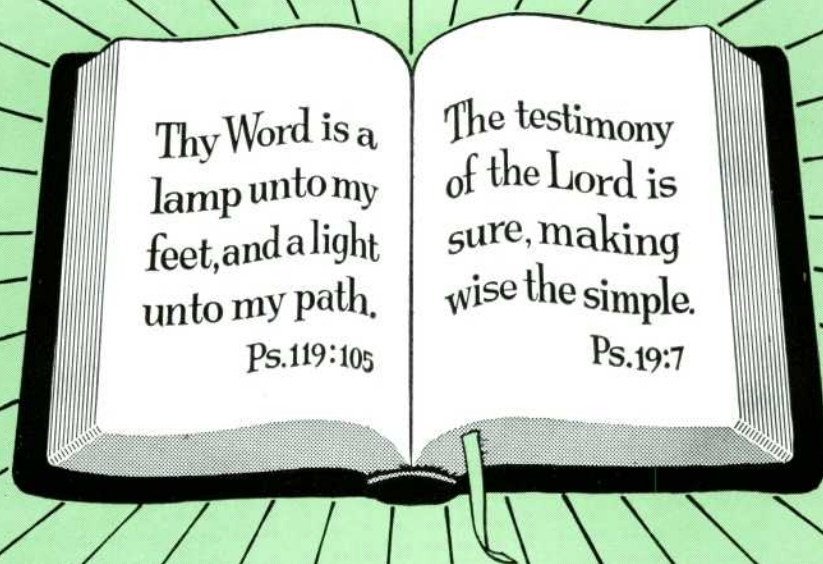


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



It Happened At Pentecost

The Day Extraordinary

Measuring Day

The Great Apostasy

EDITORIAL

Respectability Isn't Enough

OF all the people of the ancient world, the Jews held the reputation for being the most moral. Their standards were the highest known. Their family life was on a level unequalled in the Gentile world. Their divorce rate was the lowest. Women in Jewish communities enjoyed a respect known nowhere else in the world of that time.

The Jews were devoted as a religious group. Among them was an especially earnest sect called the Pharisees. The Pharisees were in general ordinary Jews, but keenly aware of moral principles and firmly committed to observing all the forms and rituals of their Israelite traditions. Whatever criticisms they received for their ridiculous definitions of "cleanness," or "sin," or "righteousness," anyone judging them had to allow that they were a dedicated group.

This was because they set up a series of standards for respectability; they adhered to their traditions with the most painful exactitude. They took great pride in the stern disciplines they imposed on themselves and exulted in their own righteousness. And they were satisfied. It was enough.

Their fellowmen honored them for this strict adherence to their law, and the Pharisees basked in the sunshine of their smiles and praises. They were "righteous," and they knew it.

But along came Jesus with something else to say. "Except your righteousness," He told the people, "shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). He was calling for something more—something more than respectability.

When Jesus set up the Pharisees for a standard to be surpassed by those who would enter the Kingdom, He was setting up the most exacting and the most respected standard known to men at that time and saying, in effect, "They are good, but they aren't good enough. You must be better."

As Jesus proclaimed it, citizenship in the Kingdom was the highest goal toward which any man might work and live. To partici-

pate in it would be to participate in the greatest triumph of the ages, a privilege indescribably grand, the utmost of any man's aspirations. And it was a privilege demanding the utmost in personal effort and devotion. No one could buy an admission there; no inheritance could bestow it. It had to be earned by righteousness and holiness of life. It had to be merited by righteousness exceeding that of the most dedicated men in the world.

It is easy to imagine some of Jesus' hearers that day were dismayed as they heard Jesus' demand. *They*, ordinary people, had to surpass what they had always considered *unsurpassable*?

Yes, this was what He said. And His words come down to us in our day. "Your goodness must be a far better thing than the goodness of the scribes and Pharisees before you can set foot in the kingdom of Heaven at all!" (Matt. 5:20, Phillips).

The ultimate attainment requires the ultimate in self-sacrifice and self-surrender; it requires the ultimate in obedience and a total dedication to the highest levels of virtue and honor. Respectability isn't enough. ●

"Search me, O God, and know my heart."

O Father, disclose to me myself! Let me not think that I love duty, if I merely love praise and ease of conscience. Let not prayer for virtues satisfy me, while I have not the virtues for which I pray. Let me not be proud of Bible-reading if I read only as a curious scholar and not as a lover and seeker after truth.

Lord, give me a straight-forward, accurate, imperious knowledge of myself, a knowledge that endures no lies and permits no equivocation; a knowledge that is not morbid or timid; but an open, manly knowledge of my evil and my good. But with my evil show me also the road of true repentance. Show me, though far ahead, the perfection Thou dost require, and let me see over every furlong of the narrow road Thy helping hand.

—Selected.

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Megiddo Means

"a place of troops"

—Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon

"a place of God"

—Young's Analytical Concordance

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

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

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It Happened At Pentecost

PRAYER

Eternal Father, Thou to whom all flesh must come, Thou mighty Being to whom we are indebted for the very breath we breathe and the life we possess, we thank and praise Thee that our lives are still spared and that we are permitted to read and study Thy Word.

Father, we know that from Thee cometh every good and perfect gift, both now and in the world to come. Apart from Thy goodness in having enlightened the eyes of our understanding, we should be stumbling on in darkness without Thee and without hope in the world. But now that the light of Thy Word has illumined our pathway, help us to walk in that light. May we allow the searchlight of divine truth to enlighten every nook and dark corner in our lives until every shadow of sin is removed, every cloud that hides Thy face.

Help us to render our bodies a living sacrifice, knowing that to do this is our reasonable service.

Father, we thrill as we read the account of that Pentecostal outpouring of Thy Holy Spirit, and we long to experience that greater outpouring which will accompany the return of the great Prophet and Thy dear Son to earth. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, and greater works shall be done than Jesus did when upon earth.

Help us to spend each day in expectancy, before the backdrop of the approach of that day which is so certain to come. May we remember that some year will be the last year, some day will be the last day, some hour will be the last hour, and some moment will be the last moment before our Lord shall come; and may we waste no time in indecision.

Be with those absent from us. Be with and bless those in sickness or trouble, those who have not our privilege of constant assembly, with all who are earnestly striving to learn and live Thy truth. And may we never grow weary in well doing, that having finished our work we may have a part in the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

DISCOURSE

A CERTAIN segment of the Chinese Communists have taken as their motto a phrase from the Acts of the Apostles: "They that turned the world upside down." What a perfect description is this of the men who founded the early Church. Propelled by the irresistible vigor of the resurrected Christ, those humble men struck at the very foundations of the superstructure of pagan faith.

What was the source of their new-found power? It was nothing less than the long-promised Holy Spirit. "This is that," shouted their spokesman Peter to the skeptical throngs. "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." This is that—a fulfillment of prophecy; a confirmation of their spoken words; an assurance that Jesus Christ is glorified, a sign to follow them that believed.

I have often wondered what the apostles would think if they saw professing Christians today. Would they recognize the religion they had proclaimed by lip and life? Would they recognize the faith for which they fought and died? What would they think of the parrot-like recitation of sacred Scripture, the half-hearted hymn-singing, the vacillation and indecision? Might they not say, What has happened? Is *this* the faith that shook the Roman world? Is *this* the preaching that stirred men to the depth of their being?

And what of us who claim to be true to God in these latter days? Is the gospel the power of God to salvation to *us*? Is our sublime hope of acceptance at the hand of the Great Judge so vivid and overpowering that *nothing* of the fleeting present, however alluring, can tempt us to forget the momentous things for which we are working?

In Acts 2 we have the account of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Before Jesus had ascended to heaven, He instructed the apostles to tarry at Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49).

In John 7 is recorded another statement Jesus made sometime before His crucifixion. It also concerns the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Verses

37-39 read: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his body shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" Here is a promise of the Holy Spirit. It was to be sent after Jesus was glorified.

Included in Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost is a witness to the fulfillment of this promise. As further proof of the genuineness of the Pentecost message and the resurrection of Christ, that "his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption," Peter says, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:30-33).

The remarkable phenomenon on the day of Pentecost was the outpouring of power which had been foretold centuries earlier by the prophet Joel, and again in their own day by Jesus Himself.

The Origin of Pentecost

Pentecost is translated from the Greek word *pentekoste*, meaning "fiftieth." It fell on the fiftieth day after the harvest-consecrating, sheaf-waving ceremony of the fifteenth of the month Abib or Nisan. Pentecost is also known as the "Feast of Weeks," "the Feast of Harvest," and the "Day of the Firstfruits." It closed the harvest season, as the Feast of Unleavened Bread had opened it. Because Pentecost was observed about seven weeks after Passover, it was part of the Sabbatical system of feasts for the Israelite people.

In New Testament times the festival was still being observed. In fact, the Holy Spirit power was given on the same day of the old Hebrew festival. (June 2 is the anniversary of Pentecost this year).

The events narrated in Acts 2 mark the beginning of the Christian Church. Multitudes of devout Jews from what seemed "every nation under heaven" had been attracted to Jerusalem. About nine o'clock in the morning the Holy Spirit came upon a group of some 120 believers.

Not only the disciples but the whole throng who had gathered to celebrate the old Pentecost witnessed the marvelous event. In Acts 2, beginning at verse 4, we read of the Holy Spirit coming upon the believers.

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spir-

it gave them utterance.... Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language" (vs. 4, 6).

The old Pentecost was a harvest feast; appropriately, the new Pentecost was also a harvest feast—it brought a harvest of "about three thousand souls" (v. 41).

The Holy Spirit Withdrawn

As believers living in the last hours of the day of salvation, we long for the time when the Holy Spirit will come again, as it did on the day of Pentecost. We look forward to the better Day when Jesus' words in John 14:12 will be fulfilled: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

The Holy Spirit that was given on the day of Pentecost was not destined to remain until the end of time. It was part of a partitive arrangement, given to "confirm the word" of the apostles and to demonstrate their divine authority (Mark 16:20). And when its mission was fulfilled, it was withdrawn.

That the power was to be withdrawn was part of the plan. The apostle Paul discusses it in I Corinthians 13 as he compares the value of charity or love with that of the gifts of the Spirit which were then the possession of the Church (see chapter 12). Paul writes: "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease: whether there be knowledge [by divine revelation or power], it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.... And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (vs. 8-10, 13).

