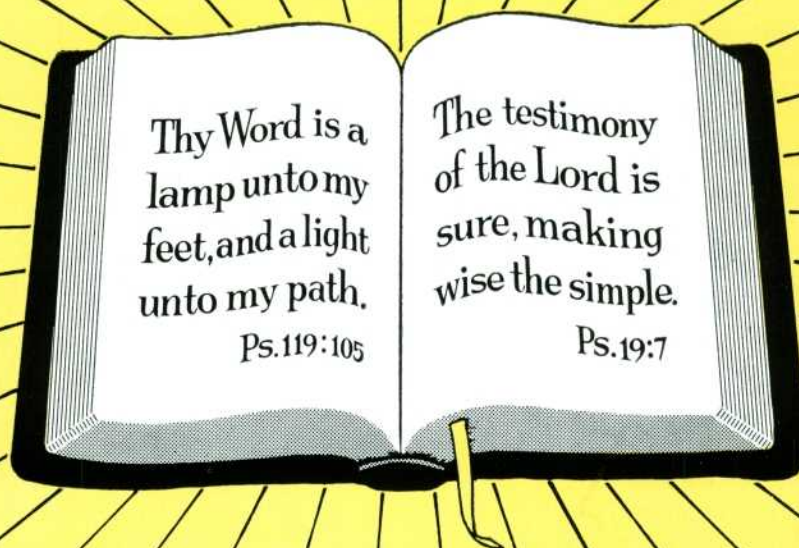


# Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



**God Has a Banquet Prepared . . .**

**What Is Truth? The Great Infidel Discussion**

**Modern Nehushtans**

**The Earth in Space**

# EDITORIAL



## Dealing With Stress

WE LIVE in a world of stress. Pressures arising out of problems at home, at work, and in the world abroad affect just about everyone to a greater or lesser degree. Consequently, numerous ideas are born which, we are told, will help us keep our sanity and serenity. There are an almost endless variety of suggestions. Some new kind of meditation, or medication, or another brand new formula is guaranteed to keep us quiet when the pressure is on—if there is enough mind over matter! The promised benefits are many, for it is widely recognized that the quiet person who can maintain his composure is less likely to suffer from heart ailments or to experience other physical and mental illnesses which the doctors call “stress-related disorders.”

Some people try to combat stress by escaping it. Another group has suggested that we play little mental games with ourselves and act as though what is true is not true at all. But is this the solution? Shall we expect that thinking positively about our troubles will *cure* them? Sometimes, perhaps; many times, a positive course of action will do more, much more.

What shall that course of action be? The best remedy God offers us in dealing with any of life's problems is a combination formula of control, commitment, and confidence. This 3-C formula is sure to relieve even the severest stress. *Control* is basic to Christlike living. It is a serious matter of self-dictatorship, telling ourselves plainly what we *will* and *will not* do. Can we picture Jesus getting harried and unstrung when the crowds pressed and He grew weary? Can we picture Him with emotions totally out of control because things did not go His way, or because of a family upset, or because of a strife between the rulers of His country and Rome?

Control is a natural result of a full *commitment*. When we are not our own, when we have given ourselves to God to be used as He sees best, the pressures and stresses of life become

only “slight troubles of the passing hour” which are sure to result in a “solid glory past all comparison” (II Cor. 4:17, Moffatt). In actuality, the problems are *His* concern, not ours, if we are totally committed to Him. This is what Jesus meant when He said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). Coming to Jesus is a step requiring definite action on our part, a full surrender of our own ways, a total commitment to obedience, a total trusting of ourselves to His direction. Along with this full commitment comes a full confidence in God, for has He not promised, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”—in stress, or out of it? (Deut. 31:6; Heb. 13:5).

How different would be our stress-filled world if everyone were committed to God, if everyone were seeking to please Him and trusting Him to order their lives! The stress would be gone, replaced by a happiness and satisfaction that comes from full dedication.

It is time that we increased our confidence in God and decreased our confidence in ourselves and the things around us. It is time that we looked at all our problems—whether at home, at work, in the world, or in ourselves—from God's viewpoint. With our affections set on Him and all our hopes bound to His promises, what can upset us? What can cause undue stress? This is not a free and easy escape from reality, but a sensible facing of the facts and committing all to the direction of Him who works all things together for good. Can't we trust Him—He who is able to care for millions and billions of suns in billions of other galaxies beyond our tiny system? Surely He is *capable* of watching out for us. *Whether* He does is up to us. There is the inescapable if—if. That is the only problem. That is the only point where stress is needed. It all depends on *us*—it *does* depend on us and our obedience. *Here* is where we need the stress. ●●



## Megiddo means

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

### *We believe*

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

### *We believe*

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

### *We believe*

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

### *We believe*

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

### *We believe*

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

### *We believe*

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

### *We believe*

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

## Bible Quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—*New English Bible*

NIV—*New International Version*

NAS—*New American Standard*

RSV—*Revised Standard Version*

TLB—*The Living Bible*

TEV—*Today's English Version*

Phillips—*The New Testament in Modern English*

Berkeley—*The Modern Language New Testament*

Weymouth—*The New Testament in Modern Speech*

Moffatt—*The Bible, A New Translation*

The use of selected references from various versions of the Bible does not necessarily imply publisher endorsement of the versions in their entirety.

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# God Has a Banquet Prepared

## ... and We Have Lost Our Appetite!

**A**PPETITE is a strange thing. It can be so strong, and yet so fleeting; so desperate, and yet so easily satisfied. And so soon the hunger returns. We do not have to live very long before we know that there are no lasting satisfactions in this world. Life is a continuous round of hunger and satisfaction and hunger again. And it is well, for appetite is vital to life; were it to disappear, soon all life would perish.

When we think of appetite, we think first of the desire for physical sustenance, food. But appetite includes much more. We all have inborn cravings, cravings for love, for attention, for affection, for security. We want that which comforts, supports, or pacifies. But among all that this world can offer us, where is that which brings lasting satisfaction? The more we try to satisfy ourselves, the more we realize the truthfulness of Jesus' words spoken to the woman at the well: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again."

We see this insatiable desire in those who succeed in this world—it is this continued appetite, this perpetual dissatisfaction with things as they are that has brought mankind from the caveman existence to modern life. Something more, something better is always imagined to lie beyond. The graduating scholar looks to the higher realms of education yet unexplored. The successful business man can always see more and more areas into which he can expand. A little further, a little higher, a little better; it is the spirit of the race. When someone asked John D. Rockefeller how much money he thought was enough for the average man, his reply was, "A little more."

It is to this insatiable human desire that God directs His appeal. Do we hunger for real satisfaction, satisfaction that will endure? Do we

want more and more and more of that which is higher and better? Is our desire for love stronger than this world can satisfy? Is our appetite for beauty, for harmony and order totally unmet in this world? Is our longing for life greater than we have even begun to approach? Do we really *love* life—do we love it so much and desire so much of it that we are willing and anxious to surrender anything of this present world to obtain it?

To such God appeals.

"What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?" (Ps. 34:12). God has nothing for those who are satisfied with this world and its goals; He wants those whose hearts cry out for *more*. He wants those who hunger and thirst for that which will endure unto everlasting life.

Do we qualify? Is our desire for His favor and His promises above every earthly interest? Is this desire intense and growing? Or does it come and go, like the hungers and satisfactions of this world, easily stimulated and easily quieted?

### Stimulating Desire

Physical appetites are instinctive; we do not normally need to do much to excite them. But spiritual appetites need continual stimulating. Strange, isn't it, that we do not instinctively crave the greater, that we do not naturally hunger and thirst after the richest satisfaction, righteousness, life, peace, God. We may hunger for a time; the desire may seem almost insatiable. But let a little time elapse and other interests come in, and how easily our first interest is relegated to second place. Desires so quickly change, enthusiasms cool, loves weaken, wishes reverse themselves. What once was almost an obsession seems scarcely to matter at all. My brethren, these things ought not so to be—not in things spiritual, things holy, things heav-

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**NOTE:** "God Has a Banquet" is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

only. This fickle, changeable instinct within us, this fleeting thing called appetite must be strengthened, steadied, directed.

Jesus addressed some of His parables to warning on this very point—of maintaining proper interest and direction in life and stimulating desire for the right things. What we like, what we want, what we are willing to sacrifice for is of great importance. The eternal values will not descend upon us like a great cloud. We must rise to meet them. First there must be desire; and that desire must be a living, growing thing, until it becomes coupled with initiative and effort. There will be nothing eternal for the man or woman who does not delight to serve God with all his heart, all his soul, and all his strength; so said the Master. God does not want any who would serve unwillingly.

What happens if we allow our appetite to wane? if our desire for this world exceeds our desire for those things which God has promised?

This is the question Jesus answers in the parable of the Great Feast, which we want to consider this morning.

### Teaching By Parable

Jesus taught many a lesson by parable. In fact, parables comprise about one third of His recorded teachings. This Master of all teachers often put men in their place by His apt illustrations and set them to thinking by the pictures He drew. He did not leave them wondering about the meaning of life, of love, devotion, sacrifice or integrity; He drew illustrations from the common, everyday scenes of life to make these abstract principles touch our lives. Indeed, His illustrations strike at the inmost recesses of the human heart, making its devisings plain and unmistakable. For example, one might wonder what He meant if He had said, "Beware that you are not ostentatious in your charity." But when He said, "Don't blow a trumpet before you," there was no wondering; everybody knew what He meant.

The word "parable" is a Greek word and literally means "a throwing alongside" for the purpose of comparison. Almost all of Jesus' parables are like this. They are parallel stories which compare an eternal principle of truth with something tangible. A parable has also been described as "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." It is a story told in terms of the earth to give insight into the heavenlies.

Let us turn to Luke 14, where we find the parable of the Great Feast. Now everyone who heard Jesus knew what it was to be hungry; and

*Do we really love life--and desire  
so much of it that we are willing  
to surrender anything of the present  
to obtain it?*

everyone knew—or at least could imagine—what it was like to be invited by a great man to share a great feast; it was an invitation that would whet anyone's appetite. Using these ideas, Jesus illustrates what God offers mankind.

The parable is actually a climax to the whole passage, which has been called "The Table Talk of Jesus." We get His comments on social ambition (vs. 7-11), as Jesus takes notice of the elbowing and schemings of the socially ambitious in this all-too-human scene and makes a contrast with the standards of His kingdom. God recognizes no high or low by men's standards; station in life does not matter to Him; all such distinctions are rooted in pride and only reveal one's smallness of soul.

