



Megiddo Message

*“Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be
glad; . . . let the field be joyful, and all that is
therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice
before the Lord: for he cometh . . .”*

– Psalm 96 : 11 – 13

Megiddo Message

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- Answer perplexing religious questions
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- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God
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Editorially Speaking . . .

"When He Came to Himself . . ."

IN the parable of the Prodigal Son is a key line upon which the whole story turns. The prodigal "came to himself." If he had not, there would have been no point to Jesus' parable.

In the life of every striving Christian there must be this moment of truth, this moment of honest self-facing. It is a great moment. It is a moment of self-recognition that brings about a complete turning in one's life. And how much better that it come now as a result of candid self-examination than when we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is only prudence to be able to say as did the old Scotsman when asked if a storm was coming, "I thatched me roof."

The Bible is a textbook in the art of self-searching. Its one point of beginning is always KNOW THYSELF. From this point we can go forward to improve ourselves. For after we have seen what we really are—and are not—we will feel an irresistible urge to *change*.

The wise of all ages have recognized this. Inscribed on the temple to Apollo at Delphi some 600 years before Christ were the words: "KNOW THYSELF." Thus Shakespeare penned:

Go to your bosom;

Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know.

Getting acquainted with ourselves may be a shattering experience; it may involve a new relationship with family or friends, with business associates, and—most importantly—with God. But whatever the price in self-effacement, it is vital to our success.

The moment of self-understanding in the Christian's life is the moment of hope. For from that moment on we can live with a realistic understanding of the goal we seek and our own possibilities of attaining it. This gives us a new sense of nobility and purpose.

Until we see ourselves as we are we may revel in great—and exceedingly foolish—pictures of our own grandeur. As the poet expressed it,

Until the donkey tried to clear
The fence, he thought himself a deer.

Bringing ourselves to the level of reality in our struggles with life, seeing ourselves for what we really are, is the only route to genuine improvement. So easily when we run into difficulties we blame our companions, or our job, or our friends, or our tools, or our community, or our church, when the real problem is right where it always has been—ourselves! Oh, for the moment "when he came to himself"!

Are we tempted to *wait* for it? It will not come until we *make* it come. It will not come until we picture the image we want to be—even the "stature of the fulness of Christ"—and compare ourselves with it to see wherein we lack.

When we have done this, it may be said of us, "He came to himself," and the road to improvement stands wide open. ●●

DOES anyone doubt? Can anyone disbelieve the divine Word as he looks out upon God's glorious springtime?

Trees are budding into leaf. Flowers are unfolding to light. Birds are waking the days with their enchanting melodies. In field and garden eager eyes discern the first blades of emerald green shooting forth in response to the warm rays of the sun.

For generations this miracle of nature has never ceased to repeat itself. Could our fathers and our fathers' fathers be called to witness, all would testify that they never saw a winter which did not have its spring.

This order of the seasons, rhythmic as the beating of a drum, is more than chance. It is more than beauty. It is more than perpetual law operating by fixed design. The order of the seasons is a symbol of highest significance. It is our surety that every promise of God Almighty can be trusted. The Great Eternal calls upon us to recognize the budding springtime as His own guarantee that every word upon the Sacred Page shall be fulfilled with the same invariable precision. He declares,

"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55: 10-11).

As certain as the returning springtime is the promise that "He shall come again." "For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations" (Isa. 60:11). The order of the seasons is God's guarantee, signed with His own immortal signature. "... For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth."

In a world torn by strife and war, by suffering and misery, by injustice and bitterness and hate, who can fail to rejoice in the prospect of a better day—just ahead! Who can fail to let his voice ring out with that of the Psalmist:

"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.

"Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: for he shall judge the people righteously.

"Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; . . .

"Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord:

"For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth."
—Psalm 96:11-13

"... For He Cometh"

Yes, "He cometh." The cycle of the seasons is our guarantee. Whoever saw a winter without a spring,

or a seedtime without a harvest? Only they have reason to doubt the promise of Almighty God.

The following article appeared in the Megiddo Message for December 8, 1940, at which time the editors considered it timely admonition. Our readers today, thirty-five years later, will find it more relevant than ever before—an evidence that the plan of God is working out just as He foresaw it would.

THE OUTLOOK—1940

IT IS BAD: no sane person in 1940 denies it. Human perversity seems to have run its mad course almost to the limit. The human race, with all its splendid potentialities for good, for progress, for constructive activity, seems bent on its own destruction. Tides of hatred, violence, fear and despair are daily engulfing the proud structure of what we once called “civilization.” The world is at sea—a very stormy sea just now—without anchor, lifeboat, chart, compass or pilot.

Thousands of words could be spoken picturing the hopeless condition of our world, politically, economically, socially, morally and ecclesiastically; but we spare you the dismal repetition of facts you already know too well. What does it all mean? How will it all end? are the questions of the hour; and no man has the answers.

Human imagination likes to picture a Golden Age in the past, always a generation or two back, when all was well—probably much rosier in retrospect than in reality. As a matter of fact, the “good old days” never existed, although times have been better than they are at present. The back-look is generally as depressing as the outlook, and offers no hope that someday things might be different. Small wonder that life has been cynically described as “a brief and discreditable episode upon one of the minor planets.”

Many and various have been the formulas and expedients tried by well-meaning and sincere men and women to better conditions. None of them, however, have succeeded. None of them have even a possible chance to succeed. The task is too great; the ancient evils too strongly entrenched in human nature and our social organizations; the adverse tides too strong. The clouds thicken; the picture grows darker. Sick at heart, we close our eyes and try not to think of the future.

THE OUTLOOK—1975

THOSE of us who remember 1940 look back upon a period relatively calm. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor was at least a year away. America was still “at peace,” though stormclouds were forming. Germany under Hitler's leadership was at war with Great Britain, though the worst was

If the Outlook

yet to be. Serious trouble lay ahead for much of the world, but in 1940 the average citizen was not anticipating it.

In 1940 educational authorities still held the respect and support of the student body. School directors could make and enforce rules and regulations without fear of violating student “rights.” Instructors seemed generally dedicated to a high standard of morality both in conduct and in academics—at least considerably higher than is the norm today, when obscenity has been heard from many a professor and profanity from a President of the United States. An overruling objective of presenting “life as it is” to the young generation has resulted in literary garbage being served in place of wholesome food. “Education” is thought of as including everything from the most inspiring to the most vile.

In the past thirty-five years there has been a noticeable lowering of standards even in many churches. Formerly thought of as bastions of defense against the “world,” they have in many ways become one with the world. This fact is evidenced by the quality of music used, the light and humorous style effected by many so-called ministers of the Gospel, by the “symbols” sometimes used to convey the message of the service on a “modern” level (pop bottles, paper plates, tin cans, etc.), and by the general primary absorption with activity and form rather than purity of heart. Despite the attempts of many churches to keep up with the times and promote programs in line with current thought and feeling, church attendance is at an all-time low. And the Christian organization which tries to uphold a higher moral standard than dictated by the mass media finds itself losing members.

In 1940 government authorities still held the respect and support of the citizenry generally. Officials were recognized in their various capacities and were expected generally to act in behalf of the law-abiding citizen. Today, confidence in government is at an all-time low. Nearly every week some

Is Bad...

official or diplomat is kidnaped, abducted or murdered somewhere in the world. In democratic countries, the desire for election and re-election often outweighs all other considerations, such as meeting the needs of the people and upholding an exemplary standard of morality and integrity.

No matter what area of human life we investigate, we find trouble compounded above what it was in 1940—in education, religion and government, or in politics, economic affairs and society.

The political scene in many nations of the world is in a state of turmoil. Fighting continues in Viet Nam. Cambodia and Thailand could be taken over by Communists at any time. North and South Korean armies face each other across a demilitarized zone. The political situation in many South American countries is at best unstable.

The Near East is very explosive, neither Arab nor Jew being satisfied with things as they are. This is the area where the Battle of Armageddon will begin. Just what will happen prior to the return of Christ and that great battle we do not know, but there is very little of peace and goodwill between Israel and her neighbors. The effects of the situation are felt worldwide as the Arab oil-producing nations, though small and relatively undeveloped, maintain a stranglehold on the energy and currency of Western nations.

Even the economic affairs of the world seem too much for man to cope with at the moment. Inflation robs elderly citizens of their life savings, while unemployment poses a serious threat to peace.

Crime in this country, and more or less throughout the world, has reached epidemic proportions. The younger generation is growing up with a disdain for law and the rights of others. It is unsafe to walk the streets of the average American city at night—one might be safer in the jungles of Brazil.

In the year 1940, the atomic bomb or the hydrogen bomb were only a plan or a dream in the scientist's mind. In the intervening years both have become stark reality, Frankenstein monsters capable of destroying all forms of life. And their de-

structive force is now in the hands of men who could use it to further their own nefarious ends. In the words of the familiar spiritual, "Sometimes it causes me to tremble."

Such is the outlook in 1975.

But thank God, this is not the only direction we have to look. In this seething, troubled world of change and decay and disappointment and turmoil, there is that which changes not but which grows brighter and brighter with each passing day. It is the Word of the Eternal God. Written expressly for our day and time, it is a tower of hope very nigh to every one of us. With a great sense of relief and a consciousness that here at last we have found something solid and secure, we turn to its hallowed and ever-comforting pages and hear the voice of the Eternal as it speaks to us across the years. The conditions of the world today are no surprise to the divine Mind.

Listen:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.

But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

—II Tim. 3:1-4, 13.

The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.

That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.

—Micah 7:2-3.

Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up.

Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.

Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord.

—Joel 3:9-11.

...Try the UPLOOK!

I HAVE lifted up my eyes to the mountains,
from whence help shall come to me.