The gifts of the Spirit were to confirm the word, that people might see and be convinced. But once the "perfect," the completed Word of God, had come, the gifts of the Spirit with their convincing phenomena, were to be done away. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity"—these three and no more. We are now in the era when only "these three" abide.

The historian Gibbon, in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, after analyzing the records of human behavior to which he had access, stated, "Since every friend to revelation is persuaded of the reality, and every reasonable man is convinced of the cessation, of miraculous powers, it is evident that there must have been some period in

which they were either suddenly or gradually withdrawn from the Christian Church. Whatever era is chosen for the purpose, the insensibility of the Christians who lived at that time will equally afford a just matter of surprise. They still supported their pretensions after they had lost their power." And what is more surprising is that even in this enlightened Twentieth Century some still support their pretensions with no power to back them up.

Jesus knew and forewarned of the human tendency to fraudulence. He said, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before; . . . believe it not" (Matt. 24:24-26).

The gifts of the Spirit were given to confirm the authority of the apostles' message, and they ceased by limitation. The apostles started out with a new revelation to mankind, and after it was given and the word confirmed, the gifts of the Spirit ceased. It was the end of an age. And the power will not be given again until that future day when the prophet Elijah, the forerunner of

Christ's second advent, comes to "restore all things" (Matt. 17:11).

The apostle Peter himself defined the time-limit of the partitive arrangement of the Holy Spirit they were at that time experiencing. Let us begin reading at verse 16 of Acts 2: "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel."

Now Joel had spoken of two outpourings of the Holy Spirit. He told of two events, a former and a latter rain. He did not tell of just one rain, but of two, a "former" or "sprinkling rain," and then a "latter rain," a "great outpouring." The designating of two rains indicates there must be a dry time between, when there would be no rain, otherwise the two rains would be all one.

Peter said, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." Then, still quoting Joel, he revealed something else: "And it shall come to pass in the last days"—something happened on the day of Pentecost, but something else is to take place *in the last days*: "It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." In these words Peter was not reciting a prophecy fulfilled because the Spirit outpouring

The Day

Extraordinary

FEW days in the history of the world triumphed more gloriously than did that great day of Pentecost when the Spirit was given. Extraordinary beyond the limits of our experience, it was the day when the apostles, having seen Christ triumph over death, tarried in Jerusalem to receive "power from on high." The promise was fulfilled—Jesus, glorified at His Father's right hand, sent forth the special power that would give impetus and confirmation to the promises He had entrusted to His followers.

It all began with tremendous excitement. The event is related in twelve short verses in the book of Acts, but its significance reaches far, far down into the future, even to that which "shall come to pass in the last days," when the Holy Spirit shall be restored.

Are we lulled to slumber by the monotony of what we call ordinary? We should realize that every day of life is a gift from God, and that nothing that comes from Him is ordinary. What did the eleven apostles have in the way of equipment that was extraordinary that day when they

stood gazing up into the heavens as their Lord and Master ascended? Nothing that could be measured or weighed or counted. The vested interests of Roman Law, of Greek philosophy, and Hebrew ritual were formidable obstacles indeed. Their dynamic lay not in the things which men call outstanding. The secret of their confidence was hope. The assuring words of Jesus kept ringing in their ears: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). And on the day of Pentecost, just ten days later, this hope was realized. Theirs became a power which toppled kings from their thrones and struck fear into the heart of pagan Caesar. All they had was the power of God, but that was enough!

The early Church of the apostles did begin in an extraordinary manner; but that is all in the past; it is history. What about today?

Christianity has been severely criticized at this point. Critics say that we look back to the glorious time, the age of miracles, the time when God spoke in thunder and lightning and through gleaming white angels; when He parted the Red Sea, scorched the peaks of Carmel, destroyed the Assyrian armies, and rolled away the great stone

they had received had not come upon *all flesh*, only upon those few congregated on that day of Pentecost, and Peter knew this. He was looking ahead to the coming second and more abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days, just before the second advent of Christ, when the grand prophet Elijah appears on the scene.

What a wonderful outpouring of power this latter rain should be. The divine forecast continues: "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy" (vs. 17-18).

The phraseology here pinpoints the time of its fulfillment. This divine forecast of events reaches down to the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. Notice the specified order of events: "Your sons and your daughters" shall be recipients; and "on my servants and on my handmaidens," the great number of people who shall form the populace of the Kingdom of Christ. They are classed as "servants," in the respect that the 144,000 sit

with Christ as the rulers of the Kingdom upon the throne, while the greater number stand before it and serve day and night (Rev. 7:9). At the time of the latter rain, the "servants" and "handmaidens" will be in the process of development, so will receive the power.

Thus Peter described two outpourings, just as the prophet Joel had. One happened on the day of Pentecost, the other is destined to be accomplished in the last days.

But to get a fuller meaning of the two rains of which Peter spoke, and the proper location of each, let us turn and read Joel 2:23: "Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately." The "former rain" was a "moderate" rain. Notice the reading in the margin of some Bibles defining the "former rain" as "a teacher of righteousness."

God is the great Teacher, and He sent this knowledge by Holy Spirit power. He gave the "former rain moderately." The word translated "former" is *morah* in the Hebrew, and it signifies
(Continued on page 21)

from the tomb of Jesus and brought Him triumphant from the dead. We look back to the time when He turned the world upside down with the apostolic preaching.

But all this is only half the story—and the small half. We are looking *forward*—forward to the culmination of all that has gone before, the Day when the heavens shall split and down the golden way shall travel the King in the greatness of His strength, His face shining as the sun, His eyes like a flame of fire, His voice like the thundering of many waters, and attended by a splendid retinue of shining seraphim, brilliant bands of celestial hosts crowding the skies as they escort the immortal Conqueror, the eternal King, the Prince of Peace.

We are looking ahead to the day when the earth shall erupt and the dead in Christ shall rise; when the saints shall receive the radiant crown of immortality and the Lord of hosts shall "reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously"! Extraordinary? Yes! A thousand times YES!

Pentecost reminds us that God can intervene in human affairs—suddenly, mightily, strikingly, with all the vigor of divine omnipotence—when the time is right. He can and—He will! The day is coming that shall see and triumph in the renewing

of that power from on high a thousandfold!

How magnificent beyond all mortal comprehension! How glorious, how sublime will be the moment when He shall be revealed from heaven with His "mighty angels." In the words of the poet:

**A shout!
A trumpet note!
A glorious Presence in the azure sky!
A gasp, a thrill of joy,
His saints are with Him in the twinkling of an eye!**

**A glance,
An upward look,
Caught up to meet their Lord, their glorious King.
The graves convulsed,
Their dead cast forth alive!
The call to Judgment from the heaven rings.**

**His face!
Oh, ecstasy supreme!
The saints find rapture standing at His side;
Blameless! without a spot!
Oh, glorious marriage as He takes
His bride!**

Let it be our part now to permit the full power of the gospel of God to penetrate and direct our lives that we may be extraordinarily prepared when dawns that great Day of God Almighty! ●●

Measuring Day

"For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known"

—Luke 12:2.

ALL of us at some time or other have pretended to be what we are not. We have professed virtues we did not possess. We have assumed piety when our heart was far from God. We have shown a spirit of willing service to the Lord when in reality we were promoting our own desires. We have feigned sincerity while our hearts reveled in feelings of mischief and rebellion.

Whatever our virtue, or lack of it, we would do well to remind ourselves that God is keeping a record. Daily, hourly the recording angel is at work. And what of the text we are providing? What of our opportunities? What are we in reality doing for God and His Kingdom? Not outwardly, but inwardly, in the deepest recesses of our hearts—what are *we* doing? Are we changing, developing, growing? Are we being transformed into new creatures acceptable to God?

If tonight the angel of the Lord should set before us our book of remembrance and show us to the world in our true light, divested of all our sham, our pretense, and our hypocrisy, how would we appear?

We should never for a moment forget the reality of this fact: "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). There is "nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known" (Luke 12:2).

The following tale of a strange midnight dream describes the reality of this fact in living fantasy. As you read, put yourself in the place of the Dreamer and disclose your feelings to your friend—and determine to make your own soul do some genuine growing in the sight of God before the real "Measuring Day" arrives!

DREAMER: I had the strangest dream last night.

FRIEND: What happened? What was your dream?

DREAMER: I dreamed I was walking down the street when I noticed a great crowd gathering on the school grounds. People were hurrying every

which way, some frightened, some ecstatic with delight. I asked someone what all the commotion was about, and he said to me: "Why, don't you know? It's Measuring Day!"

FRIEND: Measuring Day! Tell me more about it.

DREAMER: Yes, he said, "The Lord's angel has come down to see how much our souls have grown since last Measuring Day."

FRIEND: Measuring souls!

DREAMER: Measuring character!

FRIEND: I have never heard of such a thing.

DREAMER: Neither had I. So I began to ask questions. I had to find out what was happening.

FRIEND: And did you find out?

DREAMER: Yes, there in the center of the school yard on a kind of throne was the most glorious being I had ever seen. His clothing was shining white and he had the kindest, yet most serious face I ever beheld. By his side was a tall golden rod, fastened upright in the ground, with curious marks at regular intervals from top to bottom. Over it, on a golden scroll, were inscribed the words, "The measure of a perfect man."

The angel held in his hand a large book, in which he wrote the measurements of the people as they came up at the calling of their names. The instant each one touched the golden measure a most wonderful thing happened. No one could escape the terrible accuracy of that strange rod. Each one shrank or increased to his true dimensions—his spiritual dimensions, as I soon learned. For this rod was a measure of the soul-growth which registered each in this most mysterious way. FRIEND: What a strange measuring instrument, but how revealing!

DREAMER: The first few who were measured as I watched I did not know. But then the name of Simpathina was called. She is so generous and so kindhearted, so interested in the welfare of others. She will do just anything for anyone. In fact, she is the president of the Aid for the Destitute Society. I thought as she approached the rod, "Surely Simpathina's measure will be high indeed."

