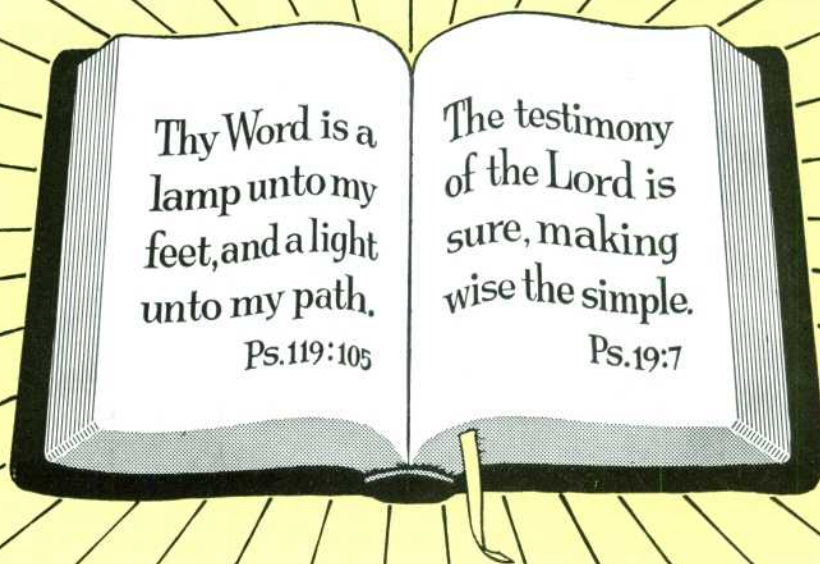


# Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



## Who Are the Angels?

Careful! Angels Are Watching  
Angels Minister Today  
Of Beings Elsewhere and Beyond

# Drifting to Death!

ON many of our lakes and rivers where there are great waterfalls, boatmen maneuver their crafts almost to the very brink and then, with a mighty heave on the oars or a sudden burst of speed with the motor, pull themselves upstream and out of danger. These men all know there is an element of risk in this dangerous practice, for there is a point beyond which it is impossible to escape. Those who flirt with death this way tell us there is no exact way to know just where this point is; that wind and current change the location of this invisible but all-important line of demarcation.

Sometimes a motorboat operator, his engine out of commission, or a man on a raft, or a boatman sleepily drifting downstream, suddenly finds himself beyond this point. Nothing can be done. Destruction is inevitable. There is no escape. End over end he plunges headlong, to be dashed to pieces on the jagged rocks below.

Drifting in the spiritual life can be equally disastrous, in fact more so, for we are dealing not only with an earthly destiny but an eternal one. It is so easy to drift, to go along from day to day, half-concerned, half-thoughtless of our eternal welfare. It is so easy to drift, to not resist that unholy thought or action that pushes us out into the dangerous current. *It is so easy to drift.*

It is the ease of drifting that constitutes its peril, spiritually. Ease is the opposite of effort. And if an element of danger accompanies such indifference, there is also a fascination that hypnotizes one into a false sense of well-being. *We may be drifting and not even realize it!*

Any relaxation of our conscious efforts toward godlikeness is dangerous, exceedingly dangerous. Omission of religious exercise, however slight, tends to put our moral nature into a state of semiconsciousness or downright sleepiness. We become lazy, indifferent. Gradually our minds slip into spiritual unconsciousness, and the things of God become less and less appealing, until sud-

denly we awake to find ourselves abhorring the things we once loved, and loving the things we once abhorred.

The moment progress in the spiritual life halts, drifting begins. So long as the Christian rests on his oars he is going backward. It is pleasant to rest and to watch others work. There is an almost vicious satisfaction in being part of a church in which someone else is doing all the work, yet the credit is shared by all. A man in such circumstances may think he is safe and reasonably secure, but if he ever becomes conscious of his position he will be startled and dismayed at his distance from God, and may find it extremely difficult to make his way back against the overwhelming obstacles of his own unfitness.

One of the most startling and dangerous aspects of drifting is its rapidity. Often, on the surface, there is no hint of the current that pulls beneath. Even a short relapse, if not overcome, may result in eternal tragedy. A brief explosion of bitterness, a moment's indulgence in jealousy, a second's flash of hatred, may be the start of a never-ending reprobation. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (Jas. 1:8).

Drifting can be fatal. It can mean ruin, eternal ruin. Indolence in our Christian lives is just as sinful, just as wicked in the sight of God as idolatry. He who allows himself to be swept along by his own whims and fancies, seeking his own pleasures, justifying himself in his own opinions, is sinning. He who compromises his Christian principles for secular interests and the love of ease is drifting, and is in danger of eternal ruin.

We possess equipment that will insure the finish of our Christian voyage. It is a strong determination to go all the way with God, plus the anchor of unshakable faith that cannot fail. The Christian who is determined, even if it means exhaustive work and the loss of the most treasured earthly concern, to make the Kingdom his home and Christ his Companion, will never drift. Whatever the storm, his anchor will hold. ●●

A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone.

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF  
THE MEGIDDO MISSION CHURCH  
L. T. NICHOLS, *Founder*  
KENNETH E. FLOWERDAY, *Editor*

The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

- Strengthen your faith in the Bible
- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God
- Bring peace and stability to your life

Published monthly by the  
MEGIDDO MISSION CHURCH  
481 Thurston Road  
Rochester, N. Y. 14619

● SUBSCRIPTION RATES: One year, \$2.00; six months, \$1.00. Make checks or money orders for all literature payable to the Megiddo Mission Church. Please notify promptly of any change of address. Foreign subscribers, please make all payments by international money orders, available at most banks and post offices.

Second Class Postage paid at Rochester, New York.

## Megiddo Means

"a place of troops"

—Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon

"a place of God"

—Young's Analytical Concordance

Geographically, Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, located at a strategic point, demanding heavy fortification; for Palestine is the age-old gateway between East and West, and the avenue connecting North and South. Supremacy there has long been the envy of aggressive nations, and the prevailing power has guarded it with jealous eye. The famous pass at Megiddo through a solid mountain range is the one means by which this avenue between continents may be traversed.

In the spiritual parallel, it is a place of troops, where soldiers are equipped for spiritual warfare against the forces of evil without and within. "The weapons we wield are not merely human but divinely potent to demolish strongholds; we demolish sophistries and all that rears its proud head against the knowledge of God; we compel every human thought to surrender in obedience to Christ" (II Cor. 10:4-5, NEB).

# Megiddo Message

May, 1976

Vol. 63, No. 5

---

## EDITORIAL

- 2 **Drifting to Death**  
We may be drifting and not even realize it!

## ARTICLES

- 4 **Who Are the Angels?**  
Learn about their origin, their work, their life, their visits to men.
- 7 **Careful! Angels Are Watching**  
A serious check for serious Christians.
- 11 **Angels Minister Today**  
Unseen, unknown, they encamp and deliver every God-fearer.
- 17 **Of Beings Elsewhere and Beyond...**  
Questions and answers on the heavenly family.
- 22 **TV: Blessing or Curse?**  
An outstanding invention, but its consequences are frightening.
- 24 **"The Lord Himself Shall Give You A SIGN"**  
A prophecy of Christ fulfilled.

## REGULAR FEATURES

- 9 **Kathy Kandor's Korner : Who Is Important?**  
How different is God's scale of evaluation!
- 12 **Fruitful Fragments**
- 13 **Understanding the Bible : The Second Advent of Christ**
- 19 **From Parent to Parent : Ten Commandments for a Happy Home**
- 20 **One Lord, One Faith : Salvation—How Do We Get It?**  
Step One: Knowledge
- 25 **Our Readers Write**
- 26 **Meditations on the Word : The Hidden Man of the Heart**  
On First Peter 3:3-4. God looks at hidden things.
- 28 **Cover Feature : Guardian Angels**
-

# Who Are the Angels?

**T**HE subject of the angels, their origin, their work, their home, their life, is one of the most fascinating and inspiring subjects of sacred Scripture. Celestial beings far removed from the problems of mortality, they enjoy the fullest measure of God's blessings.

But who are they?

To the majority of churchgoers, angels are spirit beings created by God to surround His throne and sing His praise. Less religious persons credit their existence to imaginative and descriptive writers, idealists and dreamers. The dictionary tells us they are "spiritual beings superior to man in power and intelligence." What shall we believe?

Since no man or woman living today has seen an angel, we must go to the Bible to learn about these superbeings.

The Bible does not tell us all we would like to know about angels, but from what it does tell us we can know that they are real, animate beings with real, material bodies. From the various accounts of their appearances to men, they seem to have no unusual physical features—not even the traditional wings. Wings were an artistic concept added in the days when men believed that everything capable of flying had to have wings. Modern artists, realizing that this is not true, no longer add wings to their pictures of angels. The Scriptures indicate that they appeared quite like people as we know them—at times they were thought to be ordinary people. The writer to the Hebrews even suggests the possibility of entertaining angels "unawares" (Heb. 13:2). The three angelic visitors to Abraham were identified by the Scripture writer only as "three men," and the two who went on to visit Lot were received by him as travelers in need of food and shelter (Gen. 19:1-2).

An angel, identified as "the captain of the Lord's host," appeared to Joshua at Jericho as a "man . . . with his sword drawn in his hand" (Josh. 5:13-14). The angel sent from God to explain Daniel's vision to him, and again to give him "insight and understanding" concerning future events was described as having "the appearance of a man." Again he was plainly identified as "the man Ga-

briel"—his stature must have been comparable to that of an ordinary man. The narrative also tells us he "touched" Daniel (Dan. 8:15-19; 9:21)—which a spirit or phantom could not do.

## Angels Are Messengers

The Hebrew word translated "angel" means simply "messenger, envoy." And this was their principal function as recorded in the Scriptures, to minister to the people of God. They were God's messengers to deliver His word to His human servants; they were His envoys to announce special events; they were His army to protect His people and to execute His punishment on the wicked. Angels came to fill the physical, material, emotional and spiritual needs of the people to whom they were sent. Each mortal so privileged could testify, "The angel of the Lord came unto me." In some instances the record tells us "the Lord" appeared, or that "God came down." But we are told also that "No man hath seen God at any time" (I John 4:12). Angels, being sons of God, are called by their Father's name and speak for God. As Exodus 23:20-21 tells us, speaking of the time God was sending His angel to guide the Israelites through the wilderness, "Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in him." The Almighty God does not come down to earth to attend to its affairs, but sends His angels as His personal representatives.

When the patriarch Abraham was seventy-five years old, the angel of the Lord appeared and told him to break away from his home and kindred in Haran and seek life in the land of Canaan, the place which he should afterward receive for an inheritance.

More than two decades later the Lord sent an angel to carry another message to Abram: "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). At the same time he promised Abram a son which should be his rightful heir.

Angels appeared to Abraham again in the plains of Mamre as he sat in his tent door, at which time they reconfirmed to Sarah and himself the promise of a son and also revealed the imminent destruction of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

When God called upon Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac and Abraham obeyed, the angel of God was there to stay his hand so that Isaac did not die (Genesis 22).

