know will be the resurrection, and then the great coronation! *"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing"* (v. 8).

But a certain disquietude intrudes. He longs all the more for Timothy's company because of all who set out with him from Asia, only Luke remains.

Meanwhile, the knowledge of his impending death brings him a feeling of unfinished business. He must leave the work he loves in worthy hands.

So Paul instructs Timothy to come, and when he comes, to bring with him a few items. As the days grow shorter and chillier he is feeling a need for his mantle, and *"especially the parchments,"* the Old Testament Scriptures.

Could Timothy come? It was already autumn, and two or three

weeks would elapse before Paul's summons could reach Ephesus and Timothy. Since navigation was dangerous after the autumn solstice and was entirely suspended after the first week in November, there was no time to lose. So Paul amends his injunction to *"join me soon."* He says now, *"Do your best to come before winter."* It is an autumn warning. *"Timothy, you must come very soon—before winter—or it may be too late."*

If Timothy responded and started for Rome immediately, perhaps he was able to share in Paul's last hours. But suppose he had waited. What if he had missed that last boat to Rome and arrived the following spring, after Paul had been executed? Would he ever have been able to forgive himself for disregarding Paul's urgent plea to *"do your best to come before winter"*?

These words have current significance. Summer is the time of golden opportunity. But there comes a time in every life when the icy weather of winter—whether it be the winter of passing years, the winter of changing attitudes, or the winter of unbreakable habit—freezes shut the golden doors of opportunity. By the time the springtime comes again—if it ever does—it may be too late.

*The great Apostle
faced death with a
feeling of triumph—
the next thing he
would know would
be the resurrection
and seeing his Lord!*

The Habit of Putting Off

There may be little out-and-out refusal among us, but there is the ever present temptation to procrastinate. In every circle where we move and live, putting-it-off is the popular method of avoidance. In the words of the grade-school poem:

*My friend, have you heard of the land of Yawn
On the banks of the river Slow,
Where blooms the Wait-a-while flower fair,
And the Sometime-or-Other scents the air,
And the Soft-go-easy's grow?*

*It lies in the Valley of Wait-a-while,
In the land of Let-'er-slide.
The Tired-feeling is native there,
It's the home of the listless I-don't-care,
Where the Put-it-offs abide.*

continued on page 7



You CAN Win Against Procrastination

We can all relate to the temptation to put things off, whether simple tasks or complex. Procrastination is something that threatens every part of life, physical, material, and especially spiritual.

We all do fine with things we enjoy doing.

But when we perceive something as difficult, inconvenient, or scary, it is easy to shift into procrastination mode.

Did you ever tell yourself any of these excuses?

- I'm not in the mood right now.
- There's plenty of time yet.
- It's too hard for me.
- I don't know where to begin.
- I work better under pressure.
- I've got too many other things to do first.

Don't be fooled by these innocent-sounding excuses. All they do is help us to put second things first—and the really important things get postponed.

At best, it's self-defeating.

How to Win

How many times have you told yourself that you couldn't do it? Or that you weren't "in the mood"?

Although procrastination may be an ongoing battle, there are several good remedies.

REMEDY 1: Find out why you procrastinate.

Is it laziness? Or lack of self-discipline? Or lack of motivation? Or lack of a sense of purpose?

Understanding why you procrastinate is the first step toward breaking the habit.

Time Enough Yet

*"There's time enough yet! there's time enough yet!"
Is the song of youth today,
"For I want my life, which is scarce begun,
To be free and full of play.
Let me taste awhile of the joys of earth,
Of its pleasures first partake;
When I've older grown, I will seek the Lord,
And the paths of sin forsake."*

*"There's time enough yet! there's time enough yet!"
And the cares of life press hard,
While the brow is furrowed with anxious lines
And the hands with toil are scarred.
"I must fill my place in this busy world,
I must meet life's stern demands;
When my work is done, I will then find time
To obey my Lord's commands."*

*"There's time enough yet! there's time enough yet!"
And the years glide swiftly by,
While the sun sinks low in the crimson west,
And the night is drawing nigh,
"I am weary now and must rest awhile
There'll be time enough to pray";
But the rest he takes is the sleep of death,
And his soul is lost for aye.*

*"There's time enough yet! there's time enough yet!"
'Tis the tempter's subtle snare;
'Tis the rock on which many lives are wrecked,
Going down in dark despair.
There is time for pleasure and time for work
And for wealth to seek and hoard,
But alas! alas! for the foolish soul
With no time to seek the Lord.*

*Then turn to the Lord while 'tis called today,
Lest this be thy vain regret,
That thy soul is lost, and thy life is wrecked
On the rock of Time Enough Yet.*

—Selected.



continued from page 5

In the practical details of everyday living, the “Put-it-offs” abide. We do not decide not to write a letter to a friend; we simply postpone answering it. We take it up, dally with it, lay it down, but never get around to finishing it.

We never decide *not* to make the friendly visit we know we should make. But, like King Agrippa, we just don’t find a convenient time.

In weightier matters of Christian duty and discipline, we also pursue our habit of putting it off. We never decide *not* to confine our reading to things constructive, edifying and purposeful. But when the day has been busy and we are tired, we forget the warning of Brother Paul, “*Make the very most of your time*” (Eph. 5:15–16 Moffatt), and relax in front of the TV, or pick up the nearest magazine or newspaper and read with interest whatever our eye catches. Only a few moments, we tell ourselves. But moments grow into minutes, and the habit unchecked wastes precious hours. Sometime, we say, we will do better. *But when?*

We never decide *not* to give serious attention to the training of our children, but forgetting the admonition to “*bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*” (Eph. 6:4), we refer it to a nebulous tomorrow. Is it so trivial a thing?

A mother went to her pastor to get advice on teaching her young son about God. Would it be too soon to start him at 2, or should she wait until he was 3? “When do you plan to start feeding him?” asked the pastor. “That’s the time to start teaching him.” Whether or not we are aware of it, children are learning constantly. By observing our lives are they learning

to honor their parents, respect their elders and reverence God? Are they cultivating those virtues and habits that can make them law-abiding citizens and loving children of God? Someday, we say, we will teach them—but then it may be too late.

We never decide *not* to spend our time to the best advantage. We comfort ourselves by saying, “Tomorrow I will do better.” But will we?

If Timothy had not taken seriously his spiritual father’s situation, he would have been tortured the rest of his life with the thought that he had failed his beloved chief.

THE LESSON FOR US

The strongest chain in the world is made useless by a single broken link. That broken link is the habit of putting off.

We look forward to something future—to the time when we can own our own home, or be free from some responsibility, or retire in a small country dwelling where we can have everything just the way we always wanted it. But what are we doing with the *present*? All of us need something to live by in this perplexing, inescapable present.

“*Do your best to come before winter.*” Of course you intend to come, but come before the ice and snow make it difficult, dangerous, impossible.

Do Your Best...

“*Do your best to come before winter,*” and strengthen noble friendships. You are well aware that one who would have friends must be friendly (Prov. 18:24), and one of these days you intend to do more of it. However, friendship will not be

REMEDY 2:

Talk to yourself

Procrastinators tend to say about unpleasant tasks, “I really should do this.” But underneath is a combination of resentment, a bit of natural rebellion, and little or no enthusiasm.

Why not present the project to yourself more positively? For instance, instead of saying, “I have to do this,” think this way: “If I get this done, I am going to feel so relieved!” Or “If I finish this, I will be able to move on to other things I enjoy—with a clear conscience.”

REMEDY 3:

Challenge your excuses

You’ve made excuses why something couldn’t be done when it should have been. Start writing down these excuses, then challenge them. For example:

EXCUSE: “I’m not in the mood right now.”

CHALLENGE: If you wait for the right mood, you may never do anything.

EXCUSE: I might not do a good job.

CHALLENGE: How can you say that when you haven’t even tried?

EXCUSE: It may be easier later.

CHALLENGE: Putting off starting only makes it harder.

EXCUSE: I feel inadequate.

CHALLENGE: Have you asked help from God? Have you asked help from a friend? Have you even tried?

EXCUSE: I’m afraid the job’s too big for me.

CHALLENGE: If you can’t do all of it, can’t you at least do *some* of it?

REMEDY 4:

Distinguish between fact and fear

If we let them, our fears will stop us cold.

We need to recognize that negative predictions are not facts but only feelings, or at best, unfounded conclusions.

Are we afraid of having our work criticized? Better work that is criticized than nothing done!

Are we afraid some unpleasantness or humiliation may come to us if we try? Jesus, our perfect example, did not let that fear stop Him.

P*rocrastination: relaxing when you should be working, doing something that you like when you should be doing something that needs to be done.*

REMEDY 5:
Set realistic goals

Be specific. What can I get done in the amount of time I am allotting? Figure out a realistic timetable. Having goals that are too big can be self-defeating from the start.

REMEDY 6:
Prioritize

Ask yourself what is the most important thing to be done, and list things in that order. Put small, unimportant things in their proper place—last.

REMEDY 7:
Divide and conquer

Big projects seem overwhelming. It's only natural to put off a task that seems unmanageable.

The solution? Break the project into small, manageable, "bite-size" pieces and get started. Set milestones for each part of the task, and you'll find that you can eventually complete the large job.

Do you expect to perfectly imitate the character of Christ in a day, a week or a month? You can't do it. But what you can do is improve today. Think in every situation you confront today, "What would Jesus do?" Think of your life—and your opportunities—in increments of one day, one hour, one minute.

It is the strategy of divide and conquer!

REMEDY 8:
Don't wait for the mood – make it!

It's dangerous to depend on feelings, but procrastinators do. They're focused on the immediate pleasure of avoiding an unpleasant task.

Their only gain is later pain.

Someone has said that "procrastination is all about short-term pleasure up against long-term gain." Putting it off feels good now, hard work will pay benefits later.

We have to accept the fact that we will never be "in the mood" to do some things. Part of maturity is the strength of will to rise above ambivalent feelings and take responsibility for our situation, regardless how tempting it might be to postpone it.

any richer when winter comes.

Someone is more talented than you. He has so many more advantages, and seems not to recognize or appreciate your meager—but *wholehearted*—effort. You feel forgotten, hurt—jealous. Do your best to come before winter, and conquer that feeling.

You gave a suggestion, and no one accepted it. You feel your judgment is as good as anyone else's. Why should they discriminate against you? Do your best and avert that feeling of hurt. Winter is coming.

You went out of your way to do someone a favor, and it wasn't appreciated. Did you feel hurt? *Do your best to come before winter* with forgiveness to that person who has wronged you. Be reconciled with those you have wronged. *I intend* to, you say, but I am not quite prepared to walk that road of humiliation and embarrassment. Some day...

But it will not be any easier to enter into that liberating experience when winter descends.

Do your best to come before winter and follow Christ. Live at His height; look out upon life with His outlook, and into it with His insight.

"Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). However our day of probation may end, we should feel the urgency of this moment.

Are you letting miserable misunderstandings run on from year to year, meaning to clear them up—some day? Are you keeping wretched quarrels alive because you cannot quite make up your mind that *now* is the time to sacrifice your pride? Are you letting your friend's heart ache for a word of appreciation or sympathy or encouragement which you mean to give him—someday? If you could only know and see and feel, all of a sudden, that *"the time is short,"* how it would break the spell! How you would go instantly and do the thing that you might never have another chance to do.

