"My God in His lovingkindness will meet me at every corner." — Psalm 59:10

eatelo

EDITORIAL

Buy for Yourselves

MANY things we have come from sources which are beyond us. Circumstances may be largely responsible for what we have of this world's goods, much or little. Our health may be due in a large part to physical strengths or weaknesses we inherited. It is even possible to fall heir to a good reputation we have not earned. Sometimes we may share in the good fortune of others. We may have friends who give us of their time, interest, encouragement or concern.

But there are other things which we must buy for ourselves, or we will never have them. Among these are some of the things which directly concern our eternal welfare.

We might spend years in the company of the most saintly person in the world, and still remain a rogue at heart. We think of the advantages we have missed. "If only I could be in the company of someone who is really great, I would be a better person." Or, "If only I could have known Jesus as the apostles knew Him . . . " But companying with Jesus did nothing to change the heart of Judas. Close association with the great Apostle Paul, with his profound insights of faith and his compelling duty to Christ, did not keep Demas from loving the world.

Our character is only what we make it. We ourselves must buy the materials, and build.

In another metaphor, this is the message of the wise virgins in Jesus' parable. What did they say to their foolish comrades who asked for a share in their oil? Did they say, "Oh yes, we will be glad to share with you, right down to the last drop"? No, their answer is brief but pointed: "No, lest there be not enough for us and you." And then, as if to sharpen the cutting edge of the first statement, they proposed a solution that laid the blame for the deficiency squarely on the foolish virgins themselves: "But go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves."

Yes, there are some things that cannot be shared. There are some things we must *buy for ourselves*.

Strong faith is one of them.

Can one who has through careful and patient study become well versed in the knowledge of God give that knowledge to another?

Spiritual preparedness is another.

Can one who has trained himself in Christian courage give it on demand to a neighbor who all his life has lived in self-indulgent ease?

No, Christian virtues are not transferable.

Can one who has gathered insight from years of Bible study, meditation and prayer, give that insight on request to one who has been carefree, self-seeking and unconcerned?

No, spiritual insights are not transferable.

Can one who has invested diligent effort in self-control and self-discipline instantly transmit that strength to another?

No, the benefits of self-discipline are not transferable.

Can one who has grown to know and love the law of the Lord, and to see meaning and beauty in every inspired line, give what he has gained to another?

No, spiritual appreciation is not transferable.

Can one who has through years of careful application of the principles of Christ to his life developed in Himself the veritable character image of the Master give that strength of character to another?

No, holiness is not transferable.

We may try to borrow another's good name. But we cannot lay any claim to his virtue, his faith, his patience, or his perspective. All these are qualities we must buy for ourselves.

It will not profit us in the day of Judgment if we can say, "I lived ten years with one who was a saint." Or "My father was always true to his word." Or "My sister had the patience of Job." No, these facts will only reinforce the needlessness of our own deficiency—that we knew what *others* were doing to save themselves—and why, heaven helping us, didn't we take the lesson to ourselves?!

It is the message of the wise virgins: "Go ye (Continued on page 14)

Megiddo means . . .

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

We believe

-in God the Creator of all things, all men, and all life.

We believe

—in the Bible as containing the genuine revelation of God and His purposes for men, and as being our only source of divine knowledge today.

Vol. 73, No. 5

We believe

—in Christ the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was born of a Virgin, ministered among men, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven, and who shall shortly return to be king of the whole earth.

We believe

—in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.

We believe

—in all mankind as providing the nucleus from which a superior, God-honoring people shall be chosen to receive the blessings of immortal life.

We believe

—in ourselves as capable of fulfilling the precepts and principles given us in the Word of God, thus perfecting that high quality of character which God has promised to reward with life everlasting in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

We believe

—in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth will be filled with His glory, His people, and His will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

Bible Quotations

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version. Other versions are identified as follows:

- NEB—New English Bible
- NIV-New International Version
- NAS—New American Standard
- RSV—Revised Standard Version
- TLB—The Living Bible
- TEV—Today's English Version
- JB-The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition
- Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English
- Berkeley—The Modern Language New Testament
- Weymouth—The New Testament in Modern Speech Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation
- Williams-The New Testament, A translation in the Language of the People

About Our Cover

Our cover photo was taken near Highway 15, Rush, New York, by Mr. and Mrs. David Sutton.

Megiddo Message

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May, 1986

The **MEGIDDO MESSAGE** is a religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ, and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Church. L. T. Nichols, *Founder;* Newton H. Payne, *President and Editor*. Ruth E. Sisson, *Executive Editor*.

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MEGIDDO is a way of believing and living, grounded solidly in the Bible as the reliable Word of our Creator. A total view of life, the world and the universe, it sees all events, men and nations moving together toward one God-ordained climax: the Kingdom of God on earth. This has been the plan of God since the beginning. Christ will return visibly, bodily, as King, and the governments of this world will be joined to form a totally new worldwide government. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants. This is the purpose and goal of all creation. SERMON

Meeting God at Every Corner

Scripture Reading: Psalm 139

B Y THE MERCY of God the road of life still stretches out before us. Life! Prolonged life! This itself is full of meaning. Every new day that we arise to greet the dawn, every newborn year that is added to the swiftly mounting aggregate is a fresh token from heaven—a guarantee signed, sealed, and delivered to us by a beneficent heavenly Father bearing mute but unmistakable assurance of our ability to use wisely that additional allotment of time. As we recognize each new portion of time as a guarantee of our ability, shall we not also hail it as a challenge to demonstrate that ability? Such is the purpose for which is granted this new year which stretches out before us as a lengthy and untried road.

It is a great consolation to realize that God still cares for His own. We are fully convinced that God spoke to Samuel and to Moses and to Abraham and to others in biblical times, and that He guided these men by unseen but infallible goodness. While that was in the old days, we have no reason to doubt that the God who lived in the days of the patriarchs and prophets is just the same today. It is possible for us to look ahead today with the full assurance that for the strange way before us, we have a personal Providence guiding us. His angel encamps about us if it is our desire to live our life in complete harmony with His, and all things will work together for our good if we truly love Him.

Discoveries of the vastness of our universe, and the precision with which what we call nature's laws coordinate to keep the celestial bodies operating in an orderly way, only reinforce our belief in a Supreme Being and His concern about His creation and the creatures of His creation. Surely God is not too busy or too

Note: *Meeting God at Every Corner* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

remote to be concerned about the personal life of His creatures who some day shall merit a place in some corner of His celestial abode.

We have the best of reasons to believe that God can be found behind the shadows, keeping watch over His flock by day and by night. "The Shepherd of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps" (Ps. 121:3, 4). With such a vivid sense of the personal presence of God we can say confidently, "I do not know what my future holds, but I know who holds my future." Such an assurance of divine providence is underscored in a modern translation of Psalms 59:10: "My God in his lovingkindness will meet me at every corner."

This seems to be too good to be true. What is the ground of the Psalmist's assurance that God is interested in his life and offers unfailing guidance? Let us look more closely at some of the lessons which this conviction implies.

The Psalmist is confessing a personal need for divine guidance. If he is representative of all men, we may believe that all men have similar needs, recognized or not. Guidance is necessary because of man's nature and the limit of his ability to manage himself. The once popular notion of automatic progress which inexorably bears man's life upward like an escalator, was not born in the Psalmist's conception. He would not have argued with the man of the world who said, "the world's train of progress is not late, there has been a wreck."

King David's discourse in Psalm 49 of the man purported to be in honor from a worldly standpoint, shows that he cherished no flattering opinion of man's ability to create his own destiny or direct himself during his short journey through life. The man who attempts to leave God out of the picture is of no more account to the Almighty than the beasts of the field. "Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish... Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish" (vs. 12, 16-20). Such an ending could properly be termed a "wreck."

The Psalmist again reveals his understanding of the need for God at man's corner in Ps. 39:5: "verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity." And the other Scriptural authors shared the Psalmist's viewpoint. King Solomon, David's son, wrote: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 16:25). Man needs divine guidance, and without it he will sink into eternal oblivion. And again the prophet Jeremiah is in perfect agreement: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (10:23).

Man cannot direct his own steps. He has never been able to direct himself and never will as long as he is in his mortal flesh. His tendencies are all downward. Moses commanded: "Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes," but "what thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Deut. 12:8, 32). In the early hours of the day of salvation the Lord revealed some facts about man that agree perfectly with what we have just said: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). At whatever corner God meets man, or in whatever period of the world's history He meets him, his tendencies are always the same. Downward.

Our Need for Divine Guidance

These admissions reveal that there are obvious gaps in man's experience and knowledge. There are places where he has not been and things which he has not seen. There are facts beyond his ken. Modern man may know a great deal about nature's laws; he knows very little about how to control the inner workings of his own mind. The world without has yielded its secrets one by one, but the world within remains an unsolved area. The interior life continues to plague us because it is from within the heart that man speaks and acts. Due to the lag in man's moral development, he stands sorely in need of divine guidance.

The story is told of a highway tragedy which

"My God in his lovingkindness will meet me at every corner."—Ps.59:10

occurred in our home State and took the lives of a newly married young couple. They were driving at a fast clip through the night to visit their parents. Their car left the road and overturned, killing both. The highway patrol investigating the accident reported that no mechanical defect had been the cause, but that skid marks showed that the young man was "overdriving his lights." At high speed he came upon an abrupt curve and lost control of his car. Yes, "overdriving his lights" is the cause for man's dark dilemma in his world today. He flies faster than the speed of sound, but he has lost his sense of direction. He can make his voice heard around the world, but he has nothing the world needs to hear. He lives longer, but he is not sure about the purpose or meaning of life.

