

Megiddo Message



Lord, I Thirst!

Vol. 77, No. 7

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When It Hurts to Apologize

I am sorry, I was wrong." Why are these simple words so often so hard to say? The problem lies not with our difficult language but with our difficult human nature.

We all have an instinct to make the most—and the best—of ourselves, to see ourselves in the best light and to cover anything we do not wish others to see, anything that detracts from our "good" image. We are quick enough to condemn others of being inconsistent, or play-acting, or even untrue; but very considerate of ourselves.

It is a universal affliction, having no relation to one's office or station in life. We see it in high officials who are active in world affairs. We see it in national performers. We see it in people in our government. We see it in our community. We see it in our children. And if we are honest, we see it in ourselves.

We see it in living and working with others. Something upsets us and we speak our mind. Then it is oh! so difficult to face that person and admit that we were wrong, even when the fact is obvious.

Why? Why is it so difficult to go to the one we wronged, confess it, and start over?

Part of the difficulty may lie in a certain fear of what the other's response will be. But in most cases, that is not the real problem. We can be reasonably sure the other person will respond favorably. The real problem is that by apologizing we are saying openly, "I am not all that you thought I was—or all that I ought to be."

When we look beneath the surface, we see that the real underlying problem is that our primary concern is with what others think of us—instead of with what God thinks of us. In other words, what our peers think of us means more to us than what God thinks of us. If God were the only one knowing our wrong and if all we had to do was to confess to Him, that would be much easier!

The real source of the apology pain, then, is hurt pride.

What shame upon us!

Pride keeps us from seeing ourselves as we really are. Pride keeps us from admitting we were wrong even when we know beyond a doubt that we were.

It is one thing to see the pride, another to acknowledge it, and quite another to overcome it. But why not? Who wants it? Pride works against us all the way. Proverbs 29:23 says, "A man's pride shall bring him low," and Proverbs 16:18 tells us that pride plunges us headlong to destruction.

Do we wonder at this simplistic verdict? We confirm it when we realize how easy it is for us to confess to God—where we feel we have no image to defend, no pride, and no fear of self-exposure!

How do we change this?

We need to feel such a fear of God in our hearts, such a love, such a devotion, such a deep commitment to Him that we will stand every moment in reverence and awe before Him.

How do we grow to the point where we feel a deeper sense of shame in having God know our sins than any human being? How do we come to feel that we must above all be right in His sight?

One of the fundamental changes we must make when building a Christian character is the changing of our concerns. When we belong to God, our first concern must be for His opinion, His approval, His favor.

How do we develop this concern? It is an outgrowth of true faith. If we really believe that God holds the eternal verdict upon our lives; if we really believe that in His hand is our eternal destiny, for good or ill; if we recognize His approval as our only escape from the bondage of mortality; if we see Him as the final arbiter of our life—how can we escape a deep and overpowering concern for what He thinks of us?

Again, we might look at it this way: God is the source of our life. On Him we depend for every breath. Should He withdraw His grace, His favor, and the

(Continued on page 9)

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 and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."

We believe

— in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.

We believe

— Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a Virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be king of the whole earth.

We believe

— in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.

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 humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.

We believe

— in ourselves as capable of applying in our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

We believe

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

Bible Quotations

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—New English Bible

NIV—New International Version

RSV—Revised Standard Version

TLB—The Living Bible

JB—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English

Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation

About Our Cover:

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

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



Lord, I Thirst

*As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So my soul pants for Thee, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God;
When shall I come and appear before God?
Deep calls to deep at the sound of Thy waterfalls;
All Thy breakers have rolled over me.
The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime;
And His song will be with me in the night,
A prayer to the God of my life.*

—Psalm 42:1-2, 7-8, NAS

What lies at the very heart of Christian faith? What is the motive, the impulse, the drive and soul which underlies and produces the life of faith, the life which God has promised to bless?

A religious man once wrote about those who were “patrons of religion rather than religious men and women.” What makes the difference? What is the basic quality which distinguishes the genuinely dedicated from the mere patron?

Why is it that some who name the name of Christ go on year after year spiritually immature, babies as it were,

while others are growing rapidly to the full stature of Jesus Christ?

Sometimes we are tempted to think that faith is inborn, like a talent; some have it, others do not. Or we may try to credit faith to one’s circumstances; they have not so many pressing responsibilities; they have more time to meditate and pray and really “be righteous.” Or we may think it is because they were brought up in a more reverent, faith-producing environment; perhaps they were taught at a very young age to reverence God, and that has made the difference.

Whatever our "logical" explanation, the real secret of spiritual gianthood is found in these penetrating words of our Lord: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

What is Jesus saying? That only those who truly hunger and truly thirst can experience genuine satisfaction. The real secret underlying spiritual growth, then, is *spiritual appetite*. God is not going to force His good things upon us if we do not really *want, love and long for*—righteousness.

Still we may try to rationalize. People are different. Some have almost no appetite. Others have so much appetite that they can *never* get enough of God, or His Word, or the inspirations of faith.

Yes, people *are* different. But that difference is not the result of nature; it is not the result of circumstances; it is not the automatic effect of one's childhood; *it is our own choice*. Spiritual appetite is not inborn. It is the result of the loves we cherish, the longings we nourish, the interests we cultivate, and the ideals we set up in our own mind. These make the difference, and in that difference lies the key to one's spiritual success or failure.

Why, then, do some feel a keen hunger and thirsting for God and righteousness? It is because they have caught a glimpse of better things, a higher life, an eternal destiny; and they cannot forget it. Their appetite for God and righteousness has been so whetted that the things around them have no appeal. Whether they rest or work, whether idle or busy, they have over and above all this all-possessing hunger and thirsting for righteousness: to do right, think right, feel right, *be* right before God. Whatever they are doing, there is little else on their mind. Nothing else matters. They

have set their heart on living in that new world "wherein dwells righteousness," and therefore they must be righteous!—*for they are going to be there!*

And so they eat, and eat, and eat. And the more they eat, the more they want. And the more they want, the more they eat. Do we wonder that those who hunger and thirst are the ones who grow?

It is a simple fact of life. Those who eat little grow little; those who eat much grow much. And as they continue to eat and grow, daily seeking to satisfy their increasing desire for God, concentrating on the deep issues of life and faith, reading, meditating, praying, exercising themselves in all the daily disciplines of faith, they grow. And grow. And grow. They are oblivious to what lies around them, even to circumstances that may be pleasant. Only one thing matters: that they *be right*. Do we wonder that they become spiritual giants?

This need for spiritual appetite is illustrated several times in Scripture. In no case do we find giants ready made. They are all the result of personal initiative, a strongly disciplined will, a deeply cultivated love of life, and a heart longing after God. In short, "Lord, I thirst!"

The more they learn of God, the more they *want* to learn. And the nearer they draw toward Him, the more they *long* for Him. The more they company with God, the more they *want* to dwell in His presence.

"Lord I Thirst"—Moses

See Moses at Mt. Sinai. God called him up into the mountain and gave him the most splendid revelation ever given up to that time. It was a law for the governing and well being of the nation of Israel. Only a civil law, but what great fanfare accompanied it. No one who

lived through the experience could ever forget it.

When Moses returned from the mountain, his face shining with the glory of God, in obedience he immediately erected the tabernacle. When the tabernacle was completed, Moses went there to speak to God. This meeting with God was a choice privilege, which Moses counted among his richest blessings. More than receiving a message from One he feared; it was a loving communion with his Friend. We read, "And

The real secret underlying spiritual growth is spiritual appetite. God is not going to force His good things upon us if we do not really want, love, and long for—righteousness.

the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex. 33:11).

What were Moses' first words as he spoke to his Friend? Did he voice a prayer of thanksgiving as though he had arrived, as though God had fully satisfied him and his work was complete? No, rather, he expressed a petition, a heart longing still unsatisfied:

"If I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee."

With all that Moses had seen and

Spiritual giants are not ready made. They are the result of a strongly disciplined will, a deeply cultivated love of life, and a heart longing and thirsting for God.

experienced of God's presence and power, he was still not satisfied. He wanted one more word, one more assurance that God would be with him and bring him safely through. And so he petitioned, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory" (Ex. 33:18). Instead of being satisfied, Moses was longing for more. The desire of his heart was deep. "Lord, I thirst!" He was still hungering, still thirsting, still longing to learn, to grow, to draw nearer to the God who was ordering his life, the God who had promised to see him through. For the task he was undertaking was no small assignment, and he wanted one more assurance that God would be with him.

God did not condemn Moses for his request, but responded openly, setting Moses in the cleft of the rock while His angel passed by. It was an elaborate display of His glory, the angel interposing his hand between himself and Moses to protect Moses from its fullest blaze. We wonder if Moses had realized what he was asking, but God did not hesitate to satisfy him.

What an experience!