*"My help is from the Lord, who made heaven
and earth" (Psalm 120:1-2, Douay Version).*

Lifting our eyes from this welter of fear, trouble, distress and sin, this sea of mire and blood and tears, we see light—a pure, unclouded beam direct from the Source of all light. We see plan, purpose, order, beauty. We behold an ordered, majestic march of events from the dawn of history to the present time, each having its position in the perfect whole. Behind it all, watching over all, directing all to a definite and certain end, is—God Almighty.

Consider for a moment His eternal plan.

"For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isaiah 45:18).

Inhabited by whom? The bungling mass of unregenerate humanity who now swarm and squabble over its surface? Nay, verily! In the beginning God took His oath: "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14:21).

His glory, the prophet Isaiah informs us (Isa. 46:13), is Israel—spiritual Israel—His people. He has planned, then, to fill this earth with His people, glorified and immortal. Through the centuries He has been silently working, selecting the best from the vast reservoir of humanity, as a lumberman might select a few choice trees for a special purpose out of a great forest. The rest of the trees, not being usable, are permitted to flourish at will so long as they do not interfere with the growth of his best trees, in which case the axe of the forester may be brought into use. So God selects a choice few, those in every land and time who will make themselves worthy of eternal life by complying strictly with His conditions. The rest, the masses to whom it is too much work and trouble to keep the Law, being present only by accident of birth, are not counted, but are permitted to make their own

history—and what a history it has been! Only when God's plan for His people and His future Kingdom are involved does He intervene in the affairs of the ungodly; this has happened more than once, and will happen again. We see it in the uplook.

And as a worthless scrub forest is cleared away to make room for cultivation or settlement, so this jungle of lawless humanity will be cleared and cleaned up; violently and effectively, once for all. And soon. Look Up!

"For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it" (Proverbs 2:21-22).

God has unlimited time at His disposal, and has seen fit to allot six thousand years for the first and most important preparatory era, the selection and development of a relatively small number of co-rulers for His future Kingdom on earth. These are the choice fruit of the earth, men and women who overcame and perfected their character under severe trials and adverse circumstances. God will always have the best: the fittest shall survive.

This period of six thousand years is almost ended. Our present calculation of time being admittedly erroneous, no man knows the day or hour of the great change, but the times and seasons are an open book to those who care to see. Look up!

"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:44).

Nineteen centuries ago the great King of this future arrangement came into the world and worked out His salvation in an amazingly short time, leaving us the Perfect Example. His formula was simple enough: so great was His faith and so intensely devoted was He to the task in hand that He never had to learn a lesson twice. He is now at His Father's right hand, enjoying His well-earned reward. On the day of His departure from this world's familiar scenes, eleven men of His inti-

mate friends and followers saw Him ascend, borne by angelic hands. Their world seemed to have collapsed with their hopes: the outlook was dark, so they looked up, and in the uplook they heard a glorious and comforting promise. Two men in white apparel stood by them, and said,

"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Look up! He comes again.

For what purpose? Much as the world needs His gospel, it is unlikely that His message or way of life would be more acceptable or popular today than it was 1900 years ago. But this second coming is different. No longer is He the lamb led to the slaughter, but the Lion of the tribe of Judah, riding forth conquering and to conquer (Rev. 5:5; 6:2). *Look up!*

"For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain" (Isaiah 26:21).

But He will not punish without a last emphatic warning. Before the apocalypse of the crowned Messiah, a forerunner will be sent. LOOK UP!

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5).

"And Jesus . . . said unto them, Elias truly shall first come and restore all things" (Matt. 17:11).

Then comes the ultimatum. Human misgovernment is ordered to pack up and depart—its day is over. A new age dawns; a new power looms on the horizon—the power of Jesus Christ, King of all the earth! LOOK UP!

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come" (Revelation 14:6-7).

Behind the appeal is *force*. The time for moral suasion is over; the final clean-up is at hand. In spite of a desperate resistance, the work of eliminating the incorrigible element and uprooting the ancient evils will be vigorously and swiftly pushed to completion. The nations will find it vain to fight against God.

"For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and

with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.

"For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many" (Isaiah 66:15-16).

"With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early; for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isaiah 26:9).

Christ and the saints—rulers of a new world! But the majority of the saints are now resting in the tomb. How then will it be possible for them to share in this mighty work? Again we look up for the answer.

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. . . . Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (I Thess. 4:16, 18).

Comforting indeed! The Uplook is getting better all the time.

Now let us see what the inspired prophets saw of that glorious time to come when they lifted their eyes from earth's sordid scenes to the mountains of Jehovah. Pessimists may croak that peace is impossible; that there have always been wars and strife and there always will be, human nature being what it is. But this is merely the result of the Back-look and the Outlook. LOOK UP!

"But in the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

"And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

"And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

"But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it" (Micah 4:1-4).

The method of obtaining this ideal state is simple, direct and effective.

"For the nation and kingdom that will not serve

thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted" (Isaiah 60:12).

"And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one" (Zech. 14:9).

All nations under one flag—no chance for international war. Every inhabitant of that one nation happy and contented—no possibility of revolution or civil strife. There can be "peace on earth, goodwill toward men," and there *will* be. But there is much more. LOOK UP!

"Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.

"The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

"I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.

"Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders.

"Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified" (Isaiah 32:1; 60:14, 17-18, 21).

After the cleansing judgments have done their work, there will be a thousand years of rest, of reconstruction, re-education, reclamation, repopulation with a race of happy, contented subjects.

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

"Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

"And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Isa. 35:1, 5-6; 33:24).

But even this is not the end. There follows an eternity of life and progress and joyful activity. LOOK UP!

"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:10).

Seven centuries after Isaiah's day, when the divine vision and prophecy was nearing completion and ready to be sealed, the Uplook had not changed except to be nearer, more definite and more glorious. John the Revelator, the last man to

receive a message from God, pictured in sublime words and dramatic style the establishment and the glories of the eternal Kingdom of God on earth. What more fitting close to an inspired and inspiring Volume than the undying promise:

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

"And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful" (Rev. 21:3, 4-5).

It *is* a beautiful picture, isn't it, friends? Worth working and waiting for, isn't it? But it is more than a lovely picture, a pleasant dream: soon it will be a *reality*. It can *not* fail. The eternal God has decreed it; and even now events are swiftly taking form and driving us fast toward that great **Change**.

Never mind the dark outlook, friends; the Uplook is grand! ●●

Self-Control and YOU

Man shows self-control when he does not do what he may want to do. An AA member turns down a drink. The diabetic refuses a piece of cake. The overweight shakes his head negatively when offered a second serving. The hot tempered counts ten when things go wrong. The old proverb went something like this: "Men call him a fool who cannot be angry; but he is a wise man who will not be."

What pleasant things have you declined this past week?

What unpleasant task have you compelled yourself to do?

Does such self-control contribute to your Christian growth?

Men who lack self-restraint are engaged all their lives with difficulties of their own making. Their lack of self-control makes successful, happy, healthful living an impossibility.

In what way can you apply this to your life?●●

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GOD'S MAN FOR CRISIS HOUR

Part Two

May, 1975

WITH all the dynamic boldness of the true prophet of the Lord, Elijah delivered his message before the king. And he was gone. He was gone—no one knew where.

Word of the Prophet's message spread rapidly about the palace court, through the city and on to the various parts of the country. Many heard. Some feared. A few believed; but the majority scoffed. What did the man expect to gain by creating such a stir about nothing? What did he think *he* could do about the rain? Didn't he know that Baal was the god of rain? Israel might have a short drought—that had happened before—but extra sacrifice had always brought results *eventually*. Time would show this man up for what he was. There always had been calamity-mongers, and there always would be.

A few days went by. And no rain.

Days grew into weeks, and weeks into months. And still no rain. Not even any dew! The ground became drier and drier and drier. Vegetation that had been fresh and growing from the spring rains was wilting. The water in the brooks trickled down to less and less. Even along the Jordan one could see on the banks the marks left by the steadily receding waters.

People began to wonder and think. Even the scoffers were thinking—with no weeds to cultivate or crops to harvest, there wasn't much else *to* do but think. *Did* the wilderness Prophet know something after all? Was there some kernel of truth in the words he had spoken?

God did not do this thing in a corner. He was working, and He wanted everyone to know what He was doing. Before He sent the famine, He sent a man to interpret *what* that famine was to be, and *why*. He did not leave people in doubt as to the cause. Israel had apostatized. Though the people would not acknowledge it, they *were* to blame. And God in due time would make it known. Otherwise they might explain it by putting the famine down to evil spirits or some other concocted explanation.

But even now *some* knew the cause, whether they would admit it or not. When the king himself had seen Elijah standing before him and promising this terrible punishment in the name of the Lord God of hosts, they knew inwardly that there was only one explanation for the disaster. It was a judgment and a scourge from God. It was a visible sign that the God in heaven had more power than the rain-god Baal. It was God—and not Baal—who had been giving them fruitful seasons and filling their garner with plenty.

All the while Israel was waking up to the real cause of the famine and trying desperately to cope with the disastrous problems that resulted, Elijah was nowhere in the country to be seen. He had gone his way—rather, he had gone the Lord's way—

From Palace to Wilderness

That was the path of Elijah's life. It was not the way Elijah might have planned it. It was not the direction any great man would chart for himself to go. But it was God's direction, and Elijah was God's man. Elijah was ready for any course God might lay out for him. He knew the meaning of obedience, implicit obedience.

We in these last days must walk by faith. We may pity ourselves at times for this seemingly difficult role; and difficult it is. We have never *seen* any open visible demonstration of divine power or ministry

in our behalf. We have never felt the touch of an angel, or listened to a heavenly choir. We have never been near the mountain that burned with fire or experienced the rapture of a prophetic vision. We walk by faith.

But we are not the first people ever to have need of this great virtue. Other men in other ages have needed faith also—*great* faith.

Even Elijah. God had called him out of the wilderness, and Elijah might have anticipated a spectacular career of notoriety among the high ones of Israel as he delivered one message after another from the Lord God of Israel and showed signs and wonders among the people to the astonishment of all.