A cartoonist aptly portrays the predicament of modern man, who in his cleverness has conquered the outer reaches of space and unlocked the mystery of the atom. Two apes are looking at the ruins of a great city, now a mass of rubble and debris. Evidently some powerful bomb has levelled the skyscrapers and smaller buildings. There are no signs of life; there seem to be no survivors. The caption beneath the cartoon has one ape saying to another, "You know, they say these people were remarkably clever."

Because of subtle defects in his vision and character, man needs divine guidance (Jer. 17:9). With life loose from its moorings in God, man's vantage point is off center; his lens is out of focus. His compass is hopelessly magnetized toward himself. As a result, his calculations involve a basic error in his present position and the compass needle does not afford a true reading of one direction. Man's compass has become hopelessly magnetized toward himself. What a true indictment. And here we have an example of the accuracy of divine prophecy. That very condition is foretold for the last days: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, . . . having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (II Tim. 3:1, 2, 5). Man is circumscribed, himself being the focal point of his small sphere of existence.

Men have become much like Simon the sorcerer in the days when Philip the evangelist was preaching, they We need divine guidance. Without it we would sink into eternal oblivion.

think themselves to be "some great one." The patriarch Job pictures the self-centered man as saying to God: "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?" (Job 21:14, 15).

Let those take the lesson to heart who especially need it; let them humble themselves to receive it. Do not evade the issue and say, That fits the world who know not God, or it is good for brother So and So or sister So and So. The human heart is so deceitful that it has a way of cloaking its grossest sins by pretenses of righteousness. It may be sorcery and witchcraft like Simon; it may be honors of the Kingdom like the sons of Zebedee; it may be preaching sermons, making

Let Us Pray . . .

Almighty and eternal God, Creator of the universe and Father of our spirits; we worship Thee. Far off from us Thou art, but by the insensitiveness of our own evil hearts, we too often keep Thee distant.

Grant to us in this hour of opportunity the grace of receptiveness, that into hospitable souls we may receive Thee, Thou Spirit of goodness and truth. Cross the inner thresholds of our hearts, lay hold upon our faith, steady our faltering steps, and with such inner refreshment send us out to be good soldiers for Thee, that we may be equal to all the demands that shall be made upon us. May our human efforts, bulwarked by Thy divine strength, bear fruit that shall meet with Thy approval and that will assure our acceptance when we shall stand before the Judgment seat of Christ.

Father, we recognize Thee as the Source of all knowledge and wisdom. With the Psalmist, we marvel at Thy ability to know what is going on in each of our hearts. Thou dost continually search and know us. Thou knowest our downsitting and our uprising, Thou understandest our thoughts afar off. There is not a word in our tongue but Thou, Lord, knowest it altospeeches, writing books. It may be anything you like, down to your children's possessions and performances, or your own earthly possessions; but we all, to begin with, give ourselves out to be some great one. Simon the sorcerer was but an exaggerated specimen of every popularity-hunter among us.

Truly man has lost his way, and he needs a wisdom greater and wiser than his own to intervene. According to the Psalmist that is what God does. He meets man at every corner.

Life's Meaning

In passing let us note that the two factors which make guidance necessary are present here to make it possible. Guidance is possible because of the nature of man and the nature of man's existence. Man is fallible and ignorant, but he has the capacity to correct his failures and learn. Though he may need to be spoon-fed with truth, he has the capacity for such rich nurture. Man needs guidance because he is a man, but he may have it for that selfsame reason.

gether. Even the darkness cannot hide us from Thine all-seeing eye. The thoughts that we try hardest to conceal, and the motives that we the most diligently try to hide, are naked and opened to Thee, our all-seeing God.

Cognizant of Thy superior plan for the surveillance of Thy worshipers, may we not try to hide anything from Thee, or make ourselves believe we are better than Thou knowest us to be. We cannot escape the fact that at the final corner of life we shall meet Thee, we shall stand before Thee, we shall have to give account to Thee for what we have done or failed to do.

May these observations alert us to the futility of trying to appear better than we are, always remembering that Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.

Father, we pray Thy blessing on all those who are seeking Thee in sincerity and in truth, wherever they may be. Be with the afflicted, comfort the sorrowing, support the suffering, and renew in all of us the reality of our faith. We see Thy light on the horizon. We know a better Day is about to dawn. Help us, then, to busy ourselves doing the things Thou hast commanded us to do, making a supreme effort toward holiness in our own lives, that Thy magnificent salvation may someday be made firsthand for us.

We ask it in the name of Him who shall one day reign as King over the entire earth. Amen.

Moreover, the nature of man's existence also makes divine guidance possible. This is a meaningful world backed by a purposeful plan. As it has been said, "The world is not an orphanage, nor is the universe a machine." There is a God behind it. There is a saving purpose which as God's will is operative in human history and affords purpose to man's being and living. Since there is a goal and a prize to be grasped, we must expect a gracious Providence to offer His guidance to men. "In an ordered world there is meaning to every event, nothing walks with aimless feet."

But though this is an important part of the truth not to be overlooked, the Psalmist found his hope on a higher level. "My God," he exults, "in his loving kindness will meet me at every corner." His assurance of the wisdom and sufficiency of divine Providence is to be found in the nature and character of God. Since God is related by character and covenant to Israel, and since He has a gracious purpose for His people, the Psalmist must believe in a personal Providence, adequate for every need.

Our presence here in our mortal life is not accidental. We were placed here for a purpose. The earth and everything upon it exists as a part of a master plan to develop subjects fitted for eternal salvation. "As truly as I live," said the Lord, "all the earth shall be filled with my glory." Life is an opportunity which comes to us but once. We can either use it or squander it. God leaves us free moral agents to choose our own course of action. We can serve Him and fit ourselves for the life to come, or we can do as we please, invest our all in the world of today, and lose the world of tomorrow.

Life should be a journey, not merely from the cradle to the grave, but from the old creature to the new, from a man of the world all absorbed with mundane trifles, to a truly active Christian who learns to value the seeking of God's Kingdom and His righteousness above all else.

Be strong! We are not here to play, to dream, to drift, We have hard work to do, and loads to lift. Shun not the struggle, face it, 'tis God's gift, Be strong. Say not, The days are evil—who's to blame? And fold the hands and acquiesce—O shame! Stand up, speak out, and bravely, in God's name, Be strong. It matters not How deep entrenched the wrong,

How deep entrenched the wrong, How hard the battle goes, the day, how long; Faint not, fight on! Tomorrow comes the song, Be strong! The Psalmist believed in a personal Providence, adequate for every need.

Here life's meaning is sharply outlined. If we follow this practical way of living, we can be assured that God will meet us with a blessing at each corner, as we traverse the difficult road to life.

We cannot hide from God. His eyes are in every place beholding the evil and the good. In the words of the Psalmist, in our Scripture lesson: "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off... For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether ... Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell (the nether world), behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" (Ps. 139:1, 2, 4, 7-10).

Indeed, we are destined to meet God at every corner, and He will meet us either for good or ill, according to our just deserts. We cannot hide from Him. If our lives are clean and wholesome and free from the defilements of sin, His right hand will hold us. Conversely, if sin lies at our door, His hand will be upon us for ill. Hence the Psalmist pleads—as should each of us today: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Help in Life's Dark Places

The Psalmist surely implies also that guidance is necessary because of the perplexing nature of man's existence. Sooner or later there will be blind corners around which man cannot see. His daily path will be rudely interrupted by unexpected turns. At the corner of a new year, he is conscious that an untried path lies ahead. Yesterday's light has waned and new light is needed. Last year's energies have been depleted and must be renewed. Vexing frustrations and sharp corners recur with distressing regularity.

There is that sense in which not merely a new year, but every day, the new reappears. It faces us with a Sooner or later there will be blind corners around which we cannot see. We need God.

petty round of routine events. The ordinary affairs of drab daily life chafe and rub. Our response reflects our attitudes and our habits, and thus shapes our lives. But even in familiar paths there may be blind corners around which we cannot see. We must pause at the edge of each day, as at each new year, to acknowledge that man's life is a precarious existence, that at every corner we need God's loving presence and wise guidance.

Furthermore, it is because there are tragic corners in man's experience that the Psalmist expresses his need for personal guidance. How often we wish that we might see ahead around the bend in life's way, beyond the limiting horizon of our earthbound view. We can only guess what lies in our path. The strange and sudden turns which unexpectedly appear cause us anxious moments of worry and care. Here is a man who stumbles from a life of health to one of sickness and pain. The path ahead looks dark and foreboding. There is a blind corner, perhaps hospitalization and surgery. The hand of death reaches out and suddenly snatches from our embrace a lifetime friend and companion. At an advanced age, just when our need for someone to lean upon is greatest, we are left alone. A bosom friend, whose soul was knit to our soul like the sublime friendship between David and Jonathan, may choose to take a divergent path which we cannot follow, resulting in the loss of his friendship.