Jesus' lesson is for all of us. How few people are free from petty conceits. How great is the need for true humility which springs from the heart of gratitude. When God has given so much, how can any man count himself worthy of any higher place at the table than any other? Lowliness springs from reverence: How can a man, who is mortal and subject to sin, presume to approach the holy and majestic perfection of God with any feeling of superiority whatever? Lowliness springs from a knowledge of our own great need for forgiveness: How could any man ever partake of the divine nature without the gracious offer of God's forgiveness to erase the record of his sins? God is the great host; hence He is the one to judge. He is the one to set the standards; He is the one to give praise or blame, to exalt or to debase. He has His own standard, and the broken and contrite heart is never despised.

These are lessons we always need. We are not angels yet, and we have no right or reason to pretend that we are. We must be the best that we can be, but this is possible only as we think of ourselves as we really are in God's sight; we are worth only what our accomplishments in the divine life will support. We must learn to see ourselves this way, as God sees us.

Luke 14:15 gives us what might be called one more beatitude. Though it does not come from the lips of Jesus, it surely carries the sentiment

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factions--holiness, peace, life, God!*

of His teaching: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." The passage might read, "Happy and more deeply happy," for on the lips of Jesus "blessed" offers joy now as a foretaste of joy in the future. Jesus saw this world as a bridge, a means to a better life. It is a bridge to be passed over, not to build our dwellings upon. This is the thought of all His teachings. But this beatitude spoken by one of those who followed Him may carry an additional and appropriate rigor: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God" could mean, "You will do well to be there"; and the further inference is, "Can you make it? Are you really that hungry? Is your appetite so strong that you are willing to make the sacrifice it requires, the all-out effort? Will you *do* it?"

This is the thought of the parable that follows, which provides our topic for today.

### **The Parable**

A great man prepared a great banquet. In keeping with Oriental customs, an announcement of the coming event was sent out to certain people. Though the exact day and hour was not yet known, the general nature of the feast was disclosed and the invitation extended.

Many people responded. Indeed, they thought, who would be so foolish as to decline so gracious an invitation! They wanted to attend; they really did! They would *be* there!

The day came when the preparations were complete and all was ready, and the great man sent out his servant to tell those who had accepted his invitation that the hour for the banquet had arrived. But what response did he get? Was each one anxious and eager, just waiting for the servant to bring the message? No, each one who had had the invitation refused to come for one reason or another. They tried to be

courteous, but the refusal of each was plain. "Please present my regrets," was the polite dismissal of one. "Please excuse me," said another. "Pardon me, Sir, but—"

The preparer of the banquet was disturbed. And do we not see why? If these friends were not going to attend the banquet, they should have declined the invitation at the first and not have agreed to come. How could they show themselves so devoid of consideration as to refuse to come after the preparations had been made? It was the height of insult to the maker of the feast!

When the banquet was first announced, they wanted to attend; they did! But days went by, perhaps weeks or months, while other interests crowded in, and the coming banquet was forgotten. Their desire for the things at hand grew greater while their interest in the unseen promise waned. When the time for the banquet finally arrived, they had lost their appetites.

Is it not a parable with great warning to us? Is it not a parable of many an unfaithful covenant-maker? God is the great preparer of the feast who extends the generous invitation. And many are those who through the ages have accepted—100 million of them (Dan. 7:9). But there is a long time between the call and the actual arrival of the banquet date; and what happens during this time? Appetites find nearer satisfactions; loves grow cold, and the great offer is forgotten. When the great feast finally arrives, many have no desire to go. To have enough guests at his banquet, the great man must send servants into the highways and hedges and *compel* men to come in.

### **God Has Prepared...**

There are several points we want to note in the application of this parable. God is the great preparer of the feast, and how gracious is His invitation! For a full six thousand years it is extended, while the nations of earth go their way. During this time He sends prophets, apostles, even His own Son with an invitation to the coming banquet. Surely His mercy is great.

Think, too, of the greatness of the feast. It promises to be beyond anything we can imagine—exceeding abundantly beyond! Nothing in this world can compare with it. Here is being served food that will perpetuate life. Here is everything heart can wish. We are all naturally starving, helpless, ready to perish. But here is real pleasure, joy and happiness. Here is God inviting men to a banquet where they can have

*God is the preparer of the feast  
who extends the generous invitation.  
Will we be so foolish as to forget it?*

everything they could ever imagine, and in rich abundance. It is to be indeed a "great supper," the greatest ever held on this earth. Think of the delicacies that will be served—glory, honor, peace, power, joy, happiness, beauty, love; and all will be accompanied by life—life, life! What a feast! What a banquet!

With all this in prospect, can it be possible that we may refuse to go?

#### Excuses, Excuses . . .

Yet this is the warning in Jesus' parable—because this is what we are naturally prone to do. When the time arrived for the banquet, "they all with one consent began to make excuse." They

had one trivial excuse or another. The gratifications of the moment seemed more pressing than the pleasures of the heavenly banquet. While awaiting the call to the banquet, they had gone their own way and set their hearts on the things of this world; and when the feast finally was ready, they were too absorbed to go. It was as Jesus said, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." They sent their regrets.

They excused themselves. The word "excuse" is derived from *ex causa*, which means "free from the charge"; that is, we know we are at fault for our failure, but we present fictitious evidence by which we hope to be acquitted. Psychology calls it rationalizing. A seventeenth century poet described Satan (he believed in a literal devil) as having a tongue that "dropped manna, and could make the worse appear the better reason, to perplex and dash maturest counsels."

This is much the way with our cleverly designed excuses. But there is nothing clever about them. They are merely poor props to

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## Let Us Pray . . .

Father Almighty, Thou supreme Being who hast lived through all ages past and wilt always endure, as we catch a fresh glimpse of the Heavenly City, grant that we may go forward as those to whom has been given the power of an endless life. Grant us the wisdom to use that power right here and now. May we live the life that will fit us for life eternal—the life of faith, of love, of fellowship and service. Help us to measure by eternal values and to live for eternal rewards. So shall all of life be full of meaning and beauty, full of growth and accomplishment in the divine life. So shall we think Thy thoughts and do the things that will make us fit for life in the world to come.

Great God, we would express to Thee our gratitude for this good earth and all its gifts. Thine is the power which sustains the universe. We praise Thee for the order and constancy of the natural world, for the beauty of earth, and the bounty of the fruitful fields. We give Thee praise for all who minister to our better life, for our homes and the good will of our fellow Christians. We thank Thee for tasks that make us

strong, for life's disciplines which inlay character with new strength, and for the losses and griefs which teach us life's fuller meanings. May we grow in grace as we realize the blessings with which Thou hast endowed us, and may our hearts be ever thankful.

We rejoice that Thy Word is so plain, Thy demands so reasonable, and Thy rewards so magnificent. We glory in the fact that we have been invited to share in the feast of the great King, Thy beloved Son, who one day shall make to all peoples who submit to His new authority "a feast of fat things," even immortality, with blessings which far exceed anything conceivable to the mortal mind. May we have the good sense to make the fitting of ourselves for these blessings the foremost quest of our lives, making all else secondary. Having been invited to a wedding feast may we not be so unappreciative as to allow the unimportant interests of the fleeting present to come in and replace our interest in the eternal rewards Thou hast offered, lest the decree go forth, "None of those men shall taste of my supper."

Be with us in this service and may it alert us, may it strengthen us, may it stiffen our ardor to obtain that unspeakable reward. And may we be careful lest a promise being left us of entering into that rest any of us should come short of it. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

*We have been invited to the banquet of our coming King. Nothing in the history of the world can even approach its grandeur. . . .*

bolster our sagging egos. We justify ourselves, and at what a price. We are all prone to this. We have all done it. What is most frightful, we do it with scarcely a thought. The excuses in the parable of Jesus are like this. They seemed so logical to those presenting them. But what good did they do? They did nothing to promote the pleasure or satisfaction of those who designed them; and they did nothing to comfort or cheer the maker of the feast.

Excuses in themselves are like this; they are never of value; and how often, like those in the parable, they are plainly foolish, in the light of so great an event and so gracious an invitation. This is Jesus' intent—to show us the folly of our naturally off-balance thinking before it brings us to ruin, before we give up the greater for the insignificant. In His estimation, no excuse is worth the breath required to voice it. Why, oh, why will we not see that God's banquet is more fulfilling and more satisfying than the finest of earth's interests? And its joys will continue forever!

Now the invitation is free to "whosoever will." Now we can listen, or we can go our own way and do as we please. God does not force us to attend His great banquet. But a change is coming, also pictured in this parable. God foreknew that not enough would come of their own volition to complete the banquet, so following the time of special invitation he sends out his servants into the "highways and hedges" to "compel them to come in" (Luke 14:23). Though these are not awarded all the privileges of the first comers, they will surely enjoy the great feast. They represent the populace of the Kingdom of Christ, the great multitude who will work out their salvation during the Millennial Age and enjoy all the blessings that will come with the earth under new management and finally receive their own share of immortality. It will be a *great* feast, abundantly furnished with guests. It will be a *great* feast—too great to be missed for any excuses.

But let us look more closely at the excuses in this parable. The first said that he had just bought a piece of ground, and he needed to go see it; hence could not come. Right away we see the folly of this man's priorities. He was setting his heart on gross uncertainties. He was putting his new purchase ahead of the great feast—with no knowledge of what the purchase even *looked* like! How could he be sure it was worth *anything*? How could he know someone had not falsified it to him? He was not even wise in this world.

The second offered a similar excuse. "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them. I pray thee, have me excused" (v. 19).

The third placed *social* concerns before *spiritual*. He had married a wife, and so chose not to attend the feast for fear of offending her. The call of God was shut out by the interests of earth. These three excuses are but specimens of the trivialities which monopolize men's attention and prevent their giving full heed to the things of God.

It was not that any of these prospective guests were seeking unlawful pleasures; they were simply allowing something of lesser urgency to detain them. Even so, God is inviting us today to partake of the most glorious repast. He is offering us life, eternal life. But how many decline for this or that petty interest. It may be the demands of business, or the cares of human friendships, or the hope of renown in this world. It is something human, something finite, something limiting which prompts the heart to say, "I pray thee, have me excused."

Let the words of our Lord on this subject sink deep into our hearts today. Infidelity and immorality will bar many; but this procrastinating, excuse-making spirit that is always ready with a reason why obedience can be delayed is the more deadly. Decent, plausible, smooth-spoken excuses are a threat to all of us, for no excuse can truly justify us in the sight of God; and all of us are prone to make excuses.

### The Real Reason

But let us look deeper. What was the real problem *behind* those excuses? It was not the situations that occasioned them but the underlying *lack of desire*. Any of the people who were invited could have come if they had really *wanted* to come—none was sick, or in prison, or totally



disabled. If they had really wanted to attend, neither land nor oxen nor wife would have prevented it. The real reason, then, was lack of *desire*: They had lost their appetites!

How is it with us, we who have been invited to attend the great Marriage Supper of the Lamb? When we were first invited, we were hungry. We wanted all that God could give. The promises seemed beyond comparison. We learned eagerly of Him who "satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" (Ps. 107:9). Those whom He satisfies, we heard, "shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:8-9).