Time Is Limited

There is an element of mystery about time, and the more we think about it, the more mysterious it appears to be.

Time has an elusive quality. How easily it slips away from us, and we hardly notice it is gone. With each tick of the clock another second passes into eternity. The action is irreversible. That moment is *gone forever*; it can never be recalled. Seconds pass into minutes, minutes into hours, hours into days, days into months, and years, and lifetimes.

But with each of us, time has a personal touch. Time in relation to our lives is circumscribed. We have only so much of it. Summer is speeding away. Winter is coming.

Aware of this fact in the life of every God-fearing man and woman, the prophet Jeremiah wrote stern words of warning. *"Listen! Do not be proud, for the Lord has spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before it is too late. Acknowledge him before he brings darkness upon you, causing you to stumble and fall on the dark mountains. For then, when you look for light, you will find only terrible darkness"* (Jer. 13:15–16 NLT).

Dark mountains are ahead; your feet will stumble, and you will seek in vain for the light of life in which you may continue to walk—unless—unless you listen *now*, kill your pride and *"give glory to the Lord your God."*

The form of winter may vary in each of our lives. Darkness suggests the termination of opportunity, the closing of one's probation time. It may be the end of natural life—none of us are exempt from the possibility of disease or accident. God's only promise is to guarantee sufficient time and opportunity if

we are making the very most of what we have been given (1 Tim. 4:8).

Or God may end our day of probation with the arrival of the prophet Elijah. Here again is the justice of God: He does not ask what we cannot give, but only what we have.

Remember Lot's Wife

Jesus was saying *"come before winter"* when He spoke the shortest, most pointed sermon: *"Remember Lot's wife."*

Two angels had come to Lot and his family to deliver them from the doomed city (Genesis 18). The hour of escape arrived, but Lot's wife was not prepared to accept it. For the Sodomites the end was at hand. To Lot, his wife and two daughters, the angels offered deliverance. They all left the city together, but so attached was Lot's wife to what she was leaving behind in the city that she could not keep her face set toward the hill country. Even with the angel of God holding her hand, she looked back, and lost her life. For her there was no second chance, no time to reconsider and turn, no extended opportunity. The end came. And so will it come to every covenant-maker who refuses to heed the angel's message: *"Flee for your lives! Don't look back..."* Destruction is behind; darkness is behind; soon opportunity will also be behind.

Life is *ahead*. Escape for your life!

No Winter Ahead?

How contrasting to the urgency of Jesus' words is the attitude of much of the religious world, that "while the lamp holds out to burn/ The vilest sinner may return."

Such teaching stifles initiative. It implies a never-ending summer of opportunity without bounds or obligation. As an example, I would like to quote the following from a lecture delivered by the once popular evangelist Dwight L. Moody:

"Men make out pardons for good character or good behavior. But God makes out pardons for men who have

not got any character, who have been very, very bad. He offers a pardon to every sinner on earth if he will take it. I do not care who he is or what he is like. He may be the greatest libertine that ever walked the streets, or the greatest blackguard who ever lived, or the greatest drunkard, or thief, or vagabond...."

How would this ring in Paul's ears, the pressing Apostle who was running with all his might to *win*? Does this have the urgency of Paul's message: *"Make the very most of your time"*? Not at all. Such is definitely NOT the teaching of the God of heaven. Again and again He warns that there is a limit to opportunity (Luke 21:34, 36; Matt. 24:44; Heb. 2:1; 4:1; 10:24-25; 2 Cor. 5:10). Again and again we see that it is possible to delay too long; it is possible to wait until it is too late. It is possible to miss the crown of life through negligence and continual postponement. This was Ezekiel's message when he wrote of the urgent need to repent: *"Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!"* (Ezek. 18:30-32 NIV). Turn—and do it NOW! Come—come before winter!

Challenge yourself. Say, "I won't ever feel like beginning this, so I might as well start right now!"

REMEDY 9:

Think—plan ahead

Disorganization is the breeding ground for procrastination. Take simple steps to plan your time—time for all the essentials. A realistic plan of how you can make your time useful. It will help you to overcome the instinct to put things off.

REMEDY 10:

Sell yourself on the benefits

Think of the benefits of procrastinating. What are they?—beyond a little more comfortable leisure, there is the high risk of failing.

What are the benefits of *not* procrastinating? They are the satisfaction of accomplishment, peace of mind, joy in achievement.

What benefits are accruing to the serious Christian? These benefits surpass anything we can imagine. They are benefits of membership in the family of God, the angels for our own brothers and sisters, the whole earth for our eternal inheritance, plus riches and happiness and peace, and friendship and joy, and everlasting life (see Rom. 2:7; Prov. 22:4; Rev. 22:12,14; 2:7; 21:6-7).

Yes, sell yourself on the benefit—it's your best weapon against procrastination!

Kee a good repertoire of self-motivating statements, like

- ★ "There's no time like the present."
- ★ "The sooner I get started the sooner I'll be done."
- ★ "There's no better time than doing it right now."
- ★ "It's less painful to do it now than to wait until it gets worse."
- ★ "Get it done, then I can forget about it, or then I don't have to think about it any more."

Seize the Day!

“Carpe diem,” cried the old Latins. “Seize the day!” for neutrality is impossible. Neutrality is a figment of the imagination on any basic issue of life. Right is right, and wrong is never right. And if you hesitate to take positive action in behalf of the right, winter will come and all your regrets and protests will be unavailing. Life’s processes do not call a halt because we have not made up our minds.

To put off a decision indefinitely is to make, actually, an irreversible decision.

Our foremost concern is the forming of a Christ-like character that God will perpetuate through winter and spring and on into eternity. But such a life is not the result of idleness or delayed action. To make flowers grow (not weeds) you have to plant them, nurture them, cultivate them. And this requires *action*. Likewise, there is no easy way to grow a character. You cannot become a Christian in your sleep.

If we think that deferring the action necessary to make ourselves over into a new creature will make the process less painful and less demanding, we will be disappointed; there is no easy way.

“Do your best to come before winter.” For the conclusion of the matter is this: that *it is possible to be too late*. A tree in April which insisted that it would not put out leaves until May, and then June, and so on and on postponing, would find October too late. This runs all through life. Doors *do* shut. Winter does follow autumn. Habit accentuates this fact.

If you should think it possible to remain neutral and open-minded on this subject, you are deceiving only yourself. While you rest in neutral, you are coasting downhill. For meanwhile, your life is passing through its springtime. Summer, autumn, and winter will come, slowly or suddenly but inevitably. And when winter comes, how will you warm your hands? How great will be the store of good deeds you have laid up in heaven?

If you have any gracious words to speak, say them *now*. If you have any wounds to heal, any wrongs to right, any injuries to forgive, attend to them *now*. If you have children to raise in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, be at it *now*!

And those sins that you have yet to conquer, those besetments that keep dogging your steps; those evils that you promised long ago to put behind you; that will that you have yet to bend, that wandering mind that you have yet to train; that pettiness, or pride, or selfishness, or dishonesty, or fleshly

lust, or love of the world that you have yet to break—*do it now*. Because winter is coming, though it may seem afar off—and it will be too late.

If you have any desire for the riches of eternity, act positively now. Begin *now* to mold your life according to the Pattern God has provided until your every motive and imagination is fitted into His sublime purpose.

As for me, *“now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation”* (2 Cor. 6:2 NIV). So *“do your best to come before winter.”* You will—won’t you? ♦

To put off a decision indefinitely is to, actually, make an irreversible decision.

*Better try to do something
And fail in the deed
Than try to do nothing
And always succeed.*



Mr. Tomorrow

*He was going to be all that a mortal should be—
Tomorrow.*

*No one should be kinder or braver than he—
Tomorrow.*

*A friend who was troubled and weary he knew,
Who'd be glad of a lift and who needed it, too;
On him he would call and see what he could do
Tomorrow.*

*Each morning he stacked up the letters he'd write—
Tomorrow.*

*And thought of the folks he would fill with delight—
Tomorrow.*

*It was too bad, indeed, he was busy today,
And hadn't a minute to stop on his way;
More time he would have to give others, he'd say—
Tomorrow.*

*The greatest of workers this man would have been
Tomorrow.*

*The world would have known him, had he ever seen—
Tomorrow.*

*But the fact is he died and he faded from view,
And all that he left here when living was through
Was a mountain of things he intended to do
Tomorrow.*

*The strongest chain
in the world is made
useless by a single
broken link. That
broken link is the
habit of putting off.*



A Lesson In Conservation from

The Little Grand Canyon of Georgia

By GERALD R. PAYNE

When I was in high school in Georgia, our agriculture teacher, to stress the importance of soil conservation, told us about “Georgia’s Little Grand Canyon,” a gorge called Providence Canyon. The story is that back in 1855, the Patterson family built a barn. Rainwater running off the roof started eroding the soil away. As the soil washed away, it created a ravine, which eventually swallowed the barn.

Years later the ever-growing gorge came to be known as one of the seven natural (albeit destructive) wonders of Georgia. It has swallowed buildings, automobiles, farm animals, farm equipment and whatever else rested on its edge. Whatever the gorge swallows is abandoned because it isn’t worth trying to reclaim—from a depth of 150 feet, with crumbling walls overhead.

Others say the canyon was caused by poor conservation practices. Farmers cleared large areas of forest to plant cotton and corn, and plowed up and down the slopes, instead of practicing contour plowing. This, I think, is the more likely explanation, but the barn idea can’t be discounted. Perhaps the full explanation would be a combination of the two.

During my travels some thirty years after high school, I passed by the Little Grand Canyon and could readily understand how erosion made such a massive crevice. Along the top rim of the canyon is a thin ridge of topsoil appearing almost black against the skyline, with green pines trying to hold things together. Below this is red clay which gives a false sense of solidity, since it is hard and erodes slowly until disturbed. Underneath this red clay is a thick layer of soft white kaolin and sand. The canyon walls are a display of various colors, including orange, pink, beige, purple, lavender, grey, yellow, tan and black. I have heard some describe it as “extremely beautiful.” To others it is an ugly gully with some pretty colors.

But those who see the gorge only for its beauty are missing a valuable lesson. Providence Canyon is an example of ignoring good conservation practices, which can set off a chain reaction that is not likely to ever be arrested. The area is subject to sudden downpours of rain which take away anything not protected or held together in some way. An aerial view of re-forestation in the area shows that there have been massive efforts to address the erosion problem, but still it

continues. During more than a century and a half, erosion has added another nine finger-like canyons, the largest being 160 feet deep, 600 feet wide and 1,300 feet long.

But there is an even greater lesson than the importance of good soil conservation practices.

Spiritual Conservation

When we think of conservation, we think of preserving or restoring the natural world. But why can’t it refer to our spiritual being as well? Conservation means “preservation or restoration from loss, damage, or neglect.”

Spiritual conservation assumes that one has already entered into covenant with God, and has made progress toward becoming morally like His Son (Eph. 4:13). But who can deny that our spiritual lives are as fragile as Providence Canyon? We have all seen those who neglected the spiritual conservation, whose lives became like a worthless, gaping canyon, void and empty. What a lesson!