It is at such corners that we need God's assuring promise: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"; and "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (Heb. 13:5; I Cor. 10:13). It was in the face of a foreboding corner that the Psalmist, with unbounded faith in God, declared: "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up . . . I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken" (Ps. 27:10; 37:25). When we cannot see to find our way or get our footing, let us not fail to believe that God will meet us at that corner. Does the long time of waiting for our Lord to return, and the seeming delay in the execution of God's plan for the earth and mankind, seem like a blind corner in an exceedingly dark night? Do we so long to look beyond the shadows, to have God manifest Himself at this critical corner, that we feel that we can no longer hold on to our hope if He does not show His hand quickly? But should we not the rather reflect upon our readiness for such a meeting? A meeting with God is not a matter to be taken lightly. God is love, God is wisdom, God is merciful; our God is a Sun and Shield. But that is not all that He is. He also is an impartial Judge. He is a consuming fire. He is of too pure eyes to behold iniquity with any degree of tolerance.

If we would meet God on genial terms at the acutest corner mortals ever turned, we first must prepare to meet Him. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel," cried Amos the herdsman prophet (4:12). Now is our only chance to prepare. A sharp warning is couched in the words recorded in Isa. 47:3 against attempting to meet God without due preparation: "Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man." At that final corner God will not meet us as a man. He is a God of "knowledge, and by him actions are weighed." Man may overlook our shortcomings; he may be content to call evil good and darkness light, but Godnever! He will not meet us as a man. Evil will be evil, darkness, darkness; and only a life free from every defilement of the flesh will merit His full approval.

Bright Corners

We may be thankful there are bright corners which lead not to sadness but to joy, not to death but to life. Here for example is a man who has lain for thirty-eight years at the pool of Siloam. One day Jesus comes along and says: "Do you want to get well?" Here is a new corner where God meets him. "Sir, I have no man when the pool is troubled, . . . and while I am going, another gets there first."

What a picture of a host of people who during their temporal life suffer some crippling handicap. It may be a withered limb, or some complex which proves a deterrent to success. All through life they are pushed aside. Those who are stronger, those who are quicker, those who are smarter, get there first. But thank God one's misfortunes in this life need not hold him back from living a fully surrendered life. To the man who is up and doing in the spiritual life there can come these unexpected corners that lead straight into God's presence, to "fulness of joy," and "pleasures for evermore" at His right hand; to a life where human handicaps are mastered, and we shall forget our miseries, and remember them "as waters that pass away" (Job 11:16).

Blind Bartimaeus arrived at a bright corner that day when as Jesus and His disciples passed along the Jericho Road he implored Jesus to restore his sight. How his heart must have thrilled as Jesus said to him, "Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole," and immediately the full blaze of day burst upon his darkened vision and he was healed; he received his sight.

What a bright corner it was for Zaccheus, when as he was viewing Jesus from his elevated perch in the sycamore tree, Jesus said to him: "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house." Being a despised tax-gatherer by profession he never dreamed that he would be able to entertain such a royal guest in his home.

What a bright corner that was for those three women, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, who went to the sepulchre at daybreak the first day of the week to anoint the body of Jesus, and found the tomb empty and heard the angels announce: "He is not here, he is risen." Less than forty hours earlier they had reached the darkest corner of their lives as they saw their beloved Master expire on the cross, and witnessed Him laid in Joseph's new black tomb. They could not see around that corner. Everything was dark as night. Life could never be the same again. Then followed the glow of the brightest corner humanly possible. The change was so great that it fairly lifted them out of themselves. Surely God met them at that corner.

Abraham must have undergone a similar experience when commanded to offer up his son Isaac on Mt. Moriah. How could any corner seem blacker or more filled with hopelessness and despair. Isaac, the son of his old age. Isaac, a son of promise. It was to be through Isaac that a great nation should spring from him. And now here he was commanded to offer him up as a sacrifice. How rapidly his mind must have canvassed the pertinent facts again and again. Why had God required this of him? How could God's promise to him be fulfilled with Isaac cold in death? Then his faith leaped to the rescue, and the thought came to him that he who gave life in the first place could restore it again.

Early the following morning he started on his journey toward the place where the Lord had commanded him to go. On and on he and his son Isaac trudged, carrying the wood, the fire and the knife. As they neared the spot where they were commanded to go, Isaac plaintively asked: "Father, ... Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Certainly that question from a loving son must God may delay, but God will not default. Payday will come someday.

have driven home the more vividly the blackness surrounding that dark corner.

At last they arrived at the spot where they were to meet God. Abraham informed Isaac that he was to be the subject of the sacrifice. Isaac willingly submitted. He was bound, laid upon the wood on the rough stone altar, and just as Abraham raised his hand to take his son's life in obedience to the Lord's command, how that dark corner was flooded with light! God met him at that corner. The angel stayed his hand with the words: "Abraham, Abraham: . . . Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."

And some day we who have faithfully worked and waited, who have given our best, our very best, to serve our Lord's interests during His absence, shall arrive at the brightest corner possible for a human being to arrive at. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." The King will say: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.... Enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."

We Could Miss the Important Corner

However, there is a grave possibility of our coming to a corner in our lives that would lead to this future brightness without sensing it, and by refusing to be "workers together with God," we could fail to receive the great blessings that might have been ours. It was so with the rich man in Jesus' parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. He refused to eat the crumbs of practical Christian living, allowing them to fall from the table hence lost the blessing. It was so with the rich fool who would tear down his barns and build greater, thinking he had much goods laid up for many years, unaware that that very night his soul would be required of him. It was so with the rich young ruler who when told by Jesus to sell all that he had and use it in God's service, went away sorrowful. "God came to their corner, but, dull and unseeing, unhearing and uncommitted, they missed the turn which could have led them into life."

The unfaithful servants, who shall see Abraham, (Continued on page 11) Every Day, Every Day

The Peace that Passes All Understanding

O FTEN we cannot determine what events will befall us nor the attitude that people will take toward us. Nevertheless, we can remain peaceful regardless of these unpredictable problems. The peace of God in our hearts gives a profound inner poise which external circumstances are not capable of destroying.

Misunderstandings will come as long as we have dealings with people. Most of these can be resolved if we will talk to each other and keep the lines of communication open. However, some misunderstandings are so deep-seated that every move we make to heal the broken ties seems to make the matter worse. When this occurs, only the peace of God within enables us to preserve a right spirit and undisturbed tranquility.

The peace of God also takes the initiative in seeking to heal snapped relationships; it works tirelessly for harmony, and expends itself to bind broken ties so that they vibrate once more with a melody of love.

Spiritual Dropouts

ONE OF the most derogatory phrases in our times is "dropout." The usual expectation is that anyone who is a problem person is a dropout from school, from home, or from a job. Dropouts in these areas are sad, but they are not as serious as being spiritual dropouts. This is the supreme tragedy. However, by God's grace it is never necessary to be a failure at this point.

In contrast to being a failure, one of the greatest satisfactions in life is to complete a worthy mission that we have set out to accomplish. The joy that is a fruit of the Spirit and interlocked with growth in grace, enables us to be faithful to the end of the course. Joy increases from time to time; but it reaches the abounding stage when we arrive at the point where we can say, "Mission accomplished."

This is what Jesus said when He uttered that prayer of victory in the garden on the last night before His crucifixion: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4).

Under the faithful tutelage of the Lord we, too, can finish the course. Then we can matriculate into the higher level in His eternal kingdom.

"Everyday with Paul," by Mendell Taylor. Copyright 1978 by Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City; used by permission.

Meeting God at Every Corner

(Continued from page 9)

Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom, and they themselves shut out, shall for the first time in their lives, be fully aware of the magnitude of their fatal mistake. What could have been a corner bright and glorious in the extreme will be so dark and terrifying that their reaction will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And again this same class of individuals will say, quoting from an Old Testament source, "How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!" (Prov. 5:12-13).

And, brethren, this sad ending could easily be ours. To assure it, we need only do nothing. Inactivity, inattention, the taking our hope of future life for granted —as surely as the baser sins, stubbornness, rebellion and sensuality—are factors that will assure us defeat when we stand before the Judge of all the earth.

God may delay, but God will not default. Payday comes someday. We all have a rendezvous with judgment. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap (Gal. 6:7).

Life's Final Corner

There is one corner where we shall want God to meet us with a smile of approval, and that will be when we meet our future Judge, Saviour and King, Emmanuel, God with us; as we meet Him face to face when He returns from the far country. That will be the most momentous corner that ever we rounded, and, if faithful, that corner will be bright. Just how bright we cannot postulate, for its glory is hidden from mortal eyes. "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." We are pre-informed that the glory of that bright corner will be "exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think."

And not only are we promised that we will meet our God—Emmanuel, at that corner, but that He actually will dwell among us: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Our finite minds cannot take in the bliss of being placed out of the reach of sorrow, of pain, disappointment, frustration, factors that have plagued us through our mortal life; and even death our arch enemy will be shorn of his power to attack us!

What a bright corner when this "mortal" shall have put on "immortality," and this "corruptible shall have put on incorruption," and "death is swallowed up in victory"; when the happy winners in the struggle against the flesh can sing victoriously that song of triumph: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

The time will not always tarry. Before the year we are now in has expired we may have reached the very corner where either we shall be fully prepared to meet our God, or we will wish that we were. With each covenant-maker a moment must come when we shall have to face our record as it stands. If we have not been faithful during the absence of the great Householder, there will be no sorrow like our sorrow.

If we have been faithful, God will meet us at that grand corner in the person of His Son, and give us a royal welcome. Faith then will be turned to sight, expectancy to realization, hope to glad fruition, promise to fulfillment, with life, life, life, abundant life as our happy portion as long as the ages of eternity roll, world without end.

Benediction

Loving Father, we implore Thee to dismiss us with Thy blessing.