But the instant she touched the rod, her mark went lower—and lower—and lower, and she

seemed to grow shorter and shorter. And the angel's face grew very serious as he spoke:

"Yours would be a soul of high stature indeed if only your zeal for helping others had been first applied to help yourself. First save thyself, then those who hear thee."

Then the angel called another name, "Soela," a seamstress. I had never taken special notice of her. She was always on hand when something needed to be done, and was kind and patient and cheerful, but nothing about her seemed particularly outstanding. But I was so astonished when she took her stand by the rod. Immediately her mark went higher and higher and she grew taller and taller, and her face shone so I thought it might have caught its light from the angel. And the angel smiled as he said:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. It is not the ability and the amount of work you do that counts, but the way you use your abilities, and the motive behind your work."

Next to be called was Ennajetic. I had known of her for years. A more whole-souled worker you never saw, so alert to every opportunity to serve. All her talent, all her strength, all her means were the Lord's.

FRIEND: She must have scored well by the rod.

DREAMER: O you should have seen her mark—it was very low, so low that Ennajetic turned pale as death as the angel said in solemn tone:

"O child, why do you glory in yourself and what you can give? Let your zeal be not to be seen of men, or Ennajetic, you have your reward. You need more, much more of those secret graces of humility and love and patience and faith. These you ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone."

Then came a small hunchback, with the familiar name of O. B. Humble. I hardly recognized him, though I had lived neighbor to him for years. As I last saw him, he was a tall and strong and straight young man, proud as a champion warrior. And successful. But I had not seen him for years, and in the meantime something had happened. But for his face I would not have known him.

FRIEND: Did he rate well in the angel's book?

June, 1976

DREAMER: As the angel helped him up to the rod, the angel's face fairly blazed with light. The measure of O. B. Humble was higher than any of the others. The angel's voice rang out so clear that everyone could hear him saying:

"Here is a man whom the king delights to honor. Seldom does a soul show so much growth in such a short time. Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. For he that endureth unto the end shall be saved."

DREAMER: And then—

FRIEND: Your name was called?

DREAMER: Yes. And oh, as I stood by that measuring rod and felt myself growing shorter and shorter, I thought of all the times I could have done so much better—when I could have been more patient, more thoughtful, more reserved, more long-suffering in judging another.

I had commended myself for doing so well when, actually—

FRIEND: When actually you could have been doing much better. The angel knew this?

DREAMER: Yes, the angel knew. I watched as the angel recorded my mark in the book. Such a low mark. "Oh please," I pleaded, "give me another chance. Do not put this mark down." But the angel was firm:

"The record must go down as it is. But I will come again. And may it be higher next time I come."

.....

Only a fantasy, only a dream. But Measuring Day is coming. For "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10).

