

Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST

The Garden of Eden

"THIS IS THAT"

CHANGE AND EXCHANGE

TIMELY TOPICS

LET'S GET ACQUAINTED

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

CHRISTIAN YOUTH IN THESE TIMES

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

MEDITATIONS ON THE WORD

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

DELIVERANCE

Megiddo Message

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A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

- Strengthen your faith in the Bible
- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God.
- Bring peace and stability to your life

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Megiddo means

"a place of troops, a place of God."

Geographically, Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, located at a strategic point, demanding heavy fortification. Palestine is the age-old gateway between East and West, and the famous pass at Megiddo through a solid mountain range is the one means by which this avenue between continents may be traversed.

In the spiritual parallel, God is in this place with a band of troops. Soldiers are equipped for spiritual warfare against the forces of evil without and within. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12).

Editorially Speaking...

How Tall Are You?

WHAT IS your height?

I'm not thinking in terms of feet and inches, for moral stature is not so easily measured. Character, spirituality, Christian maturity, prudence and discretion—these are the things that make the great man, the godly man, the tall man.

How can you determine your height? The method is as easy as these six simple steps.

Measure your gratitude. Count the number of favors others have shown you today. Include everything you have touched, tasted, or handled that you did not design and form yourself. Divide this by the number of thoughts of your appreciation. The result will be the measure of your gratitude.

Measure your grace to accept change. All things never continue just as they are for very long; they change, and keep changing. New activities, new relationships, new associates, new responsibilities continually confront each of us. Old problems are solved, and new ones take their place. How many changes interrupted your life during the past six months? How gracefully did you adjust? Did you have the godly resignation to say, "This thing is of God, therefore it must be good for me"?

Measure your stability and peace of mind. How capable are you of maintaining poise and perfect peace? A former friend openly slanders a reputation you have labored for years to build up. Or the temporal hope on which you had staked your confidence eludes your grasp. Or you are criticized for mistakes you did not make. Or someone disparages your best efforts and intentions. What then? How do you react? Are you man enough to take it all in peace and patience?

Measure your understanding and compassion for others. Have you learned to judge others with leniency and yourself with rigor? Do you always remember that Jesus said, "By their fruits"—not your surmisings—"ye shall know them"? Do you have Christian sympathy and encouragement for the brother who still stumbles on the obstacle you have surmounted? Recall the last time a friend placed his bushel of problems at your feet. Did you offer to give him a lift, or you send him away with the subtle inference that you already had enough of your own?

Measure your forbearance and forgiveness. Someone did you a wrong—did you return it, or wish that you could? Or your friend made a mistake that seemed to you so unnecessary, and then came to you for help to correct it. What is the limit of your forbearance? Is it as limitless as God's?

Measure your generosity—how much do you give of yourself? Someone needed just what you had to give—your hand, your suggestion, your time, your ability, your money, your encouragement—did you give it?

How do you measure up?

It's time to start measuring—and growing! ●●

The Garden of Eden

PRAYER

Our Father, before whom the generations and rulers of this world rise and fall, from whom each of us has come and to whom each shall return, make us mindful of our need for Thee and of Thy love for us. May we count these moments of blessing, when we can turn aside from our secular duties and appear in Thy presence, as the richest moments of our lives. And as once more the truthfulness of Thy Word, the reality of Thy great plan for the earth and mankind is projected before our mental vision, may our faith mount, and our determination to go the whole way be amplified.

May the prospect of living on and on through a gladsome eternity so capture and enthuse us, that we will not lose sight of it for a single moment, even in the midst of sin's most bewitching thrall, or during the most trying and ordinary day.

We rejoice to know that it suited Thy purpose to plant a garden eastward in Eden, in anticipation of the dawn of that new and better Day. We feel highly honored to know of Thy work as Master Vinedresser, that Thou hast a vineyard, a unique purpose which Thou art ever promoting, and which one day will result in the earth being filled with plants of righteousness.

Thy vineyard is a spiritual vineyard, Thy Church; and the men of Judah—righteous and holy individuals, are Thy pleasant plants. Grant that we may submit willingly to whatever process Thou deemest necessary to fulfill Thy major purpose in us that we may be the plants which Thou wilt value because of our sturdy growth.

Thou hast done Thy part and done it well. More could not have been done for Thy vineyard than has been done in it. Then may we not be content with ourselves until we too have done our best, and have borne the lovely fruits of a holy and spotless life. And may it never be said of us, "he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry" of distress.

One day the ax will be laid at the root of the trees, Thy divine judgments will fall upon all the workers of iniquity. May we be alerted, may we be warned, may we be corrected before everlastingly too late, that we may fit ourselves for life in Thy heavenly Kingdom, and bear the fruits of immortality throughout ages unending.

These mercies we ask in His name whose we are, and whom we serve. Amen.

DISCOURSE

THE LOCATION of the Garden of Eden is an enigma which has intrigued the minds of Bible students through ages. Popular belief has held that the Almighty God made a literal garden in which He placed a literal man whom He commanded to till and cultivate the land, to gather out the literal weeds and to grow literal fruits and vegetables.

Accordingly, men have searched in the history of the past for the slightest evidence or mention of its existence, its location, or its inhabitants. But in vain. Why? First, they did not search in the right place, namely the Bible, to gain information as to what the Garden of Eden really is. Second, they had no idea of anything superior to a literal garden, and a man and woman placed in it to cultivate the soil and grow literal fruits of the ground.

Instead of searching in the Scriptures for the solution to the problem of the Garden of Eden, the majority have simply lost interest in the story because they could not understand it.

As we have seen in previous articles, the Bible frequently explains and harmonizes its own symbols and metaphors. What is the Garden of Eden? Where is it? Who has ever seen it?

Let us go to the Bible for our elucidation.

What Is the Garden of the Lord?

In searching for the site of a literal garden, men have displayed their ignorance of true Bible teaching. As we investigate this subject, we should keep in mind continually that we are considering these first three chapters of Genesis from the standpoint of a *spiritual* creation. Therefore, when we come to the Garden of Eden, let us examine it as an illustration of a deep spiritual truth which cannot be understood literally. It is part of the beautiful allegory of the plan of the Almighty Maker for the perfecting and glorifying of this earth; for the Lord has told us that the Church, His people, compose the garden.

We are admonished by the apostle Paul to compare "spiritual things with spiritual" (I Cor. 2: 13), that we may understand the mind of God as expressed by the prophets, Jesus and the apostles.

The first definitions of the word "Eden" as given in Gesenius' *Hebrew and English Lexicon* are: "Delight, pleasure." The original word for "garden"

is *gan*, which has for its definitions: "The garden of Eden planted by God. A garden enclosed, Canticles 4:12; figuratively used of a chaste woman—Cant. 4:15; 6:2."