We rejoice to know that we are not as an unescorted ship on an uncharted ocean in our journey to our desired haven; but if we surrender fully to Thy leading Thou wilt ever be with us, and that no trial, or temptation or testing will come that is beyond our ability to stand.

And as Thou hast guided us in the past wilt Thou continue to guide us until at last we shall safely reach the portals of everlasting rest upon the shores of eternity—Thy eternal Kingdom upon earth. In Jesus' name. Amen. MM

"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). The key to becoming a disciple of Christ is to *continue* in His Word. No one becomes a violinist after his first lesson; it requires continued lessons and practice. Just so with those aspiring to be disciples of Christ; it is not accomplished by the simple statement, "I believe." It requires first a knowledge of His Word, and then, as with the violinist, practice. Said Jesus, "If ye love me, keep my commandments"; and again, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 14:15; 15:14).

SO WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

Of Sheep and Shepherds

The shepherd's task was both varied and arduous. Not only had he to protect his sheep from robbers and wild beasts, he had also to be constantly in search of good pasture and sufficient water (Psalm 23:2). Jacob reminds us how hard a shepherd's life could be, "in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes" (Genesis 31:40).

The vocation of the shepherd is one of the most expressive metaphors used in the Bible. Repeatedly, illustrations are drawn from the shepherd's activity. Kings, priests, prophets, leaders in temporal affairs and teachers must feed and care for their people as faithful guardians of the flock.

THE shepherd's equipment was simple. Can you match the name with the definition?

- 1. Cloak5. Staff2. Shepherd's scrip6. Flute3. Sling7. Wages
- 4. Rod 8. Sheepfold
- a. _____ A pipe made of reeds to entertain himself and content his sheep. (I Sam. 17:34; Isa. 31:4).
- b. _____ An enclosure which protected sheep from hazards of weather, robbers, and wild beasts. It was roofless, walled by stone, and had only one door. (John 10:1-3)
- c. _____ A club about 30 inches long, having a number of heavy iron nails driven into its round head and used for defense against attack.
- d. _____ Chief garment of a shepherd woven from wool or made from sheepskins with fleece. Sleeveless outer garment was gathered around the waist by a strong leather belt or girdle. (Jer. 43:12)
- e. _____ Weapon made of goat's hair used to throw stones. The shepherd carried it to protect himself and his sheep from wild animals. (I Sam. 17:40)
- f. _____ The shepherd was sometimes paid in money, but more often in the form of milk, wool or sheep.
- g. _____ A bag made of goat's skin with legs tied. Used as a container for food, necessary articles and chief belongings. (I Sam. 17:40)

h. _____ Something like a walking stick with a crook on the end to seize straying sheep by the leg. (Ps. 23:4; Zech. 11:7).

Which statements are true, and which are false?

- 1. _____ Samuel met King Saul returning from the battle with the Amalekites in which he was commanded to slay every person, ox, sheep, camel and ass. He, however, disobeyed and kept the king and the best of the sheep. I Sam. 15:3, 9
- 2. _____ Sheep were considered clean animals because they had cloven hoofs and chewed the cud. Deut. 14:4-6
- 3. _____ The Ethiopian eunuch was reading Amos the Prophet. The place he was reading when Philip joined him was "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb before his shearer. . . ." Acts 8:28, 32
- 4. ____ Moses was concerned that the children of Israel have a good leader after his death . . . "that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd." Num. 27:15-17
- 5. _____ After the shepherds had seen the angels and later found the Christ child, they were afraid to tell anyone about their experience for fear of being ridiculed. Luke 2:8, 17, 20
- 6. ____ When Joshua and the Israelites took Jericho, God commanded that every living thing

"My Sheep Hear My Voice and They Follow Me"

"... He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out....

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

-John 10:2-3, 27

A traveler in Greece asked a servant if it was usual in Greece to give names to the sheep. "He informed me that it was and that the sheep obeyed the shepherd when he called them by their names."

Soon after, the traveler had an opportunity to verify this. He writes, "Passing by a flock of sheep, I asked the shepherd the same question which I had put to the servant, and he gave me the same answer. I then bade him call one of his sheep. He did so, and it instantly left its pasturage and its companions and ran up to the hands of the shepherd with signs of pleasure and with a prompt obedience which I had never before observed in any other animal." thing be destroyed except the sheep, which were to be saved for sacrificing. Josh. 6:21 Isaiah said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matt.

8. _____ Besides the specific parts of the sacrifices, the Israelites were commanded to give the first of their corn, oil and wine to the priests, but not of the first of their fleece from their sheep. Deut. 18:4

7. _____

- 9. _____ The Prophet Micaiah uttered these words speaking to Ahab, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd." I Kings 22:17
- 10. _____ Immediately after Samuel anointed David the next king of Israel, David went to court and did not return to the sheep. I Sam. 17:15
- 11. _____ Among the blessings promised the Israelites if they hearkened to God's judgments and kept His laws was the blessing of abundant flocks of sheep. Deut. 7:13
- 12. _____ If a man found a stray ox or sheep that belonged to a fellow Israelite, he could keep it. Deut. 22:1, 2
- 13.____ In Jesus' day they sold oxen, sheep and

doves in the temple. John 2:14

- 14. _____ There were sheepcotes (sheepfolds) near the cave in which David and his men hid from Saul in the wilderness of Engedi. I Sam. 24:3
- 15. _____ Jesus told John two times, "Feed my sheep." John 21:16-17
- 16. _____ At first Job's substance included 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels and five hundred yoke of oxen. When "the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning," He doubled all that Job had had at the first. Job 1:3; 42:12

Answers:

3. False. He read from the Prophet 1. True 2. True 5. False. They told it abroad and glori-4. True Isaiah. 6. False. Every living thing with no fied and praised God. 7. False. Jesus said this to the Canaanite woman exception. 8. False. The first of their fleece whose daughter was sick. 10. False. also had to be given to the priests. 9. True 11. True 12. False. He David returned to the sheep. must restore it if he knew to whom it belonged. 13. True 14. True 15. False. He spoke to 16. True Peter.

Buy for Yourselves

(Continued from page 2)

rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves."

There are things we simply cannot do for one another. We can help and encourage one another, but no one can do right for us. No one can fulfill *our* duty to God. No one can lay up *for us* a good foundation against the time to come. No one can build *our* faith. There are certain things we have to acquire for ourselves, do for ourselves, buy for ourselves, or we will never have them. There are certain things we have to "go . . . and buy for ourselves."

And buy now, while there is still time.

Good Day!

What do I wish when I wish you "Good Day"? God's light on your path every step of the way, His joy in your heart and His love ever near To guide you and bless you and all you hold dear.

A spirit at peace, and a heart full of praise, The faith to walk firmly in difficult ways, Success in each task, from beginning to end, I wish, when I give you this greeting, my friend.

For a good day is one that is filled every hour, With all of God's goodness and beauty and power; With joyous attainment, in sickness or health, And riches surpassing earth's vision of wealth;

A good day, a God day . . . they're one and the same. I greet you and bless you in Christ's holy name; May His presence enfold you, make perfect your way. I wish you the best when I wish you "Good Day".

A Time for Action

THOUGH we live in a world of chaos, it is a time when, as Christians, we must not walk carelessly; we must not walk uncertainly. In this very hour comes the irresistible challenge to our faith. Our great deliverance and salvation will not be supplied simply by reading of the holy, righteous, and tireless characters who met the call of other days. It is for us to stand firm in the faith once delivered to the saints.

God's Word has always given and always will give indomitable purpose and invincible strength to those who rely upon it; and to all who have trusted in it, it has brought a comfort no mortal hand can give, a sacred hope of a coming peace in a war-torn world. It lifts up the fallen and infuses a passion for service into hearts that before were overflowing with selfishness. No matter how dark the night, no matter how hard and rough the mountain we are climbing, let us look forward for the first glimmer of light which shall usher in that eternal Day.

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

Our religion tells us that our trials can be converted into triumphs, our millstones into stepping-stones. We can learn from every hardship. Of our Master it was written, *He learned obedience by the things which He suffered*. How can we meet the many temptations and trials before us today if our spiritual resources are low?

We have often been afraid of being branded peculiar and out of stride. Too often we have been afraid to square our lives by our convictions. The time for pious resolution has passed. What God wants is everyday practical *action*, a closer walk with Him, and a deeper trust in His strong arm. MM

The Happy Man

 $T^{\rm HE}$ happy man was born in the city of Regeneration in the parish of Repentance unto life.

He was educated at the school of Obedience.

He has a large estate in the country of Christian Contentment, and many times does jobs of Self-denial, wears the garment of Humility, and has another suit to put on when he goes to Court, called the Robe of Righteousness.

He often walks in the valley of Self-Abasement, and sometimes climbs the mountains of Heavenly-mindedness.

He breakfasts every morning on Spiritual Prayer, and sups every evening on the same. He has meat to eat that the world knows not of, and his drink is the sincere milk of the Word of God.

Happy is he who makes the will of God his will, who has due order in his affections, sound peace in his conscience, real divine purpose in his breast, the Redeemer's yoke on his neck, a vain world under his feet, and a crown of glory ahead of him.

Happy is the life of that man who believes firmly, prays fervently, walks patiently, works abundantly, lives holy, dies daily, watches his heart, guides his senses, redeems his time, loves Christ, and longs for the future glory He has promised.

He must, by necessity, pass through this world, on His way to the better world, but he walks through it as fast as he can, and all his business by the way is to make himself right with God.

Take him all in all, in two words: he is a Man and a Christian.

