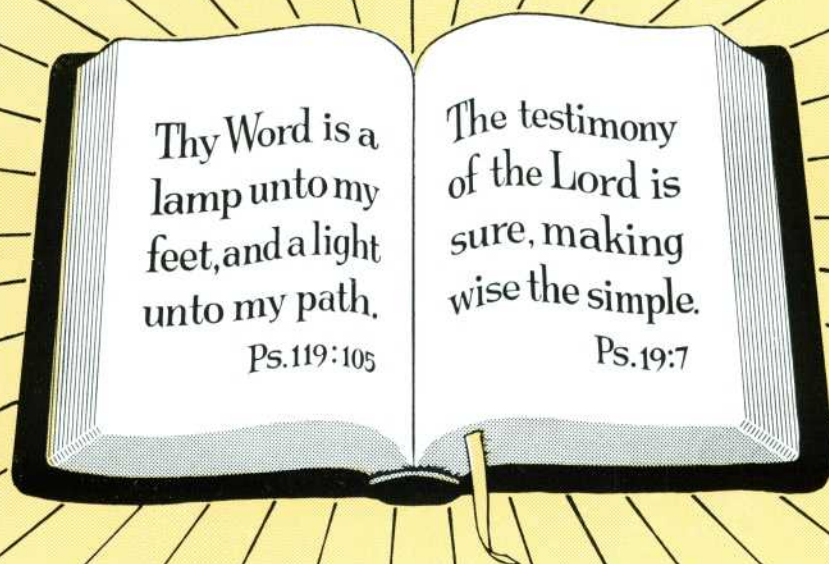


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



Do We Take God Into All Our Plans?

Moving Into the Millennium
The Marriage Supper of the Lamb
Many Rights But One Wrong

Shortcut to--What?

THE shortcut, someone has said, is the right way to go wrong! At least, shortcuts often *do* go wrong. More than one stranger in a city has attempted a shortcut via the side streets only to find he wastes more time than he could possibly have saved. More than one student has spared himself the trouble of serious study only to find he could not pass the exam. More than once has a business man shortcut his preparation time on a job only to have it take more time in the end. More than once has the housewife cut processing time on her canning only to find the vegetables did not keep through the winter. More than one wistful amateur has sought to bypass the monotonous disciplines of practice and yet perform the music of the masters—and has failed.

Shortcuts seem to be part of us. It is so much easier to walk across the grass than to go around by the sidewalk. It is so much quicker to cut the tops off the weeds in the garden than to dig up the roots. It saves so much effort to answer a question with a word or two than with a complete and well-thought-out sentence. It is so much simpler to buy prepared foods than to take the time and trouble to combine the ingredients properly. It is so much easier to sign a card and send it than to write a letter.

All shortcuts are not critical, but the same tendency carries over into the spiritual aspects of our daily life. We know we need to begin our day with God; but love of slumber, or the pressures of work, or the cares of the household become the shortcut to the day's doings, and our touch with God is cut out.

Unfortunately, God allows us no shortcuts.

God calls us to walk a path. It is narrow, and straight, and difficult. We look for a shortcut. But any shortcut into a life of conformity or ease cuts us off from the glorious destination—life! There is only one way to get there, and that is to cover every step of the narrow way.

God calls us to erect a temple, a temple of character strong enough to endure through the ages to come. He calls us to hew and fashion it, block by block, stone by stone. Each must be cut and shaped to fit exactly into the structure God has planned. The work is hard. Is there no shortcut? Yes there is—we can build with hay, or wood, or stubble. But how long will such a building last? What will happen when the winds beat and the storms rage?

God calls us to live a life of separation from the world and every lesser interest. He calls us to a life that is clean and pure and useful in His service. But many people think such a life takes too much time and too much effort and demands too much sacrificing of one's cherished desires. Hence they do not want to surrender to it completely. They prefer to rely upon the merits of Christ, whose death they assume to be the cover for their own sinfulness. But such shortcuts do not make them good and faithful servants; such shortcuts do not teach them to endure under trial and stand the test and so to be eligible for the crown of life (James 1:12). There is no shortcut to a holy and spotless character, for "every man" who has within him the hope of someday being made like Christ must purify himself "even as he is pure" (I John 3:3). There is no shortcut to purity.

Someone has said that anything that steams the window of the soul is a fleshly lust. Sometimes even so-called "lawful" things can do this. But anything, however small or great; or anyone, however dear or prominent, that makes the hope of life eternal less real and less impelling is a fleshly lust. All such are shortcuts to happiness which must be cut off if we would find the eternal happiness God offers.

Give diligence, and go the whole way—lest you find yourself taking a shortcut, and cutting yourself off from the things you want most. ●●

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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).

Megiddo Message

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Do We Take God Into All Our Plans?

By Percy J. Thatcher
(Pastor, 1945-1958)

ALTHOUGH living in a world of chaos, it is a time in which we as Christians must not walk carelessly, we must not walk uncertainly. In this very hour comes the supreme challenge of our faith. Our great deliverance and salvation will not be supplied by reading of the holy, righteous, and tireless characters who met the call of other days. It is for us to stand firm in the faith once delivered to the saints. God's Word has given and always will give indomitable purpose and invincible strength to those who rely upon it; and to all who have trusted in it, it has brought a comfort no mortal hand can give, a sacred hope of a coming peace in a war-torn world. It lifts up the fallen and infuses a passion for service into hearts that before were selfish. It gives new courage to those who are weary of sin.

No matter how dark the night, no matter how hard and rough the mountain you are climbing, look forward for the first glimmer of light which will usher in that eternal Day. Every truth some day will be accepted, every right some day will be established, every wrong some day will be righted, and every evil some day will be abolished. In praying, in working, and in hoping, we must not faint. The delays may be many, the obstacles often seem insurmountable, but nothing is impossible for God who holds the destiny of the nations in His hand.

We should ever remember the figure of Esau so vividly pictured before us. He despised the birthright, and for the present and passing indulgence let go of the blessed future and all its glory. Our religion tells us that our trials can be converted into triumphs, our millstones into steppingstones. We can learn from every hardship. Of our Master it was written, "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." We cannot sow weeds and reap fruits. How can we meet the many temptations and trials before us today if our spiritual resources are low? We have often been afraid of

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

We have been impressed more especially of late about taking God into all our plans. Oh, how many we make and have made and He has been left out; and yet, we expect that some day He will take us into His eternal plan when He fills the earth with Israel, His glory! Upon our beds, oftentimes before the day breaks, we begin to make and formulate our plans. Do we take God into them or is He left out? Do we let Him into all our deals, our sales, our purchases; into every realm and aspect of life? Why do we refrain from taking God into all our plans? There can be but one answer. We think that we do not need Him; that we can handle the plan better alone; that some choice plan of ours might be upset by letting Him in, or we would have to give Him all the glory if the plan proved successful.

Paul says that we are "laborers together" with God. How can He labor with us or we with Him if we do not take Him into all our plans? If God is going to supply all our needs in Christ Jesus, how can He do it if He is left out of our plans? Solomon, when little in his own sight, was so anxious to take God into every move and plan he made; but shortly he began to make his own plans and leave God out. How soon he became a dismal failure and brought ruin and destruction upon himself! Judas, on that dark night, now centuries in the past, departed from the Lord's table to carry out his own plans. How bitter the ending! We might say that such a deed or plan would be far from us; but remember, lest we forget our high calling, lest we suddenly leave the table of the Lord and go forth into a world of darkness and lay plans of our own to betray Him. Every time we formulate a plan and leave God out we are the

loser, for the plan from the beginning is bound to be a failure.

What a wonderful example we have in Moses, the great Lawgiver! When asked for his plans for Israel's guidance and welfare, he said, "I will go and inquire of the Lord." How exceedingly careful he was to take God into all his plans! When Jesus was confronted and His authority questioned by the Jews, He said unto them, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." They soon realized that He and His Father were working together on the same plans. Then Jesus answered and said unto them, "Verily, verily"—truly, truly—"I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth."

Men have made the Creator recede and have no part in their plans; He is thought to be useful only when some great tragedy falls. Men eat, drink, plant, reap and do business without giving a thought to God. We forget that we are only the sowers and planters of the seed, the cultivators of the soil; the increase comes from God. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." If we believe there is such a present help so near at hand, why do we attempt to struggle on alone with our own plans and purposes? "Lean not unto thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge him," not think of making a plan or carrying out a purpose without Him. Take Him into all your plans. He will willingly labor with you if you let Him. Think of being yoked together with God, He in one end of the yoke and we in the other! What strength and help in such a combination! What plan or purpose can fail with such a Master mind working with us?

Men like to make plans and hew out cisterns of their own, but they are only broken and empty. Such products are the result of God's being left out of the design and plan. Saul, at the beginning of his kingship, had the privilege of letting God help him in all his plans in the defense of Israel; but he refused and set up a campaign of his own which brought in the end his downfall and ruin. "O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from thee shall be written in the earth." If we want life in all its fullness, God must be taken into our plans. Paul, the apostle to us Gentiles, emphasized the relation of every Christian with God when he said, "We then as workers together with Him." Think of God being willing to work with us poor mortal creatures

(Continued on page 24)

Let Us Pray . . .

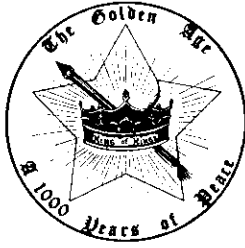
Now thank we all our God, with hearts and minds and voices. What have we, O Lord, that we have not received from Thee through countless channels? We would respond to Thine unlimited goodness with gratitude expressed in our words of worship and in our daily lives. We thank Thee that nothing has come to us, and nothing can come to us, that Thou canst not weave into Thy great design for our lives. We thank Thee, too, that Thou dost give us strength to equal every demand, and resources adequate for every task to which Thou callest us. With Thy true Church on earth and the hosts of immortals in the heavens we give Thee the glory and the praise and the love of our hearts for all Thy gifts, and for the supreme gift, even Thyself.

