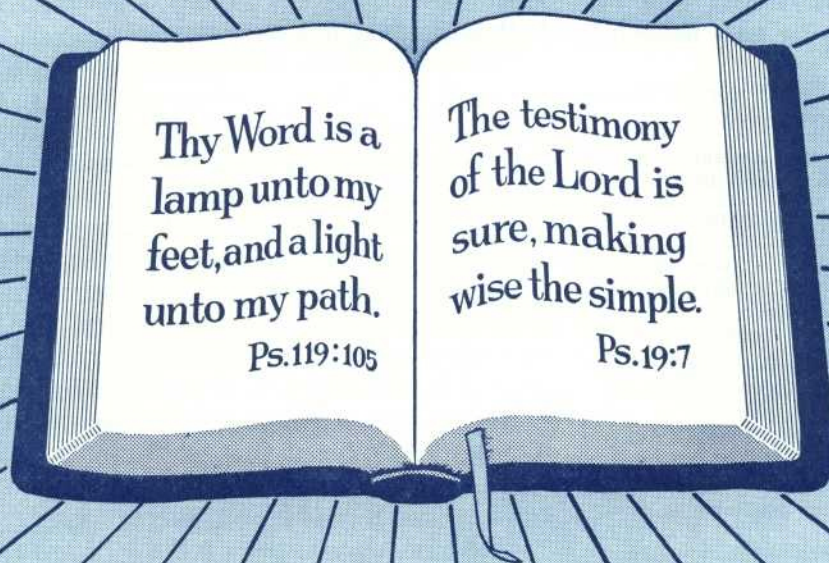


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



The Decalogue

Is the Decalogue for US?

Guilt?

The Challenge

Megiddo Message

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- Answer perplexing religious questions
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Editorially Speaking...

You Can Do Better!

"NOT good enough. Not half good enough. You can do better than that!"

A stinging censure indeed, especially when a man has honestly tried to do his best. We might feel justified in speaking that way to a slovenly child or a careless youth. But such was not its original intent. These are the words by which a famed interior decorator goaded himself on to do better and still better work. However enthusiastic the acclaim he received, he always said to himself, "Not good enough. Not half good enough. You can do better than that!"

Perfection in any temporal enterprise is a goal that will forever elude mortal man. But we can thank God that there is within us that noble discontent which keeps us dissatisfied with anything short of it. There is always something better further on. Good work today, but better tomorrow. And still better the next day.

Nowhere should this inner urge be stronger than in the realm of our spiritual endeavor. We have contracted to give to God our best, our whole heart and soul and mind and strength. Our one aspiration, then, is to become that "better" man or woman we are capable of becoming.

The person who will make the fastest progress toward this moral perfection is the one who, before he confronts the demands of the busy day, takes time to consider his "most important work" from all angles, and asks God for the necessary help and strength to carry that day's work to a successful finish. And then, when night has come, he will be found carefully and critically examining the results. He will ask: What did I do about that particularly trying problem? Where were my thoughts? Was there any time today that I could have spoken more kindly? Was my sobriety at hand when that foolish remark was made? Did I have full control of my feelings? Did temporal concerns take more than their share of my attention? Did someone's sharp tongue stir me?

Careful analysis may show that we have failed on a number of points. And we shall have to ask God's mercy for another day. But if our work seems to be satisfactory, we cannot allow ourselves even a passing feeling of self-satisfaction; for our work is not yet done. Our efforts may be commended, and we should be encouraged; but still we must keep alive within us that divine dissatisfaction that keeps whispering in our ears, "Not good enough. Not half good enough. You can do better than that!"

And true enough, we can. We always can. We can do more of the things we have done the most of.

No matter how fair, medium or good the work we have done, one motto will keep us steadily reaching toward perfection: "Not good enough. Not half good enough. You can do better than that!" For indeed, we can! ●●

The Decalogue

Eternal Covenant or Archaic Code?

IS THE Decalogue the eternal law of God, so perfect and so complete that one needs no further law to live by? Does it contain all that God requires of the man who would be saved?

Many people believe that it does, that if they keep the Ten Commandments flawlessly, they are what God considers "good enough." Among those of such persuasion are the publishers of the *Plain Truth*. In their June, 1973 issue, they supported this position in an article entitled "The Ten Commandments, Archaic Code or Eternal Law?" Candid analysis of the evidence they present should help us answer the question posed by the title: Are the Ten Commandments out of date, or are they the eternal law of God? The question is one of vital importance, for it affects the destiny of each of us. For if we should arrive at the Judgment seat of Christ in full confidence that we shall stand approved because we have kept faithfully each of the Ten Commandments, only to learn that we had adhered to the wrong law, how serious our calamity!

To prove that the Ten Commandment law existed from the very beginning, the article points to the presence of sin even in the Garden of Eden. And the presence of sin indicates the presence of law, for "sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4), and "Where no law is, there is no transgression . . ." (Rom. 4:15). Paul says also that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). And they reason, "If *all* have sinned, and sin is the transgression of the law, then some law has existed at least from the time of Adam down to the 20th century. This means two things: 1) there was law in force before the time of Moses and the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai; and 2) law has been in force since the death of Jesus Christ."

Such reasoning may be valid, but what law was involved? The transgression of any law is sin *against that particular law*, not against all existing law. The law of the Israelites would count one a

transgressor because he built a fire on the sabbath day, but many Canaanites built many fires on many sabbaths without suffering any penalties—because they were not subject to Israelite law.

Especially unreasonable is it to conclude that all people from the time of Adam were subject to a law which Paul states was not given until about four hundred years after the death of Abraham (Gal. 3:17).

When Was the Decalogue Given?

How might one try to prove that the Ten Commandments were the law that was transgressed from the very beginning?

The author of the article in *Plain Truth* points to instances where various of the Ten Commandments were applied or enforced before the law was delivered on Mount Sinai. For example, Jacob was aware of the sinfulness of idolatry when he commanded everyone with him to "put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean" (Gen. 35:2). This principle is expressed in the first commandment of the Ten: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3).

The author attempts to prove that the second command—prohibiting profanity—existed before the time of Moses because the Lord told Moses they were not to profane the name of the Lord as the Canaanites had done—and the Canaanites could not have been condemned for profanity if there had been no law to forbid it (Lev. 18:3, 21, 27). But this is a statement without evidence or even sound logic—would we say that a Chinese could not steal because he had never heard the law of Moses which said, "Thou shalt not steal"?

Now no one would conclude that when God gave the Decalogue to Israel, He was giving law to His people for the first time. Nor would anyone be able to say that all commands given prior to the Ten Commandments were included in those ten simple statements. When God called men to serve Him in the beginning, in the time of Adam, He

gave commands which were to be obeyed. Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat of the fruit of a certain tree; this command to them was law, but it had nothing to do with the Decalogue.

Noah was instructed to build an ark, and was told exactly how he should do it. This command was law to Noah and had to be obeyed; and had Noah refused to build the ark, he would have been numbered among the transgressors and disobedient. But the command bore no relation to the Decalogue.

Abraham was commanded to leave his home country and sojourn in another land; the command was to Abraham a law that had to be obeyed if he was to prove himself a faithful child of God; but that command had nothing to do with the Decalogue.

Jacob built an altar on several occasions and worshiped the one true God, but he had never heard of the Ten Commandments.

Why is it that so many of the Ten Commandment laws had already been given prior to the time of Moses?

The answer is this: God has basic principles by which, ideally, all His human family should live. And the Ten Commandment law was framed around these same principles which God had already delivered to men. All the Ten Commandments were built upon the basic principles of God; *but all the principles of God are not included in the Ten*. Hence the Decalogue alone does not include all that God requires of men to prepare them for eternal salvation; in fact, the Decalogue had nothing to do with salvation. It was the civil law for the nation of Israel, by which that nation was to be governed, just as any other nation is controlled by its law.

Moses' own words show that the Ten Commandments were not God's long-established law; they were not the law that had been previously given to the fathers. We read "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire, . . . saying . . ." and he enumerates the Ten Commandments. But notice that he has said this law was given especially for these people—it was not given to their fathers.

Moses' Law or God's Law?

The above-mentioned article in *Plain Truth* distinguishes between the law which Moses is said to have written and that law which God gave directly to the people of Israel, the Ten Commandments. We quote: "The Ten Commandments . . .

were not a code of ethics which Moses devised under a hot desert sun. The scriptural record states: 'And God spake all these words. . .' (Ex. 20:1). God gave the Ten Commandments directly to the people of Israel."

How did God speak to Israel? Did the mighty God of heaven actually stand upon the earth to deliver this very special law in person? No, God never appeared to any man on earth for "no man hath seen God at any time" (I John 4:12). God's messengers, His angels, being part of His family, are called by His name (Ex. 23:21); and they delivered His laws and commandments to men. Stephen in New Testament times informed us of this divine arrangement in his oration before the Jewish Council: he spoke of those who "received the law by the disposition of angels" (Acts 7:53); he spoke also of Moses who was "in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai" (Acts 7:38). The writer to the Hebrews refers also to the law as the "word spoken by angels" (Heb. 2:1-2).

Because the record in Exodus states that "God spake all these words" gives no special authority to those words over those which were spoken by His angel to Moses at other times, who delivered them to the children of Israel; both messages were from God, both bore the authority of God, and both were laws that were to be obeyed by those for whom they were given.

Nowhere in the Bible is distinction made between what the *Plain Truth* would consider the *eternal* Decalogue and the *temporary* Mosaic law which Moses delivered to the children of Israel. On the contrary, Paul states plainly that the law which was "written and engraven in stones"—only the Decalogue was engraven on stone—"is done away" (I Cor. 3:7, 11). If only one law was impermanent in nature, it was the Decalogue.

The *Plain Truth* article states in summary: "This law [the Ten Commandment law] has been in force from the very days of creation! It was in force from the time of Adam and Eve. Whenever people break it, they sin—they transgress the law. And the wages or result of sin is death (Romans 6:23)." But these conclusions are wholly unfounded and without Bible evidence, especially when Paul referred to the law of Moses as an *addition* to the already existing law of faith and put a time limit on its duration: it was "added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made" (Gal. 3:19). It was a law *added to an already existing*—and more comprehensive—law.

