

# Megiddo Message

JUNE, 2002

The Lord on  
high is mightier  
than the noise of  
many waters. —Psalm 93:4



# It's Not About Words

by RUTH E. SISSON

Someone has said that "you never set somebody right without going wrong yourself."

Is this true? What makes us want to set somebody right? Is it a desire to help and encourage—or dominate? Do we set somebody right because we are so sure our way is right? Listen to what the Bible says: *"All the ways of a man are right in his own eyes"* (Prov. 16:2). Of course my way is right—or it wouldn't be "my way"! But that is where we too easily go wrong ourselves.

Keeping a right attitude is a challenging task. Without even thinking, we see ourselves in a more favorable light than the other person, and very quickly it becomes a negative, self-destructive course. What does our Guidebook say? *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves"* (Phil. 2:3 NIV). Or as Mr. Peterson has paraphrased it in *The Message Bible*, *"Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand."* The apostle Paul said it again in his letter to the Romans: *"Have real warm affection for one another as between brothers, and a willingness to let the other man have the credit"* (Rom. 12:10 Phillips).

Do we really want to help others? Then we need to perform this mini-self-check: Am I strong enough to cut the criticism and faultfinding and instead be kindly constructive? Can I set aside the automatic feeling that my judgment is perfect, and give a brother or sister the same consideration I would expect if they were judging me?

We may not realize how we weaken and cheapen our cause when we belittle others. Yes, by a wrong attitude we can actually create more wrong than we correct.

What is the better way? It's not about words—it is about example; a live demo rather than a volume of text.

The Apostle Paul advised Timothy to keep a close watch both on his life and his teaching (1 Tim. 4:15 Phillips). Here is our Christian duty, clear and concise: the right words, but most of all the right example;

because the most powerful, most persuasive form of teaching is not by words. People need samples, a living image, a real-life model to copy. Were some looking down on Timothy because he was young? By his exemplary conduct he could force them to look up to him.

In many circles are those who are only too delighted to pick one another to pieces. Such attitudes are strictly forbidden the Christian. Paul cautioned, *"If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other"* (Gal. 5:15 NIV). Christians must not bite; on the contrary, they must build love and harmony into their lives.



*Setting others right is not about words; it is about living by our convictions.*

Christian convictions are principles, not "pet peeves." And the best way to advertise these principles is to live by them. If we do what God wants us to do, our opponent may be motivated to do the same. That is the

attitude we expect others to show toward us. Our usefulness, as well as our Christian witness, ends where griping begins. Remember the test which should be put to every criticism: "Is it kind? Is it considerate? Is it necessary?"

The world, the church, and everyone we know can get along without our complaints. What they need desperately is a Christ-like example to follow.

Setting others right is not about words. It is about convictions, and the pattern of life that comes from living by those convictions. Others don't need our criticisms nearly as much as they need us to show that those convictions *work*!

Don't mistake critical smallness for greathearted fidelity to genuine convictions.

*The most persuasive preaching needs no words.* ♦



# When the *SPIRIT* CAME

## THEY WERE WAITING...

Everything during the last few months had been so sudden, so unexpected. Now it was all over, and Jesus had gone to heaven. And His loyal disciples were waiting. Yes, just waiting, in obedience to Jesus' command. Just before He ascended, Jesus had told them to "*stay in the city [Jerusalem] until you have been clothed with power from on high.*" So they were staying. Waiting.

They were waiting in expectancy for — how could they know what? Yes, they were expecting "*power from on high,*" but what would that be like? Little could they imagine how it would come.

Ten uneventful days had passed since Jesus had left them, ten days of waiting. Now the day of Pentecost relieved the monotony, as it brought people to Jerusalem from all parts of the empire. Pentecost was an ancient Jewish festival, recognized widely by the Jewish people. It was still early in the morning, and already the streets were filled with the buzz of the crowds and the general commotion caused by a multitude of people.

But the believers were not among them. They, about one hundred twenty all together, were gathered in that large upper room, waiting. As they waited, they wondered: *how* would the power come? *When* would it come? They had no doubt that He would fulfill His promise, but *when*? They wondered, too, what was happening even now around the Father's throne in heaven. What was Jesus doing?

They could not see, and they could not know, but they could pray. And they *did* pray. We read that they "*all joined together constantly in prayer*" (Acts 1:14). And then they talked—they talked about their Lord and what He had taught them. How they missed His company, He whom they had come to know and appreciate; He who had been their close connection with the Father. We can imagine, too, that they talked about others in former days who had received power from God, men like Elijah, and Elisha, and the prophets—how did God's power come to *them*? On and on they talked, and then they prayed again.

## THE POWER CAME!

Then, "*when the day of Pentecost was fully come,*" when "*they were all with one accord in one place,*" its arrival was startling, shocking. "*Suddenly there came....*"

It was not like anything they had imagined. There was something to see, something to feel, something to hear! It sounded like "*a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind*" that "*filled all the house where they were sitting.*" It looked like "*cloven tongues as of fire,*" and—most mysterious of all—somehow it physically "*sat upon each of them.*" No one present missed the effect: "*everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability*" (Acts 2:1–4).

The onlookers were astounded. We read, "*Utterly amazed, they asked: 'Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us*

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When Jesus  
ascended, He promised to  
send His followers  
"power from on high."



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**I asked God for strength that I might achieve**

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

## MEGIDDO MEANS...

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

## WE BELIEVE...

- ♦ in God, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- ♦ in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- ♦ in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to

heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.

- ♦ in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- ♦ in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- ♦ in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- ♦ in ourselves as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

- ♦ in the promise of God, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

## THE HERALD AND THE KING

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

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

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hears them in his own native language?" (vs. 7–8). The Holy Spirit broke language barriers as nothing else had done in the history of the world.

What was it all about? What did it mean? The Apostle Peter, divinely inspired, took the floor and began to speak. "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say." And in a very calm, straightforward manner he explained what it was all about. This was something that had been foretold; if only they had read the prophets they might have expected it. "What you see this morning was predicted centuries ago by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16 NLT). Here is a fulfillment, he says, right in front of your eyes. And if you think this is spectacular, just realize what is still ahead. Amazing as all this is, it is only a light summer shower, a few sprinkles of rain, compared with the heavy down-pour scheduled for the last days!

"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord" (Acts 2:17–20 NIV).

We can scarcely begin to imagine what that Pentecost was like—and what will the Greater Pentecost be, when the power of God is poured out on *all who live*!

## THE MEANING OF PENTECOST

In addition to the experience of power, Pentecost brought a gigantic confirmation of the disciples' faith. If there was any faltering, any hesitating, any skepticism after the wonders of the Resurrection and the Ascension, Pentecost dispelled them.

The event was sudden and in a sense unexpected, but not because

Jesus had withheld information about it. Actually, He had spoken on several occasions of the power He would be sending. "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified" (John 7:38–39 NIV).

Just before His ascension Jesus had told them to wait in Jerusalem, for, said He, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" (Acts 1:8 NIV).