Father, we rejoice to know the weary centuries have worn away, and that the time of the apocalypse of Thy dear Son is now imminent. Divinely inspired, He could foretell that it would be a long time before He would return to reckon with His servants and establish His kingdom of peace and good will to men. Father, help us to long for that time to come, to live in constant expectancy, ever aware of the need for haste, that when the Master of the house cometh He may find us prepared to open to Him immediately.

May we not be among the foolish virgins who allow their faith-lamps to burn low or flicker out because of an absence of the important oil of faith, but may we be among the wise who keep their faith supply adequate at all times. May we think faith, talk faith, act faith. May we always keep reinforcing our faith, never allowing the corroding element of doubt to come in and weaken our determination to win life eternal.

For our country and leaders we pray. Grant them such wisdom that all who lead us and all who follow may be wise to discover the ways of peace, justice and brotherhood.

Be with those in sickness, weakness, or pain. Come with tenderness to those who are helpless, from whom much has been taken. If they feel useless and a burden to others, help them to remember that they can still pray and still uphold the hands of those who promote Thy Cause upon earth. Bless all who are seeking to learn and live Thy holy precepts, and lead us in the way everlasting. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Moving Into the Millennium

This article is fourth in a series on the Millennium

Who of Us Can Say This?

IN our most holy and precious faith, we find great joy and happiness. Trusting in God, we do not live in fear. We are enlivened by unquenchable confidence in a glorious future. Even though we must live in this old regime, we are citizens of the world to come.

"We believe of a surety and are expecting soon—even in our lifetime—the fulfillment of the promise: 'The upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it' (Prov. 2:21). This anticipation is transforming our whole outlook and changing our sense of values. We are learning to weigh all things in the scale of long-range—even eternal—values.

"In view of this expectation and hope, our personality is also changing. By drinking of the water of life we are able to continually renew our inner being. Every day we are putting off more of our old nature and putting on a new character that is like that of Christ, that is fresh and beautiful in God's sight.

"Someday soon we will exchange an uncertain future of sickness and old age for the rejuvenating work of making this earth over into a paradise. Soon we shall feel the thrill of immortal life invigorating our whole body with eternal youth. Soon the wrinkles of age will fade away.

"'Behold, I make all things new.' "

*All things are onward moving! Let the blessed time begin!
The old is swiftly passing, and the new is coming in!
Bells of prophecy are ringing, time is sweeping fast along,
Like an army that is speeding to the measure of a song.*

*Darksome theories soon will vanish, they're unfit to build upon;
Glorious light will soon be shining, for God's truth is marching on.
Solid landmarks of the old age soon will fade and flee away,
As God's all-compelling forces usher in eternal day.*

*O my brother, why such faltering, and my sister, why so mute?
Greet the early morning sunshine! Bring forth now the golden fruit.
Let no one delay or slacken; on the footpath keep your pace!
With all speed keep moving onward—you can win this heavenly race.*

*Waken with the larks of morning! Spring up with the rising sun!
Waiting not for heat of noonday, nor a-halting when begun.
Things are moving, oh, so quickly; let the blessed time begin;
All the old is swiftly passing, and the new is coming in!*

*Oh, the Word of God is spreading, blazoned at the King's command!
It will spread in all its glory, speeding on through every land.
Man's rule ever downward tending, it shall swiftly pass away,
But so soon in glorious sunlight we shall see a better Day.*

*Oh, all things are onward moving! Let earth's Jubilee begin!
See! the old is swiftly passing, and the New is coming in!
It is coming! Oh, 'tis coming, as my raptured eyes behold!
Soon will burst the glorious Dawning ushering in the age of gold!*

The Metropolis: Jerusalem

THE Bible even tells us where the headquarters of the new government will be located: "He will choose Jerusalem again" (Zech. 2:12).

Jerusalem is a city with a long and impressive history. Let us examine its place in the Biblical record to get an insight into its importance. In the hearts of God's people, Jerusalem was a city of special regard and honor. Even when the people departed from God, they still retained a feeling of reverence for their city. Its continued popularity suggests that they believed it had a future.

And indeed it has! For it shall be "the city of the great King."

A certain rabbi says of Jerusalem:

"Our founder Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac on that very mount Moriah. David captured the city and made it the capital of his kingdom. Solomon built the first temple there on this very spot. After the exile the second temple was built there. Ever since the city was destroyed in A. D. 70, we have prayed that God's presence would return to the city.

"The state of Israel was declared in 1948, on half the city then. In 1967 our people recaptured it and they tore down the wall that separated the old and new. I have been to Jerusalem several times. You just don't like to leave it. It's the Holy Land and Jerusalem, the Holy City. Jerusalem means 'city of peace.' When Messiah comes, a blessed state will follow and Jerusalem will be a city forever."

The Bible tells much about Jerusalem. Here are a few points it mentions:

God Himself chose Jerusalem (Deut. 12:5; I Kings 11:13). His "name" was there (II Chron. 6:6). All the people gathered there (Deut. 12:14:24), and their annual festivals were held there (Acts 20:16). They brought their offerings there (Deut. 12:13-14). They paid their vows there (Deut. 12:26). They sounded their trumpets there (II Chron. 29:28). They played their harps and sang praises and bowed their heads and worshiped there (II Chron. 29:28). They heard the word of the Lord there (Neh. 8:8; Matt. 26:55).

Those who felt a dedication to God did not forget Jerusalem (Ps. 137:6). They talked about it; glorious things were spoken of it (Ps. 87:2-3). They prayed for it (Ps. 122:6); they loved it (Ps. 137:6); they rejoiced over it with great joy (II Chron. 20:27-28). On one occasion they shouted so loud that the joy of Jerusalem was

heard far away (Neh. 12:43; see also II Chron. 30:26).

We Gentiles of the twentieth century are strangers to such feelings and experiences. But God will again choose Jerusalem. It will not be forever trodden down by heathen who know not God, or by Jewish nationals who do not recognize God. "The Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again" (Zech. 2:12). "In that day," the Prophet says also, "Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem" (Zech. 12:6).

Both Isaiah and Micah picture Jerusalem as the capital city of the New World. "And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Mic. 4:2; see also Isaiah 2:3).

The prophet Joel also speaks of Jerusalem as the Capital: "So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more" (Joel 3:17).

Isaiah pictures Jerusalem restored as a tabernacle that will never be taken down. "Not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken" (33:20).

The Psalmist described Jerusalem as "the city of our God," and "the mountain of his holiness," the "joy of the whole earth." "Great is the Lord," he wrote, "and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great king" (Ps. 48:1-2).

Even Jesus mentioned it in His First Sermon: "Swear not . . . by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King" (Matt. 5:34-35).

More on the "Great Multitude"

SOME have wondered if there will be room on this earth for the great number of people God has promised to bless. How large will the populace of the Kingdom be?

The Bible describes it in several ways:

Genesis 13:16: "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered."

Genesis 15:5: "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be."

Genesis 22:17: "... *I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore.*"

Jeremiah 33:22: "*As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me.*"

Hosea 1:10: "*Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered.*"

Revelation 7:9: "*After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number. . . .*"

If we were to take literally all these expressions about the stars, the dust, and the sand on the seashore, that future population would be infinite, without limit, endless.

But these expressions can be understood in a figurative sense. In *Crudens Concordance* is this thought: "The number of the stars was looked upon as infinite. When the Scripture would express a very extraordinary increase and multiplication, it uses the symbol of the stars of heaven or of the sand of the sea."

There are a few texts in the Bible which show that these expressions are used in a symbolic sense.

In Deuteronomy 1:10, we find concerning the number of the Israelites as they were in the plains of Moab: "The Lord your God hath multiplied you, and behold ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude." If they were actually like the stars of heaven for number, they would never have had room in that small country!

Also written of the children of Israel in the plains of Moab are these words: "Thy fathers went down into Egypt with three score and ten persons; and now the Lord thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude" (Deut. 10:22). This is also a figurative expression. The author meant that there was a very great increase, not that the Israelites were literally as many as the stars.

In fact, we are told just how many there were at this time: "These were the number of the children of Israel, six hundred thousand and a thousand seven hundred and thirty" (Num. 26:51). Here is the number revealed. They were said to be as the stars of heaven and as the sand of the sea, yet there were only some six hundred thousand of them. They were counted. It was an extraordinary increase.

The children of Israel and of Judah at the time of Solomon's kingdom were said to be for multitude as the sand by the sea (I Kings 4:20), yet

they were only a small part of the population of the world. The Assyrian, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian and Roman Empires were all greater in their day. The expression "as the sand which is by the sea" is figurative.

In I Kings 4:29, we read that "God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore." Other translations read that God gave Solomon "great powers of mind" or "intellectual capacity." No doubt God wanted it known that the number of the populace of the Kingdom would be a very large number, a very extraordinary increase. *We* do not know the number, but God knows it. Some translations of Revelation 7:9 replace "no man could number" with "impossible to count," or "too many to count."

How gracious is the Lord to bestow His eternal blessings on such an exceeding great host of worthy earthborns! ●●

If Christ Should Come

If He returned to earth today
And came to visit you,
Would you receive Him eagerly
With welcome warm and true,
Happy to have Him see your house
All swept and garnished bright,
A blest abode of rest and peace,
With holy love alight?