We would do well to judge and condemn ourselves now, while we still have opportunity to improve our mark, before Christ and His angels arrive and our mark is sealed eternally. ●●

~~~~~

Time spent getting even would be better spent getting ahead.

*God wants us to begin where we are with what we have and make something of it.*

When you seem to be moving fast and easy, make sure you are not traveling downstream with the current.

Kathy  
Kandor's  
Korner

## Tithe Your Time

WE were in church. The minister was speaking. "Those priests and Levites in Malachi's day" (he had just read to us from the first chapter of the book of Malachi)—"they were robbing God."

Quite a thought. They were robbing God, taking from Him what was rightfully His. How could they do such a thing!

The minister went on to tell how God asks and deserves our best, our all, to be used in His service and to His glory. If He doesn't get it, we are in reality robbing Him.

A good point to remember.

"You may never have thought about it," he continued, "but there is something hard for many of us to tithe. It is our time. God wants us to tithe our time."

Interesting. Never thought of "tithing" our time.

"Indeed, the most important tithe we owe the Lord is our time."

Most important! But how does one go about tithing his time?

"We all find ourselves with unused chunks of time, odd bits and pieces. Capture them, redeem them, whenever you can, so you will have time to give away when the need arises."

A quick mental review of my usual day, and I could think of a good many odd bits and pieces I could put to better use.

"The Lord gives all of us opportunities to tithe our time. Maybe someone comes unexpectedly for some help, or someone interrupts our pre-established plans."

Suddenly I felt a huge lump in my throat. That little word "interrupt"—I was allergic to it. And all my friends and family knew it. I could feel their eyes rolling around at me. When I *planned* a day, I meant to see it through—*without interruptions!*

"Perhaps"—the minister was still speaking.

"Perhaps there shouldn't be such a word in our language as 'interrupt.' "

A strange idea. I could think of a good many "interruptions" I had experienced.

"When people come into our existence, even for a brief time, and we have to change our plans"—

I could just see Anne as she came up to me the other day and asked for a few minutes of my precious time—which I was reluctant to give her.

"When people come into our existence, even for a brief time, that is a wonderful moment of experience for both of us. Relish it. Probe it. Invest some of the time you have set aside to tithe. You can't afford to indulge in the luxury of being too busy and too important for someone else."

Those words hit me like dynamite. What was he saying! Was I "too busy" or "too important" just because I didn't like being interrupted? The idea! It struck hard.

The minister was not finished. "We have time for such inanimate things as pieces of mail, and long shopping trips, and for preparing those special delicacies we know will tickle our family's appetites—and often consume a sizeable chunk of time. We have time to satisfy our whims and fancies and do just about anything we really want to do."

He had said enough. My ears closed momentarily as the picture of Anne's pleading face came up in my mind. I had looked at her, and glanced at my watch, and she had gotten the message. And her eager smile had faded as she walked away, unhelped, unloved, her problem unsolved—all because I was "too busy" and "too important."

My conscience smote me. I hadn't said "no" to her, but my whole attitude had shouted it. "I have more important things to do right now than talking to you," I had said by my actions. "Come some other time," I had added. But she might never have heard *that*.

I looked up again at the minister, and he was still talking. He seemed never to finish with this explosive subject. "Jesus put first things first. He was never too busy to speak the encouraging word, or to give help where it was needed. You never read in the Gospels where He turned anyone away because He was too busy. A word of reproof, or a word of exhortation, or a word of praise—He took time to give it whenever He had the opportunity. His time belonged to His Father, and no one with an honest and sincere heart was ever turned away."

A new thought. *Jesus* had interruptions too?

"I was thinking the other day of the many interruptions Jesus had that are recorded. When

those disciples called Him aside and asked for an explanation of one of His parables, do you think that was part of Jesus' pre-arranged plans for that particular day? Or when the centurion came to Jesus saying that His servant was sick and dying and Jesus offered to go and heal Him, do you think Jesus had planned on that? Or when He boarded a boat and started across the lake to get away from the crowd; was that part of His plans? Didn't that take a lot of extra time?

"Jesus took time out—time to heal the woman who touched His robe; time to answer the questions of His disciples; time to be alone with His Father in prayer; time to help those in need—time to do countless things we would naturally call 'interruptions.'"

The minister was right. Jesus did it. Should I do less? Should *my* time be more important than *Christ's*?

"Remember Paul's prayer," he said further.

"May God, who gives patience, steadiness, and encouragement, help you to live in complete harmony with each other—each with the attitude of Christ toward each other."

How *un-Christlike* had been my response to Anne that day!

The words of the minister are still burning in my heart, and I find I have many opportunities to improve my attitude, both in our home and with friends and neighbors. The closer I examine myself on this point the more I realize how much I must grow. But I am making an effort every day to tithe those precious moments.

Won't you join me?

*Yours for more time-tithes,*

*Kathy*

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## Our Readers Write...

### Bear the Cross

Christ has a cross for each of His followers. If we do not have that cross, we are not among His followers. Jesus said, "Whosoever does not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27). He did not say "Wear your cross"—like some do. He said, "Bear it"!

The cross will kill the natural man. It is an instrument of death. This death to sin means separation from all entanglements with the claims of the world, the old life, ungodly companions, unholiness and all evil; it all has to come to an end if we would live for Christ and become His faithful followers.

*Pueblo, Colorado*

*L. T.*

### I Am Rich

I am not rich financially, but I have many other riches. I woke up this morning to another day in which to try and perfect myself by God's standard. I have eyes to see His beautiful handiwork, and to read His wonderful Word. I have the most important riches, the knowledge of God and His truth. And I have so many riches besides, too many to enumerate — enough food and drink, a roof over my head etc., etc.

No matter how hard life may seem at the moment, we can look forward to what we *can* have if we remain faithful and true. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev. 21:7). This inheritance will mean riches for ever.

*Swansea, South Wales*

*M. S.*

### Confusion

The articles in your magazine answer a lot of questions. Listening to religious broadcasts over radio and TV is quite confusing. Too many man-made ideas and not enough Bible truth. I have tried to find so many things in the Bible that just can't be found, such as the trinity, the Saturday sabbath, the rapture, and others. I have always believed we are not under the Ten Commandment law today, so was delighted to read your series on the Mosaic law in "Understanding the Bible." Your teachings I can find in my Bible, each and every one. I have explored other teachings and have failed to find lots of them—they are just not in the Bible.

*Roseburg, Oregon*

*Mrs. O. K.*

### Thankful

I wish to thank you all and praise our Lord for your little work, and to extend to you all, if I may, "God-speed." May your work be a pyramid of progress until all shall know the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*West Chicago, Illinois*

*N. P.*

### Words of Life

Thank you so much for the wonderful words of life in your booklets. I regard them as my best friends; I have them always to help me meet any need, large or small. I enjoy them. Again, thank you.

*Los Angeles, California*

*O. W.*

### A Blessing

I have just finished the first copy of your magazine and look forward to future installments. It is a blessing and a joy to read. It is a most informative publication because it derives its source from the Word. Keep up the good work.

*Houston, Texas*

*F. T.*

## Tracking Tracks

MOTHER asked Dad if he would pick some cucumbers and tomatoes for the family before he left for work. "Certainly," he replied. Dad was always glad to help.

When he came in from the garden, he said, "You had better watch your lettuce. The rabbits are getting it."

"You saw a rabbit?" asked six-year-old Johnny, excited.

"No," Dad replied. "I didn't see one, but I saw where he had been. Rabbits like to nibble lettuce, and I saw their tracks."

Later the same day Mother called Johnny. "Will you come here, Johnny?"

Johnny ran to his mother.

"Haven't I told you to be sure you leave the jam tightly covered when you use it?" Mother inquired.

"Y-y-y-yes," Johnny answered slowly. "But how did you know I was in the jam?"

Mother looked in the direction of the refrigerator. Close to the handle was a bright red smudge.

"Some little boy left tracks," she said. "See?"

That afternoon, Johnny went with his mother to visit Johnny's grandmother. When they came home, they found a beautiful basket of fruit on the back porch.

"Oh, look!" exclaimed Mother. "Mrs. Johnson was here while we were gone."

"How do you know it was Mrs. Johnson?" asked Johnny.

"Because the Johnsons have a beautiful fruit orchard with lots of delicious apples. Besides, Mrs. Johnson is always doing something kind for her neighbors."

How did Dad know a rabbit had been in the garden? How did Mother know Johnny had had some jam? How did Mother guess that Mrs. Johnson brought the apples while they were away? Because each of them left tracks.

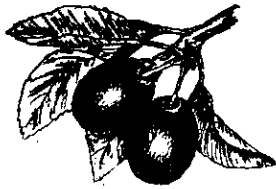
You may not think about it, but *you* leave tracks, too. Every day, everywhere you go, everything you say, everything you do, you are leaving tracks. What kind of tracks are they?

Try to think back over the places you have been, and the people you have met. Did you leave tracks that made them glad you passed their way? Did you brighten their day and lighten their load of care?

Perhaps you spoke to a friend; you left an impression on that friend—you left tracks. Or you did your work—how? Did you leave tracks that you would be glad for anyone else to see? Perhaps you were not patient when things did not go your way. More tracks.

Have you ever thought that God is going to judge us by the tracks we are leaving each day? Think about it. And watch those tracks. ●●

## Fruitful Fragments



If God is your partner, you can make your plans large.

*There are no elevators in the house of success. You must toil up the steps, one at a time.*

Don't give anyone a piece of your mind. You need it all yourself.

*If people speak ill of you, live so that nobody will believe them.*

It is not the *quantity* but the *quality* of your days that counts.

*Where you are is not nearly so important as the direction in which you are going.*

Being good is not enough. Be good for something.

*The safest rule through life is this: Instead of reforming others, set about perfecting yourself.*

When you don't get everything you want, think of the things you didn't get that you didn't want.

*It takes practice to be able to say the right thing at the right time, but it takes far more practice to leave the wrong thing unsaid.*

There is no better way to take the irk out of work than to put love into it.

*You can't change the past, but you can ruin the present by worrying about the future.*

If you served your employer like you serve your God, how long would you keep your job?

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

# UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

## The Second Advent of Christ

**M**ARANATHA" (meaning, "Come, O Lord!") speaks the hope of the Christian Church. This phrase appears but once in the Bible and is left an untranslated Aramaic word, Maranatha, in the King James Version. According to Harper's Bible Dictionary it was an Aramaic prayer used by the early Christians as a watchword signifying, "Our Lord, come!" A stranger arriving at a Christian meeting during the time of the Roman persecutions would be expected to repeat the watchword before he would be allowed to enter.

Maranatha! The Lord is coming! If we are truly looking for the Lord to come, this should likewise be our watchword. His coming could be very near—or far; we know not *when*, but we know *He is coming*.

**"MARANATHA"—word of greeting**

Passed between the saints of old:

Let our lips repeat when meeting,

Heirs of glory must be told—

**"Maranatha"—"Maranatha,"**

Jesus comes, ye saints behold:

**"Maranatha," word of promise**

By the faithful and the true—

Precious parting words of Jesus,

"I will come again to you."

**"Maranatha"—"Maranatha,"**

Soon His glory we shall view.

**"Maranatha," word of gladness**

Cheering star of hope is this;

Smiling through the rifts of sadness,

'Till the cloudless dawn of bliss

**"Maranatha"—"Maranatha,"**

Shine thou blessed star of peace.

**"Maranatha," this our anchor,**

Safely cast within the veil;

Winds and waves may rage with anger,

As across life's sea we sail;

**"Maranatha"—"Maranatha,"**

Lo: the haven fair we hail.

Oh: 'tis true our Lord is coming,

Surely, quickly He will come;

As we muse, this word we're humming—

Here we would no longer roam.

**"Maranatha"—"Maranatha,"**

Come, Lord Jesus, claim thine own.

The Old Testament is said to contain more predictions of Christ's second advent than it does of His first. Some would say that the Old Testament Scriptures have been fulfilled in Christ and are therefore no longer relevant. But we are reminded that Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, believed the prophets and freely quoted from them. Speaking to the Jews He said, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:46-47).

The apostle Paul adds his testimony that "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). It is this hope that has been the sustainer of believers down through the ages, and it is the Christian's hope today. It is sometimes called "the hope of glory," as in Colossians 1:27. To Paul it was "that blessed hope" (Tit. 2:13), also "the hope of eternal life," and the "hope which is laid up . . . in heaven" (Tit. 1:2; Col. 1:5).