Jesus Preached the Law of Moses?

To prove that the law of Moses, or more especially the Decalogue, was upheld by Jesus, the article in the *Plain Truth* cites Jesus' words to the rich young ruler, recorded in Matthew 19. The young Jew came to Jesus asking what he should do to inherit eternal life. We quote the *Plain Truth* narration of the incident: "Jesus could have told him, 'Nothing, young man. There is no law any more. I've abolished the Ten Commandments. Just believe on me, and you'll be saved, my dear fellow.'"

"But did Jesus say that? Notice the account in the book of Matthew: '...if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments' (Matt. 19:17).

"The young man was dubious. 'Which?' he asked, straight-forwardly.

"'Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother...' Jesus answered his question by naming several of the Ten Commandments!"

And here the author of the *Plain Truth* article stops. But the Gospel of Matthew tells us more. Jesus, along with the quotations from the Decalogue, cited a command not found among the Ten: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

What was the young man's response to the commands which Jesus had enumerated? He replied: "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" Did Jesus tell him, "You lack nothing, you have done everything that God requires of you"? No, not at all. Jesus told him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matt. 19:20-21). This was more than the young man had anticipated. Had the Ten Commandments been the law which a man must obey to "inherit eternal life," this young Jew would have gone away satisfied that he was already fully qualified, for all those commands he had kept "from [his] youth." But Jesus revealed to him the unpleasant truth that the Siniatic code was not sufficient. And "the young man... went away sorrowful"—obedience to all of God's law involved more surrender than he was willing to make.

The Law Established?

The article in *Plain Truth* quotes also from the book of Romans where Paul says, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31). The law of Moses, they contend, was not done away; it was established.

But does this mean that the Ten Commandments are supreme and eternal? If we examine the context, we find this is not Paul's point.

Consider Paul's thought through all the book of Romans. Paul is showing the relationship of the old covenant to the new, to persuade the Jews that God accepts Gentile believers on an equal basis: "Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision [natural Israel] by faith, and uncircumcision [Gentile believers] through faith" (Rom. 3:30). One is justified "by faith," and the other "through faith"—there is no difference. Hence, the Jew has no right to boast of any superiority because he is faithful to the old law (Rom. 3:27).

And the point of boasting brings Paul immediately to a comparison of the potency of the two laws: the new, the "law of faith" is a law govern-

O God, so help me today that nothing may make me lose my peace of mind.

So help me that nothing may make me lose my serenity, that I may be proof alike against the big blows and the petty pinpricks of life.

So help me that nothing may make me lose my patience, either with things or with people.

So help me that I may not get flustered or excited, but that I may take things easily and just as they come.

So help me to work that I may do things when they ought to be done, and as they ought to be done, so that there will be no last-minute rush today.

So help me that nothing may make me take offence at what is good or arouse me in bitterness.

Today, O God, garrison my heart with Your peace and equip my life with Your strength. This I ask for Your name's sake. Amen.

ing the heart and inner life, whereas the old was a code affecting only outward conduct. Boasting, then, is not forbidden by the old law, but by the "law of faith."

However, says Paul, the superiority of the new does not mean that the old is to be regarded as worthless. When he speaks of "law" that is "established" (v. 31) he is introducing a whole discussion that follows. His point is to show that the plan of God is one progression from beginning to end. And law was always a part of that plan. It would seem here that Paul refers to the whole Torah and God's entire covenant with Israel as "the law." But he does not say that it was to be

perpetual. Rather, it is the foundation for the new; God's plan moves forward. The old is not to be completely rejected as worthless, for it, too, was God-given; rather, we must recognize that it was insufficient—because alone it could not fit a man for eternal salvation.

The Law Holy?

The article in the *Plain Truth* seeks further support for the Ten Commandment law as a law binding today from Paul's words in Romans 7. We quote again from the aforementioned article (the bracketed words are added by the author and are not part of the authorized Scripture text quoted): "Paul asserted, 'Wherefore the law [the Ten Commandments] is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good' (Romans 7:12). The law he is talking about is the Ten Commandments—the law that says, 'Thou shalt not covet' (verse 7).

"Then in verse 14, Paul ends all controversy. He relates, 'For we know that the law [the Ten Commandments] is *spiritual*...' And those things which are spiritual cannot be abrogated or annulled. They are eternal (II Corinthians 4:18)."

How can we apply II Corinthians 4:18 to a spiritual law? The text reads: "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." What does Paul say is eternal? The Ten Commandment law? No, "*the things which are not seen* are eternal." How could the Ten Commandment law be counted among the things which are not seen? It was a law written "with the finger of God" upon tablets of stone, and made visible to all. No, Paul is speaking of the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," the reward God has promised His faithful servants, as "the things which are not seen" which are eternal. We cannot reasonably apply this text to the Ten Commandment law.

But what about Paul's saying that the law is "holy" and "spiritual" (Romans 7)?

We need to examine the context of the chapter. Paul begins by discussing the law which binds a husband and wife together as long as each is living (vs. 1-3). Only when one partner dies is the other free to marry again. And he uses this law to make an analogy: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (v. 4). Paul's brethren had formerly belonged to the Mosaic covenant and law; but that law had died, and now they had been

married into another relationship with law, this time the law of Christ, "him who is raised from the dead." The purpose of this new association is stated: "that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

Verse 5 continues the thought: "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held"—the old law had terminated—"that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." Their new covenant demanded that they should serve "in newness of spirit"; the old Mosaic law was dead. Paul's statement definitely disproves the *Plain Truth* claim.

Paul continues by illustrating the need of their being still subject to law, though it is now a new law. The purpose of restraining law should never be forgotten, even though the old law has terminated. The old law was a discipline that should be respected for the purpose it had served.

"What follows? Is the law identical with sin? Of course not." Law is not sin, though its existence serves to identify sin. As Paul says further: "But except through law I should never have become acquainted with sin. For example, I should never have known what it was to covet, if the law had not said, 'Thou shalt not covet' " (Rom. 7:7, NEB). To show the effectiveness and purpose of law in general, Paul draws an illustration from that law which was most familiar to every Jew, that law which had restrained him as a child. Law, says Paul, makes a man sinful by classifying, judging and condemning his conduct. "In the absence of law [used in a general sense, not referred to any one law] sin is a dead thing." Why? Because sin exists only as law is violated.

Paul recounts his own experience: "There was a time when, in the absence of law, I was fully alive." Such was the experience of every Jewish child—the law was not said to be binding upon them until the age of thirteen: the child not obedient to the law was not thought of as sinful. "... In the absence of law, I was fully alive; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. The commandments which should have led to life proved in my experience to lead to death, because sin found its opportunity in the commandments, seduced me, and through the commandment killed me" (Rom. 7:9-11, NEB).

Law becomes an instrument of death when it is disobeyed, says Paul. This is Paul's analysis of man's behavior when he is confronted by the de-

(Continued on page 24)

God gave Israel the Decalogue, but . . .

Is the Decalogue for US?

EVERY man needs law. Being by nature a mixture of good and evil, he needs law to restrain the evil and develop the good. Law gives definition and direction to all his strivings and desires.

All of us are subject to the laws of our nation. And this is as it should be; for did not the apostle Paul advise every soul to "be subject unto the higher powers? For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1).

But beyond this, what should we take for our personal law of life?

The answer depends on what we intend to get out of life.

If your life quest is for the highest that human effort can attain, even that perfect character that will be rewarded with endless life in the world to come, you need to acquaint yourself with God and the whole system of His divine laws as revealed in His Word. You need every principle and precept He has given to be observed; you need the words of the prophets, apostles and Jesus, for they all contributed to the total plan by which we can merit life everlasting. These you must obey, for it is written, "Blessed are they that do his commandments" (Rev. 22:14).

But if you are seeking only a few rules to insure your respectability as a citizen of this world, the Decalogue will suffice—it is all you need. It will teach you to live a civil, honorable, God-respecting life in the present world—in fact, a life above the masses of mankind.

It commands the worship of one supreme Deity, even the God of heaven, and forbids the worship of idols and images.

It teaches outward reverence for God; never must His name be used in vain.

If you would live by the Decalogue, you must set aside the Hebrew "sabbath" day each week, during which you lay aside all secular duties.

You must treat your parents with all due honor and respect.

Further, this law forbids you to commit crimes of murder, adultery, theft, and falsehood in wit-

ness-bearing. Forbidden also are many acts of covetousness.

A good law—why not good enough for anyone? Why wouldn't the man living by this law be an acceptable candidate for salvation?

The Decalogue governed many aspects of life, but not *all* aspects. It was not a law to make a man morally perfect. It did not purify the heart.

For example:

A man might appear regularly at all worship services and lift his hands to God in prayer. A worthy gesture, but what about his heart? According to God's spokesman Jeremiah, we must lift up *our heart* WITH our hands to have our worship acceptable. The Decalogue made no such demand. A man might attend all the prescribed worship services and at the same time be contriving how he could make more money during the coming week—and the Decalogue would not condemn him.

Or a man flies into a rage at the least provocation. He never does any physical harm to another person, nor does he take the name of God in vain; but he makes no effort to control his fiery temper. The law of God commands, "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath" (Ps. 37:8). But this command is not found among the Ten.

Another man indulges freely in light talk. He is witty and can hardly speak without a jest. Paul said that such talk is not becoming to children of God (Eph. 5:3-5). But the man who engages in it is not guilty of breaking any of the Ten Commandments.

Another pays all outward respect that is due to God—hoping that all his friends will see how reverential and holy he is. Jesus detested such hypocrisy (Matt. 6:1-4), but which of the Ten condemns him?

Another man hates his brother with a consuming passion that makes him speak to downgrade that brother on every possible occasion, until the brother's reputation is ruined. God does not honor such conduct, but which of the Ten Commandments has he broken?

A woman does nothing to break her marriage

compact, but her devotion to her own husband is not single; in her heart she lusts after her neighbor's husband. In Jesus' terms, she is an adulteress, but Moses' law does not condemn her.