All this, and "exceeding abundantly above all" we could ask or think of, would be given at the coming banquet. It was too wonderful for words. We would be there!

But what has happened in the meantime? The time of the banquet has not arrived yet, and how is our desire? Has it grown with the passing of time, or have we found other satisfactions nearer and easier, and so lost our appetites for things eternal?

Here is a lesson for us. Desire may change. Appetite is a passing thing, unless it be continually whetted. We must be especially watchful of our spiritual desires, lest they be crowded out by things lesser. We must keep reminded that we have been invited to the great banquet of our coming King. Nothing in the history of the world is able to approach its grandeur; of this we can be sure. But if we do not keep whetting our appetite by thinking about it and looking toward it and planning on attending it, the hour will arrive and we will have no appetite.

### Self-Checking

Let us check ourselves: How is our appetite? Do the great things God has offered mean more and more to us, far more than anything else in this world? Can we say with Paul that we are persuaded that nothing, absolutely nothing—neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else we can imagine—shall be able to separate us from our love to God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

The apostle Paul wrote that Christ is coming with reward to all who "*love his appearing.*" The

*... But if we do not keep whetting our appetite by thinking about it and planning on it, the hour will arrive and we will have no appetite.*

crown is promised to them that "love him" (James 1:12). There must be desire, devotion, dedication, love. It is a gripping, moving power which many a man and woman of God has felt, an overpowering appetite for the things of God. Perhaps no one has expressed it more fervently or beautifully than King David. "I meditate on all thy works," he wrote; "I muse on the work of thy hands. I stretch forth my hands unto thee; my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land" (Ps. 143:5-6). Again, "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times. Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness. Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight" (Ps. 119:20, 40, 77). His appetite for God was a continuing, living, impelling, growing thing. "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks," he wrote again, "so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Ps. 42:1-2). Has our desire reached this intensity? Again he wrote, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (Ps. 63:1).

Are *we* becoming more and more filled with this longing? Or, as we look critically at our lives can we see even a slight weakening of desire, a slight loss of appetite?

If there is any weakening, *now* is the time to reverse it. With such wonders just ahead, a great banquet all prepared, we cannot afford to lose our appetite. Things lesser must be forced into their proper places and our hearts and inner lives be left free to seek *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. This is what Jesus says further in our lesson:

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). We may wonder at the use of so strong a word as "hate," but its literal meaning here is "to

*Jesus wants to show us the folly of our naturally off-balance thinking before it brings us to ruin, before we give up the greater for that which is next to nothing.*

love less" (Matt. 10:37). We are never justified in feeling ill toward anyone or wishing ill upon them; hatred would be a direct contradiction to Jesus' other statements. But we are to keep all in their proper place in our heart's affections. We are to love all others and all else less than we love Christ. We are to obey Christ rather than any man. Our love for Him must be deeper than our nearest and dearest connections on earth—even than our own lives. Do we not realize that we owe our very existence to God? And any interest in this world, any love, or any desire that stands in the way of our total dedication to God and His cause must give way.

God is merciful, gracious, longsuffering. But when we promise, when we say we want to attend His banquet, He expects us to go to work and get ready, and to come when we are called. There is nothing He abhors more than those who are half and half. This is why we are told, "When

thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools; pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Eccl. 5:4-5). Better to turn down the invitation at the first than to agree to come and then make excuses.

This is why God gives us these seasons of refreshing, these times of beginning again. We need to have our appetites whetted once again. And what is more appropriate for this than to think of our Great coming King and all that He will bring to those who love Him! The more we think about it, the more our desire will grow for those things which He will bring. And the more our desire grows, the more we will be getting ready. And the more we see ourselves getting ready, the more we will look forward to the joys of that great coming banquet.

It was once said of a greatly gifted man who died that "he fell far short of the achievements within his capacity because he gave too little thought or time to things unseen." Let not this be *our* mistake. Within each of us lie great possibilities—we have been called to attend the great coming banquet. Let us think of it more and more and keep whetting our appetite, that when the great King finally arrives and the banquet is announced, we may rejoice. If we are ready then, we will not *need* any excuses to offer; our record will speak for itself. ●●

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*This year, June 18 is Pentecost.*

## The Day of Pentecost

Pentecost was a great day in ancient Israel, and we should not overlook it. Meaning literally "fiftieth day," it came fifty days after Passover and was the second of three feasts commanded by Moses' law. On the morning after the Passover, Abib 15, Israel commenced the barley harvest, presenting the first sheaf to the Lord; and fifty days later, Pentecost concluded that harvest. Thus it was a "Feast of Harvest." Later, it became a day when the law was read in the congregations of Israel, a memorial day to the Lord.

For us, the richest significance of Pentecost came with the advent of the Christian era, the day when Jesus sent the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost was the birthday of a mission; it

gave a powerful beginning to the Christian Church. It launched the first great missionary effort.

The renewing of that same power on the Greater Day of Pentecost—just ahead!—will also launch a great missionary effort, the greatest ever known on this planet. What a day that will be!

*The rolling years, in joy complete,  
The jubilee of glory wrought,  
The time the Heavenly Paraclete  
Great gifts to the apostles brought.*

*Aglow with living light it came  
Upon the twelve in tongues of fire,  
That they might all the world inflame  
With word of truth and pure desire.*

*Great God of mercy and of power,  
Bowed at Thy feet today in love,  
We wait till Thou shalt send again  
This power divine, from heaven above.*

# The Earth In Space

**T**HE SCRIPTURES declare that "God . . . formed the earth to be inhabited" (Isa. 45: 18). When we examine the facts, we can see the tremendous amount of meaning behind this simple statement. God did indeed form the earth to be inhabited, even in a natural sense. The physical world abounds with examples of this fact.

For example, if the earth rotated on its axis much faster or much slower than it does, days and nights would be shorter, or longer, accordingly, causing all life to die either by freezing at night or by burning during the day. Also, our globe is just far enough from the sun, the earth's furnace, to be properly warmed for life to exist. And its speed in its orbit around the sun is just right. If the earth traveled faster or slower around the sun, it would be too far from or too close to the sun for life as we know it to exist. The sun's surface temperature of an estimated 12,000 degrees Fahrenheit is also just right for the proper heating of the earth. If the yearly average temperature on earth rose or were reduced by fifty degrees, life would either roast or freeze.

The moon is also properly placed. If our moon were much nearer, it would cause huge tides which would overflow to the lowlands, erode the mountains, and eventually level the continents. The tilt of the earth is also important. If the earth were not tilted twenty-three degrees on its axis but were straight up, we would not have four seasons; the poles would lie in eternal twilight, water vapor from oceans would move north and south and pile up high continents of snow and ice in the polar regions, leaving dry deserts in between. Someone has speculated that eventually the oceans would disappear and rainfall would cease, and the accumulated weight of ice at the poles would cause the quator to bulge and, as a result, the earth's rotation would change drastically.

The mixture of gases in the atmosphere is right for life as we know it. If it were much different (more oxygen, less carbon dioxide, etc., or the atmospheric pressure were much lighter

or heavier), life would cease. The mathematical odds that all of these and other essential conditions could just happen by chance are astronomical, probably a billion to one!

If the ocean were a few feet deeper, carbon dioxide and oxygen would have been absorbed by now, with the result that vegetable life could not exist on the land. If our atmosphere were much thinner, many of the millions of meteors which now are burned up in space would reach the earth's surface causing death, destruction and fire.

If resourceful evolution evolves life to fit the existing environments, why has it not equally conquered all of the environments existing on our planet? Why are there environments too hot or too cold, too far underground or too far above ground, for much life to exist? Why, in the several thousand miles of varying environments on earth, are some areas suited to some creatures and other areas inhabitable only by other creatures? The answer is that of the prophet Isaiah: "he formed it to be inhabited." ••

Contributed by Jerry Bergman, of Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio.

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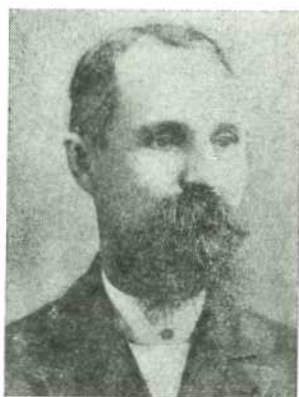
## Watch!

My soul, be on thy guard;  
Ten thousand foes arise;  
A host of sins are pressing hard  
To keep Thee from the prize.

O watch and fight and pray!  
The battle ne'er give o'er;  
Renew it boldly ev'ry day,  
And help divine implore.

Ne'er think the vict'ry won,  
Nor lay thine armor down:  
Thy arduous work will not be done  
Till thou obtain thy crown.

—Selected.



# What Is Truth?

## The Great Infidel Discussion



Reverend L. T. Nichols vs. Professor W. F. Jamieson

### Part Seven

**I**N THE YEAR 1890, our founder Rev. L. T. Nichols engaged in a series of debates with the great infidel debater Professor W. F. Jamieson.

The following articles are extracts from addresses by both speakers in the debates, which reflect the opposition our founder encountered and his sincere desire to discover fully the true teachings of the Word of God.

### Mr. Jamieson's Seventh Address

Tomorrow night I will take up the absurdities and inconsistencies in the Bible I cannot touch to-night. As the clown says in the circus, "Here we are again" this pleasant Sunday evening, and it is my purpose to pay courteous attention to my friend's remarks. Tonight we will bring forth a royal diadem, and crown our previous three nights of the past and show that the Bible does contain immoral teachings. Yet it will not be possible in one evening to more than notice an hundredth part, and these can be taken only as samples of the great abundance of these teachings.

I think it must be apparent to every listener that the Bible as it is, King James' Version, as well as the Revised, is spurned by my friend as not the Bible. Did a poor, benighted Infidel ever expect to see a Christian minister reject King James' Bible? Infidels have been suspicious all the time, however, that this was the fact. My friend steps up boldly, and I admire his boldness, and declares that the Bible in English as a whole is a fraud. Isn't that so? How cleverly my opponent has shunned this feature of our controversy, and devoted his time to history—anything—everything but telling us where that blessed book, wholly Divine, with nothing human in it, can be found. He refers to the Bible, and tells us how he loves it; but since he has informed us that this book,

from which the preachers preach, is not the Bible, but only a bad, wicked translation of the Bible, we see that it is not the book he loves.