How does it happen? Like a sudden downpour of rain, they are tempted or tried in some way, and if faith’s foundation is not well grounded, they yield to their sinful nature. Again and again the process is repeated until at last they reach the point of Providence Canyon when there is no remedy. Solomon is perhaps the best known example of just such a disaster. “*Better is a poor and a wise child,*” he wrote,

"than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished" (Eccl. 4:13). Was he lamenting his own failures?

Solomon had an outstanding beginning, but he failed to keep check on his eroding values. Not making restoration when he had the opportunity, he finished his life as this old and foolish king who refused to take his own God given advice.

The Word of God was plain concerning taking wives or



The pleasure of instant gratification was more enticing to Solomon than God's promise of eternal life for faithful service.

husbands from foreigners. *"You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you"* (1 Kings 11:2). But Solomon went right against the commandment of God, and His standing with God was washed away like the flood waters that made an empty gorge called Providence Canyon. Solomon *"had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines from foreign nations."* And the Word of God proved true: *"his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God"* (1 Kings 11:2-4).

Instant gratification was Solomon's downfall, and it is one of the greatest threats to us also. It erodes our moral values and weakens our resistance to temptation.

It is a warning for all of us. If you think it can't happen to you—if you think your values can never erode—just remember, Solomon was the wisest of men (1 Ki. 4:29-34), and he still failed even after the Lord *"had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the Lord had commanded"* (1 Ki. 11:9, 10). Yes, Solomon's own words convict him. He knew better, and refused to listen to reproof.

Instant gratification

The pleasure of instant gratification was more enticing to Solomon than God's promise of eternal life for faithful Service. He had rather please his foreign wives than obey God. Such pleasure is short lived and eventually brings sor-

row, grief and eternal death—unless we restore our commitment and repair the damages through admission, prayer, repentance, and seeking forgiveness.

There are numerous other examples of self-gratification in Scripture.

Consider Korah and the 250 Israelites who rebelled against Moses and Aaron because they wanted more power and tried to overpower Moses and supplant Aaron's priesthood. God showed whom He supported. The ground opened up and swallowed all the offenders alive (Num. 16).

Or Judas, who betrayed Christ for 30 pieces of silver, and then hanged himself in bitter sorrow.

Or Achan, who took spoil from the enemy which God had forbidden them to do. He was punished with death by the hands of his own people as the Lord commanded (Josh. 7:25, 12).

Or David, who stooped to fornication and murder. How much worse can it be! But he repented and turned from his transgression. David repaired the erosion of self-gratification that led to such grievous sins, and God forgave him. But he still suffered the conse-



quences of his actions; as God predicted through His prophet; the sword never left David's house.

What lessons have we learned from Providence Canyon?

- ❑ Don't allow your values to erode. Because iniquity has come in like a flood (Mat. 24 12-13), it is necessary to watch lest the foundation of faith be washed out and there is no repair.
- ❑ Prevent spiritual erosion by keeping your spiritual garden richly planted with strong, fast-growing, fruit bearing plants.
- ❑ See sin for what it is. What may appear beautiful and appealing can be deceiving, and often is.
- ❑ Avoid the destructive effects of sin by practicing good conservation so it will not wash away the good soil of virtue you have worked hard to build up. ♦



JESUS "FROM EVERLASTING"?

"In reviewing the second chapter of your booklet, 'Trinity or UNITY?' on page 26, the second paragraph quotes Micah 5:2. 'But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel.' The scriptural verse continues, but it is not quoted in the booklet: 'whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.'"

"The latter part of the quotation raises a question. Who are we talking about when speaking of 'whose going forth from of old, from everlasting'? It would be difficult to not think of Christ. If he's speaking of God, he doesn't make this evident."

The passage in Micah 5:2 is clearly a prophecy of Christ and His birthplace, and the Prophet adds a statement not about his having always existed but about his long lineage. Remember that Jesus repeatedly called God His "Father"—and who is as old as his father?! And so many times He referred to Himself as the "son of God," never "God the Son" as the church fathers two or three centuries later re-classified Jesus.

Why does Micah 5:2 say he would be "from of old, from everlasting"? Our purpose in studying the Bible is always to seek harmony between passages of Scripture when there seems to be a conflict. The apostle Paul makes a clear statement that Jesus would be born according to law (Gal. 4:4), and Moses said He would be "raised up," a "prophet like" himself [Moses] (Deut. 18:15, 18). Having plain statements such as these, we have to think there is something about a passage like Micah 5:2 that we are missing.

When we look closer, we see Micah is talking about Jesus' lineage, that He would be descended from an ancient Israelite family. The Greek word used in the Septuagint for "everlasting" is *aion*, and this is a word with more than one meaning, the context of its use determining the meaning. It can mean "for ever," or it can refer to a specific age or period of time. It is frequently translated "age," or used in its plural form, "ages." The literal wording of Micah 5:2 in the Greek Interlinear for "from everlasting" is "from days of the age."

In Micah 7:14, the same Hebrew words translated "from everlasting" in Micah 5:2 are used to

refer to a time no further back than the days when Israel occupied territory on the east side of the Jordan. "Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old."

In Micah 7:20 the Hebrew word for "from of old" is used to refer to the days of the patriarchs. "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old."

In Mal. 3:4 the same Hebrew words translated "from everlasting" are used to refer to the earlier days of the nation of Israel when they were united in worshiping the true God, as in the time of David. "Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years."

Some of the newer translators pick up the definition of the word that is appropriate to the context, as the New English Bible: "But you, Bethlehem in Ephrathah, small as you are to be among Judah's clans, out of you shall come forth a governor for Israel, one whose roots are far back in the past, in days gone by"—His roots would be in a family far back in Israelite history, not in eternal ages.

The Jerusalem Bible reads, "his origin goes back to the distant past, to the days of old."

The Moffatt Bible reads, "one whose origin is of old, of long descent."

The American Translation is similar: "Whose origins are from of old, from ancient days." The Prophet was not telling us that Jesus had a prior existence, but that He would be descended from an ancient family, "of long descent," "one whose roots are far back in the past."

Micah was prophesying that Christ would be descended from an ancient family in Israel (the family of David—see Luke 3:23–38).

Many prophecies of Jesus pinpoint His being descended from the family of David, as in Isa. 11:1, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." Or as in Jer. 23:5, "I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper..." Then there is God's direct promise to David at the time God denied him the privilege of building the temple (read 2 Sam. 7, especially v. 12–23)—David was given the promise that he would have "forever"

seed—the Messiah would come from his family.

Jesus in His own day was recognized as being of the “seed of David” (John 7:42), and this very passage quotes Micah 5:2. Jesus also says it again in Rev. 22:16, that He is “the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning Star.”

Jesus was “of long descent,” but there is no idea that He had always existed. If Jesus had a prior existence up in heaven, He doesn’t have much in common with us, yet Hebrews says He was tempted in all points like we are (Heb. 4:15), also that because He suffered being tempted, He is able to help us who are tempted (Heb. 2:18). He is our Elder Brother, made perfect through suffering (Heb. 2:10), one who “learned obedience” just as we have to (Heb. 5:8), in order to develop the character God was seeking in Him.

“Micah is a small book with only 7 chapters, so I’ve begun reading the book. It’s a book of violence.”

Much of the little book of Micah was local prophecy and warnings of the bad times the nation was facing for their disobedience to God’s laws. And that would mean violence, as the nation was taken into captivity. In an effort to avert disaster, God sent His prophets again and again with stern warnings, but as a nation they were unheeding and failed—through transgression (read Hebrews, chapters 3 and 4). As always, God’s predictions came true. Micah also has prophecies for the future, which are just as sure. There are prophecies of judgments, also of mercy and forgiveness (Mic. 7:15-17). All are written to warn us that God means what He says, now as then, and that His standard does not change.

We need to remember that these things are on record for us to learn from, to give us comfort and hope (Rom. 15:4), so that we don’t have to suffer the consequences of sin.

★ FORBIDDEN FABRIC?

“I have a question about Lev. 19:19, ‘Ye shall keep my statutes...neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woolen come upon thee.’ I am showing my ignorance. What is meant by this, and what would such a garment look like?”

The Levitical laws for the nation of Israel contained many details that seem pointless to us. We have to remember, however, that these laws were designed with a special purpose in view. God was teaching a nation of ex-slaves to be a God-honoring, self-respecting, law-abiding nation. The primary purpose of the laws was to teach obedience and respect for God’s authority. And often there was more meaning in a particular law than appears on the surface.

Fabric made of linen and wool mixed was forbidden for secular use because it was reserved for the high priest. The following is from *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*,¹

“The most holy textiles were made of a combination of twined linen and colored wool threads, a mixture forbidden for secular use (Lev 19:19; Deut 22:9, 11).”

We read further: “The high priest wears linen breeches, a

tunic with a fancier weave (Ex. 28:4, 39); a waistband of colored wool and fine linen (Ex. 28:4, 39; 39:29); a headdress which is designated differently than the regular priest’s (Ex. 28:4, 39; 39:28) and to which was attached an inscribed golden plate (28:36–38; 39:30–31); a robe worn over these items made out of blue wool with golden bells and pomegranates made of colored wool and fine linen (Ex. 28:4, 31–35; 39:22–26; cf. Haran 1978: 169, n. 44); and on top of all this the ephod made of colored wool, fine linen, and strips of gold, all woven together....” The writer comments that “the high priest’s clothing [was] also holier because it consisted of a mixture of wool and linen, a holy mixture.”²

Because this fabric “of mingled wool and of linen” was one of the distinguishing marks of the priests’ office. God was putting a line of demarcation between the sacred and the secular. He did not want what had been consecrated to His service to be confused with the secular, or copied for secular use. His people were to regard “holy” things with respect. It was a visual reminder that certain things were for God and others were for common use. The priests were commissioned to teach exactly this: “They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean” (Ezek. 44:23).

Applying the same principle, God wanted His people to be separate and distinct from the nations around them. They were not to copy the other nations in their way of life, in their behavior, and above all in their worship. The law said, “You shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the people that you should be Mine” (Lev. 20:26). The same principle carried over into the teachings of the apostles, as the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:17–18).

¹Meyers, C. (1992). Twined Linen. In (D. N. Freedman, Ed.) *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*. New York: Doubleday.

²Wright, D. P. (1992). Holiness: Old Testament. In (D. N. Freedman, Ed.) *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*. New York: Doubleday.

★ WISE AS SERPENTS AND HARMLESS AS DOVES?

“What did Jesus mean when He said we should ‘be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves?’” (Matt. 10:16).

The text you quote is part of Jesus’ instructions to the twelve apostles as He was sending them out for the first time. What kind of reception could they expect as they went from place to place? Jesus wanted them to realize everyone would not welcome them. Everyone would not want to hear their message, even though they were healing the sick and performing many miracles to validate their mission.

In this context, Jesus told the apostles how they should respond to those opposing them. Yes, they would have enemies. They would be like “sheep in the midst of wolves.”

How should they respond?

1: Be “wise as serpents.”