But not so. This was not God's plan for Elijah. Listen to the word of the Lord that came to him:

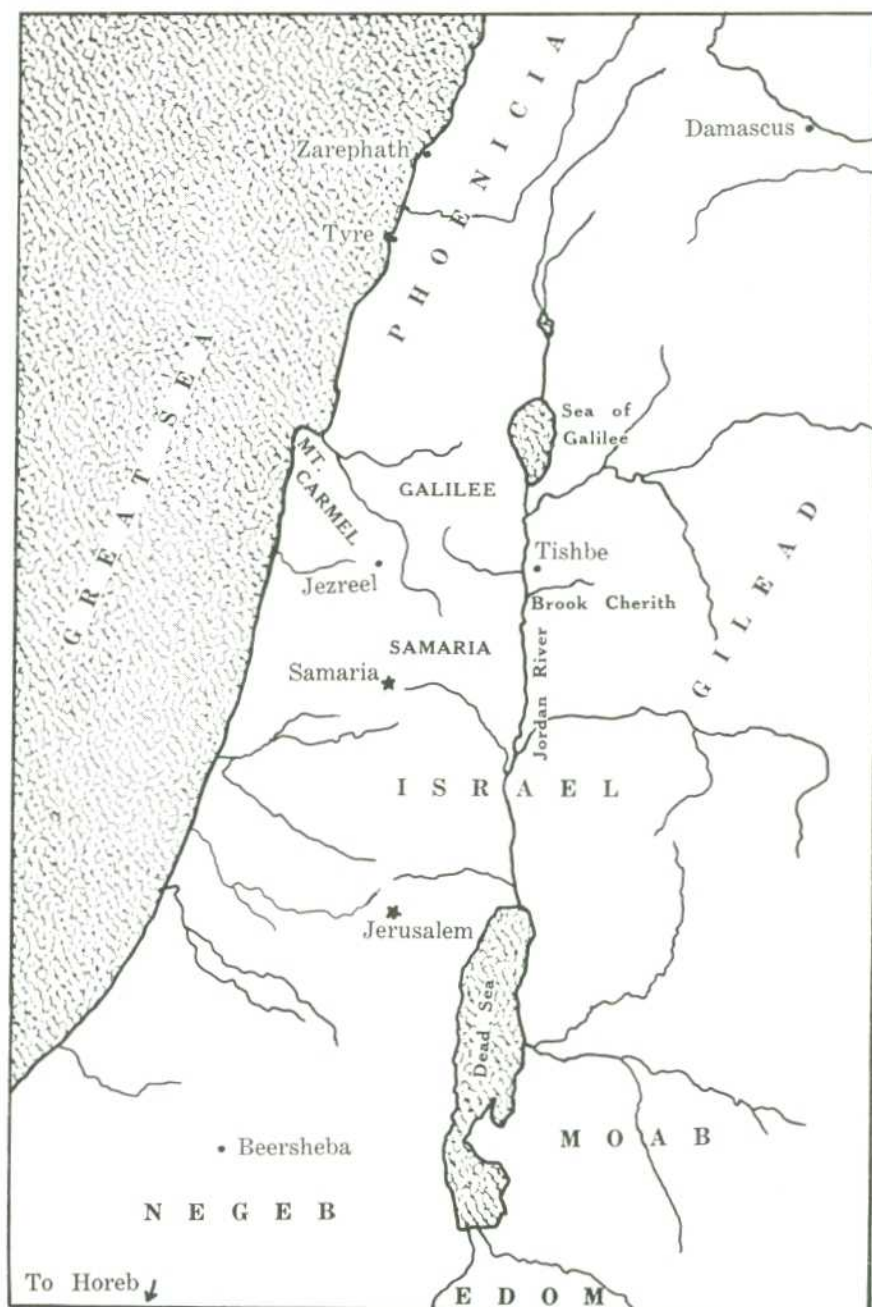
"Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there" (I Kings 17:3-4). Feel the heart-breaking disappointment those words might have conveyed to a lesser man than Elijah: "Get thee hence"—out of the palace, out of the royal city, out of the center of activity and attention. And "hide thyself." Here was obscurity at its nadir. Here was forced seclusion. Elijah was actually to *hide*.

A vigorous and dynamic man like Elijah might have greatly preferred being in the thick of things. He was a man of power, and he might easily have been tempted to use it where he could do great things. But God had spoken, and Elijah obeyed. All the way to the wilderness. All the way to Cherith. To a forsaken country and a lonely brook.

What could Elijah do for the Lord God of Israel in the seclusion of Cherith? He might have felt as the prophet Nehemiah later expressed it: "Should such a man as I flee?" Wasn't there

active work in some other part of the land where he might live in safety? What would people think when they heard how the man who had delivered God's message before the king so boldly had actually to flee into the wilderness? What certainty was there that he would be safe from Jezebel's vengeance even in this place?

But in all this Elijah proved himself once again a man of God. His first duty was obedience, even though he might not understand all that was required of him. And this required faith, great faith. He could not see the long road that lay before him. He could only step as the Lord commanded.



Elijah took that step. He "went and did according unto the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan" (I Kings 17:5). What magnificent moral stature! The man who could *give* orders could also *take* them.

What deep and urgent need in our lives today for the spirit and faith of Elijah! To be ready to go or stay, to march or halt at the command of the Lord means the complete subjecting of our will to His. It means marching when the soles of our feet seem glued to the ground beneath us. And it means standing still when every nerve of our body is keyed for action. It means obedience, Elijah's style.

By Lonely Cherith

God never allows us to meet a test until we have been fully prepared. When He sees that we shall need exceptional strength, He provides the setting in which we may develop that strength.

So it was with Elijah. God had purpose in sending him to Cherith. He had great work for him to do in years to come, and he must be prepared. He would need great spiritual strength, and much spiritual exercise is necessary to develop spiritual strength. Deep meditation and earnest prayer and sincere heart-searching were indispensable to qualify Elijah for his great work. And Cherith was the place chosen by God.

Let us visit the Prophet at his new post of duty—a dreary wild near the banks of the Jordan. Dead silence reigns, broken only by the babbling of the brook and the rustle of the wind in the trees. The glen is narrow and deep. A clear brook runs between the rocky masses. This is Cherith.

And there sits Elijah, wrapped in his mantle, silent, reflecting, meditating. God to Elijah was a living, ever-present reality, his Friend, his Guardian, his Provider, his Source of strength and power.

We today have access to the same source of strength. The God whom Elijah worshiped is our God; He has not changed in the centuries of time. We too can find strength in the power of His might.

But often to find it we must retire to our Cherith. We must have our periods of quiet apart from the crowd. Sometimes we may be inclined to think that public service is the only service that counts. After some achievement in life we may be inclined to feel somewhat important and essential. At such times there is nothing like hiding ourselves with God to examine the poverty of our soul.

Many months did Elijah dwell at Cherith, until the day when the "brook dried up" (I Kings 17:7).

We may wonder what Elijah felt as he saw the

water in the brook getting less and less, until there was not even enough to drink. Many can keep faith through great heroic deeds, but to keep faith through such slow trials is difficult. Perhaps our songs would have ceased when the brook stopped flowing.

But Elijah's did not. As far as we know, Elijah waited patiently on God. His motto was, "The God of Israel liveth," and in Him Elijah had fullest confidence. God had sent him to Cherith, and until He told him to leave, Elijah would wait.

On to Zarephath

Elijah seemed to be like the tender plant that actually benefits from the rigors of transplanting. For about this time, "the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold,

Concerning the "Ravens"...

Did God arrange that birds called "ravens" should sustain Elijah, bringing him the food he needed at Cherith?

Very possible He did not. The original word *orebim*, translated "ravens," has been considered by some as meaning "merchants," persons who traded occasionally through the country. The suggestion seems possible as God by inspiration could have directed "merchants" to supply the Prophet with food.

If we use *orebim* to signify literally "ravens," we encounter difficulties. The raven is an unclean bird (Lev. 11:13-15: "And these...ye shall have in abomination among the fowls...every raven after his kind"). Is it likely that God would use an "unclean" bird to feed His prophet?

A noted commentator (Adam Clarke) says the following: "To get a constant supply from such hands in an extraordinary way was miracle enough; it showed the superintendence of God."

On another occasion God used "angels" to feed His prophet: "And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat" (I Kings 19:5).

The provision was miraculous, whatever the means employed. God was looking out for Elijah's needs, even in the wilderness of Cherith. When He said, "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee," He meant, You shall not lack the necessities of life, you shall be supplied by especial providence. ●●

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I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee" (IKings 17:9).

What did this mean to Elijah?

Zarephath was a Phoenician city, about halfway between Tyre and Zidon. This was Jezebel's country. There were *her* people, who still worshiped *her* gods and were acquainted with her family. In Zidon, the capital, only a few miles from Zarephath, Jezebel's father Ethbaal still held sway. Doubtless these people had all heard what Jezebel thought of that man Elijah who was the cause of all the trouble in the land.

Besides, the trip from Cherith to Zarephath could be perilous, for in between lay one hundred miles of Israeli soil where Elijah was public enemy number one, and a hunted man. What might happen to him during the journey, if he should encounter one of Ahab's patrols? It was enough to test any man's faith.

But Elijah's faith was equal to the test. For we read, "he arose and went to Zarephath."

As Elijah approached Zarephath, he came upon a woman gathering sticks. Might she be the widow the Lord had "commanded . . . to sustain" him?

A Test of Faith

Faint and thirsty from his long journey across the hot, arid land, he called out to her: "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel that I may drink."

The woman was aghast. Water? Could he not see the condition of the country? Water was scarce, and she treasured every precious drop she had. But the man was clearly in need; and being of an unselfish nature, the woman decided to share what little she had. She started to get the water, when the stranger called after her, "And bring me a bite of bread, too."