Another woman dons the latest styles and attends church chiefly to parade herself. She does not bow to any graven images, nor would she think of coveting anything—except attention. Paul described such pride and show as not becoming to women professing godliness (1 Tim. 2:9-10), but there is no command among the Ten to condemn her.

Another man would not under threat of death bow down and worship a pagan idol; yet in his heart are numerous interests that come ahead of God—his social position, his wealth, or his home. The prophet Ezekiel condemns all who “set up their idols in their heart” and warns that “the Lord will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols” (Ezek. 14:3-4). The Decalogue said nothing against this type of idolatry.

Still another man regards the worship of God as strictly a one-day-a-week matter. Jesus said we should seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33) and He reserves no eternal blessing for those who relegate God to second place. Yet the Decalogue says nothing about the order of our priorities.

Wherein lies the weakness of the Decalogue?

It was limited in scope and effectiveness.

It was not a law intended to qualify men and women for eternal salvation. It was not a law that purified the heart and perfected the moral character. The Decalogue made good citizenry; it governed outward conduct and molded the people of Israel into an independent, self-respecting, God-honoring civil nation.

However, it was a law which “made nothing perfect” (Heb. 7:19). Wrote the apostle Paul concerning the law, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (Gal. 3:24-25). The law served to teach and train a nation, and ceased when it had accomplished its purpose. It was a law added to an already existing and eternal law of faith and obedience (Gal. 3:19). It was not the whole law of God intended to transform and perfect a man's moral nature to become part of God's eternal creation. ●●

A mule can't pull while kicking; neither can you.

Out of the Darkness

*“Hear ye the truth about God's Son,”
False teachers cry to everyone,
“Come wash in Jesus' cleansing blood”—
They say 'twill make you right with God.*

*They tell me that a Just Man died,
Nailed to a cross, was crucified;
My debt of sin was freely paid,
On Him, they say, my sins are laid.*

*They say no effort is required,
In doing good they soon grow tired;
But this is not in full accord
With what is written in the Word.*

*For sins not His why should He die?
My thoughts arise in asking why.
The Scriptures prove each one will pay
His own account at Judgment Day.*

*His saving grace is all you need,
No more than this, they firmly plead;
If this be true, what need of works?
Great blessing is for him who shirks.*

*We seek an easy way to go;
The man of sin would have it so.
To gain perfection is a task,
Not simply reached by him who asks.*

*Oh no! We see it written down
That only workers wear the crown.
The yoke is easy, the burden light
For all who enter in the fight.*

*Christ died to sin but once, 'tis true,
Example shows to me, to you;
Our death to sin is His concern;
Can we from Him this lesson learn?*

*Salvation is a great reward,
The gracious offer of our Lord;
It is a gift for work well done,
The grand prize when the race is run.*

*What is it then that I must do
To stand before Him sparkling new?
I must forsake my evil way
And serve my God through every day.*

*So I must fight if I would win,
No other way to enter in;
Put on the armor, stand aright,
Be true to Him with all my might!*

—Contributed by J. A., Wyoming

Are Christians Exempt from Guilt?

WE have received the following letter from a friend:

"I feel I have to write about an article that has disturbed me greatly in the May, 1974 issue of the *Megiddo Message*. It was entitled, 'Christian Youth in These Times.'

"It would have made a beautiful article in a non-Christian temperance magazine; but for a Christian magazine, it was rather disgusting.

"The last line of the story said, 'But I must for the rest of my life live with my guilt.'

"You aren't giving much credit to our Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for our sins. Jesus died for people like Rich, just as well as people who never commit such a 'major' sin. Or were you saying that drinking is such an awful sin that God could never forgive us for it? God forgives and then forgets our sins. Are we, then, supposed to reject that forgiveness and live under a load of guilt the rest of our lives? No! Jesus Christ came to set us free. This includes forgiveness for drinking or forgiveness for such a small sin as cheating a tiny bit on our neighbor.

"Please, in the future, when you write damaging articles such as that one, also explain about Jesus Christ's forgiveness. There may have been a person who read that article who was living under a load of guilt because exactly the same things happened to him. And what help did you give him? You told him he had to feel guilty the rest of his life.

"That is very sad. Jesus Christ has forgiven me for my sins and erased my guilt. He can do the same for Rich in the story."

Sincerely,
Miss H.

Guilt is a very real disturber of human life, plaguing those who realize what they could have or should have or would have done—but failed to do.

Our friend is correct in suggesting that the

guilt experienced by the non-Christian is very different from that of the Christian. First, the non-Christian is violating only his own, self-appointed standard, while the Christian is dealing with divine law and divine authority; the non-Christian feels guilt because he has failed to do what he expected of himself, or what other men expected of him, whereas the Christian feels guilt because he has disobeyed a law of God. The effect of the guilt is also different: the non-Christian's offense may affect the remainder of his life, and no more; the Christian's guilt may disturb his present life and also his prospects of eternal life; hence, the problem becomes a matter of life or death.

We can also agree with our friend that the Christian has a definite advantage in knowing that there is a means of escape from the eternal effects of guilt, which the non-Christian cannot experience—divine forgiveness. We can be eternally grateful to God that He has provided a means whereby sin can be permanently erased from our record, erased so completely that it shall never be mentioned as having stood against us: "None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him" (Ezek. 33:16). But we cannot agree that the means of removing our sins is the death of Christ on Calvary. What reason does Ezekiel give for the removal of sin? "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live" (vs. 15-16). His sins and the guilt of his sins are entirely removed because "he has done that which is lawful and right."

The Lord states plainly in another place the formula for the removal of sin: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their

land" (II Chron. 7:14). Forgiveness is a possibility, but again there is no association with the death of Christ.

Isaiah also wrote of the ways of the Lord: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7). What need for the death of Christ to remove sins which a man has "forsaken" and which God has "abundantly pardoned"?

What about Rich in the story? It seems possible that our friend has mistaken the point of his concluding statement: "But I must for the rest of my life live with my guilt." Rich's feeling of guilt was not simply over his one indulgence in alcohol; the guilt Rich felt was the result of the loss of his sister, which was a direct result of his indulgence. The point of the story was not whether Rich was forgiven his sin; the point was that whatever he might do henceforth, he was responsible for an unhappiness that was permanent. The remembrance would be perpetual; his sister was gone, and nothing he could do could bring her back. Whether he repented and turned and received God's forgiveness or not, the result of his sin was inescapable. His sister was dead.

The story was intended mainly to point out the possible long-term effects of a single moment's "pleasure." It was discussing the effect of sin upon the sinner, not the relationship of that sinner to God. Certainly God can and does forgive sin that we repent and turn from; and the feeling of guilt need not inhibit the remainder of our lives. Nevertheless, there may remain an inescapable consciousness of the wrong we have done.

Rich's situation in the story might be compared to that of Paul the apostle. Prior to his conversion, Paul had been an ardent opposer of the cause of Christ, even persecuting His followers. He had stood by when Stephen was stoned, and had consented with those who took Stephen's life. After he was converted and became as zealous a supporter of the cause, the Lord did not hold against him his evil past; his sin was certainly forgiven as Paul dedicated all his energy and strength to advancing the ministry he had received from Christ. But he could not dismiss completely his former evil. He considered himself "least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am." And for this reason, he "labored more abundantly than they all" (I Cor. 15:9-10). Again, he considered himself "less than the least of all saints" (Eph. 3:8). And to the

Galatians he wrote, "You must have heard of my career as a practicing Jew, how merciless I was in persecuting the Church of God, how much damage I did to it, how I stood out among other Jews of my generation, and how enthusiastic I was for the traditions of my ancestors" (Gal. 1:13-14, Jerusalem Bible).

David also felt the weight of guilt after he had done wrong. He committed what we might classify as a "major" sin, but he did not dismiss his reprover and feel no guilt. He prayed to God: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me" (Ps. 51:1-3). His sin was ever before him; however, he knew that God could and would forgive him if he was worthy of such forgiveness (vs. 10-12).

It may be impossible, so long as we are mortal, to escape completely from the effects of our waywardness and sin. For example, the person who smokes heavily for years and then realizes that as a Christian he cannot indulge the habit. He quits the habit, but the ill effects of the years of smoking bring on other sicknesses, which are a continual reminder of his years of folly. He broke the habit successfully, and God forgave him; but its effects are ever present.

There is only one real and complete escape from all feelings and effects of guilt, and that is future. The promise is: "... thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away; and thine age shall be clearer than the noonday; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning. And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; ... and thou shalt take thy rest in safety" (Job 11:16-18). This is clearly a picture of the immortal state. God can and does forgive us our sins now as we repent and turn from them, but only when we are made immortal will their stain be completely removed from our remembrance: when "the former troubles are forgotten," when "the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" (Isa. 65:16-17). ●●

A good steward is one who sees life as a trust from God. He is determined to buy up every opportunity, so that life will be fully productive and God will be glorified. Such a man will not vegetate during his lifetime; he will live, and labor, and serve, and make life count for God.



*And he opened his mouth
and taught them,
saying . . .*

"Strait Is the Gate..."

"DON'T think there's such a thing as one [religious] way," says a prominent Jewish Rabbi. "I visualize the way as a wide highway, 100 miles, and we can go holding hands or on our own. There's room for everyone."

What a cordial invitation to all kinds and classes of people! And the Rabbi is right—there is a broad highway where "there's room for everyone." But notice that the Rabbi did not mention its destination. Jesus did. He said, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction. . . . Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13-14).

Jesus presents the solemn truth that there are two ways: one is broad and easy; the other is narrow and difficult. One is a wide highway where there is room for everyone; the other is a restricted way with a narrow entrance, which only few will find.

Every worthiness has a narrow gate, even in this world. Life is so constituted that we must forgo many roads in order to walk one narrow road. Consider a few examples. Two men might compete in an athletic program. One says he is physically free. He indulges all his appetites as he desires, feeling that as an individual he has a right to taste every experience. The other young man disciplines his impulses and directs them into higher forms of creative activity; he undergoes a strict regime of training. He is not free; he is bound by laws that underlie physical life. The day of the race arrives, and both enter together. But which has the greater physical freedom to win the race? The disciplined man. And how did he get his freedom? Through the narrow gate of discipline.