What does that mean? The word translated “wise” in this passage means “thoughtful, sagacious or discrete (implying a cautious character)” according to *Strong’s Dictionary of Greek Words* (SHG).

Why the comparison to serpents? Perhaps because serpents are wary, and quick to perceive danger. They are also rapid in escaping from danger, which was part of Jesus’ advice further along in this same passage: “*when they persecute you in this city, flee to another*” (Matt. 10:23).

2: Be “harmless as doves.”

The word translated “harmless” means literally “unmixed, pure....without admixture of evil, free from guile, innocent, simple.” The apostle Paul used this word in Rom. 16:19, where he advised believers to be “*simple [innocent] concerning evil.*” He used it again in Philippians 2:15 when he said they should be “*harmless [pure, unmixed with evil], the sons of God, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.*” According to the lexicon, the word translated “simple” or “harmless” suggests a single-minded devotion to duty, with child-like innocence, without guile, innocent, not hypocritical. The comparison to doves suggests that they were to be non-threatening and non-aggressive.

Jesus was sending His disciples on a dangerous mission. The disciples under threat were not to be helpless and gullible, but neither were they to harm their opponents. They would need the quick perception and rapidity of the serpents without the venom.

★ WIKIPEDIA STATEMENT ABOUT MEGIDDO HOLIDAYS

“I just read a statement concerning the Megiddo Church from Wikipedia, the free on-line encyclopedia. It reads: ‘Nichols is held in the highest esteem by the members of the Megiddo Church, and his birthday, October 1, is celebrated as a holiday second only in importance to Christmas.’

“Please explain: ‘second only in importance to Christmas,’ which celebrates the birth of God’s Son, Jesus Christ, earlier in the year.”

The statement on Wikipedia about the Megiddo Church is partially true. We do recognize both holidays each year, and yes, Christ’s birth is the earlier in the year, a double holiday with the sacred New Year, that we celebrate in the Spring each year. (For Bible evidence regarding the date of the observance, see *The Megiddo Message*, Spring 2012, page 25). We call this celebration Abib, after the name of the first month of the Hebrew year as God instructed Moses (see Ex. 12:2; 13:4).

Of secondary importance is our service in memory of our founder L. T. Nichols on October 1. We feel a deep debt of gratitude to God for the work of our founder, whom we believe God used to uncover the true teachings of the Bible. The Bible foretold that false teachers would mix the true teaching with fables to tickle the ears of the hearers (2 Tim.

4:3–4), and this would lead to the long dark days of the apostasy. Uncovering the true teaching was a key task in the plan of God, without which there would still be total spiritual darkness.

But there is no comparing of Jesus Christ and Mr. Nichols as the Wikipedia’s statement suggests. Jesus is supreme. We honor Jesus as the coming King of the whole earth (Zech. 14:9). Priceless to us is His whole life—His perfect example of the standard of character God is looking for in His church (Eph. 4:13). Jesus patterned that godly life all the way from birth to death, to resurrection, finally receiving the physical change to the immortal “*glorious body.*” The Bible clearly states that Jesus Christ, is returning to give to each faithful servant the same—an immortal body (see Phil. 3:20–21; 1 John 3:2).

Jesus Christ is God’s Son of promise, prophesied all through the Old Testament. He is “*the Head of the body the church*” (Col. 1:18), the “*captain of [our] salvation*” (Heb. 2:10), who did always the things that pleased His heavenly Father (John 8:29).

Jesus is the “*author and finisher of our faith*” (Heb. 12:1–2), also called the “*author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him*” (Heb. 5:8–9). He is our Elder Brother (Rom 8:29; Heb. 2:10), who was “*tempted in all points*” as we are, “*yet without sin*” (Heb. 4:15). He will return as our Judge and Savior, to judge His servants and reward with eternal life all who have grown to the moral stature of Jesus Christ by living faithfully by His commandments (Eph. 3:14; Rev. 22:12, 14; 2 Tim. 4:1). Jesus Christ is coming to set up His everlasting worldwide Kingdom of God (Ps. 72:7–8), transforming this earth into a paradise of delight where everyone who lives will be righteous (Isa. 60:21), and there will be no sin, no violence, no heartache, no sorrow, no sickness, and finally no death! (Rev. 21:3–4), where everyone everywhere will know and worship the true and living God (Jer. 31:34). Jesus is at the very heart and center of the plan of God for this earth! That is why we pause each spring to honor Him.

Our founder honored Jesus above all, and that is our aim also. ♦

ANSWERS:

A. Agrippa (Acts 26:28)

B. Barnabas (Acts 4:32–37;
11:25–26; 13–15)

C. Caesar (Acts 25:10–12)

D. Dorcas (Acts 9:36–41)

E. Euodias (Phil. 4:1–3)

F. Father (Matt. 6:9)

G. Gamaliel (Acts 22:3; 5:34–39)

H. Herod (Matt. 2:1–18)

I. Italy (Acts 27:1)

J. Jude (Jude 3)

K. Kingdom (Matt. 4:23)

L. Lydia (Acts 16:14–15, 40)

M. Matthew (Levi) (Matt. 9:9;
Luke 5:27–28)

N. Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30)

O. Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 1:14–16)

P. Passover (Ex. 12; Luke 22)

Q. Quarrels (2 Tim. 2:23–26)

R. Rabboni (John 20:16)

S. Stephen (Acts 7:59–60)

T. Thomas (John 20:25–28)

U. Unleavened (1 Cor. 5:8)

V. Vengeance (Rom. 12:19)

W. Worship (Rev. 4:10–11)

Y. Yoke (Gal. 5:1)

Z. Zebedee (Matt. 4:18–22)

KNOW YOUR BIBLE

"Let the wise listen and add to their learning" - Proverbs 1:5

NEW TESTAMENT ABCS

A 1. **A** _____
Roman official whom Paul almost persuaded to be a Christian

B 2. **B** _____
Early Christian missionary who came from the island of Cyprus, comrade of Paul

C 3. **C** _____
Roman Emperor to whom Paul appealed for justice

D 4. **D** _____
Early Christian woman who was sick, died, and was restored to life

E 5. **E** _____
Philippian believer who had a conflict with another woman in the church

F 6. **F** _____
Relationship of God to His human family of believers

G 7. **G** _____
Esteemed Jewish doctor of the law who taught young Paul in Jerusalem

H 8. **H** _____
Wicked ruler of Judea who ordered the slaying of all children two years old and under

I 9. **I** _____
Country where Apostle Paul was held in house arrest.

J 10. **J** _____
New Testament author who exhorted us to "contend earnestly for the faith"

K 11. **K** _____
Christ went everywhere preaching the _____.

L 12. **L** _____
Woman of Thyatira who was converted to Christian faith and actively taught others

M 13. **M** _____
One of the 12 disciples who was a tax collector _____.

N 14. **N** _____
The City which rejected Jesus

O 15. **O** _____
Christian brother in Ephesus whom Paul commended for his faithful visiting

P 16. **P** _____
Jewish festival commemorating the exodus from Egypt, observed by Jesus

Q 17. **Q** _____
A type of dissension forbidden in the church of Christ

R 18. **R** Mary addresses Jesus as R _____

S 19. **S** _____
Early Christian martyr who was stoned to death

T 20. **T** _____
Disciple of Jesus who refused to believe in Jesus' resurrection until he had seen the nail prints in His hands

U 21. **U** _____
Type of bread used for Passover meals, symbolic of spiritual bread of sincerity and truth

V 22. **V** _____
A term for the retributive justice belonging only to God

W 23. **W** _____
An act of reverence due to God and Jesus only

Y 24. **Y** _____
Paul called the old law of Moses a y _____ of bondage

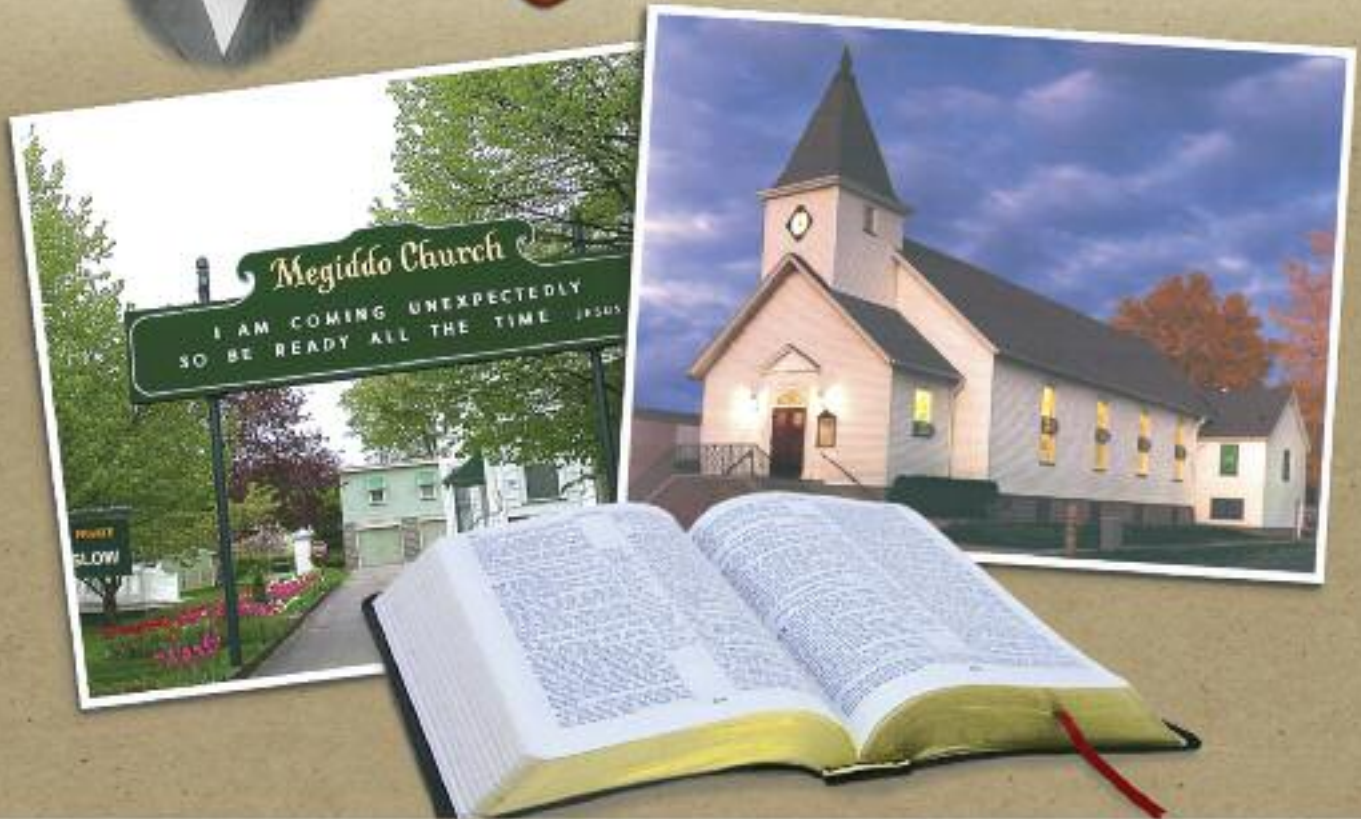
Z 25. **Z** _____
Father of James and John, disciples of Jesus

ANSWERS ON PAGE 16

HISTORY OF



Megiddo Church



The Megiddo Church Is ...