Canticles, often called Song of Solomon, creates a representative picture of the love of Christ for His Church, using the love of a bridegroom for his bride. Chapter 4:12, to which the lexicon refers, reads as follows: "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." The word "garden" is used again in verse 15: "A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." Notice particularly how the lexicon defines this symbolic use of the term "garden": "Figuratively used of a chaste woman." This chaste woman could suggest to us the bride of Christ, composed of both men and women, all the faithful of the six-thousand-year day of probation. A similar representation occurs in Isa. 58:11, where the faithful are termed "a watered garden."

What, then, is the garden of the Lord? It is an illustration of His Church, His people, His faithful servants.

The Vineyard

In searching the Scriptures we find that the vineyard of which Jesus and the prophets speak is the same as the Garden of Eden. The meaning of the original word for vineyard is given in Gesenius' *Hebrew and English Lexicon*: "A field set with plants of a nobler quality, specially a vineyard. . . . A vineyard is also sometimes used in the prophets as an image of the people of Israel—Isa. 5:1; Matt. 20:1."

Isaiah describes a vineyard of the Lord: "I will sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it . . . and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" The entire picture is representative. How can we know? Let us read further: "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry" (Isa. 5:1—7).

What is the vineyard or garden of the Lord? The house of Israel—spiritual Israel—His people, whether Jew or Gentile (Romans 2:28, 29). What were the plants He was cultivating? "The men of Judah" (Isa. 5:7). What was the tower? We are told in Proverbs 18:10: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it and

is safe." What kind of harvest was the keeper of the vineyard seeking? a harvest of literal grapes? No, "He looked for judgment, . . . for righteousness."

Instead of a description of a literal garden, then, we learn that the Garden of Eden in Genesis represents His people, His Church, the bride of Christ, which is also called the "vineyard of the Lord."

In Matthew 20 Jesus employed the term in the same symbolic sense:

"For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning, to hire labourers into his vineyard. . . . And he went out about the third hour, . . . and said unto them: Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, I will give you. . . . And again about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, . . . He saith unto them, Go ye into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire."

In the morning of the "day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2) for the inhabitants of this planet, the Almighty God began to call laborers into His vineyard or garden. Adam, though not the first man to inhabit the earth, was the first called; this was during the early morning hours. Again during the third hour, Noah's day, God called laborers into His garden. In the sixth hour, the days of Moses, He was still calling. And in the ninth hour, the days of Jesus, He repeated His call and confirmed it by many wonderful signs and miracles. The resurrection of Jesus, confirmed by living witnesses, made a profound impression, and in the apostolic age more heeded the call than in any age before or since.

Now we are living in the eleventh or last hour of the day of salvation, and the call is still sounding to all who will hear, to all who have ears attuned to the heavenly message, "Come, work in the vineyard of the Lord." At the close of this hour the Lord of the vineyard will call His laborers to account, and will pay them according to the fruit they have produced while working in His garden.

In Genesis, where God outlines His plan of salvation in symbolic language, Adam and Eve are said to have heard the voice of the Lord in the "cool of the day" calling them to account. It is in the "cool of the day," the evening of the day of salvation, the last hour, that Christ will come to judge His servants.

Plants for the Vineyard

When we think of a garden, we do not picture a desert waste of barren sand but a productive plot of fertile soil in which are thriving trees, plants or vines capable of yielding a harvest for the benefit of the gardener. Likewise, the garden of the Lord

is filled with spiritual plants which are now under the most diligent cultivation.

The Psalmist likened the nation of Israel to a vine under God's care and cultivation. "Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it." God brought His vine, Israel, His chosen people, out of the land of Egypt, cleared the Promised Land of its wicked, worthless inhabitants, and transplanted His vine in Canaan.

"Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land." Ideally described, it flourished so as to cover the mountains in the south and the cedars of Lebanon to the north. It spread from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates.

"The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river" (vs. 10, 11). What are the Lord's goodly cedars? "The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted" (Ps. 104:16). They are trees of righteousness, of the Lord's own planting (Isa. 61:3).

But what has happened to these productive plants? God has permitted them to be damaged. Speaking especially of His chosen vine, Israel, He tells how its walls have been broken down, and those passing by "pluck and ravage its fruit."

And so the Psalmist pleads for the mercy of the Vinedresser: "Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself." The picture is historical, the vine being a figure of the nation of Israel. But in making a spiritual parallel we might compare all whom God calls—whether Jew or Gentile—to this vine. Whether an Abraham, an Enoch, or a Noah, or any man or woman who works in the Lord's service today, all are selected out of the land of spiritual darkness and are transplanted into the vineyard of the Lord. Remember, "the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant."

Though this vine now grows only in the garden, it shall multiply and flourish until it fills the whole earth in the day when "all nations shall call him [Christ the King] blessed" and from sea to sea this planet is filled with the glory of the Lord.

Jesus compared Himself and the divine truths which He impersonated to a vine: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

Harvesting the Garden

Every gardener desires a rich harvest, a recom-

pense for all his toil and trouble of fitting, planting, cultivating, nurturing and watering the tender plants. And so does the Lord long for the "precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it."

The Psalmist eagerly petitions the Lord for the arrival of the great and inevitable day of harvest. "Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself." Christ, as Lord of the harvest, will visit this vine and examine its fruit when He returns as Judge, Conqueror and King. No imperfection nor immaturity will pass His scrutinizing gaze. If, after we have been planted in the garden of the Lord "a noble vine, wholly a right seed," we turn into a "degenerate plant of a strange vine" (Jer. 2:23), if our vine has produced only "the foul rank growth of malice" and self-importance, instead of the precious fruits of patience, humility and kindness which He desires, we shall most certainly be rejected. Then, instead of being planted to expand eternally in the garden of God, the ax shall be laid at the root of this vine or tree that has not borne fruit—good fruit—and it shall "be hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 3:10). For those who have not yielded a generous measure of good fruit, "the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and desperate sorrow" (Isa. 17:11).

While the harvest shall be to the unfaithful a time of "desperate sorrow," it shall be to the faithful the opening of the gates to "everlasting joy." Christ "shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit" (Isa. 27:6). "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely" (Isa. 4:2). If the Master Gardener finds that our vine has produced this most precious fruit of the earth, we shall be beautified, glorified, and permitted to remain in the garden of the Lord for evermore.

Then shall be fulfilled Psalm 96:11—13:

"Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." ●●

Of all life's lessons which we may learn and of all the abilities to which we may attain, the most important is to acquire the ability to discern between good and evil. When we have mastered this, we shall have claimed the privilege of living and learning forever.



Electrified by the coming of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Peter silenced the discordant multitude, proclaiming . . .

"THIS IS THAT..."

success of its instigators. Starting in a little upper room in Jerusalem, these men within thirty years had penetrated to the heart of the Roman empire. They out-thought, out-lived, and out-died the pagans of the Roman world.

We would do well to consider carefully a few characteristics of these men who followed in the train of the conquering Christ.