Peter spoke of it as a "lively hope" and exhorted his readers to "be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto [them] at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:3, 13).

"Hope that is seen is not hope: . . . but if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it," said Paul. Hope can refer only to something yet to come; something past might be wished for, but cannot be hoped for. The hope of the second advent is not wishful thinking, not a dream of the night, but a hope that will one day meet its fulfillment.

All the Old Testament prophecies concerning the first advent of Christ were literally fulfilled to the



letter. Why should we doubt the complete fulfillment of those concerning His second advent?

### III. CHRIST RETURNS—WHEN?

As men count time, it has been a long time since Jesus ascended into heaven, leaving the promise, "I will come again." Nineteen and one half centuries represent nearly thirty lifetimes for the average individual. Many have watched and waited and given up in despair. Others have died, faithfully waiting. Our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, thought surely the Lord would come in his lifetime before the turn of the century—until he realized and taught his followers that there would be a tarrying time.

We live in this "tarrying time." Just how long this period might last, we cannot know. We know that when the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled, He will come. It is our inability to calculate God's time that prevents us from knowing when it will be. The prophet Habakkuk preinformed us of this time of tarrying: "For the vision [Christ's coming] is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. . . . but the just shall live by his faith" (2:3-4), or as rendered in the Moffatt translation, "Then answered the Eternal, . . . The vision has its own appointed hour, it is ripening, it will flower; if it be long, then wait, for it is sure, and it will not be late. . . . The good man lasts and lives as he is faithful."

The fact that Christ has been expected for so long does not in any way detract from His coming; it only adds to the certainty. Every day brings the time that much nearer. Bible prophecies were seldom fulfilled when men expected them. Abraham reached the age of 100 without an heir through which to transmit God's promised inheritance; and Sarah, at the age of 90, had given up all hope of mothering a child. Noah had to wait 120 years for the fulfillment of the flood to float an ark he had built on dry land.

Only a few faithful were holding to the faith of their fathers and waiting for the promise when Jesus was born. Multitudes had been fed and many healed during Jesus' ministry, yet only 120 waited for the promise of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. But all things came to pass in due time as foretold. Just so surely will Christ return when all things foretold of His coming have been fulfilled.

There is nothing wrong with looking for Christ before the time. A man's time for preparation is limited to his lifetime, hence the need for prepara-

tion. In the case of any secular event of note, people plan and prepare long in advance. The second advent of Christ will eclipse anything that has ever been prepared for by men. Should we not be working, watching and waiting for it?

#### B. Date Setting—When He Didn't Come

Despite Jesus' clear warning that "of that day and that hour knoweth no man," many have attempted to fix the date for His return. It is said that men began to set dates as far back as the second century, but evidence for such a statement is lacking. There is, however, considerable evidence of date-setting in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Needless to say, any and all attempts to set the date have failed as Christ has not yet appeared. The failure of earlier date-setters has proved to be no deterrent to others; the practice is still being followed today.

**1. The Millerites.** One of the most well-known incidents of date-setting took place within our state of New York. William Miller, founder of the group bearing his name and progenitor of the Adventists, began to preach in 1831 that "the present world would end about the year 1843." In 1833 he published a booklet on the subject, the first of many publications. He attracted between 50 and 100,000 followers. When 1843 passed without Christ coming, some of his associates set October 22, 1844, as the date of the second coming. After that date passed quietly, the group was stunned, though not entirely shaken. Several existing church bodies today find their roots in Millerism.

The group was divided as to the cause of the failure. Some concluded that the date was wrongly computed and that the advent of Christ was yet future, while others abandoned the movement altogether. "Adventism began with the belief that the exegesis that produced the date was correct but that the event foretold was a heavenly one, the opening of an investigative judgment in heaven, which would terminate in the coming of Christ to execute judgment on all. This church early established as one of its prime tenets that man cannot know the time of Christ's coming" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1968 Edition, Vol. 1, pp. 178, 179, "Adventism.")

The theory of an "investigative judgment" is but a man-made theory developed to cover a man-made mistake. It remains a part of the belief of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church today. Such a doctrine is without Scriptural support—and none is offered—and merely serves to compound the error of date-setting.

2. **Jehovah's Witnesses.** Probably no existing religious group has attempted more date-setting than has the sect known as Jehovah's Witnesses. It all began in the late 19th century when Charles T. Russell, the founder, declared in his *Studies in the Scriptures*, Volume 3, published in 1899, "We found the time of our Lord's second advent clearly proven to be in 1874—in October of that year. . . . The Lord has come! The Lord is indeed present!"

Mr. Russell had arrived at this date through the application of Bible chronology based on his own interpretation of the visions of Daniel the prophet. Since no visible signs were forthcoming, the announcement caused little excitement, but he gained a band of followers through his explanation that the Lord would "come to his temple" in 1914. Faced with the inevitable question: Where is He?, the explanation was offered that He was invisible—only "to the eye of faith is he now revealed."

Some years later, J. T. Rutherford, better known as "Judge" Rutherford, succeeded the late Mr. Russell and continued the date-setting. In his book *Creation*, published in 1927, Mr. Rutherford writes under the caption, *The Coming of the Lord*, "The Scriptural proof is that the period of his presence and the day of God's preparation is a period from 1874 A. D. forward. The second coming of the Lord, therefore, began in 1874; and that date and the years 1914 to 1918 are specially marked dates with reference to his coming. . . . The Scriptural proof supports the conclusion that the coming to his temple was in the year 1918. . . . From 1874 to 1914 the prophecy concerning the Lord's coming was being fulfilled and could be understood, . . . by those who were watching the development of events, but not by others."

Mr. Rutherford emphasizes the 1914 date in various ways, again describing it as the date that marks the time for the coming of Him "whose right it is" to take over the affairs of the world and stating that "the period of the Gentile times must end in 1914." We also learn from his book that "the facts . . . considered show that the Lord was present from 1914 forward," and again that "the facts show that 1914 marked the legal end of the Gentile times and therefore the end of the world." According to Rutherford, "These physical facts began exactly on time, in 1914, proving both the presence of the Lord and the end of the world."

The above quotations represent only a very small segment of the printed material available on the subject and are quoted only for the purpose of pointing out the fallacy of date-setting. **The practice is strictly forbidden in the Scriptures; it is not for man to know when Christ will come. To**

fix a date for Him to come is to usurp the power of the Father Himself who alone knows the exact time (Mark 13:32; Matt. 24:36).

To say that the prophecy of His coming "began to be fulfilled" at a certain date, or that it "was being fulfilled" is to defy the plainest teaching of the Bible. There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that His coming will be stretched out over a certain period of time or that He will be unknown, unseen or invisible at His coming.

3. **Date-Setting—circa 1976.** Despite the clear warnings of Jesus and the failure of the attempts of others, dates are still being set for Christ's return. As of April 27, 1976, a group of 28, an independent prayer group in the town of Grannis, Arkansas, were still assembled in a small house awaiting the second advent. They began their vigil last September 29 after one of the members of the group supposedly received a message from God that said the Lord's coming was at hand and that they should remain in the house. Children have since been kept home from school; jobs have been given up and chores neglected in order to be together—but Christ has not come.

We admire the faith and zeal of such people, but like the Jews of Rome to whom Paul directed some of his words, "they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" (Rom. 10:2). Jesus did not promise to announce the date of His coming; rather He said, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:32-33).

**No, we are not to set dates arbitrarily, nor are we to speculate as to when He will come. He commanded His servants to "Occupy till I come," (Luke 19:13), not to give up their jobs and sit down and wait for Him to come.**

Neither are we to be so encumbered with the things of this life that we fail to watch for His coming. "Keep a watch on yourselves; do not let your minds be dulled by dissipation and drunkenness and worldly cares so that the great Day closes upon you suddenly like a trap; for that day will come on all men, wherever they are, the whole world over. Be on the alert, praying at all times for strength to pass safely through all these imminent troubles and to stand in the presence of the Son of Man" (Luke 21:34-36, NEB), was the warning of Jesus. Christians are not likely to be given to "dissipation and drunkenness," but worldly cares are the lot of us all; and it is on that point we must watch, lest they blind us to the signs of the times.

#### IV. CHRIST RETURNS—HOW?

Jesus is coming again! Millions of believers in Christ share this hope. But how will He come? Silently and invisibly? In a blaze of glory apparent to all? Spiritually, in the hearts of men?

Will He come secretly to earth and gather the faithful to Himself? Or will He come with a host of angels, seen and heard by all the inhabitants of earth? Will He leave God's throne for a lower level of heaven, from there to direct the affairs of earth, forever unseen? Will He take the faithful to heaven to live with Him, or will He reign as King over an earthly Kingdom?

##### A. The Rapture Theory

There are many variations of the theory termed the "**Rapture**." The word **rapture** is defined as "The state of being rapt or transported; the act of transferring a person from one place to another. In theology, to transport with ecstasy."

Admittedly, the word **rapture** does not occur in the Bible, nevertheless the theory is accepted by the majority of those who believe in Christ's return. To them it represents the moment when the Lord will come to take them to heaven, the moment when they get to be with the Lord. The period of time to be spent in heaven ranges from three and one half to one thousand years, according to various religious groups, after which they expect to return to the earth to make it their eternal home.

They find the basis of their belief in the words of Paul: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:16-17).

The majority expect the rapture to be an event barely noticed by the unbelieving world. Descriptions of the event picture dramatic happenings: The driver of an automobile is pulled through the roof of the vehicle as with a magnet, leaving the car driverless on a busy street. A wife is pictured as awaking in the morning to find her husband missing—he was a believer, she an unbeliever—and she begins a frantic search, only to learn that some of her neighbors are also missing. An airplane is pictured as crashing pilotless to the earth as the pilot is taken away at the rapture.

Do such happenings picture Christ's second advent according to the Bible? Will Christ sneak down to earth and snatch away His servants unknown to the rest of the world?

Believers in the theory think they find support in Jesus' illustration of two in a field and two grinding at the mill, with one to be taken and the other left in each case (Matt. 24:40-41). But was Jesus teaching that it was the righteous that would be taken? Do we want to be taken?

To say that the righteous are **taken** and the wicked **left** is to contradict the Bible. Proverbs 10:30 is definite: "The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth." This is a Bible truth often repeated by the prophets, apostles and Jesus.

In Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares, the servant is told to let the wheat [the righteous] and the tares [the wicked] both grow together until the harvest. Then "Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them." It is the wicked that "shall be cut off from the earth," but "the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it" (Prov. 2:22, 21).

The very text used to support the theory, I Thessalonians 4:16, does not support the idea of a secret or silent coming: "For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God..." (NIV). A loud command, or the trumpet call of God, are not suggestive of an unknown coming. Rather, they picture an event that will be noticed.

The Rapture also suggests another impossibility: a third coming of Christ. Nowhere in the Scripture is there a suggestion of a third coming, but if the saints are taken to heaven for an indefinite period, then the return with Christ would be a **third** coming, for which there is no Biblical support.