The Megiddo Church is a small group of people deeply dedicated to a biblical world view and to the Bible as a way of life. We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of our Creator and our only source of knowledge about God and His plan of salvation for the earth.

A philosophy of life...

Because of our view of the plan of God, our first concern is not to achieve success in this world but to develop a character acceptable to God, so as to receive the eternal salvation He has offered in the Bible.

Our name "Megiddo"...

Our name "Megiddo" is taken from the name of a town in ancient Palestine. Its history spans more than 3500 years, being destroyed and rebuilt more than twenty times on the same spot. Located on a main route for travel between Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia, Megiddo has seen more battles than perhaps any other location on earth, and is to be the staging ground for the final battle of Armageddon at the return of Christ (Rev. 16:16).

In our context, Megiddo means literally "a place of troops" where dedicated soldiers of God fight the spiritual enemies of doubt, sin, and evil in themselves, using the "sword of the Spirit which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17).

Key Dates in the life of L. T. Nichols, founder of the Megiddo Church

- 1844:** Born in Elkhart, Indiana
- 1849:** Nichols family relocates to frontier state of Wisconsin, where life was rugged and difficult.
- 1854:** Young L. T. (age 10) attends Christmas party, where Santa Claus' false face falls off, revealing Deacon Graves—starts him questioning fundamentals of religious beliefs.
- 1855:** L. T. is carrying a Bible to school, studies and talks to classmates during recess. Vows that he will never lie or steal, or take the name of God in vain, or use tobacco or alcoholic beverages
- 1861:** Was offered an annual salary of \$1500 if he would fill the pulpit of a local church.
- 1864:** Is married to Harriet Griffis
- 1864:** Is drafted into the army only weeks after marriage; refuses to kill his fellowmen based on convictions of Bible teaching; when his life is threatened for his stand, he appeals to President Lincoln and is allowed to serve in the military hospital.
- 1865–1875:** Studies Bible intensely, seeking correct understanding of it
- 1869:** Debates publicly in Wrightstown, Wisconsin. Subject: The resurrection
- 1868–1874:** Settles in Fon du Lac, Wisconsin, circuit preacher for nearby towns
- 1870:** Debates publicly at Kasson, Minnesota. Subject: The Bible is all one harmonious teaching
- 1874:** Relocates to McMinnville, Oregon, for opportunity to preach; holds annual camp meetings for followers
- 1877:** Debates with Professor Campbell at Salem, Oregon. Subjects: Is man mortal or immortal by nature? Is the resurrection physical? Will there be a literal kingdom on earth? Maud Hembree (his successor-to-be) is converted.
- 1878:** Publicly debates at Salem, Oregon. Subject: Is the sabbath observance binding now?
- 1880:** Discovers cornerstone Bible teaching: that one's salvation depends on knowing and obeying every command of Scripture, as expounded by Jesus.
- 1882:** Travels east through Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio
- 1882:** Returns to Oregon
- 1883:** Leaves Oregon, travels to Texas, then settles in Ellington, Minnesota
- 1883–1900:** Serves several congregations in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois as traveling circuit preacher
- 1887:** Holds public discussion in Owatonna, Minnesota. Subject: Is the Mosaic Law binding today?
- 1888:** Establishes church at Barry, Illinois, places church under the direction of Maud Hembree
- 1891:** Makes 6-month trip by ship to England and Wales in an effort to persuade Christadelphians of his convictions about the Bible and its teachings
- 1893–1894:** Travels with wife to St. Augustine, Florida



CHAPTER 1 Part 2

A CONFIDENCE BROKEN

When L. T. was only five years old the Nichols family loaded their wagons and headed West to the frontier state of Wisconsin. The dried bones of livestock, an occasional broken wagon and a mound of stones marking a grave were mute and stern reminders of the hazards of travel in the mid 1800's.

Little L. T.'s mother, Emmeline Dunbar Nichols, was an able leader and teacher in her own right. A Christian according to the Campbellite-Restorationist tradition, she diligently taught its principles to her children by song and story. L. T. was an eager student and had complete confidence in the lessons he received at home and in church, until....

It was Christmas Eve 1854 when L. T. was 10 years old. His mother instructed her children, "Hang up your stocking. Santa Claus is coming tonight, and he will leave you some presents." That evening the family went to the church where there would be a Christmas tree, the first L. T. had ever seen, and "Santa Claus was to come down the chimney. Papa



Life on the Frontier

told me so, Mama told me so, and I thought it was so if they said so," he wrote as he recalled the experience in later years.

"We listened, and pretty soon we heard him coming down the chimney! Soon he crawled out, and we saw the pack on his back. We all saw him and he was really Santa Claus! An odd-looking fellow. He began jumping around, and pretty soon he stumbled and his false face dropped, and it was old Deacon Graves!"

Young L. T.'s confidence was betrayed. His parents, teacher, even the preacher had seriously taught him the Santa Claus fable.



"Why Father! Old Santa Claus is only old Deacon Graves!"

Where are they —

who cannot be bought;
whose word is their bond;
who put character above wealth;
who put truth above popularity;
who put fact above opinion;
who are larger than their vocations;
who are honest in small things as in great things;
who make no compromise with error or wrong;
who sacrifice personal advantage for a cause they believe in;
whose ambitions are not centered around their own selfish desires;
who refuse to compromise "because everybody does it";
who are true to their commitments through good report and evil report, in adversity as well as in prosperity;
who do not believe that shrewdness, cunning, and hardheadedness are virtues;
who are not ashamed or afraid to stand for right even when it is unpopular;
who can say "no" with emphasis although all the rest of the world says "yes";
to whom one Word from God means more than all the words of all the men in the world combined?

Such are those God is seeking.

"Why Father! You're not teaching me the truth; old Santa Claus is only old Deacon Graves!" And then he thought further, "Why are these preachers teaching us lies!" When he went to the Bible, young L. T. could not find one reference about Santa Claus. It was all a lie!

Never again would he believe a religious teaching unless he could find proof in the Bible. This resolve remained with him the rest of his life.

From time to time a circuit rider (itinerant preacher) held services in the local school house. Before services began, the preacher would tuck his sermon in the large pulpit Bible. Then when the audience came in and were seated, he would spread his hands upward and in his lengthy prayer would say, "O Lord, send the Holy Spirit to enlighten thy servant, for he knoweth not what to say to this people." Young L. T. questioned to himself, "Was the minister being truthful? Was he honest?" The answer was not long in coming. One day some mischievous boys slipped away with his sermon notes, and that day the last sentence of his prayer was literally and shamefully true—he indeed "knew not what to say to this people"!

L. T.'s mother taught him to respect the Bible and revere God. He was already beginning to search. And the more he studied, the more he saw errors being taught as truth, and the greater his commitment to the Bible grew. He noted their errors, and determined not to repeat them. At the age of 11 he made a solemn vow to God that he would never touch liquor or tobacco, never commit an immoral act, never be dishonest in

any way, or mar his speech with profanity or obscenity.

Young Nichols did not hesitate to speak out against any teaching that he believed contradicted Bible teaching. In Leroy, Wisconsin, facing 27 ministers, he told them they were all on the wrong track; that the thoughts of man are vanity. "If we cannot read what we believe in the Bible, we should let it alone. The Lord means just what He says, and unless we keep His commandments, He will not save us. The moment you say, 'You need not keep every commandment', you need not keep any. If you open the way for one thought of man, you have let in the whole train of evils."

Of course, they did not like to hear such words from a teenager. What did he know anyway! They tried to silence him, but to no avail.

When L. T. was still in his teens, someone, observing his speaking ability and enthusiasm, offered him a salary of \$1500 dollars a year to fill a pulpit of a local church. Considering that a skilled laborer in 1860, such as a carpenter, earned little more than \$300 a year, the offer of a \$1500 salary would have been very appealing. His father, a sick man, was working for very low wages, his mother was earning a small income sewing shrouds for funerals, and his own wages were very low. But without hesitation, Nichols declined the offer. Why? Because he saw that the hired servant must please those whose bread he eats, and he determined never to have his integrity shackled by money. Like the apostle Paul, he would

preach the gospel without charge (1 Cor. 9:18). Like the prophets of old he would remain free to speak the truth as he found it in the Word of God, whether they would hear or refuse to hear.

As L. T. approached manhood, his mother pleaded with him to be more orthodox. "Throw these ideas away and go to college and fit yourself to be somebody in this world."

But young L. T. already had other goals. "No, Mother" he replied, "I would rather follow what God has to say." He had observed that seekers after worldly riches and fame all go to one common place, the grave; they all would be laid to rest and forgotten. He was determined to do something better with his life.

A New Chapter

Harriett Griffis, attending school with Nichols, found him serious, studious, and amusing. As she observed his exemplary conduct and courage to stand for what he believed, her ridicule gave way to admiration and love, and on October 15, 1864, Harriett Griffis became the wife of her childhood schoolmate.

Nichols commented in later years that it took his last dollar "to tie the knot." According to the custom of the day, a boy belonged to his father until age 21, to repay the parents in part for his childhood care. Since Nichols was married at age twenty, his small savings went to his father as a cash settlement for the remaining year of his minority.

Yet even though they were poor, young L. T. and his new bride had youth and health, and looked forward eagerly to a long and happy life together.

But a dark cloud was on the horizon that would severely test Nichols' faith. ♦

TO BE CONTINUED



L. T. Nichols
about age 20



Hattie Griffis
L. T.'s schoolmate,
whom he married at
age 19, and who was
his lifelong companion.



Emmeline Dunbar Nichols
(mother of L. T.)
She was her son's steady
supporter, always ready
to exchange error for
truth when she saw
the evidence.

The iPad—Obsolete?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

kingdom that dislodged all the kingdoms of men and filled the whole earth? Would it last for a few years, or a few centuries, perhaps a millennium or two? No, *"it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever"* (Dan. 2:44).