Two young men in school hold opposite views about the way to mental freedom. One says he is free to do as he likes with his mind. He listens to lectures when he desires, makes no discrimi-

nation in his reading. He engages in conversation whensoever with whomsoever about whatsoever—his whims decide, for he is free. The other young man gathers up his spare moments and makes them contribute to his central purpose. He discriminates carefully in his choice of reading matter and restricts his conversation to that which has purpose. He places himself under a strict mental regime. The day of examination arrives, and the two men enter together. Which enjoys the greater mental freedom? Again, it is the disciplined man. And how did he get this freedom? Through the narrow gate of discipline.

The same is true in the fields of art or music. Free, unrestrained self-expression may seem creative. But the self-exacting disciplines of the narrow gate teach one to be able to express himself in a manner that is acceptable. The way of self-surrender to the laws which govern art and music is the shortest route to genuine freedom of expression. And at its entrance stands the narrow gate of discipline.

Is it strange, then, that the Christian life should also require discipline? That is what makes the gate "strait" and the way "narrow."

In fact, the Christian who aspires to be "like Christ" must surrender all *un*-Christlikeness. The narrow gate and the strait way prohibit the breadth of license found in the broad, easy way. Many things have to be left outside, if one would enter through the narrow gate.

One of the first excesses which must remain outside the narrow gate is "worldliness," a general term which John defined as "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," which are not "of the Father" but "of the world" (I John 2:15-17). By seeking the things of God we break with the world; it is inevitable. The Christian way is not the popular way of the crowd; it never has been.

Naturally we are slaves to the "done" thing. We come into a world full of traditions and habits and customs. To conform is the easy, obvious, accepted thing to do. There is nothing we dislike so much as to be different. But if we would enter through the narrow gate and walk the way that leads to life, we must break with all the evil of the world; that is why the travelers upon this road are few.

Perhaps even more difficult than leaving the world itself is leaving the *way* of the world, which includes our own natural thoughts and inclinations. For centuries men have thought that by leaving the people of the world and living a solitary life, you leave the world. But you do not. You may leave the world in a physical sense, yet take with you all the ways and desires that belong to the world.

Here is something vital for our Christian lives. We may not participate in the forbidden pleasures of the world, and yet still be a part of the world in spirit and deportment and desire. This is the restriction of the narrow way. Jesus did not preach a doctrine of "Come as you are." No, He said that from the outset the Christian life will be different. We must leave outside the narrow gate the things that our unregenerate nature would desire which are contrary to the laws of God.

This means we have to leave our very "self" outside. And here is our greatest difficulty. Paul put it this way; "Put off the old man," leave him outside the gate. There is not room for both the old and the new to enter through this gate together. The old man must be left behind.

"If any man will come after me"—what must he do? "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." This means sacrifice; it means self-denial; it means self-discipline. These things are difficult, but Jesus never said the way would be easy. Thank God that it is difficult—it is His means of securing the very best material for His eternal Kingdom.

How many will negotiate this narrow gate? "Few," says Jesus; few. The illustration is not a pessimism, but a realism. The plain fact is that those who find it are few; the many are not willing to pay the price. And we should not be surprised. On the higher levels of any walk of life the company is always smaller. Crowds throng for the ordinary; but seek a higher level, and you will find there is always plenty of room.

The way to life has few travelers because it is the higher way. In fact, it is the highest type of life; it is the acme of perfection in living.

Christ came to show us this way of holiness. And He appeals to us to walk in His steps, in this high calling, in His glorious life. His life was

strait and difficult; but He trod it. And it is our privilege to follow.

Why follow?

Because of the destiny of the narrow road—it leads to life and glory and happiness eternal! Beyond its short, uncompromisingly narrow entrance, this narrow way opens into glorious breadth of endless duration, even "pleasures for evermore." Who would not want to seek such a widening road! ●●

From A Reader

Loving With Our All

The Eternal will accept into His kingdom of love and peace only those who have learned to conquer their own besetments, to put away every evil and to love God with all their heart.

This means that our religion must be foremost and uppermost in everything. We must separate our hearts from earthly things so that when the Day of the Lord comes, we will be wholly consecrated to the Lord.

We must come out from the world and be separate. But our separation must extend even further than this. Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment."

If our love for God and His truth is the paramount interest in our lives, all other loves will be secondary. There will even be a separation from our own self, for quite naturally we love ourselves.

Are we preparing for the Day of the Lord as rapidly as that Day is approaching? Surely the reward will be great! Let us give all our love to God.

R. S., Mississippi

Every morning is a new opportunity, an opportunity to learn, to obey, to serve God with all our mind and might and strength. How we will use the opportunity depends on what we carry in our mind. Many people look at a day as simply another sunrise, but each new day is God's appeal to us to correct the mistakes of yesterday, to gain greater heights in the divine life, to overcome evil with good. A new day is a new opportunity to take up life's tasks with refreshed heart.

"Let children first learn to show kindness at home."

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

Three Classes of Humanity

"To every man there openeth
A way, and ways, and a way.
And the high soul climbs the high way,
And the low soul gropes the low,
And in between, on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A high way, and a low;
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go."

The words of the poet, John Oxenham, contain a kernel of truth. It is man himself who decides his destiny. Life is a series of choices, and as a man is inclined, so he chooses; and as he chooses, so he becomes. Always it is a man's prerogative to make his own choice; he is never coerced by God.

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve." These were the words of God's servant, Joshua in his valedictory. He had seen the children of Israel safely located in the Promised Land; and knowing his earthly career was near an end, he was urging the people to choose the good way—God's way. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." What more could he say?

Joshua's words echo God's loving invitation: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; . . . choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deut. 30:15, 19). And even today, the eleventh hour of the day of salvation, the Scriptures speak to those who will hear: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And . . . whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

God does not predestine one man to be a saint and another a sinner. He simply sets His plan before men and they choose the way that they will go. Hence a man's end reflects the sum total of the choices he has made during his lifetime. As said the poet, "Every man decideth the way his soul shall go."

Life is a series of choices. There are always two alternatives: it is the present versus the future;

the temporal versus the spiritual; worldly pleasures or a reward afar off.

Up to this point in our study we have concerned ourselves with the class who have chosen the good and the right way and as a result have had their names inscribed in the Book of Life. We know that all such will be found worthy at Christ's coming and will be among those to be placed on His right hand at the Judgment.

In this issue we will continue the study of the righteous class and will complete the section which covers the faithful, following our outline:

- I. The Faithful Covenant-Makers
 - F. God's Honor Roll
- II. The Unfaithful Covenant-Makers
 - A. The Unfaithful Identified

Many today are quite like those to whom Joshua was delivering his farewell address. With their mouths they said, "Yes, yes, we will follow the Lord," but as we learn from the record of the Judges, their memories were short-lived and they were often brought to dire circumstances because of their own evil.

Many of today's church members are giving only lip service to God. They attend a religious service on Sunday morning, join in the hymn-singing, agree with the words of the minister, and promptly forget God until the next Sunday rolls around. The difference between our time and the time of the Judges is that today God is silent, He is not openly directing the affairs of men. They can neglect Him, take His name in vain, and break every commandment in the Book, and still He does not intervene. Nevertheless, those who will complete the 144,000, His Honor Roll, will be "kings and priests" and with Christ "reign on the earth," are being chosen by the very choices they make in their everyday lives.

I. THE FAITHFUL COVENANT-MAKERS

F. God's Honor Roll

When God first began to call men on the earth to work in His service, some hearkened and answered. Abraham removed from his homeland to a

strange land because he had sufficient faith that the things God had promised him would come true. Noah had faith to build an ark on dry land; Enoch had faith to walk with God more than three hundred years.

Faith is an essential element in religion. It is the basis from which it is made. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," was the definition given by the writer to the Hebrews. It was faith that gave the worthies of old the conviction that enabled them to endure hardships beyond our comprehension. Their faith gave them an assurance of the things hoped for.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is often referred to as the "faith chapter," but we like to refer to it as "God's Honor Roll." In it we find enumerated the names of many who by their faith and their works won divine approval. They lived by faith in the promises of God, "therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11:16, RSV). They lived by faith and they "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off" (v. 39). The promises which they by faith saw "afar off" are now almost within view by comparison, and those faithful ones mentioned in this chapter, together with the faithful ones throughout the six-thousand-year probation period will be rewarded together at the second coming of Christ.

We will review a few of these success stories that have been recorded for our learning, those whom we like to identify as members of "God's Honor Roll."

1. Noah. Noah was among the first of whom we have record that was called to work for God. We read that "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:9), and "Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him" (Gen. 7:5). Noah may not have been perfect at all times, but whatever sins he had must have been overcome before his days on earth were ended.

2. Abraham. "When Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). God was not giving an impossible command; He was simply asking for obedience. And Abram, or Abraham as he became, rendered that kind of obedience and it is recorded that "he was called the Friend of God" (Jas. 2:23). It is also written that the Lord renewed His covenant with Isaac because his father "Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen. 26:5). Abraham kept the charge given him and became perfect before God.

3. Moses. Moses' career as the deliverer of God's people was launched by a visit from an angel. Reared as the son of an Egyptian Pharaoh, he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward" (Heb. 11:25-26). Moses could visualize his future reward and "by faith . . . he endured . . . and obtained a good report." His reward is certain.

4. Jesus. Contrary to what is taught by nearly all Christendom, there is nothing in the Scriptures to indicate that Christ was born sinless, or that moral perfection was His by nature. Rather, we read that "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9). And again we read that He is "not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). It was "for the joy that was set before him" that He "endured the cross, despising the shame," and for which He has now been rewarded. **He was tempted, He learned, He became perfect that He might be an example to all who choose to follow Him. He stands at the head of God's honor roll.**

5. Paul. Paul testified that He was a follower of Christ, and he exhorted his followers to likewise follow him as he followed Christ. He endured much for Christ's sake. At one point in his career he said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12, 14). But there came a time near the end of his life when he knew he had attained. He said, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day" (II Tim. 4:6-8). He knew he had merited a reward and that the righteous Judge would grant it to him at His second coming.