Or would the glory of that hour
Be dimmed for you alway,
And would His coming unannounced
O'erwhelm you with dismay?
Would you be grieved to have Him find
Your dwelling unprepared,
With much neglected, much amiss—
Your sins and failures bared?

And do you even now desire
A few more days or years
To set your home in order ere
Your Saviour Christ appears?
Then read the promise sure He left,
And heed this warning stern:
"Be ready," "I will come again"
Bespeak His swift return.

—Selected.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

IN Revelation 19 is recorded a breathless foreglimpse of one of the greatest events ever to take place on planet Earth. It is the union of Christ and His faithful Bride, the one-hundred-forty-four thousand who are "called, and chosen, and faithful."

These are John's notes on what he saw:

"After these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven"—who were the "people in heaven" that John heard? Who could they be but angels!

"I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments. . . ." Imagine hearing a host of angels shouting "Alleluia unto the Lord our God"! They are exultant in His triumph over evil: "For he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever" (a symbol of eternal death, destruction from which there will be no reviving).

Then "the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia" (19:4). "God that sat on the throne" is Christ, Emmanuel, "God with us" (Matt. 1:23), the new and glorious King. After the saluting "*Amen, Alleluia,*" comes the pronouncement of the King Himself: "And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great."

Then John heard even more: "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Whose voice did John hear? Again it is the voice of the angels, sounding as "the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings." And what are they singing? These angels are singing the praises of the victorious Bride; they are gathered to celebrate their supreme accomplishment, to give the newly crowned immortals the honors of the high courts of heaven. Hear them as they sing: "Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the mar-

riage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." It is the greatest wedding in the history of the Earth.

Then follows the ceremony: "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (19:8). That righteousness which each of these super-accomplishers worked so diligently to attain is now granted them as an eternal garment; never again will they be tempted by evil. It is the reward for right living—"fine linen clean and white," linen which can never be soiled.

John does not tell much about the ceremony, he only says that the angel told him to write this down. "And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." We can imagine that John was so engrossed in the magnificent drama he was watching that his pen was easily laid aside. How could anyone not know that all who were partaking of this glorious marriage feast were blessed! But the angel was thinking of others—even us!—and he told John specifically: "Write." Then the angel did more: he gave to John's words the final seal of surety: "These are the true sayings of God."

The angel had said so much that John could comprehend no more; he was overwhelmed with the glory he had seen. It was enough. He fell at the feet of the angel to express the awe and reverence he felt. But the angel stayed this act of worship. "See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God" (v. 10). Can we imagine how John felt as this great angel from heaven said in effect, "Don't worship me, John; you are one with me. Both of us are members of God's family; let us worship God together." Did John ever feel lonely on Patmos? Patmos was no more a prison; it was the portal of heavenly inspiration!

And the end was not yet. Vision proceeded upon vision, as John saw heaven open to reveal more indescribable wonders—the triumphant ride of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the binding of Satan, the destruction of all forces of evil, the glorifying of an innumerable company of mortal populace, the descent of the glorious New Jerusalem, and the vision of the earth made new, the finished product. What a preview! ●●

PRE- POST- and

AMONG religious people today are three principle views of the Millennium:

PREMILLENNIALISTS hold that Christ will return before the Millennium

POSTMILLENNIALISTS hold that Christ will return after the Millennium.

AMILLENNIALISTS hold that there will be no Millennium, in the general sense of the word.

AMILLENNIALISM

These terms suggest only general classifications; within each group are wide variations. Someone has estimated that there are at least a hundred different premillennial views.

PREMILLENNIALISM

is the view of the last things which holds that the second coming of Christ will be followed by a thousand years of peace and righteousness, after which the eternal order will begin. They believe that during the Millennium Christ in person will reign as king on earth.

The Pre-Mils (short form for Premillennialists) deny all possibility that the world is growing better as the Millennium approaches. They believe world conditions are worsening and will continue to until the time of the end. In the meantime, they believe it is the function of the true Church to prepare people for membership in the new Kingdom to be revealed.

The Pre-Mils find ample evidence in Scripture and in the contemporary world to convince them that the coming of Christ is imminent. It may occur today, or tomorrow; it certainly will occur very soon.

We are Premillennialists. We believe the Bible teaches that Christ will return, and with the saints whom He will select at Judgment, those who are among the overcomers, He will rule during the thousand years on earth (see Rev. 5:9-10; 3:21; II Cor. 5:10).

POSTMILLENNIALISM

is the view that the Kingdom of God has already begun and is now being extended. Eventually the whole world will be Christianized. After a long period, Christ will return.

The Millennium which the Post-Mils (short for Postmillennialists) look forward to is a golden age of spiritual prosperity during this present dispensation which will be brought about by forces now active in the world. This dispensation is a period of gradual advancement. Christ will return finally to a fully converted world.

The views of Augustine, Calvin, Luther, Melancthon, the Church of England and the Augsburg Confession are largely Post-millennial.

The Postmillennialists give what they consider "evidence" that the world is growing better, to support their position. They observe the following:

Looking back over two thousand years, we can see marvelous progress; the world at large enjoys far better living conditions than they did then.

Slavery and polygamy have practically disappeared in most countries.

The status of women and children has been improved.

Social and economic conditions are better.

A great revolution has occurred in transportation, communication, home furnishings, etc. Much more wealth is being consecrated to religious groups.

More Bibles are sold and circulated than ever before.

The Christian (?) message is being broadcast worldwide via radio and television.

The number of seminaries, Bible colleges, institutes supported by churches, are growing.

The Postmillennialists believe this age will blend into the Millennium so slowly and imperceptibly that no change is recognizable at the time. "The kingdom of heaven," they quote, "cometh not with observation" (Luke 17:20).

What about the binding of Satan, sin and all sinners? This is a long, slow process, they say; no time can be set as to how much longer it will take.

We will discuss objections to this belief later; but let us say now that there is much Scripture which militates against it. One cannot possibly believe the Bible and say that the world will enter a perfect Millennial state without the help of outside forces.

AMILLENNIALISM

is the view that the Millennium is an indefinitely long period of time, perhaps even longer than one thousand years. "We figure a thousand is a symbolic number," they say. "In the Bible, ten stands for round totals. The cube with all sides equal symbolizes perfection. One thousand is the cube of ten, a figurative expression indicating a long time."

The prefix "a" means "without." "A" plus "millennium" means literally "no millennium." Amillennialists deny that there will be any reign of Christ with the saints for a thousand years.

A-Mils (short for Amillennialists) believe the Scriptures do not promise the conversion of the world in this age, or any future age.

They think that the term "thousand" is figurative, that it might apply to the whole or part of the Christian era from the time of Christ to the pres-

ent. It is that period during which "the departed saints reign with Christ," say some of them. "The regenerated soul leaves the body and goes to live and reign with Christ. It is a present reality." Then when Christ comes, there will be one general resurrection and judgment, followed by the eternal order of things.

Other A-Mils believe Christ is coming to take the saints away forever, that they will never live and reign on the earth.

Needless to say, the Amillennialists have trouble with many passages of Scripture which talk directly about the reign of Christ and His saints on earth, and the conditions that will be common then.

Amillennialism is not taught in the Bible; the Bible is *not* Amillennial.

Premillennialism vs. Scripture

The Premillennialists find ample proof for their position in the Bible. Christ is coming "with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him; behold, his reward is with him and his work before him"—not behind Him, as the Post-Mils would have us believe (Isa. 40:10).

Jesus in parable compared Himself to the nobleman who goes into a "far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return" (Luke 19:10). The comparison would be incorrect, if Christ came back to a kingdom already set up and an earth already in a perfect state.

Another passage from Jesus strongly supports the Pre-Mil position. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). This tells us two things: that Christ is coming, and that when He comes the whole of mankind will not be ready and anxious to meet Him.

Jesus' words in His post-ascension message reveal the same truth: that Christ will return to an unconverted world. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, . . . and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him" (Rev. 1:7). Also His words to His disciples: "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. . . . Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; . . . even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:26-30).

Postmillennialism vs. Scripture

The texts which apply to the Millennial reign of Christ the Postmillennialists expect to see fulfilled before Christ returns. They cite Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-5, and comment: "We are taught that the Church is to be prominent like a house on the top of a mountain, and that its guidance will be sought willingly in all phases of hu-

man life. The statement that all people will flow unto it must mean that people all over the world are Christianized. Nations will no longer spend their energies and substance in destructive wars. To sit every man under his own vine and fig tree is a symbol of contented peaceful homelife."

But, we ask, are men going to learn this on their own? What nation today is laying aside its armaments and pursuing only peaceful life?

Later in Isaiah 2 is a passage which speaks of the land being full of idols which the people cast to the "moles and bats" when the Lord arises "to shake terribly the earth" (Isa. 2:8, 20-21). This does not sound as though they give up their evil practices of their own volition.

The Post-Mils also cite Isaiah 11:1-10 as evidence for their position: "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: ... with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: ... the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb; and ... they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

It is beyond us to imagine how such a state could be brought about without divine intervention. How much nearer is the world today to being "full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" than it was three thousand years ago? Where is such justice or peace or righteousness as the Prophet describes? And how can "he," who is to be of the "stem of Jesse," judge and reprove with righteousness and equity except He first come and dwell among men?

Isaiah 2:4 describes a time when men shall "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks." If all nations are to do this, when will the trend begin? Have they not been doing the reverse for all of recorded history? What will cause the change? What will compel men to learn war no more? They were fighting thousands of years ago, and they are still fighting today. The 1976 appropriation for defense in our country was more than \$90,000,000,000.