If I go to a book store and ask for the holy Bible, the polite clerk hands me this book labeled "Holy Bible." It has a false stamp on it, but that misguided clerk has not attended this debate and so he does not know. Poor, darkened mind: He has taken the advice of his minister not to attend, and the consequence is that he is in heathen darkness, and sells me, in two ways, a counterfeit Bible—oleomargarine, not true butter. I am saying this to you in all seriousness. He fools me, or tries to, for my friend here tells me so. He tells me that this Hebrew book he places before me, and a Hebrew Lexicon to help me read it; that this is his Bible. I find, however, upon investigation, that his Bible, like that of the "hog king" of England, as Dickens describes James, is a fraud. Instead of being wholly Divine, it is mostly man-made; for the vowels, which were a human invention, make up the principal part of the book. Upon my word, I am getting very distrustful of what any Christian tells me. He does not mean to deceive me, perhaps, but I am inclined to think that if there is a devil in the universe, he has out-generated Jehovah who inspired Guttenberg to invent the printing press, and the very first book he manages to get printed on it is the so-called Bible. The people at first were shy of his black art printing, but it appears, as usual, Satan accomplished his purpose, and palmed the old thing off on a too-confiding

world as God's inspired Word, and managed to paint his own diabolical character, full of malice, revenge, and fury, and write under this picture "I am that I am."

As Mr. Nichols told us last night, the so-called Bible, the unreliable King James' translation, even says God, "The Lord God," when it was not God at all but an angel! How can we know that the devil has not been playing that same little trick all the way through? He explained to you the other night how "Satan stood up against Israel." Then he explained that David repented, as if, forsooth, a man ever repented of anything that God moved him to do, for does it not say that God moved David to number Israel? Mr. Nichols forgot all about the tussle that Pharaoh had with God in the heart-hardening campaign, and this is the way my friend has reconciled the contradictions which, to use his phrase of last night, is "just as easy as falling off a log"—and about as effective.

Where, O where, I ask again, is the Bible? The old family Bible—mother's Bible—where is it? Gone. These old Jew Holy Rolls, with no vowels, where are they? A few ancient copies left, but they are not copies of the whole Old Testament; only scraps. In the British Museum there is a copy of the Pentateuch alone. A Christian writer says:

"It is a large double roll containing the Hebrew Pentateuch, written with great care, on forty brown African skins. These skins are of different breadths. Some contain more columns than others. The columns are 153 in number, each of which contains about 63 lines about 22 inches deep, and generally more than five inches apart. In making copies of the law, a code of stringent rules had to be observed. For instance: New copies might be made only from the most approved ancient manuscripts. The ink must be of a special quality; the parchment made on purpose, by a Jew, from the hide of a clean animal; and the skins fastened together by strings of the same. There must be so many columns to the skin, so many lines to the column, so many words to a line; and the places above, below and between must be just so wide. No points might be written. It was not permitted to write by heart, but the copyist must look at each word and pronounce it aloud before writing it down and the name of God must be written with a special effort at attentive devotion; and before writing it, the copyist must wash his pen. If there was even a single letter too many, or too few, or wrong, that whole skin of parchment was worthless, for erasure or alteration was not allowed."

Despite all the care of those old custodians of God's revelation to man, in spite of it all, the Bible has not reached our age perfect, true, reliable. No

man has a revelation in his house; no church has it. You have at the best only the report of a revelation, and that is not a revelation at all.

A copy of the Talmud written in the old-fashioned consonant character, was examined not long ago, a fine copy of the best edition, in thirteen folio volumes, all in Hebrew, without accents or vowel points. A tremendous mass it was of mysterious looking material. That is going a great ways back for the word of God, and still I find I have not got it.

I now want to ask my friend, and hope he will answer, where can the original God-inspired Bible be found? Is the original in existence, or is it lost? And have we only copies, more or less imperfect? If such be the case, it would not be amiss to notify the Christians throughout America, Europe and Asia. From his teaching, his preaching, his independence of thought, his sincerity of motive, I have no doubt that my worthy opponent can teach not only, but set a good example to the entire Christian world. He quarrels with no man, however earnest he may get, on account of the honest difference of opinion existing between himself and that man.

Mr. Nichols spoke of my having once been a spiritualist and trance-medium, and that, therefore, there is hope that I may get my eyes still farther opened and see that the truth is in his direction. I have to say to him frankly I have not much hope so far as it applies to this question. If it pertained almost entirely to what my friend preached today, I am already with him; or what amounts to the same thing if he is with me. If he is a Christian then I am a half-way Christian myself; but if I am an Infidel, he is a half-way Infidel already. So we are bound to keep together until one converts the other. Perhaps he may convert me to his side, and I may convert him to my side; in which case we will have a "fair exchange." But so far as these great questions are concerned, let me tell you again that I enjoy nothing better than this candid comparison of ideas, opinions, convictions; and I will say, no matter how much I may differ with Mr. Nichols in his views of the inspiration of this book, or of God's Word, I must admit that he is doing a mighty work for humanity. I am not such a bigot; I never want to be so narrow and sectarian as to withhold the hand of fellowship from a gentleman that is working for humanity, though he may not see eye to eye with me. I wish that the Christian world this night were as liberal, and truth-loving, and devoted to principle as I am satisfied that my opponent, L. T. Nichols, assuredly is. There would be a grand reformation in this world then, and you would not have seven-by-nine ministers traveling around the town raising their voices and their hands in holy horror, and rolling



their eyes heavenward in despair at the sacrilege of two men honestly debating the great issues of life and death, of humanity and destiny; whence, where and what this destiny is. No. No. These public teachers ought to be here sympathizing with Mr. Nichols, defending the very book that they preach from and are teaching.

Why, the very course they pursue almost gives the public to think that they really, after all, do not believe what they preach, but that they want to stick close to the 99 sheep that need no shepherd, that are shut up in the theological fold or church, because the wool clipped from 99 is much better and more remunerative than that from one lone, poor, wandering sheep.

Now, I am a wandering sheep. I am a goat, gone astray on my road to hell, according to their theory, and yet they do not put forth the least effort to go out and hunt me and when they have found the lost sheep, throw him on their shoulder and go back rejoicing to the fold. As my shepherd would be carrying me, could not I look lovingly into his face and say, "Am I not thy lost lamb?" and he would say to me: "A pretty looking lamb you are." But it is his duty, nevertheless, to go out and see that the poorest, scrawniest, most beggarly sheep in the world are returned to the fold. But the pay is not so great and the butter is not so thick. Oh, I tell you, if there is truth in a future life, I am inclined to think that they have not got the truth. I am rather favorably impressed with the idea that Spiritualism is the most beautiful, fascinating, desirable philosophy I ever studied. There is a more mysterious power about Spiritualism than there is in Christianity. I do not

say there is nothing in Spiritualism. But since Spiritualism failed to satisfy my demand for rigid proofs, my only hope has been a future as desirable as that system represents. I would rather have eternal sleep than eternal life on orthodox terms. Mr. Nichols' view of a future life on this earth may be even superior to Spiritualism; I do not know.

My opponent said last night that I read from a book, and he was astonished. It was my debate with Rev. Dr. Ditzler, the Methodist minister, speaking seventeen tongues, and I read a few pages because the contradictions were compactly arranged. No harm in that, was there? But I have not time to quote all.

## Mr. Nichols' Seventh Reply

Considerable of Mr. Jamieson's speech I can acquiesce in, although I think he has not quite fairly put the matter before you. I am a full believer in liberty of thought, governed by the facts in the case. I believe in every individual being his own judge, and being not only willing but anxious to hear both sides upon all questions. I cannot say that Mr. Jamieson agreed with me to the great extent he said he did in my preaching this afternoon. I am at unity as far as liberty of speech and having no fear of investigation is concerned, and when you have said that, you have said the main thing; but as far as the questions in this debate are concerned, we are no more alike than black and white.

He consumed considerable of his time in search of the Bible; roaming around, trying to find the Bible. This, strictly speaking I say, may not be acknowledged as the Bible. I must confess it, and every honest, candid individual is driven to the same conclusion, because you all know that that is King James' translation of the Bible. He has asked where those old originals are, and I frankly say that I never saw one of them. It would do a man no good to assume a thing that is untrue, and Mr. Jamieson never saw one, but I must say to you that I believe the God of heaven has so superintended His Word as originally delivered (as I have said in former speeches) that that book we style the Bible contains the Divine revelation from God which is necessary for our salvation; and the mistakes that King James has made in that Bible (and every individual is driven to the conclusion that it does contain mistakes, if they are honest) are not the mistakes of God. I came here as an honest disputant, not to deny facts or endeavor to uphold anything that I believe to be untrue, but to maintain the truth; and although King James' translation contains some mistakes, we can go back to the original

## Twelve Booklets

HISTORY OF THE MEGIDDO MISSION  
THE COMING OF JESUS AND ELIJAH  
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?  
GOD'S SPIRITUAL CREATION  
THE KINGDOM OF GOD  
THE GREAT APOSTASY  
HELL AND THE DEVIL  
AFTER DEATH, WHAT?  
TRINITY OR UNITY?  
THE HOLY SPIRIT  
THE ATONEMENT  
THE SABBATH  
ALL for \$3.00, Postpaid

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

language, and find an explanation in the matter.

I would never say that the clerk who sold you a Bible was acting the part of a deceitful man, or perpetrating a fraud upon you in selling you King James' Bible. I do not say that this, as a whole, is not the Bible. I say, take it as a whole, that in its general teachings—the majority of it—it is the same as the Bible that is Divine; it is that which God inspired, upon which we can rely and place our feet without any difficulty whatever. That portion of the Bible that contains mistakes is the only portion that we go back to the original to rectify, and in every instance we find something to help us understand. Is it not a little curious that in all the mistakes brought forward, the original contains words that have meanings which will allow the Bible to harmonize? Is it not a little curious, if it is all human and not Divine? Would you not suppose that I would frequently get up a stump that would not let me out of those great and wonderful contradictions? If it were human, that would inevitably be so. But it is Divine.

Now I shall resume my argument which I had to leave last evening for lack of time. Mr. Jamieson represented to you that there was a devil, and he was a terrible old monster, who was up in heaven in the high courts of bliss, and there was a great difficulty and war up there, and they kicked him out, and he fell to the earth, and we have had a great trouble here ever since. I don't believe any such story as that. I don't believe that the Bible—King James' or the original—teaches any such things. I know it speaks of a war in heaven, and I wish to call your attention to it for a little while, and see what this battle was. "There appeared" (Rev. 12: 1-3) "a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and there appeared another wonder in heaven, and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads." Are you not satisfied that this is figurative language? Can you by any means make that a literal devil? Might as well try to make the woman clothed with the literal sun! What a monstrosity that would be! A body going clear through the sun and touching the moon with her feet, and also her head reaching to the twelve stars! Who, with common sense, would bring that into this discussion, and make it a literal matter? I would have just as good a reason to do so as Mr. Jamieson or any other individual has to produce a ten horned dragon that made war in heaven and say it was literal. We don't believe a word of it, not by any means; but I will endeavor to show you who this great monster is.