Now asking for water was bad enough. But asking for food—that was beyond reason! She looked squarely at the man. Could it be—was he someone special—could he be a man of God?

"As the Lord thy God liveth," she replied, "I have not a cake, but [only] a handful of meal in a



***"Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water
in a vessel that I may drink."***

barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die."

The woman and her son were facing starvation, but the Prophet did not withdraw his request. He had another plan. "Don't be afraid! Go ahead and cook that 'last meal,' but bake me a little loaf of bread first; and afterwards . . . there will still be enough food for you and your son. For the Lord God of Israel says that there will always be plenty of flour and oil left in your containers until the time when the Lord sends rain, and the crops grow again!" (I Kings 17:13-14, TLB).

Now this was a challenge of faith, a real challenge. The woman and her son were starving, and could she part with the last bit of food in exchange for a *promise*? Could she trust the stranger's word? Was he the man of God she thought he might be?

She decided to do as he asked her. She went into the house and used that bit of meal and oil she so treasured and baked the little loaf for the prophet, and took it out to him. As quickly as she could she slipped back to peek under the lid of her meal

(Continued on page 26)

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

World Religions

RELIGION is as old as the human race. Among primitive peoples, religion developed out of a sense of fear. Primitives feared the powers of nature which caused the lightning, rain and floods. They feared the power of sickness which brought death to members of their family or tribe. They reasoned that unseen spirits must control the elements and sickness, and they sought ways to appease these spirits so that they would be friendly and not do them harm.

Self-preservation was as instinctive among primitive peoples as it is in twentieth century humans. In their efforts toward extending their lives, they developed ceremonies and sacrifices that were supposed to influence these "spirits" to do them good.

The ancient Egyptians were very religious, each province having its own god or gods, which were believed to be divine guardians of the people. These gods were represented by something familiar to the people, usually animals, but were thought of as living beings. Like the primitives, the Egyptians attributed all their troubles to the wrath of gods or malicious spirits. They worshiped also the powers of nature, which they pictured in animal form.

The Egyptians had a strong belief in a life after death, as is evidenced by the findings of archaeologists. Tombs have been uncovered complete with everything that might be needed in the afterlife—from combs and jewels to tools and slaves and servants. Hundreds of pyramids (which contain tombs) and rock-hewn tombs scattered throughout the land bear mute testimony to their industrious attempt to insure for themselves a happy hereafter.

Religion in ancient Babylon, Assyria and Greece took the form of mythology. People in these areas developed elaborate myths to explain the forces of nature. The sun, moon, stars, sky, mountains, rivers, springs, winds and a mysterious "underworld" were all thought of as operated by deities that inhabited them. Later the Greeks developed "mystery cults" centered about these imaginary gods and goddesses, cults like the worship of Diana of

the Ephesians, which we read about in the book of the Acts.

Not all religions have survived the centuries. Ancient civilizations disappeared and their gods and their religions with them. Others arose to take their place, and today we have eleven major world faiths—that is, organized and active religious bodies. These eleven basic faiths have divided and subdivided into literally hundreds—almost thousands—of sects and denominations.

Among these basic religious bodies, the definition of "acceptable" religious practice varies widely. To the Zennist, religion is meditation in solitude. To the Moslem, the most important religious duty is to turn toward Mecca five times daily and repeat the Islami watchword. The ideal of the Hindu and Buddhist religions is the ascetic who escapes the miseries of the world in a monastery.

All these are in marked contrast to the religious ideal given by God in His Word: "to act justly, to love loyalty, to walk wisely before your God" (Micah 6:6-8, NEB).

In this issue we will complete our study of the religions of the East and Far East, covering the religions of China and Japan.

V. RELIGIONS OF THE EAST AND FAR EAST

Without exception, the religions we speak of as "Eastern" are of the mystical variety. A prominent Christian has said of mysticism that "It begins in 'mist,' centers in 'I,' and ends in 'scism.'" This statement is more than a play on words—it speaks the truth. Eastern religions center in the mind of the individual and are more or less mysterious. The majority of them hold to the belief that spiritual truth is to be gained through the mind and without the use of intellect or reason. In the same way contact is said to be made with a higher power. Those who follow such beliefs have split into many factions, "scisms" in the truest sense of the word.

We will study briefly some of these other Eastern faiths.

A. Shintoism

Shinto is a Chinese word meaning "The way of

the gods," but peculiarly Shinto is the native religion of Japan, not China. It was so named because it was developed by Chinese living in Japan.

Shinto is largely nature worship, not much more than animism, a rather primitive form of religion. Shinto has more than 3,000 gods and goddesses, mostly objects of nature, but including some deified individuals such as former emperors, war heroes and ancestors. Shinto is the way of life for millions of Japanese and has been for many generations. That the educated, industrialized nation of Japan today should continue to hold to so simple a faith is surprising.

1. Shinto worship. Shinto pagodas are profuse throughout Japan. They are often pyramid-shaped and very ornate. Faithful Japanese resort to these temples or shrines daily for prayer. Many ceremonial festivals are conducted at the temples for such occasions as the new moon, changing seasons, rice planting and harvest, plus sacrifices and offerings for all calamities. The only religious requirement is daily prayer at a temple.

2. Shinto doctrines. Ethical and moral teachings of Shinto writings are vague. An individual may be absolved from any evil simply through ceremonial washings. Also included in Shinto teachings is the principle of absolute patriotism, "my country, right or wrong," a devotion to country and emperor that became well known during the second World War. Japanese military men showed a complete disregard for danger in the use of suicide tactics during the war, preferring death to defeat.

3. Shinto vs. the Scriptures. Shintoism expects little of its votaries and offers little in return. Instead of a God that is a "refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," (Ps. 46:1), Shinto offers a multiplicity of deities "which see not, nor hear, nor know," gods which are dead, including the worship of a human emperor. **The true God requires that we adhere to the moral and ethical teachings of the Scriptures and to worship only Him. Hero worship and idol worship is forbidden:** "Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them: But the Lord, . . . him shall ye fear, and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice" (II Kings 17:35-36). God will allow no rivals.

In recent years, Shinto has lost some of its favored status. It is no longer state-supported, but it still remains the national faith of Japan.

B. Confucianism

Confucius, the founder of the Chinese religion that bears his name, was born in China in the middle of the sixth century B. C., in the same century

as such religious leaders as Zoroaster, Lao-Tse and the Buddha of Eastern faiths—and such prophets as Jeremiah and Zechariah of the Bible.

Confucius' main interest was more ethical than religious, hence the claim made by some that Confucianism is not a religion but merely a philosophy. Confucius did not claim to originate many of the things he taught. He made an extensive study of Chinese history and culture and gathered into books the best of what he gleaned from the writings of others.

Confucius was a teacher and these books formed the basis of his teaching. His teaching was ethical and moral, but there is nothing in his teachings to indicate that he had any faith in any god. A man's salvation depended entirely upon himself, according to Confucius. Like the Buddha, he wasn't sure any god existed and man should not depend upon the gods doing anything for them. To him, virtue was its own reward—men should not do good for reward, nor refrain from wrongdoing for fear of punishment. His rule was the Golden Rule in reverse: "What you do not want others to do unto you, do not do unto them."

1. Confucius' worship. The worship taught by Confucius had nothing to do with the gods, but after his death he was deified and worshiped by his followers.

The ancient custom of ancestor worship and reverence for the dead is accepted and practiced by followers of Confucius. The dead are considered to be part of the family. Their spirits are thought to be always present, so food is regularly prepared for them and sacrifices are offered in their honor.

2. Confucius' doctrines. The center of Confucius' teachings was right relations in everyday living. He emphasized the virtues of kindness and sincerity which he believed to be the secret of harmonious living. His theory was to promote harmony in the family, the community and the state.

Confucius did not believe in prayer. He said that since no one knew about a life after death, they might better center their attention on the present life. His ideas concerning God were much like those of the Buddha—he was not sure any existed, so man should not depend upon anyone but himself.

Confucius explained the creation by accepting the ancient Chinese theory of **Yin** and **Yang**. The Chinese story of creation says that in the beginning all was chaos, and out of this came two forces, **Yin**, the negative force and **Yang**, the positive force. By the action and interaction of these forces, the earth and all things were supposedly formed.

3. Confucianism vs. the Scriptures. Confucianism is commendable for its emphasis on ethical

and moral principles, but it is sadly lacking in that which makes the difference in religion—it lacks God. The man who relies entirely upon himself and seeks a salvation that consists of this life only has but little to look forward to. Confucianism offers no hope of a future and holds no belief in God, two elements necessary to true religion. Such a religion can only end in the grave and its followers are among those “having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).

The present-day state of Confucianism is uncertain. Since Communism came to mainland China, all public worship of any deity has been banned. The innumerable temples which were built for the honor of Confucius have been allowed to deteriorate and those that are suitable are used for other purposes. Confucius’ teachings, once required in the schools, have been withdrawn and suppressed.

C. Taoism

Taoism, pronounced “dow-ism” is, like Confucianism, native to China. Taoism (before Communism) claimed more than 50 million Chinese as believers, but how much they are able to practice their religion today is uncertain.

Taoism dates back to the same century as Confucianism. Lao-Tse, its founder, was an older contemporary of Confucius. He lived during a period of much social unrest in the country; and despairing of improving the situation, he is said to have resolved to retire from the world. A friend suggested he write his ideas in a book. This he did, and the **Tao Teh King**, which is the scripture of Taoism, was the result. It is one of the most popular books in the world, second only to the Bible in number of copies sold.

Taoism is yet another of the mystical, mind-centered faiths of the East. Although its founder lived near the time of Confucius, he adopted none of the practical teaching of his contemporary. Taoism is best expressed as inactivity. It has also been described as “the gentle art of doing nothing.” Another has said it is to “busy yourself with no business.” Lao-Tse’s theory was that most of the world’s troubles come from action, hence inaction, doing nothing, was the better course to follow.