"Lord I Thirst"—David

David was another spiritual giant who walked daily in close communion with God. But here again is every evidence of a giant not ready made. David was a spiritual giant because his hunger for spiritual insight was a living, growing thing. He was never satisfied. The more he companied with God, the more he learned of the knowledge of God, the more he lived in the presence of God, the more he longed for all of these. So deeply did he feel for God that we, reading his Psalms twenty-five centuries later, can still sense it and be inspired to seek God ourselves.

Hear the intensity in his plea: "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; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary" (Ps. 63:1-2).

Again, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God" (Ps. 84:1-2). Yes, David was thirsting.

What was the source of this deep inner longing? Why was David longing for God? Was it because he was naturally religious, or because some circumstance in his life compelled him to God?

David was seeking God not because of anything external but because of the deep longing of his heart. He could say it and mean it, "Lord, I thirst!" David hungered for all that God could teach him, for all that God was, for all that God could give him. Only God could grant him the desires of his heart; only God could give life.

The 42nd Psalm is one of those intensely personal portions of Scrip-

ture which x-rays the soul and shows what is at its center. It begins by painting a word picture from the world of nature, a world very real to the Psalmist. Picture a deer standing alone among the rocks in a wilderness uninhabited. It is the dry season. The ravines are arid, the springs waterless. The deer stands there, apprehensive, its eyes full of fear, its tongue parched with thirst. It is panting desperately for water, for it knows that in water is life.

That, says the Psalmist, is a picture of himself. That, he cries out, is the condition of his soul. "As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Ps. 42:1-2).

"My soul thirsts..." for what? For pleasure? for comfort? for fame? for the good words of those around me? No, the Psalmist would be satisfied with none of these. They were too small, too petty, too insignificant. At the center of his life was one enormous reality: God. Gone were all the trappings of religion, gone the familiar pattern of practices, gone everything which was merely on the surface. Only his inner thirst remained. "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God."

So often we have proved ourselves too shallow, too attached to this world. We have contented ourselves in a religion which is merely on the surface. Our faith has been in externals, in form and ritual, in meeting and greeting, in friendships and smiles. While all these are good, they are not enough. They are not the heart of it. Real religion is the heart thirsting for life, for faith, for goodness—for God; a heart so committed to pleasing God that it is ready and anxious to make any sacrifice, or render any obedience that is required.

Exterior religion may be pleasant, if you happen to have a taste for that

sort of thing. To go through the motions of piety with more or less regularity may be comforting, not too disturbing to the even tenor of life. It is not too costly, in terms of time and effort and money, to practice quite successfully a religion which lies on the surface.

But what is it worth? How durable is such a faith? Will it stand up in the storms of life? What will remain when the trappings are torn off and faith is stripped to its essentials? Have we that soul thirst, that inner longing for God that will cause us to seek and secure that which will always abide with us, come what may?

"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." Here is the fundamental difference between deep genuine faith and surface religion. Here is the heart of a living, growing faith!

If our heart is thirsting for God, there will be a marked difference between our former life and our new life in Christ. Those about us will know it. We will live every hour

with this desire on our minds, and it will influence every decision we make, every word we speak, every feeling we harbor.

"Lord I Thirst" —Paul

The apostle Paul was another of these intensely thirsty souls, deeply longing for God and righteousness. He could recount a past which would have been the envy of many. He was "an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil. 3:5-6).

But superseding all this was what he had learned from Christ. Even though he could look back on what many would consider an enviable past, it was not enough. "I count all things but loss," he wrote speaking from the depths of his own convictions, "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but

refuse, that I may win Christ,...That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:8, 10-11).

Paul found no satisfaction in his past, only in the fact that it had brought him to knowing Christ. Now his whole heart was set on pleasing Christ, knowing Christ, and building the life that Christ would approve. "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." This was his one desire, his one goal. In other words, "Lord I thirst." He could be satisfied with himself only as he could be sure that Christ was pleased with him.

In doing this, Paul was avoiding a tragedy that has ruined so many, that of being too easily satisfied with lesser goals, transient nothings. Paul knew the danger, and guarded warily against it. "This one thing I do," he said, and he meant it. His one desire

*So judge me, God, by what I do, and I will not complain,
Whether my life be sunshine, or whether it be rain.
But hear my prayer for strength and grace to conquer and excel,
That I may honor Thee, my God, and always serve Thee well.*

*I do not want to drop my cross or fall beside the way;
Just give me grace to serve Thee, God, for still another day.*

*Let not my spirit weaken, or let my mind grow tired
However long the vigil, Lord, keep me at Thy side;
Enable me to do Thy will, however great my loss,
And as Thy humble servant, God, to bear whatever cross.*

The real secret of spiritual gianthood is found in these words of our Lord: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness."

was to go deeper into the things of God, deeper into his own heart, to pursue with all his might the goal which Christ had set before him; to make his life a brilliant pageant of triumph in Christ, so that he might be able to say triumphantly, "I live for God" (II Cor. 2:14, Moffatt). Only then could he be satisfied.

"Lord I Thirst"—Peter

The apostle Peter experienced this same divine thirsting for righteousness, and he wanted the same for his brethren. His one longing was that they should, "like babies,...be hungry for nothing but milk—the spiritual honesty which will help you to grow up to salvation" (I Pet. 2:2, JB). The whole center of Peter's message was bound up in that one word: "Grow."

How might they grow? By thirsting for God, desiring the "sincere milk of the word," by longing more and more for spiritual nourishment. In other words, "Lord I thirst."

Peter put the responsibility upon each one. Each must grow—out of spiritual babyhood, into spiritual maturity. And this growth, he says, will be directly related to your

appetite. The more you eat, the more you will grow. So, everyone of you, "desire the sincere milk of the word"—hunger for it, long for it, thirst for it—that by it you may grow.

"The milk of the word" is to the inner life what food is to the body. And just as a loss of appetite often indicates a serious physical problem, so the loss of *spiritual* appetite indicates a serious *spiritual* problem.

The Apostle says it again in his Second Epistle: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18).

The author of the book of Hebrews shared this same concern for his brethren. For the time and advantages they had had, they ought to be grown up. But they were not. Theirs had been a firm grounding in the word. They had endured suffering. They had been so well taught that by now they should be teachers. But they were still, spiritually speaking, small children. What was the underlying cause? Lack of appetite, lack of thirst.

Perhaps they were giving too much concern to nonessentials, and as a result their ears had become dull of hearing and their eyes closed to the beauty of real truth. He writes: "We have much to say, much that is difficult to explain, now that you have grown so dull of hearing. For indeed, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the ABCs of God's oracles over again; it has come to this, that you need milk instead of solid food. Anyone who lives on milk, being an infant, does not know what is right. But grown men can take solid food; their perceptions are trained by long use to discriminate between good and evil" (Heb. 5:11-14, NEB).

It is not enough to offer an outward obedience; God wants the

longings of our hearts. When this longing is absent, when spiritual children do not desire spiritual blessings and growth above everything else, there is nothing to cause them to change and mature, and they remain, spiritually speaking, infants.

One of the outstanding marks of a son or daughter of God is an insatiable hunger for God and righteousness, to do right, feel right, be right. This ever growing desire draws them to live every moment as in the presence of God, eager to see some new unfolding of His plan for them, receiving every day as His special benison of mercy. In short, "Lord I thirst."

"Lord, I Thirst"—Us

And now, what of us? Have we this thirst, this longing, this deep desire for God and righteousness that is above all else?

Let us say it from the depths of our heart, and let us mean it. Let us walk deeper and yet deeper into the days ahead *with God*, losing ourselves in His thoughts, seeing every aspect of life as under His supervision, and receiving each day as His special gift. When we are working, let us approach each task as His special assignment to us, which must be done for His pleasure and to His glory. And when we rest, let us focus our minds upon Him and all that He has done, is doing, and has promised to do. As we do this, our appetite will increase. And as we thirst more and more for God, we will eat more. And according as we eat we will grow, more and more, until at last we reach the ultimate, even the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Let each of us probe deep into the ground and source of our personal faith. Don't take it for granted. Examine it. Test it. Take it apart. Overhaul it as it needs overhauling.

"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God"—where else can we find hope, satisfaction, life!

*O God, let my faith be
A living, growing thing in me—
That takes control of heart and hand
And binds me to a loftier plan,
That keeps me calm amid the strife,
And trains me for a larger life;
A life that sees beyond earth's woe
To joys that only angels know;
A life that tastes, e'en here, with
Thee,
The bliss of immortality!*

May this be our supreme effort
and prayer as we prepare for our
Lord's return. MM

When It Hurts to Apologize

(Continued from page 2)

resources that sustain our existence—should He so much as change the consistency of the air we breathe—we would perish in seconds.

For all things temporal and eternal we are wholly dependent upon God. Shouldn't we, then, become sensitive to His opinions—of what is "right" and what is "wrong," of what is "good" and what is "evil"?