6. Zacharias and Elisabeth. To those who would claim that it can't be done, that perfection of character, complete obedience to the laws of God is an impossibility, we would point to the aforementioned husband and wife. Of them it is recorded, "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6). Christ had not yet been

born; they were not claiming the merits of another, but of themselves they were keeping the commandments as God's law required.

In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews we find other worthies mentioned who, "having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:39-40). They fulfilled their part in becoming morally perfect, but they await the end result of their faith, salvation (I Pet. 1:9), when they stand before the righteous Judge together with the covenant-makers of the latter days.

Certainly the few names we have mentioned are not the only ones recorded in God's book of remembrance, but they are some of the more familiar. We read of Caleb and Joshua, two of the original children of Israel that came out of Egypt who "wholly followed the Lord"; of King Hezekiah who "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord," and as a result was "buried in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David"; of Job who was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil," and others too numerous to list.

II. THE UNFAITHFUL COVENANT-MAKERS

As we have learned in the first section of this lesson, to be either faithful or unfaithful necessitates being a covenant-maker. All who in the end fall into either class must have first heard and learned of God. And knowing what He requires, they must have agreed to serve Him. All others who have not met these requirements make up the third class, the ungodly.

Whether an individual becomes a faithful or unfaithful covenant-maker is determined by the use he makes of the knowledge he acquires. When God had an earthly kingdom, that kingdom could be inherited by virtue of being the only or oldest son of the king. Such an inheritance was often short-lived, as we learn from the record of the kings in the Scriptures.

But everyone who is granted an inheritance in the Kingdom of God must be fully qualified. And that inheritance will be his eternally. David, the son of a farmer, was made king over all of Israel, and although he sinned many times during his earthly career, he was man enough to confess his sins and repent and turn from them. He is listed by the writer to the Hebrews among those "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises" (Heb. 11:33).

After David's death, his son Solomon succeeded to the throne. Solomon had all the advantages of

his father David, and more. "God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart. . . . And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. . . . And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five" (I Kings 4:29-30, 32). Yet with all his wisdom and the advantage of having been reared by a God-fearing father, he disobeyed the command of God and took "many strange women" for wives, worshiped the pagan gods, and "did evil in the sight of the Lord" and died "an old and foolish king, who [would] no more be admonished" (I Kings 11; Eccl. 4:13), hence he will be numbered among the unfaithful at the Great Assize.

Why? Not because he was predestined to do so, but because he chose to. God gave Solomon every opportunity to be among the faithful. Among his God-given gifts was wisdom, and "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Jas. 4:17). Of all the sons of David, God had chosen Solomon to be the next king of Israel, saying unto his father, "I will establish his kingdom for ever if he continues resolute in keeping my commandments and my ordinances, as he is today" (I Chron. 28:7, RSV).

Solomon disobeyed the commandments and ordinances of the Lord and followed the evil desires of his own heart. He became unfaithful by his own actions, his own choice. To be faithful or unfaithful is within the power of the covenant-maker.

A. The Unfaithful Identified

In our first lesson of this series, we spoke of the faithful as being called by many endearing names or titles in the Bible. Likewise, the unfaithful are designated by many different terms—all of them uncomplimentary.

The unfaithful are those who had the knowledge of God and agreed to live according to that knowledge, but failed to do so. They are those "who wander from the way of understanding," and as a result will lose their place in the kingdom and "will rest in the assembly of the dead" (Prov. 21:16, RSV). They had to have known the way, else they could not have wandered from it.

The apostle Paul designates them as those "who hold the truth in unrighteousness, . . . for God hath shewed it unto them." He also lists them as "haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers . . ." (Rom. 1:18, 30-31). This is only a partial listing of Paul's designation of the unfaithful class. It is not that every un-

faithful servant is guilty of the whole category of sins listed, but they are sins that were common to men in Paul's day—and since human nature has not changed in the 1900-plus years that have intervened, the same sins in varying degrees are to be found today.

We will list individually a few of the many titles by which the unfaithful servants are known in the Scriptures.

1. Old Testament titles. The class of the unfaithful is accorded a variety of titles by the writers of the Old Testament. We will review some of the more significant ones.

a. Hypocrites. The patriarch Job described the end of the hypocrite. Hypocrisy is defined as claiming to have "characteristics one does not possess; especially the deceitful assumption of praiseworthy qualities; insincerity." Therefore, to be a hypocrite, one must have known God's law and covenanted to obey it. A hypocrite professes that which he does not possess, and of him Job writes: "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment . . . he shall perish for ever . . . he shall be chased away as a vision of the night" (Job 20:4-9). **His portion will be eternal death; "but for a moment" refers to this present, brief life.**

b. An empty vine; wild grapes. "Israel is an empty vine," wrote the prophet Hosea, "he bringeth forth fruit unto himself." Israel, God's people, are frequently referred to as a vine or His vineyard. The prophet Isaiah told of the vineyard God had planted with choice vines, but "it brought forth wild grapes" (Isa. 5:2), a representation of the unfaithful servants.

c. Other titles. There are numerous other terms or titles that refer to those who fail to keep their covenant, the unfaithful. Again in Isaiah 18:5 we read of "sour grapes ripening in the flower" that shall be cut off and taken away; Jeremiah was shown a vision of two baskets of figs, "one basket had very good figs, . . . and the other basket had very naughty figs," (24:2), representative of the faithful and unfaithful; Malachi prophesied that the day would come when "all that do wickedly shall be stubble" (4:1)—a figure that will include all unfaithful servants; Jeremiah also spoke of "a noble vine, wholly a right seed" that had "turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine" (2:21), another reference to the unfaithful.

2. New Testament titles. Writers in the New Testament likewise showed scorn for the unfaithful in the use of varying titles identifying them. These range from such terms as "hay, wood and stubble," to "the sow that was washed" that returns "to her wallowing in the mire."

a. Turncoats. The actual word "turncoat" does not appear in the Scriptures, but Peter's words, part of which are quoted above, aptly describe one. Speaking of those who have known the way of righteousness and turned from following it, he says, "it had been better for them not to have known" than "to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (II Pet. 2:21), and then in the following verse he compares this class to the washed sow that returns to the mire. Could anything be more unflattering?

b. Chaff, tares. These terms are somewhat related since they are both associated with wheat. That which was spoken of as "tares" was a common weed that grew among the wheat in Palestine, a weed that looked very much like the wheat while it grew but was worthless in the end. Likewise, the chaff. When the grain was winnowed after harvesting, the chaff, the husks that enclose the seed, was removed, being as worthless as the tares or weeds that grew with the wheat. The unfaithful are of no more value to the Lord in the end than tares or chaff and will ultimately pay the penalty of death for their sin.

c. Goats. In Matthew 25, Jesus describes the unfaithful servants as "goats," in contrast to faithful "sheep." We read: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered [out of] all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. . . . Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire [destruction]" (vs. 31-33, 41).

To be a messenger you must know the message.

TEST YOURSELF

1. How do we know God does not predestine one man to eternal life and another to eternal death?
2. What must one do to have his name on God's Honor Roll?
3. How does one become part of the unfaithful?
4. How do the titles given the faithful compare with those given the unfaithful?

*Reprints of these studies are available
upon request.*

ISRAEL

Yesterday

Today

Tomorrow

Introduction

Is the modern State of Israel a fulfillment of Bible prophecy? Is God blessing Israel today because of the promises made to their fathers?

Who are the Israel chosen of God, who shall receive His everlasting inheritance?

In the first three parts of this series, we have discussed who is the Israel that received God's promises. We have seen that God chose natural Israel as a nation with which He could work and from among whom He would find material for His eternal Kingdom. But we have found also that there was nothing exclusive about Israel's privilege. Israel's calling was to responsibility, not to a predetermined and assured blessing. The covenant was conditional: "If ye shall . . . , then I will . . ."

Israel as a nation rejected the opportunity God gave them, and the covenant with them terminated, as we shall see in this article. Henceforth, God's chief concentration is upon the fulfilling of His eternal promises to an eternally chosen people—chosen out of every nation on a basis of individual merit—spiritual Israel.

A Covenant Terminated in Christ

When the Jewish people forsook God, God forsook them; and thus terminated their covenant with God and all the promises that had appertained. The apostle Paul associates this point of termination with the death of Christ—when the Jews killed the Messiah, they as a nation had transgressed beyond recovery. And, says Paul, Christ nailed the Mosaic law and covenant to His cross to take it out of the way. It had reached the limit of its period of usefulness, the Jews being no longer a nation and no longer interested in serving God. With the removal of that covenant went also the special promises and advantages the Jews as a nation had enjoyed (Col. 2:14).

In Galatians 3, Paul discusses at length the purpose and the termination of the Mosaic law and covenant. He says that "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham"—not natural descendants but children of faith, i. e., believers.

"So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. . . . But that no man is justified by the law [of Moses] in the sight of God, it is evident: . . . Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law," bringing the blessing of Abraham on to Gentiles as well as Jews. The Mosaic covenant and law had ended (vs. 6-7, 9, 11, 13-14).

Paul speaks further in this chapter of the covenant with Abraham under which all may qualify as believers and inheritors of the promises. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made" (Gal. 3:16). And, he continues, "This I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God [that is, the covenant with Abraham]" cannot be disannulled by the law of Moses which was added "four hundred and thirty years after, . . . that it should make the promise of none effect" (v. 17). The addition of the Mosaic covenant in no way affected the original covenant God had made with Abraham and his seed (all believers). The Mosaic arrangement was merely a temporary addition: "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed [Christ] should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator [Moses]" (v. 19). The Mosaic covenant was secondary; it was added to an already existing covenant God made with Abraham and all who would become His seed, all true believers.

Paul continues: "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." But the Mosaic law could not make a person righteous,

and its covenant did not offer eternal life; it was a civil law for a civil nation, a temporal—and temporary—arrangement. The removal of that law and covenant did nothing to annul the promises to Abraham; these stand—to Jew and Gentile alike, as they belong to Christ. “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (vs. 27-29). Abraham’s seed is definitely a *spiritual* seed—true Israel.