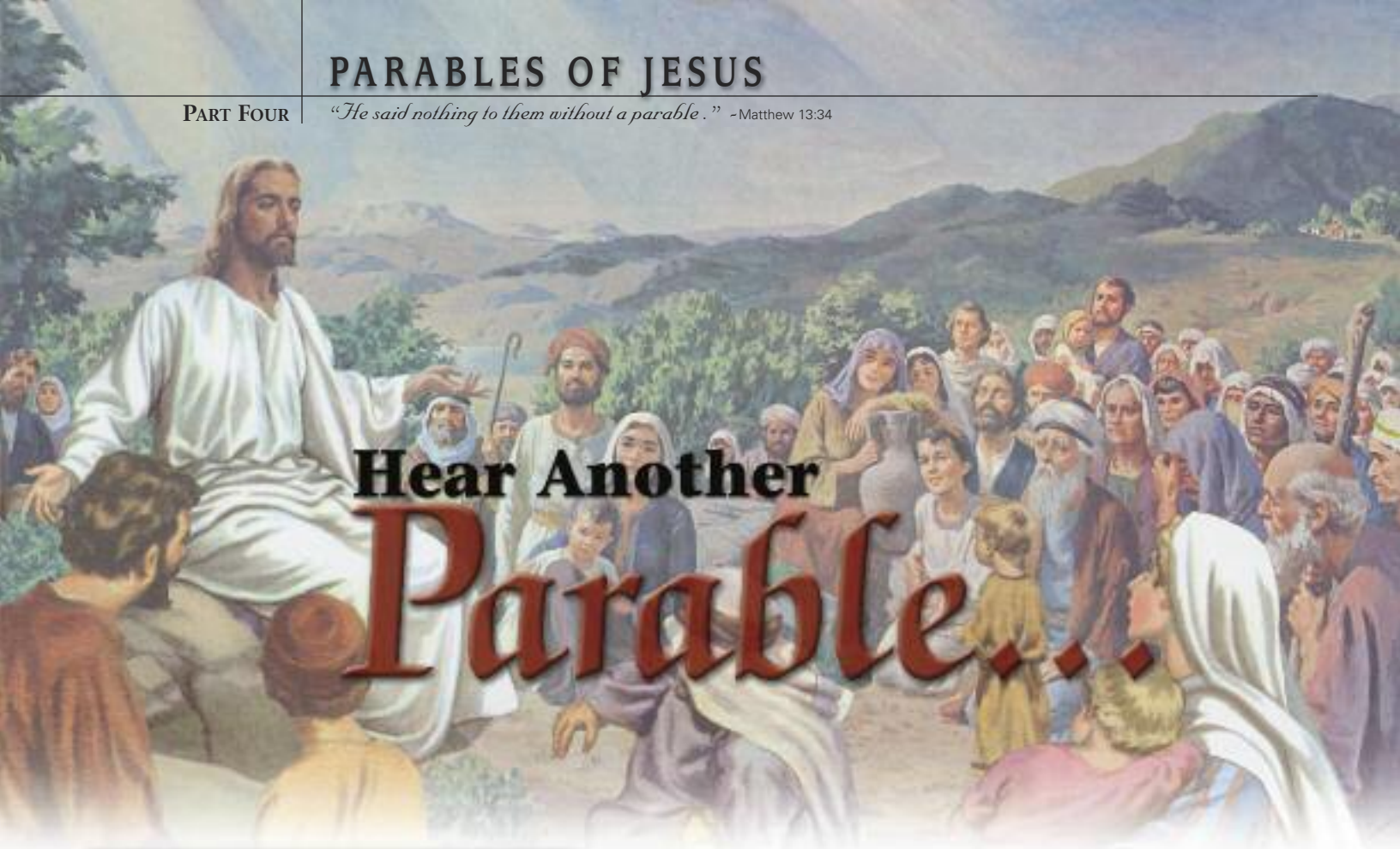
Obsolete versus eternal—what makes the difference? **The small stone is God's design, not man's. And God's plan will not be thwarted.**

The four world kingdoms—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome—have come and gone. The fifth kingdom, the kingdom of Jesus Christ, represented in the dream by the lit-

tle stone, is being cut out of the mountains. And—strangely—there is no buzz about it in the market place. But it **IS** coming. These are the words of Daniel to the king: *"...The great God has made known ... what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure"* (Dan 2:45).

Just as sure as the iPad will become obsolete, just so surely this fifth kingdom will come into being, and *"stand forever."* It is sure and certain because it is the promise of the God of heaven in His Word, that Word that is destined to survive all the obsolescence of this world—because:

"There were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever" (Rev. 11:15). ♦



Hear Another Parable...

THE PARABLE OF the Ten Virgins



1 "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3 Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, 4 but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5 But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

6 "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' 7 Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

11 "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' 12 But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

13 "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."

—Matthew 25:1–13

By RUTH E. SISSON

AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT

Be ready... Watch." It was a keynote of Jesus' teaching. "Watch..., for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." The parable of the Ten Virgins, or Ten Bridesmaids, is a lesson on being prepared. You must prepare in advance, says Jesus, or face the consequences of being unprepared. Because doors do close.

Even we, reading the parable two thousand years later, can feel the finality of Jesus' words: "And the door was shut." "Those who were ready went in," and were in—forever. Those not ready were shut out—forever.

The Characters

The characters in this parable are:

The bridegroom (representing Jesus), who is absent from the scene of action, but whose arrival is expected.

Ten virgins, or bridesmaids (representing those who are acquainted with God's plan and want to be part of it): young women who have been invited to the wedding ceremony, who are waiting during a long night vigil for the arrival of the bridegroom. They must have their lamps trimmed and brightly burning all the time because they do not know when the bridegroom might come. The most serious issue is the supply of oil each bridesmaid has brought with her.

The Parable

Reading these last chapters of Matthew, one gets the feeling that Jesus is running out of time, and is pressing as much meaning as possible into His words. He is nearing the end of His ministry. In a matter of days He would be arrested and crucified. His lessons get more and more focused.

"Then the Kingdom of Heaven shall be likened to..." (Matt. 25:1). Everywhere Jesus went He was preaching the kingdom. "...He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1).

Why is it called *"the kingdom of heaven"*? Because the Kingdom on earth will belong to the very highest, noblest culture, the culture of heaven. And the Kingdom will operate under heavenly authority. The plan is from God, and when the Kingdom is finally set up, it will be part of heaven. Heaven is going to be right here on the earth (Matt. 6:10).

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom" (Matt. 25:1). All characters are introduced immediately, and the action of the parable is in progress. *"Ten virgins"* (those invited to the wedding) *"took their lamps"* (a source of light for which they were responsible) and *"went out"* (they acted on the invitation) *"to meet the bridegroom"* (they had an expressed purpose). This also tells us the bridegroom is not present, but his arrival is expected.

Then immediately Jesus classifies the ten bridesmaids: *"Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish" (Matt. 25:2).* What makes the difference? Why some wise, and some foolish? They all look alike. All have their lamps, and all lamps are lighted. All knew they would need their lamps because it might get dark before the bridegroom came.

So how is it that some are wise and others foolish? Looking closer, we see that some have a larger supply of oil than others. *"Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps" (Matt. 25:3-4).* Could the whole difference between being *"wise"* or *"foolish"* depend on one's supply of oil? Yes!

All Asleep

"But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept" (Matt. 25:5).

At this point Jesus includes a prophecy in His parable. Jesus would be going away (to heaven), and while He would be absent from His people (the bridesmaids), they would all, in the language of the parable, fall asleep.

A number of the Bible writers, as well as Jesus Himself, predicted



But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

ACCORDING TO ANCIENT JEWISH WEDDING CUSTOMS...

The parable of the Ten Bridesmaids is easier to understand if we have some background in ancient Jewish customs of marriage.

Among the ancient Jewish people there were three stages leading to marriage:

- ◆ the engagement
- ◆ the betrothal
- ◆ the marriage ceremony

The **engagement** was often carried out by the parents, who selected a son or daughter from a family among their acquaintances, whom they thought suitable to be a life-time companion of their son or daughter. As strange as this practice may seem to us, it worked for many generations.

The selection of the bride was followed by the **betrothal**. At the betrothal, the bride-to-be and the bridegroom both pledged themselves together by oaths which could be broken only by divorce. The betrothal was celebrated by a feast, and presents to the bride, and often to the brides' parents.

Between the betrothal and the marriage, an interval elapsed. In the time of the patriarchs, this time period varied from a few days to a full year for virgins and later to a month for widows.

During the betrothal the bride-elect lived with her family or friends, and all communication between herself and her future husband was carried on through the medium of a *"friend of the bridegroom"* (John 3:29). During this time she was virtually regarded as the wife of her future husband, and faithlessness on her part was punishable by death (Deut. 22:23-24), though her husband had the option of breaking the agreement (Deut. 24:1).

At last came the actual **marriage**, when the bride moved from her father's house to that of the bridegroom or his father. The bridegroom prepared for the wedding ceremony by putting on a festive dress and placing on his head a nuptial turban. The bride was veiled, her robes white, sometimes embroidered with gold thread, and covered with perfume. She herself was further dressed with jewels (Isa. 49:18; 61:10; Rev. 21:2).

The **marriage ceremony** was a time of great joy. Everyone in the family and those who were friends of the family joined in a procession to the home of the newly married couple.

The point of Jesus' parable depends on a part of the marriage custom which may seem strange to us. The bridegroom, dressed in his festive clothing, came with his friends from his home to hers. If the two were separated by a long distance, there was no saying when he would come, and since he was a supremely honored guest, not to welcome him appropriately was a serious breach of manners. What if the bridegroom happened to come at night? No one was allowed in the streets after dark without a lighted lamp, hence the need for the waiting bridesmaids to keep their lamps trimmed and burning brightly, because they did not know when the bridegroom would come.

Source of data:

Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary, 1992; Smith's Bible Dictionary, 1986; Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 2003; Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 1995



Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.

this time of complete apostasy from true religion, when false teachers succeed in turning all away from the true teachings of Jesus to fables (2 Tim. 4:3–4) so that no one would be aware of the plan of God.

But suddenly, *“at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’”* (Matt. 25:6). The bridesmaids wake up.

“Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps” (Matt. 25:7), *“all those virgins”* representing those who respond to the midnight cry. They take action. They believe the bridegroom is coming, and immediately start preparing to meet Him with lamps burning brightly.

Crisis

“All those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps” (Matt. 25:7). But as the hours go by, all ten lamps no longer look alike. Some lamps are burning brightly, others are flickering. Where is the bridegroom? It’s time he was here. What has happened to him? Has He decided not to come?

One virgin checks the oil supply in her lamp. It is getting low. *“How is your oil supply? Mine is almost gone!”*

More flickering. One lamp goes out, then another. Panic! My lamp is out, yours is burning brightly.

“And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out’” (Matt. 25:8). Notice the clear identifier. What makes one wise or foolish? It is the size of her oil reserve.

What does it take to hold on through the long time while the bridegroom tarries? What keeps our lives bright with hope and promise while we wait? It is the oil of faith—faith in God and His Divine plan, faith in His promises, faith in Him that He is able to do what He has promised, and that He will abundantly reward each one who endures to the end (Heb. 11:6; Matt. 24:13).

BUY FOR YOURSELVES

The members of the human family are strongly interdependent. We rely on one another for information, resources, equipment, even ideas and attitudes. This interdependence has both simplified and complicated our lives, often for good.

If we get “good genes” from our parents we may enjoy many years of good health. We can earn money and use it to help others. We can share ideas and suggestions so that others benefit.

But our interdependence has limits. There are things which each of us can have only as we buy for ourselves. Among these are the resources which directly concern our eternal welfare.

I might spend years with the most godly person, yet remain unconvicted in my own heart. Think of Judas among the Twelve, yet he was willing to betray his Lord into the hands of His enemies for a paltry sum of money. Think of Demas in close association with the great apostle Paul, while in his own heart loving the present evil world.

No one can share an upright character. Each covenant maker must stand his own tests, and prove his own character.

No one can give another deep conviction and faith. Each must search out the evidence for himself, and accept it, believe it, and shape his life by it.