And when we read in the Bible—His Book—that He "hates sin"; that He "abhors sin"; He "despises sin"; He "abominates sin"—shouldn't we be concerned about *our* sin?

If we could realize how seriously sin offends Him; if we could realize what a dark blot it places on our record, shouldn't we be anxious—very anxious—to confess our sins to Him, and make ourselves right before Him? And shouldn't we be thankful when it hurts to confess to Him—because we want so very much to be right in His sight!

But confession alone is not enough. We must confront ourselves with our sinful state and make the change in our lives that His law requires. This is the only route to mercy and life. MM

Let Go and Let God!

If you want to thrive morally and mentally, just let go. Turn over to God the little—and big—problems of your life.

Let go the little annoyances of every day, the irritations and petty vexations that cross your path. Don't take them up, nurse them, cuddle them, caress them and brood over them. They aren't worth it! Let them go!

That little hurt you got from a friend. Perhaps it wasn't intended, perhaps it was, but never mind. Let it go. Refuse to think about it.

Let go that feeling of hatred you have for another, that jealousy, or envy, or malice. Let go all such thoughts. Sweep them out of your mind, and you will be surprised what a cleansing effect it will have upon you. Let them all go; you house them at deadly risk. The divine mandate is, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice" (Eph. 4:31).

But the big troubles, the bitter disappointments, the deep wrongs, the heartbreaking sorrows, the tragedies of life, what about them? Should you hold onto them? Why, no. Turn them over to God. They are too big for you anyway. Let Him handle them as He sees best. He knows, and will do more for you than you ask. Trust Him.

Put away all regret and resentment. Yes, let them go quickly—the longer you hold them the worse they will hurt you.

Then that little pet ailment you have been hanging on to and talking about. Let it go! It will be good riddance. You have treated it royally, but quit nursing it. Talk instead about God and all that is good, upright, holy, and pure. Talk about the great future God has planned. The change will do wonders for you.

It is not hard once you get used to the habit of it—letting go of these things and replacing them with thoughts that are uplifting and inspiring. You will find it such an easy way to get rid of the things that mar and embitter life. Your life will be so much happier, so much more beautiful. And you will be free to enjoy it because you are not encumbered with these miserable feelings.

Learn to look at the little problems of life in the light of eternity. Ask yourself, what will it matter ten years from now—five years from now—one year from now? See your problems in this light, and you will be surprised how different they appear.

Remember, above all, that you can depend on God. The only question is whether He can depend on you! MM

WHEN

Shall These Things Be?

These Things Shall Be, Part 5

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is"
— Mark 13:32-33

Perhaps the most often asked question concerning the second coming of Christ is not *whether* He is coming, or *how* He is coming, but *when*. Is He likely to come during our lifetime? Shall we look for Him in the near future, in the far future, or when?

Many dates have been set—unfortunately—for the coming of the Lord. Some zealous religious groups have even sold their homes and robed in white, expecting at a certain time to ascend and meet the returning Christ. Because of many such disappointments, thousands have been driven to infidelity and faithlessness.

What is wrong? Has the Word of God failed because we have not yet seen Christ? NO! Jesus Himself told us plainly that no man knows the time of His return. "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:32-33).

Jesus carefully explained that it would be a "long time" before He

would return to establish His Kingdom. In Luke 19, He compared Himself to a nobleman going into a far county. "He added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they [His apostles] thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." His work of setting up the Kingdom would not be accomplished until *He returned* from heaven. And in the parallel account in Matthew 25, He said that only "after a long time" would He come to reckon with His servants (v. 19).

"The Time Is At Hand"

We believe that the coming of Christ is now imminent.

Why do we believe this?

For centuries people have been speculating *when* Christ would return. Because He has not come, many have lost faith.

But the word of God is only confirmed by their disbelief and scoffing. The apostle Peter foretold that

"there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (II Pet. 3:3-4). By their very scoffing the promise of His coming is confirmed, because "the day of the Lord will come" (II Pet. 3:10).

Jesus also foresaw a disbelieving condition at the time of His second advent. "When the Son of man cometh," He said, "shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). In other words, He will *not* find faith. The question demands a negative response.

The situation will be parallel, He says, to that at the time of the Flood, or at the time of Sodom and Gomorrah. For "as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot...Even thus shall it be in

the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:26-30). It was all "business as usual," the multitudes unconcerned and unheeding of any warning. Very few were aware of the approaching divine intervention and were making any serious effort to escape. And so shall it be when Christ returns the second time.

Known: The "Times and Seasons"

Although the "day and hour" of Christ's return has not been revealed, the apostle Paul wrote that the "times and the seasons" *would* be known. His words are written for us: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (I Thess. 5:1-2). Those not watching will be taken by surprise. But this need not be—if we heed the warnings of the times and seasons.

One of those signs of the "times and seasons" follows immediately: "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them" (v. 3).

While we cannot know exactly how this prophecy was intended to apply, has there ever been a more far-reaching peace movement than in recent years, especially since the frightening discovery of atomic power? When have men worked more diligently to patch together some form of peace than in recent years? From the Hague Conference to the United Nations to the present-day meetings of heads of state, to the unsurpassed efforts of Pope John Paul II, the world's supersonic pilgrim of peace, the movement has gathered momentum, though violence continues worldwide. Yet this very violence is also a sign. The prophet Joel foretold (3:9-11) an unprecedented surge of armament

building and preparation for war, to be climaxed, like the cry for peace, by the appearance of God's "mighty ones" and His purifying judgments.

The two movements, so contradictory in nature, are solid realities before our eyes. On the one hand we see a vast effort toward peace—for which we are thankful—and on the other an unprecedented build-up of military weapons, including nuclear weapons, which become every year more sophisticated and more deadly. The contradictory efforts may not make sense, but they fulfill to the letter the words of God's holy prophets.

To us who live in this auspicious era and are aware of this momentous sign pointing to the imminence of the second advent, Paul addressed the words that follow: "But ye brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (I Thess. 5:4-6).

Ominous Signs

What else might be classified as identifying the times and seasons?

One forecast is that of the apostle Paul in II Timothy 3, so accurate that it fairly screams its message to us. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (vs. 1-4).

When have times been more perilous in the "civilized" portions of the world? Look at the problems facing our own nation: lawlessness,

moral degeneracy, drug addiction, alcoholism, crime of all kinds. Former President Kennedy was right when he said "we are destined—all of us here today—to live out most if not all of our lives in uncertainty and challenge and peril."

Another vivid Bible prophecy pointing to the nearness of the return of Christ is found in Jesus' words recorded in Luke 21:25-26. In the light of this prophecy, worldwide trouble, uncertainty and anxiety; the overhanging threat of nuclear war; the realization that man holds in his hands the means of his own annihilation—all take on new meaning:

"And there shall be signs in the [political] sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

"Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."

The "meaning" is divine intervention which shall end once for all this man-made reign of terror.

"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (v. 27)

The "signs" are to be preliminary to the passing away of the present heavens and earth "with a great noise," which Peter foretells (II Pet. 3:10).

How accurately are these prophecies fulfilled! Unrest, instability of nations, is the tone of our times! The political heavens are shaken indeed in strong confirmation of the prophecy.

These "signs," it will be noted, are all of an ominous nature, and truly we find ourselves in ominous times. Yet the counsel of the Bible is never a counsel of despair or even of anxiety. To those who are hastening their "escape from the windy storm and tempest" (Ps. 55:8), the words of Jesus bear a calm and deep assurance:

*Thy Kingdom come, O Lord,
Wide circling as the sun;
Fulfill of old Thy Word
And make the nations one;*

*One in the bond of peace,
The service glad and free
Of truth and righteousness,
Of love and equity.*

*Speed, speed the longed-for time
Foretold by raptured seers—
The prophecy sublime,
The hope of all the years;*

*Till rise at last, to span,
Its firm foundations broad,
For evermore to stand
The city of our God.*

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

Although the day and hour is not for us to know, the times and seasons are most obvious, for when this state of affairs exists, the following verses emphasize: "Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

After Six Days

The first chapter of Genesis outlines six days during which God "works," and a seventh day during which He "rests" from His work. "God finished on the sixth day his works which he had made, and he ceased on the seventh day from all

his works which he made" (Gen. 2:1-2, Septuagint Version).

This narrative of creation viewed as an allegory rather than a historical account gives a tremendous revelation of divine truth which is consistent with the teaching of the entire Bible. A Bible rule for calculating time as stated by Peter—"One day is with the Lord as a thousand years" (II Pet. 3:8)—allows us to understand the allegorical "six days" as representing 6,000 years. This is the time during which God "works," developing those who shall be part of His coming Kingdom. At the end of these six days He sends Christ, who then continues the work and brings it to completion during the seventh thousand-year day, or the Millennium, in which God is said to "rest."

The same six-day work period was part of the Mosaic arrangement, a type of the period for human government, to be followed by the great

sabbath rest of 1,000 years, the Millennial Reign of Christ and the saints.