June, 1980

Turn now to Revelation, and let the Revelator tell his own story, because he can tell it better than I can. He tells it in the seventeenth chapter. "So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns." I want to know who it is, and what it is, and who the woman is. Mr. Jamieson has told you about this great starry monster, with seven heads and ten horns, and we may as well see what this war is to be. I also want to mention that this war spoken of in Revelation is to be right on this Earth. And it has not happened yet. The book of Revelation was written to reveal "things which shall be hereafter," and the devil of theology was on earth long before Revelation was penned. What we read of here is to be brought about when the King of kings shall return from the far-off country and take the reins of government in His own hands and rule the earth. Then there will be a time of trouble; there will be war in "heaven," and the devil will be cast out of the heavens.

Now do you suppose that it is the literal heavens? Let us look at the matter for a moment. "Hear, O heavens!" Do you suppose that is a literal heaven commanded to hear the words of the Lord? Where are these heavens? Let the Prophet tell us: "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amos, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Here are the four kings of Judah, and he says to them: "Hear, O heavens!" The kings were the heavens, and the people ruled over, the earth.

This war in heaven is also a war among the rulers of earth. And it will happen when Christ comes back, for it says He is coming as "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah." It is declared to us in the 19th chapter of Revelation about this war that: "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword." That is figurative language.

We find also that the great monster with seven heads and ten horns that made war in heaven was upon the earth, and the heavens were the ruling powers. And what is more natural, than that, when Christ returns to the earth to take the reins of government, there will be war? Do you suppose this great America of ours will lay down her weapons and submit to His power or His rule? She will marshal her forces and bring her armies against the King of kings, and there will be the greatest war man has ever seen, for Daniel in the 12th chapter declares: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to

that same time." Daniel speaks also of the time of the resurrection, at the coming of the Lord (v. 2). But the trouble is not in the literal heavens nor a literal woman, nor a literal sun, nor a literal monster in Revelation.

Turn with me for a moment to Genesis, to the dream of Joseph. He says: I have "dreamed . . . and behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me." Who would think that the literal sun, moon and stars bowed submissively to Joseph? We find the sun, moon and stars in this case are only the father and mother of Joseph, and Joseph's eleven brethren who, when he was in Egypt, were to come and bow under his authority. The Divine phraseology explains it all. I don't know how Mr. Jamieson can fail to see it.

We find on this devil question that it is a very easy matter, with the Bible in hand, for us to brush it away, leaving the truth to shine in its great beauty and glory.

Listen! nobody but the God of heaven would have thought of getting up such phraseology as in the lessons we find in the Bible. Remember, my friends, this was written long before it ever came to pass; and then to think that Rome would come up and have seven heads and ten horns, ten divisions of the kingdom. Remember this was spoken and written long before it ever had its division. Does it not prove the Book to be Divine and not human at all? I am glad he brought that question up, because I wanted to tell you I did not believe in any old literal devil running around with a poker to catch you and get you to hell; by no means. I don't believe he got his power from Jehovah, as Friend Jamieson has represented. No, sir. The devil I believe in is the one you can see when you look into a glass. That is all the devil I believe in. Sin in any and all of its manifestations is all the devil I believe in, and it is the devil that tempts us. We have that manifested in a multitude of men, but it is all the same.

You will find in every case that the Bible stands, and no one can overturn it. Let us prize this record. Let us go to it and study it. I am sorry that our clergymen do not advise their members to come here to this discussion. There is a chance for them to

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### Errata

On page 19 of the May, 1980 issue of the MEGIDDO MESSAGE is an error. The first sentence in the second paragraph should read, "We find, then, that the God that Moses saw, and that the seventy and Israel saw, were angels instead of the great Jehovah Himself." ●●

learn something, although I may be a little puny teacher. There is something to learn from this discussion. I am not afraid of Mr. Jamieson; he does not have horns like that devil, and you need not be afraid of him either. I have no horns, so you need not be afraid of me either.

Mr. Jamieson says I am half Infidel, or he is half Christian. Well, I will tell you how it is: He is a half Christian, for I am not a half Infidel. I have hopes of him, he has given me more hopes tonight than ever; and I trust that this friendly discussion will result in great good. I love a friendly, Christian discussion. That is not quarreling.

I will call your attention further to this testimony: "I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand" (Rev. 20:1). "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years." Yes, that old devil has got to be bound. Friend Jamieson wanted to know if he is loose. Yes, but the time is coming when he is going to be bound. When will that be? When the Lord comes back from heaven and takes the reins of government in his own hands; when that war ensues and the Lord overcomes him, and casts him out of power. Don't let Mr. Jamieson deceive you in this matter; don't let me deceive you; and don't let any other man on earth deceive you. ●●

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## Heads Up!

When the past is in your mind  
When to brooding you're inclined,  
And the road seems hard to find—  
Heads up!

Eyes front!

Forward, *march!*

When your spirits seem quite low,  
And you ask which way to go,  
Whether "Yes" or whether "No"—

Heads up!

Eyes front!

Forward, *march!*

God above will show the way  
In starless night or dreary day;  
Repeat again without dismay,

Heads up!

Eyes front!

Forward, *march!*

—Selected and altered.

# Covetousness Is . . .

**I**T HAS BEEN said that it is far easier to cure a man of smallpox than it is to cure him of greed and covetousness. This is true today; it was true in ages past. We can read in the Bible of several occasions where greed for earthly treasure brought death.

There is the case of Achan, whose covetousness was excited by the sight of that costly robe of Shinar. Even when it had brought him face to face with death he could still call it a "goodly Babylonish garment." One sin led to another—he appropriated the gold and silver that was devoted to the treasury of the Lord, he robbed God of the firstfruits of the land of Canaan, and then he tried to conceal his evil.

The deadly sin that led to Achan's ruin had its root in greed and covetousness, one of the most common of sins. Are not we today tempted by this same sin, and are not the warnings against it as solemn and explicit as those given to Achan? We are just as directly forbidden to indulge our covetous desires as was Achan to appropriate the spoils of Jericho. God has

declared it to be idolatry, and so it is. We are warned, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). "Take heed, and beware of covetousness" (Luke 12:15).

We cannot covet possessions that are not ours; neither can we covet our own ways or any fleshly desire that is forbidden by God. If we do, punishment will be meted out to us.

Is it not time that we realized that each and every one of us are but the guests of our Creator here, that we in truth possess nothing? All that we have is merely loaned to us, and we will have to give an account of the use we make of it. All belongs to God.

We have the example of the fate of Achan. We know also of the fearful doom of Ananias and Sapphira. Having promised to give all to the Lord, they withheld a portion and received judgment which cost them their lives (Acts 5: 1-11). The same fate will befall us if, after agreeing to sell out all to the Lord, we hold back a part with which to satisfy ourselves.

Yet, notwithstanding all these warnings in the Book of God, covetousness abounds. Everywhere its slimy track is seen. It creates in the heart discontent, excites envy, and prompts to many evils. It is a deadly foe of all God's children.

Let us show our better judgment by learning the lesson from those of the past who suffered for their sin, and stop coveting anything that will hinder our spiritual growth. ●●

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## Keep the Joy Before You

**I**T IS ALWAYS good and necessary to exhort and admonish one another to do better in our Christian lives. We have to keep the joy set before us, which will be exceeding abundantly above all we can now ask or think. Our mortal minds fail to comprehend the greatness of the reward. And to think that will be ours, a full reward, if we are fully one hundred percent obedient and always do everything to please the Lord.

Many times we fail to keep the things of the eternal kingdom always first in our minds, relaxing our vigilance. There is great danger in doing this, and it is a very bad situation to be found in when our Master returns.

We must keep striving more strongly to keep the things of our natural mind outside and to use this short remaining time to please the Lord. We

are told many times in the Word of God that we must grow up to the full stature of the Lord. And we are also told that what is required of us is not beyond our ability to perform. It is a great work as we strive joyfully to endure the trials of every day which are necessary to make of us a strong character. A time of trouble is coming, and we shall want to be delivered at that time. And what a wonderful deliverance that will be, to stand before our Master approved, free from all mortal physical weakness, pain and sorrow. All these great promises will be ours if we apply ourselves wholeheartedly to overcoming every evil.

It is so very easy to allow our minds to drift, neglecting to watch every thought, word and action, and to lose control over self. We have failed that way many times. But let us always arise and climb to a higher level of thinking and doing, with a full determination to win. ●●

—B. C., Canada

# Modern Nehushtans

WHAT IS the meaning of the word Nehushtan? The word occurs in II Kings 18:4, where we read: "He [Hezekiah] . . . brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan." Translated, the word means literally, "a piece of brass" (see Marginal reference).

Some seven or so centuries earlier Moses had made this very serpent of brass at God's command. During their wilderness journey the children of Israel often murmured until they vexed the soul of Moses and brought the judgments of God upon themselves. As they compassed the southern end of the Dead Sea, and the land of Edom, they became "much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread" (Num. 21:4-6). It was another complaint. So what did the Lord do? "The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died" (v. 6).

Then, realizing their sin, the people confessed and asked Moses to pray unto the Lord for them, "that he take away the serpents from us." Moses prayed, and the Lord instructed him to make "a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: . . . that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live." It was a matter of obedience. By this simple gesture they could be spared from the results of the terrible plague.

The plague was stayed, but the brazen serpent remained; and several hundred years later it was still around, prominently displayed. Many were the Israelites who looked upon it in those intervening years and were reminded of God's judgments as well as His mercy.

But why was the serpent destroyed by Hezekiah? It was because that which had been a symbol had become an object of worship; the people were actually burning incense to it. Whatever blessing the serpent had been as a symbolic reminder in time past, it had now become an

unquestionable curse. King Hezekiah, recognizing the evil of the practice, had the courage to call this relic "Nehushtan," "just a piece of brass," and destroyed it.

It seems to be a tendency and weakness of humans to allow that which is a symbol to blind them to the reality. It happened with the Pharisees, whom Jesus accused of "making the word of God of none effect" through their traditions. The law of Moses had been given by the Lord. It was a righteous law and had been given for a specific purpose. It was designed to mold and govern the nation of Israel through a long period of development. It served its purpose well. But when the nation ended as a nation, the time had come for its removal. With the advent of Christ, its efficacy was finished. But the Pharisees of Jesus' day would not accept this. They preferred the piece of brass to the "new and living way"; they preferred that which demanded little—and gave little. But Jesus denounced it for what it was—Nehushtan, a piece of worthless brass; a maze of meaningless laws which had been added age by age to the law of Moses until the so-called "law" consumed volumes.

Some people have a blind veneration for the past that hallows anything handed down from a previous age. They seem to have a fanatical attachment to institutions and customs of olden times and worship at their shrine, rather than at the shrine of living faith. This is where the Pharisees of Jesus' day erred, and thus prevented any possibility of seeing beyond.