An angel of the Lord appeared to Lot and his family, warning them of the doom awaiting his home town because of the wickedness of its people. The angel even accompanied him, his wife and daughters, taking them by the hand as they fled to a place of safety.

When Jacob was on his way back to Canaan with his family and his flocks, it is recorded that "the angels of God met him." So surprised and overcome was Jacob by this unusual meeting that he exclaimed, "This is God's Army!" (Gen. 32:2, Amplified Bible). Again, when Jacob feared an encounter with his brother Esau, an angel of God appeared to him and "wrestled with him until daybreak." The heavenly visitor even changed Jacob's name, informing him that he should henceforth be called Israel, meaning "a prince of God."

An angel appeared to Moses "in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush" (Ex. 3:2), to appoint him to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Moses offered what he thought were plausible and compelling reasons why he should not fulfill the commission, but the angel of God refused each excuse and departed with the final command, "Go."

Repeatedly through the days of the wilderness wanderings, angels appeared to minister to Moses and disclose God's power and glory to the people. The Law of Sinai was given through the medium of angels (Acts 7:53). The angels even performed funeral rites, taking charge of Moses' burial (Deut. 34:5-6).

When the children of Israel crossed the Jordan into the Land of Promise, the ministering angel revealed himself to Joshua before the conquest of the land began. "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come" (Josh. 5:13-15).

Angels appeared to announce the birth of Jacob and Esau, of Samson, of John the Baptist and of Jesus.

The Lord sent an angel to punish King David for

his sin in numbering Israel. He sent a pestilence among the Israelites, and seventy thousand died. At the proper time the plague was stayed by the hand of the angel (II Sam. 24:1-16).

The prophet Elijah was encouraged by an angel as he lay under the juniper tree. He had requested that he might die, thinking himself to be the only servant of God in the land. The angel later assured him there were yet seven thousand, representing a substantial number, who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

Angels were also present during the ministry of the prophet Elisha. One time when danger seemed to threaten, the servant of Elisha was worried. A host of the Syrians seemed to be surrounding them. "Alas!" he cried to his master. "How shall we do?" And Elisha answered, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Then "the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountains were full of horses and chariots of fire around about Elisha" (II Kings 6). And the chariots of the Lord are "twenty thousand, even thousands of angels" (Ps. 68:17).

The prophet Daniel enjoyed angelic visits. In answer to his prayer, the angel Gabriel appeared to give him wisdom and understanding, and to inform him that he was greatly beloved of the Lord (Daniel 9 and 10).

Angels ministered to Jesus many times during His earthly ministry. After His temptation in the wilderness, we read that "Angels came and ministered unto him." Angels were present at the transfiguration. Just before His crucifixion, Jesus was strengthened by an angel in the garden of Gethsemane. On the morning of the resurrection "the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door." Angels took Jesus into heaven, and two tarried behind to assure the astonished disciples that He would in like manner return (Acts 1:9-11).

The work of the angels continued through New Testament times in behalf of God's people. Philip was directed by an angel to the Ethiopian eunuch who was yearning for an understanding of the Scriptures.

An angel directed Cornelius, a devout man who feared God, to find a man who could teach him the will of God.

An angel delivered Peter from prison.

An angel stood by Paul on board the ill-fated ship caught in a stormy sea, to assure him that not a single life would be lost.

As John looked out upon the lonely Isle of Patmos, an angel sent by Jesus Himself appeared to

him with a message that seemed to transform the desolate place into a part of heaven.

Are they not indeed “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Heb. 1:14). They are! And they encamp “round about them that fear him and [deliver] them” (Ps. 34:7).

### Angelic Life

Angels enjoy a state of life superior to any known to us. A permanent part of God’s family in heaven (Eph. 3:15), they cannot die (Luke 20:35-36). They are immortal, incorruptible, “partakers of the divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4).

Because the Bible pictures angelic life as the same immortal life which glorified humans shall someday experience, we believe that angels were once human as we ourselves and according to God’s eternal purpose they lived righteously before God and were rewarded with the superior state of life they now enjoy. This is the hope which the Almighty God still proffers to mortals today: “They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither . . . can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection” (Luke 20:35-36). Worthy men and women shall be made “equal to” —identical with—the angels!

This glorious change from mortality to immortality was the sublime hope of the apostle Peter, as he addressed “them that have obtained like precious faith with us.” These are his words: “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature” (II Pet. 1:1-4). What more sustaining promise could have enlivened hope in the hearts of those early persecuted Christians, than to look forward to the day when they might be “partakers of the divine nature”—be made equal to the angels!

This same change to the angelic state was the hope of the apostle Paul, as he wrote to the Philippian brethren: “We . . . are citizens of heaven, and from heaven we expect our deliverer to come, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transfigure the body belonging to our humble state, and give it a form like that of his own resplendent body, by the very power which enables him to make all things subject to himself” (Phil. 3:20-21, NEB). Christ’s

own “resplendent body” is no longer subject to death, and He has promised a glorified body like His to worthy mortals.

The apostle Paul writes more about this glorious change to the angelic form of body and life in his letter to the Corinthians. “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” The inheritors of immortality have been changed into a substance not subject to decay, a substance superior to flesh and blood.

“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (I Cor. 15:49-55). All who receive that change will be “equal unto the angels.”

Still another Scripture writer shared this same expectation. The beloved John, in his First Epistle, wrote, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (I John 3:2).

But all the men of God who looked forward to the change to the angelic, divine nature, knew also the price. As John expressed it: “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure” (I John 3:3). Those who are now angels, according to God’s eternal purpose, had to undergo the same purifying process. God’s overall plan is eternal and perpetual: to reward obedience, righteousness, “patient continuance in well doing” with “glory and honor and immortality, eternal life” (Rom. 2:7). The angels have it, Christ has it, and we can have it too—if we will purify ourselves even as they are pure. ●●

---

Read This Slowly, and Think:

**Does my life please God?**  
**Is there anyone I should forgive?**  
**Is my daily life a testimony for God?**  
**Am I doing anything I would condemn in others?**  
**How much time do I waste?**  
**Is there anything I cannot give up for God?**  
**Am I better today than I was yesterday?**

# Careful! Angels Are Watching

**Y**OU have never performed before an applauding throng. You have never been the hero of the cheering crowd. Nor has your name been listed among the Who's Who of this world. It is well, for God is not seeking the wise and mighty of this world.

Yet you know what it is to be watched. You know the intensity and real earnest effort you give a task when someone is expecting great things of you. This reaction is especially noticeable in children. Watch the small child constructing a mansion with his building blocks. He does not know you are watching. Slowly, block by block the work proceeds. Then you speak to him. You let him know he is doing a fine job and give him a little encouragement. Watch what happens.

A team plays a game in the great stadium. No one is around, no one is watching; it is just everyday practice, nothing spectacular. But let the seats be filled with onlookers, let there be scarcely standing room among the bleachers and let the cheers of the throng fill the air, and suddenly the players are electrified. The game becomes serious business—someone is watching.

Paul felt this same way about his whole Christian life. He and his co-workers, he writes (I Cor. 4:9), were "made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men," or as the Amplified New Testament puts it, "a show in the world's amphitheatre—with both men and angels as spectators."

To get the full significance of this illustration, picture the Roman arena as Paul knew it. In the arena gladiators made sport for the populace. The arena was the scene of many a bloody and terrible sight. In the center, at ground level, was the great open space where the gladiators confronted each other in a veritable death-show. Surrounding this arena were tiers of seats rising in stadium fashion to great heights and seating many thousands of people. There were box seats at the lower level where prominent people and the emperor sat, while the high gallery seats accommodated the ordinary citizens.

Like the gladiators, Paul and his fellow-apostles

had been appointed to fight in a great arena before a host of spectators.

As Christians today, we still live and work in public display. We are a constant influence to those who see us. The world is watching, and the Bible we display to them in real life is the clearest statement of faith they can ever expect to read. It is living; it is active. They cannot miss its message. But is it genuine? Is it true? Is our life a testimony and a display of all that God would have us be? Can other men, seeing our "good works," be moved to glorify our Father who is in heaven?

Yet human eyes are not all that behold us. Paul said we are performers before men *and angels!*

We naturally think that the whole concern of angels is for the things of God and heaven; surely they are too absorbed with the infinite to notice the finite. They have been placed beyond the bounds of time. Many of them have even looked upon the face of God Almighty. They dwell among the celestial. How can they have any interest in the lowly human creatures on this planet? Why should they have the least concern for what *we* are doing?

Yet divine spectators we have, great hosts of angels who are watching over the progress of our world with intense interest. The Bible tells us the very universe observes our Christian progress. "The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own. The world of creation cannot as yet see reality, not because it chooses to be blind, but because in God's purpose it has been so limited—yet it has been given hope. And the hope is that in the end the whole of created life will be rescued from the tyranny of change and decay and have its share in that magnificent liberty which can only belong to the children of God!" (Rom. 8:19-23, Phillips). Think of it—"the whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own." The angels are watching. They are eager, anxious for the day of our salvation.

It is written of Jesus that during His mortal

life He was "seen of angels" (I Tim. 3:16). This is the normal circumstance of every aspiring son or daughter of God. We may be hardly known in this world and yet be worthy of the love and concern of the angels. For if we are heirs of salvation, if we are called of God, God sends His angels to minister to our needs.

The angels have witnessed the whole working-out of God's plan on earth from the very first. They observe firsthand the building of the body of Christ's true Church. They miss nothing as they watch the movements of time. Even now they "see the complex wisdom of God's plan being worked out through the Church" (Eph. 3:10, Phillips).

What does this mean so far as you and I are concerned? It means that God's angels right now witness everything we do. They read every thought. They listen to every word. The angels are watching. How mightily this fact should influence the pattern of our lives!

The angels are watching. Known to them are all the motives which we scarcely reveal even to ourselves. Before them our whole lives are as transparent as clear glass. They see, and they know; and how they yearn for us to succeed. Oh, that we, down in the arena of life, could look up and see the bleachers filled with these divine spectators, all there cheering for us!

The angels are watching. And what do they see? Do they recognize us as children of God, men and women whom God will someday accept as His own sons and daughters? Are we the kind of persons they look forward to having for their own brothers and sisters in the great family of God? Do they see among us that godly love which they feel among themselves? Do they see us encouraging and edifying one another in love, bearing each other's burdens, watchful for each other's welfare?

Careful! Angels are watching. What do they think of us as they see us playing with a temptation we should flee from, or what do they think as they see us sitting idle when we should be working? What do they think of our halfhearted commitment or our wavering faith?

Careful! Angels are watching. They know our spiritual capability. Do they see us living up to our best, daily outdoing ourselves in spiritual advancement? or do they shake their heads in dismay as they see us wasting precious opportunities we could have turned into spiritual milestones?

Careful! Angels are watching. What do they think about our inner goals and motives? Do they see in us a concern for purity that surpasses every other interest in life? The world is full of people

who have enthusiasm for sports or hobbies or business or politics. They will cheer and shout and get all excited over nothing more than the victory of their favorite team or candidate. And today's winner may be covered with mud tomorrow, so brief is the glory of their success.