Men of Conviction

In the first place, we must say that they were men of conviction. They had certain beliefs which determined how they should live and how they should die, and most certainly the dominant article in their creed was the fact that Jesus was alive. To them He was no historical figure of the printed page, no tender memory blown down through the ages, no figure in a stained glass window, no name in a book. Jesus was their Master and their Saviour, and they insisted that it was because of His resurrection to life that they could live so gloriously. The life of Christ meant the reality of hope and life and liberty and law to them, now and for evermore.

These convictions were not just inherited and unexamined prejudices. For them the light of reason had shown upon the facts of experience, and the evidence was unassailable. In a pagan society they had to be sure—doubly sure—of what they believed, and they presented those beliefs, the highest in the land, in terms of the best culture of the day. The best deserved the best. Many men of their day—like ours—were inclined to debate rather than declare, to discuss rather than to decide, to call a committee meeting rather than to give a commission. But the apostles were men of conviction. And conviction in their realm meant *action!*

Few today have definite opinions about life, God, honor, duty, justice and friendship. Standards too often are governed by the society in which we move, rather than the unalterable Word of the Lord.

A CERTAIN segment of the Chinese Communists have taken as their motto a phrase from the Acts of the Apostles: "They that turned the world upside down."

What a perfect description is this of the men who founded the early Church. Propelled by the irresistible vigor of the resurrected Christ, those humble men struck at the very foundations of the superstructure of pagan faith.

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

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

When we compare the effect of the Apostolic church with its initial beginning, we marvel at the

We are afraid of being considered fanatical, and so we fail to take a stand. Yet we know that the men who have done the most to impress this world have been men who have not been impressed with it. From Daniel on down to our own day, men of conviction have found it necessary to mold what they could of the world to their beliefs, not their beliefs to the world. Of course it had its cost. But what worthwhile thing has not? Will it cost nothing to declare and live the truth? Of course it will cost.

Therefore we must be people who have the courage of their conviction, and like the early Church, refuse to compromise.

Men of Courage

This leads us to a second characteristic of these men. They were men of courage. Jesus had said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Here were verbs that spelled action: "come" . . . "deny" . . . "take" . . . "follow." Something to leave behind: "come"; something to lay off: "deny"; something to pick up: "take"; and something to do through every remaining hour of a man's life: "follow."

The apostles found the hardness of this command only too true. They were persecuted from city to city, their lives in constant danger, besides experiencing the discipline of daily intercourse. Yet they could go singing down the ghastly shambles of the Roman arena.

It still requires courage to witness for Christ in a society which is only nominally Christian, to be an example of the believers "in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." How many of us are ashamed of that Name which we profess to know? Sometimes the witness of the Church can be damaged more by being persuaded to abandon its principles than by open persecution.

Men of Consecration

The apostles were men of consecration. They had one thought, one interest, and one goal in life. The apostle Paul expressed it well when he wrote of himself, "This one thing I do." His love for Christ and the truths He proclaimed was so dominant and so compelling that it absorbed the motive of every action of his life.

Consecration is devotion, love. But love of this sort does not come automatically. It has to be produced. We know its power only as we submit our ways and thoughts and ideas totally to those which are as much above ours as the heavens are above the earth.

The apostles reached a place of enduring fame on God's honor roll only because their consecration to God was of the highest order. Their whole physical life, knowing, feeling, and will, was totally consecrated to God. The trouble with us is that we are inclined to consecrate only a part—to give Him

our outward life, but not our inner; our thought-life but not our emotional. We surrender to His guiding in part of our conduct but not in the whole.

Again our consecration is inclined to be a fitful thing, governed by moods and feelings. It is well illustrated in the story of the small boy who came to his father one day as he sat in his big arm chair. "Daddy," said the little one, "I am going to give you my new book." The father was puzzled by this, but accepted it. "Thank you," he said. The child then brought the book and laid it in his father's lap and went away. But it wasn't long before his father heard the door opening and a little voice said softly, "I think if you don't mind I'll have it back now."

Is this the measure of our giving to God? In some moment of strong spiritual inspiration we feel we want to give God everything, but that moment doesn't last and soon we take back that which we have vowed to give.

The times we are living in demand the uttermost consecration on our part. The measure in which God will bless us in the future depends on our measure of consecration now. Nothing less than entire consecration—time, hands, feet, voice, lips, intellect, will, heart and love—can ever merit His fullest measure of blessing.

The world is still waiting to see what God can do with Christians who are truly consecrated to Him. We believe that God is able, and that He will do all that He has promised. Why do we hinder Him by our indecision? Why not act right now and join the ranks of the men who turned the world upside down?

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PENTECOST

. . . is here again (June 8, 9), the harvest feast in ancient Israel, the day which closed the barley and wheat harvests just as the Feast of Unleavened Bread fifty days earlier had opened them, on the 16th day of the month Abib.

A greater significance came to Pentecost in New Testament times, when the first Christians, assembled together on the same day as the old Hebrew festival, received the gifts of the Holy Spirit—a power from God which was to assist them in their mission to go and teach all nations, until the end of that age. As the old Pentecost was a harvest feast, it was appropriate that the new Pentecost brought a harvest of about 3000 souls (Acts 2:6).

The greatest significance of Pentecost is yet future—the Day when the Holy Spirit is renewed, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of the Lord. For the arrival of this greater Pentecost we work and watch and pray. ●●

Change and Exchange

DO YOU remember the fable about the fox and the skylark? The skylark was fond of worms, but found them hard to secure. One day he met Mr. Fox, who had the bright idea of exchanging worms for feathers.

The skylark said, "I have plenty of feathers, so I can make the exchange profitably." Later that day, after his good meal, he found that he could not fly so high. But he let it pass.

The old fox continued to exchange a few worms for a few feathers, until the bird had so stripped himself for his appetite that he could no longer fly. Then the fox declared, "Your appetite has brought you to the place where my appetite can be fed." Only a feather—a trivial thing—but enough of them lost took away the bird's power of flight and escape from the enemy!

A foolish exchange to be sure, but we are nonetheless foolish when we exchange God's high standard of living for man's low standard.

The law of gravity is not confined to the world of matter. A stone let go by the hand will fall to the ground, but so will a standard of value when it slips from the moral grasp.

Let go of integrity of purpose and you drop to the level of expediency—if not dishonesty.

Let go of character and you will find yourself clinging to reputation, your name the plaything of every wind that blows.

Let go of courage, and you find yourself facing what you must, without inspiration or hope.

The well-defined spiritual life is not only the highest life, but *it only* can offer the things that last. The man who tries to make the best of both worlds, makes nothing of either. And he who seeks to serve two masters misses the benediction of both. But he who has taken his stand, who has drawn a boundary line sharp and deep about his life and has marked off all beyond as forbidden ground, finds the yoke easy and the burden light. For this forbidden ground eventually becomes as though it did not exist.