Paul explains further that those who become this adopted seed of Abraham become Israelites and are counted as part of his family. He discusses this in Ephesians 2. Believers who were formerly “afar off” and were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” are “now in Christ Jesus... made nigh by the blood [or word] of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both [Jew and Gentile] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition [the Mosaic arrangements that divided Jew and Gentile] between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain [Jew and Gentile] one new man, so making peace; that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Eph. 2:12-16).

It was the death and crucifixion of Christ that finally marked the end of the Mosaic law and covenant. And henceforth all were to serve God as adopted spiritual children of Abraham. “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom. 8:13-17).

Those who shall be heirs with Christ are selected without respect to nationality. This was the lesson Peter acknowledged when he “opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). Here are the conditions: that a man *fear God and work righteousness*; he needs no other credentials.

Two Israels

In John 8, Jesus spoke of two Israels: the Israelites by birth, and a spiritual Israel, those men and women who have been adopted into the family of Abraham by following Abraham’s pattern of faithful obedience. Jesus says, “And ye shall know

the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

The Jews who heard Jesus were quick to assert their “superior” nationality: “We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?” (v. 33). But Jesus proceeded to tell them that just because they were natural descendants of Abraham they were not naturally free—they were servants of sin. “Verily, verily I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (vs. 34-36).

Jesus continued: “I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father; and ye do that which ye have seen with your father” (vs. 37-38). The people were not ready to give up their proud lineage: “Abraham is our father,” they answered Jesus, sure that they had a special privilege because of their nationality. But Jesus replied plainly, “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.” Jesus did not allow their claim, but told them, “Ye are of your father the devil”—their sinful works and intents revealed their true lineage; they were part of an evil generation. Thus Jesus showed conclusively that natural Israelites had no special right to call themselves children of God.

On another occasion Jesus spoke of a class of Jews who are Jews indeed, those to whom salvation is promised. He said, “We know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). He did not refer to those to whom He was to say, “Ye are of your father the devil.” Never did Jesus promise salvation to any but those who would become Israelites inwardly. If one is a Jew by nationality, he must become a Jew inwardly. If one is a Gentile, he also must become a Jew inwardly. There is no salvation in any other way.

(TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE)

Little courtesies feed nobler reverences. No man can despise smaller duties and do the larger duties well. Our strength is sapped by small disobediences.

To see the future’s best through the present’s worst—that is the true perception of a child of light.

The quality of our greatness depends upon what we do with that which is least.

The Challenge

IT WAS springtime in the land of Israel, that magic time of year when all nature bursts into brilliant array. But this springtime was different. Try as he would, Jared could see no beauty in the land. Never had Israel experienced such a spring. Instead of lush green carpet spread over the hills, all was brown and desolate. Where normally budding flowers studded the sunny slopes, only gray and barren rocks met his gaze. Sadly he surveyed his olive groves, wilted and yellow from lack of rain. Young trees he had so painstakingly nurtured now stood stark and ghostly in the shadows. Even the older trees would soon be worth no more than the fuel to cook his evening meal.

Why? Why such drought? Why the stark desolation in a land that had always been fertile and productive?

Jared knew. He knew the reason that most of Israel did not know. Sad was the day that Ahab had taken the throne of Israel, for he had proved to be of no better character than his father. In an effort to make Ahab and backslidden Israel see the error of their ways, the prophet of God, Elijah, had pronounced the dread sentence: "There shall be no rain or dew in the land until I give the word."

For three and one-half years now this sentence had stood against the adamant king and his apostate people. The first few waterless months had been bearable. But now—

Sick at heart, Jared sought strength in prayer. "O Lord God of hosts," he cried, "hear the supplication of thy servant. Send us a deliverer, if it be Thy will. Have mercy upon us, lest we perish from the land."

Slowly he made his way homeward. Looking up the narrow road he saw a cloud of dust coming toward him. Just another dust devil, common these hot, dry, windy days.

But no, as it drew closer, Jared was surprised to see the form of a horse and rider emerge. The rider, seeing Jared, reined his dust-covered beast to a halt beside him. "Do you live around here?" inquired the horseman.

Jared noticed immediately that his visitor was

attired in the uniform of the King's guard. Cautiously he replied, "Y-e-s, . . . yes—just around the bend yonder."

"I have a message for you from the King. You are to be on Mt. Carmel early in the morning three days hence. Notify your neighbors. And see that you do not fail." Without further explanation the soldier galloped away on his faithful mount, leaving bewildered Jared in the middle of the road.

Mount Carmel. Three days hence. What could it mean?

His first thought was to hurry home. But remembering the order, he turned down the lane that led to the home of Azariah the olive merchant.

"Well, Neighbor! What brings you here? Olives to sell?"

"An order from the King, Azariah. All of us are to be on Mt. Carmel three days hence. And early in the morning! He has appointed me to pass the word."

"All the way to Carmel in this heat and dust? Just to climb a mountain?" Azariah's voice echoed the disgust he felt.

"I am confident Ahab has something more important in mind than a national exercise day." Jared was obviously preparing to leave, but Azariah had more to say.

"Come, Neighbor. While you are here I want to show you something in my courtyard."

Reluctantly Jared followed His pompous host to the partially enclosed portico. And there in the center was the heathen figure of Baal carefully placed in an artistic setting of small evergreens and flowers. "There!—what do you think of that? Pretty fine, isn't it?"

"You ask me what I think." Jared stood, his face stiff and expressionless. "Do you mean that you wasted precious water to beautify a piece of worthless rock?"

"That rock is my god, and this is where I worship," Azariah exploded, his face red with anger.

"What help has Baal ever given you? He cannot see or hear or speak or move."

"So you think my god is a fake! But tell me, what has Jehovah done for us of late?" Azariah's

tone was contemptuous. "A few more weeks without rain, and your olive groves will be totally ruined. Surely your God could at least freshen us with a little dew, especially for a zealot like you. And watch out what you say about Baal—if Queen Jezebel ever heard you—"

"I am well aware of that," Jared was fully aware of Jezebel's vengeance on dissenters, but this loyal son of Israel was unafraid. His answer was resolute. "My trust and my faith is in the God of Abraham and Isaac and Israel, our fathers. He has delivered His people in time past, and He will again, in His own good time."

The olive merchant was without words.

"But I must go now, Azariah. Don't forget, Mt. Carmel. In the morning, three days hence."

The appointed day found many weary Israelites trudging up the slopes of the great mountain that stood by the sea. Singly and in groups, a large number were congregating on the summit, ready for whatever might happen.

To any curious onlooker like Jared, the setting was strange. On one side, in a group apart from the great body of people, stood the priests of Baal and Ashtaroth, arrayed in their ceremonial robes. On the other side stood a lone, vaguely familiar figure, Elijah the prophet. What was *he* doing here? How dared he approach this place after having been banished by the King? Something important had brought him out of seclusion. But what?

And what was the meaning of the two bullocks tethered to a nearby tree? Why the large collection of earthen jugs? Jared was thoroughly confused. He could only wait and see.

But Jared had not long to wait.

Elijah came near to all the people and said,

"How long are you going to limp upon two diverse opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him, but if the Baal, follow him."

But the people gave him no answer. Then Elijah said to the people,

"I, even I only, am left as a prophet of the Lord, but the prophets of the Baal are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bulls, and let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood but make no fire, and I will prepare the other bull and place it on the wood, but I will make no fire. Then call you on the name of your god and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the god who answers by fire, he is God."

Thereupon all the people answered and said,

"It is a fair test!"*

"Fair enough!" and throughout the great crowd, some were sure of the results; some were uncertain. The majority silently confided their strength and hope in Baal.

While proceedings were getting underway, Azariah set out to find Jared, whom he was sure was somewhere in the crowd. Finding a lone man in so great a multitude might have seemed hopeless, but Azariah thought he knew where to look—or where *not* to. Jared would not be with the great majority of Baal-worshippers, he could be sure. Reaching the outskirts of the excited crowd, Azariah spied a small group of quiet commoners, their eyes intent on every move of the prophet Elijah. And sure enough—right in the midst of them was his neighbor Jared.

"Well, Neighbor, what do you think of the contest? Looks like my piece of worthless rock may pay off yet! Just look at the multitude who worship him. Elijah hasn't a chance!"

"Now, friend Azariah, don't be too sure. The contest is not over yet." But his words fell on deaf ears, as the chanting of the priests of Baal grew louder and louder. "O Baal answer us! O Baal answer us! O Baal answer us!" And on and on, until they were hoarse.

Baal did not answer.

The priests chanted for hours.

But Baal did not answer.

The cry of the priests grew louder and louder, as they became more and more desperate.

But still Baal did not answer.

At noon Elijah mocked them, and said,

"Cry with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he has gone aside, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened!"

So they cried with a loud voice, and proceeded to slash one another according to their custom, with swords and with lances until the blood gushed out upon them; and when midday had passed they worked themselves into a prophetic frenzy until the offering of the oblation; but there was no voice, nor answer, and none regarded.

Mixed emotions filled the crowd of Baal-worshippers. Some were angry; some were perplexed; a few were skeptical. Baal was not responding. But would Elijah's God do any better?

At last Elijah stood up and called the people to gather closer to him. As they moved forward, Jared turned to Azariah. "Now, my friend, we will find out *who* is God in Israel."

"Wouldn't be too sure," replied the now-downcast Azariah. "Just because Baal *failed* is no surety that your God will hear your prophet. Your God is a long way off—you've never even seen Him!"

"Come, Neighbor," pleaded Jared. "Don't be stubborn. Surely you have not forgotten the Lord God of our fathers so *completely*!"

The skeptical olive merchant was adamant. "We

* Inset quotations are from I Kings 16, American Version.

shall have to wait and see. If anything happens, —maybe I will believe.”

Approaching near to the altar, the two men were puzzled by Elijah’s strange activities. There was the altar, and the wood, and the sacrifice. But why was the Prophet digging so industriously around the altar’s base?