No, the Postmillennialists do not have Scripture to support their position. The Bible teaches plainly that nothing less than the judgments of God will compel men to obedience. And even then, many will stubbornly refuse and will have to die in disobedience (see Isa. 26: 9-10; Zech. 13:8-9; Mal. 3: 1-3; 4:1-2). God is not going to wait endlessly, while men blunder in sin and ignorance; He is going to ACT! ●●

The King

*With all the clash of battle
Which round the earth doth ring,
'Tis strange we hear so little
Of bringing back the King!*

*Though once on earth rejected,
He will to earth return;
To right all wrong with justice,
For this our spirits yearn.*

*The whole creation groaneth!
O Lord, Thy comfort bring!
Cast out the prince of this world,
And give us back The King!*

*Give peace unto Jerusalem!
On Zion set up Thy Throne!
Give joy unto Thy people
And bid them cease to roam.*

*Oh, hear the prayer of David,
The Son of Jesse, Lord!
And give the King Thy judgments,
According to Thy Word.*

*His judgments shall be righteous;
Then will the people find
A just and perfect Ruler
For earth and all mankind.*

*He shall descend like showers,
With blessings in their train;
And righteousness shall flourish
Throughout His vast domain.*

*For He shall have dominion
On earth from sea to sea;
And every king and people
To Him shall bend the knee!*

*His name shall stand forever!
And all the world shall see
God's great and matchless glory!
Amen! So let it be!*

Selected.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Resurrection and Judgment

THE Bible has been called a Book of Hope, and indeed it is, offering hope in a seemingly hopeless world. It describes a "fabulous future" that whosoever will may qualify for, an endless existence in the Kingdom of God for those who will fear God and work righteousness.

Before this Kingdom can become a reality, God's well-laid plan must be fulfilled in proper sequence. In this series of lessons, we have studied the sequence of events in this plan and have found the following to be true:

Before Christ will come His herald, Elijah the prophet.

Before the Judgment there must be the resurrection of the covenant-makers, the "dead in Christ."

Before the new King ascends the throne must come the conquering of the nations.

Before there can be "one nation" worldwide, all existing nations must submit to the new King.

Before righteousness can fill the land, all evil must be wiped out and earth's inhabitants re-educated.

Before the earth can be filled with the perfect glory of the Lord, there must be a final resurrection and judgment at the end of the Millennium and a final destruction of all sin and evil.

In this lesson we will complete this series of studies as we survey what the Bible tells us about the re-educating of the nations, and the second resurrection and judgment which will take place at the end of the Millennium.

The thought of judgment is awesome, for it means the disclosing of men's inward motives. But there is one consoling fact: The judgment which all servants of God must face will be God's judgment, and God is always just and righteous.

Righteousness is a theme which begins at Genesis and continues throughout the Scriptures. Wherever judgment is mentioned, righteousness or justice is invariably coupled with it. God will "judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness" (Ps. 9:

8). He will "judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

We need never fear having to suffer unjustly at the hand of God, for "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne; mercy and truth shall go before thy face" (Ps. 89:14).

Today justice sometimes seems "afar off." Judges can be bribed; criminals can be set free on mere technicalities of the law; an innocent man may be convicted of a crime he did not commit; and juries may be swayed by sympathy. But there will be none of this at God's bar of judgment. His record will be so complete that no human opinion will have to be consulted; and there will be no mistake in the verdict rendered.

After the great Battle of Armageddon, the survivors will extol the Great Judge, as the Revelator saw them singing "the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: ... for thy judgments are made manifest" (Rev. 15:3-4).

III. AFTER THE JUDGMENT

D. Educating the Nations

Education is the strong support of our modern culture and the source of many a blessing to all of us. Better health, better means of transportation, better nutrition, better living conditions have all become possible because of better education. But education has failed to bring about the "fabulous future" some have envisioned. In the realms of science and technology, men have come a long way; but failing to educate in morals as well as in mind has led to a moral decline that threatens the basic structure of our society. The present system is not the ultimate in education.

After the Battle of Armageddon, a vast educational program will be inaugurated. Those who survive the battle will have consented to submit to the new King. But before they can serve Him, they

will have to learn His ways. However, this educational program will be different from those of the present age. No longer will God's Word be misinterpreted and scorned. No longer will classroom prayer be protested or forbidden. Discipline, morality and respect will be the core of the process; God will not have a morally delinquent race to inhabit His kingdom.

1. The students. The one third who survive Armageddon (Zech. 13:8) will form the first "class" to be educated. One third of earth's inhabitants (according to today's population figures) would number more than one billion—a gargantuan class to educate. But they will have to learn, for they will be the parents of the new generation that will multiply and fill the earth. All these people will be mortal, hence will have to learn by methods probably comparable to those used in schools today. Schools there will be, and teachers and texts.

One characteristic will distinguish these students from those of today: All will **want** to learn. No longer will it be necessary to beg someone to read the Word of God and learn of His plan; all will be seeking the knowledge that will give life. We read: "The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: . . . yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 8:21-22). Realizing that they have in time past followed blind leaders, they will come "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).

2. The teachers. Christ and the 144,000 will be in charge of the educational process, but to reach students in all parts of the world will require a great many teachers. We learn from the prophet Isaiah that missionaries [or teachers] will be chosen from among the survivors of the nations: "I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Put, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory and they shall declare my glory among the nations" (Isa. 66:18-19, RSV).

The names of "Tarshish, Put, and Lud, . . . Tubal and Javan" have been the subject of much speculation concerning their location. It seems likely that the names are not actual but symbolic, representing all nations of the earth. There is no need for speculation when we accept them as symbolic.

Teaching will be rewarding during the Millen-

nium. Today's teachers are often faced with students who have no desire to learn, who are unruly, sometimes hostile, sometimes violent. God's Word, now forbidden in many schools, will be taught openly. The words of the prophet will be fulfilled: "He who teaches you shall no longer be hidden out of sight, but with your own eyes you shall see him always" (Isa. 30:20). Help for the teachers will be available at all times, for "if you stray from the road to the right or left you shall hear with your own ears a voice behind you saying, This is the way; follow it" (Isa. 30:21, NEB).

3. The center of knowledge. The prophets long ago saw in vision the time when Jerusalem would be the religious capital of the world, the center for the dispensing of knowledge: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2:2-4).

Knowledge will be dispensed from the Jerusalem headquarters. Men will learn to live in peace and harmony; war will be outlawed. The turning of implements of war to implements of agriculture foreshadows the time when "He [God] maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 46:9). Parents will learn to rear their children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord." They cannot be expected to teach their children until they are first taught themselves.

The thousand-year rule of Christ over the nations of earth will be one steadily onward progression that nothing can hinder. The overcomers, the 144,000 who rule with Him, will be given "power over the nations: . . . and . . . shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. 2:26-27). Ruling with a "rod of iron" suggests an unbreakable rule, but never cruel or inhuman. However, no wrongdoing will be tolerated. All will have to learn and obey God's law.

4. Education completed. Long before the thousand-year period is ended, education will have progressed to the point that peace and tranquility will fill the land. It will be the Millennium, that long-looked-for Utopia. [This subject is being

thoroughly covered in a series of articles in the **Megiddo Message**, beginning with the April issue.] Old things will have passed away; all things will have become new.

When the educational process is complete, the one third will have been refined as silver and tried as gold; then "they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zech. 14:9). Then it will be that "they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:34).

All will know the Lord; all will be under covenant to serve Him. The situation compared to that of today will be a near paradise—but even then it will not be the finished product. The education of the people, the elimination of the dens of iniquity, and the subjugation of sinners will produce a heavenly state; but before that state can be permanent, one more earth-shaking event will take place.

E. The Second Resurrection and Judgment

During the Millennium, people will enjoy a longer life span, but being still mortal, they will be subject to death. "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed" (Isa. 65:20). Because "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick" (Isa. 33:24), there will be no untimely deaths; people will simply fall asleep when their time is fulfilled.

Because all have been taught in the ways of the Lord during the Millennium, all will be under covenant and amenable to judgment. To bring all of these together for judgment at the end of the Millennium will require a second resurrection.

1. The Second Resurrection. Revelation 20:5 tells us of this resurrection: "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." The "rest of the dead" can be none other than those who have died since the "first" or "primary" resurrection at Christ's coming.

The placement of this verse may prove confusing. However, we must remember that all Scripture is not in chronological order. The statement concerning the "rest of the dead" is set off by parentheses in some translations, showing that it is out of position. Reading verses 4-6 and omitting the first sentence of verse 5, we find the whole passage referring to the first resurrection and judgment and the thousand-year reign of Christ and

the saints. Reading verse 5 after verse 6 places the events in their proper order with the second resurrection and the rebellion following the Millennium.

2. The rebellion. It may be difficult for us to imagine a rebellion against Christ and His righteous rule after a thousand years of peaceful, quiet living, but such a rebellion is forecast by the Revelator.

During the Millennium, the devil (sin and all sinners) has been bound, but men being mortal and still possessing their human natures, have been allowed to harbor evil desires in their hearts. Many, especially during the early years of the Millennium, died with this evil still in their heart. Restored to life in the resurrection at the end of the Millennium, they will be as they died. It would seem reasonable to believe that the rebellion will be generated by this group rather than those who have lived later in the period.

We read in Revelation 20:7-9: "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan [representing evil and evil workers] shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, . . . to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them."