But what about us? What are *we* concerned about? Careful! Angels are watching. Is ours a deep and constant enthusiasm for the things that really matter?

Our world today offers so much of trouble to fill the mind. Modern youngsters are lost in a search for what they can neither define nor locate. Politicians seek to please at any price. Law enforcement officials are bewildered by crime which they can neither restrain nor overpower. News of accidents abound. Heroes of the theater and play-world glamorize the promiscuous and mortify the virtuous. What are we as Christians to do?

It is all so near, so present, so real. Be careful! Angels are watching. There is great danger in becoming so absorbed in observing all these things that we will forget what lies beyond. When our minds get all taken up with these passing things, the eternal gets pushed aside. Careful! Our best energies are so easily squandered on temporary ends.

What should we do? We may not be able to prevent the facts from striking our minds, but we *can* control the amount of interest and attention they receive. If we could hear the chorus of angels voicing the praises of God all around us, wouldn't we try harder to keep our mind free from the worthless rubbish of life?

The angels are watching. They are eager for our victory. How can we afford to disappoint them!

O how careful we should be as we conduct ourselves within the great arena of life. The angels are eager to see us forgive the brother who has wronged us, and to forget the wrong. And when we ourselves are in the wrong, they would have us turn square around, admit it and do better.

We have a duty to fulfill. We put it off, waiting, waiting for a more convenient season. Careful! Angels are watching. They would have us go and do it—now. It will be no easier tomorrow.

What do they think about our concern for the things of God? Are we willing and glad to give ourselves in any capacity we may fill, or do we think of ourselves and the glory of our own image? Careful! Angels are watching.

The angels of God delivered Lot and his family from the uncleanness of Sodom. They took them by the hand and hastened them out of the doomed

*(Continued on page 10)*



Kathy  
Kandor's  
Korner

## Who Is Important?

SAY, boys," Roy's husky voice floated in through the open window. "My dad has just been made president of the biggest company in this state!"

"So what. My dad is leaving tomorrow for West Germany. He is going to talk to some very important business men," boasted Sam.

I glanced out the window at the three boys who stood talking on the sidewalk. Keith and two of his schoolmates, they had long been very competitive.

I watched as Keith self-consciously drew away from the boys. His shoulders were sagging and he thrust his hands deep into his pockets as he turned away from them and headed into the house.

"Good afternoon, Son," I greeted him, trying to be extra cheery as he shuffled through the doorway. "How did school go today?" I asked, though I could guess by his dragging footsteps.

Keith was a picture of dejection. He ignored my question. "Mom," he spoke, his voice thick with self-pity, "how come Dad never does anything special or exciting like Roy's or Sam's fathers? Dad never talks to anyone famous, or goes to any great places. He's just a plain salesman. Why aren't we important like some other people? Dad never does anything worth bragging about!"

"Let's sit down and talk about it, shall we?" I asked as I looked into his unhappy face. I placed a cover over the meat patties I had been preparing and we sat down by the kitchen table.

"Keith, I know your father's life seems dull in comparison with that of Sam's and Roy's fathers. But I don't think you realize how important your Dad really is."

"MY dad important?"

"Yes, important. Have you thought about the things that make a person really important?"

Keith made no reply as he stared blankly at the tablecloth. So I went on.

"Different things are important to different people. To Sam's and Roy's fathers, their business is the most important. Your dad thinks more of us than he does of his business, and he works hard because he loves us and wants to be able to provide the things we need. I believe I've heard of both Sam and Roy being very lonesome when their fathers have been gone on those long, long trips."

"They sure have been lonesome," was Keith's rejoinder. "And when they get lonesome they get grumpy and hard to get along with."

"Your father does his work and does it well, but he isn't interested in a lot of promotions that would take him away from us. You may not think about it, but when he is home he is interested in what *you* do."

"That's nice. But still, Mom--"

"Roy's dad doesn't have time to look at the things Roy does and help the family around home—he has so many business engagements."

"Yes, Roy says he's almost never home for a whole weekend. I *am* glad Dad isn't like that."

"There are some other things that make your Dad really important, too, Keith. Your dad is trying to be important in God's sight, and that is the greatest work a person can do."

"Why's *that* so great?"

"Keith, who is Jesus?"

"The Son of God, and our coming King."

"Was He important? *Is* He important?"

Keith nodded.

"Was it because He was the president of a big company? or the ruler of the country?"

No answer.

"Or maybe it was because He went to Rome and talked with the Emperor."

"Now Mom! Jesus didn't care about talking with the Emperor."

"Many, many people of Jesus' day would have felt very honored to visit the Emperor. But Jesus was content to grow up in a humble home and learn a humble trade. It's not what you do in a physical way, but *who you are*, that counts."

"But Mom, Dad can't be great doing nothing just because Jesus was. Jesus was God's Son, to begin with."

"You are right, but it was the kind of person He was that made Him great. Your dad, Keith, is trying to be that same kind of person Jesus was. Tell me, Keith, have you ever seen your dad angry at any of us?"

Keith was thoughtful as he replied. "No."  
"Keith, there aren't very many children who can say that of their dad."

"Sam says his dad gets so angry and shouts at them sometimes—I saw him do it once."

"The Bible tells us that a man who can rule his spirit is greater than a man who can capture a city. So your father is greater than the greatest general."

Keith's face lit up, but he made no comment.

"Another thing, Keith. When your father says something, do you think he is telling the truth?"

"Why of course!"

"Your father is honest, strictly honest. But all fathers aren't. More than one boy your age has seen his father do or say many things that aren't quite straight. And he doesn't tell low stories as many men do, or slander or gossip. I think you have a pretty fine dad, Keith."

"I think so too, Mom."

"Keith, your father is more concerned with what God thinks of him and with what God will pay him than with what he can make or be in this world. He wants to be a co-ruler with Christ in the new Kingdom that is coming. Just think, Keith, your father a *king!*"

Keith's eyes shone at the thought.

"The faithful will be made like the angels. Then your dad—if faithful—will be able to travel to other worlds and visit the homes of those wonderful angels. And someday he will even be privileged to look upon the face of God! That's what your dad is working for."

Keith turned to me with large shining eyes filled with admiration and wonder.

"O Mom, I *do* have an important father. I'll never be ashamed of him again." He paused and looked seriously at me. "Mom, do you think I can ever be like Dad?"

"Most certainly you *can* be, Son. That will make us both so happy. If we can all be faithful to God, we can live together all through eternity! Won't that be wonderful!"

I went back to my work in the kitchen, but my thoughts were soaring—as thoughts do at moments like this. The goal was yet many steps up the road of life, but would it be—would *our* example cause our son to make this decision for God, too? Would we all become "important" people before God?

Yours determined to do my part,  
*Kathy*

## Careful! Angels Are Watching

(Continued from page 8)

city. This seems to have been their role through the centuries—heavenly expeditors, we might call them. Whenever they appeared, their message was one of "Hurry up!" It was "Hasten" or "Go quickly," or "Rise up quickly" or "Escape." No time for loitering, no time for indecision, no time for weak and faltering purpose.

Even today the angels of God may watch us with the same longing desire to hasten us out of the doomed system in which we live, before God's judgments descend upon it. Are we cooperating with them? Do we heed the divine pronouncement?

God's angels are watching. What do they see in our homes? Are we always kind, and helpful and considerate? Are we the type of people we would imagine as fitting companions for them? Or do we tend to be challenging and difficult and superior, what Paul called "carnal"?

The angels bear the name of God. And they love those who love God and live lives consecrated to Him. An angel appeared to Zacharias and foretold the birth of his son, John. And it was written of him and Elisabeth that "they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6). An angel appeared to Mary, the mother of Jesus. The book of Acts records that angels appeared to Peter and to Paul. In Old Testament times they appeared to Elijah and Daniel and other men of God. Always they were interested in those who were interested in God.

Has there been such a commitment to God in your life and mine that evokes the angels' interest in *our* lives? Heaven draws near the souls of the consecrated, and the angels of God strengthen those who are committed. There is no heavenward desire, or love for holiness, or longing for goodness, or struggle for purity that the angels of God do not see and approve.

As you meet each new day, as you lift your heart and hands to God, think about the divine companionship He is providing His own, and *do* be careful—for wherever you are, or whatever you are doing, ANGELS ARE WATCHING! ●●

---

*Lord, as I contemplate Thy grace,  
I hide my face in shame;  
Oh, wake me! Rouse me! Lord, I pray,  
And stir me into flame!*

# Angels Minister Today

WE have never met one of those superior beings called angels. We have never seen one of them on a swift, lightning-like flight from heaven to earth. We have never talked to one or listened to an angel choir.

Yet there may be right within our reach this very moment an angel of God! We could know, if we could only see. Though we lack the sight, we have the promise:

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Ps. 34: 7). And, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:14).

Among the greatest and most precious promises of sacred Scripture stand these words. They are simple and straightforward. Even a child may grasp the message. God has promised that His angels will protect and assist any and all who shall be heirs of salvation.

We should notice that the promise is without time limit or date of expiration. It is an ongoing fact. Angels have ministered. Angels do minister. Angels will continue to minister. The only qualification is that one be a God-fearer (the fear of the Lord is "to hate evil"—Prov. 8:13), or an heir of salvation. If we meet this qualification, we can be sure of the angels' protection and help in sickness or health, on sea or on land, at home or abroad. Deliverance—within the scope of what God has promised—is sure to the God-fearer.

But we should notice that God's promise does not say how or by what means the angels will protect and give aid. Nor does God promise that they will always be visible.

The angels are just as real and just as actively interested in God's people today as they have been in any time past. We can state this confidently because God has promised it will be true, and His promise cannot fail.

How are we to believe in something we cannot see? Some people today claim to be realists who cannot believe anything they cannot see. But even they are not right. Nature gives us hundreds of examples of things we know are real but cannot see. Take a drop of water from a mountain lake in the palm of your hand. Examine it closely. You see nothing but water. But place it under a microscope and you will see it is teeming with life.

Consider that scientists now know everything in our world is composed of atoms. The atom was so named because it was thought to be the smallest part of anything. Yet scientists now count particles within the atom!—invisible to human eyes but as real as the objects they compose.

Our world has many things in it which our senses cannot perceive, but which are real and useful. We cannot "see" electricity, but when we press a switch we know it is there. We cannot hear radio waves, yet the air around us is filled with them—all we need is the proper mechanism to pick them up and translate them into intelligible sounds.

Members of the animal kingdom have senses which far surpass our abilities to perceive. Bats have a phenomenal built-in radar system by which they can fly safely, though they are blind. A dog can hear sounds which to our ears are not audible. Birds have an almost superhuman sense of direction by which they can fly the ocean and return to the same nest they had occupied the season before. We cannot judge everything that *is* or is not by *our* powers of perception.

Hence, is it not entirely possible that angels can be all about us, all unknown to us simply because we lack the sense to perceive them? And is it not entirely within the power of God to withhold such a sense?

People in past ages saw angels openly and talked with them. Many were the mortal men and women who met them. God is temporarily withholding this privilege from us. But its duration is limited. Right now we are in a space of time when God is silent, when He is not openly revealing Himself and His messengers to mankind. We walk by faith rather than by sight. We have only the Bible by which to enlighten ourselves in God's plan.