1. Taoist worship. Taoist worship approaches the art of magic. Much that is nothing more than superstition is included in their elaborate temple ceremonies. Taoist priests are called upon to “drive away evil spirits from haunted houses, from sick people who are possessed and from villages suffering from any epidemic.... They walk on swords, pass unscathed through furnaces and drive long needles through their flesh. They are required to

make it rain in seasons of drought and they are expected to lessen the punishment of the dead in the next world by their prayers.” The priests supposedly hold a secret magical method of gaining immortality—but it is known only to the priests and passes on from one chief priest to the next.

2. Taoist beliefs. The word **Tao** means “the way, or the path,” but it is also described much the same as the Hindu’s Brahman, an “eternal, impersonal force which is in everything,.... existing before heaven and earth, the one sustaining source of all things.”

Lao-Tse’s teachings were simple and idealistic, as well as impractical. “Be natural. Conform to nature, let the Tao take its course.... Practice inaction, occupy yourself in doing nothing. Keep the mouth shut, close the gateway of the sense, and as long as you live, you will have no trouble.”

His teachings also included superstitions: “Do not punish the innocent. Do not scold the wind or the rain.... Obey your father and mother. Do not use a short foot, an unfair measure, a light balance.... Do not sing and dance on the last day of the month.”

3. Taoism vs. the Scriptures. It would seem that even a superficial study of Taoism would be sufficient to turn any American away from it, but strange as it may seem, the 1973 Religious Population Census showed 15,000 adherents in North America. Such a shallow belief would fail to satisfy anyone with the least desire for immortality. An abstract idea such as the Tao is a poor substitute for a God who says, “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me,” or a God that “Like as a father pitieth his children,... pitieth them that fear him” (Ps. 50:15; 103:13).

Taoism, like other similar religions is only the product of men’s minds and can but lead to eternal death. A man might be considered an intellectual and have studied all the ancient philosophers; yet if he fails to understand the knowledge of God, “he shall go to the generation of his fathers; [he] shall never see light,” because “man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish” (Ps. 49:19-20).

D. Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism dates back to approximately the same time as Confucianism. Zoroaster, its founder, was a Persian priest who set out to reform the nature-worship of the Persians, but like many reformers, he failed to accomplish all that he set out to reform.

Conflict is the basis of Zoroastrianism. Zoroaster

believed that there was a spirit of good and a spirit of evil in the world and that these were forever contending for supremacy. He excused his war against the unbelievers by saying that it was but a part of the eternal conflict between good and evil. The good were to be rewarded in heaven; the evil were condemned to a literal hell, described as some imagined place of unbelievable torment inhabited by all sorts of spirits, demons and devils.

Zoroaster's reform consisted mainly in teaching some moral principles, teaching the people to work the land and teaching the people to worship Ahura Mazda, which he saw as the one god. He did little to stamp out the superstitions that had persisted for centuries.

The writings of Zoroaster, considered as sacred by his followers, contain a mixture of fact and legends about himself, his teachings and his work. Zoroastrianism was the official religion of Persia during the founder's lifetime and for some time afterward, but when the country was conquered by the Arabs it was converted to Islam.

Zoroastrianism and the Persians have the distinction of having contributed much to popular present-day Christian beliefs—a fact which is no credit to Christianity. The Christian religion came into a part of the world rife with superstition and abounding in mystery cults. Christianity had its roots in Judaism and the nation of Israel, but it was “an Israel which in captivity had learned much from Zoroastrianism,” according to one historian. Among these adopted beliefs were the theory of the immortal soul, the belief in demons and a literal devil. The centuries that followed saw the adoption of even more Persian ideas, such as the doctrine of substitution or vicarious suffering, which was applied to the death of Christ; the date of December 25 for the birth of Christ, and the doctrine of hell as a place of punishment after death.

Such beliefs existed in Persia before Zoroaster, and it was his expressed aim to eliminate the paganism from the Persian religion. But his high standards were not maintained; and paganism, which had been only partially overcome, again became dominant. In later years the country was dominated by the Muslims and many joined the ranks of Islam.

1. Zoroastrianism vs. the Scriptures. Zoroaster, like the leaders of other Eastern faiths, was a self-proclaimed prophet. He claimed to have received words direct from God whom he identified as “Ahura Mazda,” but the teachings he supposedly received contain so much superstition that it is obvious they are but the words of man. Could we imagine the Almighty sending a message to His

prophet saying that a dead body should not be buried lest it defile the earth? Or that “Whenever a person sneezes, the proper prayers must be offered”? or that “Properly cut tooth-picks alone should be used”? Such writings are the work of man and are but superstitions, “contrary to sound doctrine” (I Tim. 1:10), and those who teach such foolishness are “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9).

The idea of a spirit of good and a spirit of evil is likewise a pagan idea and does not fit in the category of sound doctrine. The true God gives only sound doctrine. He did not put evil in the world to contend with the good. The evil is the result of man's natural desire to have his own way. The source of sin is not a “spirit of evil,” but the heart, or mind of man. “There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him,” said Jesus in Mark 7:15. It is “from within, out of the heart [or mind] of men,” that “evil thoughts,” the first stage of any evil act, proceed (v. 21).

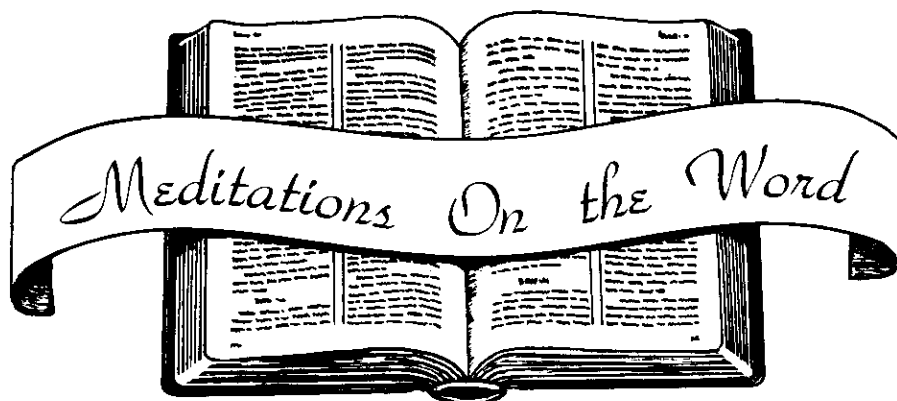
E. Summary

We have studied seven of the religions of the East, and comparing them with the Word of God we have found all to be wanting. Of the seven, only one, Islam, claims to worship but one God. All others worship innumerable deities which in many cases are only glorified humans or animals—even the forces of nature may be included.

This contrasts sharply with the Christian idea of God as “The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy” (Isa. 57:15), a God of righteousness, justice and love. “But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king,” said the prophet Jeremiah (10:10). His Son Jesus lived as a Man on the earth, worked out His salvation, was put to death and entombed to be raised from death's slumber on the third day by His heavenly Father. Both the Bible and history offer proof that these things happened and reinforce the Christian's hope that “if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: . . . that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:5, 4).

Only a living God can one day bring such a hope to fruition.

*Reprints of these studies are available
upon request.*



"A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time"

(Isaiah 60:22)

THROUGH all the works of God, known and unknown, runs one golden thread, one unchangeable principle: eternal growth, eternal expansion. This is inherent in the nature of God, who is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. He has worked in the eternity past, He is working in the present, and His work of creation and development will go on while the cycles of an eternal future unfold. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him" (Psalm 103:17). From eternity to eternity: a planet may be glorified, a galaxy may be completed, yet the end never comes. The end can never come.

We cannot, of course, understand these things, because the finite mind cannot comprehend the infinite. Still, we may intelligently believe in that which we cannot understand. We do it continually; the simplest facts in Nature are shrouded in mystery, yet we accept them because we see them. So we accept the limitless universe, no less than the existence of familiar things near at hand, because we see it, or at least enough of it to convince us that it is infinite in its

extent. A great skeptic once aptly pointed out that we are forced to believe in God, just as we are compelled to believe in unlimited time and space, by the far greater difficulty of unbelief. What lies outside of space? What is the substitute for time? And if not God, then what?

So with the principle of expansion: it is absurd to think of an eternal and infinite Creator finding Himself at the end of His resources or creative will. To the wicked He will say, "Thus far, and no farther," but never to Himself, for all His works are good. "I know that, whatsoever God doeth," saith the Wise Man, "it shall be for ever." None of His finished works will ever be destroyed; there is limitless space for limitless growth of the family of glorified worlds.

Modern astronomy reveals the magnitude of the space above us—its hundreds of millions of galaxies, each composed of billions of stars and no one knows how many unseen planets and satellites. Yet what is seen, even with the most powerful telescopes, might be compared to atoms in a single drop of water in the oceans of the world, into

which pour all the rivers of the world. It is possible that not one of our earth-days passes but somewhere in space another world is finished and glorified, and others begin their long career as masses of formless matter, awaiting the patient molding of whatever forces of Nature exist and operate in their part of creation.

We cannot understand it—certainly not; the mind is wearied as it attempts the task. We do not need to understand it; it is simply something that exists. We may think of the glory and wonder of it all and be thereby exalted and expanded in measure; but full comprehension must wait for the reward of the divine nature and eternal life in which to learn.

Such a God may well be called the Eternal. How much nobler is such a concept of the Deity than the "orthodox" idea of a Being who, existing in lonely grandeur from eternity past, suddenly awoke about six thousand years ago and proceeded in haste to create a world, adorned with sun, moon and stars, and to people the earth with the first human beings, the parents of a race who still occupy the only in-

habited world in all the creation around us!

But as the whole is the sum of its parts, our chief interest is in our particular corner of this infinitely vast creation. Here is familiar ground; here is something we can at least faintly comprehend and act upon. Our text, a jewel set in a necklace of jewels, deals with the immediate future of present realities, the outcome of the things which we see and touch.