Every right principle sacrificed at the shrine of our own desires; every noble deed exchanged for some way of our own; every craving of the carnal mind indulged in increases the difficulty of our escape from the enemy SELF.

When we knowingly and deliberately transgress God's law we are exchanging the grand things of eternity for a mess of pottage.

Perhaps these things seem trivial to us; perhaps we think that God does not notice them. But in God's scale of values, anything below His standard will in the end be rejected.

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," said Paul (II Cor. 5:17); "old things are passed

away; behold, all things are become new." The Christian's life requires that we exchange old habits for new; and by changing the inner attitudes of our minds we change the outer aspects of our lives.

A life firmly grounded in discipline, courage, honor, faith and love is certain to be victorious.

The temporal is but the scaffolding to aid us in changing and exchanging the things of here and now for the things that are eternal. ●●

Timely Topics

CRIME fighting in Monroe County and Rochester," reports a recent article in the leading Rochester newspaper, "is like a headless octopus flailing its many tentacles to stomp out an increasing number of brush fires." A survey of the eight years between 1961 and 1968 showed that crime in Monroe County grew 11 times faster than the population. In brief, the report showed:

- Felony offenses such as murder, rape, robbery, arson—*up 159 per cent.*
- Misdemeanor and lesser offenses such as petit larceny and third degree assault—*up 168 per cent.*
- Traffic accidents—*up 107 per cent.*
- Robberies—*up 100 per cent during the first 3 months of 1970.*

In 1968, one out of every 13 persons in this county was the victim of a crime. And the number of unsolved crimes committed during the last three years exceeds the total crimes committed in 1968 alone. If crime continues at the same rate of increase that it has in the last three years, an authority points out, by 1980 the number of criminal offenses will equal the number of residents in Monroe County.

An unprecedented and critical situation with no easy solution, skyrocketing crime is a major concern of many conscientious persons. What is the solution? education? evangelism? more law enforcement? more court action?

All of these may help from a human point of view, but none of them is *the* answer. For "this

people hath a revolting and rebellious heart" (Jer. 5:23). They are like those whom the Psalmist described as being "a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God" (Ps. 78:8). Much more than moral suasion will be needed to bring such a people under the authority of divine law. Will goodness and divine favor lead them to repentance? No, "let favor be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord" (Isa. 26:10).

But—

Listen further to the prophet of the Lord: "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." When shall the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness?

"When thy judgments are in the earth."

Until that time arrives and God begins the work of executing His divine law upon all the inhabitants of earth, "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (II Tim. 3:13).

Can we expect crime to diminish and trouble to disappear before the end of this age arrives?

Certainly we cannot.

But we ourselves can work, and watch, and pray for the dawning of the better Day of eternal, transcendent peace, in the meanwhile ridding our own lives of every speck of sin. For the command is, "that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life" to a world that suffers in ignorance, superstition, and sin. ●●

Let's Get Acquainted!

Gehazi

(For the complete account, read II Kings 4, 5, 8)

GEHAZI, servant of Elisha the prophet, our thoughts turn to you as to the life of a man whose story is recorded for our learning and instruction.

You had such an extraordinary opportunity as the servant of Elisha, the man of God. Sometimes, as we meditate upon your life and character, it seems almost impossible that anyone with the advantages you had could have such a bitter experience. Elisha had done many miracles and you had personally witnessed at least some of them.

Elisha had commanded a certain widow who was in debt to borrow a great many vessels and fill them with oil from the pot she had in her possession and then sell the oil to pay her creditors. The oil flowed and flowed until not a single empty vessel remained and the widow was able to pay all that she owed. Surely you knew that such an occurrence would require the power of God in addition to the word of your master.

Then, Gehazi, you yourself suggested a son as a token of appreciation to a kindly woman who was careful for the welfare of your master (II Kings 4:14), and you knew that Elisha promised the birth of a son to this woman. It came to pass exactly as he said it would. Wasn't this evidence that your master was indeed a man of God? Sometime later, the son of this same woman became ill and died.

It was your master who resurrected this boy from the dead (II Kings 4:18—37). Yes, you must have been convinced that Elisha possessed a power greater than any ordinary man.

You must have known, also, of the time when Elisha threw meal into the pottage when wild gourds had been put into it, and it became nourishing food instead of the deadly poison that it had been (II Kings 4:38). Was not this act proof that God was with your master?

You witnessed the act of the feeding of one hundred men with twenty barley loaves and some ears of corn, and you saw that food remained after everyone had eaten (II Kings 4:42). Could it be that you forgot?

And the healing of the leper Naaman, the Syrian general. You actually delivered your master's instructions to this man personally (II Kings 5:10), and later you witnessed his recovery. You had seen so much, Gehazi, that your faith *could* have been unshakable. But apparently you did not allow these things to increase your faith as you should have.

We ponder this, your record, Gehazi, and we feel that you certainly should have been a much different man than you proved yourself to be. It is hard for us down in these last days to imagine how anyone who had seen the things that you witnessed during your years as the servant of the great prophet Elisha could entertain even the slightest thought that you could deceive your

master. It seems to us that anyone who had the privilege of such constant and close contact with such a godly man would certainly be beyond the stage of seeking great things for himself in this world. How could you do such a thing as tell lies to further your own selfish interests? You not only told lies, but you told lies about another man, that you might gain wealth for yourself (II Kings 5: 20—27). Again, we ask, how could you do such a wicked thing? Did you not realize that it would be impossible to deceive a Man of God? The deed is almost beyond our comprehension. How could anyone stoop so low, after knowing the good and the right way?

But wait, Gehazi, we are beginning to remember other sayings of Holy Writ. Did not Jeremiah the prophet say, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"? Yes, that was your problem. Your heart was deceitful. You had a great opportunity, but you did not use it. You served God with your *hands* but not with your *heart*. You did not search your innermost thoughts and seek to cleanse your innermost self from evil.

Yes, Gehazi, as we study your life we see a striking parallel between your behavior and that of a man with similar disposition who lived centuries later—Judas Iscariot. Your master was a great prophet of the living God. Judas' master was none other than Jesus, the future king of this earth. You, like Judas, spent some years in close service and communion with your illustrious master.

Your master could feed a large number of people with a small amount of food, and have some left over. Judas' master did the same. Your master could raise the dead. So did Judas' master. Your master performed miracles; Judas' master did also. You personally witnessed some of these miracles. Judas did, too. You had every advantage to learn to live above sin and evil. So did Judas. Your great besetment and downfall was covetousness. Yes, the same besetment, the love of money, caused the downfall of Judas. The stories of both of you are identical in so many ways. We see how human nature has not changed.