They did not have long to wonder. Pointing to the earthen jugs, the venerable old Prophet addressed Jared himself: “Fill the jars with water, pour it upon the wood, the sacrifice and let it also overflow into the trench.” Thankful for an opportunity to be of service, Jared dashed down the hill with several others toward the sea and shortly returned bearing the water. Carefully they poured it over the wood and the sacrifice.

“Now do it a second time,” ordered the Prophet. And it was done. And a third time, until the trench was filled with water. By now the sneers and jeers of the crowd were disquieting. A few even started for home—this was too ridiculous to witness. “Who ever heard of kindling a fire with water? If those jars had been full of olive oil, old Elijah might have had a chance. But sea water!”

Now came the test. With the quiet confidence of God’s true servant written upon his face, Elijah raised his arms heavenward and prayed.

“O Lord, God, of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known today that thou art God in Israel and that I am thy servant, and that at thy command I have done all these things. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that thou, O Lord, art God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.”

And then, it happened! “The fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt-offering and the wood, the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.”

Amazed astonishment burst from every quarter of the assembled multitude; and the people shouted as with a single voice, “The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God. The Lord, he is God!”

All were shouting, except the prophets of Baal. Stealthily they attempted to slip unnoticed into the crowd. But there was no escape; Elijah had seen them.

“Seize the prophets of the Baal; let not a man of them escape.”

The deed was done; the day was complete, and the multitude dispersed.

Jared was eager and overflowing with joy as he hurried down the road that led to his home. And whom should he overtake but Azariah the olive merchant. For some time the two men walked together, but neither spoke; each was lost in his own thoughts.

Finally Azariah broke the silence. “Why did I do it, Jared? Why did I do it? How could I have been so foolish as to put my faith in a heathen god? . . . Do you think God will ever forgive me for all the wrong I have done?”

“Certainly he will,” was Jared’s immediate response. “Certainly, if you truly repent and serve Him, He will forgive.”

“And what about *you*—will *you* forgive me?”

“Of course, Azariah.”

“I want to be more than just a neighbor. I want to be a true friend, Jared, if you will accept me. Together we can remain loyal to the true God, and someday—”

“Someday, Azariah, He will give us a place of honor when He makes our Father Abraham a great nation and blesses His people with eternal mercies.”

So engrossed had the two men become in their conversation that they were unaware of the sudden change in the sky. It was beginning to rain!

At the entrance to the lane that led toward Azariah’s home, the two men paused—in spite of the rain—shook hands, and solemnly pledged themselves to their new united purpose: the one, to seek the forgiveness of the God he had once again come to worship; and the other, to offer a prayer of thanksgiving for his many blessings and for the mighty triumph of right over might. ●●

“Hold Fast”

*“Hold fast!” I hear the Master say,
“Behold I come without delay;
Your working day is almost done;
Sin’s cursed reign at last is run.*

*“A glorious blessing I will bring;
I’m coming soon—rejoice and sing!
Let not this world your soul beguile,
Hold fast! ’tis but a little while.*

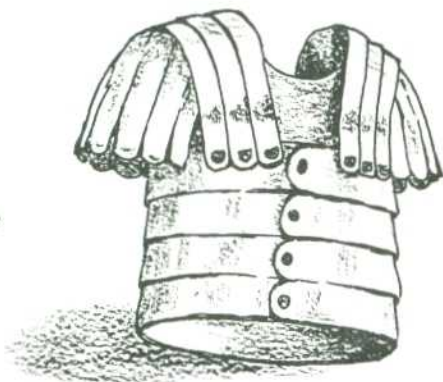
*“The cruel tempest soon will break,
And all the earth shall reel and shake;
While only those whose hearts are pure
Will stand the test, the strife endure.*

*“Let not your hearts be overcharged,
Have faith to hold and trust in God;
Behold I come in this your day,
I counsel you to watch and pray.*

*“Let not this world with all its strife,
Distract thee from thy goal of life.
Hold fast in faith, in truth abide,
And thou shalt reach the other side.*

CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

The Roman soldier's breastplate



Breastplate of Righteousness

THE second piece of the spiritual armor for Christians that Paul mentioned in his letter to the Ephesians is the breastplate of righteousness. The breastplate or the armor covered the chest and upper part of the body. It protected the heart, so you can see how necessary the breastplate was.

To a Christian soldier, the breastplate of righteousness is a very important piece of armor. It protects from the darts of the evil one. Do you know what righteousness is? It is right doing, what God says is right, not what seems right to us.

Many, many years ago Moses, one of God's most stalwart soldiers explained God's righteousness to the children of Israel. He said, "It shall be our righteousness if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us."

It is not an easy thing to always remember to do what God has commanded us. Naturally, we want to say and do what *we* want to. That is called our own righteousness. Do you know what our own righteousness is in the sight of God? Our own righteousness is as filthy rags, of no value to God.

Paul knew that every Christian would have a mighty warfare to fight and so he took great care to tell us what armor to wear to be a victor. He used this spiritual armor himself and he was able to say at the end, "I have fought a good fight." If we emulate Paul and use the same Christian armor he did, we will be able to say the same thing.

Be careful now in girding for the fight. Make sure you choose the Breastplate of Righteousness. It is the only breastplate that has proven successful in this Christian conflict. ●●

Sandals of Peace

CHILDREN, we are now ready to discuss the third piece of the Christian's armor, the sandals of peace. You all know that sandals are worn on the feet. In olden times when a person put on sandals it indicated that he was ready to move about or go someplace. The sandals protected the feet from stones and other things that might in-

The Roman soldier's sandals



jure the feet. One could walk faster and greater distances wearing sandals than he could if he did not wear them.

That is the way with the Christian soldier, too. It signifies that the soldier is ready to go wherever duty calls him. But, what kind of sandals are the sandals of peace? These sandals, like all the other pieces of the Christian's armor, are spiritual. Do you remember what the Psalmist tells us about peace? Read Psalm 119:165. It says, "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall
(Continued on page 27)



"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

"Put on the whole armour of God...that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

"Above all, taking the shield of faith,...and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6: 10-17).

Showers of Blessings

The Blessing of Home

WE will study today another great big drop from our Showers of Blessing. This big drop is your homes.

So many children in the world today do not have nice comfortable homes like we enjoy. Perhaps some of the children who read about these spiritual showers of blessing do not have all the comforts of home that others of you have.

For most of you, home is where you live with your families; Mother and Father are there and your brothers and sisters, too. Home is where you are sheltered from the cold weather and rain; it is where you have comfortable beds and a nice warm fire when the snow is coming down outside and the wind is blowing hard.

Have you ever wondered where your home really came from? What is your home made of, maybe wood? If so, where did the material come from? Wood comes from trees. Someone had to cut down many trees to make your house. But where did the trees come from? Yes, of course, the trees grew in the ground, but did you know it was really God who made the trees grow? He sent the sunshine and rain so the trees could grow big and strong. A man cut the trees down and sawed them into lumber. Then a carpenter took the lumber and sawed it into the right sizes and shapes to make a house and he used lots of nails to hold the lumber in place and make the house strong.

If your house is made of bricks, someone had to make the bricks. Bricks are made of clay, a certain kind of earth. Other things are mixed into the clay, then the bricks are formed and baked in a big oven until they are very hard. A mason puts the bricks together and makes a house. But, again, the material from which bricks are made was made by God. If God did not provide all the materials for people to use we would not have the nice homes we have today.

Yes indeed, children, our home is a great blessing. Be sure you are thankful for your home and don't forget to thank God for it. ●●



Learn to Be Patient

Harry Long-legs was a baby crane. He was learning to catch fish. But he couldn't catch any because he didn't want to stand still long enough. They have to stand real still so not to scare the fish. When some fish came along, Harry would wiggle and they would all swim away. Mother wouldn't catch the fish for him, and he got hungry. So he decided he would have to learn to catch fish for himself.

He went down to the shore to watch for a fish, and when he saw one he got so excited that he fell in the water and the fish swam away. After Harry Long-legs fell in the water, he realized he would have to have patience like his mother had told him if he was to catch any fish. So he stood real still there in the water. Pretty soon a fish came along and Harry caught it. My! it tasted good.

We have to learn to be patient too, like it says in James 1:4, "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

The Decalogue

(Continued from page 6)

mand of God for goodness. When a man fails to live according to the law of God, then the fault does not lie with the law—or God's demands—but with the man himself.

Paul used a common command from among the Ten to illustrate his point on law in general. But note that Paul used the command in absolute form: "Thou shalt not covet"—anything, not only the particulars that were listed in the law. To covet as Paul means here is to desire for oneself what another has; it does not imply that any action is taken to seize what is desired; the desire itself is wrong. But this sin would not be, says Paul, if there were no law saying "thou shalt not covet." In this sense, the law made the sin. For where law does not prescribe a set course of behavior for a man, sin is a dead [inactive] thing.

Paul also expresses in this passage another very human trait: Whenever a limit is set, man is incited to go beyond it. To be told "Don't" arouses the desire to "Do" (v. 8). In this sense the law may be said to produce sin.

Paul speaks of the whole system of the demands of God upon men as "the law," *not speaking specifically of either the law of Christ or the law of Moses*. His point is that the very existence of law awakens the conscience to recognize and identify sin. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7: 12). God is a God of law and order, and the law is a good and needful thing, "that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (v. 13). Only as sin becomes "exceeding sinful" does it become something to be killed and put away. And this is possible only because of the existence of law. Hence, law should be respected.

Then Paul relates what he has said about law in general to his present situation as a subject of the law of Christ. And the personal struggle which he describes in the verses that follow (vs. 14-25) shows conclusively that the law to which he refers is NOT the Ten Commandment law. The Ten Commandment law never involved a man in so violent an inner struggle, for it was a law governing only outward behavior.

Paul had known the Ten Commandment law since childhood, yet he recounts his present experiences with his own nature as a new experience: "I discover this principle, then: that when I want to do the right, only the wrong is within my reach. In my inmost self I delight in the law of

God, but I perceive that there is in my bodily members a different law, fighting against the law that my reason approves and making me a prisoner under the law that is in my members, the law of sin" (Rom. 7:19-23, NEB). No such struggle as **this ever resulted from attempting to live by the Ten Commandments!**

The Ten Commandment Law Is the Royal Law?