In every hour of this day of salvation, the people of God have been a minority, numerically insignificant, a nucleus, a saving salt in the midst of a corrupt world. "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you," said Moses, "because ye were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people" (Deut. 7:7). Natural Israel was not small as many nations were in that day; this was spoken to the true Israel, those worthy of the name. So it has been throughout the six thousand years of probation, a very small remnant (Isa. 1:9).

This, one might think, is not expansion. Yet it is. The planted seed is small, and its germination unseen, but where the Spirit of the Lord works, there is growth. In this "eleventh hour" the true believers are very, very few in number, but their characters are expanding daily toward perfection, and God's appointed number (Rev. 14:1) is nearing completion. When the Bride has made herself ready (Rev. 19:7) and the marriage of the Lamb is consummated, their spiritual offspring will multiply and replenish the earth. "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit" (Isa. 27:6).

The visible judgments of God will turn the tide and once God's way becomes the popular way, the movement will gather speed—a revival such as the world has never seen, with its object the development of the subjects of the Kingdom of God.

Six thousand years of free choice have produced the ruling aristocracy of the Kingdom, a mighty and wonderful achievement; but in that time the world has reached the condition described in the 59th chapter of Isaiah, where "none calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth . . . for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter." The mercy of God has hardened their hearts. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. 8:11). But things will change. "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9). One short chapter and 1,000 years beyond the dark picture, we find the blessed result of the purifying judgments:

"As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Numbers 14:21).

As our planet goes from glory to glory, its destiny will be guided and controlled by volunteers who, in the face of all the world, dared to stand alone and be different, to be godlike. Is it not just and right that they should thus sit on the throne as rulers (Rev. 3:21)? God rewards every man according to his works, and greater work will merit and receive greater reward. ●●

Consider the Watch

"Consider me," said the watch. "I am small but manage to get along. To some, I am even indispensable.

"I work at an even rate of speed and concentrate on the present alone. The past is out of my life, and I will take care of the future when it arrives.

"I never hurry, worry, or get excited. I attend to my own affairs and keep my hands out of other people's business.

"I was made for one purpose, to keep time, and that one thing I do to the best of my ability, having ambitions in no other fields.

"I envy neither the clock, the sun dial, the radio, nor anything else, being too busy to bother about them.

"I keep ticking for years, but rest a moment between each tick. Periodically I am cleaned and then I continue my work, for I always work better when clean.

"I can function properly only through the perfect cooperation of my parts. If one of them shirks or fails me, it throws me out of kilter or stops me altogether, so I am of little use until repaired.

"But I would rather wear out than rust from idleness.

"My active life depends largely upon how I am treated. Loyal to my owner when properly cared for, I refuse to work when ill used, so indifference gains him nothing.

"If my story is of use to anyone, he is welcome to it. That is all." ●●

A man may occasionally regret his silence, but more often does he regret his conversation. Who of us has not wanted to bite off his tongue when he has said something impetuous or harsh.

Kathy
Kandor's
Korner

Wasting Others' Time

“WHAT makes you think your time is so much more valuable than anyone else's?” My sister sounded distressed with me as she opened the door and ushered me into the vestibule of the conference room where our committee was meeting. I glanced at my watch as I took off my coat—I was a few minutes late, as usual.

“I—I,” I began faintly as I thought of all the things I had been trying to get done before I left home. Clothes to fold, dishes to put away, and the floor just *had* to have a quick wipe-up. And then I couldn't find my handbag, and the telephone rang, and—and—

“Think of the time you wasted,” my sister continued. “Why don't you start a little sooner than you think necessary—and you might make it on time just once!”

Clearly I was late—one time too many. I should have started to get ready earlier today, but there were so many little things to do.

“Think of the time you wasted,” my sister went on. “Seven hours—”

“Only about twenty minutes,” I interrupted indignantly, “if my watch is correct.” I looked at it once again.

“No, you wasted the time of twenty willing workers. These women's time is just as valuable as yours isn't it? The only difference is that it is *their* time instead of *yours*.”

“Well, if you must look at it that way—” were the words that came out, but I knew there was no other way to look at it. My sister was *right*.

“It's a habit with you, Kathy, a terrible habit. Do try to break it!”

I didn't have much to say for myself, except to agree with her weakly. And she persisted. “Time

is not only money, it is the stuff life is made of. No precious moment is ever recoverable. If it were, I would—”

“I would be on time today,” I interposed with an emphatic nod and a faint smile. And so our committee meeting began that night. Also begun that night was a long and strenuous battle with my self-centered put-it-off-ish nature.

I was quite some time swallowing all my sister's good advice, and still longer digesting it. But it was a good lesson, and a needful one. For how little I had realized how tolerant people were having to be for *my* sake. What a trial I must have been to those who had to live and work *with me*!

It was jolting to realize that people *like me* make meetings start late, and keep people waiting in professional offices, and delay the skilled services which may mean life and death to suffering victims.

My ears still burn as I recall my sister's final word on the subject: “Remember, Kathy, that being late is no status symbol. It is plain bad manners.”

Christan consideration demands that we think of another's time as well as of our own—and that is something I had never thought of! How unappreciative I was of all the time and effort of others—which often might have been worth more than my own. Paul's words flashed upon my mind: “Consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works.” And, “Make the very most of your time.”

I drew a long breath that day as I vowed to break this habit. But a habit so long practiced does not snap off with a single rap. It requires blow upon blow upon blow. I asked the help of my family to keep me reminded. It took a lot of humility to accept their suggestions, but it has surely paid off.

I think I have the delay habit broken now, but I still must keep reminding myself that I do not want to rob others of time that is rightfully theirs.

How about you, my friend? Are you using your time and allowing others to have all that belongs to them? Is your punctuality in good condition?

Yours for a more punctual me,

Kathy

God does not promise immunity from trouble, but He does promise to make us “more than conquerors.” He does not guarantee good weather, but He does guarantee to take a man through it. The man who is led by God discovers that he is able to turn trouble into blessing and tragedy into triumph.

Nameless, But...

WHAT is my name? And wherefore do you ask? The New Testament does not disclose it; why should I? Let me continue to be known simply for what I did for Jesus. I lay no claim to greatness or fame. I possessed no extraordinary talent, nor had I ever before been confronted by any unusual opportunity. One of the more or less unpretentious and obscure friends of Jesus, I nevertheless loved Him with a full heart and counted it my highest joy to do for Him what I could.

Jesus, like every great leader of men, had His public and intimate company of friends—the Twelve Disciples personally selected by Him and called to office as a president forms his cabinet. With them He traveled through Galilee, preached to the multitudes, comforted the poor, and healed the sick. To them He gave private instruction and issued special orders. They were the officers of His Church, the leaders of His cause.

But, as you read the Gospels, other figures emerge, like pictures from shadowed corners in a gallery. There was the unnamed woman who slipped quietly into the house where Jesus was being entertained at supper and anointed Him with the precious ointment. There was Simon of Cyrene of whom the only record is that he lifted the cross from His smarting, bleeding back, and carried it to Calvary. There was the soldier who touched a sponge to His parched lips.

It is to this quiet group that I belong—and to which, no doubt, many of you belong. When or how you became acquainted with Jesus does not matter—whether it was through the reading of a book, the hearing of a sermon, or the entreaty of a friend. The important thing is that you were persuaded by His teaching. The result, I hope, has since been a genuine friendship stirred by many deep impressions and nourished by many an hour of communion, and strengthened by many a prayer and song of praise.

Looking backward over my life, I see more clearly than ever, as the New Testament writers imply by their silence, that my name did not matter, or my address, or my occupation. What *did* matter was the one act of service I was privileged to perform in behalf of my Master and the spirit in which I rendered it. I did it, not to be remembered, but because I loved Him! That is the way it

is told in the Gospels; that is the way I would have it still.

As the tomb of the Unknown Soldier in your nation's capital is a monument, not to one individual patriot but to all who loved their country to the point of giving the last full measure of their devotion; so, let my deed be a symbol of the service rendered by Christ's humble followers in every generation who may not make the newspaper headlines, but whose names are not forgotten in God's book of eternal remembrance! And let my example be a perpetual reminder that one does not have to be great or gifted or famous to serve Him acceptably.

Have you considered the difference between dutifulness and thoughtfulness? Dutifulness waits for a spoken command. Thoughtfulness anticipates commands by divining the desires of the heart. Dutifulness goes the first mile because ordered to do so. Thoughtfulness goes the first mile unasked and the second likewise for love's sake. The dutiful son or daughter finishes the household tasks assigned, then hurries away to play. The thoughtful one stops to ask, "Mother, is there anything else I can do?" Dutifulness is the cup of obedience filled to the brim. Thoughtfulness is the same cup running over.

Is your Christian service characterized by the extra that cheerfully goes beyond the call of duty? Obedience? Yes, of course! Christ expects and commands that. But is your heart behind your obedience? Do you possess that love which always out-runs duty?

I speak from experience. The deed which is recorded of me in the New Testament was not something I did in the line of duty. I did not wait to be elected to an office or appointed to a committee. I was not commanded by Jesus to do what I did, or even requested. I volunteered to do it, and I did it for love's sake.

It was during His last week in Jerusalem before He was crucified. While the rulers and chief priests were trying to ensnare Him in His talk, while gossips were arguing about His claims, while His disciples were wondering when His Kingdom would appear and contending about who would be the greatest, I was turning over in my mind how I might befriend Him. I could not preach or debate.

I could not dissuade His enemies from their evil purpose. I could not lead an army to His rescue. But it was clear that He was not seeking to escape them, and I was sure He was not afraid. What would help Him most as He faced His great ordeal?

Then it came to me—a place of retirement, a quiet retreat where he could be alone with His disciples and keep the Passover. “I will offer Him my home,” I decided. “He shall have the choicest room in my house.”