But this age will shortly end in the most dramatic of angelic presentations, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels" (II Thess. 1:7). Jesus Christ is coming back to be King of the whole earth, and He will not come alone. Angels will accompany Him all the way from heaven to earth. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels" (Matt. 16:27).

God's angels will be part of every divine activity upon earth from that time forward until the Kingdom has fully come and earth has been annexed to heaven. "Thousand thousands" of angels will minister to Christ when He sits as Judge (Dan. 7:10). We read in the Bible that "ten thousands" of angels came down upon Mount Sinai at the time Moses received the Law (Deut. 33:2), and "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" will be attending and acclaiming when the new "kings and priests" of the new order are inaugurated with Christ as earth's administrators (Rev. 5:9-13). When the Bride and the Bridegroom are united in marriage for eternity, the angels will be as "the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Rev. 19:5-7).

Angels will also provide assistance where human

efforts might prove inadequate. They will assist in the great ingathering of God's servants prior to the first Judgment, gathering them from "the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven" (Mark 13:27). They will help in proclaiming worldwide the "everlasting gospel" and issuing the ultimatum to all that live: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come" (Rev. 14:7).

Never before in the history of the ages have we needed so urgently the thrust of the things unseen and the lively anticipation of the future. The glamor of this world and all its playthings of the dust are so blindingly close to the eyes of them that believe not—and also of them that believe—that each of us stands constantly in mortal peril. We need the angels, though we see them not. And we need the vision of their presence to keep us from losing sight of the things we cannot as yet see.

For soon, very soon—to our sorrow, or to our ecstatic joy—we shall see that which is for the moment invisible. ●●

## Fruitful

## Fragments



It is never necessary to blow out another's light in order to let your own shine.

*You are what you think, not what you think you are.*

The temperamental individual has been described as nine-tenths temper, one-tenth mental.

*It takes a strong person to hold on to his own tongue.*

Our business in life is not to get ahead of others but to get ahead of ourselves, to break our own records, to outstrip yesterday's best today.

*No man has a right to do as he pleases except when he pleases to do right.*

So much trouble in this world is caused by combining a narrow mind with a wide mouth.

*Wise men talk because they have something to say; fools, because they have to say something.*

Remember when you throw dirt you always lose ground.

*In any kind of argument, the best weapon to hold is your tongue.*

Too often there is more seeking after knowledge we do not have than there is growth in the knowledge we do have.

*We can have our will when our will is God's will.*

Those who walk closest to the Lord share more with the Lord.

# UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

## The Second Advent of Christ

**T**HE Second Advent of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth could be said to be THE theme of the Bible. All aspects of God's plan for His Kingdom are the subject of much prophecy in the Scriptures. The prophecies concerning Christ's birth, death and resurrection were fulfilled to the letter, and the prophecies concerning events leading to His second coming are being fulfilled daily.

The truth of the Bible is reinforced with every morning's newspaper. The headlines tell the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the last days: ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT OVERTHROWN IN COUP; DEATH, DESTRUCTION AND ANARCHY REIGN IN LEBANON; ROBBERS NET TWO MILLION IN DAYLIGHT HEIST; UNIONS REJECT CONTRACT, STRIKE IS ON.

If ever there were a time when men were fearful of the things coming upon the earth it is now! Jesus' own prophecy concerning the last days should ring in the ears of every believer: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:25-26). The "powers of heaven," the political heavens, are shaken by assassinations and coups. Racial violence flares and disrupts far-off African nations; civil war between Moslems and so-called "Christians" leaves Lebanese cities in ruin; violent youths disrupt and destroy in schools and universities in our own land; bold, daylight robberies become commonplace; labor unions make ever-larger demands on industry. Can anyone doubt that these are truly the "last days"?

Just how long the "last days" will extend we cannot know. But while men of the world shudder with fear at the "things which are coming on the earth," the Christian finds comfort in the words of Jesus: "When these things begin to come to

pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

The skies are growing darker  
With the passing of the years  
And life becomes more restless,  
And on every hand are fears.

Men know not what is coming,  
Yet feel something lies ahead  
And it fills them with foreboding;  
With a solemn sense of dread.

But Christians—we are waiting  
For the breaking of the Day;  
We are certain Christ is coming,  
He may now be on the way.

Deeper still will grow earth's darkness—  
Still more awesome grow its night,  
But true Christian, be not fearful,  
Soon will come the world's true Light!  
*Selected and altered.*

With the fulfillment of every prophecy the Second Advent of Christ draws nearer. Men and nations may go about their business without thought of divine intervention, but that does not mean that it will not come. The promise of the angels at His ascension still holds: "This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). These words are too clear to be misunderstood. Christ IS coming! This is the Christian's hope; a hope not dependent upon fallible man, but a hope bearing the seal of "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," even God Almighty.

## II. CHRIST RETURNS—WHY?

God has a plan for this earth. He will not forever allow it to be mismanaged and desecrated by evil men. It is for this reason that He will send Christ to earth to take the reins of government into His hands. God's plan holds the only hope for the salvation of today's depraved society and that plan culminates in the return of Jesus to the earth.

The improvement of society has been the dream of many world leaders. But men at their best can conceive no workable plan for the betterment of all because they lack the power to translate their thoughts into action.

Christ is the hope of the world. He is coming back to this earth to fulfill God's plan, thus it behooves us to study and know what to expect at His coming.

### C. Christ Comes—To Conquer and Reign

In our first lesson on this subject we reviewed briefly Christ's work of judging and rewarding the covenant-makers. Following the Judgment, as we learn from Revelation 14:1 and Zechariah 14:4, Christ and His faithful band, the 144,000 that have been redeemed from the earth, stand on Mt. Zion.

Christ is destined to be King over all the earth; but before He can rule over all nations, they must submit to His rule. At the present time, the United Nations organization consists of 143 sovereign nations. To think that they would all willingly give up their sovereignty in favor of another, even a righteous King, transcends reason. It will require a power greater than that of the armies of the nations to bring them into subjection; it will require the forces of God vs. the forces of the nations—Armageddon.

Right will triumph and Christ will establish His Kingdom. For Christ, it is the consummation of the prophecy of the angel Gabriel spoken to His mother before His birth: "He shall be great, . . . and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32-33).

For the 144,000 chosen ones with Him, it will be the fulfillment of a promise made long ages ago, the realization of a hope on which they staked their all: They are made kings and priests to reign with Christ on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10). [For further information on the subject of the Kingdom, inquire for our booklet on the subject.]

### III. CHRIST RETURNS—WHEN?

In the nineteen-plus centuries that have passed since Christ's ascension, His second advent has been the subject of countless books and sermons. Much speculation has surrounded the timing of the event: Would He come **before** the Millennium or **after** the Millennium? Did the apostles expect Him in their day? Was Paul looking for Him to come during his lifetime?

And His coming—was it to be literal and visible,

or spiritual and invisible? Or was His coming to be understood as something that happens at each person's death, that He comes to receive the soul of the deceased?

Jesus did not promise any advance notice to any particular group of people, but He did say that we should recognize the signs of the times. It was not for the disciples to know, and it is not for us to know the exact day nor hour when He will come.

The Scriptures allow but one interpretation concerning His Second Advent: The only advance notice will be His herald, Elijah the Prophet, whose coming will be sudden and dramatic. Jesus' return will be otherwise unannounced, hence will contain an element of surprise, taking many unawares. Jesus Himself compared His Second Advent to lightning, a comparison that could never be used to picture an invisible presence. Lightning is apt to be startling, even frightening, appearing suddenly without warning. So also will be Christ's coming.

#### A. In The First Century?

A thorough study of the Book of Acts proves that the first Christians believed Christ was coming again. They had every reason to believe it, for the apostles had been with Jesus and they went everywhere preaching the Christ who had died, who had been raised from the dead and was now at the right hand of the throne of God. They had been eyewitnesses to His glory.

Now, reflecting on His ascension, they could recall His words concerning His Second Advent:

"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3).

"Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Lk. 12:40).

"Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Lk. 18:8).

"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrow, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping" (Mk. 13:35-36).

"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory" (Mk. 13:26).

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27).

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

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matt. 25:31).

Christ spoke frequently of His return in plain and straightforward statements. But because the apostles believed it and preached it, do we have any reason to believe that they expected Him to return in their lifetime?

Some find evidence of Christ's soon return in the words of the Master Himself. Others charge Paul and the other apostles with having been mistaken in their expectation of the Second Advent in their day.

Did Jesus expect to return soon when He ascended? Did Paul mistakenly believe Christ would soon return to earth? The Bible alone contains all we know about the Second Advent, and to it we will go for the answers.

**1. Misunderstood quotes from Jesus.** In His effort to convince people of the necessity of preparing for the Kingdom of God, Jesus used parables, object lessons and plain language. Some of His lessons are too plain to admit of any misunderstanding, but others may be misconstrued. We will consider a few.

**a. "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16:28).**

This verse, taken out of context, could easily lead one to believe that Jesus was telling them He would return before they had died. But further study leads to no such conclusion. Rather, the promise was fulfilled before a week had elapsed. We learn by reading the following verses that just six days later Jesus took Peter, James and John up into a high mountain. There He was "transfigured" before them "and his face did shine as the sun."

In vision the three disciples saw a preview of the coming Kingdom; Moses (representing the faithful dead), and Elias or Elijah, (representing the faithful living), were seen talking with the glorified Christ. That the event was a vision and not an actual happening is verified by Jesus' own words in Matthew 17:9, "Tell the vision to no man." They had been eyewitnesses to His glory, as Peter later testified.

**b. "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled" (Luke 21:32).**

Just prior to these words, Jesus had been forecasting the signs of His second coming. He ended with a parable of the fig tree, saying that "when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass,

know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand" (vs. 29-31).

Jesus was saying in effect, You know when the fig tree puts out leaves that summer is here, so when you see these things coming to pass you will know My coming is near. The generation that would not pass away until all had been fulfilled was not the generation living then, but the generation that would be living when the signs should come to pass, the generation that should see God's truth shining again after the apostasy and should learn to recognize the signs of His coming.

**c. "Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64).** To understand this statement by Jesus, we need to keep it in context. Jesus was on trial before the high priest, having been accused by two false witnesses. The high priest demanded to know if He were the Christ, the Son of God. Though it would cost Him His life, He could not deny His cause, so He affirmed the high priest's statement with the words "Thou has said," and followed with the above quotation.

The whole passage is not meant to be a literal description of Christ's coming, but a confirmation of His Messiahship. He was saying, in effect, You may have me at your mercy now, but the time is coming when I will be the Judge and you will be at my mercy.

**d. "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me" (John 21:22).** Jesus spoke these words to Peter in reply to the question, "Lord, and what shall this man [John] do?" Many read into Jesus' answer that Jesus was saying He might return before the death of John. But that is not what Christ was saying. He merely said that even if John were to live until He returned, it should not affect Peter's service to God.

**2. Plain statements from Jesus.** While some of Jesus' statements might be misconstrued, He also said many things too plain to be misunderstood. We will consider a few.