There is, however, a difference in what happened after each of you committed your great evil. Judas took his own life in remorse after he realized what he had done. You were condemned to the life of a leper. Is there a possibility, though, Gehazi, that you might have repented of your sin? Might you have learned a great lesson from your terrible experience? We do not know. The record of your life is silent on this point. We do know that Jesus healed lepers and probably some of them afterwards learned to live lives of uprightness and holiness. You still had life, and repentance was still a possibility for you. We truly hope that you did turn over a new leaf as far as your spiritual life was concerned.

Only once are you mentioned in the record we

have, after you became a leper, and that is when you recounted to King Jehoram all the great deeds that Elisha, your former master, had done (II Kings 8:4). It seems almost certain that you, a leper, would not have been allowed to enter the presence of the king without specifically being bidden. Lepers were condemned to live apart from other people, so dreadful was the disease. And while you were speaking to the king, a woman and her son arrived to plead a case. You gave testimony to the king that this woman was the one Elisha stayed with at times, and her son, the boy whom Elisha had raised again from the dead. Perhaps your words had much to do with King Jehoram's deciding in the favor of the woman and granting her more than she asked.

Yes, Gehazi, the record of your life provides much food for thought for us in these days. It really doesn't matter to us whether you repented of your sin or whether you didn't. While we hope you did, your actions will not help or hinder us as far as our future is concerned. The question for us to answer is, What are *we* doing? We can take a great lesson from your failures and take heed to ourselves. We must make sure that the searching of *our* innermost hearts is our first and greatest aim in life. It matters not what service we do with our hands; if our heart is not right, all will avail us nothing.

May we let your mistakes, Gehazi, be a very real and lasting lesson for us, for your record is one of those "written aforetime for our learning," and may we learn the lesson well. ●●

Words to WALK By

The world is not so much advanced by the gigantic pushes of its mighty heroes as by the numerous little pushes of lesser folk.

The study of the Bible is a postgraduate course in the richest library of experience.

It is all right for the ship to be on the ocean, but not for the ocean to be in the ship. It is all right for the Christian to be in the world, but not for the world to be in the Christian.

Getting even with a person means putting yourself on his level.

We prove our faith in the future by the plans we are making for the future.

Lies, like chickens, come home to roost.

Some folks are so busy laying up for a rainy day that they cannot enjoy good weather.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Kingdom of God

LAST MONTH we commenced our study of the Kingdom of God, a real, tangible kingdom to be established on this earth in the near future. We defined a kingdom as a major territorial unit under the sovereignty of a single person, usually a king or a queen. We saw the Kingdom of God foreshadowed in the Old Testament prophecies and observed its principal placement throughout the Scriptures.

Why should we study about God's Kingdom? Because it is a government which may affect the lives of each of us. Someday soon every living person will be face to face with the new authority of this government. And what shall be our reaction?

We shall continue our study following our outline:

- III. Christ the King
 - A. Old Testament Foreshadowings
 - B. The Gospels' Presentation
 - C. His Divine Right to Kingship
 - D. His Return to Receive the Kingdom
- IV. Essentials of the Kingdom
 - A. Rulership
 - B. Populace
 - C. Territory
 - D. Laws

As we study, let us try to visualize what life will actually be like in this realm. Let us be impressed with its reality, picture ourselves a living, integral part of the new order, and concentrate daily on qualifying for the honor of residence there.

III. CHRIST THE KING

B. The Gospels' Presentation

Throughout the Gospels Christ is presented as King. Christ Himself clearly taught His kingship. It was implied throughout His teaching of the kingdom. **Matthew** shows His descent from the house of David. **Luke** gives the account of the angel's declaration to Mary before His birth that He would one day reign over the house of Jacob (**Luke** 1:32, 33). **John** tells the incident of Nathanael's recognition of Jesus: "Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel"—an affirmation which Jesus did not deny (**John** 1:49).

1. Christ's own claim to be king. Christ Himself did not deny that He was to be a king. Asked of Pilate: "So you are a king?" Jesus replied: "Certainly I am a king" (**John** 18:37, Moffatt). He again showed His future kingship in the deliberate fulfillment of the prophecy of **Zechariah** 9:9, when He rode into Jerusalem and accepted the homage of the multitudes (**Matt.** 21:1—11).

Referring to the transfiguration when some of the apostles would see a vision of His future kingdom, He said, "There be some standing here, which shall . . . see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (**Matt.** 16:28).

When the mother of James and John came asking Jesus for a favored position in the Kingdom, Jesus did not say that He was not to be the King or have a kingdom, but that those positions were not His to give (**Matt.** 20:20—23). In His portrayal of the coming Judgment He pictured Himself as King, sitting upon the throne, separating the righteous from the wicked (**Matt.** 25:31—34).

2. Christ's enemies charge and condemn Him as king. It is evident that Christ must have made it plain to His hearers that He was a king, else His enemies would not have brought that charge against Him. They used this as a basis for the charge against Him when they brought Him before Pilate. Accusing Him they said, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King" (**Luke** 23:2). It was after this charge that Pilate asked Him: "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus made no denial of His position, answering: "Thou sayest it."

Jesus' claim to the kingship was stated in the superscription on the cross on which He was crucified: "This is the King of the Jews." The priests desired to have the statement altered so as to detract from His claim to the kingship and asked Pilate to change the writing, saying, "Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews" (**John** 19:21). But the title stood, written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

3. The witness of the resurrection and the apostles affirm Christ's kingship. Christ's triumphant resurrection re-inforced all His claims to future authority and strengthened mightily the faith of the apostles. On the day of Pentecost Peter proclaimed to all the fact that the Crucified One had been exalted to the throne (**Acts** 2:36). The

preaching of the apostles emphasized constantly Christ's lordship, kingship, and authority.

4. **The Epistles and the book of Revelation testify to the kingship of Christ.** Though not always stated directly, the fact that Christ is king of the world to come is everywhere implied in the Epistles. Paul, named the twelfth apostle by Christ Himself, proclaimed His kingship no less boldly than did Peter. He described Christ as being above all in authority, "not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:21). He is "Lord both of the dead and the living" (Rom. 14:9). He is coming to "reign over the Gentiles" (Rom. 15:12). He has been given a name that is above every name, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9—11). Those who suffer with Christ will "reign with him" (II Tim. 2:12), and He will save them "unto his heavenly kingdom" (II Tim. 4:18).

Peter wrote of the "everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:11).

Throughout the book of Revelation, the predominant aspect of Christ is that of the King. He comes with power, majesty, authority and the acclaim of multitudes of the heavenly hosts, "ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5), "King of the ages" (Rev. 15:3), "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Rev. 17:14; 19:16), and "he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15). The reality of Christ's kingship is beyond all doubt.

C. His Divine Right to Kingship

Unlike the potentates of earthly monarchies, Christ is a king by divine appointment.

1. **By Birth.** Christ was truly born to be King. As He testified of Himself, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world" (John 18:37).

Christ was born into a kingly family. His mother was of the house and family of David (Luke 2:4), therefore He was a direct descendant of Israel's most kingly family.