Although we cannot set any dates, nothing hinders our generalizing on the passage of time. The divine plan of six days (six thousand years), if we number approximately four thousand years from Adam to the birth of Christ and nearly two thousand years since the birth of Christ, shows us plainly that there are not many of the allotted six thousand years remaining. This is only approximation, but we are confident that the great day of God Almighty is not far distant.

After Four World Kingdoms

Another prophecy which confirms the times and seasons in which we live is that of the prophet Daniel.

King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed, and as he dreamed the God of heaven caused a dream to be impressed upon his mind which was to provide enlightenment for His people in regard to His future plan and purpose—the rise and fall of four world kingdoms.

The interpretation of the dream, made known by Daniel as he stood before the magnificent throne of Nebuchadnezzar, disclosed four world kingdoms, four monarchies of men which were to succeed one another and be successively destroyed or dissolved. And this prophecy was given when only the first of these was in existence.

In the symbolism of the dream, there was a great metallic image. In the head of gold he saw the soon-to-be vanquished Babylonian Empire. Silver breast and arms indicated Medo-Persian pre-eminence. This would be followed by the Greeks, represented in the image's belly and thighs of brass. The last phase of the image, legs of iron, prefigured the iron rule of the Romans, the feet and

toes "part of iron and part of clay" representing the last remnants of Roman influence visible in the broken and divided states of Western Europe, which would be in existence at the time of the end.

All these kingdoms arose and fell just as foretold.

What next? When the image of man's rule should be completed and finished, what should be his destiny? According to the dream, a stone cut without hands would destroy and scatter the image. Then that stone would grow, and grow, and grow, becoming a great mountain which would fill the whole earth.

The conclusion of the dream is told in graphic language in Daniel 2:44-45, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure." This last Kingdom—yet to come—shall be superior to all the kingdoms of men and "it shall stand forever," this fifth world kingdom, God's eternal Kingdom on earth.

This prophecy focuses sharply the time for the establishing of the fifth kingdom, for the fourth and last of the kingdoms of men has vanished. Only a broken, divided, decaying remnant remains. Numerous ambitious generals—Hannibal, Napoleon, Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin and his aspiring successors—have not and cannot by the most clever strategy establish a fifth world empire, for the God of heaven long ago decreed that

His Kingdom would replace the *fourth* empire of man.

The fulfillment of this divine foresight is nothing short of amazing. In scope and numbers of inhabitants the powers of today outrank the earlier empires by a wide margin, but no one political entity holds ascendancy over all. And to think that the God of heaven could foresee and foretell this broken and divided state of affairs at the time of the end nearly two and a half millenniums ago!

This same marvelous foreknowledge of the rise and fall of empires is written again in Daniel 7, and with the same grand climax: by divine intervention. After the successive rise and fall of four beasts out of the sea of nations (which parallel the four parts of the image), the Prophet reveals not the rising of a fifth beast but the triumph of Christ and His saints: "the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever" (7:18).

The descriptions of the beasts are significant. A lion indicated the strength and supremacy of Babylon; a bear which raised itself on one side shows the Persian phase of the second world empire to be of greater eminence and duration than the Median phase; next in the four wings of a leopard can be seen Alexander's four generals who ruled the Grecian Empire after his premature death. The fourth beast, "dreadful and terrible," has an identifying "little horn"—the papal outgrowth of the Roman Empire—which "wore out the saints of the Most High," changed God's times and laws, and "true religion was beaten down" (Dan. 7:25; 8:12, Moffatt Bible).

When shall the Kingdom of God be established? It follows next in sequence. "The judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his [the little horn's] dominion,...And the kingdom and dominion, and the

greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him" (7:26-27).

"Near, Speeding Apace!"

"The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly," proclaims the prophet Zephaniah (1:14). "It is near, speeding apace!" (Moffatt). The signs marking the times and seasons of our Lord's advent are rapidly fulfilling with utmost precision. But one remains: the arrival of the herald of Christ, *the coming of Elijah*.

★ That day is coming—soon. A new heavens and a new earth, figurative terms for new rulers and a new populace, shall replace the old, until this planet will be a "new" world wherein "dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet. 3:13).

Then, "the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one" (Zech. 14:9). One King shall be king over all the earth, who shall rule in justice and righteousness and peace *for ever!*

Who does not want to live *then!*

MM

**"Thy Kingdom
come, Thy
will be done
in earth, as it is in
heaven" —Jesus.**

What Will We Do Throughout

ETERNITY

What will the saints do in the new world, when everyone who lives is immortal? What will life be like? What will we do—if we are among those supremely privileged ones—throughout eternity?

In a day when boredom with the daily routine is the lot of thousands, the idea of eternity—a future stretching into infinity—might seem almost frightening. If we have trouble filling the next hour, what would we do with eternity?

This problem is as improbable as it is unreal. Those who will be part of eternity all have one fundamental quality: they love life. And all who love life have no problem filling it, even when it is cumbered with difficulties and limitations. Can we imagine their delight when all the difficulties and limitations are removed, what immense possibilities will be open for doing, being, and becoming?

What are just a few of them?

The conventional view of heaven has little to offer. While most people don't expect to be sitting around on a

cloud playing a harp, few think of heaven, or a new earth, as a particularly exciting or eventful place. Too often the future abode is described in terms that are at best vague and unreal.

But the Bible is neither vague nor unreal. It is very definite in its picture of eternity.

First of all, it tells us that the future life God has promised will be real life in a real place with real people. The place will be the earth glorified and beautified, under the dominion of a real king and His associates. This territory will extend "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8). "All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isa. 52:10). And the Lord Himself shall be king (Zech. 14:9).

What will life be like in that new world? Though we may not have all the details we would like, the Bible gives us a few broad promises that are all inclusive and thrilling beyond anything we can imagine. Our God has promised to do for us "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). Stop and ponder this for a moment. The promise is not all we can ask or think,

*"Eye hath not seen, nor ear
heard, neither have entered
into the heart of man, the
things which God hath
prepared for them
that love him."
—I Cor. 2:9*

EVITY?

or *above* all we can ask or think, or *abundantly above*, but it even surpasses all that—EXCEEDINGLY!

Another expansive summary statement of the promises of God is found in I Cor. 2:9, where the apostle Paul is quoting from Isaiah: "As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

If this is not enough, the Psalmist adds on top of all this the promise of abundant satisfaction. "They 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).

And there is more. Wrote the Psalmist again with prophetic vision, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11).

The Bible also gives us pictures of what will *not* be part of eternity and the new world God will bring into being. This may seem strange, but what better way could

He communicate to us a real picture of a *new* world, we who see so much today of what needs to be eliminated!

The Revelator pictured clearly the new world as a world in which there will be *no* sickness, *no* pain, *no* sorrow, and *no* death (Rev. 21:3-4). We will not even get tired. The promise is, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:31).

Add to all this the absence of frustration, disappointment and danger, for in that new world there will be nothing to hurt or destroy (Isa. 11:9). There will be no poverty and no oppression (Isa. 32:17-18; Mic. 4:2-4). There will be no violence or threat of it (Isa. 60:18). There will be no war or wanton destruction (Ps. 46:9). There will not even be any night, for the glorified earth will be filled with the light of its glorified inhabitants (Rev. 21:25; Isa. 60:19).

Above all, there will be no sin (Rev. 21:27).

Now let us translate all this into everyday terms, and what is the Bible saying to us? With all the negatives of

Why dream
about
eternity?
Why try to imagine
what is
unimaginable?

***Because there is no
other incentive
strong enough to
impel us to offer to
God the complete
sacrifice He requires.***

our world removed, what will there be to do and enjoy, to envision and become? What will there be of challenge and opportunity? What will we do throughout eternity.



Music

Perhaps you are one who connects happiness with music.

The new earth will be a very musical place. Read the book of Revelation with your ears open, and hear how much there is of rapturous melody and singing, praise and adoration, rousing trumpets and ringing harps. Again and again when the throne of Christ is mentioned, the music is ringing. The throne of Christ is surrounded with angels worshiping and praising God and acclaiming the victory of the saints on earth.

If music is in your soul, either to perform or to compose, or even to sing or make melody in your heart, you will find the new earth a delightful place. What could be better than an eternity of time through which to sing and make melody in your heart—the happy expression of one fully satisfied. What could surpass an eternity of time in which to create and compose to the glory of the heavenly Creator—and the greatest voices in the Universe to perform your compositions!

Or perhaps you prefer to listen while others perform. There is coming a performance that you will not want to miss, when the victorious earthborns will join multitudes of the heavenly hosts, even “ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands ... saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb...to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” But you won’t be a silent listener long, because it is written of that time that “Every crea-

ture which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth” will reply in exultant tones, “Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Rev. 5:11-13).