Could I ever forget the warm glow in His eyes when I told Him of my plan and invited Him to be my Passover guest with His disciples? To my joy I had understood His wish. The desire of His heart had been anticipated and was to be satisfied. We set a time and place where two of His disciples might meet one of my servants. We agreed upon a secret sign, “a man carrying a pitcher of water,” so His enemies would not know. Thus, in due time, on what turned out to be His last night, He was my guest, in the Upper Room of my house.

I can see it, as though it were yesterday—Jesus and His disciples reclining upon the couches which I had arranged around the table, John’s head upon

to the Upper Room. They knew they were welcome to stay as long as they wished. As they left one by one later, I told them to come often, for it would always be His room.

You are not surprised, then, when I tell you that it was to that room that the women came running, early the first day of the week, with the first news of the Resurrection. It was to that room that Cleopas and his companion rushed that same night, coming all the way from Emmaus to make known that the Lord had been revealed to them in the breaking of bread. It was there that the risen Lord appeared Himself a few moments later saying, “Peace be unto you: As my Father hath sent me, so send I you.” It was there that He appeared a week later showing His hands and side to Thomas and saying, “Be not faithless, but believing.”

And that is not all! It was there, in my Upper Room, that the Church of the New Testament was born with just one hundred and twenty members. It was there that the disciples “tarried,” as the Lord had commanded, until they should receive power. It was there that His promise was fulfilled, and, after forty days, there came from Heaven a

... it was my upper room.

his Master’s breast. I can still hear the tone of His voice as He took into His hand the bread which I had given him. “This is my body which is broken for you.” And lifting the cup my hand had filled, He said, “This cup is the New Covenant in my blood.” Afterward there were other words not less unforgettable: “Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. . . . I am the vine, ye are the branches. . . . Abide in me and I in you. . . . Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am that they may behold my glory.” Yes, all of these words were spoken in the Upper Room of my house that evening.

I joined in the hymn which Jesus and His disciples sang as they prepared to go out to the Mount of Olives, said goodnight to them at the door, watched their figures disappear in the darkness, then turned to re-arrange the room. It was midnight, but I was in no mood to hurry. The presence of Jesus seemed still to linger.

It was only natural that His disciples should return to my house after the crucifixion and burial. I was waiting for them at the door, and without a word; for I understood their feelings. I led them

sound as of a rushing mighty wind and all were filled with the Holy Spirit!

Do not misunderstand me. I am not boasting, but deliberately trying to provoke you to a holy jealousy. For there is a sense in which each of you may do what I did. Still the one appropriate provision is a large upper room, furnished and prepared.

See to it, then, I beseech you, that you give Him a *large* room. At His birth there was no room for Him in the inn. Later He faced cold winds of hostility and rejection. And still the majority of hearts are too filled with pleasure and mirth to welcome what He has to offer.

Then there are those who open the door a little way when He knocks, but keep Him standing on the outside while they argue about His claims. Others want Him to enter by the back door, and to use the servant’s quarters. Their interest is limited to what He may do for them.

But there are others whose primary interest is in what they can do for Him. They joyfully welcome Him to their best and largest room. To them He is the most honored of all guests. Their whole house and all that they possess are placed instantly and unreservedly at His disposal. I beseech you,



A Child's Prayer

Lord, teach a little child to pray,
And then accept my prayer;
Thou hearest all the words I say,
For Thou art everywhere.

A little sparrow cannot fall,
Unnoticed, Lord, by Thee;
If I am good, though I am small,
Thou dost take care of me.

Teach me to do the thing that's right,
And when I fail, forgive;
And make it still my chief delight
To serve Thee while I live.

Whatever trouble I am in,
To Thee for help I'll call;
Just keep me, Lord, from stain of sin,
For that's the worst of all.

No wicked thought must be allowed,
For Thou the heart dost see;
And let me not grow vain and proud,
Offending man and Thee.

But may I seek until I find
What Jesus preached and showed—
That humble, meek and lowly mind
Without which none are good.

Nameless But . . .

(Continued from page 21)

give Him a large room! Give Him your very best!

Also, I pray you, give Him an *upper* room. In ancient times, the upper room was often like a veranda or patio. Being on the upper floor, it was a secluded place, away from the noise and din of the street; it was a cool place, where refreshing breezes gently fanned away the heat of the day.

Is there such a room in your life? And is Jesus always welcome there?

Once more, may I remind you to give Him a furnished room. In my upper room, I provided a pitcher of clean water at the door. Beside it were fresh towels and a basin. Inside was a table upon which I had placed the food and drink required for the Passover feast. Around the table were couches upon which Jesus and His disciples might recline in comfort as they ate the Passover and communed with one another.

My room was not furnished lavishly, but it was adequate. And that is all He expects of anyone.

What is the room of your heart like on the inside? Is it characterized by attitudes and emotions in harmony with His? Is that mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus? Has all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander been put away from you with all malice? Are you kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you? Your room, thus furnished, can not but be pleasing to Him.

And is your room ready *now*? When the disciples called at my door, they were not told to wait. I did not begin at once to make excuses. They did not hear me say, "Oh, yes, I did intend to provide a room for Jesus; in fact, I meant to give Him my very best room. But it is not ready yet. I have not put it in order. Tomorrow it will be ready." But tomorrow He was on the cross! Tomorrow would have been forever too late! What folly if I had procrastinated! But I did not. When His disciples arrived saying, "The Master saith, 'Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?'" My room was waiting. It was a large room. It was an upper room. It was furnished. And it was ready.

And so I beseech you, if you are His true friends, you will have a room for Him. What kind will it be? Open wide the door of your heart and give Him a large upper room, furnished and ready. ●●

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MEGIDDO MESSAGE

LETTERS

Men Misrepresent

I have read the section of the January issue of the *Megiddo Message* under Timely Topics, which deals with the extreme perversion in certain quarters of the United States, in public schools, where even derisive language is used against religion and against God.

It seems to me that this regrettable situation prevents any real understanding of God's existence and His purpose for man, His top creation on earth.

The Bible has been so misrepresented that it has gradually lost its logic and purpose for a great proportion of human beings. Unfortunately, the pure teachings have been mixed up with superstitious ideas, dogmas, doctrines and practices, to which the *Megiddo Message* refers. Through wishful interpretations of the Bible hundreds of denominations of the Christian faith have sprung up, only to damage its unity and integrity too often.

This is all due to a general misunderstanding of the Bible.

The *Megiddo Message* is indeed a great light beaming in the darkness that surrounds us. My best wishes for your continued success in promoting the Faith by diffusing the pure teachings of the Lord.

Los Angeles, California

E. S.

Reading

I look forward every month to the *Megiddo Message* magazine.

Because of the *Megiddo Message*, my interest in the Bible has increased, and I now read the Bible every morning the first thing. I learn so much from what I read.

Brockton, Massachusetts

A. D.

I Turned

I read your books and pass them on to others. I am not an authority on God's Word, but I am doing all I know to live for God. At least, I turned from an ugly life of sin and am trying to live a better life. Thank you again. I try to read and study carefully.

Evansville, Indiana

J. H.

Enlightened

The *Megiddo Message* has helped me so much. I've been enlightened to many Bible truths that I did not know. So many things I had been blind to for such a long time I can now see. Thank you so much.

I enjoy all the articles and go back over the magazine many times. I always like to be ready in case God lets my path cross that of someone who might need help.

I pray that God will make me fit to be one of His fold and become a true Christian.

Rockford, Illinois

B. P.

May, 1975

Deceased

My mother (Mrs. Jessie Russell) died February 23. She was nearly 96 years old. I learned about our faith from her.

Williamsville, New York

Mrs. John Kaufman

Mrs. Russell was a subscriber to the *Megiddo Message* for many years, and was an occasional visitor to our Rochester Congregation during her active years. —EDITOR.

The Bible Fulfilled

The events taking place in the world today definitely prove the prophecies as shown in the Bible are coming to a fulfillment. I am very interested in the prophecies and can see God's words coming true.

Leicester, England

C. D.

"Off" or "On"?

I have long felt that the so-called Christian churches were "off the beam" when it came to some of their teachings. The Trinity is impossible to teach, and so are many of the other "standard" teachings of theology. I may be excommunicated by the denominational churches when it is discovered that I am teaching the "truth," but no man can excommunicate me from the true Church of Almighty God! When Christ returns, I am sure no teachers of false theologies will prevail.

Pitman, New Jersey

R. B.

Striving

I am striving to live better every day. We have all lived long enough and had sufficient experience to realize that in order to overcome a besetment, we must do some real work on ourselves. First we have to be willing to admit our faults, and if not chastened or warned about them, we would never see them.

God's promises are to those who overcome. They are to the fighters and the lifters, to the courageous. No cowards, no shirkers or retreaters can enter His Kingdom.

Rome, Georgia

S. J.

"To Do"

I am so thankful God has had mercy upon me, or I would have to continue in the way of the world, destitute of purpose and believing in false hopes. Please accept my gratitude for your work on my behalf. I think of the rhyme:

"Only one life, 'twill soon be past;

Only what's done for Christ will last."

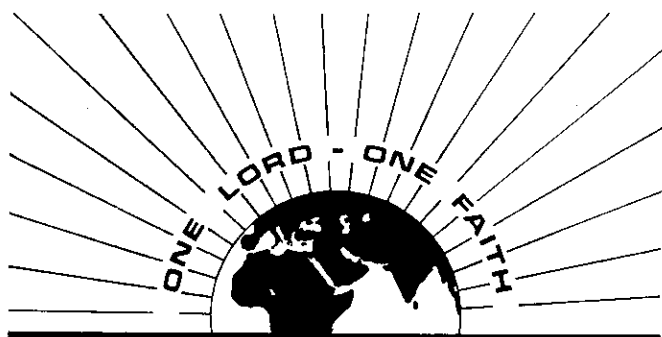
The verb in this rhyme is "to do" for Christ. It denotes action, action to clean sin out of my personal life, action to keep the light of truth burning within my heart that others may see how kindly God has dealt with me, action to keep away the rigor-mortis that sets in on any living thing that is idle. How wonderful it is to be always active doing what should be done for Christ.