The angel who announced His birth declared that He would occupy the throne (Luke 1:32, 33), saying also that "he shall be great, and shall be called the son of the highest."

On the day of Pentecost, Peter affirmed that the promise God had made to David, that "of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne" (Acts 2:30) was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.

Paul declares that the gospel of God was "concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom. 1:3).

Son of God and Son of David, Christ certainly had a right to the throne.

2. **By Divine Appointment.** The ideal of the "Divine right" of kingship was realized in Christ.

Because of His flawless attainments and perfect obedience, "God highly exalted him" (Phil. 2:9) to a throne on which He shall sit with all those who, like Him, are overcomers (Rev. 3:21).

3. **By Conquest.** However divinely appointed and ordained to be King, Christ's kingship shall not be His until all opposition is forcefully subdued and men are taught to bow before their rightful Ruler.

The word from which our word "king" is derived means, "the able man," "the one who can." In the highest sense this is true of Christ, the only man capable of uniting the kingdoms of men into one eternal, worldwide Kingdom of God.

D. His Return to Receive the Kingdom

The constantly recurring prophecies of Christ's kingship are bound up with another prophecy of Scripture yet unfulfilled: The King's return. Not until Christ comes the second time "without sin unto salvation" will He receive the crown of earth's authority and extend His domain from sea to sea.

During His earthly ministry Jesus likened Himself to a nobleman going into a far country "to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." He was alluding to the then-common practice of aspiring rulers to travel to Rome, the seat of all legal authority, to be trained in the art of government, conditioned, and finally given the right to rule over a certain territory within the empire, then returning to that territory as ruler.

Jesus Christ, though king of the earth by divine right, by birth, and by virtue of His outstanding moral achievements, is now at the Father's right hand, preparing for the great Day of His return when He shall be acclaimed as Lord and King of all the earth.

The return of Christ the King is a subject frequently mentioned in the New Testament, and a number of different Greek words are used for the event, each having a distinct and unique shade of meaning. We will list just a few of the most prominent, giving an example of each use. The meaning of the Greek terms is highly significant. Properly understood, they give us a glimpse into the glory that will attend His second appearing.

Erchomai, used in Luke 19:13, "Occupy till I come," indicates the act of His coming, but not necessarily of His arrival. **Heko**, used in Rev. 2:25, "Hold fast till I come," not only means the coming, but stresses the arrival as well. **Parousia**, frequently employed by the New Testament authors, goes further still, involving not only coming and arrival but the actual personal presence of the Person who has arrived. For example, study its use in James 5:8, "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Again, **analo**, used in Luke 12:36 where Christ compares Himself to the master of the house returning from the wedding, indicates a departure in order to return, while **hupostrepho**, used in Luke 19:12, "To receive for himself a kingdom, and to

return," incorporates the idea of returning from a journey.

Apokalupto, occurring in II Thess. 1:7, "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed," stresses His appearing, with the idea of revelation. **Prosopon**, used of the "presence of the Lord" (II Thess. 1:9), indicates the actual presence of the one who is coming, and that all are before his face. **Epiphaneia**, used in I Tim. 6:14, "The appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ," emphasizes the glory that will attend the Saviour when He comes. **Phaneroo**, used by the apostle Peter (I Pet. 5:4), involves not only His appearing but the further thought that the person appearing will be seen in his true character. **Ephistemi**, used by Jesus Himself in Luke 21:34, "That day come upon you unawares," stresses the thought not only of the coming of the Lord being near but particularly of its suddenness.

IV. ESSENTIALS OF THE KINGDOM

What constitutes a kingdom?

The political entity we call a kingdom is not mystic and ethereal. A kingdom is a physical, tangible, substantial domain.

What of the Kingdom of God? What shall it be?

If we were to ask this question of a variety of religious leaders of our day, we would receive a variety of answers. To some the Kingdom is an invisible, spiritual influence in the hearts of men. To others it is an eternal state of bliss in heaven, entered into at death. Augustine, one of the early church fathers, developed the idea that the church is the Kingdom of God on earth.

But the Bible upholds none of these descriptions. According to God's Word, the Kingdom is to be as real, as literal, as tangible as any other government earth has ever had. It shall be a government of people, for people and by people. Daniel 7:27 gives us a word picture of God's literal, worldwide Kingdom: "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." God's Kingdom, like all other kingdoms, shall have rulership, populace, territory, and laws. Let us discuss these four necessary elements.

1. Rulership. No present-day government is run entirely by one man. Because of the many facets involved in governing a country, the supreme ruler, however high his position, must have help. In this respect, God's kingdom is no exception.

The rulership of God's kingdom shall belong to Christ and His saints, "the people of the saints of the most High" (Dan. 7:27). Christ shall be "King of kings, and Lord of lords," which indicates that under Him will be lesser kings and rulers with positions of authority, nevertheless subject to Christ the King.

Rev. 5:9, 10 indicates that Christ will share the rulership with persons selected out of "every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" who will be made unto God "kings and priests" to "reign on the earth."

In the family of Abraham, this divine plan for the selection of associate rulers for Christ's future kingdom was foreshown. Abraham's wife Sarah, the angel revealed, was to be a "mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her" through the child of promise, Isaac (see Gen. 17:1-17).

In Revelation 20, those who had "not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads [representing only mental assent], or in their hands" [representing open demonstration of acceptance]—these "lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4). Here is a definite picture of Christ's co-rulers.

When Christ is described in His kingly battle array, He is not alone, and those who accompany Him are not the ordinary run of mankind: "They that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." They have achieved their honored position through outstanding merit and service (Rev. 17:14).

Rev. 14:1 pictures these select individuals: "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads."

Verses 4 and 5 give further description: "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. . . . for they are without fault before the throne of God."

God's standard for quality in rulership was established as long ago as the Kings of Israel, when David said, "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (II Sam. 23:3). This ideal shall finally be realized in the Kingdom of God.

2. Populace. Whom shall the rulers of Christ's eternal Kingdom govern?

According to the prophet Zechariah, one third of earth's people shall survive God's purifying judgments, having submitted to the new authority (Zech. 13:8). And these people will form the nucleus of the people that shall multiply and fill the face of the earth during the Millennial reign of Christ and the saints. Developed and educated under the most ideal circumstances, when "thou shalt not see evil any more" and "all shall know me [the Lord] from the least of them unto the greatest of them" (Zeph. 3:15; Jer. 31:34), they will all be a superior people.

The prophet Zechariah speaks of their purification: "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my

people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zech. 13:9).

According to the prophet Isaiah (60:21): "Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified."

Also foreshown in the family of Abraham, the populace of the Kingdom are represented in Ishmael, the son of Hagar, of whom the angel promised: "I have heard thee: behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; . . . and I will make him a great nation" (Gen. 17:20).