The idea of going to heaven from the meeting in the air has been read into the text by men. Being raised to meet the Lord in the clouds only concerns **meeting** Him; it does not say that they stay there. The place of the reign of Christ and the saints is clearly stated in Revelation 5:10, "and we shall reign on the earth," the place plainly taught throughout the Bible as the eternal home of the righteous. (Read Psalm 37, where the promise is repeated six times.)

The rapture is but a theory of men; Christ is coming, but He will come according to God's plan, not man's.

*Reprints of these studies are available  
upon request.*

"For a time is coming when men will not tolerate wholesome instruction, but, wanting to have their ears tickled, they will find a multitude of teachers to satisfy their own fancies, and will close their ears to the truth and will turn away to fables"  
—II Timothy 4:3-4, *Weymouth*

# The Great APOSTASY

(Book Feature: Part One)

## Introduction

**I**N AN age when every tenet of faith must meet the challenge of a skeptical world, the Bible is still powerfully defensive. The divinity of its origin is certified again and again by its prophetic language. Prophecies stretching over periods short and long, from moments to centuries, are verified by the striking accuracy of their fulfillments recorded on the pages of history. Such facts convince us that the Book is the product of divine intelligence.

Among the major prophecies of the Bible are those which describe a total apostasy, or departure from true religion.

For many centuries God had a living, working people to whom He ministered faithfully through the patriarchs, prophets, Jesus and His apostles. But God's way is ever narrow, rugged, difficult; and the time came when the people of God wearied of it and accepted another way which was less difficult. Following the trend of human desire and the line of least resistance, they so modified divine law, they so enlarged and resurfaced the narrow way to life that it became the broad way to destruction. The original path to life was totally obscured. This was done during the night, the darkest night in human history, the night of the great apostasy.

The darkness, however, was destined to give place to dawn. As clearly defined in Scripture as the beginning of the apostasy is its *end*. Begun by the work of "the man of sin," to whom light and true knowledge were abhorrent, the apostasy was terminated by the work of a man of God whose highest veneration was for the Word of God and whose most ardent desire was to live by its holy principles.

The apostasy—its beginning and its end, its  
June, 1976

causes and its consequences, its place in the plan of God—all is revealed in the Bible. Read with an open mind, verifying each fact, and you will find yourself exclaiming with the Sacred Writer, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes."

## God Calls Men

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."

In these words the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (1:1-2) pictures the happy arrangement that prevailed from the time of Adam, when God first began working with mankind, to his own day. Under this plan, members of the human family desirous of living the higher life were informed of the pattern for that life.

During these years ordinary humans enjoyed direct contact with the Divine Mind through the ministration of angels and by knowledge transmitted through the medium of Holy Spirit power. Angels appeared directly to Abraham. Moses the great Emancipator was permitted to hear the voice of the angel speaking from the burning bush. The commandments and ordinances given on Mount Sinai to be the governing law for the children of Israel were delivered by angels. They were the revealed will of God for that day and time.

The prophets of Israel bore special messages from God to the people with whom He was working. They were always forthright and authoritative. The formula was, "The word of the Lord came to" so-and-so. There were a few intervals when no new truths were revealed in this way, when "there was no open vision" (I Sam. 3:1) and people had

to rely on the record of what had already been given; but generally speaking, the dispensing of divine knowledge by one means or another was constant.

In fact, the whole of sacred history is bound up in a single theme: God's call and man's response (or lack of response) to that call. It was God's purpose that earth's inhabitants should be informed about what He has in store for them, that they should know His will and be conscious of the blessings to attend obedience and the curses that will accompany disobedience. "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; . . . therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deut. 30:15, 19). It was revealed that "ignorance" alienates men from the life of God, but "happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding" (Eph. 4:18; Prov. 3:13).

God revealed His knowledge to men, and He expected men to remember it, apply it, and teach it to their children. As the Israelites were enjoined, "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes" (Deut. 6:6-8).

When God spoke through His Son Jesus, the people living at that time enjoyed the rarest opportunity and privilege. Never before had men heard the Word of God through His Son, or seen in human flesh and blood an example of the flawless life the perfect law of God makes possible.

To one living during these fruitful years, it could easily appear that as long as people were living on earth, some among them would possess this knowledge of God and choose to serve the Eternal and loyally live by His superior laws. Yet the same holy men through whom God was speaking revealed that this would not be the case. A time would arrive when man's inborn perversity and rebellion against divine authority would totally overpower his every desire for divine guidance and he would depart to formulate religion after his own liking and apostatize from the true teachings of God Almighty.

### **"For the Time Will Come"**

The great apostasy from true religion is among the major subjects of Bible prophecy. At least six different prophets wrote of it over a period of some

five hundred years, and their prophecies present the facts in a number of different ways.

#### **Prophecy Explicit**

The apostle Paul, among the last to prophesy by the power of God's spirit, wrote most explicitly concerning it. He said, addressing his son-in-the-faith Timothy, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:1-4).

The language here is emphatic. Sometime after Paul's day an era should arrive when men would not endure sound doctrine; but pursuing their own lusts they would seek "something to tickle their own fancies, and . . . collect teachers who will speak what they want to hear. They will no longer listen to the truth, but will wander off after man-made myths" (Phillips).

Paul spoke again of this apostasy in his farewell address to the elders of the church of Ephesus. He foresaw that men would arise who would not be satisfied with the simple teachings of Christ and His apostles but who would fashion a religion after their own liking and depart from the faith. He said, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). The cause of the apostasy, said Paul, would be twofold: First, "grievous wolves" would invade the flock, bringing with them corrupting influences; secondly, and even more seriously, members of the Church would turn apostate and would proclaim doctrines contrary to the teachings of Christ and would seek to lead men and women away from the truth.

This same Apostle in his second Epistle to the Thessalonians forewarned again of this corruption of true religion by sinister forces. In chapter two, verses 1 and 2, Paul speaks of the second advent of the Messiah, an event which at that time was still long distant. Paul was telling them plainly that a period of years would separate their own day from Christ's personal return to earth. And during this time, some spectacular events would take place:

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that



day [the day of the Lord] shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (vs. 3-4). Later we shall identify this power carrying out this shameful program. The "falling away" or "apostasy" (Weymouth's translation) was inevitable, because the people of God would tire of resisting the powers of evil. And this falling away was not reserved for the dim, distant future—the existing Church in Paul's day was already feeling its effects. Wrote Paul, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work" (II Thess. 2:7).

### The Prophecy in Parable

Before Paul wrote, Jesus had already prophesied of the coming apostasy, and His prophecy is in the form of a parable.

To differentiate between the careless and the alert among those who have entered God's service, Jesus built a parable around ten virgins, listing five as wise and five as foolish. The bridegroom would be absent for an extended period of time, and the ten virgins were to wait, being ready to welcome him whenever he might return. The parable speaks figuratively of Christ, who was soon to go to Heaven where He would be seated at the Father's right hand, from whence He would in due time come again to His people on earth.

But according to the parable, during the bridegroom's absence all the virgins would "slumber and sleep." Now sleep is a state in which one is oblivious to what is going on; while asleep, one is powerless to accomplish anything or to know anything. He cannot reason, make decisions or act upon decisions made. And this is the illustration Jesus used to describe the condition of God's true Church during the time of His absence: "all" would "slumber and sleep." Wise and foolish virgins alike would lapse into a state of slumber; the apostasy, or departure from true religion, would be total.

Among the religious systems which give partial credence to the idea of an apostasy, most are inclined to ignore the divine forecast that this apostasy should be total, that *all*—no exceptions—would slumber and sleep during the Bridegroom's extended absence. Many claim that even during the darkest days of the Medieval Age God had a few living witnesses upon earth. Some even go so far as to claim that the titular heads of their particular church body form a direct succession of apostles from Christ's day to the present time.

However, this position is unscriptural. In I Co-

rinthians 4:9, Paul wrote, "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last," or "last apostles," as it reads in the margin. And the phraseology of Revelation 21:14 is a final statement that even down at the time of Christ's return, when the new order is being established, the names of only *twelve* apostles are inscribed in the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem. No place here for a succession.

### The Prophecy in Vision

God gave His prophet Daniel a vision to reveal what would happen in the years to come. In this vision Daniel saw rising out of the "sea" (of nations) four "great beasts, . . . diverse one from another." Each beast is representative of one of the four major world kingdoms (Babylon, Media-Per-sia, Greece, Rome). Each had its day and then succumbed to a beast more powerful, until the fourth beast arose, "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it; and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns" (Dan. 7:7).

But this was not all. This fourth beast had yet another "little horn," which represented yet another power which would arise and "wear out the saints of the most High." And this power, this "little horn," was to be an outgrowth of the fourth "beast." "And, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things" (Dan. 7:8). This "little horn" was destined to be the destructive agent: "And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time" (Dan. 7:25).

In still another vision the prophet Daniel foresaw this same power which would be instrumental in bringing about the apostasy: "And out of one of them [the beast] came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, . . . Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced and prospered" (Dan. 8: 9-12). Note that this power would make war with the saints and prevail against them. It would "wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws"; and it would "cast down the truth to the ground," and practice and prosper.

## Other Prophecies

Other Biblical forecasts picture this complete falling away from true religion directly or in figurative language.

The prophet Isaiah, depicting the situation that shall prevail when God's saving knowledge begins to be broadcast to all mankind at Christ's second coming, has this to say: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people" (Isa. 60:1-2). The masses of mankind will be in darkness regarding true religion.

The prophet Jeremiah describes the reaction of the people at this same time, in these words: "... the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit" (Jer. 16:19)—the apostasy had been complete.

In figurative language the prophet Joel (chapter

1) forecasts the rising of a sinister power which would destroy the food crops. This power would lay God's vine, His people, waste, and inflict such damage that the vine would become completely dead, its branches bleached white. Verse 12 is revealing: "The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; . . . even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men." Always the fruits of righteousness create joy, because of the consciousness that one's works are pleasing to God and therefore one is sure of an abundant future life. When all effort to bear good fruits ceased, when the goal of moral perfection no longer challenged the will of man, when the reward of eternal life no longer captured his desire, thrilled his imagination and influenced his life, then God withdrew. No living water fell from heaven; the rivers of life ceased to flow, the pastures dried up, drought overcame the land.

God's prophets spoke plainly. It remained for time to verify their statements. ●●

(NEXT MONTH: "And It Came to Pass . . .")

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## Abib Reflections

Abib 1976 has come and gone, but we are still hearing about it from our friends. Here are portions of letters from a few who tell how they consecrated the season.

### From TENNESSEE

Another Abib season has come and gone. I had a little commemoration of the Resurrection on the morning of April 14 (Abib 15). I got up at five o'clock and read the account of the Resurrection from Matthew's gospel and also from Mark's gospel, and had a prayer. The Resurrection of Christ is the most important event in this planet's history up to this time. Jesus said, "Because I live ye shall live also." And Peter says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