-Selected

The Date of Christ's New Passover

"The Catholic Church celebrates the Passover on Thursday evening, Jesus' crucifixion on Good Friday, and His resurrection on Easter Sunday. It seems that most of the Protestant Churches agree with this, more or less. Please comment."

To understand the Biblical dating of the events around the crucifixion of Christ, we need to review a few facts about the Hebrew year according to the law given by God to Moses, which as far as we can know was the calendar the Jewish people were still using at this time.

Let us first establish the method of counting days. According to the law given to Moses, the day was to be measured "from even unto even" (Lev. 23:32). That is, the day began at six o'clock in the evening, rather than at midnight.

Second, we need to establish the proper means of determining the beginning of the year. We learn from Exodus 12:2 and 13:4 that the first month of the year was the month of Abib: "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you."

The Hebrew month of Abib, which began the sacred new year, commenced with the first new moon following the spring equinox. And according to the original arrangement given to Moses, the first day of the year was also the first day of the month and the first day of the week (see Lev. 23).

The Israelites were commanded

to commemorate the month Abib, the first month of the sacred year, and the Passover, which fell in that month, as a reminder of their miraculous deliverance from Egypt. We read: "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover unto the Lord thy God: for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night" (Deut. 16:1).

The date for the Passover remembrance, as well as the manner of observance, was precisely spelled out in the Law. "In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover" (Lev. 23:5).

We also need to observe where the Sabbaths fell in the month Abib and the new year. Counting from the first day of the year as also the first day of the week, the seventh day of the year would be the first sabbath; the fourteenth day would be the second sabbath; etc. By this means of counting, the Passover, on the fourteenth day of Abib, always fell on the second sabbath of the year. The day of the Passover would begin with the beginning of the fourteenth of Abib, in the evening, and that evening was to be the time of the memorial observance. The following evening, the beginning of the fifteenth of Abib, and the following day (still the fifteenth of Abib), was the Hebrew festival of the waving of the sheaf of the firstfruits of the harvest. The command was, "On the morrow after the sabbath [he] shall wave it." The fourteenth of Abib being the Passover and the Sabbath, the day of the fifteenth would be the "morrow after the sabbath" (Lev. 23:10-11).

The account in Luke confirms that the Passover fell on a sabbath. Luke 23:54, speaking of the day of His crucifixion, reads, "And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on."

The observance of the Jewish Passover in the year of Jesus' crucifixion and the chronology of events around that time, including Jesus' Passover with His disciples, His betrayal, condemnation, crucifixion, death and resurrection, relate significantly to the above plan for counting days.

Was it on the accustomed Passover of the Jews, or was it one day earlier?

We believe that it was one day earlier, on Abib 13 rather than on the accustomed day of Abib 14.

Recall that Jesus sent His disci-

ples to make special arrangements for the keeping of the Passover observance with Him.

Matthew, Mark and Luke all suggest that Jesus gave these directions to His disciples, to prepare the passover, at the "time that the passover must be killed" or on "the first day of the feast of unleavened bread"-which might suggest that it was already the thirteenth of Abib when Jesus sent the disciples to make arrangements for the meal they were to share (the "feast of unleavened bread" was "called the Passover"—Luke 22:1). If so, this would place the actual Passover meal with the disciples no earlier than the evening of Abib 14. For example, Matthew's account: "Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?" (Matt. 26:17). Mark 14:12 and Luke 22:7 are similar.

Before we give any further consideration to this possible dating method, let us look at the account in the gospel of John, which records more detail.

John 13:1 indicates that Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples before the accustomed time for the Jewish Passover (Abib 14)-because of His strong desire to eat it with them before He suffered. This suggests that had He waited until the usual time He would not have been able to partake with them. The text reads: "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended" The Supper with the disciples was "ended" and it was still "before the feast of the passover."

The narrative continues with de-

tails of the conversation that followed at that last Passover supper that Jesus kept with His disciples. And as John said, He kept it "before the feast of the Passover"--one day early, that is, on Abib 13 instead of Abib 14.

Following the supper, He went with His disciples to Gethsemane, where He prayed and "shed as it were great drops of blood." There He was betrayed, arrested, and led away to be arraigned before Annas and Caiaphas. These events took place during the night of the thirteenth of Abib. The following day, the morning of the thirteenth. He was taken before Pilate, then sent to Herod, and back to Pilate again; then condemned to die, and by the sixth hour, or noon, He had been placed on the cross. By the ninth hour, or three o'clock, He was dead. During the remaining three hours of the day He was removed from the cross, placed in Joseph's new tomb, the tomb was sealed, and the people returned to their homes to begin the celebration of the Passover feast during the early hours of Abib 14.

This sequence of events reveals that Jesus died about three hours before the beginning of the Passover and sabbath.

THE following facts reinforce L the point that Jesus kept the Passover with His disciples one day early (Abib 13) and was crucified on that day and not on the Jewish Passover:

1) If Jesus partook of the Passover at the regular time of the Jewish Passover, then the events immediately following that Passover meal, i.e., the betraval, the arrest, the trial, and the crucifixion, would all have taken place on the Jewish holy day. This seems unlikely, as Matthew records that when the "chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people . . . consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty and kill him," they said No. "Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people" (Matt. 26:3-5).

2) It is also unlikely that the Sanhedrin would have been functioning on the "holy night" of the Passover-it was a time held sacred by all the Jewish people.

3) The Talmud says that Jesus suffered on the "eve of the Passover"-not on the Passover itself.

4) Jesus said at the Supper, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." Knowing that He was to be crucified. He planned the Supper to be one day early, or the night of Abib 13.

HOW does all of the above relate to our counting time today?

Let us begin by relating the sacred Bible year to the secular calendar we use today.

First we must determine where the sacred year begins. Abib, the first month of the Bible year, commences with the first new moon after the spring equinox. The equinox occurring on March 20 this year, the first new moon following occurs on April 9, hence the sacred year begins with the evening of April 9.

Following this timeline, the first sabbath or the seventh day of the year would begin the evening of April 15 and continue through the day of April 16. The second sabbath, also the Hebrew Passover, would occur on the 14th of Abib. in the evening of April 22, and continue through April 23.

The anniversary of the night Jesus kept with His disciples would occur on the thirteenth of Abib, which we will observe on the evening of April 21. During this night, and the following day, Jesus was betrayed,

(Continued on page 26)

What About Mormonism?

We have been asked to comment on our views of the Mormon church, commonly known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Let us say at once that we have no quarrel with those who belong to the Church of Latter Day Saints. We, with them, are grateful to live in a land of religious freedom where we can serve God according to the dictates of our own conscience and conviction. And we admire the exemplary life style of some Mormons of our acquaintance, whose moral standards are noticeably superior to those of the average citizen. We also admire their work ethic and the quality of life values they seek to instill in their children, and their adherence to principles of honesty and integrity. They have a reverence for God that is often lacking today even among members of the nominal churches.

Our concern is with the foundation on which the Mormon doctrine rests. Will Mormon doctrine stand the test of "Prove all things"? Is Mormon faith a "faith unto salvation"? This is the question.

What is the answer? How can we know? What shall be our standard of comparison?

At this point we confront a singular problem, as Mormon faith rests not only on the canon of Scripture as we know it, the Authorized King James Version or any other translation, but on another work which the Mormon people esteem as equal in authority with the Bible: the Book of Mormon.

A large part of the question, then, becomes: Is the Book of Mormon part of the revealed and inspired Word of God?

As believers dedicated to the Bible as the only message of God available to us today, we have no choice but to judge any belief by what we find in the Word of God. What we might think would have no more value than what anyone else might think—our only authority for judging lies in the Word of God. Anyone can make claims, but the final answer can only be decided by "What saith the Lord?"

The following discussion of Mormon history and doctrine is based upon a careful review of available publications. If in any area we have misinterpreted or misapplied Mormon teaching or doctrine, it is not intentional. Citings of Mormon teaching are from the Ensign, a magazine published by "Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." — Editor. **S** INCE its founding in the early days of the 19th century, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has been surrounded with controversy. An organization of some three and one-half million people, the Mormons believe their church to be the one true church on earth today, the true restoration of the church of Jesus Christ.

What is the basis of authority in Mormonism? Unlike most other socalled Christian religions, the Mormon Church does not rely solely on the Bible for authority. While as a church they accept and reverence the Bible, the principle source of faith and teaching is *The Book of Mormon*, which is held to be inspired and infallible. Also on a par with the Bible and the Book of Mormon is any direct "manifestation" received by any of the Mormon hierarchy.

Let us consider first the Book of Mormon.

The Book of Mormon is actually a combining of three books: The Book of Mormon, The Pearl of Great Price, and Doctrine and Covenants. Grouped together, they are said to form "the keystone, ... the stone that supports all other stones in the arch," according to a presentday Mormon elder. The Bible occupies a place of authority lower than the Book of Mormon.

What is source of the alleged authority behind the Book of Mormon?

Mormon faith is founded on the work, writings, and experiences of their "Prophet" Joseph Smith. According to the Mormons, the contents of the Book of Mormon were written on "golden plates" by an angel of God, who delivered the plates to Joseph Smith. The "Prophet" subsequently translated the messages on the plates in the year 1829 and published them in 1830. Upon this the authority of the church rests.

(It is notable that no one except Joseph Smith saw the golden plates —Joseph Smith said the angel warned him not to show them to anyone. Other "witnesses" to the plates saw them "In vision.")