And this isn’t all—you won’t want to miss the music that is planned for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Read John’s description of his mini-preview of it in Revelation 19, where he tells of hearing “a great voice of much people in heaven [angels and more angels!], saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power unto the Lord our God.” The chorus swelled as yet more celestial voices join in, as “the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” And then, giving all honor to the victorious saints, rings out this song of triumph: “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Rev. 19:1, 6-8).

Has there ever been a performance on earth to equal it?



Travel

Or perhaps you are one who likes to travel. Most of us do, but too often we lack the time and means.

With citizenship in the new Jerusalem will come a passport to the Universe. Present-day space programs give only the tiniest tantalizing glimpse into the limitless handiwork of our great Creator and the myriad realms that lie beyond our little planet.

Do we wonder if space travel among them is a realistic possibility? Not if we have read the Scriptures, for remember the promise: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered in the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love him."

Observe the activities of the angels, and you will find them the greatest space travelers in all history. Wherever we read of an angel in Scripture, his appearance is always sudden; he is always either coming or going. Remember the introductory words of Gabriel to Daniel: "I am Gabriel, which stand in the presence of God."

And the angels are not dependent on any earthly vehicles of conveyance. When we read that Jesus will send His angels "to gather his elect...from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven," we do not picture them scheduling transportation on jetliners or spacecrafts. Of course not! These heavenly glorified beings, whose home is some distant world, have life within themselves, and with that life comes knowledge of the laws of the universe. No longer are they planet-bound. They are travelers of the first order—*experienced* travelers.

Again and again through the Bible we read of the angels traveling between heaven and earth. It seems so near, so easy. Yet when we read of the vast distances between us and the stars, our little minds are stunned. Have you ever wondered what kind of celestial express route might link earth to heaven, upon which the angels can travel at speeds far beyond the slow speed of light? Might this not be what Jacob saw symbolized in a dream as a ladder reaching from heaven to earth, upon which the angels of God were continually ascending and descending? (Gen. 28:11-16). Were it not for such a possibility, travel between

stars even within our local group of galaxies would take many hundreds of thousands of years!

Flying is as natural to angels as walking is to us. In the book of Revelation, how many times did the apostle John see in vision an angel "fly" in the midst of heaven!

Interstellar and interplanetary travel is one of the most common activities of the angels, for many have been the visits of the angels to our planet. In fact, we have no way of knowing how many angels are here right now. And when heaven opens its doors and takes in our little earth, and earth becomes a part of heaven, all the space routes of the universe will be open to us. Blessed traveling!

Certainly one of the greatest fascinations of travel is the delight of meeting people of other lands and cultures. What could surpass the delight of meeting the inhabitants of other worlds—worlds that have been glorified for aeons, or worlds newly glorified, or worlds yet in the process of development.

In the words of our hymn, "We now may let our minds expand with all their power combined, and yet we cannot comprehend the joys we there shall find."



Or perhaps you are one who enjoys administration, authority, and organization. It is an art sorely needed by our present bungling governments. But because of the built-in weaknesses of the present system, little of significance can be accomplished.

But the new world will offer limitless opportunities in planet administration. This, we are told, is a regular part of angel work. We read in the book of Hebrews that "Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection

the world to come, whereof we speak" (Heb. 2:5). In other words, our present world *is* under the direction of the angels. They are here, devising the means, performing the work, protecting, guiding, assisting wherever we have need. They know what it was to be in our place, and they can help us. Shouldn't we thank God for these Divine administrators, "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation"? (Heb. 1:14).

And do good administrators need authority? We have never seen anyone with authority such as the angels have. And they have no problem knowing who is right or wrong—because they can read the human mind. Even Jesus, while still a mortal man, had this ability (John 2:25). With such an aid, the angels have no problem overpowering an evil force—because they can know its intentions before it even moves to strike. No human foe do they fear, for their resources are omnipotent!

Recall how the angel stepped into the fiery furnace and protected the three Hebrew children from the wrath of the king. Neither fire nor fury could frighten that angel.

Recall the angel of the Lord marching into the camp of the Assyrians and smiting many thousands in one night, giving a tremendous victory to God's people. A prodigious task from a human point of view, yet it was easy for an angel who knows the basic laws of life.

Picture the angels administering the law for the nation of Israel upon Mt. Sinai, ten thousand of them coming down to demonstrate God's authority (Exodus 19, 20). It was a grandiose occasion, no doubt, even for angels. Some blew trumpets, others made the mountain shake, while others made it appear as a smoking, fiery furnace. It was an occasion long remembered—by angels *and* men!

The authority of the angels has

The Bible is
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The future life
God has
promised will
be real life in a real
place with real
people. The place
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glorified and
beautified, under the
dominion of a real
king and His
associates.

also been *felt* as well as seen. How would you like to have been the angel who wrote those blazing words of doom upon the wall in the Babylonian palace that night? (Daniel 5). That angel had authority which made the old king tremble, but the angel was not afraid. He was performing a special service in behalf of God's chosen ones, bringing to pass a prophecy made many years before. Who among all those "high" officials of state could challenge him! That angel had authority.

Wouldn't we delight in some of these angel duties?



Special Services

Or maybe you prefer less spectacular assignments—how would you like to serve on a "special services" committee, and take your turn in performing miscellaneous duties?

It's not likely that you ever aspired to becoming a messenger, but messenger duties are nothing to be despised—not when the angels are performing them! Indeed, message-bearing will be one of the most delightful tasks in eternity!

Imagine the joy of the angel who was sent to announce to Abraham and Sarah the birth of their long-awaited child of promise. Or imagine the thrill of announcing to the youthful Mary that she was to be the mother of the Messiah, the future King of the whole world. No ordinary duties these!

Or think of the angel who was sent to deliver Peter from prison, to escort him through the gates and down the street to safety. Or think of the angel who appeared to the apostle Paul on the stricken ship, giving comfort and assurance. Think of the angel who was commissioned personally by Jesus to deliver His revelation to John on the Isle of Patmos.

"I Jesus have sent mine angel"—think of *being* that angel, that personal messenger of Jesus Christ!

And think of the special assignment that has been given to myriad angels—to accompany Jesus when He returns to earth, for by His own testimony He is coming with "mighty angels," "hosts" of them. Perhaps some have already gathered for the great occasion!

Every step toward setting up the new system and removing the old will be assisted by angels. They will bring Elijah; they will "gather together his [Christ's] elect" (Matt. 24:31). They will even officiate at the Judgment seat of Christ. The prophet Daniel saw in prophetic vision the great King upon His throne of Judgment and "thousand thousands" ministering unto Him (Dan. 7:10).

Again our imagination fails—we cannot begin to conceive of all the special services we may be able to perform through eternity!



Teaching

Perhaps your greatest desire is to teach. Or study. In either case, eternity will not be one moment too long for you. In fact, only in eternity will you have time to become a master in all the fields that interest you. Only in eternity will you be able to satisfy your desire to instruct and teach others.

Your first need will be of a mind that can comprehend and retain the vast resources of knowledge that will be opened. Our world has not seemed short on knowledge—but it has seemed so to us only because of our very limited brainpower, though scientists tell us we use only some ten percent of what we have. Yet to absorb the knowledge that will be available in eternity we will need much more than the remaining nine-

ty percent. But when Christ refashions our mortal bodies into the likeness of His own resplendent, glorious body (Phil. 3:20-21), a "new mind" will be part of the package. God will abundantly meet our need!

And for the first time in the history of this world, all available knowledge will be perfect and error-free. This means that what you learn (or teach) today will not be contradicted tomorrow by some new discovery.

What subjects will be open for study? Let your imagination browse for a century, and you still will not have even scratched the surface of possibilities. There will be courses in every area of the explored and unexplored sciences known today—*plus*. What about learning the prehistory of our earth—and other worlds; the angels can write the course, for some of them were there.

Or what about a course in the background, progress and destiny of our Solar System. When we have mastered these rudimentary topics, we may want to go on with courses in interplanetary communications, courses in space travel, courses in planet guidance and development, and courses in the basic architecture and design of galaxies—all these and an incomprehensibly more lie within the realm of the imagination. And—remember—we are not to be limited by this, for the Eternal's promise is that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9).

Or perhaps you favor the arts, creative or mechanical. These, too, will offer limitless opportunities.

What about teaching? Angels have been teaching for ages, even on our little planet. Angels were sent to instruct Abraham. The Law of Sinai was given by the disposition of angels, and angels were present to

help with instruction of the people. Most of the time unseen, they have been the prime teachers of God's people through the ages.

But in the age to come there will be one great difference. For the first time, these angelic instructors will be *seen*. The promise is, "Thine eyes shall see thy teachers" (Isa. 30:20)—a great change from the era immediately preceding, though their work has never been in question.

Think you for a moment that you will be bored with eternity?



Ministering

Perhaps you are one whose strongest desire is to help the less fortunate, to relieve pain and suffering and the miseries of old age. This is a noble desire in the world of today, but in eternity there will be no suffering to relieve—for all sickness, pain, old age and death will have been removed!