This was the point Jesus was making in His parable, when the foolish virgins were sent to the marketplace to buy oil for their flickering lamps. The oil they needed was the oil of faith, faith to keep awake and alert when the bridegroom seemed to

tarry. Had the bridegroom come when first expected, they would have had plenty of oil. But when the time dragged on and on, their supply of faith was exhausted. They did not have the deep conviction to hold steady, expectant, eager no matter what.

Faith is a product we must buy for ourselves by going over the evidence, by keeping our eyes open and seeing the fulfillment of the prophecies of God’s Word all around us.

Before your faith lamp starts flickering, buy more oil. Buy the oil of evidence. Review again and again the solid foundation of facts that undergird your faith in God and His Word. List in your mind the prophecies that have been fulfilled—and what remain yet unfulfilled. Take, for example, the prophecy of the four world kingdoms—fulfilled; and the fifth kingdom: yet to be fulfilled. Go over the Old Testament prophecies relating to Jesus, prophecies of His birth, His birthplace, His ministry, His death, His glorious resurrection and ascension. Mark in your mind that each was fulfilled just as foretold.

Buy the evidence.

Then think about the prophecies yet to be fulfilled: prophecies of Jesus’ Second Advent, His Kingship, and the glorious age to come. Buy an abundant supply of this highest grade oil, the oil of faith and keep your lamp brightly burning. Then when the Bridegroom comes, you will be ready and He will invite you to go in with Him to enjoy the wedding feast with Him.

Before the door is shut.

So the ones with flickering lamps (lacking the oil of faith) say to the wise, Share with us! Give us some of your oil. Don't you see, our lamps are going out! Isn't sharing a Christ-like virtue?

The wise have only one answer: *"No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves"* (Matt. 25:9). Are the wise being selfish? unfeeling? unkind?

The facts: The wise prepared in advance, bringing an extra large reserve of the precious oil; the foolish did not. Had the bridegroom come when first expected, they may have held out. But if He did not come when they thought He would—? They were not prepared for that.

Some things can be shared, others cannot. This precious oil of faith that keeps one's lamp of obedience burning brightly is something each must procure for herself. No sharing possible.

What is the suggestion of the wise? *"Go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves"* (Matt. 25:9). *"Buy for yourselves."* Faith is not free; faith has a price, and one must be prepared to pay the price.

Having no other alternative, the foolish virgins dash off to find a supplier.

Disappointment

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came" (Matt. 25:10). Unprepared. Just when they might have shared in the joy of the arriving bridegroom, their lamps went out, and they had to go in search of oil.

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut" (Matt. 25:10). Notice: *"those who were ready"* went in—ready because they had prepared in advance; ready because they brought that extra reserve of oil that they just *might* need—they didn't want to come up short.

"And those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut" (Matt. 25:10). Five are in, and five are at the shops negotiating for more oil.

The five shoppers return—now they have enough oil to see them through! *"Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!'"* (Matt. 25:11). Open! Open the door and let us in—we are ready now to believe with all our heart!

But it is too late. Once that door was shut, there was no more admittance. *"...He answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you'"* (Matt. 25:12).

Watch!

What is Jesus' conclusion? *"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming"* (Matt. 25:13). Jesus leaves no question. He Himself is the bridegroom, and He will be coming at an unexpected time. There is only one solution: Watch! Stay alert! Be ready all the time. ♦



And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.



Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us!"



Brian's Accident

A True Story

Fifty-five, fifty-six, fifty-seven, fifty-eight. Five dollars and fifty-eight cents." Brian was counting the money he had been saving in his bank. "Mom," he called out, "how much do I need to buy this wagon?"

Mother appeared in the kitchen doorway. She glanced at the catalog as her six-year-old held it up to her.

"About fifteen dollars, Dear."

"Fifteen dollars," Brian repeated. "Will you help me count the rest of my money, Mom?" He was anxious to see if he had that much in his bank.

Mother and Brian sat down to count. Brian had been saving money toward a new wagon for a long time. It had been so long that Brian was sure he must be nearing his goal. So this morning he had pulled out all the catalogs and looked and looked until he found just the kind of wagon he wanted. It was bright red, and sturdy-looking.

For a few moments he sat on the floor watching his mother count his dimes and quarters. Then he picked up his polar-bear bank and gave it another hard shake—polar bears could hold a lot of money, and Brian wanted to be sure the very last coin was out.

"You have just seventeen dollars and thirteen cents." Mother smiled as she added the last coin to the stack.

"I have enough! I have enough! Brian shouted and jumped with glee. "I can have my wagon now! I have enough!"

"I'm so happy for you, Brian. Your patience and careful saving has really paid off. That's the way dimes and nickels add up, when you save them." Mother smiled at her young son as he dashed off to share the good news.

Soon he was back. "Can we write out the order now? I can take it to the post office," Brian offered.

Mother smiled. "Later, perhaps. Just now we had better hurry or we'll be late. Remember our outing this afternoon."

"Where are we going?" For an instant Brian had forgotten. "Oh, I know! Sledding!"

Soon Brian and his little sister Tina were in the car with their mother and on their way to Aunt Linda's. There they found two eager cousins and two of their friends all ready to go.

"Can Marie ride with us?" asked Tina.

"Sure. Marie can ride with us, and Tim can ride with Aunt Linda and her boys."

The Hanson's lived on a high hill out in the country, and the children always looked forward to visiting them in the wintertime. "Mommy, I heard someone say the Hanson's aren't home. Can we still go sledding down their hill?"

"The Hanson's are not at home, Tina, but they left a key to their house with Aunt Linda so we can go in and warm up after sledding. Isn't that nice of them?"

The children all nodded. Soon they were in the Hanson's driveway, and almost before the car had stopped, they tumbled out.

Across the Hanson yard they pulled their sleds, until they came to the crest of the long hill. Then "all aboard!" and six delighted boys and girls went flying down the hill. It was a just-right day. There was lots of snow, and the cold night had made a hard crust on the top of the snow so that the sleds went flying down almost all the way to the weather-beaten fence at the far end of the field. It was a long trek back, but no one seemed to mind—not at first. All were eager to do it again, and again.

It seemed all too soon when Mother and Aunt Linda called everyone into the house to warm up before going home. But they were delighted to come when they saw the big potful of steamy-hot chocolate that was waiting for them, and a plate heaped with Aunt Linda's crispy nut cookies. Only a few minutes and there was barely a crumb left.

"Now," suggested Aunt Linda, "you boys can go out and pack the sleds into the cars, and the girls will help clean up here. Then we will all be on our way home."

Mother was repacking the last of the dishes when they all heard a commotion outside, then a crash and some loud crying.

"Sounds like glass breaking!" Aunt Linda and Mother hurried to the garage to see, and there stood two little boys. Brian was crying, and Tim looked puzzled. All over the garage floor lay the broken fragments of what had been a glass storm-door. Mother and Aunt Linda examined the children closely. "Are you hurt?" Both shook their heads, and Brian wiped his tears with his thickly mittened hands.

"What happened?" questioned Mother, as she rested a tender hand on Brian's head.

"Tim said he's not going home in our car, and I want him to ride with us this time!" Brian wailed.

Mother looked stern. "Were you boys arguing about it?"

"I want Tim to ride with us," wailed Brian again.

"But what happened to the door?"

"I just got so mad, I came running to the house real fast

and I couldn't stop, and my arm went right through the glass. I couldn't help it!"

"Now calm down," Mother spoke quietly. "Let's clean up this glass, and then we'll decide who's going to ride with whom. Brian, you should be very thankful you were not hurt. If you didn't have all those warm clothes on, and that heavy jacket, you could have been on the way to the hospital right now. I've heard of children getting hurt severely by going through glass doors."

When they arrived home, Mother told Dad what had happened, and the three sat down in the living room to talk.

"Mother told me what happened today," Dad began, "and we've decided that you should pay for a new glass for the Hanson's door."

Brian looked stricken as the picture of a red wagon flashed through his mind. "Me? With my own money?"

"Yes," said Mother firmly. "After all, you were responsible for breaking the glass."

"But Mommy, it was an accident!"

"I know you didn't do it purposely, Brian. But if you think about it, you will realize that it could have been avoided."

"But I was running, and I couldn't stop!"

"Brian," asked Dad. "Why were you running in the first

place? Wasn't it because you had lost control of your temper?"

"Yes," Brian muttered. He had to agree.

Dad went on. "If you hadn't been angry, you would have been watching where you were going and would have seen the door and opened it. Besides, we are responsible even for our accidents.

Somebody has to pay, even when we don't do something deliberately. And Mother and I feel you are old enough to learn this."

"But—" Brian started to cry.

"But what about my wagon?"

"We're sorry, Brian," said

Mother, "we know you've waited a long time for that wagon. But we hope you will remember this lesson. The wagon will have to wait until you can save up enough money again."

She stood up.

"Just remember, Son," Dad put a loving arm around Brian, "that anger costs, and costs dearly.

Some people are never able to make up what they lose in a moment of anger. You will always be sorry for what you do when you are angry. That's why God wants us to learn to control ourselves."

After supper, when the family said verses around the table, Brian quoted Psalm 37:8. Look it up and you'll know why. ♦

*Just remember
that anger costs, and costs
dearly. Some people are never
able to make up what they
lose in a moment
of anger.*

Abib Is Coming!



The New Year is coming, the sacred New Year as God commanded Moses to measure time.

According to the Bible, the first month of the ancient Hebrew New Year began with the new moon of **Abib**, or Nisan (see Ex. 12:2; 13:4), the first new moon following the Spring equinox. The equinox this year occurring on March 20, and the first new moon following on March 30, the Megiddo Church will welcome the beginning of the month **Abib** on Sunday evening, March 30, continuing with morning Prayer service on Monday, March 31. The observance spans two days because Bible time was counted "from evening to evening" (Lev. 23:35).

The observance will be in recognition of its double significance—as the beginning of the sacred New Year and also as the anniversary of the birth of Christ. Members and friends will gather to consecrate the New Year to God and to honor Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother, our Master, our Perfect Pattern, our Judge and our Coming King.

Thirteen days later (Abib 13, this year on Friday evening, April 11), we will commemorate the anniversary of our **Lord's Supper**, when we renew our vow to be faithful in our service to God. The following Monday morning, April 14 (Abib 15) will be Christ's triumphant **Resurrection**.

Fifty days later (June 2, 2014) will be the anniversary of the day of **Pentecost**, when Jesus sent power of the Holy Spirit to His disciples.



THE ALBATROSS: TIRELESS ROVER

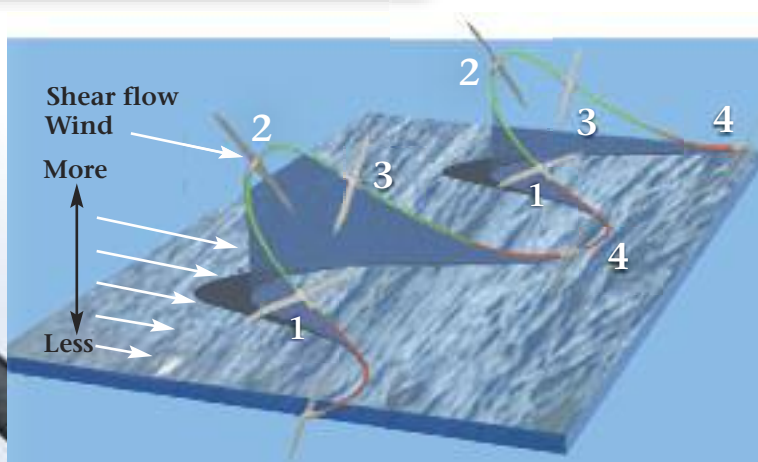


Soaring night and day, the albatross rides the wind currents above the world's oceans, eating and sleeping on the wing, often not returning to land for years at a time. How is it possible? It is the wonderful design of our wonderful Creator!