On the night before His crucifixion, in His last Passover sermon, Jesus spoke of the power He would be sending, comparing it with what He possessed. These are His words: "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12 NIV).


Again in that sermon, He told about this special provision for their support, calling it a Comforter, or Helper. He would be going away, He explained, but He would not leave them alone. This "Comforter" would come, "the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I have said to you" (John 14:26). The Apostles heard, but little did they realize what the fulfillment of that prophecy would be—and right within themselves.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS THE FIRST COMFORTER

What was the purpose of this Comforter, this power? Why was it sent?


First of all, in the words of Jesus to His Apostles, He gave this power to "teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance that I have said to you" (John 14:26), so that an accurate documentary could be written of Jesus' ministry and teaching.

Second, He sent it to confirm the spoken words of His representatives, to add force and power to their message in an unbelieving world (Mark 16:20). In the words of Paul, it was "to



Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to His disciples to give heavenly authority to their teaching.





**Joel the Prophet**  
wrote of two  
outpourings of power  
as a “former rain”  
and a “latter rain.”

confirm the promises made unto the fathers” (Rom. 15:8). Says Paul, speaking of his Gentile converts, “I have won them over by the miracles done through me as signs from God—all by the power of God’s Spirit” (Rom. 15:19 NLT).

### **A TEMPORARY GIFT OF POWER**

This outpouring of power, the “sprinkling” or “former rain” of Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:23), was for a limited time and for a specific purpose. Like any period of “rain,” it was not intended to be perpetual. When its purpose was accomplished, it ceased.

In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul discusses the various gifts which were part of this special power. Different persons had different gifts. To one was given power to heal, to another, the ability to teach; to another, the ability to speak in tongues; to another, the ability to interpret, and so on. But all were for a limited time only. None of the prophecies of this outpouring ever said that these gifts were to be eternal, perpetual, or forever.

And in due time, when the purpose had been accomplished, it ceased, just as the Apostle prophesied: “When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (1 Cor. 13:10). As translated in several of the newer versions, this text suggests a time when the Bible would be complete, supplying Divine knowledge in such a sufficient measure that knowledge and power by the Holy Spirit would no longer be needed. It was to be “when the time of fulfillment comes” (Knox Bible); “when the complete comes” (Phillips), “when perfection comes” (Williams). The same word is used to describe the “good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” in Romans 12:2.<sup>1</sup>

Just as surely as the power came, at the end of the age it was withdrawn.

What was the purpose of this Comforter, the Holy Spirit? It was a marvelous gift, but not a gift essential to salvation; nor did it directly aid its

possessors in attaining salvation. Nothing is said to indicate that it purified the heart or made an old creature into new. The disciples who had it still had all the work to accomplish which we must do, to bring themselves to the mental and moral likeness of Christ.

Paul, who had this power, testified personally to this fact: “My own behavior baffles me,” he wrote. “For I find myself not doing what I really want to do but doing what I really loathe....I often find that I have the will to do good, but not the power....My conscious mind wholeheartedly endorses the Law, yet I observe an entirely different principle at work in my nature. This is in continual conflict with my conscious attitude” (Rom. 7:18–23 Phillips). He also labored diligently, lest, as he wrote, “when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27). He had no idea of depending on the Holy Spirit for the credits he needed to obtain salvation.

Nevertheless, those who had the Holy Spirit had advantages, tremendous advantages. We might say that the power gave them a direct link with God, and wasn’t this a boost to faith and courage such as we have never known? How could anyone possessing such power ever lose faith!

The Holy Spirit gave its possessors a special point of contact with God, special power from God, special knowledge from Him, and special insights into the wonders of His plan. As Paul said, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But,” he continues, “God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:9).

Wouldn’t we like to know more of what the Spirit revealed to Paul, what special insights into the future he enjoyed? Paul even indicated that he had been given a special measure of gifts, which he called “surpassingly great revelations” (2 Cor. 12:7 NIV).

And what about John on the Isle of Patmos, and all that he saw and heard? And think of the vision given to Stephen in those last conscious

<sup>1</sup> According to the Lexicon, the Greek word translated “perfect” (*teleios*) may be used either to indicate a point of completion in time or an achievement in quality.



moments as he saw the heavens opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Wasn't that a magnificent privilege?

Think, too, of the earlier prophets who had received knowledge from God long before the bestowing of the Holy Spirit. Think of the Prophets and all that was revealed to them by God, knowledge reaching far into the future. Think of Daniel in Babylon seeing the kingdoms of men all crashing in defeat, and one little stone about the size of a man's hand growing and growing until it filled the whole earth.

The dispensing of the Holy Spirit had significance, too, from another aspect. It was God's *"deposit in advance,"* we might say, on His prom-

*what is to come"* (2 Cor. 1:21–22 NIV). He said it yet again in the same Epistle (5:5): *"Now it is God who...has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."*

Do we wonder that apostasy was a sin unpardonable for those who had shared in this privilege (Heb. 6:2–6), who had felt this power from God in their own being, who had handled the word of life at such close range, and even been given privileged glimpses into the wonders of eternity?

A foretaste and deposit in advance for them, a confirmation for us—yes, the benefits of the Holy Spirit were very real. And just as surely as the heavenly power descended at Pentecost, just so surely will God bestow upon each faithful one the blessings of immortality.

## *The Holy Spirit was God's deposit in advance, a visible guarantee of future blessings.*

ises; a written guarantee of future blessings. This fact was vivid in the mind of the Apostle Paul. He said, *"The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us everything he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people"* (Eph. 1:13–14 NLT). The Holy Spirit was God's open warranty on His word, proof positive that He would do as He had promised. Paul wrote it again in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians: *"Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing*

### **THE SECOND COMFORTER, THE WRITTEN WORD (THE BIBLE)**

The Holy Spirit benefited us by making possible the second *"Comforter,"* the written Word of God, the Bible.

When Jesus on the night before His crucifixion spoke of the first *"Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit,"* He spoke also of *"another Comforter"* which is *"the Spirit of truth."* We read of it in John 14:16–17 (NIV), *"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor [Comforter] to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth."* This Comforter would give support, guidance, and strength, and *it was promised to "abide forever"*—nothing like this was said of the first Comforter. But the first Comforter was necessary to make possible the second, so that the New Testament writers could record what they had seen and heard. What they wrote is part of the second Comforter, which we today have as the Bible, the written Word of God.

Do we realize the value of the treasure we hold, this treasure from God? A book which reveals what we need to know of God's plan and how we may become a part of that plan—what more wonderful Comforter could God have given to the human family! ♦





## Jesus Christ's First Advent

# In the TIME



When Jesus came the first time, it was not strange that those acquainted with the Divine plan felt that the “point of fulfillment” had been reached. At long last the words of the ancient prophets were being fulfilled. Jesus could read the Scriptures and point to passage after passage that spoke of Him.<sup>1</sup> And so the Apostles spoke and wrote as though they were in the time foretold, the “last days.”<sup>2</sup> Truly the long-looked-for Messiah had come and the establishing of the Kingdom was *next* in order of Divine events.