God does not want us to forget the past, but neither does He want us to worship it. Life is a *present* reality, and the value of time for us is only the value we give it today.

The cross of Christ is a modern symbol we may properly call "Nehushtan." This symbol, which could be associated with the cross of self-denial Jesus taught, a cross that must be carried daily wherever we go, whatever we do, has instead become a symbol of some magical power associated with Christ's death, as though He by dying took care of the sins we ourselves would not be capable of atoning for. Thus it has become



only a piece of brass, fit only to be destroyed.

Even that which is the center of our faith—the Bible—may be misused. The apostle Paul pronounced a curse upon anyone who should handle “the word of God deceitfully.” The Bible is truly our hope and our salvation; but used as a blind object of devotion instead of being adhered to in daily life, it will provide us neither hope nor salvation.

Let us take care that the sacred things we esteem do not lose their meaning. Even the most

sacred and meaningful phrase may lose its power with us and become a common, ordinary thing, a “piece of brass,” if we do not keep activating our minds by it. God wants us to serve Him in truth and righteousness. He wants us to use our minds to think and to direct all our ways by His Word. This is our first duty; if we fail in this, even the most sacred symbols and objects in our lives will become no more than Nehushtan, and will provide us no eternal satisfaction, deliverance, or blessing. ●●

## *Is Your Lamp Burning?*

Say, is your lamp burning, my brother?

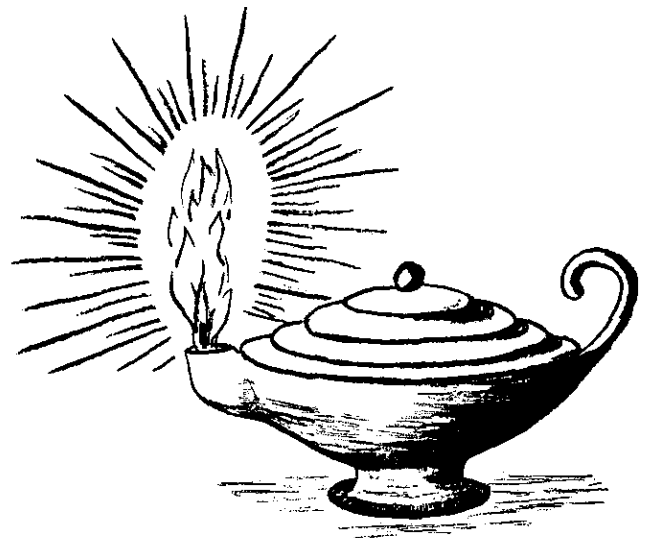
I pray you look quickly and see;  
For if it were burning, then surely  
Some beams would be falling on me.

Straight, straight is the road, but I falter,  
And oft I fall out by the way;  
Then lift your lamp higher, my brother,  
Lest I should make fatal delay.

There are many and many around you  
Who follow wherever you go;  
If you thought that they walked in the shadow  
Your lamp would burn brighter, I know.

Upon the dark mountains they stumble,  
They are bruised on the rocks, and they lie  
With their white pleading faces turned upward  
To the clouds and the pitiful sky.

There is many a lamp that is lighted,  
We behold them anear and afar,  
But not many among them, my brother,  
Shine steadily on, like a star.



I think, were they trimmed night and morning,  
They would never burn down or go out,  
Though from the four quarters of heaven  
The winds were all blowing about.

If once all the lamps that were lighted  
Should steadily blaze in a line,  
Wide over the land and the ocean,  
What a girdle of glory would shine!

How all the dark places would brighten!  
How the mists would roll up and away!  
How the earth would laugh out in her gladness  
To hail the Millennial Day!

Say, is your lamp burning, my brother?  
I pray you look quickly and see;  
For if it were burning, then surely,  
Some beams would fall brightly on me.  
—Selected.

# Our Readers Write...

## Inspired

I have been listening to the cassette sermon "Take No Thought for the Morrow" and am moved to show appreciation for the meaning of it all. Such sermons help me as never before. "Saviour, let me walk with Thee" can be my plea, too, close to Him, following our Pattern, our soon coming King.

How thankful we are to have found the Light. Praise be to God!

The bread comes as fast as we can consume it. Too true! I marvel how it is prepared so regularly, yet in such variety. The article on the back cover of the December, 1979, *Message*, called "Aspiration" has been my spiritual breakfast each day since; so inspirational has it proved that I want to memorize it.

God is not far from those who truly love Him. We grieve Him many times after promising to serve Him. We know He forgives if we confess, but we must forsake too. Each victory helps us, some other to win. I delight in singing His praises. I see the need to make bigger strides each day as time is so elusive and I must keep at self, spending and being spent, joying in doing the Master's will.

Some day will be the meeting. God grant that we may be present.

*Crewe, England*

N. T.

## All In A Tick

We are told that this life is but a tick on Eternity's great clock.

Inasmuch as our eyes of understanding have been enlightened by this wonderful Word of God should we not be strictly careful about the life we live, acting like sensible men, not thoughtless, making the very most of our time? These are indeed evil days; vice, immorality, indecency, anger and jealousy mark the conduct of most people today. God commands us to be a separate and peculiar people, zealous of good works, having nothing to do with the fruitless ways of darkness. We must redeem the time and not waste it. It will take all of our time to conquer this carnal nature of ours and bring our lives into subjection to God's righteous law. If ever we hope to live in that blessed time when there will be no more sickness, sorrow, pain or death forevermore, we will have to hasten to make ourselves ready now.

Right now is the time to strive with patience and determination to overcome every evil with good, and run the race to the end.

Let us renew our determination to overcome all evil and daily nourish the new man with the bread of life, that we may stand before the Judge unashamed, clad in garments of spotless white.

*Peru, Iowa*

F. B.

## Today—Tomorrow

Our great concern now is not to waste our time on the things external that we must leave behind, but to cultivate the virtues that will make us somebody in God's sight.

The work of becoming a Christian is not completed in a moment but is a process of growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Word of God. His Word is a thorough furnisher unto all good works.

Time is passing swiftly on. We must work while still we may, making the best use of our time, despite all difficulties, for "the night cometh when no man can work" (John 9:4). It must be a divine growth "not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).

We must realize the shortness of this mortal existence and the necessity of haste in all our spiritual endeavors. These are the days for shaping our destiny. Today is the accepted time, tomorrow may be the day of reckoning.

*"Then let us live with rightful aim,  
The evil shun, the good maintain;  
And with this motto ever clear,  
Improve each moment, hour, and year."*

*St. Joseph, Missouri*

H. W.

## Sowing Seed

The opportunity for sowing the good seed of the Kingdom is ever present. One need not travel to the far shores of earth to do so. Men and women who need converting are everywhere, and those whose faith needs strengthening are always about us. Those to whom we speak a word may not heed it, they may ignore it entirely for the present; but some will hear and reconstruct their lives. In any case, we are the better for having done on our part. We find strength for our own weakness by helping another who is weak. We become kind and compassionate by showing kindness and compassion to others; lovable by loving; and as expressed by the Wise Man, "He that watereth shall be watered also himself."

We all must be of one mind, but this cannot all be done in a moment. It is something which we must grow into. As we read in the words of Paul in Ephesians 2, we must grow into a holy temple in the Lord. There is a growth to make if we ever are part of this holy temple.

We see how short life is. We must be careful or we shall not have time to become of one mind, with one mouth glorifying our Father in heaven (Rom. 15:5-6).

*Monrovia, Liberia*

J. S. D.

## Appreciative

I would like to say that I have enjoyed each monthly issue of the *Megiddo Message* magazine while serving in the armed forces. Soon I will be returning to civilian life, and I would like to continue receiving your monthly magazine without interruption.

Let me say again, thank you very much for a well published magazine that you have. May God bless you and your Church, and your magazine for the next 3,000,000,000 years to come upon this earth, or as long as we must live as human beings.

*Fort Fustis, Virginia*

F. H.

## A Young Girl's Appreciation

Well, Mom and Dad, how's everything now? I changed my mind about looking for a new job when I went to visit G—— and D—— (her employers). They are really depending on me. I guess from what they said they don't trust D—— and D——. It makes me feel good that they do trust me. Thanks to you, Mom and Dad. All your discipline that I objected to—I'm real thankful for it now. I really didn't know how much it influenced my life, but people notice.

*Albion, New York*

L. B.

## Pressing Into the Kingdom

We must press forward no matter what our circumstances may be. It is not always possible to have our environment such as we would wish, yet we are told we can create our own environment—at least as far as our minds are concerned, if we keep ourselves peaceful and in harmony with God's Word and adjust ourselves to changing circumstances. We are taught that to be ready and willing to make such adjustments is a sign of spiritual maturity. So it is something to be sought for. There is so much more peace and contentment when we really come out and separate ourselves from the world.

Time is of supreme importance. Truly, time is that important commodity which really gets away almost before we realize it. We get up with the sun, plan our day, the things we wish to accomplish; then, things which we cannot foresee come across our path. Come evening and we did not accomplish what we had planned. "Take time to be holy." This we firmly believe. We *must* attend to spiritual things or duties, but then the temporal things still remain to be done.

We believe God will guide and direct, but we must be very careful to see that we are doing all we can on our part, then He will do the rest. We must refuse to believe that there are any circumstances sufficiently strong to defeat us in our quest for eternal life.

*Charleston, Mississippi*

R. S.

## Step by Step

It is indeed good and pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity (Ps. 133:1). But to dwell in unity is not a simple saying; we must understand what unity means. The first step in unity is to speak the truth (Eph. 4:25), and truth must be learned as given by God in His holy writings to us (Ps. 32:8). So, after one knows the truth it leads us to the second step which requires us to walk in the truth (I John 1:6-7), and to walk in the truth means the keeping and doing of all of God's commandments. When we have taken these two steps that brings us to a final step which requires the endurance to the end of our lifetime, as Jesus says, "but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." This great and wonderful work of saving will be done by our Redeemer Jesus Christ who shall "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:20-21).

*Bright, Ontario, Canada*

A. B.

June, 1980

## Obituaries

### Ralph Vosburgh

On March 15, 1980, funeral services were conducted in Fort Plain, New York, for a longtime friend and brother, Ralph Vosburgh. The passing of Brother Ralph leaves only one survivor of the Vosburgh family, Gerald, who still resides near the family homestead in Stone Arabia, New York.

The Vosburgh acquaintance with the church dates back to 1921, the family through the years showing exceptional kindness, generosity and hospitality toward the church and its members.

### Erma Britch

On April 2, we met to pay our last respects to a friend and sister of our Rochester Congregation, Erma Britch. Sister Britch moved to Rochester to join the church group in 1935 and as long as health permitted she showed a willing spirit to help in whatever way she could, whether in ministering to the sick or in church activities.