AIR SPEED MEASUREMENT DEVICE

Do we think our weather stations have perfected the anemometer to measure wind speed and pressure?

The albatrosses had it long before us! These majestic birds have tiny tubes along the sides of their bills which allow them to measure the exact air speed in flight to carry out their soaring maneuvers. Who gave them this device? Who taught them to use these measurements to soar and glide with such efficiency? This ability is a God-given instinct.



DYNAMIC SOARING

Albatrosses are designed with a remarkable ability to take advantage of wind velocity gradients in a type of flying called **dynamic soaring**.

Dynamic soaring is highly energy efficient. In fact, so effortless is this type of flying that the heart rate of the albatross when flying is just slightly above its rate when resting on land.

The technique is similar to that used by a sailor who "tacks" into the wind. Albatrosses use the winds both to climb and to descend. Because of this technique, the bird can soar for hours with scarcely a single flap of its wings!

How does it do it? **Dynamic soaring** is based on the fact that wind speed over waves changes with altitude. Above ocean waves, winds blow in layers, there being less wind near the surface.

Dynamic soaring consists of repeated cycles, with one cycle as illustrated to the above left: 1. the bird climbs (windward flight); 2. the bird curves and changes direction of flight (from windward to leeward); 3. the bird descends (leeward flight); 4. the bird curves again (changes flight direction to windward).

Above a wave, winds blow progressively faster the higher one ascends. As albatrosses rise at an angle from the relatively windless wave trough, they abruptly gain airspeed, giving them a burst of kinetic energy that allows them to climb to heights of 30 to 50 feet above the ocean. Then they bank downwind and swoop down into another wave trough, adding airspeed as they cross the boundary in reverse, and begin the cycle again.



DESIGNED TO FLY

The largest albatrosses have wing spans up to 11 feet from tip to tip, yet weighing only about 20 pounds.

SHOULDER-LOCK



Is it tiring for the albatross to keep its wings extended for hours—even days? Not with its specially designed locking joint. Albatrosses are equipped with a shoulder-lock, a sheet of tendon that locks the wing when fully extended, allowing it to remain extended without any muscle exertion—another clear evidence of awesome design.

DEALING WITH SALT WATER

Albatrosses drink sea water. What do they do with all that salt? God has designed them, and other sea birds that drink salt water, with a special nasal gland, sometimes called a salt gland. This gland makes it possible for them to eliminate excess salt from their blood. In fact, the birds cannot remain healthy on fresh water alone. Albatrosses kept in zoos must be given salt tablets to go with their food. The excess salt drips from the bird's beak. (see photo).



OIL FOR THE BABY CHICK

Albatross parents are very attentive to the needs of their one chick. To feed the young chick until it is able to digest solid food, the parents have been designed with a special gland in their stomachs that excretes a very nourishing "stomach oil." The parent excretes this oil into its stomach, then regurgitates the oil and partially digested food into its throat for the baby chick.



GOING HOME!

Are we proud of our amazing GPS satellite system that can locate us anywhere on the globe? The albatrosses have surpassed us hands down.

To test their extraordinary homing ability, 18 albatrosses from Midway Islands were banded and shipped by air to distant points. Fourteen returned to their nests on Midway! One bird flew from Puget Sound, WA, a distance of 3,200 miles, in only ten days. Another, released in the Philippines, found its way home across 4,120 miles of empty ocean in 32 days.

These tireless rovers, homeward bound, can chart fantastic courses beyond our ability to understand. Yes, albatrosses have an uncanny—God given—homing instinct. What can we say? *Worship the Creator!*

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Reality Trumps Perception

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left no place for perception. The command was plain: *"Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it"* (Deut. 12:32). There was no allowance for misinterpreting, or reinterpreting, or adding any human perceptions. The only right response was to accept the Law of God as total authority, and obey it.

Now think about one more area where our perception differs from and actually falls far short of—reality. This is in our concept of the reward that God is holding in store for every faithful one. Picture in your mind's eye the most beautiful sun rise, or mountain vista, or broad expanse of hill or plain—the reality of the glorified earth will surpass it. Let your mind be caught away with rapturous melodies echoing from one angel choir to another, filling the air with the sounds of immortal voices—the reality of the coming new world will surpass it. Stretch your imagination to feel the glow of happiness and the warmth of genuine love that will thrill the heart of everyone who has been accepted into the royal heavenly family—our fondest perception cannot begin to approach the reality.

Reality trumps perception, because our perception is limited by our experience, our inadequate knowledge, and our earthly nature, but all of these limitations are temporary. The reality is expressed in the ecstatic promise of Scripture, that *"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away"* (Rev. 21:4).

Best of all, is the fact that this reality is no idle speculation. It is real and sure, because, *"He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me, 'Write, for these words are true and faithful'"* (Rev. 21:5). Let the certainty of our bright hope in the promises of God glow in our mind's eye. It is the motivator that will keep us on tip-toe with expectancy until Christ returns and our hope is changed to glorious reality—a reality that will trump our finest, most extravagant perception. For *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him"* (1 Cor 2:9). ♦



Procrastination is the thief of life.

A good indicator of spiritual temperature is our eagerness to serve God by obeying Him.

Procrastination is a choice.

We have complete control over how we let it affect and disrupt our lives.

THE CHOICE YOU MAKE

*There is a choice you have to make
 In everything you do,
 And you must always keep in mind
 That the choice you make makes you.*

The price of procrastination is always too high.

Procrastination is letting low-priority tasks get in the way of high-priority ones.

Procrastination is talking about superficial things when you should be addressing the serious issues of your life.

*I wish I were great, oh, the good I would do!
 I would use all my powers to help the work through.
 Well, how do you know that you would, may I ask?
 Just prove it by how you do each little task.*

By the streets of "by-and-by" one arrives at the house of "never."

Triumph is just "umph" added to "try."

Abraham Lincoln said, "Good things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle."

People who sit around waiting for their ship to come in may discover when it arrives that it is a hardship.

We complain that our days are few, then act as though there would be no end of them.

Reality Trumps Perception

We have all heard that “perception is reality.” The statement is welcome in the current me-centered culture, because it adds value to the individual if one’s perception becomes the basis for meaning, and each has the “right” to determine his own “truth.”

But how seriously should we take this line of reasoning? How many times have I *thought* that I understood something—only to learn later that I didn’t understand it at all? Is my perception to be put on a par with the facts? What about the laws that govern physics, chemistry, and all the sciences? If the only reality is one’s perception, what happens to the building blocks that support the structures of the sciences, education, medicine, and society itself? What is the basis for all knowledge or understanding if there is no ultimate reality (fact)?

May I propose that, generally speaking, perception is not on a par with reality. Why? Because our perceptions are affected by our experience, which may include misinformation, faulty reasoning, or invalid assumptions. Does our faulty perception change reality? Not at all. Think about the generations of people who really believed the earth was flat. Or consider those who thought the earth was at the center of the universe; or those who observed the sun rising and setting each day and concluded that the sun makes a daily circuit around the earth. Did their faulty perception change reality? In every case, reality trumps perception.

Consider a more current example: those who perceive the universe and everything in it as originating from natural causes, as Charles Darwin postulated. When they deny the existence of a Creator, and credit an unguided principle they call natural selection with bringing about the countless intricate designs that make plants and animals suited to their singular environments, are they not putting perception above reality? Do their conclusions remove the reality of the marvelous design behind creation and the great, all-wise Designer? Not at all.

What about those who sincerely believe that the evil in the world today is caused by a devil or Satan that was cast out of heaven and landed on earth—a teaching totally foreign to the Bible? Does their perception change reality? Not at all. Here again, reality trumps perception.

If the only reality is one’s perception, then all meaning becomes subjective and the result is chaos. But no, reality overrules perception. However different people may perceive or misunderstand the facts, their perception does nothing to change reality.

Now apply this comparison of perception and reality to

understanding the Bible, the Word of the Almighty Creator. Here the issue becomes critical because we are talking about eternal life and eternal death, and our Maker, the only one who can give life, does not think as we do. What is the illustration the Prophet Isaiah used? He said that God’s thoughts are as high above ours as the heavens are above the earth (Isa. 55:8–9). Doesn’t this comparison suggest that our perceptions of His knowledge fall way short of reality? Here again, reality trumps perception because God’s Word, not our faulty understanding of it, is reality. This is why the Psalmist said, *“I will hear what God the Lord will speak”* (Ps. 85:8), not, I will interpret what God says according to the thoughts already in my mind. Why is the Psalmist so definite? Because what God says, not what we think He said, is what He requires of us.

Jesus addressed the problem of perception directly when His disciples asked Him why He spoke to the people in parables. What was Jesus’ answer? Because *“seeing they do not see and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand”* (Matt. 13:13). Again the problem was their faulty perception. Jesus cited the prophet Isaiah: *“For the hearts of this people have grown dull, their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them”* (Matt 13:15). Their faulty perception of the message did nothing to change it.

Think about the potential for problems that can result from faulty perception. In business, in the sciences, in the most common everyday situations, who wants to rely on a flawed perception, even if it be our own? Reality always trumps perception. Misinformation, faulty reasoning, invalid assumptions accomplish nothing. In no area is this fact more critical than in our religious convictions. I do not want to depend on a formula for salvation that is not securely founded on the Bible, the Word of God—because I have no power to save myself. If I go through life thinking I have an immortal soul (a concept that came from Plato), my wrong perception does nothing to change the reality that there is absolutely no consciousness in death (see Ecc. 9:5, 10; Ps. 146: 3–4; Ps. 6:5; Isa. 38:18–19). I have heard ministers say that God loves everybody unconditionally, and has special plans for each of our lives. Should I believe it, when I read in the Bible that Jesus loves those who *“keep His commandments”* (John 14:15; 15:14)? Can I trust the popular idea about God’s love, or shall I believe the Bible that tells me *“The soul that sins shall die”*? (Ezek. 18:20). Again, reality trumps perception. The law in ancient Israel

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This I Ask

*Lord, I seek the living way,
Guided by Your Word each day;
Leaving all the world behind,
Greater joys to find.*

*This I ask, to know Your will,
And the strength to then fulfill
All that You would have me do,
Till my course is through.*

*Help me to resist the wrong,
Though the fight be hard and long;
For the trials that are mine
Will my gold refine.*

*Lord, I would not be ashamed
Of Your Truth, though oft defamed.
I would glory in my cross,
Though I suffer loss.*

*This, O Lord, of You I ask,
Courage to complete my task;
Growing stronger, Saviour mine,
In the work Divine:
Till, my sacrifice complete,
Humbly bowing at Your feet,
I will bring my all to Thee,
Yours alone to be.*

***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.***