Next, but not immediately. Some two millenniums had to come between, two millenniums during which the Gospel would be preached

to all parts of the known world;<sup>3</sup> then a great power of darkness would arise, totally silencing true religion.<sup>4</sup> Then slowly the darkness would begin to break until finally the light would shine again.<sup>5</sup> And then, at last, would come the final fulfillment of *all* that the prophets had spoken, the Second Advent,<sup>6</sup> the Great Day of the Lord.

We find ourselves today at a most significant point in the history of the world. We are living literally *in the time between*, between two comings—*after* the first period of fulfillment and *just before* the second.

Though most of those who heard or read the prophecies concerning the Messiah were not aware, the ancient prophets had forecast *two* comings of Christ, a first and a second. Sometimes they compassed both prophecies in a single statement, for example the prophecy of Isaiah: “*Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder...*” (Isa. 9:6). “*Unto us a child is born*”—here is a prophecy of Christ’s first coming, when He would be born of the virgin Mary, of the seed of

David. “*And the government shall be upon his shoulder*”—here is the Prophet looking further into the future when Christ should come a second time, as earth’s conqueror and ruler, the King of the whole earth.

Jesus came just as foretold, born in obscurity, in the town of Bethlehem. He ministered among men, as was prophesied, died, and was resurrected and taken to heaven, all as prophesied.

But those fulfillments were only *part* of the prophecies, for just as surely as He came the first time *He will come again*. Just as He went away He will return. The angels promised: “*This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven*” (Acts 1:11 NIV).

Some year will mark the beginning of the most important year ever, the year which will bring the end of all things as we know them and the opening to all things to come. Some year will be the year in which Jesus will return. It may be the year we are now in. Never before has there been so much evidence pointing to the end of the age. Never before has there been more to support our confidence that we are nearing the climax of all climaxes, the Second Advent of the Messiah. As one believer has said, “Christians never had more reason to believe that the coming of Christ would occur any day than they have in the present *prophetic crises of the world*.”

One of these days something dramatically new will occur. The events forecast for the end time all fulfilled, the heavens will open and down the parted sky will come the King with all His retinue of shining angels,<sup>7</sup> myriads of them!

Then will follow the judgment of

<sup>1</sup> Luke 24:27

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 1:1; 1 John 2:18

<sup>3</sup> Col. 1:23; Mark 16:19–20; Rom. 10:17–18

<sup>4</sup> Dan. 7:25; 8:12

<sup>5</sup> Daniel 12:5–6; Joel 2:21–22

<sup>6</sup> Heb. 9:28; Matt. 24:30; Acts 1:11

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 16:27; Mark 8:38; Rev. 1:7.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Pet. 5:4; 2 Tim. 4:1; Matt. 25:31

<sup>9</sup> Rev. 19:16; 17:14

<sup>10</sup> Zech. 14:9



# BETWEEN

## Jesus Christ's Second Advent

His servants<sup>8</sup> and the rewarding of the saints<sup>8</sup>, an event which Daniel fore-saw and described in these vivid and symbolic terms: *"I beheld until seats were placed, and the Ancient of days did sit [in judgment]. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him"* (Dan. 7:10).

Christ will be crowned King,<sup>9</sup> and His new and wholly righteous government will demand allegiance worldwide.<sup>10</sup> This will arouse the furor of the nations, as they *"gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. 'Let us break their chains,' they say, 'and throw off their fetters'"* (Ps. 2:2-3 NIV). All nations will participate, to resist the new power (Zech. 14:1-3). The result: the battle of Armageddon,<sup>11</sup> in which the forces of evil will fight for the last time, to their eternal destruction.

With Christ and the saints victorious, the new government will be in full sway, initiating worldwide programs of rehabilitation, re-education, restoration, and reconstruction. It will be the glorious Millennium,<sup>12</sup> a thousand years of peace, progress and prosperity<sup>13</sup> such as this world has never before known. Then will follow the final cleansing of the earth from evil,<sup>14</sup> and the dawn of Eternity.<sup>15</sup>

All this is forecast in the Word of God; all this is in store for planet Earth! It is enough to overwhelm the human mind. And it is no vain dream—it is all real, it is all in the plan of God, and it *shall be!*

These Divine forecasts will surely happen; the God of heaven has decreed them. And right here in our world! The ground on which we stand will one day be under the jurisdiction of that new Kingdom. So will the land that is under the dominion of every

other government on earth today. *"All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God"* (Isa. 52:10). All people everywhere shall bow before the new King, *"all nations shall serve him"* (Ps. 72:11). His dominion shall extend *"from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth"* (Ps. 72:8).

This is the blessed hope, the hope of the world through Christ. Is it our hope? Are we living as though we believe it? Are we living every hour of

the time between in lively anticipation of these great events?

When Christ comes, will we be ready to welcome Him? God grant that we may be so gripped by this hope that it will possess us, strengthen us, and stimulate us to live at our very best—always. ♦

<sup>11</sup> Rev. 16:16

<sup>12</sup> Rev. 20:4

<sup>13</sup> Isa. 32:17-18

<sup>14</sup> Rev. 20:14-15

<sup>15</sup> Matt. 6:10

*Never before has there been so much evidence that we are nearing the climax of all climaxes, the Second Advent of the Messiah.*



# Dialogue

***In reading your magazine (the Megiddo Message) on a monthly basis, I find that baptism is never mentioned as a commandment of Jesus for entrance into the Kingdom. Please advise as I find this rather peculiar. Thanks in advance."***

**Y**ou are correct, we do not mention it often, although it is a good question. Is baptism a Scriptural ordinance? Definitely.

There is no mention of water baptism being commanded as a rite to be observed in the Old Testament. The first mention of it is with the arrival of John the forerunner of Jesus. Jesus was baptized, and He commanded His Apostles to baptize. However, a study of the subject indicates that it was part of a special arrangement for a special time when the disciples were also given the Holy Spirit power and were able to perform miracles. In fact, baptism was generally associated with receiving the Holy Spirit (see Acts 8:12-17; 2:38-41; 10:45-48; 19:3-6). When Jesus commissioned His Apostles to go out and teach, He said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them..." etc. (Matt. 28:19). It is recorded also at the close of the Gospel of Mark: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." (Mark 16:15-16). A few verses later it is stated that this commission was fulfilled.

*"They went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following:" (Mark 16:20).*

Since the power to perform miracles was given only for a time, we believe that the requirement to baptize ended with the withdrawing of that power, at the end of that age. For this reason we do not believe the Bible teaches that literal baptism is necessary for salvation today.