**a. "And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because . . . they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (Lk. 19:11-12).** Jesus saw the necessity for the parable because they thought the Kingdom should come at that time. He was simply setting them straight by picturing Himself as a nobleman going into a far country before He would return. In the parallel passage in Matthew, He is quoted as saying "After a long time the lord of

those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them" (25:19). It was to be a **long time** before He would return to judge His servants.

b. **"Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).** This was the last assembly of Jesus and His disciples before His ascension. They had not comprehended what He had been telling them about going away to return at a future time, and now He told them again, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:7-8).

No, the Kingdom was not to be restored at that time. Immediately after this, He was taken up into heaven. Ten days later they received the promised power of the Holy Spirit and went out to preach the good news of the Kingdom to the then-known world.

3. **Misunderstood words from Paul.** Paul, the last and most eloquent of the apostles, has been often falsely accused concerning the Second Advent. However, a careful study of his writings should convince the most skeptical that he did not expect Christ during his lifetime.

The most misunderstood of his words are found in his first letter to the Thessalonians. Speaking of the Second Advent and the Resurrection, he used the term "We." "We which are alive and remain" shall not go before the sleeping believers, but after the Resurrection will rise with them to meet the Lord in the air (4:14-17).

These words are interpreted by many to mean that Paul expected to be among those alive and remaining at the coming of the Lord. However, the "we" is a collective "we," including the whole body of believers, who will meet at the time of the Resurrection and of His coming.

From the reading of the second letter to the Thessalonians, it appears that the Church there had received the wrong impression and Paul felt impelled to send another letter to correct their misconceptions. After a brief introduction, he said, "Now we beseech you, brethren, [concerning] the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed. . . . Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things" (II Thess. 2:1-3, 5).

He told them all this before and now he was trying to jar their memory, but that Day could

not come until certain events took place. There must first be an apostasy, a falling away which he saw already beginning at that time.

He had mentioned this "falling away" in his farewell address to the brethren at Ephesus. He was leaving, knowing that he would not see them again, and he was warning them of false teachers: "I know that when I am gone, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. **Even from your own body [or church] there will be men coming forward who will distort the truth to induce the disciples to break away and follow them**" (Acts 20: 29-30, NEB).

Other statements from Paul prove beyond doubt that he did not expect the Second Advent soon. Writing to the Philippians, he said: "All I want is to know Christ and experience the power of his resurrection; to share in his sufferings and become like him in his death, in the hope that I myself will be raised from death to life. I do not claim that I have already succeeded in this or have already become perfect. I keep on to try to possess it, for Christ Jesus has already possessed me" (Phil. 3:10-12, TEV). **Had he expected Christ's return during his lifetime, he would have no need to share in the resurrection.**

Later in his life, he felt that he had merited the reward and he wrote to Timothy: "As for me, the hour has come for me to be sacrificed; the time is here for me to leave this life. I have done my best in the race, I have run the full distance, I have kept the faith. And the prize of victory is waiting for me, the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that Day—and not only to me, but to all those who wait with love for him to appear" (II Tim. 4:6-8, TEV).

No, we are confident that Jesus was not teaching His Second Advent would be during the first century. Paul and the other apostles understood that it was to be at an undisclosed future time, but for those who heard their preaching it would be soon in that the only time they would have to prepare for the Day was their lifetime. After falling asleep in death, their next conscious moment would be the Resurrection and the Second Advent, hence the urgency of preparing to meet Him.

*Reprints of these studies are available upon request.*



# Of Beings Elsewhere and Beyond . . .

## *Asked and Answered*

"I visited a planetarium recently, and I am puzzled by what I 'learned.' The astronomers say the stars are whirling balls of different types of gases, in different stages of their life-cycle, and that they have very high surface temperatures in which life as we know it could not possibly exist.

"If this be true, what about the angels? Where do they come from?"

IN considering a subject like astronomy, it is very important to realize that there is a great quantity of known fact and a much greater quantity of theories and conclusions and speculations. The latter are based upon facts, but they are not provable by any means known at present. Fact and speculation are often so closely intertwined that separating them is next to impossible.

But speaking in general terms, we might say that astronomy, like any other subject, has a **what** and a **why** and a **how**, all of which the astronomers try to answer. In recent years the **what** of the subject, the clearly observable facts, has been tremendously expanded. By the use of modern telescopes and radio telescopes and advanced means of photography and projection, scientists have been able to peer deeper and deeper into the heavens. The more they extend their range of vision, the more stars and galaxies of stars they see. The **what** of the universe now visible is marvelous beyond our comprehension.

But of course scientists are not content simply to observe, identify and chart what they can see. They do not want to say simply that they see countless pinpoints of light coming from outer space. They go further and attempt to figure out what the stars are composed of, where they came from, and why and how they exist. They do this by establishing what seem like plausible theories, upon which they can build explanations and draw conclusions. All such conclusions are based on a limited amount of fact, but all are subject to change at any time as more discoveries are made. The scientists themselves would be the first to admit that they do not know of a certainty the substance of the stars, or exactly how or when or why they came into existence. Theories are based on the rea-

sonings of the human mind, and subject to constant change.

Scientists observe the stars and note their differences in appearance. They know that different gases, when burned, produce different colors.

Astronomers build their science by relating what they know from our world to what they see with their telescopes. They observe differences in the appearance of the various stars. Different stars appear to be different colors. Now scientists know that burning gases in our earthly environment produce various colors; and when they see these same colors in the stars, they conclude that the same burning gas out there produces the same color of light. The same is true of their understanding of the life-cycle. Everything we are acquainted with has a life-cycle; hence, scientists believe that heavenly bodies may be passing through a life-cycle.

Their conclusions may be right to some extent. Some stars may be burning gases. Some heavenly bodies may be passing through certain stages of a life-cycle.

But of one thing we can be certain: Not *all* stars are whirling balls of burning gas. There *are* habitable worlds, probably countless numbers of them, filled with God's glorious living beings. God has a "family" in heaven as well as in earth (Eph. 3:14-15); He has living beings beyond the sphere of the earth, and worlds capable of supporting such advanced life.

When we think about the theories of the astronomers, which they may seem to state so confidently, we must realize the factors against them:

1) *Distance*. The stars lie at distances so great that the light that leaves them this instant reaches our eye or our telescope anywhere from four years from now to ten thousand million years from now (and light travels at a rate of six trillion miles every year).

2) *Mortality*. The scientists themselves have such short lifespans that observing changes in the stars over a long period of time is impossible, though they have seen a few. And seeing firsthand the objects of their study is out of the question—the nearest star, using present rockets for transportation, we are told, is 96,000 *years* away!

3) *Knowledge*. A few astronomers accept a belief in God, but the majority prefer to be inde-

pendent of any religious beliefs and figure out all the why's and how's without accepting what the great Creator has revealed about them. Thus doing, they are immediately limiting their views to what they themselves can imagine; and some of their conclusions, if we may judge, seem almost too childish to take seriously. If they would take what God has revealed about His creation, His purposes, and His overall plan, and fit what they know about the heavens into that framework, they would get a totally different picture of what is presently happening in the heavens.

Consider these basic statements of Scripture:

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. 3:14-15). God has a whole family in heaven, as well as in earth.

"It is he that buildeth his stories in the heavens, and hath founded his troop in the earth" (Amos 9:6). There are "stories" in the heavens, worlds at varying distances and levels, and God is the great builder.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant" (Ps. 103:17-18). A God who has mercy from "everlasting to everlasting" has had *someone* on whom to bestow that mercy from "everlasting." Mercy without animate beings to have mercy on, could not be.

"And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings" (Luke 1:19). The angel Gabriel had come from the "presence of God"—from the real abode of real beings, where dwells the great Creator Himself.

There are almost three hundred direct references to angels in the Bible, real living beings who live somewhere in God's limitless creation. And from what the Bible says about these heavenly beings, we may safely conclude that there are many, many of them inhabiting many, many worlds. Note these statements about the angels:

"The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them" (Ps. 68:17).

"A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him" (Dan. 7:10), or as translated in the Moffatt Bible, "Millions of angels were at his service."

"Ye are come . . . unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels" (Heb. 12:22), or "to countless hosts of angels," "gathered thousands upon thousands," "myriads," "countless multitudes of angels," as the phrase is rendered in other versions of the Bible.

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

(Heb. 1:14). Or as translated in the American Bible, "Are not the angels all spirits in service, whom he sends on his errands for the good of those who are destined to possess salvation?"

God's creation is not limited to this small planet, nor are His living beings limited to those we see here. We are only one small part of a "manifold wisdom," an "eternal purpose" (Ps. 104:24; Eph. 3:10-11).

**"The astronomers at the planetarium also told us the stars give off their own light because they are burning gas, and that they will eventually burn themselves out. They say the same about our sun, that it will eventually become dark and the earth will become a huge chunk of ice, and life will become extinct. Is this possible?"**

Here again the scientists are limited to what they can figure out from their own background of knowledge. Such conclusions are, no doubt, the best they can arrive at, using the information they have been able to put together. They are not familiar with anything that can give off such vast amounts of light unless it be burning. Thus, when they see an object radiating light, they conclude there must be something "burning" to produce that light.

If they would consult the Bible, they would learn that immortal beings radiate light.

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:3). The righteous shall shine "as the stars for ever and ever."

"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43).

When Jesus appeared to Paul on the Damascus Road, there was "light from heaven" which exceeded the brightness of the noonday sun (Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:13).

When Moses met the angel on the Mount Sinai the light from the angel was so bright that even Moses' face shone afterward—apparently the angel made it possible for Moses to absorb some of the light and radiate it (Ex. 34:29).

When the angels appeared to the shepherds at the time Jesus was born, the "glory of the Lord shone round about them" (Luke 2:9), causing them to be afraid.

When the Kingdom has been established and God's angels are openly active on earth, and the saints have been glorified, it is written that "the sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light,

and thy God thy glory" (Isa. 60:19). So bright will be the divine light that, as the Revelator described it, "the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it... And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: ... for there shall be no night there" (Rev. 21:23-25).

God is not dependent on physical combustion to produce light.

As far as the possibility of the sun's burning itself out and the earth's freezing up, we need have no fear. The Bible compares the reign of Christ to the duration of the sun and the moon, and many passages of Scripture state that His kingdom will be "everlasting" (Ps. 72:5, 17; Luke 1:32-33; Dan. 7:27). And as for the earth, it "abideth for ever" (Eccl. 1:4). No if's, until's or wherefore's, but simply "the earth abideth for ever." And the authority of the great Creator Himself can scarcely be compared with the questionable guesses of mortal man.

**"The astronomers seem to assume that all life comes about naturally when conditions are just right. They say that is why we have life on earth. What do you think?"**

It seems impossible that any thinking person could honestly believe life in all its complex and varied forms just "happened," or evolved. Scientists themselves have proven that life cannot come from non-life. Inanimate objects do not become animate, however long a period of time they may exist or however ideal the conditions in which they exist.