Though I am nothing in the eyes of God, by obeying His commandments, by keeping love for God within myself, I can better myself and obtain mercy from the Lord, and even the reward of life eternal.

I realize it is within my power to correct myself, and I have made a commitment to the Lord to do so. God is wonderful, for He is our Rock through whatever difficulties may come.

British Columbia, Canada

R. F.



How Will the Kingdom Come?

Would you like to learn the basis of true Bible belief? Follow the discussions in this series (this is number five), and you will soon see why the Bible is so important to us today. It tells us what is coming in the near future—new authority, new laws, new goals—a new life for everyone on earth. If you are already familiar with God's plan, read to refresh yourself and stimulate your faith. If it is new to you, compare the plan carefully with your Bible and learn what life is all about. If you speak another language, translate this section into your native tongue and share it with your people. It may help them, just as it has helped you.

GOD'S plan is orderly; when the time is right it will be carried to completion. The next event that must happen to bring it to its fulfillment is told in the last two verses of the Old Testament: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Elijah the prophet, not another person calling himself Elijah, not a group of people describing themselves as an "Elijah class," but the Prophet himself who "went up by a whirlwind into heaven" will be sent to prepare people for the coming of Jesus. He is to be sent "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord," a day that is yet future.

This "great and dreadful day" was pictured by Daniel as "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation" (Dan. 12:1). With the whole world in turmoil and crime rising at the fastest rate in history, it would seem that the time must be fast approaching when the great Prophet will appear.

Elijah will perform a very necessary work in alerting the nations of the world to the coming of

Christ. All the inhabitants of the earth will be warned that the return of Christ is imminent and will be given a chance to turn from their wicked ways and worship the true God, "lest I... smite the earth..."

The resurrection of the covenant-makers is another very important part of Elijah's work. We learn from I Thess. 4:16-17 that the "dead in Christ" and "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." The "dead in Christ" being scattered worldwide, the power of God will be necessary to restore them to mortal life and bring them together in one place to meet the Lord when He returns.

The covenant-makers will include both patriarchs and prophets of old, many of whom wrote of their hope of a resurrection. The prophet Balaam "saw the vision of the Almighty," and "heard the words of God," which said: "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh" (Num. 24:16-17). Job expressed his faith in a physical resurrection: "And though after... worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold" (Job 19:26-27). The Psalmist expressed a like hope: "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave" (Ps. 49:15), and Isaiah voiced a similar assurance: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise" (Isa. 26:19).

Daniel recorded the words of the angel who said that "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" and the words that assured him that he would be among them: "For thou [Daniel] shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." It will be a resurrection of both faithful and unfaithful servants, for in the words of Daniel, some shall come forth "to everlasting life," and "some to shame and everlasting contempt." The division will be determined at the Judgment after Christ's arrival.

After the nations have been duly warned, Christ will come. We have no way of determining the length of time between the coming of Elijah and the return of Christ, but we believe the lapse of time will be short. Paul's words in I Thessalonians 4:16-17 make it appear that the resurrection and Christ's coming occur at the same time, but with the widely scattered population, this can hardly be possible.

But the promise of more than a dozen prophets will be fulfilled; Christ will come!

Jesus Himself said before His death: "If I go..., I will come again" (John 14:3). He did go,

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

and when He was taken up two angels stood by to inform the stunned disciples: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). God's plan for this earth hinges on this one development and we are as sure that it will happen as that tomorrow morning will dawn.

How will He come? From His own words we learn that He "shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: . . . and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 25:31; 16:27).

The first order of business will be the Judgment of the covenant-makers, those who throughout the six-thousand-year day of salvation promised to serve Him, to work in His vineyard.

One of Daniel's visions included a preview of the Judgment scene: "I beheld till the thrones were cast down [placed], and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: . . . A fiery stream [symbolic of divine judgment] issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened" (Dan. 7:9-10). The living covenant-makers, together with those resurrected, compose the great number who will stand before Christ [here described as the Ancient of days] at the Judgment.

The "thousand thousands" who minister unto Him are attending angels who accompany Him. The purpose of the Judgment is to determine whether or not each kept his covenant. Jesus compared this separating "them one from another" to the "shepherd [who] divideth his sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:32). The sheep represent the faithful to whom He says: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you" (v. 34), and the goats represent the unfaithful, those on the left hand, to whom He will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire [everlasting destruction, II Thess. 1:7-9]" (v. 41).

Where is the Judgment held? We are not told where Christ's throne is to be located; but the power of the Holy Spirit having been restored at Elijah's coming, the covenant-makers would not have to be confined to the earth, as is evidenced by the meeting with the Lord in the air. It could be possible that the Judgment is to be in the air, for when Christ stands on Mt. Zion with the overcomers, the 144,000 "which were redeemed from

the earth" (Rev. 14:1-4), the Judgment must necessarily be past and the faithful determined.

Zechariah also described in prophecy Christ and the saints gathered near Jerusalem, and indicated where the meeting in the air will terminate: "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, . . . and the Lord my God shall [appear] and all the saints with [him]" (Zech. 14:4-5). Christ is described as "the Lord my God," not because He is God Almighty, but because He is God's representative among men, Immanuel, as the prophet Isaiah (7:14) said He should be named. The Hebrew name Immanuel means "God is with us" (Matt 1:23).

Christ and His 144,000 chosen ones are now ready to begin their reign on the earth. A worldwide announcement will be made: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come" (Rev. 14:7). This is the first step toward turning the world into one nation under the rulership of Christ and the saints. All the inhabitants of the earth will be caused to hear and will be given a chance to submit to the new government.

True to the prophetic word, they will not submit willingly. Many will, but others will join together to resist the new Ruler and His associates. The result is the Battle of Armageddon.

We learn more about this battle from the Revelator: "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. . . . And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Rev. 19:19; 16:16). The Lord and His army will be the victors: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings" (Rev. 17:14).

Waft, waft ye winds, His message,
And you, ye waters, roll,
Till like a sea His glory
Shall spread from pole to pole;
Till over sin victorious,
O'er sickness, death and pain,
The King returns in glory
To take His throne and reign.

ELIJAH

(Continued from page 12)

barrel—and, yes, there was still a little left! And there was a little oil in the jug. The woman shouted for joy! How good it felt to run her fingers through the meal. Now she and her son could have their loaf, just as she had planned before the stranger came.

The next morning there was *still* flour in the barrel and oil in the jug—that morning, and every morning as long as the famine lasted. Never very much, but just enough!

Elijah must have spent about two years with this widow and her son in Zarephath. During this time Elijah must have taught them much about the true God and His workings with His people. It is likely he even told her how God had sent him to “a certain widow woman,” who would sustain him—how marvelously God works! God had taken note of the widow even before she knew of Him.

Then something happened in the little home. The widow’s son became very sick and died.

The widow was perplexed. Had God sent this

prophet to save them from starvation, only to let her child die from sickness? In her grief she blamed the Prophet: “What made you interfere, you man of God? You came here to bring my sins to light and kill my son” (I Kings 17:18, NEB). No doubt the holy life of Elijah had made the widow conscious of the evil in her own heart. But now she thought the God of Elijah must be punishing her for her sins by taking away her son.

But in the face of this trying experience, Elijah again proved himself the same godly man he had been before. He did not judge the widow harshly or declare quickly that he was innocent. In fact, he did not even answer her question. He said, “Give me thy son,” and took the boy up to his abode and laid him on his own bed.

All this time Elijah was thinking. Might God, who had sealed up the dew and the rain, also answer his plea to restore the life of this child? Such a thing was unheard of, even in the spectacular history of the Israelite people. But was anything too hard for the Lord?

Elijah prayed: “O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?” Elijah then did everything he could. He “stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child’s soul [life*] come into him again.” He did all he could, with his whole being, and expected God to do the rest.

And God did. “The Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul [life*] of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth” (I Kings 17:20-23).

The miracle brought a positive response of heartfelt conviction from the widow. “Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth” (I Kings 17:24).

No wonder that Jesus, more than eight centuries later, cited the “Widow of Zarephath” as an example of outstanding faith and character. For “unto none...was Elijah sent, save unto” her (Luke 4:25-26).

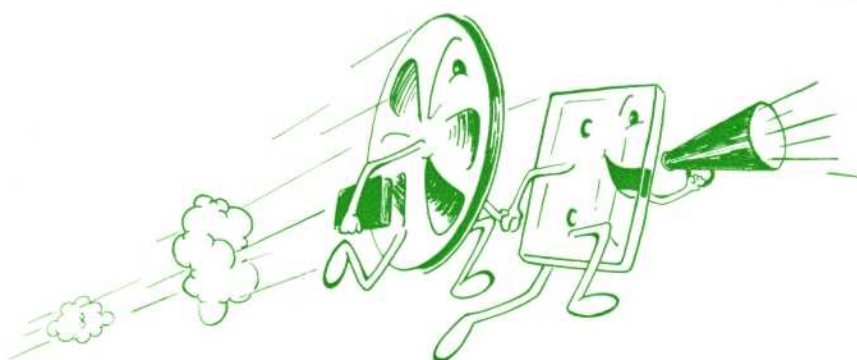
(TO BE CONTINUED)

* The translation of the text in the KJV: “The soul of the child came into him again,” is misleading, as it supports the illusion that the “soul” is some part of a man’s nature which is immortal and therefore survives death. The Hebrew *nephesh* translated “soul” in this text does not refer to an immortal, non-material spirit, but only to ordinary, physical life, which ends in death.

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*Teach me Thy patience; still with Thee
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In work that keeps faith sweet and strong,
In trust that triumphs over wrong.*

*In hope that sends a shining ray
Far down the future's broadening way,
In peace that only Thou canst give,
With Thee, O Master, let me live.*