Or perhaps you long to relieve the trauma of the oppressed and underprivileged. This desire, too, will be out of date in eternity, for in that new world—for the very first time in the history of our planet—there will be no unwilling subjugation of one people to another. You will have to find another outlet for your spirit of helpfulness!

You will not have to look far, for God's whole plan centers in the people He is blessing. And when there is nothing more you can do for people on this planet, when all who live here are fully satisfied and immortal, there will be other people on other worlds, people yet unborn, who will need your help. There will always be people to instruct and bless, and that ministering is the happy duty of the angels (Heb. 1:14).

Oh, the fathomless reaches of God's mercy!



Creating

Or perhaps your strongest yen is to be original, creative, the designer of something fresh and "new."

While there is "no new thing under the sun," "under the sun" does not describe all of God's realm. The new world will have possibilities for things "new"—infinite possibilities.

The present world has no opportunity that can even begin to compare with the possibilities that will be open to you in the new world. For angels have power to *create*!

Is it possible? Doesn't this seem like too much to imagine or conceive? Not at all. It has already been placed on the record, signed and sealed by the Eternal Himself, that angels share in the creating process. We read it in the beginning of the allegory in Genesis, where God said to His angels, the *elohim*, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion" (Gen. 1:26). When God said, "Let us," He was talking to His angels, those with whom He shares this delightful task.

Yes, angels are instrumental in the creating process. They have been on this earth, and we have every reason to believe that it is the same on other worlds, for God is doing all according to His eternal purpose (Eph. 3:11). Just look at a telescope picture of our own Milky Way galaxy, with its hundred billion shining worlds—and it is only one among many billions of galaxies. Can't we "see" that the process of developing and perfecting worlds has been going on from time immemorial?

The art of creating might take on many forms, as lowly as designing the plants and flowers of a world like ours; as lofty as drawing the

God Has Promised...

More Than We Can Ask or Think of:

God is able to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think"—Eph. 3:20

More Than We Have Seen, More than We Can Imagine:

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."—I Cor. 2:9

Abundant Satisfaction:

"They 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"—Ps. 36:8-9

"They shall spend their days in prosperity and their years in pleasures"—Job 36:11

Life—Joy—Pleasures:

"Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."—Ps. 16:11

"To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life"—Rom. 2:7

The Whole Earth Filled with God's Glory:

"As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord"—Eph. 3:20

"The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea"—Hab. 2:14

blueprints of a new universe. Does it seem impossible? There is only one thing sure about our speculations—that they cannot approach the reality, for remember that God has promised to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." The best that we can imagine is only enough to whet our appetite, to stimulate our curiosity and longings, and move us to muster all our God-given faculties to qualify for these exalted privileges.



Why dream about eternity? Why think about it? Why try to imagine what is unimaginable? Because no other incentive is strong enough to impel us to offer to God the complete sacrifice He requires of us, holy and acceptable to Him (Rom. 12:1).

Eternity with all its limitless possibilities is not a "free-for-all." The

Bible tells us clearly and explicitly that God's matchless rewards are reserved for the pure, the meek, the upright, those who become holy as He is holy (Matt. 5:5, 8; I Pet. 1:15-16); for those who are "undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord" (Ps. 119:1, 3); for those who "by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality" (Rom. 2:7).

Keeping in our minds a vivid and glowing picture of what lies ahead will give us the power to complete the task of total self-mastery that God has assigned us. And this we must do, for He will have no old creatures in His new world. Everything in that realm will be "new," all new. "Behold, I make all things new." Nothing old or impure or ugly or contaminated will be allowed, for "there shall in no wise enter... anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27).

Why has God revealed so much of the possibilities of eternity? Because it is the stimulus we need; because nothing less would impel us to make the full surrender He requires, to perfectly love Him with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our mind, and all our strength (Mark 12:30-31).

That new world *will be!* It is not an idle dream. It is real, and soon it will be here. It was the prayer of our Lord, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). And said the prophet Isaiah speaking of the Eternal's plans for this earth, "He created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:17-18). Someday this earth will shine with the glory of its immortal inhabitants (Daniel 12:3), and shine *through all eternity.*

What will we be doing through eternity? Be sure to be there, and you will find out!

MM



Me Down, LORD

The old axiom "Haste makes waste" speaks loudly to our reckless, careless world. Especially evident is the undisciplined speed and chance taking on our nation's highways.

However, excessive haste is not limited to our driving habits; far from it. The human race in general seems driven to a frenzy of pleasure seeking, or as the younger generation expresses it, "living on the fast track." The result: our hospitals are crowded with the physically and mentally broken, who can no longer function normally in society. What a price to pay for getting the most out of life!

Where do you and I as Christians fit into the scheme of things? Are we in control of our life, or is our life controlling us?

Perhaps it would be advantageous to examine our life style. Perhaps we need to realize that the quality of our work weighs far more than its quantity. Just maybe we need to get down on our knees and earnestly pray, "Slow me down, Lord."

Granted, we are not caught in the mad world around us, but we face a force equally destructive from within—our own evil propensities—which must be brought

under control, and hasty, undisciplined action is not the means. We must slow ourselves down. In other words, stop, look and listen!

Perhaps no one has a more urgent need to slow down than the impetuous individual beset by an impatient spirit. How often our peace is marred by some trivial thing—like finding ourselves caught in a slow moving checkout line in the supermarket. Aren't there better alternatives than to become all upset just because of a short delay? Wouldn't it be more profitable to slow ourselves down, accept the delay and engage our thought processes in something constructive?

What about that hasty and explosive temper? Has any good ever resulted from losing control? Does it make us feel more important? The author of Ecclesiastes has the answer: "Anger resteth in the bosom of fools." Not a very flattering portrayal, is it? However, there is an excellent alternative. It is this: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Prov. 16:32).

Lord, please help me to slow down!

There is yet another human trait, more pronounced in some than in others, which can wreak havoc both physically and mentally. It is worry. But you may say, "It is impossible to live a worry-free existence." Perhaps, but it is possible to slow down our overactive thought processes and keep our worries under control. We don't have to make things appear worse than they are. We don't have to borrow trouble. We can learn to slow down and take one day at a time, trusting tomorrow to God. It is possible, with God's help, to halt this self-destructive habit so

(Continued on page 23)

Search the Scriptures

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me"
—John 5:39

With His usual manner of authority our Master spoke these words to the Jews. The Jews had claimed to believe Moses and the prophets, but their worship had become merely an outward form which did not move them to produce the fruits of righteousness. They thought that in the Scriptures, of which they were custodians, they had promise of eternal life according to their own ideas of right and wrong. They were complacent, thinking that they were God's chosen people, feeling that if any were saved it should be they.

To such Jesus' teaching was disappointing, for it held no hope. He publicly denounced them as hypocrites, blind guides, blind Pharisees, whited sepulchres. They claimed faithful Abraham for their father, assuming that they should be blessed with him, but not considering or attempting to obey God's commandment to him, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1).

Their idea of a Messiah also ran counter to what had been foreshadowed in the Scriptures. They visualized a Christ who at His first advent would come in regal splendor to renew the kingdom of David and release the Jewish nation from bondage. This He was not doing. Instead He had come as a humble man, fitting Himself for the high position He should ultimately hold as King of the whole earth. Had they searched, they would have found the Scriptures revealing that He was to come the first time as Prophet and Priest, and the second time as Conqueror and King.

Moses had said, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me" (Deut. 18:15). King David said, speaking prophetically for Christ, "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,...to do thy will, O my God" (Ps. 40:7-8). Isaiah had said, "Behold, a virgin

shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good" (7:14-15). Isaiah also spoke of the Messiah coming to proclaim the "acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God" (61:2), and in Jesus' remarks in the synagogue at Nazareth, after reading the Prophet's words, He purposely omitted the "day of vengeance," showing He understood that Isaiah had spoken of both His comings, and that the day of vengeance was to accompany His second coming.

As Jesus did in His day, so now the true Church continues to sound the gospel call with the invitation to search and study the Divine Record and no longer remain in unbelief. Ignorance will excuse no one, nor will the fact that people are so wrapped up in the cares and affairs of this life. The apostle gives a very timely warning: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. 4:17-18). To say we have no time for this important work is folly, for people find time for the things they really want to do. Eternal life is promised on no other condition but through knowledge of and obedience to the Word of God, hence the importance of Jesus' commandment to search and study the Scriptures.

Through passing years, contrary to Jesus' command (Rev. 22:18-19), some have added to and taken from the Word of God, claiming the Bible was not sufficient to salvation. Others have interpreted it to correspond with their creed and thus have covered the real beauty of the Gospel. For this reason true religion has to be sought for as one would search for any earthly treasure. Indeed, we

read just such an admonition from one who possessed the wisdom of God: "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding: if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God" (Prov. 2:3-5).