The Bible tells us plainly that all life originates with the Creator, God. Whether it be life on this planet we call Earth or on some distant planet in another universe or on a star, or anywhere in the vast creation, all life is created by God. Nehemiah, a man of God, long ago stated this fact when he said:

**"Thou, even thou, art Lord alone;  
thou hast made heaven,  
the heaven of heavens,  
with all their host,  
the earth, and all things that are therein,  
the seas, and all that is therein,  
and thou preservest them all;  
and the host of heaven worshipeth thee"**  
(Neh. 9:6).

"The heaven of heavens, with all their host"—certainly there is life beyond our little sphere. There is life elsewhere in the universe, and one Almighty God sustains it all. ●●

May, 1976

From Parent to Parent—

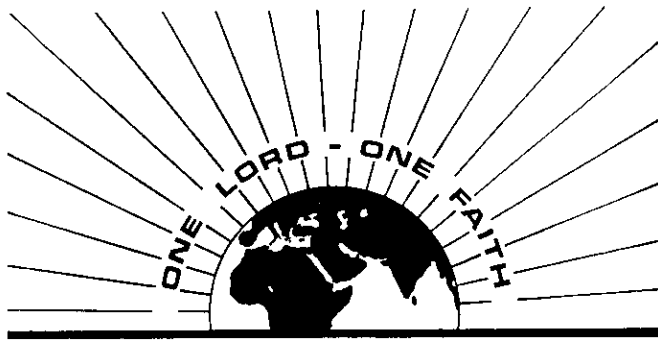
## Ten Commandments for a Happy Home

1. Be patient with each other.
2. Begin and end each day with God. Spend time together in prayer.
3. Be cheerful. Be friendly. Be thoughtful of each other.
4. Share responsibilities.
5. Do things *together*. Enjoy each other's company in work and in recreation.
6. Avoid disputes. Especially, avoid excited talk.
7. Do not let little differences accumulate; discuss them openly. Do not criticize. Strive for harmony.
8. Be honest with each other. Keep principle above feeling.
9. Be understanding of each other's weaknesses and problems; help each other to overcome them.
10. Grow together. Have a common goal. Share the thoughts and experiences that draw one and all closer to God.

---

### A Prayer for Today

Let me be a little kinder,  
Let me be a little blinder  
To the faults of those about me.  
Let me praise a little more,  
Let me find work less a chore;  
Let me be when I am weary  
Just a little bit more cheery.  
Let me serve a little better;  
Let me be a little braver  
When temptation bids me waver;  
Let me strive a little harder  
To be all that I should be.  
Let me be a little meeker  
With the brother who is weaker.  
Let me think more of my neighbor  
And a little less of me.



## Salvation-How Do We Get It?

### Step One: Knowledge

*When we know what we want, in this world or in the world to come, the next problem is to find how we may claim it and have it for our own.*

*We recognize ourselves as part of God's handiwork, the highest form of living creation on this planet, also of His creating, which we call earth. God is the supreme ruler, maker, controller and sustainer of all that lives and moves.*

*But we, and all other living creatures and things in this world, are mortal; that is, we are subject to decay and death. We are here awhile, then we must give our place to others, who in time must do the same.*

*Is there, then, nothing permanent?*

*Yes, indeed, there is! The Omnipotent, Everlasting Creator does not live in the midst of mortal, ever-changing subjects. Filling His eternal abode are beings as eternal as He Himself. They are beings who began life much as we have begun it, but who have in the course of time been changed, elevated to a type of life far surpassing anything we know. They have been made immortal, placed beyond the reach of change or decay or death. They know the full meaning of salvation. They are God's angels.*

*And the promise is that some among earthborns shall someday be made "equal unto the angels." When this earth is annexed to heaven, all its inhabitants will be glorified, be made immortal, and become part of God's permanent heavenly family (Luke 20:35-36; Eph. 3:14-15).*

*Our question is this: Who will be among that privileged, glorified number? Who will someday feel for himself the pulse of immortal life within him? Shall you? Shall I?*

*The answer can be affirmative. It is within our possibilities—well within. But first there are steps, important steps to take. Let's see what they are.*

**T**HE Bible outlines certain basic steps to salvation, or immortality. Each of these steps may be divided into many smaller ones, but the whole forms the basic progression. The last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, summarizes them well: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand" (Rev. 1:3). This is the general. Let us think now about the specific.

Step One: Knowledge.

*We must learn the facts.*

The Bible tells us that "all things that pertain unto life and godliness [come] through . . . knowledge" (II Pet. 1:3). So learning is the first step.

What is our source of knowledge? There is only one answer: the Bible—the Word of God. We today have no other source of knowledge about God and His plans.

Knowledge is basic; and knowledge comes only by studying what God has revealed to us "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge" (Eph. 3:4). "So then, faith cometh by hearing . . . the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Hearing, reading, studying, learning—all have one objective: to acquaint us with God and what He offers and what He expects of us. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

We might compare the steps to salvation with the steps we would take in making any purchase in this world. (Customs and modes of living vary widely in different parts of the world, but most of us have done some type of shopping.)

Whatever the line of purchase we might consider, our first interest would be in the product offered us. We would want a full description, plus any information we could get as to the quality of workmanship involved, its durability, its guarantees, if any. Then we would consider such factors as its usefulness to us, its ability to satisfy our need, its certainty, date of delivery, etc.

When God offers us salvation and gives us the Bible from which to learn, this is just the type of information He is making available to us. He tells us what He is offering us, "even life for evermore" (Ps. 133:3). Along with this promise of life come promises of "pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11), "riches and honour" (Prov. 22:4), "fullness of joy" (Ps. 16:11), everlasting "gladness and joy" (Isa. 35:10), "sure dwellings, and . . . quiet resting places" (Isa. 32:17-18). The very description of the product gives us the information

we want about its durability—terms like “everlasting,” “eternal,” and “for ever” are common in the sacred descriptions of it. What more could we ask!

As for the guarantee on this product, God Himself stands behind it and its fulfillment is as certain as the sunrise (Jer. 33:25). Since He “could swear by no greater, he swore by himself” in making His promises to Abraham and to Moses (Heb. 6:13). To Abraham He said, “Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee” (Heb 6:14); and Christ’s universal Kingdom shall make possible the fulfillment of that promise to all His spiritual children (Abraham is the spiritual “father of all them that believe”—Rom. 4:11). To Moses God said, “As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord” (Num. 14:21). The promise is as certain as the existence of God Himself.

If we consider the value of this product to us, we will immediately recognize value far surpassing the price of gold and jewels of earth, “for the price of wisdom is above rubies” (Job 28:18). If we could imagine anything more satisfying, more useful, and suited to our need, something would be wrong with our understanding; for what God has offered far surpasses our greatest imaginings. It is written, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (I Cor. 2:9). As for certainty of fulfillment, we read that God is “able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20).

If we have studied this far and are seriously interested in making the purchase, we will want still one more bit of information: *When* can we get the product, to be able to call it our own? When will immortality be ours?

The Bible has an answer: It will be “brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (I Pet. 1:13). “When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (I Pet. 5:4). The “crown of righteousness” will be delivered by “the righteous judge,” the Lord, “at that day”; and “that day” is the day of “his appearing” (II Tim. 4:8). It is the “inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven, . . . ready to be revealed in the last time” (I Pet. 1:4-5).

As for the exact date of the dispensing of the product, God has not revealed it. At the time the gospels were written, it is said that not even Jesus knew. “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32).

By this time it is quite likely that Jesus knows—He may even now be en route from the heavenly realm of His Father, on His way to earth; we cannot know. All we know is that the time of His absence is running out; the day of His arrival draws near and ever nearer. In the words of Scripture, “the night is far spent, the day is at hand” (Rom. 13:12).

At the outset, God set aside six thousand years, which He represented as six literal days in revealed allegory (we will survey this subject later). During this first interval of time He planned that men should rule the world as they should choose, while He would be selecting the best material from among men for use in His future Kingdom. Approximately 4000 of these years were spent before Christ’s first advent. And if we take the date we assign our calendar year at present (1976), without considering the many small adjustments which have been made in the calendar system over the years, we have a total of 5976—not much short of the total. We must realize these figures are only roughly approximate, but they do serve to give us some idea of the time involved. Furthermore, the many prophecies in the Bible which were to be fulfilled before the second advent of Christ (such as, the rise and fall of four world kingdoms of men; prophecies of the unrest in the political world in the last days—Luke 21:25-26; prophecies of widespread unbelief—Luke 18:8; of moral collapse—Luke 17:26-30; of marital unfaithfulness and youthful disrespect—II Tim. 3:1-4, and the general erosion of sound moral and social values—and many, many more)—all these prophecies are fulfilled today, proclaiming loudly that the end of the age is near.

All this information is vital to us when we come to consider seriously the purchase of what God offers us—even “life for evermore.” And all this is information we will want to become thoroughly familiar with as we set out to acquire salvation. Then we are ready for Step Two, which we will discuss in our next article in this series. ●●

---

A famous poet believed a child should not be given religious instruction. “Let his mind be open until he is ready to choose,” he said.

One day a friend invited the poet over to see his garden. The poet was surprised at being shown a garden so badly in need of attention. “You have nothing but weeds in your garden.” The friend replied: “Oh! I let the plot do just as it likes, to express itself, to choose its own line of production.”

# TV: Blessing or Curse?

THE greatest improvement in communications since the invention of writing is the television. A viewer many thousands of miles from a scene can witness action as it takes place. Both the audio and visual elements can be transmitted via satellite around the world as they occur, or they can be recorded and played back the next day, or the next year. This outstanding invention is the result of many superior minds working together for the benefit of the human race. Of course, the physical laws which are utilized in broadcasting, transmitting and receiving television are all part of the heritage bequeathed to this planet by its Creator; but men have used their faculties ingeniously to produce such near-miraculous results.

Television today, however, is a subject of controversy. Many thinking people are criticizing its productions—and rightly, though TV is not inherently evil. The mechanism could be a great blessing. In fact, in many ways it is a blessing today. It is put to many good and important uses. In the medical and teaching professions it has proved invaluable in the dissemination of knowledge. Beneficial uses are found in the industrial and commercial fields. Even in public broadcasting there are educational and instructive programs which prove a benefit to many.

But unfortunately, television, like so many other things, is not an unmixed blessing. To multitudes of people it is a curse. For a program to be popular among the general public, it must appeal to the lower or animal nature. Advertisers want their programs to receive a high rating in the polls. In order to achieve a high rating, a program must have mass audience appeal. And when have the masses ever espoused high moral standards?

TV programming is not all bad. The news, if given factually and without bias, cannot be faulted. Some musical programs, religious dramas and historical programs are beneficial. Some documentary programs have merit. But a large proportion of both adult- and child-oriented programs are harmful, or at least not beneficial. Scenes depicting crime, murder, violence, and deviant behavior have no place in a Christian home. In fact, they have no rightful place in *any* home.

Commenting on the influence of television, Dr.

Michael B. Rotherberg, writing in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, said, "The average American child will have witnessed 18,000 TV murders by the time he is graduated from high school. Besides murder, the child will have seen countless highly detailed incidents of robbery, arson, bombing, forgery, smuggling, beating and torture—averaging one per minute in the standard television cartoons for children under the age of ten.