The Book of Mormon

The Mormons make bold claims for their "prophet" and founder, Joseph Smith, and for his writings and works. Mormonism teaches that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and that the Book of Mormon is actually part of the Word of God. The Book of Mormon, said to have been translated from golden plates delivered to Smith by an angel, is declared to be both inspired and infallible, containing "many great and precious truths" not contained in the Bible. In fact, it has been called a "second revelation of the law of God" and is placed on a level above the Bible. As one Mormon elder writes: "Men can get nearer to the Lord, can have more of the spirit of conversion and conformity in their hearts, can have stronger testimonies, and can gain a better understanding of the doctrines of salvation through the Book of Mormon than they can through the Bible... There will be more people saved in the kingdom of Godten thousand times over-because

of the Book of Mormon than there will be because of the Bible."

Our question is: Are these claims veritable? How can we know? Did God indeed send His angel to deliver another gospel to Joseph Smith?

Or did Joseph Smith, with the aid of others, adapt his own Book of Mormon from an already existing book—as non-Mormons have suggested?

What are we to believe? Of what can we be sure?

torical sources of the same time period.

Secular historical records give tangible proof of many of the events chronicled in the Scriptures. In addition, archaeology has confirmed the Biblical record almost countless times, verifying even small details of the Scriptural account, that it happened just as it was reported and at the time with which it is associated in the Bible. Prophecies spoken well in advance and fulfilled

Did God indeed send His angel to deliver another gospel to Joseph Smith?

The Book of Mormon Confirmed or Denied?

Our first step is to examine the Book of Mormon as we would examine the Bible, to assure ourselves of its authenticity. In other words, how does it fit into the historical picture? Is the history it relates, or any part of it, verified by secular accounts? Then, our one standard of faith being the Bible, we must examine the Book of Mormon in the light of Bible teaching, for "every word of God is pure," harmonious, and consistent.

The Book of Mormon vs. History

Is the Book of Mormon historically documented, as is the Bible? The Bible has stood up under a volume of criticism through hundreds of years. Even people who do not accept its authority or believe its teaching will attest to its historical accuracy and authenticity. Its historical documentation has been demonstrated again and again. Places, names, events mentioned in the Bible are also found in secular hisas spoken, often centuries later, further establish the verity of the Scriptures.

By contrast, as far as we are able to determine, secular history corroborates none of the major accounts in the Book of Mormon-of the socalled "Lost Tribes," a people who were supposed to have been descended from Joseph, the son of Jacob, who migrated to North America; of Jesus coming to the American continent after His resurrection and teaching the descendants of these people. The "Golden Plates" from which Smith claims the Book of Mormon was translated were written in what he called "Reformed Egyptian" (a type of Egyptian that is nonexistent, according to Egyptologists). It is also interesting to note that the "golden plates" are said to have been written about four centuries after Christ, some 1200 years before the translation of the King James Version of the Bible, yet woven into the book are several hundred word-for-word quotations from the King James

Version of the Bible, of the New Testament Scriptures!

In fact, non-Mormon researchers have documented extensive information which concludes that the original Book of Mormon came not from an angel but from a plagiarized manuscript.

Evidence has been produced to show that the original Book of Mormon was copied—not translated—from this manuscript (it needed no translating; it was written papyrus from which the book was supposed to have been translated and found it contained nothing which Joseph Smith claimed to translate from it. Instead of the words of Abraham, the papyrus was found to contain ancient Egyptian writings condensed from the Egyptian "Book of the Dead," written centuries after Abraham's time. These findings have also been confirmed by other Egyptologists, though not by the Mormon church.

Any thing we believe must teach that which is in harmony with the Bible.

in English). The manuscript was written in Scripture form and contained many quotations from the King James Bible when written. The author wrote it as a historical novel early in the nineteenth century, intending it only as fiction. The names of the characters in the story correspond exactly with those in the Book of Mormon. The text was revised and edited somewhat by Joseph Smith and his associates, and bits of Scripture were added, but some portions were printed word for word from the original manuscript.

(The Mormon Church does not accept this explanation but holds that the book is authentically that of Joseph Smith.)

There are even reverberations of questions from within the Church, much open dispute and controversy is not resolved. The *Book of Abraham*, a section of the *Pearl of Great Price* was called into question by one of the Mormons themselves. It is said that a noted Egyptologist, an elder in the church (who has since resigned) examined the original

The Book of Mormon vs. the Bible

Our second criteria for judging the Book of Mormon is that it must teach that which is in harmony with the Bible.

In this the Book of Mormon falls woefully short. In fact, there is nothing in the Bible to confirm the events recorded in the Book of Mormon.

We are aware of our Mormon friends' contention that a book cannot tell what follows it, but this is not true of the Bible. The Bible *can* and *does* tell of what was to happen after it was completed. And the Bible does not tell of any book to follow, supplement or supersede it. The Book of Revelation, written to tell of "things to come," does not even hint at the narrative presented in the Book of Mormon.

While we cannot expect the Bible to give us a historical account of events which followed its time of writing, if it is a complete revelation of the plan of God it should give some advance message of significant future events, especially anything that would affect a believer's basis of faith and practice—i.e., their salvation; because the Bible is clearly declared to be a thorough furnisher "unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16-17).

The Bible does not hesitate to speak out clearly about the future. Nor is the scope and time of its prophecies limited to the time of its writing. The prophet Daniel, some four hundred years before Christ, foretold the rise and fall of four world kingdoms, to be followed by a fifth and universal—and eternal—Kingdom of Christ and the saints (Daniel 2:44; 7:15-27). The fulfillment of this prophecy spanned approximately twenty centuries, and its complete fulfillment is yet future.

Several events following the concluding of its message are clearly foretold within its pages. Among these are 1) the destruction of Jerusalem; 2) the withdrawing of the power of the Holy Spirit; 3) the total apostasy from true religion; 4) the renaissance of true religion after the apostasy; 5) the second advent of Christ and His forerunner; 6) the establishing of the worldwide Kingdom of God.

No Continuing Inspiration

Our greatest problem with the Book of Mormon is that it, along with several doctrines of the church, is based on a belief in continuing inspiration, that God continues to reveal Himself directly to and through His prophets in all ages, the present age included. Can this be Biblically supported? Does the Bible allow any follow-up writings which should be accepted as inspired by God, which enlarge or augment or alter the message of the Bible? Is there any possibility that the Bible we use is "one of two" inspired books? Can it be that another book was intended to follow, of which we are not told in the Bible? Is there possibly a "second revelation of the law of God"?

The writer to the Hebrews informs us of how God revealed Himself and His messages to humankind in different ages. We read:

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1-2). In the beginning, God sent His Word through His Prophets. Later He sent His Word through His Son, Jesus Christ. The writing and delivery of His Word was completed through the prophets, apostles and Jesus.

We find no record where He made provision for latter day revelations, or latter day prophets or apostles. In fact, to the contrary we have record of inspired prophecy and teaching coming to an *end*, and the withdrawing of the Holy Spirit. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge (by divine power), it shall vanish away" (I Cor. 13:8).

The Bible is very definite in telling us that God does not reveal Himself and His message openly to His people in all ages. Even during Bible times there were periods when there was "no open vision" (see I Sam, 3:1). And when there was knowledge by divine power or not—as when the bush burned with "fire" and was not consumed, in the time of Moses: or when the pillar of fire and the cloud were visible guides to Israel: or when a voice out of heaven spoke to Jesus: or when the apostles had power to "confirm the word" by performing miracles of healing, by speaking in public without having to prepare what they were to say, and by recalling and writing about events they had not witnessed. All this required direct inspiration from God, and was done by special power not available to us today.

The church of Christ is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20). The spiritual "city" described in Revelation "had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the man—he was a prophet. This is singularly different from the Bible, which tells of God-sent prophets who were also men. Moses was a prophet, and is called the "man of God" (Deut. 33:1); Elijah the prophet was also called a "man of God" (I Kings 17:24); Elisha, his successor prophet, was likewise known as "the man of God" (II Kings 5:20). The prophet Isaiah is identified as "the son of Amoz," a man with a wife and two sons. The

Does the Bible allow any follow-up inspired writings?

twelve apostles of the Lamb" (21:14). No allowance was made for additional apostles.

The Bible as we have it today begins with Genesis and ends with Revelation. There is no provision made for any additions, subtractions or alterations. The Book of Revelation is declared by its author to be the "Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him . . . sent and signified . . . by his angel unto his servant John" (Rev. 1:1). In the last chapter of the book, a warning is issued against any and all additions or subtractions: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy. God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holv city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18-19).

Mormons disallow this application of the above Scriptures by saying that Joseph Smith was not a prophet Jeremiah is introduced as "the son of Hilkiah," a priest of Benjamin. Jesus is more than once identified as a Prophet, and also as a Man: He is the "mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5).

Salvation through the Book of Mormon?

To accept the Mormon statement that there will be "more saved" as a result of the Book of Mormon than the Bible, we need more evidence than we have been able to find.

From what we learn in the Bible. salvation is promised only to those who are faithful in obeying its commands. Speaking of Christ after Pentecost, Peter, "filled with the Holy Spirit." described Him as "the stone . . . which is become the head of the corner," saying, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:8-12). Salvation is by heeding the words of Jesus, "And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:23). We cannot accept anything from the Book of Mormon—or any other book—that is not corroborated by what we find in the Bible, the Source Book of salvation.