Sister Britch is survived by one son, Delwin Britch, of North Berkshire Falls, Vermont. Interment was in Mount Hope Cemetery.

### George W. Sawyer

Also on April 2, 1980, our church lost an ardent member, brother and friend of many years, George W. Sawyer. In failing health for many years, he nevertheless lived richly, making the most of his bright hope of the future to look beyond temporary sufferings.

Brother Sawyer's was a long and useful service to the organization as he gave liberally of his skills. As an electrician, he donated literally thousands of hours to installing and operating of lights in the church and on the church grounds. As a writer, he contributed numerous thought-provoking articles and letters which were published or circulated and widely appreciated for the spiritual uplift and encouragement they provided. As a missionary, he made three major trips, distributing literature and attempting to interest others in living the Christian life. When in declining years he was unable to do any strenuous work, he took very seriously the various hand tasks associated with mailing our literature and was always an eager helper.

Services were conducted by Assistant Pastor Newton H. Payne, and interment was in Mount Hope Cemetery where rest others of our beloved dead awaiting the great Day when the trumpet shall sound and all who sleep in Christ will rise to receive the reward of their life's labors.



# SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

*"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds"*  
—Acts 26:28-29.

**P**AUL's role before Agrippa was a dual one; he was the defendant acting as his own attorney. Agrippa was the judge, expected to render the verdict, guilty or not guilty. Paul's kinsmen had already judged him guilty, but that did not dampen the missionary spirit within him. Completing his defense before the king, he appealed to him and all others who heard him, to join him in the Christian faith. It was like pleading guilty to being a Christian, and then bidding the judge to share his guilt.

Paul was an able defender of the faith. His message was straightforward. He did not offer a mixture of philosophy and religion, but he set forth the principles of the faith as the Master had taught them. His teaching conformed so closely to that of Christ that he could say, "Copy me as I copy Christ." His life and manner of speech were consistent with his teaching. He was a living example of Christianity in action, never hesitating to bid his hearers look to him.

Paul stood before Agrippa as an example of the Christian faith. We should never underestimate the power of a good example, nor should we forget the significance of our own example. Very few people have ever been argued into the Christian faith, but many have been led into it by the power of example. Paul may have been the only example of a consistent Christian life the king had ever seen, and the best instruction in the Christian way is the Christian himself. It might be possible to refute an argument, but it is impossible to refute a life. An Enoch of whom we know no more than that he "walked with God" leaves an indelible impression on the mind of the reader. An Abraham who was fit to be called the "friend of God" impresses us as someone we would like to know.

And Paul, who could say to a king, "I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains," was an example that almost moved the king to follow him. Agrippa was stirred, but not sufficiently to yield to Paul's pleading. His answer is reminiscent of Felix's "convenient season"—not just now, but maybe sometime. Before him Felix had trembled; now Agrippa almost yielded with the words, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

There is no such thing as being "almost" a Christian. We either are or we are not. To some, being a Christian means joining a church, but church membership has no significance if one does not honestly seek to live up to the principles upon which Christ's church is founded. Christianity is not something on the fringe of life; it is life itself. Our religion is not something we do in our spare moments, it is our daily life.

Paul's teaching closely paralleled the teachings of Christ. Before his experience on the Damascus road he had been a "Pharisee of the Pharisees," but after that he was a new creature in Christ; all things had become new. As Christ was no flatterer, neither was Paul. As Christ was bold and plain-spoken, so was he. It was this boldness and faith in his message that enabled him to speak so convincingly before Agrippa.

Paul's only exception in his invitation to the king were the chains that bound him to a Roman guard. Could we stand before a king, or even our neighbor, and invite him to be as we are? Or would we have to make some exceptions?

In the secular world, there are many exceptions. We learn in school that "It is 'I' before 'E', except after 'C'"; that the months of the year have either 30 or 31 days—except for February

(with another exception). We own some property. It is all ours, except—. But the rules for being a Christian contain no exceptions. They have been set down in our Guidebook by God Himself, and with Him there is no variableness.

But what of us? What exceptions would we have to make? We are not bound by a literal chain, but are we bound by evils that we would not want to see in another? Could we invite another to be as we are without exception, or would we have to add a few little exceptions? (Except for my patience which is rather short at times? Except that I'm apt to be difficult the first thing in the morning? Except for my tongue that is sometimes rather hasty? Except that I am prone to exaggerate a little?)

If we need to make exceptions such as these, it is time to correct them *now*, for there are no exceptions to the rules laid down by God. We are either a Christian, or we are not; we cannot be half-and-half. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5: 17). Not *some* things, but *all* things are new. "That ye put off . . . the old man, which is corrupt . . . and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22-24). We cannot be part old and part new. Until we put off the old ways, there will be no place for the new.

Jesus said, "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mk. 12:29-30). We can have no other loves above the love of God. He demands all—without exception. We cannot have two masters, for said Jesus, "either [we] will hate the one, and love the other; or else [we] will hold to the one, and despise the other" (Luke 16:13). A choice must be made; we cannot have divided loyalty.

We are reminded that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28). Again, it is *all* things, not just *some* things. Whether or not we can see the good in it, it is working for us if we are truly called for His purpose. "All things work together for good"—without exception. ●●

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Perfection is attained by slow degrees; she requires the hand of Time.

June, 1980

## Looking Back, Looking Ahead

PETER wrote to his followers to stir up their minds by way of remembrance, that they might be mindful of the words spoken by the holy prophets and the commandments of the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another month is almost gone; its days have become history. Swifter than a weaver's shuttle they have flown, leaving behind recorded deeds of good and ill. But the time still lent to us is ours to use in God's service—or not, if we choose—we will be held accountable.

As we look back to Abib, and the beginning of the springtime, and think how swiftly the months have passed, it would be well to ask ourselves, "Have I improved my character, risen to a higher plane in the months gone by, or have I wasted my time which should have been redeemed? What is gone is gone forever; it cannot be recalled.

Why are we told to redeem the time? Because "the days are evil." Indeed, they *are* evil with surpassing wickedness on every hand. How great is the darkness all around us everywhere. The flesh is continually calling, "Follow me," and it seems to become more and more insistent as the days speed by. But we must not heed the call of our lower nature. We have chosen Jesus for our commander, and He leads the way we must go. Let us follow Him.

The one man most to be feared is self. "The heart is deceitful above all things," and it is so easy to let a thought or an imagination lead us into forbidden paths. We must watch the way, meditate on the Word because every word of God is pure.

The Bible tells us that it is "not in man that walketh to direct his steps," and that if we draw nigh to God and walk in His statutes, whether our trials be great or small, He will draw nigh to us and "will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that [we] may be able to bear it." He has also said that the angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him (Ps. 34:7).

So let us work in God's own appointed way, dying to sin as did our perfect Example, striving with all haste so as to finish this work, for we are "far on in the night." ●●



# Questions

**"The prophet Elijah brought back to life the body of the son of the widow woman. I Kings 17:22 says that 'the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.' I hereby claim that the Scriptures prove that 'the soul is immortal.' The child's soul re-entered the body."**

The question of whether or not the soul of man is immortal has been debated for hundreds of years. But the fact remains that the Bible nowhere says that the soul is immortal, undying, or deathless. It does say, "The soul that sinneth it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20). And, "the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten; . . . neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun" (Eccl. 9:5-6). Psalm 78:50 says that "he spared not their soul from death," hence souls do die. And if we try to say that the soul is immortal and undying, we make a direct contradiction.

The meaning of the text you mention in I Kings 17:21 revolves around the meaning of the Hebrew word translated "soul." That word is *nephesh*. Among its definitions are the following: "a living creature, a person, sometimes applied to animals, life, beast, body, breath, creature, man, mind, etc." The New English Bible translates this verse, "O Lord my God, let the breath of life, I pray, return to the body of this child." The meaning is the same in both translations. It makes no difference whether Elijah said, Let this child's soul come into him again, or whether he said, "Let the breath of life return to the body of this child." The word "soul" means "breath" or the vital principle which makes the difference between a living and a dead person.

Neither you nor I nor anyone can find in the Scriptures a text where the word "soul" is associated with the words immortal, deathless or undying. Man's only hope of life beyond this short mortal existence is through a restoration of life, a resurrection from the dead (I Cor. 15:12-20).

When you say that the "soul re-entered the body," I assume that you mean the intelligent

part of a person as is popularly assumed. The Bible does not support the idea of this intelligent "something" existing apart from the body. The soul of a man is his life, his breath, that which makes alive; a man does not *have* a soul, he *is* a soul. There is nothing in Scripture to give us any idea that God has a vast storehouse of departed souls where the angels can go and select the proper soul to re-unite with its body. This is a concept borrowed from the ancient Greeks; it has no foundation whatever in the Bible.

**"Is it possible for one to be a Christian without joining a denomination?"**

Yes, it is entirely possible; in fact, most denominations teach many points contrary to the message of the Bible. This is according to what Paul prophesied: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:3-4). They have broadened out the way that Jesus proclaimed to make a popular, easy way with few restrictions. Thus, what Jesus called the "way to life" cannot be found with them; it is the "narrow" way that leads to life, and "few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13-14).

In matters of religion, we must be careful to follow the advice of the apostle Paul and "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21).

**Who are the Jews? If they are God's people, and if Adam was the first one called to serve God, was not Adam the first Jew?**

The term "Jew" is usually applied to the literal descendants of Abraham through his son Isaac, and to their heritage and traditions. The name is drawn from the tribe of *Judah*, this tribe being the line through which the Messiah came. We do not hear of the term being used, however, until after the time of the Jewish captivity.

As used in Scripture, however, the term is by no means limited to the descendants of Abraham, nor is it meaningfully applied to all of them. "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children" (Rom. 9:6-7). The true Jew is the man or woman circumcized in heart, "in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28-29). In a sense, Adam could be said to have been called

as the first "Jew," though the term was not used in his time. But Adam, being unfaithful to his calling, disqualified himself.

The "Jew indeed" is the person "in whom is no guile" (John 1:47), the loyal servant of God who will receive His eternal blessing and everlasting inheritance.

"It seems to me that Jesus made a mistake in Mark 2:26. He says that David 'went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him.' If you will read First Samuel, you will find that David did not go to *Abiathar*, but to *Ahimelech*."

You are correct in stating that Ahimelech was the priest who gave David and his men the shewbread (I Sam. 21:6). But isn't it possible that Jesus was correct in what He said? Notice that Jesus did not say Abiathar gave the shewbread to David but that the incident occurred "in the days of Abiathar."