Given an opportunity, men are quick to return to their old ways. The voice that said, "this is the way, walk ye in it," is silent. Like the children of Israel of old who soon forgot the miracles that saved them from the Egyptians, so men forget the manifold blessings of the new heavens and earth and attempt to overthrow the rule of Christ and the saints. The words "as the sand of the sea" would indicate a great multitude of rebels, an unrevealed number.

3. The judgment. This same chapter in Revelation also pictures the last judgment, the judgment that marks the final separation of the righteous and the wicked. All living and all resurrected ones at this time must stand in this judgment because all have come under covenant.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. 20:12). The books are symbolic; records kept by angels possessing the power of God need not be written in books. The use of the books points to the fact that the deeds of men are recorded and

by that record they will stand or fall.

The decision of the Judge is final; the righteous receive the crown of immortality and become the glorified populace of the Kingdom of God. The wicked are destroyed at a stroke of the hand of God: "Fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them" (Rev. 20:9). "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10).

The "lake of fire and brimstone" represents complete destruction (II Thess. 1:9), not literal hell-fire. A burning hell is a product of men's minds, not a teaching of Scripture. Neither can we accept the torment literally. It would not be possible to torment anyone "day and night for ever and ever" for we are told by the Revelator that there shall be no night in the Kingdom (Rev. 21:25): "...and there shall be no night there."

"And death and hell [the grave] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (Rev. 20:14). Death, the last enemy (I Cor. 15:26), is destroyed. Never again will there be death on the earth; there will be no need for graves. The Kingdom is come!

F. Other Judgment Theories

Theories concerning the resurrection and judgment are many and varied. We will briefly discuss a few of these beliefs.

1. No death; no resurrection. To the best of our knowledge only the Christian Science church holds to this position. To hold to such a doctrine in the face of death on every side borders on the ridiculous. To say that one who has died is not dead is equally ludicrous. Such a belief requires a disavowal of the resurrection of Jesus and is comparable to denying the Scriptures. Jesus died, was raised from the dead, and ascended to the Father where He was judged and rewarded. Likewise, all hope of future life for those who die before the return of Christ lies in a resurrection and judgment.

2. Must all die physical death to qualify for eternal life? Some religious groups take the position that all who come to judgment must first have died physically. Hebrews 9:27 is the verse they use to support this claim: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. . . ." To apply these words to physical death, however, would be to contradict the words of Jesus spoken to Martha at the time of the raising of Lazarus, that "whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). Also Paul wrote in I Corinthians 15, "We shall not all sleep."

There would be some who would never die, some who would be "alive" when Christ should come (I Thess. 4:17). To what "death" did the writer of Hebrews refer? There can be only one answer: death "unto sin." As we read, "For in that he [Christ] died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God" (Rom. 6:10-11).

All who come to Judgment will **not** have first passed through physical death. Christ is to "judge the living and the dead" at His appearing (II Tim. 4:1, RSV), hence men come to Judgment from among the living as well as from among the dead.

3. All to be raised; all to be judged. Probably the most widely held belief concerning the resurrection and judgment is that all who have ever lived on the earth will one day be resurrected and judged.

While such a doctrine may be widely held, it is not Scriptural. The Bible plainly tells of a class that have their reward in this life with no hope of a future life. Such will have neither resurrection nor judgment. They "shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts" (Jer. 51:57).

All now sleeping in the grave will not stand in the judgment. Those who never came under covenant to the Almighty have nothing to answer for, hence will sleep perpetually.

4. An investigative judgment. The Adventists hold to a doctrine peculiar to themselves alone concerning the resurrection and judgment. Briefly stated, it is this: An "investigative judgment" began in 1844 of all those who "professed to serve Christ and is to continue until the Second Advent" (E. G. White, *The Triumph of God's Love*, p. 284).

Because of the complexity of this doctrine, much of it has been here omitted, but it is a doctrine entirely foreign to the Scriptures. Nowhere in the Bible do we find any indication of a judgment that is to take place before the Second Advent. Lives cannot be evaluated nor works judged while the individual sleeps in death.

The Millennial reign of Christ and the saints is plainly stated to be on the earth, not in heaven: The redeemed "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" are "made . . . kings and priests" and "shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10). One who is thus judged will not have to stand at the judgment a second time to have his life reviewed; such a procedure is unthinkable.

*Reprints of these studies available,
10 cents per copy*

Did Any New Testament Authors

Know Jesus?

A LONG-TIME reader of the *Message* has asked us to comment on an article written by a noted columnist, Sidney Harris. In the article, Mr. Harris chides "Christians" for their ignorance in believing that the gospels were written by men who had known Jesus personally. He says in part:

"Incredible the number of letters I have received from all parts of the country questioning my statement in a recent column that the evangelists—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—never met Jesus in the flesh.

"Every Biblical scholar of note, whether believer or unbeliever, knows this to be historically true, as much as we can know anything of those times. Nobody who wrote the New Testament had come into actual contact with Jesus."

Permit me to comment immediately on Mr. Harris's last statement, that "nobody who wrote the New Testament had come into personal contact with Jesus." This statement is definitely false, as at least three of Jesus' own apostles were among the New Testament authors, and one requirement of apostleship was that a man have seen the risen Lord.

Note the testimony of John: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" (I John 1:1-3). Who could possibly be "the life" that was "manifested," the "Word of life" made visible, if not Jesus Christ Himself?

Note the testimony of Peter, recorded in his second epistle: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (II Peter 1:16). Again the words of Peter are recorded by Luke in the book of Acts. Peter is speaking: "And we are witnesses of all things which he [Jesus] did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem;

whom they slew and hanged on a tree: him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10:39-41). Can we read these words and think for a moment that Peter did not actually *see* Christ personally? Read the accounts in the Gospels, of Jesus calling Peter, talking with him, reproving him, encouraging him, as well as the instances recorded where all the apostles saw Jesus personally and were in contact with Him, as we read in Acts 1, of "the apostles . . . to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days" (vs. 2-3). Peter was one of the apostles, and the Epistle of Peter opens with these words: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to . . ." etc. And the Second Epistle also: "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ . . ." etc. There were only twelve apostles of Christ (Matt. 10:1-2; I Cor. 15:5-6, 8), and only one of them was called "Simon Peter."

One other apostle stands among the New Testament authors, and his name is Paul. Did he see Christ personally? Here are his own words: "And he [Jesus] was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; . . . after that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (I Cor. 15:5-8).

We certainly cannot agree with Mr. Harris' statement that "Nobody who wrote the New Testament had come into actual contact with Jesus." To accept such a statement would be to make void the entire New Testament authority.

As far as Mr. Harris' other statements are concerned, he may have some reason for stating that Matthew, Mark, and Luke never met Jesus in the flesh, although there is no conclusive evidence to prove that they did not; and there *is* evidence to indicate that they may have.

The authorship of the Gospels has been the subject of debate among Biblical scholars for hundreds of years. The King James translation simply

states: "The Gospel According To," and then names Matthew, Mark, Luke. No attempt is made within the books to identify the author positively.

No one living today or during the last 1800 years has any personal knowledge of the apostles' times. Just what happened in the years following the death of the apostles is not known. It was a turbulent period both religiously and politically. The Bible tells us nothing and secular history is at best sketchy.

And apparently there was little of Jesus' life and sayings committed to writing during Jesus' life on earth. Most of the record in the New Testament was written from oral information preserved either by memory, by word-of-mouth, or revealed by the Holy Spirit which Jesus promised should "bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

The consensus of opinion among scholars might be summarized as follows:

Mark's Gospel was written first, mainly from information supplied by the apostle Peter. Mark the writer is thought to be the John Mark who accompanied Paul and Barnabas on one of their missionary trips. There is no definite evidence that he ever met Jesus—or, for that matter, that he did not; but Peter, as we have seen, was definitely in contact with Him; hence, Peter having been Mark's source of information, Mark's writings should be the equivalent of an eyewitness account.

Matthew, the Gospel writer, is thought to be Matthew the tax collector (Matt. 9:9), called Levi in Luke 5:27, and one of the Twelve apostles. If this assumption is correct, he certainly had contact with Jesus and was an eyewitness to the life of Christ. Some scholars contend that the writer Matthew was not the apostle Matthew, but again, this cannot be definitely proven or disproven; we are not told. But it seems likely that Matthew the gospel writer was Matthew the apostle. In any case, he seems to have used major portions of Mark's writings in his gospel.

Luke the physician was a Greek, and a very warm friend of the apostle Paul. We have no record that he was intimately acquainted with Christ, or that he was not. Like Matthew, however, he copied the gospel of Mark in many passages.

When it comes to the Gospel of John, there is strong evidence that it was written by the beloved apostle, although some think that it could have been written by a John identified only as "the Elder."

However, one outstanding authority, F. F. Bruce (Rylands professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis in the University of Manchester), believes that John the apostle wrote the Gospel bearing his

name. He lists a number of facts bearing on the Gospel writer's identity which appear in the Gospel, one being the Gospel's own claim that it was written by an eyewitness: "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true" (John 21:24). Other church writers of the first and second centuries also credit the gospel without question to John.

Whatever the facts about the authorship of the Gospels, their authenticity and reliability remain the same. They were written by "holy men of God" who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit," whatever the name they bore among men. They wrote for God, and they wrote what God wanted us to know. Had it been important for us to know more about their identity as men, we would have been told. What God wants us to know is that their writings are part of His Word for us, a Word to be believed and obeyed.

The most unfortunate part of critical statements such as the above by Mr. Harris is the negative approach. Such declarations tend to raise questions which are not countered—as they could easily be—by positive statements of faith, fact and conviction. And those who do not investigate further find their faith in God and His Word growing weaker and weaker from such subtle underminings. If as much effort were given to *proving the divine authority behind the Gospels* as has been given to disprove their authorship and dates, etc., etc., the young generation today might read the Bible with far greater confidence than they can now read it.