"Aggressive behavior is learned from TV and retained if the child is not punished when he tries it," said Rotherberg.

It is inconceivable that a child who is subjected to a constant barrage of violent and deviant behavior will not be affected by it, temporarily if not permanently.

The Designer of the human race left explicit directions in regard to what children should be taught: "Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 11:18-19). Also we read: "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons" (Deut. 4:9).

Advertisers know that constantly exposing the public to the merits of their product substantially increases their volume of sales. They are willing to spend millions of dollars just to create a desire in the consumer's mind. This may prove a blessing in some cases. More often it is a curse. Prostrating a child's mind for mercenary ends deserves the severest censure.

Neither child nor adult can view programs appealing to the lower nature without damaging his hope of eternal life. A wise man once said, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." If the "pure in heart" are to see God and the "meek" are to inherit the earth, as Jesus said, then Christians should use extreme care in what they watch. A

continual diet of violence, or even of light and seemingly harmless material, is not conducive to the developing of a "meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (I Pet. 3:3).

There is another type of program which may not be harmful to the average citizen but which gives no benefit to the Christian. It is the sentimental or maudlin, emotionally silly type, which has no elevating or uplifting qualities. The Bible commands that we limit ourselves to that "which is good, to the use of edifying," when it comes to the words we speak (Eph. 4:29). Should we settle for less in the things we permit ourselves to see?

As striving Christians we are under a supreme obligation to "do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31), to "make the very most of [our] time" (Eph. 5:15-16). We are commanded to fill our minds with "everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good and pure,

everything that we love and honor, and everything that can be thought virtuous and worthy of praise" from God's point of view (Phil. 4:8, JB). If we permit our eyes to witness that which does not meet these qualifications, we will find it impossible to bring our minds to this standard. Far easier is it to *get* an impression than to *erase* it.

And of course, foolish or silly programs are totally "off limits" to the Christian. The command is, "Go from the presence of a foolish man" (Prov. 14:7).

One of the greatest dangers in habitually watching TV is the hypnotic effect which it produces. It becomes a habit difficult to break. It is a matter of more, more, more. . . .

For those who wish to be morally and spiritually strong, TV is a curse and not a blessing. It is too great a temptation, and the results are too tragic for the serious Christian to risk. ●●

---

*From A Reader—*

## **Budding, Cutting and Growing**

I am so pleased to realize that if we let Christ's word into our lives, it can grow until we have the power to live clean lives for Him.

Often I think about the rose tree, how it starts off as a wild, unruly stock not very beautiful, no aroma, nothing that would attract our attention. How like us in our natural condition, unruly, wild, in fact, nothing of merit. But along comes the flower grower. He takes a bud-cutting from a cultivated rose, then makes a T-cut in the root of the wild rose and inserts the bud, then binds them together. Before long a shoot will grow from the bud. Then the grower must cut away all the old wild growth or the wild growth would strangle the good growth and the bush would revert to its wild state. With proper care and attention, what used to be a wild and unattractive rose will grow into a beautiful blooming bush.

If only we would allow the seed of Christ's word to grow in our lives, how much more beautiful we would grow. But it is the cutting away of the old life that makes all the difference. We cannot hope to be beautiful in the eyes of God if we just carry on in the same old way without any change at all. The pruning knife must always be at work cutting away that which would spoil our spiritual growth; our whole lives should be our testimony, not our

words only; for talk is so cheap. If the bud of Christ's word is growing in us, our whole lives will show it.

*Mr. L., Nottinghamshire, England*

# **READ for Your LIFE!**

HISTORY OF THE MEGIDDO MISSION  
THE COMING OF JESUS AND ELIJAH  
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?

GOD'S SPIRITUAL CREATION

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

THE GREAT APOSTASY

AFTER DEATH, WHAT?

THE DEVIL AND HELL

TRINITY OR UNITY?

THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE ATONEMENT

THE SABBATH

COMPLETE SET . . . . . \$2.00

SINGLE COPIES . . . . . .25

May, 1976

# "The Lord Himself Shall Give You A SIGN"

## Immediate or Long-range?

### Question:

"You quote Isaiah, chapter 7, as the source of the prophecy of the birth of Christ from a virgin mother.

"By studying this particular chapter of Isaiah, we observe that the birth of a child from a 'maiden' (New World Translation) was a sign given by God to satisfy Ahaz, the king of Judah, that he was going to conquer his enemies, the kings of Syria and Israel, who were conspiring to make an assault on his throne. God indicates when this promise would be fulfilled in the following words: 'For before the boy will know how to reject the bad and choose the good, the ground of whose two kings you are feeling a sickening dread will be left entirely.' This, plus other verses in the same chapter, clearly shows that the sign was an assurance to Ahaz for *his* time and no prophecy for the future, i. e. for several centuries later when Christ was born. There seems to exist a literal fulfillment of the promise regarding the birth of the child in chapter 8, verse 4 of Isaiah, where we read: '... for before the boy will know how to call out "my father!" and "my mother!" one will carry away the resources of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria.'

"While I accept Christ and His mission as the fulfillment of many Biblical prophecies including those listed by you, I cannot accept this one, inasmuch as it does not seem relevant. Christ's birth of virgin Mary just happened by the will of God and we do not need to attach to it an irrelevant prophecy which raises so much controversy. There are so many clear proofs of Jesus' unique position and rightful claim that we can very well avoid this doubtful prophecy attached to His birth."

### Answer:

The apostle Paul wrote that the things "written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4). While this is not true of *all* things, God purposed that much of the Old Testament writings, particularly the prophetic writings, were for us as well as for the people of the time.

You question whether we are misapplying a prophecy made by Isaiah concerning the birth of one to be called "Immanuel." We do feel the prophecy had an immediate significance; as you say, the primary meaning of the prophecy was a sign given by God to satisfy King Ahaz of Judah, to assure him he would conquer his enemies. How-

ever, we also see in the prophecy a direct reference to the Messiah who would be born of a "virgin" and named Immanuel—"which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23). If we are incorrect in making this application of Isaiah 7:14, the apostle Matthew was also mistaken—and he was writing under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit power. For Matthew employed the prophecy of Isaiah in such a way as to apply it to Christ's birth of the virgin Mary. Matthew 1:22-23 reads: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted, is, God with us."

We agree with you that there was a literal fulfillment of the promise regarding the birth of the child in chapter 8, verse 4, of Isaiah, where we read: "... for before the boy will know to call out 'my father!' and 'my mother!' one will carry away the sources of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria before the king of Assyria."

But it is important to remember that Biblical prophecies are often two-fold: they have an immediate, or local application; and an ultimate or long-range fulfillment.

Face to face with the weak and faithless occupant of David's throne, the prophet Isaiah realized that he could put no hope in the present. He could speak, but Ahaz would not take heed. The whole thrust of Isaiah's message was his vivid expectation of the destiny of Israel. It was the Messianic hope. God would send a divine Redeemer who would be an offspring of the stem of Jesse (11:1). A child should be born who would be more worthy to sit on David's throne and take the government upon his shoulder. The words of the prophet in Isaiah 7:14 fit into a whole chain of prophecies referring to the Messiah (7:14-15; 9:6-7; 11:1-10).

The idolatrous Ahaz was completely incapable of comprehending the full significance of the sign God was giving him and its implications for the future destiny of Israel. Even on the literal level Ahaz was not willing to receive the assurance given him by God.



The prophecy met its literal fulfillment, as recorded in Isaiah 8, with the birth of a child. But as has been pointed out by other Bible students, the "virgin" idea of the prophecy is awkward to explain if we limit the application of the prophecy to an immediate fulfillment. In the first place, the prophet would never have referred to his wife as "the virgin" (Heb. *almah*), as this term was never applied to a married woman. And this child of prophecy was the second in the family; the "prophetess," as Isaiah called his wife, was already the mother of Shear-Jashub (see Isa. 7:2-3).

Another problem in limiting the prophecy to the immediate fulfillment is the fact that Isaiah addressed it not to Ahaz and his house alone but to the "house of David." This child of promise was destined to replace once and for all the merely human kings of Ahaz's house and character.

No ordinary son of men could even approximate the exalted figure of the Redeemer depicted so majestically by Isaiah. Only in the Messiah, the child of the virgin Mary, can we see the full reality of Him who should eat the "butter and honey" that He might learn to "refuse the evil and choose the good" in preparation for the Day when the "government shall be upon his shoulder," and "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end" (Isa. 9:6-7).

Indeed, the Bible offers many clear prophecies of Jesus' unique position and rightful claim to the coming kingship of earth; and we firmly believe the words of Isaiah (7:14-15; 9:6-7) are among these prophecies. ●●

## Changed?

I read where a sergeant in the army said, "The army isn't what it used to be. On the other hand, civilian life isn't what it used to be either. The trouble is," he said, "I am still what I used to be." I wonder how many of us have remained just about what we have always been?

If we are really interested in the direction we are moving, we will keep all of God's commandments and have a strong faith that will change us from what we used to be to what God wants us to be. This takes a great deal of time and effort.

But when we become new persons, we will look at life from a new perspective. We will live with a new power within. We can change in whatever way we are called upon to change, then He who has been our "dwelling place in all generations" shall be our "refuge and strength" through all our days.

*Covington, Georgia*

L. G.

## Something Different

I thoroughly enjoyed the first issue of your *Message*. It is the most readable religious matter I've ever encountered. I have always been "turned off" to printed material of this nature, but yours is different.

*Richmond, Virginia*

V. T.

## Render Obeisance

It should be our foremost thought that we not forget daily to raise our deepest aspirations to Him who is our Creator, Designer and Keeper, lest we blunder into carelessness and neglect and allow ourselves to wax cold because of the evil behavior of the world around us.

We should rejoice that we have been given an opportunity to see over and beyond the rubbish of so-called truth to the "more excellent way."

If anyone has any reasons why he or she should not render obeisance unto our Creator, I have many more to the contrary.

*Thermopolis, Wyoming*

J. A.

## From the Book of All Books

I am amazed what the Book of all books can do for us if we only read its pages and take heed to its warnings and advice. The apostle Paul wrote to his son Timothy, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." To fill this order will keep us busy every spare minute of every day.

*Hamilton, Ontario, Canada*

W. Y.

## Appreciative

I get much good from the *Message*. My husband and I also get much good from the tapes. Thank you people for your help.