In the study of this precious Volume we should remember that it is not a Book to be read through once, twice, or thrice and then laid aside. It is to be studied by subjects and with ever increasing interest. In it alone is our hope of eternal life, hence the need for understanding. It is not all plain, simple language, for it contains many parables, symbols and allegories. Even Peter said of Paul, that he wrote some things hard to be understood (II Peter 3:16), but it was Paul who said that to understand the wisdom of God we must learn to compare spiritual with spiritual, and also to rightly divide the word of truth (I Cor. 2:13; II Tim. 2:15). One individual writer does not tell the whole story on a certain subject; we have to acquaint ourselves with the general teaching of the Bible, harmonizing the whole, rather than build a theory on a single text.

A deep love and longing for eternal life alone will stimulate us to search for the wisdom of God, and having found it, to continue our zeal to overcome our carnal natures so as to be worthy of God's honor. Theory alone is not sufficient. One has to be a doer of the Word as well as a hearer to be justified of God (Rom. 2:13). Left to ourselves, we could not know what our life must be, but the Bible enlightens our understanding and guides our souls through this vale of darkness. It becomes the fullness of our hope as we let it reveal our thoughts and motives, as we exchange the wrong for the right. It becomes our consolation in sorrow as we trust its promises with a heart broken with penitence; and the joy of our heart as we delight to do God's will above all else.

We are commanded often through the Bible to write its precepts upon our hearts that they may be with us and lead us through every experience of life. In proportion as we do this and keep the law of God in our minds will our faith increase and our hope be more secure. We will progress just as we study this Book and allow its principles to influence and mold our lives to the pattern Christ left us.

MM

Ask yourself, "What kind of a church would our church be if everyone in it were just like me?"



Slow Me Down, Lord!

(Continued from page 21)

that we will be able to echo the words of our perfect Example, who said, "Don't worry at all then about tomorrow. Tomorrow can take care of itself! One day's trouble is enough for one day" (Matt. 6:34, Phillips).

There is another area in our lives where we need to slow down, and that is in our relationships with others. However close or casual a friendship may be, the possibility exists for misunderstandings, hurt feelings, or unfair judgments. It is so easy to misconstrue another's words or actions, so easy to build "mountains out of molehills," so easy to be wrapped up in ourselves and ignore the needs of others. None of us is an island. None of us lives to himself alone. Everyone needs someone.

Let our earnest prayer be, Slow me down, Lord. Help me not to become so wrapped up in myself that I fail to recognize the needs of others. Help me always to remember that those who desire Your approval will be speaking often to one another, aware that You are keeping an impartial record, and some day I will have to face what it contains.

How well are we controlling our lives? Have we acquired the ability to slow down and place our priorities where we want them, on the highest and best? Or are we busy here and there, going in circles, as it were? As we awake to each new day, do we allow our minds to go spinning out of control on secondary plans for the day, or do we put on the brakes and spend those first few moments with God in prayer, asking Him to go with us through the day, to help us keep our priorities in their proper place? All through the day we should maintain a steady, onward pace, never forgetting our need to dwell in thought with God. Meditation is power—staying power, stabilizing power, maintenance power. Let's slow down and probe its magnificent potential!

What is the result of the life that is consecrated, controlled and disciplined? It is this: that life takes on new meaning, it becomes beautiful. When we have learned how to slow down and control ourselves in the untoward situations of life instead of letting them control us, we find new peace and contentment. We have a changed perspective, and are able to scrutinize our actions so that we can judge between right and wrong. In fact, it becomes possible for us to actually run the way of His commandments.

And what shall the end of the matter be? Just listen! "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Mal. 3:17).

Lord, please, please, help me to slow down!

MM



Part 6

Vision Of The Future

Synopsis

The Biblical record closes with Paul a prisoner in Rome "in his own hired house." Clement of Rome, who died A. D. 101, completes the record. According to him, Paul was acquitted of the charges against him, which were vague at best, was active for a short time in the mission field, then was again arrested and brought to Rome where he was martyred by order of the Emperor Nero, A. D. 67 or 68. This tradition may or may not be true, but there is nothing improbable in it.

In this scene, the Great Apostle, thinner and grayer, heavily fettered, sits in a gloomy dungeon, awaiting the Imperial verdict. There is a high, barred window at rear center stage. At left front, rising to the level of the corridor outside is a short flight of stone steps, at the top of which is a heavy grated door. The only furnishings are a straw bunk, covered by a blanket, a stool, and a crude table.

In the dim light, Paul is trying to read. The key grates in the lock, and the door swings inward, as the Jailer's voice is heard.

Jailer: A visitor for you, Sir. [Paul rises. Rufus, a young Greek, enters, carrying a small basket.]

Paul: Oh, good morning, Rufus. Or is it morning? I can hardly tell day from night in this cell, and I have no way of knowing the time of day.

Rufus: It is afternoon, Brother Paul, a very hot afternoon. I

have brought you some food which we hope will tempt your appetite.

Paul: [lifting cloth] All this—for me?

Rufus: Yes, you know how Mother is.

Paul: Ah, yes—your mother...and mine. So many things she did for me, even back in Berea; and how much she has done ever since my coming to Rome. It was she who provided for me when I was penniless, after the shipwreck, and it was your people who helped me find a house. In fact, she paid my first month's rent herself. Throughout my first imprisonment she sent me food and comforts. How can I ever thank your family enough, Rufus? How can I repay you?

Rufus: The thanks are on our side, Brother Paul, and we can never repay you. If you could know how good your face looked that day when we met you at Milo's tavern—

Paul: Probably as good as yours looked to me. But I see you have a letter for me.

Rufus: Yes, from Timothy. Go right ahead and read it; don't mind me.

Paul: [after reading silently] It is mostly church business, Rufus. The church in Ephesus is having its troubles, with heresy and backsliding, and ordinary human nature. Timothy has his hands full, poor lad.

Rufus: How is his health?

Paul: Much better. His visit to me last winter was too much for him, I fear. He says the church is praying daily for my release, but so far as I can see, it does not appear to be God's will. We were both fortunate to escape the great persecution in which so many of our brethren died, but the end must come some time. I have filed an appeal, but the Emperor has no love for me since I converted one of his favorites. He took it personally, so I hear.

Rufus: [looking nervously about] How do you stand it in this awful place? I'd go mad.

Paul: Oh, it could be worse. And, when all is said and done, what can I do about it? It is not much like the old house arrest days, of course. My jailer is kind, but he has his orders. The food is bad, but so is prison food the world over—at least I've found it so. Luke is permitted to see me every day, for which I am very thankful. The worst thing is the rats—there's one now! I am not complaining, but there is still so much to do and so little done. There are subversive forces to be fought in the churches. There are letters to be written. I wish I were two, so I could do more.

Rufus: Do you have a light at night?

Paul: No, it is not allowed. It is wearisome to sit in the dark, but I am thankful I have so much of the Word written in my mind so I can meditate to some profit, and plan my letters for the next day's writing when Luke comes.

Rufus: Is there anything I can do for you, Brother Paul?

Paul: [rising and speaking very earnestly] Yes, Rufus, there is. I know I shall not be with you long. As I face the end I have no fear for myself, for I have searched my heart and feel that my personal work is done. Now someone else must carry on. That someone is you, Rufus—you and all the brethren who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

The greatest comfort you can give me is your promise that you will be true to the faith, an example to the flock and a voice for Christ; that you will keep yourself pure and the church pure, so that we may all live together, world without end, in the future Kingdom of God. Will you promise me, Rufus? [clasps his hand].

Rufus: [solemnly] Yes, Brother Paul, I will. For you, for God, for my own salvation, and for the glory of the church of Christ, I will be true.

[The door creaks open]

Jailer: Time to go, sir.

Rufus: Farewell, brother; I will see you again. [Exit]

The door closes. Paul paces a turn or two, then sits on his bunk, reclining as weariness overcomes him. An Angel appears from right rear, in a shining white robe. Paul rises, then kneels. The Angel raises him up.]

Angel: Fear not, Brother Paul. I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God, and I have come to strengthen you, for you are greatly beloved. Be of good courage, O servant of God. Be not afraid of what men can do to the mortal body, for your name is written in the Book of Life and no man can blot it out. Only a little longer to endure. Your rest shall be secure.

Paul: [eagerly] Tell me—tell me, O Gabriel, what of my beloved churches when I am gone?

Angel: The church of God is stronger than the power of Imperial Rome, and in the end she shall triumph over all earthly powers and lay them in the dust. But as you have long known, there must first be bad times—very bad. The prophecies of old are moving toward their fulfillment; the mystery of iniquity is already working, and will work until the last witness is destroyed, and true religion falls to earth, there to lie dead, as Daniel foretold, for a time, times, and a half—1,260 years of darkness.

Paul: And then—?

Angel: Then life enters into it, and it stands upright, never again to fall! This will be in the last hour of the day, the last chapter in the plan of salvation. Then, very soon, comes the end, and the Kingdom of God.

Paul: How will this be?