This vast number of people is described in Revelation 7: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number [an unrevealed number], of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; . . .

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes [emblematic of purity of character]? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."

Note especially those words which are the key to this passage: "great multitude," "before the Lamb," "clothed with white robes," and "serve him." These people will compose the populace of the Kingdom, immortal like their rulers, having achieved the same standard of moral purity, though under much more favorable circumstances. And instead of sitting upon the throne, they are "before the throne" and "serve." But their "service" shall not bear any load of drudgery or toil, as the following verses reveal: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

3. Territory. The domain of God's Kingdom is described repeatedly throughout Scripture; each time it is indicated to be on earth. For example, it shall be:

"From sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8).

"On the earth" (Rev. 5:10).

"Under the whole heaven" (Dan. 7:27.)

"The land," "the earth" (Ps. 37:3, 9, 11, 22, 29, 34).

Isaiah 57:13 states: "But he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain."

Jesus Himself said in His first sermon, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5).

4. Laws. Just as any present-day kingdom has laws, God's eternal Kingdom shall have laws. But the laws governing God's Kingdom will be different. They will be righteous laws rightly enforced. Christ is said to "rule with a rod of iron" (Rev. 2:27)—said to be "iron" because of its unbending authority, not that it will be cruel or unjust.

In that day people will seek to know the law: "And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Micah 4:2; see also Isa. 2:2, 3).

In the Kingdom of God, **all will know and obey God's law.** "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33). Those who do not strictly conform to the law will be reminded of their delinquency: "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isa. 30:21).

Those who enforce the law will not be like many public officials of our day who can be bribed to allow law-breaking, for God says through the prophet: "I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders" (Isa. 60:18). "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted" (Isa. 60:12).

But the utmost in blessing shall attend obedience: "And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing"; "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring" (Isa. 23:18; 44:3).

To be a messenger you must know the message.

TEST YOURSELF

1. Explain Christ's "divine right" to the kingdom.
2. List what you consider the four most definite verses that prove Christ will be King.
3. How do we know Christ will have associate rulers?
4. How will law be enforced in the new age?

Reprints of these studies are available upon request.

Christian Youth in These Times

The Rose

(Continued from last issue)

Mara spared no words in venting her wrath and disdain for Naamah. Of course, she had to veil her feelings in the presence of her master and mistress, but she took every opportunity to humiliate Naamah by dropping hints as to her misbehavior. Naamah didn't try to justify herself to her mistress, nor did she speak of her difficulties with the cook. Adah, however, was well acquainted with Mara's disposition, and more than likely had overheard a few one-sided conversations from the kitchen and guessed that all was not well.

Naamah munched quietly on the supper that Benjamin had so thoughtfully brought her as she stared blankly out her small window that overlooked the garden. It was a lovely evening, quiet and serene. Hot and flushed, Naamah decided to escape to enjoy the cool night air of the garden.

As she sat on a stone bench, her eyes fell on a little rose bush which only a few weeks ago she had watched the old gardener prune. How sad it had looked, all shorn, with nothing left but little stumps. When she had said as much aloud, Rufus looked up and a faint smile lighted up his kindly eyes as he said, "Pruning, my dear, is one of the most important steps in gardening." And sitting down beside her, he had explained, "It is the same with the lives of men and women, Naamah. God may seem to be dealing harshly with someone, when actually He is strengthening and beautifying them for some great and noble work. Take our own great king—"

Naamah had listened earnestly as he told of the times long ago when David had been reproved by Nathan. It was something for him to humble himself and take advice from the prophet, but David did it. Naamah had felt awed by his great wisdom and understanding and realized how much she herself had yet to learn. He had finished by saying gently, "So, pruning may seem painful, even cruel at the time, but—ah—what grace and beauty shall come of it."

As she gazed at it now, she saw fresh green leaves shooting from the dead-looking branches. Old Rufus was right—she knew he would be. "Maybe that is what God is doing to me," thought Naamah: "pruning." The little green shoots seemed

to be saying, "Don't be discouraged. I was all cut and bleeding, too, but look at me now. I am growing. See how pretty and green I am!"

Lost in thought, she didn't hear the approaching footsteps and was startled when a gentle hand touched her shoulder.

"It is only I," laughed Adah. "When I didn't find you in your room, I just thought I'd find you here. How are you feeling?"

"Better, thank you," replied Naamah as she fixed her gaze upon a star that had just appeared near the horizon.

Adah said nothing for a moment. Then she sat down and laid her hand on Naamah's arm, saying softly, "It's Mara, isn't it?"

"Well, yes. I displeased her this afternoon."

"I gathered as much from little Benjamin. Apparently he displeased her too," Adah sighed.

Naamah shifted her gaze and looked off into the deepening shadows. She seemed for the moment to have forgotten her companion.

"You know, I feel sorry for Mara," she said at last.

"Sorry?" her mistress queried.

"Yes. She must feel very alone. Loving or caring for no one but herself. She doesn't seem to enjoy life very much."

Together they talked of Mara, David, old Rufus, and the rose bush. They both started when a voice behind them said with a feigned growl, "What now! Are you two going to stay up all night?"

Adah looked around in surprise. "Why it is night, isn't it?"

"Yes, my dear. It is," chuckled Ithamar.

Recently Naamah had noticed a change in her master. He was very preoccupied. At times she would see him pacing the floor with a worried expression on his strong brown face, and oblivious to her presence. He rode into the city often and seemed to be weary when he returned. And from the scraps of conversation which she heard between Ithamar and Adah, Naamah felt she knew what was bothering him. Such words as revolt—conspiracy—strengthening—Absalom—vows at Hebron—King David—fleeing—which she had picked up fit in with the gossip and discussion that she heard at the well and market place. Absalom was conspiring to take over his father's throne.

One day Naamah was on the patio weaving, and

Adah was reclining on the couch when Ithamar came through the gate and strode over to them.

"I just came from the city," he said soberly. "A messenger just arrived and reported to the king that the conspiracy at Hebron is growing by leaps and bounds and everywhere people are favoring Absalom."

Naamah stopped her work. Adah sat up quickly. "It has been that way for quite a while, hasn't it?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered as he sat down beside his wife. "But it looks now as if Absalom is ready to make a dash for the throne—perhaps at a given signal and soon. The king and his household are leaving the city early tomorrow morning."

.

It was late morning as Naamah sat grinding wheat in the courtyard. They had received the news earlier that morning that David and those who were faithful among his household and warriors had started their sad escape into the wilderness where they would hide from Absalom. Naamah felt bewildered and confused. Everything had happened so suddenly that it hardly seemed real. King David had fled, and Absalom was probably coming this very day to take possession of the royal city. Something she had said to Mara flashed across her mind to mock her. "I don't think anything will happen to King David, for God is with him," she had said confidently, and now—now he had to flee for his life, all Israel acclaiming his rebel son.