### From VIRGINIA

I hope that Abib and the Passover was a great success for you all. My wife and I took the Passover here at our home on the eleventh of April, and we were thinking of you all. We are striving to grow in grace, wisdom and the knowledge of Christ.

### From KANSAS

We went up to be with the R. .... family on Abib day, and had special services together. We had several readings and songs, and then had our dinner together. Everyone enjoyed the day.

### From CANADA

We had a new Passover service in our home for the first

time, this year. We broke bread and drank grape juice in remembrance of Jesus as He commanded us to do in Luke 22: 19. We also had a Resurrection Morning service on April 14.

We are trying to learn Bible verses out of the *Watchword Book*, and we have morning hymns and prayer each day. This certainly gives a person a better outlook for the day.

### From AUSTRALIA

Sister E. .... came over to our place, and we partook of the Passover together.

### From ENGLAND

Sister S. .... invited my sister and myself down to her place for Abib First, so we gladly accepted. We had a very nice New Year's Day. I felt I ought to do something, too, so I had a little celebration at our home the following day. There were five of us. We each read an article from different *Messages*, also read the appropriate verses from Luke's Gospel and related the account of our Saviour's birth. We sang some hymns together and also had a little discussion on "dying to sin." They all said they had enjoyed their day, so I felt rewarded.

### From INDIA

We here in India spent the first two days of Abib in prayer, study of the Word and in worship. About ten of us were present. Some of the neighbors who heard we were having the special prayer and worship session in honor of the birth of our Lord came to see us out of curiosity and were amazed to hear that Christ was not born on December 25. The whole world, because of false teaching, has thought December 25 is the birthday of Christ, and except for a few will continue to observe the same. But it is for us the remnant that the truth is given to observe.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

## It Happened At Pentecost

(Continued from page 7)

"a sprinkling rain." The outpouring at Pentecost did not cover the entire earth; only a few received it. It was a "teacher of righteousness" "moderately."

Now let us determine the meaning of the original word translated "latter rain." It is the Hebrew word *malquosh*. The definition of *malquosh* is "a great rain before the harvest." This is to be the rain just before the great ingathering when Christ comes. You remember Jesus said: "The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels" (Matt. 13:39). Hence Peter was correct when he said this latter outpouring was to be in the last days. It is the rain to begin falling just before the harvest, just prior to Christ's coming when He will send His angels to gather all His servants, both good and bad, to separate them.

The latter rain will be an abundant rain, it will cover the entire earth. It will result in people everywhere knowing the Lord, "from the least . . . to the greatest" (Jer. 31:34).

The prophet Joel then speaks of the latter, more abundant rain in verse 23: "he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month" (or "as of old"). Were it not for Peter's explanation at Pentecost and the clear separation of the two events, we would have difficulty understanding Joel's prophecy and might think he was speaking of literal rain. But Peter's explanation is too clear to be mistaken. Joel spoke about a former rain and a latter rain of Holy Spirit power. When Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost and spoke of the current outpouring of the Holy Spirit, he said "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." Then he went on to describe the greater rain which was yet to come—"And it shall come to pass in the last days." The latter rain was still future.

Now let us read more of Joel's prophetic words: "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you." The prophet is using "worms" as a symbolic term for evil men and women. Literal worms and caterpillars destroy vegetation and food crops; in like manner evil men and women should be the sinister forces to destroy the "garden" of the Lord, His people. It should be they who would "wear out" or "cause to fail wholly" the saints (Dan. 7:25), the bearers of God's knowl-

edge upon earth, and turn His saving truth into a lie. So completely would they work their devastation that the fables and traditions of men would displace the saving truth of God and its efficacy would be lost.

The order of events here again is enlightening. The destructive work of the worms and caterpillars comes between the early and latter rains, which agrees perfectly with the order of events in history. The long night of the apostasy, when truth lay lifeless and dead, came between the two outpourings of the Spirit.

Joel continues: "And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed" (v. 26). At long last a time would come when the "fig tree," though barked and peeled (Joel 1:7) and rendered inactive by the sinister forces pictured as worms and caterpillars, would put forth leaves, and bear fruit. The life-giving knowledge of God would once again be made available to mankind. That would make possible the time when men would "eat in plenty, and be satisfied," and praise the name of the Lord their God who had dealt wondrously with them. That time is now. Then follows the great outpouring in the last days, which Joel forecasts in these words: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit" (Joel 2:28-29).

It is also interesting to note that Joel—and Peter quoted him without comment—further identified the latter-day rain by pointing out other events which were to be contemporaneous: "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come" (vs. 30-31). The timing here may seem a little confusing, but it is not when understood. The "latter rain" is to accompany Elijah's mission of turning the hearts of "the children [of darkness] to the fathers [of light]" (Mal 4:6). It is through him that the latter rain will begin to fall. In Matthew 17:11 Jesus foretold: "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things." One of the first and greatest things to be restored will be the gifts of the Holy Spirit. With this restoration the latter rain shall have begun, a small beginning of the downpour that will follow and will last for a thousand years.

Let us quote verses 30-31 again: "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth [the political powers of earth are described in prophetic language as "heavens" and those they have authority over as "earth"—see Isaiah 1:2, 10], blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke." These forecasts are illustrative of the Battle of Armageddon, which will be a time of worldwide destruction and cleansing. "The sun [the greater powers of earth] shall be turned into darkness, and the moon [the lesser powers] into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come."

Why should the facts be stated in this order? Would not the turning of the sun into darkness and the moon into blood *constitute* the great and terrible day of the Lord?

Let us see.

Peter, being so much closer to the source of these forecasts (the prophet Joel) had information not available to us, and he himself was a recipient of the power of the former or "teaching" rain; hence his words should help us. Let us quote what he had to say, as it is rendered in the New English Bible: "And I will show portents in the sky above, and signs on the earth below—blood and fire and drifting smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before that great, resplendent day, the day of the Lord, shall come" (Acts 2:19-20, NEB). The sun of man's incompetent systems must be turned into darkness, and his moon, his lesser glories, into blood before the "great, resplendent day... of the Lord come." Other translations employ similar terms. The RSV employs the words "the great and manifest day of the Lord." Goodspeed words it: "before the coming of the great splendid Day of the Lord." Others render it: "the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord" (NIV and Williams); "before the Lord's great and splendid day" (Beck); "the great glorious day of the Lord" (New American Standard). All these terms emphasize the glorious splendor of the Millennial Day rather than the terror of the day of God's judgments. If we apply this thought, the order of events as given by Peter is correct. The latter rain or renewing of the Holy Spirit precedes the coming of the great splendid Day of the Lord. But it will not cease with the arrival of that Day; it will continue all through it, to complete and enhance its splendor.

And what a consoling promise is found in the words of Acts 2:21: "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." They shall be saved from the destruction of that critical hour. Joel's prophecy also projects the thought of the deliverance that will

be available to those who seek it: "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call" (Joel 2:32).

### Looking Ahead

The first Pentecost with its thrilling adventure and outstanding accomplishments is long since a part of history. But let us not say to ourselves as did Gideon, when as a young man he was told by the angel that he should be the instrument through whom Israel would be delivered from the invading Midianites, "And where be all the miracles which our fathers told us of?... but now hath God forsaken us."

A greater Pentecost is coming.

A greater outpouring of heavenly blessings is coming.

Let us not join with the pessimists in the cry: "The former days were better than these," for in that they answer not wisely (Eccl. 7:10).

Let us not attempt to live in the dead past, rather let us use the days that we now have. They are our most critical days, the only days for preparation we shall ever have.

"It is far on in the night, the day is almost here; so let us drop the deeds of darkness, and put on the armour of the light" (Rom. 13:12, Moffatt Bible). The night is far spent, the dawn of that better Pentecost soon will burst in upon us. Let us spend our time getting ready! ●●

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### 'Twas God Who Hurl'd

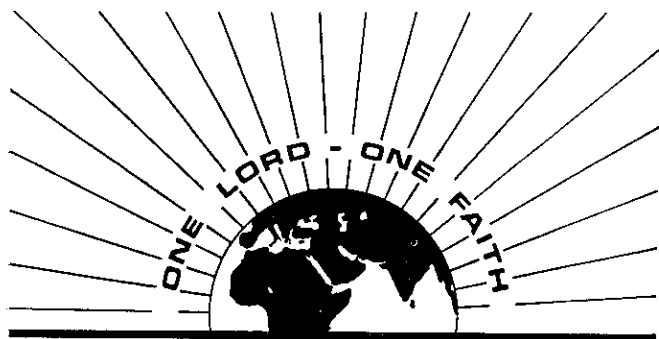
'Twas God who hurl'd the rolling spheres  
And stretched the boundless skies;  
Who form'd the plan of endless years.  
And bade the ages rise.

From everlasting is His might,  
Immense and unconfined;  
He pierces through the realms of light,  
And rides upon the wind.

He darts along the burning skies;  
Loud thunders round Him roar;  
All heav'n attends Him as He flies;  
All earth proclaims His pow'r.

Ye worlds, with ev'ry living thing,  
Fulfill His high command;  
Mortals, pay homage to your King,  
And own His ruling hand.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE



## Salvation--How Do We Get It?

**Step Two: Response**

**Step Three: Salvation**

**W**E have learned about this world and our place in it. We have learned also about God and what He plans to do in the future, of the Kingdom that will be set up here on earth and of the superior, glorified people who will inhabit it. Our question now is, How can *we* be sure that we can be part of that Kingdom? In the words of a man who sought long ago, we want to know: "What must I do to be saved?"

This is the greatest question lips could frame; for what could be more important than our own life now and future?

The Bible answer may be surprising to some because it is contrary to what many people believe. God's better world and a place in it is not free for all. Immortality is not a gift God is waiting to bestow upon everyone who asks for it. God wants only the very *best* human material He can find for His heavenly realm; and He is willing to wait until He gets it. If we fail to qualify, the loss is ours, not His. He will have nothing inferior. So it is our task to make and prove ourselves *the best*.

How can we do this?

In the last article in this series, we surveyed Step One, *Knowledge*. Now we are ready for

### **Step Two: RESPONSE.**

*We must decide, and then act accordingly.*

God dispenses His knowledge. He lets us know what He has to offer. If we have any interest, we investigate it; we listen, and we learn. This is no more than we would do with any purchase we might consider in this world, only the issues here are incomparably more important.

But before knowledge can be of any real benefit to us, we must *respond* to it. We must *do* some-

thing. Mere information about the product, however complete, does not make it ours. We must do something toward acquiring it.

We will divide *Step Two* into three smaller steps: A) *decide* B) *believe* C) *obey*.

*We must decide.*

The Christian life begins with a decision. In fact, the whole life is made up of one decision after another. We must decide today and keep on deciding in every situation that arises. "Choose you this day, whom ye will serve," said Joshua of old to the people of his time (Josh. 24:15). We can choose to serve God, in prospect of obtaining the great rewards He offers us. Or we can choose to forget Him and go our own way, live as we please, and die. The choice is ours.

This is the step Jesus called "counting the cost." He pictured in parable a builder who set out to erect a tower. Before the builder began, he sat down and figured out just what the project should cost, to be sure he would have sufficient to finish it (Luke 14:25-28).

That is what our Christian decision involves, a serious considering of the price to be sure that we are willing to go all the way. Every purchase has its price; even so the prize of immortality. And though the full cost can never be comprehended at the outset, the person who considers carefully before making his decision is far more likely to succeed.

Jesus summarized the price when He said, "And 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" (Mark 12:30). Jesus also compared the acquiring of a place in God's kingdom to a "merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matt. 13:45-46). The merchant man considered the value of the one pearl to be more than equivalent to the value of all the lesser pearls in his possession. He was willing to sell *all* for *the one*. Eternal life is indeed a "pearl of great price"—what could be greater! But it has its price, even "all that a man hath." Is it worth it?

The matter deserves our most thoughtful deliberation and our firmest decision. For the issues are issues of life and of death. And the decision once made must be continually renewed to keep it firm. Each time we renew our decision we drive another stake in our solid foundation for effective action and genuine progress—which are the next two parts of our response:

*We must believe and obey.*

Though belief must somewhat precede obedi-



ence, the two are so closely connected as to be inseparable. For every true believer will obey, and everyone who obeys will truly believe.

Once we decide to serve God and pursue the rewards He offers, we must believe, firmly believe.

1) We must believe that God is able to do for us what He has promised.

2) We must believe that His Word is true and His laws are just.

3) We must believe that we ourselves are able to fulfill our obedience and merit His approval.

Then we must act upon our belief. For "faith without works is dead" (Jas. 2:20). If we say we believe and do nothing to show that belief, we are not really believers. We cannot believe that we must live by all of God's laws and not actually live by them ourselves. Belief demands action, consistent and continuous action.

By far the greatest part of the price of the reward God offers is *obedience*. We must obey. Whatever God says, we must be ready to do it. This is a long-standing principle. God told Israel of old: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Deut. 12:32).

If God should tell us to sail the oceans, we must be willing to do that. Or if He tells us to acquire all we can of all kinds of knowledge, we must be ready to do that. Or if He commands that we isolate ourselves from every communication with this present world, we must be willing to do it, gladly, willingly, in prospect of the great reward. In the words of the hymn, we must be ready to do "Anything, Lord, for Thee."

But God does not ask any of these things. He asks only that which every man or woman who comes into His service is able to give: "Give me thy heart." This means that God wants our first thoughts, our first allegiance, our first interests, our first affections. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2).

The Bible gives many guidelines for the type of everyday life and conduct that is acceptable to God. There are qualities we must add to our character—"Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22-23). And there are qualities we must subtract from our character: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings. . . . Put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing

that ye have put off the old man with his deeds" (I Pet. 2:1-2; Col. 3:8-9). All this makes us better men and women now, at the same time preparing us for life in God's new and better world that is coming soon.

The personal obligation upon each one who accepts God's offer and agrees to serve Him is tremendous. From that point forward each is responsible for living by God's law as he learns it, by applying it to himself and benefiting from it. God does not give us this opportunity and this knowledge and then let us take or leave it at our caprice. Once we accept His offer, it is our sacred duty to follow through with the required obedience. "For we [all covenant-makers] must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10).

When we have applied God's laws to our lives and have reached the standard of moral perfection He requires (Matt. 5:48), when our consecration is truly complete, then we are ready for the third and final step in God's program of salvation.

### Step Three: SALVATION.

*"He will come and save you."*

The apostle Paul summarizes this step well in these words: "We . . . are citizens of heaven, and from heaven we expect our deliverer to come, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transfigure the body belonging to our humble state, and give it a form like that of his own resplendent body" (Phil. 3:20-21, NEB).

Even after we have done all that God requires of us, we are still mortal, still subject to death. We must look to God for our final salvation. "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him" (Isa. 40:10). "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you" (Isa. 35:4).

Christ is coming, and He will bring our reward. We can depend on Him to do His part—if we have been faithful on *our* part. And then we shall be "saved with an everlasting salvation" (Isa. 45:17-18). We shall be given the right to partake of the tree of life through all eternity (Rev. 22:12, 14).

Then we shall be saved, made equal to the angels, placed beyond the reach of death and mortality, and be among the happy inhabitants of the earth made over new.●●

# Questions

"In your book, *The Coming of Elijah and Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, you state that the law ended with Christ, and you gave Colossians 2:14-19.

"Now if you will open your Bible you will see this does not say 'the law' but it says the 'handwritten ordinances.' The commandments were not handwritten but were written by the finger of God.

You seem to feel that the phrase "the handwriting of ordinances" in Colossians 2:14 excludes the Ten Commandments, which as you say were written with the "finger of God."

If we take the figure literally, as you apparently do, we must agree that the fingers are part of the hand. Hence the author could be saying that the "handwriting of ordinances" and writing done by the "finger of God" were the same, assuming that God is doing the writing in Colossians 2:14. However, the verse does not say who does the writing; it says only that the "handwriting of ordinances which was against us, which was contrary to us," Christ took away, "nailing it to his cross."

The newer translations of this passage do not include the thought of "handwriting" at all. For example, the New English Bible: "He has forgiven us all our sins; he has cancelled the bond which pledged us to the decrees of the law." Or the Jerusalem Bible: "He has overridden the Law, and cancelled every record of the debt that we had to pay." Or the Revised Standard Version: "having cancelled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands." Or the New American Standard: "having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us." Or the Beck: "He forgave us all our sins, wiped out the Law's demands that were against us and took them out of the way." The "handwriting of ordinances" was apparently a term for a bond or note, in other words a law, the law, the law of Moses, no part of it being excluded.

Paul's statement in II Corinthians 3:7 seems very definite that the whole law of Moses, including the Ten Commandment law, was done away. He says: "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away." One might infer from this that Paul was saying it was the glory of his countenance (Moses') which was to be done away; but the next three verses remove this possibility, showing that he was definitely referring to the law "written and engraven in stones," which was indeed a "ministration of death" (a number of the Ten Commandment laws carried a death penalty for disobedience), which was to be done away. "For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious" (Verse 11). "That which remaineth," the "ministration of righteousness," is also called the "royal law" (see James 2:8).

The Jewish people had become so obsessed with the ritual of the law that they had completely lost sight of its purpose and objective. Hence it became something "against them," and at the proper time God took it out of the way and it was done away, superseded by the law of faith and obedience.

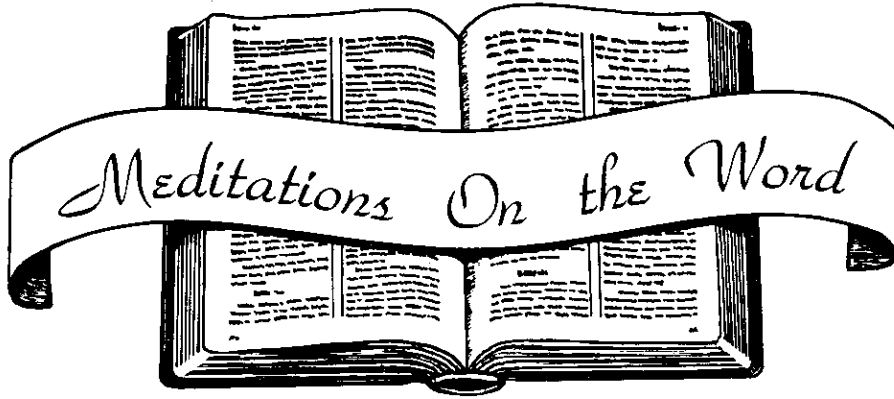
You seem to say that there is a difference between the Ten Commandments given by God which you believe to be still in effect and the "handwritten ordinances," which were done away. Apart from the Ten Commandments, all parts of the law of Moses were received verbally from the angel of God, as far as we can know from the narrative, and written down by Moses. The fact that Moses wrote them down does not mean he originated them or that these laws were inferior to the others. He wrote only what he received from God. All the laws were authorized by God. Why should we make certain of them distinct from the others?

The Bible is filled with commands and principles vastly deeper and broader than the Ten Commandments, by which we must live if we wish to attain to God's eternal blessings. ●●

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*There are too many natural-born nurses—when it comes to nursing hurt feelings.*

*A gossip is like an old shoe whose tongue can never stay in place.*



*"Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth? Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord God; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision"*  
—(Ezek. 12:22-23).

AS a rule, proverbs may be trusted to contain a sound kernel of truth, for they are the distilled essence of many generations of human experience. They can, of course, be terribly misused and misapplied. But the prophet Ezekiel's Israel seems to have acquired some proverbs which contained not even the redeeming quality of probability. For instance, that one about the fathers eating sour grapes and the children's teeth being set on edge (Ezek 18:2-3)—a thing as impossible as it would be unfair. No wonder the patient spokesman of the Eternal strove so hard to wean them from such proverbs as our text.

An all-too-human weakness is the desire for quick results. The small child digs up the seeds which he planted yesterday to see why they have not sprouted. Especially in this day of scientific miracles we are likely to expect "push-button" reactions, forgetting that these "miracles" came to us ever so slowly, through the infinite patience and persistence of men who could try and fail and try again, not twice or a score of times, but hundreds or even thousands of times. Likewise the conservative, far-sighted investor, who does not expect the improbable and who can wait for events to take their course, may find financial security and peace of mind, while the speculator, greedy for a fast dollar, gets himself ulcers—or worse.

Nature itself is unhurried but inevitable. A great educator, when asked by a father to shorten a course for his son's benefit, replied that when the Almighty wished to produce a sturdy oak He took a hundred years or more, while a squash required only three months.

This human attitude is understandable, for men can reason only from what they see and with such materials as they have. It is not easy for a mind bound to a lifespan of less than a century to adjust its judgment to those of a God with whom "a thousand years . . . are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night" (Psalm 90:4). Yet it is to the glory of the human mind and its Creator that it can do that very thing to the extent required by the plan of salvation.

It can be done, but it is neither simple nor easy. There is but one bridge which spans the abyss separating the human from the divine, and that is faith—faith in God and His revelation. And this sort of faith does not come in a sudden emotional experience, nor by inheritance, nor by saying to oneself, "I must have faith." Securing and maintaining such a faith is the Number One problem of the ages, and especially of the present age.

At the very heart of our latter-day hope is the second coming of Christ and His messenger, Elijah the Prophet. And soon. If we accept the Scriptures as the revealed will of God we cannot avoid the doctrine of the second coming. Many have read the promises and believed them, and then proceeded, in direct defiance of the commandment (Mark 13:32-33), to set the date of the great event. They were doing it in Paul's day, and they have been doing it ever since. In A. D. 1000, Europe was swept with a mounting hysteria as the Kingdom of Christ was expected, for no reason at all, to come. Farms and homes were abandoned and the populace gathered in the churches to await the hour of disappointment. The suc-

ceeding centuries, down to our own, are strewn with the wrecks of blasted hopes, based on such unlawful time-setting. Men have presumptuously tried to tie the Eternal to a human schedule, and as a result of the inevitable failures, cynicism and disillusionment have taken the place of the spirit of expectancy which marked the early Church, whose face shone with the hope of "Maranatha—the Lord is coming!"

Today we hear instead the bitter challenge, "Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it" (Isaiah 5:19). Or the half-believing evasion, "The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off" (Ezek. 12:27). Or, more than all, the completely skeptical, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (II Pet. 3:4). These ideas, passed from mouth to mouth and from mind to mind, have become lying "proverbs" which have brought the glorious hope—the world's only hope—into disrepute.

These prophetic warnings stand like great light-houses far out at sea, that we who have professed Christ may not make the same shipwreck of our faith. Perhaps we too have done some vague time-setting in the back of our minds. Perhaps we too have tried to tie the Almighty to our schedule, or set a limit to our waiting for Him to take action. There is an everpresent danger of granting even an instant's tolerance to the suggestion, "My Lord delayeth his coming" (Luke 12:45), which is but a preliminary to the fatal decision, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

To our small and impatient minds there may seem to be a delay, but things are not what they seem. There is and can be no real delay, for time and events are driving us toward a point which does not recede. The hour of Destiny will strike, be it early or late; "he that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Hebrews 10:37).

And if it seem to our myopic vision to tarry, who are we to complain? Who are we to attempt to hurry the hand of the Eternal? Could we face that Day without a shadow of fear? Are we so pure or so perfect that we are actually impatient for our day of opportunity to end? Let us beware lest the stern words of the Prophet condemn us for our self-righteousness:

"Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light...even very dark, and no brightness in it" (Amos 5:18, 20). ●●

June, 1976

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**Wasted**

**Steam**



*Have you heard of the boat with a whistle so big  
Which proudly its deck did adorn,  
That when they did blow it the vessel would stop?  
--It took all the steam for the horn!*

*Do you oftentimes burst with such arrogant pride,  
Your poor timid brother to scorn,  
That progress is hindered by lack of control--  
Does it take all your steam for your horn?*

*Let your good deeds and actions but speak for themselves,  
For almost as sure as you're born,  
You'll narrow your outlook and shorten your view  
If you use all your steam for your horn.*

*--Selected*