Especially is Mr. Harris' statement detrimental when his negative approach is associated with the conviction of "every Biblical scholar of note, whether believer or unbeliever."

We do much better to concern ourselves with *what* the writers of the Bible had to say, as their words can influence our lives, than to contest who wrote what portion. But herein lies much of the motive for criticism through the years: The moral standards of Jesus and the writers of the New Testament required such a high order of conduct that it has ever made their writings the subject of criticism; if a possible discrepancy could be found in the genuineness of the authorship, date or content of a writing, then that document might be considered fraudulent and lacking in divine authority for us.

But the very fact that the Bible has withstood centuries of the most vituperative attacks and still speaks the unassailable truth proves its superior origin. It is the book God intended for our instruction. ●●

Kathy
Kandor's
Korner

Strictly Honest?

WHY, oh, why did I do it? How could I? *Why?*" Janet questioned herself for the umpteenth time. Her armload of books seemed unusually heavy as she finally neared the entrance of the lane that led up to the Kandor home. The sun was bright and the air warm and balmy, but there was no sunshine in Janet's heart.

Slipping through the front door as quietly as possible, she stole quickly up the stairs. Perhaps Mother would not hear her. Flinging herself upon her bed, she broke into a sob.

Soon a cool hand caressed her hot forehead. It was her mother. How did Mother always know when she was needed most?

"What is it, dear?" Kathy asked tenderly.

Janet made no reply; but mothers know how to wait, and gradually Janet's sobs subsided.

"O Mother, I didn't mean to do it, really I didn't!" Janet tried hard to stop the tears.

"Do what, Janet?"

"Our math class is so crowded, our desks are almost side by side." Janet sat up on the edge of the bed to tell her story. "It was that geometry exam I studied so hard for, and I just couldn't think of the right construction. I was stuck on the first problem. My mind just went blank." Her voice trembled; it was hard for her to go on.

"Then, somehow, I just glanced in Gail's direction, and my eye caught what she had drawn and I *knew* it was right." Janet paused again.

"Yes," Kathy encouraged.

"I know it was wrong to copy, but it happened so easily, almost like an accident. Then I handed my paper in, as though it were all my work—when really, it wasn't."

There was a moment of silence, until Mother spoke. "Did you think of that verse, 'He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house, he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight'?"

Janet nodded as she studied her hands.

"Are you truly sorry you saw Gail's answer and copied it?"

Janet nodded again.

"Did you ask God to forgive you?"

"I did, and I'll never let it happen again—never!"

Janet responded emphatically.

Kathy hesitated, realizing how difficult the next question would be for Janet to answer.

"Are you willing to go to your teacher and tell him about this?"

"Tell Mr. Anderson?" Janet gasped. "Why, Mother, you don't know what he's like! He's dreadfully unpredictable. He might just decide to fail me for cheating! And really, I didn't do anything *that* bad!" Janet broke into a new sob and flung herself down on the bed once again. "I've worked so hard for a good grade all year. And I would never *repeat* the course!"

After a long silence, Janet sat up again and spoke. "Mother, isn't it enough if I confess to God and to you?"

"Janet dear, cheating is so prevalent in the schools today, but we have a higher standard to uphold. Before God we must be *strictly honest*. How could you enjoy being in the top bracket of your class if you cheated to get there? You'd be carrying a mark you didn't earn. It would be like carrying around stolen money. You would be acting and living a lie."

"But what if Mr. Anderson should tell the class I cheated?"

Kathy looked earnestly at Janet as she spoke. "Would that be any worse than his telling the class you got the top mark—if it wasn't really your own credit? Think how God looks at it."

Janet did not answer, and Mother went on. "Janet, somehow I feel that if you go to Mr. Anderson and tell him exactly how it happened and what you did and how sorry you are, he will respect you for your honesty. Then you will have his respect and be able to respect yourself also."

Kathy moved toward the door as if to leave while Janet sat motionless, her hands clenched in tight fists as she struggled to get the consent of her mind. Was Mother right, or was she too optimistic? Did she really know enough about Mr. Anderson to guess what he might do?

Kathy came back to Janet's side and placed a tender arm around her drooping shoulders. "Better to take second place honestly than top place dishonestly, my dear. You might get a name before your class by being dishonest, but what kind of a record are you writing *before God*?"

(Continued on page 21)

Many Rights

But ONE WRONG

WEALTH, youth, power, social status—things that many men seek for and some men find. One man had them all. We don't know his name, but he might have been a "jet set" socialite of the New-York-to-Paris circuit or an Oxford graduate on London's Fleet Street. It so happened that this particular individual was an active religious leader of the Pharisee group, living in Jerusalem about the year A. D. 30.

This man had everything and yet he was missing something. He lacked one thing and he knew it. Despite his religion and education and social standing, he was worried. He had no assurance about his future after death, and he wanted this assurance. All he possessed seemed worthless without the knowledge that his life had some meaning and direction. So he came to one man he thought could help him—an itinerant Galilean preacher named Jesus. We read about this young man in the Gospels by Matthew, Mark and Luke. In reading his story, perhaps we see something of ourselves.

He Was "Right"

Notice this man's rightness. He came to Jesus at the *right age*—while he was still young. His life was ahead of him with great possibilities to serve himself or God. God wants us to come to Him early in life so He can use us with our full strength and abilities, and so we may have years to enjoy His blessing, peace, and guidance and to develop our character potential. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth," was the advice of a man who failed to remember Him when he was old. God would like all of our life as well as all of us.

This young man also came with the *right attitude*—he came seeking. We must look for God before we can expect to find Him; and when we seek, we shall find, the Bible assures us. "You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart," God told Jeremiah (Jer. 29:13, RSV). The writer of the letter to the Hebrews noted that God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (11:6). The person who diligently and earnestly seeks the right way will find it.

This young man came to the *right person*—Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God. "Who else has the words of eternal life?" was Peter's positive response when Jesus gave him the option of seeking another way. Jesus can show us the way to an abundant life now and eternal life in the future. He is the only One who says, "I am the Way." Only Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, and His claim was confirmed by His being resurrected from the dead. Mohammed did not claim to be the Son of God, nor did he arise from death; neither did Buddha, Confucius, or any other great religious leader.

The young man asked the *right question*—"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" What question could be more important? Until this question is settled, there is no assurance of our eternal destiny. There is no prospect of a future. If we would have eternal life, we must go to the One who offers it. "He that believeth on me has everlasting life" (John 6:47)—he is on the right road, he has been delivered from the way that leads only to death and destruction.

The Right Answer

The young man not only asked the right question, he received the *right answer*—"Follow me." Jesus told the man to set aside the one thing that stood between him and God—his wealth—to turn away from lesser things to follow after that which was greater. Your "lack" may be different—it may be your selfishness or pride, or your career or your hobby or your car or any other "god" that stands between you and the living God. Jesus calls us to turn our lives around and turn them over to Him and obey His voice—"Follow me."

Here then was a man who had everything in his favor, a man who did all the right things.

He came at the right age.

He came in the right attitude.

He came to the right person.

He asked the right question.

He received the right answer.

But he did the wrong thing!

He said no. He turned his back on Jesus and walked away. He would not turn away from his

god to the true God. He could not give up his ties with the temporary to gain the eternal. He could not see beyond the things at hand to the greater things which lay beyond.

What supreme tragedy! The Scripture says he went away "sorrowful," because he had great wealth. He went away, his own way, the way to nonentity and death.

What Happened?

How could anyone be so right and yet be wrong?

God tells us repeatedly in His Word that the quality of life is more important than its quantity, either in time or possessions. "It matters not how long you live, but how well," was the way one ancient Roman put it. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," said Jesus (Luke 12:15). We must establish biblical priorities. We are not to lay up our treasures on earth, where they can be taken away, but rather to lay up our treasures in heaven, where they can never be taken away. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21).

Yet in asking us to give up everything, God promises us so much more. Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life" (Luke 18:29-30, RSV). Do we really accept this great challenge? Do we believe this great promise?

Where are your priorities? Where are mine? How do you stand with God? How do I stand? What can we learn from this young man who was right so often, yet wrong in the end? ●●

Adapted from an article published by *Vital Christianity*.

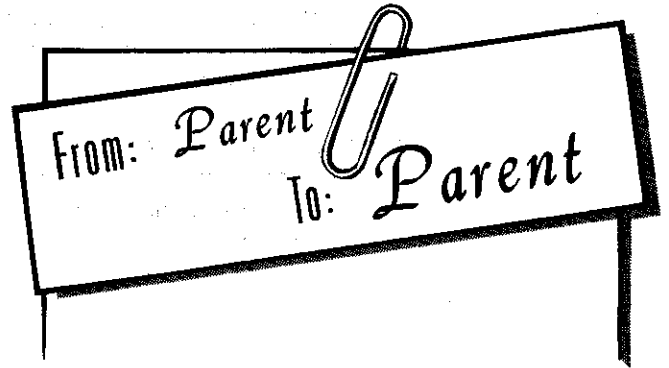
Kathy Kandor's Korner

(Continued from page 19)

"Every choice you make, Janet, is in some way affecting the rest of your life." Kathy looked longingly at her daughter. "May God help you to make the right decision."

With a prayer on her lips, Kathy slipped quietly from the room, leaving Janet to decide which was worth more—a top mark in geometry, or the favor of God. ●●

June, 1977



Don't Give Up!

WE'VE crossed another hurdle at our house—not really a large hurdle, but it's important. Let me tell you about it.