*Alvin, Texas*

C. W.

---

# Our Readers Write...

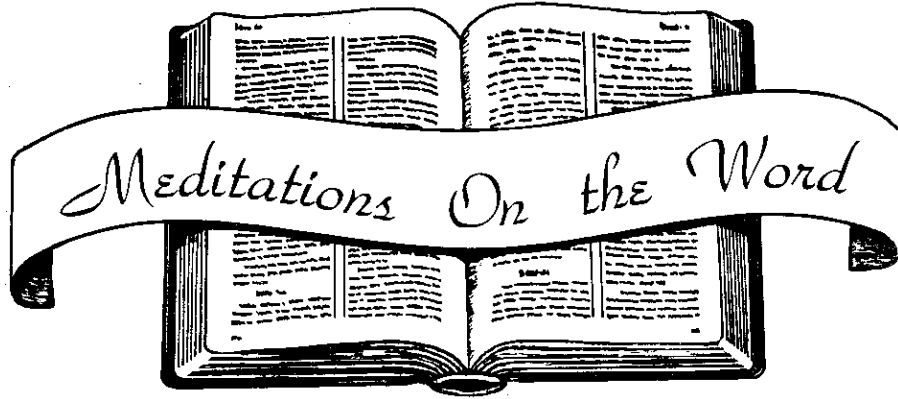
## Giving Our Best

Before we can gain the promises of God, we have need of patience. We need patience to develop in our life the very best of which we are capable, to lift our minds to higher ideals and loftier standards as we transform our lives from all that is sinful, selfish, low, sensual and earthly. We must change to an altogether new way of living, to new habits, new tastes, moving from the low to a very high standard of human conduct. God demands perfect obedience to all His commandments.

*South Wales, Great Britain*

G. S.

May, 1976



*"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price"* —First Peter 3:3-4.

CERTAIN it is that Peter's admonition, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel," strikes an inherent weakness in the feminine complex. Each year many perfectly good garments are discarded because out of style. Sensing this weakness the designers of women's clothing change the style as often and as radically as possible, and alert merchandisers are quick to stock their shelves with the latest fashions, so as to stimulate buying. However, pride in one form or another manifests itself among men as well as among women. While the principle involved in the proverb, "the clothes make the man," has a legitimate place in the behavior of a Christian, it is easy to carry correctness of dress beyond the point of *proper* appearance to *pride* in appearance.

A deep thought is embedded in the words, "the hidden man of the heart." And we are led to ask, what is this hidden man within us? Is it the man that reveals himself in human affection? Some men who are judged as cold and distant in their contacts with other men, may show outstanding warmth and affection toward members of their immediate family. However this inner self, disclosed in intimate love and affection, cannot be the "hidden man of the heart."

Then is this hidden man our subconscious self? Modern psychiatry has demonstrated that the conscious mind is small compared with the subconscious, that the influence the subconscious mind wields over the body is far greater than that of the conscious mind, yet there is nothing to indicate that this is what the Apostle referred to as "the hidden man of the heart."

Then who is he? Perhaps some of us have barely reached the handshake stage of acquaintance with ourselves. The story is told of a war veteran who appeared on an American Legion platform in one of our eastern cities. He was a victim of amnesia and asked pathetically, "Can anyone please tell me who I am?" That is the question we all should ask; and only God, through the medium of His Word, can give the answer.

Man thinks himself an important factor in creation. The Almighty acquaints him with himself by informing him that the natural man "at his best state is altogether vanity" (Ps. 39:5). And if this be the status of the individual, how about larger groups and nations? "All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity" (Isa. 40:17). Man feels qualified to direct himself in his journey through life, but God says, No, you are not able, "there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 16:25). When man arrives at a conclusion he states his case with an air of finality. He says, "Surely I have discovered something worthwhile this time." But God answers: You do not know yourself. My thoughts are as much higher than yours as the heaven is higher than the earth (Isa. 55:8-9).

But why should this man, our real self, be hidden? Sometimes he is hidden because we want him hidden: we do not care to look ourselves straight in the eye. He is not necessarily hidden from eyes that see. We learn from Prov. 21:2 that "every way of a man is right in his own eyes." Hence if self-centered, if our vision is limited to the perspective of an over-sympathetic eye, our true iden-

tity *will* be hidden from ourselves.

Two statements by the apostle Paul highlight our thesis of the "hidden man" from two different angles. In II Cor. 13:5 the inactive Christians of the Church at Corinth are told that if unable to judge themselves by their works, if totally unaware of their true position in the divine life, they are hiding from themselves, and therefore classify themselves as "reprobates," "failures." And in I Tim. 5:24-25 the same Apostle points out that there are exceptions to the general rule: "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after." And the same holds true for righteous men. The good deeds of some are visible as they perform them; with others they are hidden, but not for long, for the Judgment Day will reveal them. To God, Christ, and the ministering angels, the inner beauty of character is open, and in their sight it is of "great price."

And now for an example of how this "hidden" works. Thrift and economic need demand that the visible man work each day of the workaday week. This man says, I am driven by circumstances to be industrious, but I would much prefer to spend my time in some more pleasurable pursuit, hence I will exert myself as little as possible and still draw my paycheck at the end of the week. The hidden man says: No, you cannot do that. God demands that you obey the Golden Rule and work to your employer's interest, the same as you would want him to do were the situation reversed.

Some of the reasons why our better self is sometimes hidden are clear. His very nature is lowly, he wears the "incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit." He does not sound a trumpet before him, declaring his own goodness. He is not seeking the honor of men, but is willing to bide God's time for exaltation, to wait until the Lord comes, "who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (I Cor. 4:5).

It now becomes clearer why the hidden man is hidden—his life is "hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). There is the hidden Source of his strength. In the northern Adirondacks there is a large area that was once a flourishing forest. The timber was cut down to be sawed into lumber or made into paper. Afterward the stump land was burned over in what the owners thought would be a cleansing of the ground, but proved to be a fire so destructive that it robbed the soil of its virtue. So now all that the eye sees is a charred wilderness showing no life but stunted blueberry bushes. But that is not

all; there is a fertile belt winding through this valley of destruction. Through it a stream flows, and there are fish in that stream, and it is fringed thickly with overhanging trees. The sandy, charred waste can never overcome that stream, for it gets its water supply from hidden springs.

This is a good example of those who trust in God. The earth-man is in them during their lifetime, and the finitude of earth with its waste of death is all about them, and the wilderness threatens always to overwhelm them, but their real life is invincible because it is hid with Christ in God, and fed from eternal springs. ●●

## A Part OF--or--Apart From?

We live in times of progress. Science, art, life—full speed ahead!

But to what? Where is the world progressing? It does not know itself. Though its aims are higher than the sky (or lower than the mythical caverns of Hades), the world is not aware of a goal.

Then does the world drift aimlessly through space? By no means! Whatever appears new and fun for the day, that is where the world is. Perhaps it is in hypocritically acclaiming God's way of life (as during the Victorian era). Or perhaps it is in open immorality (the Elizabethan age and today).

But are we there with the world? Are we a part of it, or are we apart from the world? Or are we on a road somewhere in between?

It is easy to get caught up with the drift of the world. Just sit back and agree with the popular beliefs, join the modern fads, and shout the appropriate slogans.

But if we do not want the *end* of the way of the world (Jesus said the "broad" way leads to "destruction"—Matt. 7:13), we will have to change our course of life. We will have to go against the current.

God's thoughts and ways are far removed from what ours naturally are. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:6-7).

While the world drifts aimlessly downward, if we want what God offers we will have to follow God's way. It will not be easy, but it is the only way to "life everlasting." ●●

# Drifting to Death!

ON many of our lakes and rivers where there are great waterfalls, boatmen maneuver their crafts almost to the very brink and then, with a mighty heave on the oars or a sudden burst of speed with the motor, pull themselves upstream and out of danger. These men all know there is an element of risk in this dangerous practice, for there is a point beyond which it is impossible to escape. Those who flirt with death this way tell us there is no exact way to know just where this point is; that wind and current change the location of this invisible but all-important line of demarcation.

Sometimes a motorboat operator, his engine out of commission, or a man on a raft, or a boatman sleepily drifting downstream, suddenly finds himself beyond this point. Nothing can be done. Destruction is inevitable. There is no escape. End over end he plunges headlong, to be dashed to pieces on the jagged rocks below.

Drifting in the spiritual life can be equally disastrous, in fact more so, for we are dealing not only with an earthly destiny but an eternal one. It is so easy to drift, to go along from day to day, half-concerned, half-thoughtless of our eternal welfare. It is so easy to drift, to not resist that unholy thought or action that pushes us out into the dangerous current. *It is so easy to drift.*

It is the ease of drifting that constitutes its peril, spiritually. Ease is the opposite of effort. And if an element of danger accompanies such indifference, there is also a fascination that hypnotizes one into a false sense of well-being. *We may be drifting and not even realize it!*

Any relaxation of our conscious efforts toward godlikeness is dangerous, exceedingly dangerous. Omission of religious exercise, however slight, tends to put our moral nature into a state of semiconsciousness or downright sleepiness. We become lazy, indifferent. Gradually our minds slip into spiritual unconsciousness, and the things of God become less and less appealing, until sud-

denly we awake to find ourselves abhorring the things we once loved, and loving the things we once abhorred.

The moment progress in the spiritual life halts, drifting begins. So long as the Christian rests on his oars he is going backward. It is pleasant to rest and to watch others work. There is an almost vicious satisfaction in being part of a church in which someone else is doing all the work, yet the credit is shared by all. A man in such circumstances may think he is safe and reasonably secure, but if he ever becomes conscious of his position he will be startled and dismayed at his distance from God, and may find it extremely difficult to make his way back against the overwhelming obstacles of his own unfitness.

One of the most startling and dangerous aspects of drifting is its rapidity. Often, on the surface, there is no hint of the current that pulls beneath. Even a short relapse, if not overcome, may result in eternal tragedy. A brief explosion of bitterness, a moment's indulgence in jealousy, a second's flash of hatred, may be the start of a never-ending reprobation. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (Jas. 1:8).

Drifting can be fatal. It can mean ruin, eternal ruin. Indolence in our Christian lives is just as sinful, just as wicked in the sight of God as idolatry. He who allows himself to be swept along by his own whims and fancies, seeking his own pleasures, justifying himself in his own opinions, is sinning. He who compromises his Christian principles for secular interests and the love of ease is drifting, and is in danger of eternal ruin.

We possess equipment that will insure the finish of our Christian voyage. It is a strong determination to go all the way with God, plus the anchor of unshakable faith that cannot fail. The Christian who is determined, even if it means exhaustive work and the loss of the most treasured earthly concern, to make the Kingdom his home and Christ his Companion, will never drift. Whatever the storm, his anchor will hold. ●●



## Guardian Angels

Angels a record are faithfully keeping  
Of every word that we speak;  
Whether we're watching our conduct, or sleeping,  
Whether we're haughty or meek.  
Known unto them are the thoughts that we cherish,  
Nothing is hidden or sealed;  
Their record tells if we live or we perish  
When at the Judgment revealed.

Angels have ministered down through the ages  
When they found one who would hear;  
Often they visited prophets and sages  
Who lent a listening ear.  
Abraham, Joshua, Daniel and Moses,  
As they the narrow way trod,  
Jesus, and others, the Bible discloses,  
Talked with the angels of God.

Wonderful angels! who would not be like them,  
Sharing the joys that are theirs;  
Theirs is a glory and beauty resplendent  
With which no mortal's compares.  
Years in their flight they have long ceased to number,  
Going from strength unto strength;  
Having no fear that in death they shall slumber,  
Theirs is eternity's length.

Angels will strengthen our faltering footsteps  
If we desire to obey  
Jesus' commandments revealed in His precepts,  
Lest we should faint by the way.  
And when at last we approach the fair portal,  
There to receive our reward,  
We like the angels shall be made immortal,  
Ever to be with our Lord.