If we read the account in First Samuel, we find that it did happen during the "days of Abiathar." Ahimelech gave the bread to David and his men during the time Saul was seeking to slay David. When Saul heard about what Ahimelech had done, he was very angry and commanded that Ahimelech and all his house should be slain. This meant the life of Ahimelech, who was high priest, and that of his sons, who were also priests. But, we read, "one of the sons of Ahimelech . . . named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David." Abiathar reported to David what had happened, and David said, "I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house. Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard" (I Sam. 22:9-23). From that time on, Abiathar accompanied David.

What did Jesus say about the incident? That David "went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests." Jesus was right; David did eat of the shewbread, and it was in the days of Abiathar. ●●

## SO WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

### Windy Questions

Choose the correct word to complete each quotation:

1. "That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of (temptation, doctrine, service)."
2. "The ungodly are not so: but are like the (hay, clouds, chaff) which the wind driveth away."
3. "And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought (rain, fish, quails) from the sea."
4. "For he that (wavereth, feareth, boasteth) is like the wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed."
5. "He that observeth the wind shall not (plow, sow, reap); and he that regardeth the clouds shall not (plow, sow, reap)."
6. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and

thou hearest the (sound, rustle, noise) thereof."

7. "And Moses stretched out his (rod, staff, hand) over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night."
8. (Job, David, Solomon) said, "O remember that my life is wind: mine eye shall no more see good."
9. "Whoso boasteth himself of a false (gift, name, victory) is like clouds and wind without rain."
10. "The wind shall eat up all thy (pastors, friends, crops), and thy lovers shall go into captivity."
11. "He maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his (hand, might, treasures)."
12. Jesus said, "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A (man, reed, branch) shaken by the wind?"

### Answers:

1. doctrine, Eph. 4:14; 2. chaff, Ps. 1:4; 3. quails, Num. 11:31; 4. wavereth, James 1:6; 5. sow, reap, Eccl. 11:4; 6. sound, John 3:8; 7. hand, Ex. 14:21; 8. Job, Job 7:7; 9. gift, Prov. 25:14; 10. pastors, Jer. 22:22; 11. treasures, Ps. 135:7; 12. reed, Matt. 11:7.

# Being Useful

## -- Like a Sponge

SOMEWHERE along in the field of innovations the sponge was introduced as a useful household item. Its power to absorb is its outstanding quality, also its ability to hold moisture for dispensing later. I personally find the sponge serves me quite well where other implements are impractical.

How like the sponge is our mind. It can take in; it can also give out. And it can only give out *what* it takes in. We fill our memory with experiences and impressions. How much we retain of these depends on many factors, including our previous experiences, our powers of concentration, and how continually we try to impress our minds. The process is repetitive; as long as there are fascinations to soak up, the mind will accumulate them.

And so, knowledge increases. As we grow and live, we learn, if we apply our minds in a constructive manner. In this 20th century, the world resembles a massive sponge whose accumulated intake of knowledge is overflowing to each succeeding generation.

Jesus was a perfect example of one who retained knowledge from the right source, along with the right application of that knowledge. It seems almost incredible that at the age of twelve He was able to confound those older and supposedly wiser than He. Because of His intense desire to be about His Father's business He was soaking up His Father's words. As He grew in stature, He grew in knowledge and His mind became filled with His Father's wisdom. But His life was not without its problems. More than once the tempter appeared, but His reply was always ready: "It is written." Jesus remembered the words He had learned—He remembered to *do* them. On another occasion He made it known, "I speak not mine own words, but the words of Him that sent me." And as He went about speaking, the force of His life's example confirmed the message of those words.

David was another man whose mind served him as a sponge. His heart was inditing "a good matter"; he was saturated with things concerning the King (Ps. 45:1). And as he bubbled

with enthusiasm his tongue became as the "pen of a ready writer." David's spiritual posterity is still profiting from his psalms.

The apostle Paul also took in—and gave out—what he learned from his Master. After the Damascus experience, he emptied himself of all tradition and refilled his mind with the doctrines of Life. And this was what he advised others to do: "Fill your minds with those things that are good and noble that deserve praise: things that are true, right, pure, lovely, and honourable. Put into practice what you learned, and received from me, both from my words and from my actions." His last testimony is a definite assurance: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." But read on. Be filled. The prize of victory is awaiting him. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:7-8).

Especially like the sponge is the young mind. Children will absorb what surrounds them, whether good or evil. If they are to soak up that which is good, they must be surrounded with good examples. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 reminds the father of his important duty in this respect, in the training and directing of the young. Children of tender years cannot know that to which they have not been exposed. A good habit is often the result of patient teaching and example.

Paul had some brethren in Rome whom he believed to be full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and who were able to teach one another. They had absorbed the good until they were overflowing with it. May his words fill us to the same extent, that we may have to overflow to others and so prove ourselves useful to God. ●●

—Contributed.

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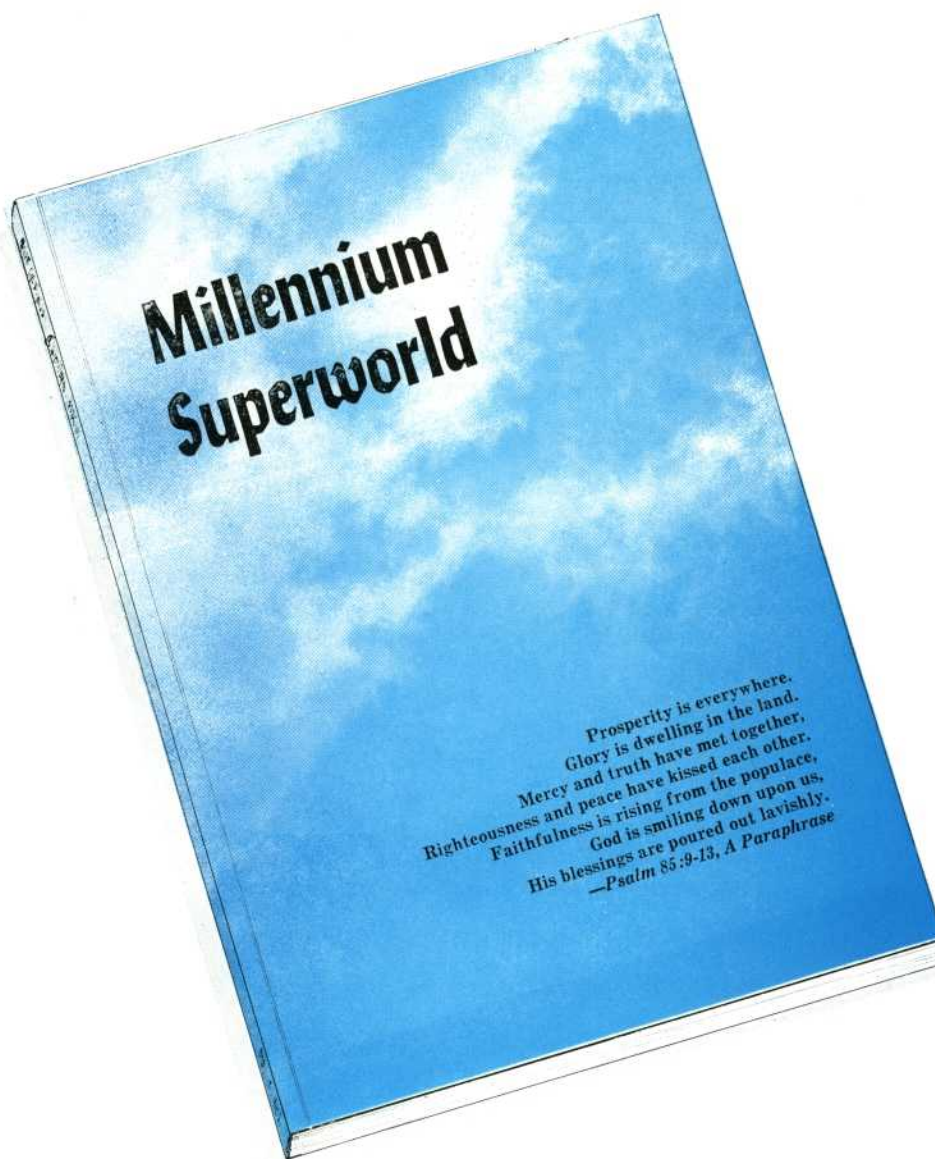
The man who does not hope for better things and does not believe that better things can be brought about is not the man likely to bring better things about. . . . Pessimism is productive of paralysis and stagnation.

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*Reputation is in itself only a farthing candle, of wavering and uncertain flame and easily blown out; but it is the light by which the world looks for and finds merit.*

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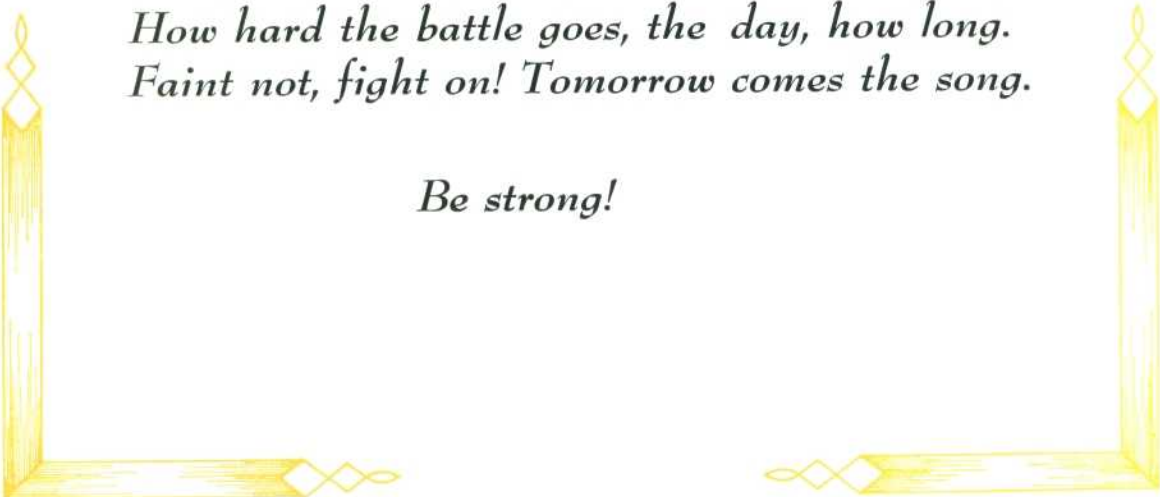
## BE STRONG

*We are not here to play, to dream, to drift.  
We have hard work to do, and loads to lift.  
Shun not the struggle; face it, 'tis God's gift.*

*Be strong!*

*Say not "The days are evil--who's to blame?"  
And fold the hands and acquiesce--O shame!  
Stand up, speak out, and bravely, in God's name.*

*Be strong!*



*It matters not how deep intrenched the wrong,  
How hard the battle goes, the day, how long.  
Faint not, fight on! Tomorrow comes the song.*

*Be strong!*