***"You are correct about the fact that water baptism wasn't mentioned in the Old Testament. Not until Jesus taught the new covenant of hearing, believing, confessing, and obeying was it necessary for the Gentiles to even listen to Him or the disciples."***

If the Gentiles were not part of the promises made to Abraham in Genesis 12:7, why does the last statement of the promise in Genesis 12:3 read: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed"? Doesn't it seem that the blessing on Abraham was to affect people outside Abraham's family as well as inside it? Surely all families on the earth are not descended from Abraham!

In the last book of the Old Testament (Malachi), the prophet stated that God's goodness would be recognized "beyond the borders of Israel" (Mal. 1:5 NIV).

Actually, God never denied His message or His blessings to anyone who would listen, whatever their nationality happened to be. Ruth was a Moabitess, and even came into the lineage of Jesus. Elijah was sent to help a foreigner in the city of Zarephath during the famine (1 Kings

17:8-16). In the New Testament the authors took great care to state that "God is no respecter of persons" (nationality or blood) but only of character (Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; Jas. 2:1; 1 Pet. 1:17). In every age and among every people, the one who wanted to receive God's eternal blessings had to listen to and obey God, even during Old Testament times (see Ex. 19:5-6; Jer. 7:23).

***"Jesus showed how important baptism was by having John baptize Him. John records Jesus' statement and commandment to Nicodemus in John 3:1-7. John 3, v. 5, reflects that if a man is not born again of water he will not enter the Kingdom."***

It seems that you equate being "born of water" to being "baptized of water." I am not sure this can be upheld by the definitions of the words as used in Scripture. The word "baptize" is translated from the Greek *baptidzo*, and means a burying, an immersing. The word translated "born" in John 3 is *gennaō*, and means "to bear, beget, bring forth, conceive, be delivered of," as in a human birth. This was Nicodemus' understanding of it, as shown by the question he asked Jesus (John 3:4).

Notice also that Jesus says one must be "born of water" and "of the Spirit" before he can enter the Kingdom. Two different births are indicated. The first birth, being "born of water," is the acquiring of the knowledge of Christ, which Jesus Himself compared to "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). The second birth (born of the Spirit) indicates a physical change, according to Jesus: "The wind bloweth where it lis-



# WHAT ABOUT BAPTISM?

by GERALD R. PAYNE

teth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Notice the wording: "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Those who inherit the Kingdom, who are "born of the Spirit," receive a physical change so that they are able to come and go like the wind!—superhuman ability.

***"If what you say is true that this act was only for a short period of time, then the Kingdom of God has already been established and we have all lost out."***

We can still be "born of the water" and "of the Spirit"—we have not lost out on the Kingdom. When Jesus spoke of these births, we do not believe He was talking about being baptized physically in water. As already explained, He was speaking of immersing ourselves in the words of life (being born of water) and later being changed physically (being born of the Spirit). And the Kingdom has not yet come. When the Kingdom is established, it will be worldwide, and it will last forever; it will not end. The prophet Daniel included both facts in his description of this Kingdom which "the God of heaven" will set up, saying that it will supersede all former kingdoms and "it shall never be destroyed...it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44; see also Daniel 7:27).

Jesus will have "dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8). "The Lord shall be king over all the earth" (Zech. 14:9). And Jesus' own words, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10)—all tell us that when the Kingdom comes we will see and know it.

***"One last note to look at is in Paul's letter to the Galatians. In Gal. 3:26–29 Paul also speaks of baptism and being heirs according to the promise."***

We believe that the baptism which is binding on us today is not a physical rite but a level of spiritual commitment, a total immersing of ourselves in Christ's teaching, which means learning, believing, and practicing it. Gal. 3:26–29 confirms this. The text reads: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Wouldn't this "baptizing" have to be more than a physical immersing in water? Notice the result of it: those who have been baptized "have put on Christ."

There is no evidence in Scripture that the physical act of immersion changed one's behavior. The baptism that accomplishes this change is the one Paul spoke of in Romans 6, in which we are "buried with him by bap-

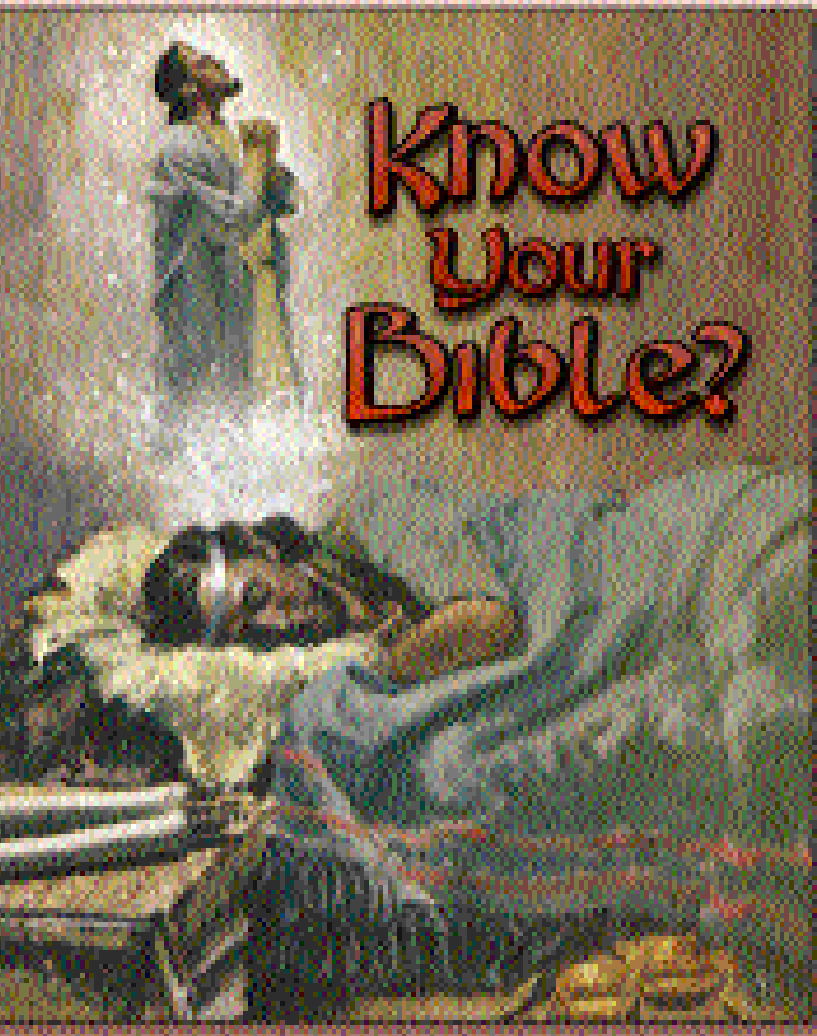
tism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). The result of this spiritual baptizing "into death," this immersing in Christ that is so complete that it is a "death," results in a drastic change of behavior, so drastic that it is called "walking in newness of life." The result of this baptism is the making of an upright character which God will accept and bless in His Kingdom.