It had been the same old story at our house night after night after night, the sort of experience that makes parents almost "child-weary." You see, we had decided that our seven-year-old boy and five-year-old girl were old enough to wash and dry the supper dishes all by themselves.

Our original suggestion wasn't met with much enthusiasm. The children knew, of course, that it was futile to protest; but that doesn't mean they were eager workers either. The first few nights there were some long faces and an abundance of excuses ("I can't wash tonight because I have a cut on my finger"; or, "These dishes are too heavy for me to dry"); we even had a couple of sudden "disappearances" from the kitchen. However, Mom and Dad persisted, and the children soon made an important discovery: If they went to work quickly and finished the job, they *liked* it; the longer they put off doing the dishes, the less they liked it and the less time they had before bedtime to spend on other activities.

That's why I say we're over the hurdle. Now the dishes are cleaned up quickly, and there are none of the old complaints and excuses. And everyone is so much happier.

There are so many things children can help with and at the same time learn to enjoy doing. Dishes, dusting, picking up, sweeping floors and cleaning out drawers, making beds and emptying wastebaskets, running errands, hoeing the garden and pulling weeds, and . . . and . . .

Most any child, of course, would rather be doing a dozen other things than working with his or her parents; but children will often find work a challenge and a pleasure. And we know that the dis-

cipline and responsibility acquired by learning to work at the necessary, practical, everyday duties of life can be very helpful in developing our children's characters. A sensible amount of work mixed into their daily routine will also add a measure of security and purpose to their lives.

In these pleasure-loving times, we see too many children, even very young children, running up and down the streets and through anybody's yard with nothing constructive to do. It is not surprising that young minds, feet and hands turn so easily to mischief.

Our neighbors are viewing *our* children—yours and mine; and can they see a difference in our children who are being raised by parents who profess to be Christians?

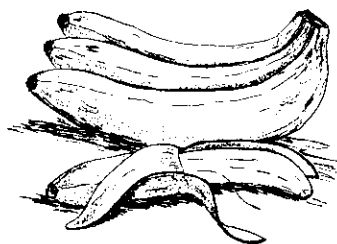
Play has become all-important in so many families. That's the way most children spend their time—it's all play all day. While play can be constructive and useful to the children's mental and physical growth if properly guided, we must not

allow ourselves to be caught up by the trend of the times. Our children share all the benefits of home—they have their own rooms, pleasant and warm surroundings, clean beds, wholesome food and clean clothes. Why shouldn't they help to maintain it all? Why shouldn't they learn that all these good things have their price?

A family that works as a unit will enjoy one another more, appreciate one another more, and will be much better equipped to work together for God. Such a family will be more stable, their children more secure, and their home more peaceful; and every member will reap the benefits of character-building that working together brings.

Maybe you already have a regular work schedule in your home. If not, try it. And when the whining begins, and the long faces appear and you hear the "I-don't-want to's" and the "I can't's," don't give in! Be persistent. Keep working. Nothing worthwhile—either in this world, or in the world to come—is gained without work. ●●

Fruitful Fragments



A habit is a shirt made of iron.

You can tell more about a person by what he says about others than you can by what others say about him.

Whatever chore you may have to do, think of doing it as for God, and it will become easier.

It is well to live and let live; it is better to live and help live.

The best time to hold on is when you reach the place where the average person would let go.

Things turn out best for those who make the best out of the way things turn out.

Do not judge another until you stand in his place.

Put all your failures in life in the past tense—that way you won't stumble over them as you head for success.

Believe it or not—a smile adds much to your face value.

A man needs stormy weather from time to time to remind him he's not really in charge of anything.

One strange thing about temper is that you can't get rid of it by losing it.

Never begin talking until you have begun thinking.

Into the Valley

Not always on the mount may we

Rapt in the heavenly vision be:

The shores of thought and feeling know

The spirit's tidal ebb and flow.

"Lord, it is good abiding here,"

We cry, the heav'nly presence near:

The vision vanishes, our eyes

Are lifted into vacant skies.

Yet hath one such exalted hour

Upon the soul uplifting power,

And in its strength, through after days

We travel our appointed ways,

Till all the lowly vale grows bright,

Transfigured in the heav'nly light,

And in untiring hearts we bear

The freshness of the upper air.

The mount for vision: but below

The paths of daily duty go,

And nobler life therein shall own

The pattern on the mountain shown.

"Did Not Our Heart Burn Within Us?"

TWO men were walking down the road to Emmaus. They were talking about the things that had happened—Christ's crucifixion, and now the story that the women told—that Jesus was alive, the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty. Could they believe it?

As they walked, a stranger joined them and asked, "What are you talking about? Why are you sad?" After they explained, the stranger reproved them, saying, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe." And he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Jesus. Impressed, the two men asked him to come to their home, and he went. As they sat down to eat, the stranger took bread and as he blessed it and broke it, the men's eyes were opened and they realized the stranger had been Jesus.

But He was gone.

"And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32).

We should have known who He was, they said to themselves, because "Did not our heart burn within us?" Didn't we feel impressed and invigorated and renewed in mind and spirit?

The story of the walk to Emmaus is a familiar one. But it is the men's words to one another that I would like to dwell on. "Did not our heart burn within us?"

You and I can identify with that feeling. We have experienced it many times. Our hearts burn within us as we thrill to the stimulating words of a sermon from the Book of God. Our hearts burn when we open our Bibles and bask in the promises of God. And how our hearts burn as we have a spiritually uplifting conversation with a friend.

But what happens when we retire to the everydayness of our homes, when we lay aside our Bibles to go over the week's shopping list, or when we part from our friend and are once again with the members of our own family, whom we know so well. Is the fire still hot in our hearts?

To keep our hearts burning during the ordinary hours of everyday living is the real test of our character. These are the hours of cooking and shopping, of housework and gardening, or of breadwinning and traveling. Can we do it? Can we

keep our hearts burning during the week day valleys?

It is up to *you*, it is up to *me*. Our hearts *can* burn at whiteheat intensity if we just take the time to stoke up the fire of our zeal.

It is *I* who must pray, pray without ceasing. It is *I* who must sit down and read my Bible, *I* who must memorize a verse. It is *I* who must make a point to fellowship with Christian friends. It is *I* who can worship and sing to God's glory. But most important, it is *I* who can and must make the effort every day to control my every thought. If my thoughts are trained in the right direction, *my* heart will burn.

If our hearts are burning within us, we will be patient when our toddler spills his milk for the fourth time, kind to the one we have heard say something unkind about us, forgiving when our neighbor apologizes for an embarrassment caused us the day before, understanding and helpful to the brother or sister struggling with a problem. We will criticize ourselves, not others, and return only good for evil. In short, if our hearts burn within us we will be well on our way to perfection of character.

Our hearts will burn within us all the time when we get a sharp vision of the future—eternal life in God's Kingdom on earth!—and keep it before us all the time. The more real the future is to us, the more zealously we will work so we can be a part of it.

In that great Day so soon to come, when we stand before the throne of God, will the angels be able to say of us then, "*How their hearts burned within them*"? ●●

*The times are tense, our lives are rushed and hurried;
We have too little faith; too much of sin;
Too much of busyness, too little prayer;
As if unmindful that He comes again!*

*Go work! This is no time for fret and worry,
This is no time for pleasures of the night;
Not long will last earth's pomp and pride and glory,
So soon thy faith will change to glorious sight!*

“Unto You That Fear My Name”

To walk through life in the fear of the Lord involves many difficulties, decisions and problems. We are not always strong to face certain situations, nor are we able to discern the subtle workings of evil in and around us. The Psalmist, who had much to say concerning the healing balm contained in the Word, himself failed miserably at times. But as he learned to hide the Word in his heart, the Eternal Word became his strength and a mighty

God grant us the courage and the wisdom in these closing hours of our probation to manfully resist the workings of our own natures, to love to think on the true and the pure, rather than on the false and the unholy. Should not our constant prayer be, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me"? And as we press on, secure in the knowledge that the Word is truth, it will heal all our spiritual wounds and secure for us a permanent place in God's never-ending Kingdom. ●● —*L. K., South Amboy, New Jersey*

(Continued from page 5)

We are nearing the close of salvation's day. With God's mercy still extended to us, let us take Him from now on into *all* our plans, then in that soon-coming Day He will let us help Him unfold to this sin-sick world the eternal plan of the ages. In our battle against sin and wrong let us remember that thoughts grow to deeds, deeds to habits, habits to character, character to destiny. In closing, there are no more appropriate words than those of the beloved Paul, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." ●●



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People God Used

Part 8

In all ages God has had a watchful care over His people. We have seen how He guided Israel and worked with them as a nation for many years, until they become so wayward that they forsook Him altogether. Because of their apostasy, God allowed them to be taken captive by their enemies and to live in Exile.

But even in Exile a few were faithful to Him, and for their sake He arranged for an end to the period of Exile and a short period of reviving in their ancient homeland.

As we read of their experiences, let us think of God's fairness and equity in dealing with men; just so will He deal with us. He will render to "every man according as his works shall be."

Captivity and Return

THE captivity of Judah lasted seventy years, just as Jeremiah had prophesied, dating from the first carrying away under Jehoiakim (about 605 B. C.), when among others Daniel was taken captive.

The lot of the captives in Babylon was bad enough, but it was not by any means as severe as the bondage in Egypt. A number of the captives, such as Daniel, Zerubbabel, Nehemiah, and others, occupied positions of trust during the Captivity. But to those who remained loyal to their God the years on foreign soil were a test of faith and endurance. All around were people worshiping other gods and pursuing their own pleasures; it was not easy to be different. Most of the captives adopted the foreign customs and culture; a few remained separate, meeting together in groups to retain their faith in Israel's God, anticipating the time when they could return and rebuild their native land. They knew the return would be—it had been

predicted just as certainly as had the carrying away.