Paul warned the Galatian brethren about being turned away to "another gospel," and against those who "would pervert the gospel of Christ. ... As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have At the time of Jesus' baptism, and again at the Transfiguration, a voice out of heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5). Peter, speaking to the Jews after Pentecost, quoted the words of Moses: "And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:23). The foundation of the true church is the apostles and prophets of the

The foundation of the true church must be the apostles and prophets of the Bible, with Christ as the cornerstone.

received, let him be accursed ... But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:6-12).

Apostles and Prophets Today?

Do we have apostles and prophets today? Mormonism declares Joseph Smith to have been a prophet of God in these last days. All church heads since Joseph Smith have likewise been called "prophets," the title being conferred by the "laying on of hands," and as such they have the right to issue new doctrine, or change old ones. A case in point is the recent decision to admit black people into the church, overruling the decree of Joseph Smith. (If Joseph Smith was a prophet and inspired, how did he make the mistake?) All of God's prophets received their authority and their prophetic messages direct from God, never from men.

Bible, with Christ as the cornerstone; no provision is made for any additional apostles or prophets.

Paul further explained this foundation in his letter to the Corinthians: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:10-11).

Other foundation can no man lay. The foundation had already been laid before Paul's apostleship and he identified himself as the last of the apostles. The church was to be built on the words of Jesus, not on the words of Joseph Smith.

The Priesthood Restored

According to Mormonism, the Priesthood was "restored to earth on 15 May 1829, by a heavenly messenger, John the Baptist—the same John who with the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood baptized Jesus of Nazareth in the River Jordan, and later, as a resurrected being, laid his hands on Joseph Smith." (Peter, James and John are said to have appeared to Joseph Smith at a later date also—not in a vision, but bodily.) "The so-called Mormon priesthood is perpetuated by the "laving on of hands."

We find no way to accept these statements within the framework permitted us in the Word of God and are forced to regard them as unfounded, mere fantasy, teachings of men and not of God.

Again, we know of no Biblical or historical evidence that John the Baptist and other apostles were resurrected from the dead and appeared to Joseph Smith in 1829, as the Mormons claim. There has been no resurrection on earth since Jesus was raised, and there will be none until the return of Elijah and Jesus. (No mention is made of how these individuals traveled to the U.S. or what became of them afterward.)

The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is our High Priest, "called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. 5:10). The Melchisedec Priesthood is an eternal priesthood; Christ alone fills the rank of High Priest in the order of Melchisedec.

Baptism for the Dead

One tenet of the Mormon Church attractive to many is the teaching that the living can effect the salvation of dear ones who have died. Mormonism makes provision for "proxy baptism" to wash away the sins of long-dead ancestors and assure their presence in the family unit in the kingdom. Such a practice is clearly outside the Scriptures; the Bible plainly states: "The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing"; "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence" (Eccl. 9:5; Ps. 115:17). There is no possibility of the living changing the status of the dead; "As the tree falleth, so shall it be" (Eccl. 11:3).

Other Doctrines

The Latter Day Saints look to the Book of Mormon for doctrines and inspiration, but most of these doctrines run parallel with those commonly accepted by nominal Christianity today-and truly are found more in the Book of Mormon than in the Bible. According to one writer, "There are doctrines taught in the Book of Mormon that can be seen with a greater view than in the Bible, such as. . . . the doctrines of the Fall, agency, and the redemption of Christ; the reality of Satan and how he operates among peoples and nations; ... the purpose and necessity of baptism and the redemption of little children; and the doctrine of the Resurrection Perhaps the most important purpose of the book, as stated in the preface, is the convincing of Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God."

We agree that these doctrines may be seen "with a greater view" in the Book of Mormon than in the Bible—because they are not taught in the Bible! Let us look at a few of these doctrines individually.

1) The doctrine of the Fall and the Redemption of Christ. These doctrines are false in any book; we do not believe that they belong among the teachings of the Bible, and are but relics of the apostate church. The Bible is very clear that no one was ever condemned for any but his own sin; the sin of Adam harmed no one but himself. And because there was no "Fall" there is no need for redemption from the "Fall." Likewise the idea of a literal sacrifice to appease the wrath of the Father was adapted from paganism. It is a Bible principle that "every man shall die for his own sin." Man's words on the subject count for naught.

2) The reality of Satan. From this statement it is evident that the Mormons believe in a literal Satan or created power of evil that is at work in the world among the nations. If we study the Bible, we find that the devil, or Satan, is simply evil men. It is "from within, out of the heart of men," that all evils proceed. "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him," said Jesus. (Mark 7:21, 15). Jesus spoke only what He received from the Father; His words are Truth.

3) The purpose and necessity of baptism. Water baptism was practiced by John the Baptist before Christ and it was commanded by Jesus as part of the Apostolic Commission. Under it the apostles had power to heal the sick, to cause the lame man to walk and to open the eyes of the blind. But with the end of that age. the Holy Spirit was withdrawn, and all miracles ceased. Not being under the Apostolic Commission today, water baptism is not required today. The only baptism required today is the "one baptism," as taught by Jesus in Mark 10:35-40, and explained by Paul in Romans 6: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? . . . Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). These truths can be learned only from the Bible.

4) Jesus, the Christ and the Eternal God? Jesus is the Christ; there is no debate on this point; He said as much Himself. But He is not the Eternal God. God the Father of Jesus is the Eternal God; there is none beside Him. How could Jesus possibly be both the Father and the Son at the same time? God Himself attests to the fact that He is the only God: "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me... I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded" (Isa. 45:5, 12). We have need of no further testimony.

Conclusion

All true belief and practice must be founded in the Bible, God's one book of revealed knowledge, the book which was written for our learning and admonition, our only source of information concerning the divine Mind today, and we have no authority to look further than this. With the Bible, we stand; without it, we fall.

We accept the Bible as God's only message to man and take Him at His Word that He will accept no additions, subtractions or alterations. "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Prov. 30:6).

No, in the light of the Bible and its revealed truth, we find that Mormon faith and practice is not supported by the firm foundation of the prophets, apostles and Jesus, and fear that the great "keystone" is destined to the ultimate fate of the house built on the sand.

Glamour is not greatness; applause is not fame; noise is not influence; prominence is not eminence. The man of the hour is not likely to be the man of the ages.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Concerning the "Generation" that Shall Not Pass Away

"What is the meaning of Jesus' words, 'this generation shall not pass, till all be fulfilled'"?

This text is Jesus' conclusion to His parable of the fig tree, recorded in Matthew 24:32-35 and Luke 21:29t4. The two narratives are essentially parallel.

The passage is part of Jesus' temple sermon, in which He outlined events from the time then present through the time of His second advent. The sermon, as recorded by Matthew and Luke, is basically in chronological order. If we follow Matthew's account, Jesus' first prophecy is of the destruction of the Jewish temple (Matt. 24:2). The disciples respond with a question: "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming?" (v. 3). In response to these questions, Jesus first discusses some general problems that sincere worshipers in all ages would face (24:4-13), highlighting the need for sustained endurance: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (v. 13).

Jesus then proceeds to sketch major prophetic events from their time to the time of His return. He prophesies the end of the Jewish age (24:14), the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation (24:15-20); the apostasy from true religion (24:21-22); and -26). From verse 27 to the end of the chapter He discusses the deception that would precede His coming in the last various aspects of His second advent and the signs days (24:23that should precede it.

Among the signs preceding His return is the text in question. These are Jesus words: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:32-35).

Christ is speaking of events just prior to His second coming. His stated purpose is to draw attention to the feeling of imminence that should dominate His followers during a certain period of time—a time when His coming should be "near, even at the doors."

Borrowing a simile from nature, from the familiar "fig tree, and all the trees," Jesus points to a period of rapid "putting forth" of tender leaves—an illustration of growth—which announces the approach of summer, and, more especially, of the harvest season that came with summer. "When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh."

Jesus then repeats His statement in other words: Just as quickly and just as surely as summer follows upon the period of rapid spring growth, so "likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it (My coming) is near, even at the doors."

What are "all these things" to which He refers? The gospel of Luke is specific:

- turmoil in the political heavens, among the ruling nations of earth; "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity" (Luke 21:25)
- universal fear of the future; "men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (Luke 21:26)
- general unrest and turmoil in the political heavens: "For the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:26).
- the fig tree putting forth its leaves: a figure of the life and growth of true religion in the last days, following the long winter of the apostasy.

These "signs" are a sure announcement of the imminence of summer, i.e., the time of harvest and the second advent. Says Jesus, "When ye see these things come to pass, know that it is near, even at the doors."

Then follows this statement of Jesus': "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

The question is, who composes "this generation"? Who are they who "shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled"?

Not having the power of the Holy Spirit or any direct revelation of the divine Mind, we are not able to know all that we might like to. The best we can do is to relate visible evidence to revealed facts, and be ready to accept God's purpose as He unfolds it. But God has not left us in the dark. He has given us enough statements sufficiently plain to inform us of the overall direction of His plan, and enough is revealed about the time of the end in this text to give solid assurance to our faith.

The thrust of the passage seems to be this: Jesus is certifying the uninterrupted continuity of His work in the time just before His second coming. Despite the prevalence of iniquity at that time and the turmoil and unrest in the world, two things "shall not pass away": 1) "This generation" and 2) "my words." Whoever "this generation" includes, Jesus says they will "not pass away until all be fulfilled." And just as permanent are His words. In fact, so sure are they of fulfillment that that even if "heaven and earth" should pass away, "my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

The question is, whom does "this generation" include? The term "generation" may be applied to a group of persons living contemporaneously; specifically in this text, in the context of Jesus' words, it has been applied to those who saw the fig tree first bud this side of the apostasy. However, this is not the only meaning of generation.