***"Again I say if your statement is correct about baptism being for only a period of time then what hope have we?"***

We have hope of life eternal if we practice the spiritual baptism Christ preached, if we immerse ourselves in the teachings of Christ, which results in total commitment, a dying to one's former life and living the new life in Christ. This spiritual baptism is still required. ♦

*The first birth, being "born of water," is the acquiring of the knowledge of Christ, which Jesus compared to "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14)*





# Know Your Bible?

## CONFESSIONS

1. Who, after beating his mule, confessed to an angel that he had sinned?
2. Who, after stealing battle spoils, confessed to his theft and was stoned to death?
3. Which captive, wearing sackcloth and ashes, confessed his sins and the sins of Israel to God?
4. Who wept, as he lay on the ground in front of the temple making confession, and was surrounded by a great crowd of men, women and children?
5. Who was instructed to lay both hands on the head of a live goat and confess the sins of the Israelites?
6. Who was confronted by priests and Levites when he confessed, "I am not the Christ"?
7. Who had people being bitten by poisonous snakes come to him, to confess their sins and ask him to pray for the removal of the snakes?
8. Which king, after confessing to a prophet, took hold of him and tore his robe?
9. As King David was crossing the river Jordan, who confessed his regret for throwing stones at him?
10. After a hailstorm, who confessed to Moses and Aaron that he and his people were wicked?

## Who?

1. Who were Hophni and Phinehas?
2. Who was the father of Methuselah?
3. Who was Vashti?
4. Who was Othniel?
5. Who was Reuel?
6. Who was Zipporah?
7. Who was Sisera?
8. Who was Aaron?
9. Who was Emperor of Rome when Christ was born?
10. Who said, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down"?

## Do You Know...

1. What tribe was responsible for porting the tabernacle on the marches through the wilderness?
2. What was a sign that let Noah know the flood had receded?
3. What did the Israelites mean by "unclean" beasts and birds?
4. What determined how long the Israelites in their wanderings should camp in one place?
5. What was the most notable thing that the disciple Andrew did?
6. What was Christ's first miracle, and where was it performed?
7. What did Solomon choose when the Lord, in a dream, offered him whatever he might desire?
8. What did the Israelites use to commemorate the crossing of the Jordan?

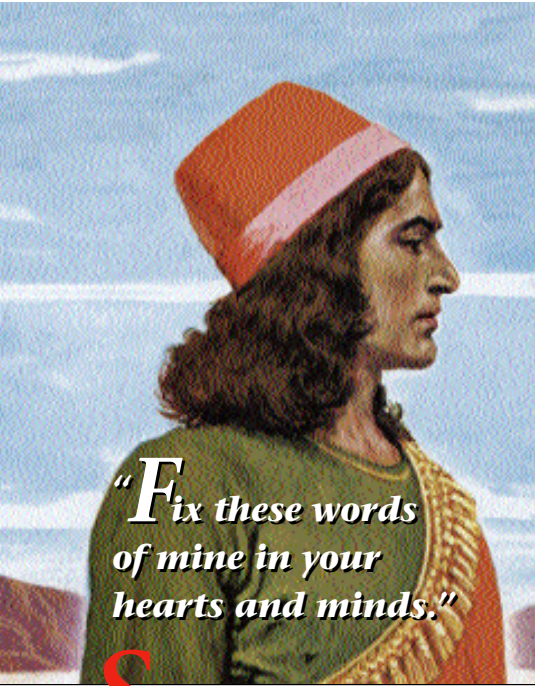
## COMPLETE THE QUOTATION:

1. "O house of Jacob, come and let us walk \_\_\_\_\_"
2. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; \_\_\_\_\_"
3. "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart \_\_\_\_\_"
4. "The fear of the Lord is \_\_\_\_\_"
5. "The heavens declare \_\_\_\_\_; and the firmament shows \_\_\_\_\_"
6. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, \_\_\_\_\_"
7. "The foolishness of God is \_\_\_\_\_ and the weakness of God is \_\_\_\_\_"
8. "A double minded man is \_\_\_\_\_"
9. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation that \_\_\_\_\_"
10. "How shall we escape, if we neglect \_\_\_\_\_"

ANSWERS ON PAGE 16



# Be An OBADIAH



***“Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds.”***

**S**urely Ahab thought himself the most informed man in the kingdom of Israel in his day. He knew the suffering of the people and the plight of the nation's economy. He knew what other nations must be thinking of his nation, the land God was supposed to take care of. He even *thought* he knew the *cause* of the disaster.

But he didn't know everything. He didn't know about the good work being done by a good man *right in his own household—directly in opposition* to the wicked work of his wicked wife Jezebel.

At this time in the kingdom of Israel were some very special associations known as “schools of the prophets.” Possibly these associations originated as an experienced prophet attracted young admirers who were eager to acquire his wisdom and emulate his virtue. Such disciples often lived with their families in colonies around the master. The Prophet Samuel may have been the first to have such a school—the earliest Biblical reference to this type of colony is to one near Ramah, where Samuel lived (1 Samuel, chapters 10 and 19).

Because these groups were called “schools of the prophets” does not mean that all members had God-given power to foretell the future. To “prophecy” in the Hebrew language means “to speak (or sing) by inspiration,” both “in prediction” and in “simple discourse.” In this latter sense, a teacher of sacred law was a prophet.

These schools were centers of spiritual life, keeping faith alive even in bad times. According to history, the members would arouse each other with

music and singing. Not only did they cultivate sacred music, but they preserved the sacred history of God's people, handing it down to their children, both orally and in writing. Dedicated to God, they took the law seriously when it said, *“Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up”* (Deut. 11:18–19 NIV). These men did more than memorize the law—they practiced it. Daily they sought God in prayer, and their steady reviewing of His great deeds in the past kept them ever ready for new avenues of Divine service. In such groups the religion of Jehovah prevailed.

When disaster struck the land, *all* the inhabitants were affected—faithful servants of God as well as idol worshipers. Jezebel, placing the blame for the disaster on the God of heaven, determined to do away with all who had anything to do with Him, especially the schools of the prophets. What would they do?

God provided a remarkable way of preserving them—right out of Ahab's household!

Naturally enough, we expect the palace of Ahab and Jezebel to have been the center of corruption and idolatry in Israel. But it was not *all* bad. Right in the midst of it was a good man named Obadiah. A strange place for a man of God, we are not told how the appointment came about or even his exact duties; but the record tells us that Obadiah was the “governor” of Ahab's palace, and also that he “feared the Lord greatly.”

As governor of the palace, Obadiah probably held one of the highest positions Ahab had to give. Maybe the king despised his piety but valued his faithful counsel

and sterling character. We are not told.

But Obadiah's presence there proves one fact: that one can live above one's circumstances; that one can maintain faith and virtue in the midst of evil. It may be difficult, but it is possible; and it is a test which every loyal servant of God must be prepared to face. For God does not promise a sheltered, comfortable, secure life. He does not guarantee a smooth and easy-going atmosphere abounding with faith and love. Some are called to live or work with those who are hostile and antagonistic. Some may have to dwell in the house of Ahab. But even there they can “*fear the Lord greatly*”; they can be an Obadiah.