Angel: A great man, an excellent teacher, a faithful and wise servant, shall be raised up to perform this mighty work, and true religion shall be restored.

Paul: By faith or by sight?

Angel: By faith alone. No vision, no miracle, no sight or voice of angels, but only the naked Word to guide him.

Paul: Would that I could see and know him.

Angel: You shall see him, Paul, and enjoy his company through the ages of eternity. Is not this enough?

Paul: It is enough. I can wait.

[Paul kneels as the Angel vanishes, and remains kneeling in prayer.]

Next Issue: "I HAVE FINISHED MY COURSE."

Strength from Above

As a lover of truth, I see the importance to seek help and strength from above, because we humans are so easily led astray. And it is highly comforting to know that we have over us a Super Power that can and will gird us with strength when we bring ourselves to call upon Him.

To be identified with the believers of like mind and purpose is indeed heartening. Who today among the theologians talks about the necessity of being an overcomer—and the gracious rewards that go with it? With so much pagan thought on every side, we need the proper tools to keep our spiritual mechanism in tune. Where in all of man's literature can we find such words to incite us to action? My reply and my choice is with David in Psalms 18:32: "It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect."

Wyoming

J. A.

No Time to Waste

Thank you for all the tapes you send me. The *Message* and the Maranatha Musings I look forward to also. The days go by so fast, and the time for Christ's coming seems to be close.

It is a great chore to keep the mind on the things that belong to God. The task of keeping temporal things in their place, with all of the other things we have to distract us, is great. Time is precious; we never have any time to waste.

But if we didn't have these little trials, I wonder if we would ever grow. I pray to have the strength and the faith and knowledge to keep pressing on. I have always had a war with myself, to keep my temper and patience (or impatience) from ruling me. I know it isn't others that cause the problems, but we ourselves. And how we handle our problems, that is what counts in the end.

Alabama

D. M.

For the Beauty of the Earth

How I enjoy the beauty and loveliness all around me. I try to imagine how beautiful will be the earth and all that is in it, in the world to come, knowing it will in every way far surpass anything we have ever seen or imagined.

It is wonderful to think of that time

to come. And we know it is drawing closer, ever closer with every passing day. Certainly we should be more energized each new day to exert every ounce of effort we have that we may be happy to see that time arrive.

Maryland

J. B.

Instant and Loyal Obedience

You are to be congratulated on your excellent magazine. These are difficult times and we hunger for the bread of

angels. Some would say "there is no God." But it is inconceivable and unacceptable to imagine this is true.

God said to Abraham: "Get thee out of thy country unto the land that I will show thee" and Abraham obeyed. God spoke to Moses in the burning bush, and Moses went forth to lead Israel out of Egypt. God spoke to Isaiah in the temple: "Whom shall I send and who will go for me?" and Isaiah replied, "Here am I, send me."

New York

L. S.

Obituaries

Hedwig Cummings

On May 1 we met to pay our last respects to Sister Hedwig Cummings, who has been part of our Rochester Congregation since the family relocated from the area of North Tonawanda, New York, in 1944.

Sister Cummings was responsible for the family's acquaintance with the Megiddo Church through a set of books given her by her older sister, Clara, while she was still a girl at home. Young Hedwig kept the books, but did not read them. A number of years later, times were hard—it was during the Depression—and Sister Cummings, in an effort to help meet family expenses, set up a small candy and soft drink stand in front of their home, which happened to be at the intersection of two country roads. Business was seldom rushing, affording her plenty of time to read, and for some unknown reason she thought of the books her sister had given her. She began a serious study of them, and became very interested in their teachings. This was about 1930, and so began the family's acquaintance with the Church. It was the solution to a family problem, because her husband, a Free Methodist, would not attend her Lutheran Church—because, he said, they "worship images, and the Bible clearly says, 'Thou shalt not have any graven image before me.'" And Sister Cummings, as a Lutheran, would not attend a Free Methodist Church. But on the Megiddo faith they could agree.

It was a decision never reversed or regretted, and the Family worked together in the Church until Brother Cummings' death in 1964.

Sister Cummings is survived by her two

daughters, Alice and Agnes, both of our Rochester Congregation, and one sister, Mrs. Opal Cummings, of Lockport, New York.

G. Alwin Rathbun

On May 7, we met to pay our last respects to Brother Alwin Rathbun, a member of our Rochester Congregation for more than 20 years.

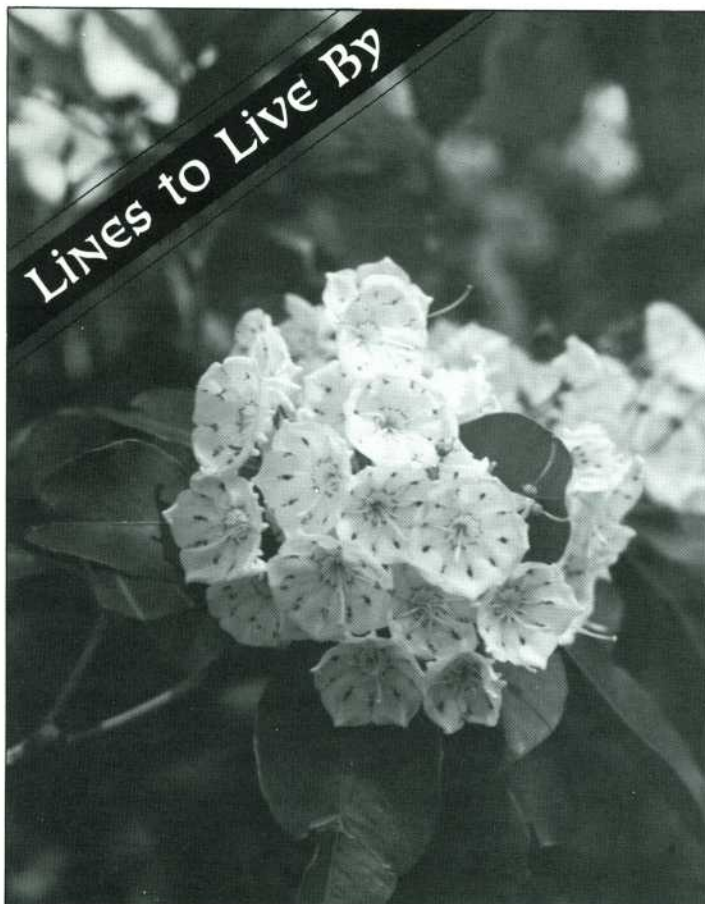
Brother Rathbun first learned of the church from his mother, who responded to a small advertisement for the *Elijah* book about 1920.

Brother Rathbun was an exceptionally willing volunteer; whenever there was something to be done, he was always there to lend a hand. As recently as last summer, he insisted on being part of the church's lawn mowing team, and could be seen pushing a lawn mower when he was almost too stooped to walk. Very regular in attending meetings and Bible studies, he was well versed in the Scriptures and could answer almost any Bible question asked him.

Brother Rathbun is survived by one brother, Walter, of Peru, Kansas; and one sister, Louise, of Avon, New York, both regular correspondents with the Church and subscribers to our publications; and one nephew, Clifton Fleming, of New Braunfels, Texas, who is also a subscriber to our publications.

Errata ... Sorry!

The article "I Am Committed," on page 11 of our May issue, was missing its last line. It should end with: "present your bodies a living sacrifice,...which is your reasonable service."



A Prayer for Wisdom

*Almighty God, in humble prayer
To Thee our hearts we lift;
Do Thou our youthful minds prepare
For Thy most needful gift.*

*We ask not golden streams of wealth,
Along our path to flow—
We ask not undecaying health,
Nor length of years to show;*

*We ask not honors which an hour
May bring and take away,
We ask not pleasure, pomp, and power,
Lest we should go astray;*

*We ask for wisdom — Lord, impart
The knowledge how to live;
A wise and understanding heart
To all before Thee give.*

*Build thee more stately mansions, oh, my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Set thee toward Zion, with a dome more vast,
Till thou at last art free,
This mortal clothed with immortality!*

*There is something wrong with the man who knows the right way to take and still
wants time to think about it.*

When a boy was once asked if his father was a Christian, he answered, "Yes, he is a Christian, but he is not working much at it just now!" How true that is of many Christians—branches of a very fruitful vine, but withered branches!

*The difference between perseverance and obstinacy is that one comes from a strong
WILL and the other from a strong WONT.*

A Pentecost Hymn

*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 other hearts inflame
With words of love and pure desire.*

*Then guided by this power divine
In tongues of other climes they spake;
With words of hope and faith sublime
They bade each sinful heart awake.*

*Great God of mercy and of power,
Bowed at Thy feet in prayer and love,
With longing hearts we wait the hour
When Thou shalt send from heav'n above.*

*Come soon, Beloved One, and bring
The power that will renew the earth!
Come quickly, come, the heavens rend,
And give Thine own the Spirit Birth!*