There is another passage which the proponents of the Ten Commandment law use to support their position that the Decalogue is the chief law binding upon us today. We quote again from the article in *Plain Truth*: "The apostle James declared that the Ten Commandments are a law of liberty. We are free from slavery to the throngs of sin, free from murder, theft, adultery, and all the evils that come upon a society that breaks the Ten Commandments!"

Is this according to Scripture? Let us read James 2, beginning with verse 8: "If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well." Immediately we see a command that is not part of the Decalogue. "But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors" (v. 9). The Decalogue could never convict a man for having respect to persons, for it contained no law forbidding it.

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all"—because he has broken one law, his obedience to that law is not complete.

As an example of his point that every command within a law must be kept if a man is to be obedient to that law, James cites two commands that are part of a law familiar to all: "For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." James is not setting forth any particular law to be obeyed or disobeyed; he is simply showing that if one is to be obedient to a law, he must obey every command within that law.

As to the significance of the commands cited, both belong to the law of Moses, and both were reiterated by Christ (see Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28). And might we not as justifiably assume that James was quoting Jesus as that he was quoting the old law? Especially on the basis of James' concluding admonition: "So speak ye and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy." The law of Moses was never called a "law of liberty"; on the contrary, it was a "minis-

tration of death" (II Cor. 3:7) under which a man might die in the presence of two or three witnesses *without mercy*. "Judgment without mercy" was the rule under the old law of Moses; why then should we conclude that James was referring to that law as a law of liberty? For this very reason the old law was removed—it was never a law unto eternal life; it was only a civil law.

Also, James' emphasis on speech and action—"so speak ye and so do"—would indicate a law of broader scope than the Ten Commandment law, for it did not govern every word and act under a threat of judgment.

The Ten Commandment Law for Us?

The article we have been quoting makes one further statement: "If the modern world would take notice and heed this law of God [the Ten Commandment law], if people everywhere would obey this immutable, inexorable, spiritual law, then the whole world would be filled with radiant happiness, prosperity and love!"

We can definitely agree that were all people to live by the Ten Commandment law we would have a happier, more prosperous world today; for it was a civil law, and as long as Israel lived by it, the nation prospered.

But we cannot describe the Decalogue as "immutable, inexorable, spiritual" in the light of Bible statements which refer plainly to its limitation and termination (See II Cor. 3:7-11, 13; Gal. 3:19; 3:24-25; Heb. 7: 18-19; 10: 1-10).

The fact that God gave the law does not mean that the law is perpetually valid for all people. If we were to say that all of God's laws are eternal because they emanate from God, all of us today would have to sacrifice our sons, as Abraham was commanded to do, or build an ark, as God ordered Noah.

As seekers for the goal of life eternal—not simply a better world here and now—our objective is to obey that law which will prepare us to be the inheritors of the Kingdom of God. And the attainment of that goal involves commands vastly more far-reaching than any command of the Decalogue. It involves the control of every thought and emotion and feeling and attitude of our being; it makes every moment of every day a struggle between the wrong and the right, a battle between the lesser and the greater.

Paul himself engaged in a struggle which he never would have known had he been concentrating only on obedience to the Decalogue. For example, he commanded his brethren to "set [their] affection on things above, not on things on the

earth" (Col. 3:2). "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:1-2). And again, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31-32). Such a command was not part of the Ten!

And again he exhorted, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient [edifying]: but rather giving of thanks" (Eph. 5:3-4). And again, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, . . . honest, . . . just, . . . pure, . . . lovely, . . . of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). Which of the Ten Commandments demanded that a man control his *thoughts*?

No, there is a vast difference between the effectiveness of the two laws. And as earnest life-seekers, we can be eternally thankful that God has revealed in His Word that higher, more effective law by which we may transform ourselves into such creatures as He desires for His eternal associates. For only by this highest, most complete dedication can we hope ultimately to share in the world without end. ●●

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Meditations

On the Word

CHRISTIANITY is a form of religion which tolerates no selfishness. Everyone possessing the hope that comes only by a knowledge of the promises of God must be willing to share that hope with others. We all must be willing and anxious to share the good news with others, to say "Come . . . take the water of life freely."

"None of us liveth to himself" (Rom. 14:7), each must be his "brother's keeper." Every faithful servant of God will be glad to let his light shine to others, to say, "Come." There are a number of ways of doing this. It may be by preaching the gospel publicly, but not all are preachers. One person may impress and help others by heart-to-heart conversation: "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" (Prov. 15:23).

One may help in a financial way, while another may work with his hands doing the many regular chores in connection with the maintenance of God's house, and the carrying on of His work. Helpful correspondence has a definite place. The letters written to the churches 1900 years ago by Paul, the greatest missionary of all time, stimulate us every time we read them, and many in these evil days can testify that they have been encouraged, stimulated and strengthened through the lowly medium of a letter from a spiritual friend. These are all different ways of saying "Come." And we should never forget example. In no better way can we encourage others to a higher life than by showing a flawless example ourselves.

Our meditation verse, besides stressing the point of how a Christian should be a co-sharer with others, also covers a specific case which definitely applies to our day and time. In short it states the

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" —Revelation 22:17.

very commission under which we are now working. During Bible times, dispensations varied with different ages. God always had a plan especially fitted to the age at hand. At the time of the destruction of Sodom and Go-

morrah for their wickedness, Lot and his immediate family were commanded to escape for their life and look not behind them. That, we might say, was a present truth for them. Noah was commanded to build an ark for the saving of himself and his house. Moses was commanded to go down to Egypt and deliver God's people from their cruel bondage.

Supernatural power accompanied most of these commissions. Something was needed to add prestige and divine authority to these various movements. Mighty miracles were performed through Moses in Egypt before the Pharaoh would let the children of Israel go. The events accompanying the giving of the Law on Sinai were such as should have convinced the stoutest heart God was behind it; and signs, wonders and demonstrations of God's power continued all during their forty years of wanderings.

These visible signs, the work of the Holy Spirit power, were provided intermittently during the reign of the Judges of Israel, the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, and through the intervening years to the time of Christ. A quick review of the history of these times reveals the working of divine power in such stirring scenes as the conquest of the hosts of Midian by Gideon and his three hundred men; the sublime scene on Mount Carmel when Elijah the Prophet of the Lord staged a test before eight hundred and fifty idolatrous priests and prophets to determine the true God. We see this same Elijah restoring the widow's son to life, and Elisha his

protege raising to life the son of the Shunammite woman; Daniel and his three associates surpassing all the wise men of proud Babylon in wisdom and understanding through the power of God.

Perhaps we are more familiar with the Apostolic Age than with any of the former ages. For one thing we are not separated from the early Christian era by as many centuries of time as from the earlier commissions, and the abundance of power invested in the apostles made that age more productive than any age before or since.

During these years the Holy Spirit had been their never-failing helper. By it the apostles and their co-workers had given definite proof of the genuineness of their mission. The Holy Spirit had given them power to open the blind eyes, to cause the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, the dumb to speak. The Holy Spirit even provided them answers when their adversaries tried to entrap them and brought them before the magistrates (Mark 13: 11), but now that power was about to cease.

The command to go and preach the gospel to all the then-known world had been fulfilled. The writings to make up the Bible were complete—although not yet formed into a book—the “perfect” had come. The Spirit had done its work and its cessation was in order, hence a new commission was needed. Under this new commission it is for the “bride” or church of Christ to say, “Come.” Every one who hears the joyful sound can and must echo the glad invitation, Come! Come forsake your sins and take the water of life freely. We are blest in having the written Word so that in absence of Holy Spirit power we still may say, Come!

“And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” We can be thankful the Almighty has no pets, that the invitation to work for eternal life is given to all alike. He is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that fears Him and works righteousness will be accepted (Acts 10: 34-35). God does not discriminate against any nationality or race. “Whosoever will may come.”

The proposition comes to each of us individually. It is for each of us to concern ourselves about the knowledge of God, to assure ourselves of the truthfulness of His Word and the reality of the great prize He has offered. We ourselves must count the cost to decide if the value of the reward is more than equal to the things to be given up to obtain it. The decision to make the all-out effort to do the work is for each of us, as is also the determination to hold firm that decision and continue faithful to the end.

In the early hours of the Day of Salvation the invitation to come and partake of the water of

life was sent out, and during the third, sixth, and ninth hours of the day the call was repeated again and again. And it is to our profit and advantage that in this the eleventh hour the call is still sounding, “Come . . . take the water of life freely.” Let us heed this call that we may drink forever of the “river of His pleasures” in the world to come. ●

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Sandals of Peace

(Continued from page 22)

offend them.” This is a peace of which the majority of people do not know. The Christian must actually become a person whom nothing can offend. It doesn't matter whether people talk about him, do him an injury or shun his company, it will not bother a Christian soldier at all. He will have a peaceful heart that nothing can disturb.

As the Christian soldier goes bravely forward in the battle against self and sin, his peace will increase and he will find that he is becoming more and more at peace with his God. Peace with God can come only by learning what God requires of us and living to please Him. And as we become more and more Godlike, our peace will begin to flow like a quiet, placid river and nothing will be able to ruffle or disquiet it.

Begin putting these wonderful sandals on now, Children. It takes time to get them fastened securely. It is not an easy matter, like putting your shoes on every morning. The task cannot be done in two minutes, or two days, or even two months. It takes a lot of *time* and *effort*. ●●

Dear Lord and Father of mankind!

*Forgive our feverish ways!
Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
In purer lives Thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.*

Dear Lord
and Father

*In simple trust like theirs who heard
Beside the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word,
Rise up and follow Thee.*

*O peaceful rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
His yearnings for eternity
Interpreted by love!*

*With Thy deep hush subdue Thou all
Our words and works that drown
The tender whisper of Thy call,
And noiseless let Thy blessing fall
As fell Thy manna down.*

*Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls all anxious stress
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.*



*Breathe through the heat of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let wrong be hushed, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still small voice of calm!*