The Lord made use of Obadiah's position in a very special way. Being the governor of Ahab's house, Obadiah had ways and means which ordinary men in Israel did not have, and he used his position to do a great service to God's people. The Bible tells us that he saved the lives of one hundred prophets by hiding them in caves in groups of 50, and providing them with food and water.

This may have been dangerous business; Obadiah may have risked his own life and his position to do it. But he was a man of great character, and God protected him.

Is there a need near you? Are you afraid to step out in some field of service? Do not fear. Be an Obadiah right where you are. The cause of God prevailed in Ahab's day, and it will today, long after the Ahabs of this world are forgotten. ♦







# SEEING LIFE AS JESUS SEES IT

by RUSSELL HAMBY

**I**n studying the text of John 9:35–41 and Matthew 13:10–17, my thoughts turn to the question: How can I really see life while I am living it?

The subject interested me so much that I had to further explore the Scriptures, seeking a Christian answer.

What does it take to make us see life *while we are living it*? Why are we so much like the confident Pharisees to whom Jesus said, *"If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."* (John 9:41)?

One of the purposes of Jesus' coming was to teach us to see. Christ's was not an esoteric teaching understood only by those who know the secret and denied to everyone else. Jesus' view of life enables us to look at everyday life—birth, marriage, work, suffering, death—with new depth and appreciation.

## Look honestly at life—and death

How can we experience life as Jesus did? What does it take to make us really see?

One clue penetrates the Gospels: To see life as it really is we have to look honestly at death. Death is that reality which influences life's priorities because it puts a limit on life. In a basic sense, death reveals how to live a worthwhile life. When we admit that we do not have forever, we see the present moment more clearly. We see little things as little and big things as big. By seeing life in the light of death, we understand better.

Most of us fail to look realistically at life. In our attempt to escape the reality of death, we tell ourselves that we have forever, and that our experiences today will be our experiences tomorrow. Some live as though they had unlimited time and resources, viewing nothing with intensity.

Jesus, conscious of His impending

death and that His own time was limited, said, *"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work"* (John 9:4). In light of the limits of life He looked carefully and piercingly at everything and everyone.

## Sin has blinding power

Why don't we see what Jesus saw? Because, to use Jesus' term, we are *"blind."* We think we see, but in reality we do not. *We will see as Jesus saw only when we take seriously the blinding power of our own self-centeredness.*

In all of our vision there is a selection process. We have selective sight. We see certain things, and are blind to others. Perhaps most blinding is to put myself at the center of my life and make everything else revolve around my preconceived ideas and prejudices. The Pharisees in New Testament days were at this point. Jesus said to them, You are blind to things that are happening around you, because you think you already understand. *You miss what I am saying, because you think you have already heard it all.* You are unaware of what God is doing among you, because you have a mind set about the way you think God has to work. Seeing, you do not see; hearing, you do not hear; and even in the presence of a mighty revelation, you do not understand it.

What does such a harsh evaluation tell us? It tells us that we will never see life as Jesus saw it until we recognize our inability to see or perceive on our own. That is why there are so many different religious faiths in the world. Failing to test for truth, they settle for a religion of convenience or ease, a religion of their own making and not of God's.

Why can't these millions of misled, misinformed people see where they are going wrong? They do not see because they assume they know and are content. Jesus was constantly inviting people to come and see. He encouraged

people to break out of their self-centered way of seeing things, but they would not.

Today His message still invites us to come and see if there is not some new thing that can come out of Nazareth; some new discovery that can be found in the common ventures of life when it is viewed from His perspective.

We will not see until we realize that we have to look through the eyes of others; until we realize, in the words of the ancient prophet, that *"It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps"* (Jer. 10:23). One of the great gifts of humanity is being able to benefit from the experiences of others, that the race does not have to start fresh with the birth of every new baby. We are the recipients of that great body of insight, knowledge, and culture that has been handed down to us. We do not have to begin by ourselves. The critical question is, Through whose eyes will we look? Whose eyes do we choose to make our own? Whose experience will we share?

This is the reason behind revelation. God is making known His knowledge, His wisdom, His laws, His ways of working with His human family so that any who will, may listen and learn. Jesus says to us, in effect, *"Look at God, look at life, look at who I am and what I am doing, and then you will be able to understand your own experience."*

Christian discipleship involves seeing life through the eyes of Jesus. It means seeing nature as the arena of God's creative acts; seeing people as beings who have the potential to become children of God; and over all seeing God working to bring about His eternal good, even in the most tragic moments of life.

Many persons try to escape life because they do not like the lives they are living. Some are disturbed by what they have made of life; others are resentful because of what life has brought to them. Sadly, they make a

*continued on page 16*



# WHEN GOD USED AN ATHEIST

by EDWARD SHAYLER

*How firm a foundation, ye Saints of the Lord,  
Is laid to your Faith in His excellent word!  
What more can He say than to you He has said  
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled!*

*In every condition, in sickness and health,  
In poverty's vale or abounding in wealth,  
At home and abroad, on the land, on the sea,  
As your days may demand, shall your strength ever be.*

The British Colonies were governed by the appointments of the British Government, who with a suitable staff oversaw the administration of laws and policy. The size of the administration depended on the movement of people and trade. British military forces and police were also part of the process. The native population was subordinate to the administration. This method was quite successful, although at times it allowed for some strange behavior.

A British barrister who was a graduate of Oxford University was assigned to a post in Hong Kong. Among the privileges of the position was membership in the Military Defense Corps. This Corps was unique in its administration of command. In this Corps, the higher ranking staff members, by refusing any or all promotions and remaining privates, encouraged their office staff to become commissioned and non-commissioned officers. Military training was done on a scheduled basis at a defense station in the territories. When war came, these "officers" proved to be good soldiers by never complaining, but being slow and awkward, they were easily taken as Prisoners of War when Britain surrendered the Colony.

As Prisoners of War, they, like us, were separated from their officers and were required to join us in Work Parties (another name for hard labor). At this time I became acquainted with this barrister. He had never done any manual labor in his life, and to me it was pitiful to watch him shovel and lift. He was running the gauntlet with his fellow-captives, and they were not treating him too kindly. I helped him when I could. As we became friends, he explained to me the importance of using proper English. All law and courtrooms demanded it, and by its use a person could have many doors opened for him. He told me that he would like to practice on me. I tried to distance myself from him; my world did not require fine language.

He persisted. But conversation needs a background of similar viewpoints, and as he expounded the virtues of atheism, this caused a discord between us as my belief was Christianity (lightly practiced). Yet for some reason that I cannot understand, one of my meager possessions in the prison camp was a King James Version of the Bible. I could never understand this logic: Why would a soldier without an extra pair of socks, pack around a heavy book that he had never read? The Bible for me was a formidable challenge mostly because it did not make sense. Still, I respected it.