When the seventy years had been completed, God moved upon Cyrus, king of Persia, to issue a decree allowing all Jews who so desired to return to their own land. He also gave them many vessels of gold and silver that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple, that they might use them in the new house of God which they were to build.

Zerubbabel led the caravan from Babylon to Jerusalem. When they arrived in Jerusalem, their first work was to erect an altar, for the altar was the foundation of all the temple services. Then they set to work on the temple. For awhile the building of the temple was interrupted by enemies of Judah, but at last it was completed, the people being encouraged by the strong prophets of God, Haggai and Zechariah. At last they dedicated the temple with great joy and festivity, and restored the ancient sacrifices that had been commanded by Moses, the man of God. (To learn more of this, read Ezra, chapters 1-6, and the books of Haggai and Zechariah.)

The Time of Ezra

There followed a period of about sixty years of which we have no knowledge. At last, however, Ezra, the scribe, went up to the Holy City, taking with him a number of patriotic Jews. The work of Zerubbabel had been rebuilding of the temple. Ezra's work was to be the reforming of religion among those who were in Judah and Jerusalem. The captives who had returned had settled among the people of the land, and now there was great danger because the Israelites were intermarrying with the people of the land—a practice which God had always forbidden. Intermarriage with foreign people was sure to lead again to abandonment of the religion of their fathers.

A large part of Ezra's effort among the Israelites was aimed against this evil. The people declared their willingness to do as Ezra dictated, however, and so the danger was for the time being avoided.

Nehemiah

Soon after this we come to the story of Nehemiah. This man was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia; this was a position of ease and wealth. But Nehemiah was an Israelite, and the welfare of the people in Jerusalem lay near his heart. And when he heard of the difficulties his brethren in Jerusalem were having, he prayed to God that he might find such favor in the eyes of the king, that he would be allowed to go to Jerusalem and repair the walls that had been thrown down. The city,

without walls, was exposed to any assault.

For four months Nehemiah prayed without any visible answer. Then one day at the table the king noticed the sad face of his cupbearer. "Why is thy countenance sad?" he inquired. Then Nehemiah told the king all that was in his heart. At once the king granted him the permission for which he had waited and prayed for four months. Nehemiah started as soon as possible.

No sooner did Nehemiah reach Jerusalem than he inspected the walls to see exactly the condition they were in. Then he showed himself to be a first-class organizer. He assembled the rulers and told them of his plans and tried to encourage them for the work. He divided the work among the families, giving each one a specific task and encouraging the spirit of true rivalry. "To every man his work" was his motto. The people worked enthusiastically.

There was no lack of opposition; all good causes have opponents. But none were able to move the manager Nehemiah from his purpose or to abate his enthusiasm in any degree. With sword in one hand and trowel in the other, it is said, the people pushed the work forward, while Nehemiah carefully oversaw the project.

In just fifty-two days the work was completed, and the people assembled to voice their joy and thanksgiving to God. Nehemiah gathered them all together, and then Ezra read the law of Moses and explained it in their hearing. In this way Nehemiah instructed the people in what they should do to be faithful and upright before God. As a result, the people celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles (a harvest festival of thanksgiving).

Ever watchful for the spiritual welfare of his people, Nehemiah instituted reforms in the matter of Sabbath-keeping under the law of Moses, of usury (unjust interest) and of idolatrous intermarriages with the people of the land. His labors never ceased, for he seems to have realized that eternal vigilance is the price of true godliness, that maintaining loyalty in the midst of idolatrous people is possible only when everyone is committed to personal loyalty to God.

Perhaps the one important result of the captivity was that the people who returned were more obedient and more loyal to God than their fathers had been. They had seen the dire results of idolatry, and the goodness of God in making a way for them to return; and some committed themselves to being His faithful servants.

Israel as a nation was never again a strong political entity, but they were once again in their native land, where they would remain until the time of the Great Dispersion. ●●

Scriptural Spotlight

(Continued from page 27)

to Him undivided, wholehearted and complete. It is a discontent that makes us hot and restless, discontented with ourselves as we are.

When we realize the magnitude of the work each life-seeker has to perform, we will understand why we must long for righteousness as a man dying of thirst longs for water. Whichever way the thought is expressed—whether hungering, thirsting, panting, or longing—it means that the persons concerned desire to serve God above everything else, because they want to share in the blessing He has promised.

The righteousness that results from such longings pursued in Christ will ultimately beautify its possessor with a blameless character. All other goals and ambitions will be merged into that highest of all goals, to obtain that righteousness which alone will please God and merit His approval.

"Blessed" or "happy" is the first word of each of Jesus' beatitudes. It is a word full of sunshine, thrilling with music, brimming full of just what the truly hungry and thirsty are seeking—life, eternal LIFE!

In those in whom there burns that intense passion for eternal life in the Kingdom of God—in them will be that consuming desire for spiritual nourishment: They will truly "hunger and thirst after righteousness." To such is the promise of ultimate satisfaction given: "They shall be filled"—filled with the rarest and richest of benefits this world can offer, even a hundredfold now, and with unspeakable bliss in the world to come.

O the bliss of the man who longs for total righteousness as a starving man longs for food, and as a man perishing of thirst longs for water; for that man will be truly satisfied! ●●

God's Footprints

"How do you know there is a God?" was asked an Arab in the desert.

"How do I know that a camel passed my tent in the night? Because I have seen his footprints in the sand, and I can tell you which way he went, and his size, and even the color of his hair, by the hairs that have dropped along the way.

"How do I know there is a God? I see his footprints in the skies, the desert sand, and the oasis, in every flower and tree, and in my own body. I know Him by His footprints."



SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled"
—Matthew 5:6.

THE word hunger is a strong word laden with intense desire. Thirst is perhaps an even stronger word. Only people famished for water in desert lands can fully understand the dire pangs of thirst. In the time of Jesus, water cisterns were matters of life and death.

In the ancient world many a day-laborer was never far from real hunger and actual starvation, or even from extreme thirst. For them there was no faucet which could be opened to bring a stream of clear, fresh water into the house.

But the most parching thirst came when a traveler was caught in a sandstorm. He would wrap his head in his cloak and turn his back to the wind, and wait, while the swirling sand filled his nostrils and his throat until he was on the verge of suffocating for breath and was parched with an imperious thirst.

Such is the hunger and thirst this beatitude describes. It is no genteel hunger which can be satisfied with a midmorning snack. And the thirst of which it speaks is no thirst which can be slaked with a cup of juice or modern beverage. It is the hunger of the man who is starving for food, and the thirst of the man who is on the brink of death from lack of water. Many of those listening to Jesus had known well the ravages of hunger and the thirst He was talking about. Among the poor it was an ever-present threat.

In our text, then, Jesus was really asking, "How much do you want goodness? Do you want it as much as a starving man wants food and as much as a man dying of thirst wants water?" And Jesus asks us today: How intense is *your* desire for goodness?

Most people have an instinctive desire for a certain amount of goodness, but that desire lacks the sharpness and intensity of the person actually hungering and thirsting for righteousness. When

the moment of decision comes they are not prepared to make the effort, the sacrifice which real goodness demands. What a growth into righteousness when at all times we desire goodness more than anything else in the world!

William Barclay translates our text thus: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for the whole of righteousness, for total righteousness, for complete righteousness."

Jesus is saying that it is not enough to be satisfied with a partial goodness. Blessed is the man who hungers and thirsts for the goodness which is total and complete. Blessed is the man who hungers and thirsts for the knowledge of God—the only knowledge that points the way to eternal life.

Jesus saw many people hungering, but not for righteousness. And so today, there is much hunger for pleasure, for friendship, for the rewards of this world; but how little real hunger for righteousness!

The man who hungers and thirsts after righteousness finds joy. His is a positive passion. No longer are his eyes on the passing things of earth; his unquenchable thirst is for the pleasures and joys of eternal life! Such was the longing of the Psalmist, a longing which could have but one satisfaction. He exulted: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15).

There is a hunger deeper than the physical; and there is bread that will satisfy that longing. There is a thirst deeper than the physical; and there is water that will satisfy that desire. Both the bread and the water which will satisfy are found on the table of the Lord. Both are living—they are the words of eternal life (John 6:51; 4:13-14).

What is hungering and thirsting after righteousness? It is divine discontent with everything that is unlike God. It is our desire to make our service

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Aspiration

(A Paraphrase of Psalm 139)

*My Lord, Thy all-discerning eyes
My inmost purpose see;
My deeds, my words, my thoughts arise,
Alike disclosed to Thee;
My sitting down, my rising up,
Broad noon and deepest night;
My path, my pillow, and my cup
Are open to Thy sight.*

*Before, behind, I meet Thine eye
And feel Thy mighty Hand;
Such knowledge is for me too high
To reach or understand;
What of Thy wonders can I know?
What of Thy purpose see?
Where from Thy spirit shall I go?
Where from Thy presence flee?*

*If I ascend to heav'n on high,
Or make my bed below,
Or take the morning wings and fly
O'er ocean's ebb and flow,
Or seek from Thee a hidingplace
Amid the gloom of night--
Alike to Thee are time and space,
The darkness and the light.*

*O Lord, Thy all discerning eyes
My inmost purpose see;
O grant that all my secret thoughts
May pleasing be to Thee.
And may my rest or rising up
At noonday or at night,
Disclose the beauty of Thy truth,
The radiance of Thy light.*