The original word translated "generation" (genea) has two basic meanings in the Greek, a natural and a metaphorical. The first meaning is the natural, which is "a begetting, a birth, nativity; a family, that which is begotten, several ranks in a natural descent, successive members of a genealogy." Metaphorically it is used of "a race of men very like each other in endowments, pursuits, character." Another definition is "an age" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon).

According to this definition, the emphasis is not on being contemporary but on "likeness." That is, those living at one time would not be of the same "generation" unless they were of the same family, or were in some way "like each other."

Applying this meaning, "this generation" would include *all* believers during the time specified, i.e., during the time of the fig tree's budding and growth, prior to the arrival of summer. And are not they as a special family, a people "very like each other in endowments, pursuits, character"? And do they not, in another sense, comprise "an age," a specific period in the plan of God?

"This generation," then, in the context of Jesus' parable, might begin with those who saw the fig tree bud and grow in these last days, and all the successive members of this family. They are the "chosen generation" (I Pet. 2:9), the "royal priesthood," the "holy nation," the faithful generation, who would not "pass away" until the fulfillment of all things prophesied. In a sense, living believers are part of the budding fig tree, part of its growth—it is impossible to separate the truth from those who practice and proclaim it. And as the fig tree's growth announces the approach of summer and the harvest, do not the presence of the living truth and living, growing believers announce the approach of Christ?

What, then, is Jesus' saying in "this generation shall not pass, till all be fulfilled"? He is saying that there will never be another period of dormancy for the fig tree once it starts to bud and grow. Before the season is over, the final fulfillment will come. Never again will there be a total apostasy from true religion.

This application of the text is reinforced by Jesus subsequent statement, which also underscores both the certainty and the importance of His prophecy: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

The text, then, contains two strong statements of things that should not "pass away": "this generation" and "my words."

In other words, a certain period, i.e., the close of the age and the time of His return would find both living believers and living truth being proclaimed. And note the positive certainty of His words: "Verily I say unto you . . ."—it is a statement of great importance. Well Jesus knew how needful would be this assurance to a people who would see everywhere the general turmoil, fear, uncertainty, perplexity and rampant wickedness which He pictured in this prophetic chapter.

The fact that there will be believers living at the time of Christ's return is highlighted in other sayings of Jesus. In the parable of the Ten Virgins, some were wise and some were foolish. When the night watch proved to be longer than was anticipated, the lamps of some of the virgins went out. But not all. Some were ready and waiting, their lamps trimmed and burning, when the bridegroom finally arrived.

Jesus said it again in the parable of the servants. We read: "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants" (Luke 12:37-38).

Let us resolve that we will be among those who endure to the end, "whom his lord when he cometh shall find watching."

Always put off until tomorrow what you shouldn't do at all.

LETTERS

Keep Awake

We are getting nearer and nearer to the time of Elijah's and Jesus' return. How we should work to merit their approval that we might be worthy of that glory which is beyond our imagination-one blissful, long eternity!

This may be the season of our Great Paymaster's return, but we do not know the moment when He will come.

It is so encouraging to know that all things will work together for our good, however contrary, difficult or sad they may be, for God cooperates for good with those who love Him and "If God is on our side who is against us?" How this should inspire us to never grow weary in well doing, but to keep "look out" and strive a sharp to be "alert and wakeful" for, "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord and Master finds awake when he comes."

We really cannot afford to miss this wonderful opportunity of gaining such tremendous pay, so may we work with all our might in God's Vineyard, so may we pray God to count us worthy of this calling.

What joy and great happiness will be ours if we are zealous now, to do what is right and strive to be honest and sincere, pure and without a flaw and to be commended by Jesus, as Mary was, for choosing the very best part.

May we never, never get drowsy and let the cares of this world-which will soon pass away-choke out God's Word and we become unfruitful.

What happiness it will be to live in peace and safety, when this earth is made a paradise. And to think that for the sacrifice of one "old man," self, we may anticipate being there to wear that beautiful robe of immortality!

South Wales

Where God Loses Out

Someone took a survey of the media religious programs to see how often "God" was mentioned, against how often "I" was mentioned. God lost out, ten to one, it seems.

Vanity certainly is deeply entrenched in mankind, whether the common man, or those who profess religion. Very few religious denominations teach that this trait of human nature must be brought under control, or rather eradicated altogether, as a devil bound is still a devil, and still a threat (he may get loose, and at the most inappropriate times!). We are told in Psalm 94:11, "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity."

However, we need not stay in this condition! There is a way out, and that is to replace our thoughts with those of the Lord.

E. H. Manitoba

Help From God

We are reminded to walk as children of light, as He was in the light. Let us copy Christ.

Our help comes from God, the giver of the life that now is and the life to come. So let us keep waiting and watching, for there is a glorious Day coming, and I think very soon.

M. P. Virginia

A Great Year

It has been a great year for me, reading the Megiddo Message magazine and listening to the sermons on the cassettes-thank you!

I look forward each month to the Megiddo Message and the cassettes. A. D.

Massachusetts

So Much Ahead

Our fortunes or our misfortunes in life shouldn't dampen our spirits. When we look ahead to millions and billions of years of living with the angels, learning to control ourselves and being obedient to God's every command should seem a small thing.

Iowa

W. P.

Everyday Thanksgiving

Everyday should be thanksgiving day with us. We can be so thankful for receiving all the gems of Truth. We all have so many good blessings, I am sure we cannot count them. And are we as thankful as we ought to be? It shows in the way we live whether we are or not.

I have enjoyed all the letters, and all the tapes and Messages.

South Carolina H. C.

The Date of Christ's New Passover

(Continued from page 17)

tried, crucified, and buried-before the beginning of the Sabbath, also the Jewish Passover, that evening, or Abib 14 (on April 22 this year).

Jesus rested in the grave through the day of the Sabbath, or Passover (April 23), then early the next morning (April 24 this year), "upon the first day of the week," He was resurrected. This day, often called "Easter," a name originating with "Ashtar," the Babylonian goddess of spring, was set by the Council of Nicaea to be celebrated the first Sunday after the first full moon after the equinox. This year the first full moon occurs on March 26, hence their celebration of "Easter" on March 30, the first Sunday following. MM

R. B.

FINALLY, BRETHREN

Spiritual Senility

THE symptoms are subtle, and usually mild. Nothing like acute pain or the loss of all of one's spiritual faculties. In fact, the sufferer may hardly be aware that he or she is afflicted.

But the disease is progressive; and if not treated vigorously and consistently, it will prove fatal.

We generally associate senility with advanced age. At what age does spiritual senility become a concern? It, too, is associated with advancing years, though this is not the whole picture. Actually, one does not have to be any certain age to be afflicted. Sometimes the earliest symptoms occur soon after childhood.

Spiritual senility is so dangerous because it is so subtle. The patient is very apt to be calm, quiet, unconcerned, pleasantly satisfied with things as they are.

The disease attacks the spiritual nerve tissue. One of its earliest symptoms is a weakening of the spiritual consciousness, a dulled sensitivity to things sacred. things divine. Some impression is felt, but the force, the strong inner resolution, the forward thrust is gone. Along with the weakened consciousness is a marked loss of spiritual appetite-what appetite remains becomes more and more easily satisfied, with less and less. Sin does not seem so egregious, or righteousness so compelling. The things of the spirit lose the strong appeal they once had, and the things of the presentearthly goals, earthly possessions, earthly friends, wealth, health, and the thousand things that absorb mankind-increase in importance. Meanwhile God, and all that would bring Him to mind, seems far away, and the vision of future glory fades.

Another symptom of spiritual senility is a slow deteriorating of one's reverence for God, along with a noticeable swelling of self-sufficiency, self-consciousness, self-assurance—more of self and less of God. The sufferer shows a lack of concern for God's opinion, and a broadened awareness of self.

Are you wondering about treatment?

One of the best treatments is plenty of nourishing spiritual food and exercise. You must feed your mind constantly on the Word of God, reinforcing your convictions and strengthening your faith by using it in the ordinary situations of every day.

Another treatment is meditation. Absorb your mind so completely in the promises of God that you are lost to what is around you—you will be amazed how your problems diminish in size. Watch closely your inner life, and develop a close communion with God.

The closer we link our lives to God, the less the things of earth will affect us.

What about prevention?

Essentially the same as treatment. But to be effective, the effort must be begun early and continued over a long period of time.

If careful examination reveals that one is not currently afflicted, there is no sure guarantee that he never will be—outside his or her own diligence in keeping the mind actively engaged in thoughts of God, His Word and its precepts, promises, and insights.

One cannot be sure of avoiding the disease simply because he may have a record of outstanding health.

Nor can one be sure of escaping it because of some profound impression received early in life, or by dwelling on some great victory achieved. Very often, spiritual senility sets in after a period of moderate achievement which has been followed by a long period of relaxed effort. Any impression, however deep, must be renewed; any effort, however successful, must be sustained. We must keep alert to the condition of our heart, and be aggressively pursuing God's favor, if we would prevent spiritual senility.

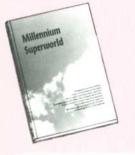
Check your response level often. Watch out for any slight symptoms. As with any other illness, cure is easier if the problem is detected early.

Above all, in the words of the apostle Paul, abound toward God, for "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (II Cor. 9:8).

That is Paul's message to us: Abound toward God, abound in every good work. If we concentrate on this, we need not worry about spiritual senility.

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