*Fear not, I am with you; O be not dismayed!  
I, I am your God, and will still give you aid;  
I'll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand  
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent Hand.*

I believe that God intervenes sometimes without our permission; this could have been the case here. An epidemic of diphtheria broke out and many died with it. I became a victim, but a kind doctor secured and administered some serum, which saved my life. When I was allowed out of isolation, my friend the barrister was wait-

*continued on page 16*





ing for me with the balance of my possessions, including the Bible, and he almost immediately suggested that he should come and read it to me for an hour every day. He persisted that it would be of great help to him when the war ended and he would once again perform in a courtroom; the daily reading would help him keep his orientation sharp.

I agreed, and the readings began. What a wonderful and pleasant surprise to me. He was a superb reader. His voice had conviction, as he responded perfectly to every comma, colon and semicolon. I found it a great pleasure to listen to him read. This reading time did not go unnoticed. Many of the other prisoners began to attend, and before long the group became too large for the room. But there being no better location, it continued in the same room.

About this time I became paralyzed with diphtheria poisoning, and was bedridden. My barrister friend came often to help me with personal needs. As I was not in isolation, the daily reading continued; it was beginning to be a close-knit group.

Suddenly my barrister friend fell to the diphtheria plague, was taken to the isolation compound and died about five days later. We could not attend a funeral service because there was none, but this man left a void. He also left a legacy, and here I can only speak about my own. We tried to continue with the daily reading, but it was never the same. Discussions and disputes began, quite naturally because some wanted to protect their own religion and what they had been taught. Gradually the group dispersed and was no more. But my barrister friend had left me with a legacy he was unaware of: a better understanding of the Testaments, and a foundation for a knowledge of their true meaning.

Because of this participation, I have ever since cherished the desire to prove all things by reading God's Word in the Scriptures, and this is what has brought me to the place I am today. YES!!!!

I did read all of that Bible, and I had others read it with me. The pages got thick and wrinkled because of the treatment that it was subjected to. Its resting place was at the Yokohama Docks, where the American Army brought me after liberation, where it had to be discarded because of vermin and disease.

How many times this Book was the only comforter I had. The Book by itself was only excess baggage until I began to eat the words, and then it provided a haven when nothing else around me made sense. Even after I returned home I could not forget what I had learned. The words of that Book haunted me, until I finally surrendered a very stiff neck.

Today I am blessed with a life that few on this earth will ever know—because an atheist barrister provided a strong foundation for me to build on. Who but God could have arranged that!

*When through fiery trials your pathway shall lie  
My word, all-sufficient, shall be your supply:  
The flame shall not hurt you; I only design  
Your dross to consume, and your gold to refine.*

*The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,  
I will not, I cannot desert to his foes;  
That soul, though all earth should endeavor to shake,  
I'll never, no never, no never forsake! ♦*

#### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 12

##### CONFESSIONS

1. Balaam (Num. 22:27–34)
2. Achan (Josh. 7:19–26)
3. Daniel (Dan. 9:1–5)
4. Ezra (Ezra 10:1)
5. Aaron (Lev. 16:21)
6. John the Baptist (John 1:19–20)
7. Moses (Num. 21:6–7)
8. Saul (1 Sam. 15:24–27)
9. Shimei (2 Sam. 16:5–6; 19:18–20)
10. Pharaoh (Ex. 9:25–27)

##### WHO?

1. Evil sons of Eli (1 Sam. 1:3; 2:12)
2. Enoch (Gen. 5:21)
3. Queen of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) (Esther 1:9)
4. He was Caleb's younger brother. He delivered the Israelites from the Mesopotamians (Judges 3:8–10)
5. The father-in-law of Moses (Exodus 2:18–21), also called Jethro (Ex. 3:1)
6. The wife of Moses (Ex. 2:21)
7. A mighty general of the Canaanites, who held the Israelites in subjection for twenty years (Judges 4:2–3)
8. Brother of Moses (Ex. 4:14)
9. Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1–7)
10. Nehemiah (Neh. 6:3)

##### DO YOU KNOW...

1. the Levites (Num. 2:17)
2. the dove bearing an olive leaf (Gen. 8:11)
3. those forbidden to be eaten or their dead carcasses touched (Lev. 11)
4. they remained in one place as long as the pillar of cloud or of fire was on the tabernacle (Num. 9:22–23)
5. bringing his brother, Simon Peter, to Jesus (John 1:40–41)
6. the turning of water into wine, at Cana of Galilee; (John 2:1–11)
7. an understanding heart (wisdom) (1 Kings 3:5–9)
8. twelve stones from the bed of the river, set up at Gilgal (Josh. 4:20–24)

##### COMPLETE THE QUOTATION

1. "in the light of the Lord" (Isa. 2:5)
2. "learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isa. 1:16–17)
3. "be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." (Ps. 19:14)
4. "the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever" (Ps. 111:10)
5. "the glory of God," "his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1)
6. "the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1)
7. "Wiser than men," "stronger than men" (1 Cor. 1:25)

#### Seeing Life As Jesus Sees It

*continued from page 14*

career of being unhappy. They want to be someone else or have something more or do something different, or go somewhere they have never been. The Gospel is not a ticket to escape from life but a new way of viewing life and affirming it with new meaning and hope.

The Christian faith is not an escape from life. Rather, it is a way of making life a delight and a joy while using it to achieve a far greater life, life that will be truly living; life that will be free from the encumbrances and problems of the present; life that will open into the eternal, even "life everlasting."

Who offers greater than that! ♦

8. "unstable in all his ways" (Jas. 1:8)
9. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (1 Tim. 1:15)
10. "So great salvation ....?" (Heb. 2:3)



## Elijah, Herald of Jesus' Second Advent

***"I see on your website that you say your 'founder discovered the Bible teaching that the prophet Elijah is coming as the herald of Jesus Christ.' How is this?"***

Although the second advent of Jesus Christ is widely taught, we find very few groups teaching that He will be preceded by a herald, the Prophet Elijah. Yet this is part of the plan as taught in the Bible. The last two verses of the Old Testament are very specific: *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse"* (Mal. 4:5-6).

Our booklet, *"Before Christ, Elijah,"* discusses the subject in detail. If you would send us your mailing address, we would be happy to send you a copy. This booklet also includes a discussion of whether or not John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecies about Elijah. We do not believe that he did, because Jesus said, when questioned by disciples after the transfiguration, *"Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things"* (Matt. 17:11). At this time John the Baptist had already come as the forerunner of Christ's first advent, had fulfilled his mission and been beheaded, so Jesus could not have been referring to him.

### • Grace and Salvation

***"I found this on your website: '1880: Discovers Cornerstone of Bible Teaching: That salvation is dependent on knowing and obeying every command of Scripture.' Does this mean that if by human nature a man/woman sins, there is no grace or forgiveness for repentance?"***

***"I have not gone all through your website, but I have liked what I have seen so far."***

Let us say immediately that God has made provision—very generous provision—for our repentance and forgiveness. In fact, the two always go together. When we repent, He forgives.

In studying the Bible we find that God sets a very high standard by which to select those individuals who will be part of His eternal plan. The standard is revealed by numerous commands all through the Bible. Outside of temporary and local commands which are not of concern to us (i.e., the command to Noah to build an ark, or the laws given to Moses for the governing of the Israelite nation), there are commands affecting every part of our daily life and conduct, even including our attitudes, feelings and thoughts (see Colossians 3; Ephesians 4; 2 Timothy 2; Romans 12; James 3, etc.).

In His first sermon, Jesus mentions many qualities of character which are prerequisite to being blessed. He mentions meekness, purity of heart, peace making, among others (Matt. 5:1-20). He says plainly *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven"* (Matt. 7:21). He says also that following Him is a matter of taking up one's cross daily and denying oneself (Luke 9:23).

The Apostle Paul says that *"The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age"* (Titus 2:11-12).

What happens when we fail? God has a plan, because He knows our weak-

nesses. In the words of the Psalmist, *"He knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust"* (Ps. 103:14). He knows that we will stumble, but He has provided a means for repentance and forgiveness. As He said to the nation of Israel, *"Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin"* (Ezek. 18:30). He said also, *"If a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die...But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity,...shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die"* (Ezek. 18:21, 24).

God works on a plan of forgiveness when we confess and forsake our sins. *"He who covers his sin will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy"* (Prov. 28:13).

As long as we have life, we have the opportunity to turn from our sins and do right. God in His mercy will forgive. As He said through the Prophet Isaiah, *"Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"* (Isa. 55:6-7). What more could we ask than "abundant pardon"!

God is anxious to pardon—all we have to do is turn and do right and none of our sins will be remembered against us (Ezek. 18:22; 33:16). ♦

*As long as we have life, we can turn from our sins, and God in His mercy will forgive.*



# CAUGHT by the CURRENT

*"We ought to pay greatest attention to the truth that we have heard and not allow ourselves to drift away from it." —Hebrews 2:1 Phillips*

In the early part of the last century, a ship was wrecked near the coast of England. The sea had been calm and the weather clear, but the vessel was caught in a treacherous current that slowly lured it off its course. Before the captain and the crew realized what had happened the ship had crashed onto the rocks.

In life, too, there are powerful currents of compromise which can catch the soul and carry it to shipwreck. Spiritual drifting is usually a slow, almost imperceptible process. We know it has occurred when we have lost the strong resistance we formerly felt to evil or the passionate desire we knew we had for truth.

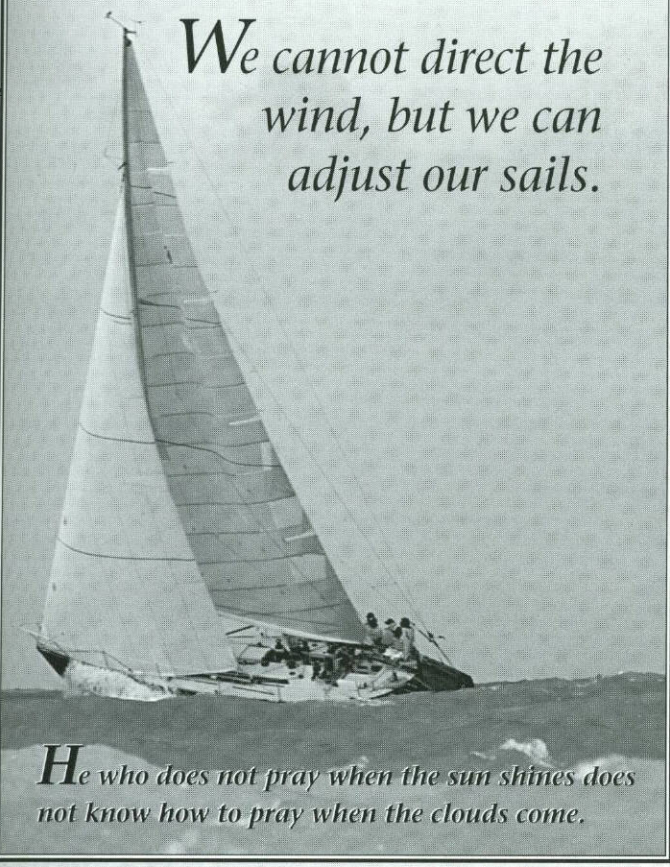
The Apostle Paul wanted to make sure this did not happen to Timothy and those to whom

he ministered. He encouraged him to be faithful. *"Give your whole attention, all your energies, to these things so that your progress is plain for all to see"* (1 Tim. 4:13 Phillips).

In our day it is very possible for believers to succumb to the savage assault of evil. We can prevent this by being committed to God's truth, our regular worship and a life of faith. We must give careful attention to these things so that we don't drift away.

*Only the compass  
of God's Word will  
keep you from  
spiritual shipwreck.*





*We cannot direct the  
wind, but we can  
adjust our sails.*

*He who does not pray when the sun shines does  
not know how to pray when the clouds come.*

If we claim God as our Father, we should be willing to act like His children.

*Wisdom is knowing what to do, skill is knowing how to do it, virtue is in doing it well.*

Never trifle with any sin. You do not know the streams that may flow from that fountain; for sin is a fountain—not a mere act but a fountain of evil.

**Seven Ways to  
SPIRITUAL STAGNATION**

1. I'm too old to change.
2. I like my way better.
3. I can't do it.
4. I've tried it before and failed.
5. It doesn't matter.
6. I don't have time.
7. God doesn't care.

*God who has given so much to me,  
Give one thing more—a thankful heart.  
Not thankful when it pleases me,  
As though Your blessings had spare days,  
But such a heart  
Whose pulse may be Your praise.*

No matter how long you nurse a grudge it won't get better.

*If you have not felt the joy of doing a kindly deed, you have neglected much—especially yourself.*

Your temper is a valuable possession, don't lose it.

*The door to the human heart can only be opened from the inside.*

To live for the approval of men is to live with tension and anxiety.  
To live for the approval of God is to live with peace and joyous expectancy.


*Faith is not belief without proof but belief without sight.*

The only good deeds you can be sure of doing are the ones you do today.

*The habit of viewing things cheerfully and thinking about life hopefully may be made to grow in us like any other habit.*

Every Christian occupies some kind of a pulpit and preaches some kind of a sermon every day.





*I* asked God for **strength**, that I might achieve;  
I was made **weak**, that I might learn humbly to obey.

*I* asked for **health**, that I might do greater things;  
I was given **infirmity**, that I might do better things.

*I* asked for **riches**, that I might be happy;  
I was given **poverty**, that I might be wise.

*I* asked for **power**, that I might have the praise of men;  
I was given **weakness**, that I might feel the need of God.

*I* asked for **all things**, that I might enjoy life;  
I was given **life**, that I might enjoy all things.

*I* got nothing that I asked for—but everything I had hoped for.  
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.

*I am among all men, most richly blessed.*