Naamah straightened resolutely. God is with our king, she told herself. He is just pruning him some more, like the rosebush that needed just the right amount to be the most beautiful.

Just then little Benjamin came running up to her excitedly. "Jonathan and Ahimaaz are coming up the path! I saw them!"

A clatter of hoofs on the path outside verified his announcement. Naamah arose as the king's couriers entered and approached her. In spite of their usual friendly greeting, Naamah noted a new seriousness in both of them.

"Is good Ithamar in, Naamah?" asked Ahimaaz.

"Yes. I shall tell him you are here. Won't you come in?" She stepped into the house, followed by the two visitors.

"Peace to you, my young friends," Ithamar greeted them heartily as he entered the room where they were waiting. "You came in time to share our noon meal with us."

"Oh no!" protested Jonathan. "We just came to—"

"Never mind. I've already told Naamah to set the table for two more, and praise the Lord there is always plenty of food."

"Thank you for your hospitality," Jonathan laughed. "As a matter of fact, I'm starved and

we'll need something to sustain us." And he added quietly, "We are on our way to En-rogel."

"En-rogel!"

At the table the men discussed the recent events. At one point, Jonathan, noting Naamah's stricken look, asked, "What is the matter, Naamah?"

Mara's lip curled into a sneer. "I know what the matter is. Her—king—King David—he was afraid and had to run!" With this she cackled and disappeared through the kitchen door.

"You say you are on your way to En-rogel?" Ithamar was inquiring. The three men had left the dining hall and gone to the housetop for private talk.

"Yes, sir—to hide."

"Well now, this sounds interesting. Tell us more."

"That is about it. Now we need your cooperation for the rest. You, no doubt, know that Absalom is expected to arrive in the city this afternoon. No doubt he will call a council together immediately. Hushai will be in the meeting, of course, and he can inform you of Absalom's plans. Then, if it is agreeable with you, you are to let us know, somehow, of those plans."

Ithamar stroked his chin thoughtfully. "Let me see, now. Don't you think one of the servant women could better give you the information without being suspected?"

Ahimaaz chuckled. "Well, we thought of that, but you know a woman's weakness; and that would make exciting gossip."

Ithamar stood up and walked slowly over to gaze down into the garden. "Yes," he said presently, "she would have to be very trustworthy."

"What about Naamah?" Jonathan asked suddenly as though he had just thought of her.

Ithamar's eyes were resting upon this sweet, serious servant girl as she bent over to pick some flowers in the garden below. "That is just what I was thinking. She is exactly the person for the job." Then he added, half to himself, "She is certainly an extraordinary young woman."

"Then that settles it?" Ahimaaz interposed.

"I think so, if it is acceptable to her, and I think it will be."

"Then the plan will be for you to find out through Hushai whatever you can of Absalom's plans. You will tell Naamah and she will come down to En-rogel early tomorrow morning to let us know the facts, and we'll get word to David as quickly as we can, right Ithamar?"

"Right. Now shall we speak to the young woman?" He went to call her from the garden.

The two couriers rose and bowed slightly as Naamah reached the top of the stairs and approached her master. She could not imagine what *they* could want of *her*, but she silently asked her God to give her wisdom and courage to meet the situation.

"Naamah, we would like to ask a favor of you."

"Anything, Master," Naamah murmured, "to serve you."

Ithamar frowned slightly, but the two onlookers knew that he was not displeased. "No, Naamah, this is no small thing. You will be serving your people, your king, your God."

"Yes, sir," she answered simply. "What would you have me do?"

Ithamar briefly went over the plans. "We all feel that it would be unwise to send a man to such a place as the well, where only women go. No one would be likely to suspect a woman. We felt that you could be trusted to keep the information a secret and to deliver it safely to our two friends here. Will you do it?"

Naamah's eyes showed her answer. "Oh sir! I shall be very happy to do what I can."

Ithamar, obviously pleased, smiled broadly and glanced at the men. "Very well, Naamah. Jonathan and Ahimaaz can tell you where you are to go."

So the final plans were made. As they began to descend the stairs Ahimaaz asked Naamah, "Tell me, do you think Absalom will be successful?"

"Oh! No!" she answered confidently, "for our God is with King David."

"Naamah," Jonathan spoke in a low voice, "the good Lord grant that you are right."

.

Early the next morning while it was still dark, Naamah started down the familiar path through the valley to the well. She hurried, hoping to arrive before any of the other women, who occasionally went to draw water very early. Her heart beat faster as she neared the place which the men had described. Yes, there it was—two large boulders. Then a small bush. She was to go down between the rocks by the bush. Sure enough! There was the woody spot where Jonathan and Ahimaaz were supposed to be concealed. It was indeed a good place to hide, for it was dense with vines and underbrush. She looked all around before she continued down the path. Forcing herself to walk calmly, she went over in her mind what she was to tell them.

Reaching the edge of the woods, she parted the vines and slipped through; not seeing any signs of the men she whispered shakily, "Jonathan! Ahimaaz! Where are you?"

Looking around again, she saw the grinning face of Ahimaaz protruding from a mass of leaves. In a moment Jonathan's face appeared. "Here we are," they said in unison. Jonathan untangled himself and crawled out first with Ahimaaz right behind him.

The men were eager to know what the outcome of the council meeting was. But first, Jonathan spread his cloak on the ground and bade Naamah to sit down.

Naamah sank gratefully onto the proffered gar-

ment, and began to relate all that Ithamar had told her about Absalom's entrance into the city and Hushai's offer of allegiance to him; Ahithophel's advice to pursue King David, which was actually sound advice over that of Hushai, and Absalom's preference for the latter plan. The couriers snickered at Absalom's stupidity.

"It is the hand of the Lord," mused Jonathan.

"Undoubtedly," rejoined Ahimaaz. "Remember David's petition when he heard that his counselor was favoring Absalom—that Ahithophel's counsel would be rejected?"

"Verily, I do! But go on, Naamah, excuse the interruption."

"Hushai wants you to report to the King about the two men's advice that his was preferred, but as a safeguard they should not stay on this side of Jordan tonight but should cross over the river as quickly as possible. Absalom may decide that Ahithophel's counsel is best after all."

"Well, let's see," Ahimaaz frowned thoughtfully. "We can't leave here until the morning water carriers are gone, can we?"

"That will be a few hours still," Naamah ventured.

"That's true," added Jonathan, "and we want to get there as soon as we can. Maybe we can sneak out before too many start coming."

With that plan decided upon, Naamah bid the two farewell, saying that it wouldn't do for Mara to miss her for she had an avid curiosity.

"Peace to you, Naamah."

"And to you, peace."

Naamah crept up to the path cautiously. Some loud talking and laughing told her that some one was on the way to the well. Crouching behind the rocks until the voices trailed away, she proceeded cautiously up the path and seeing no one, she stepped gingerly onto the path.

.

The family, plus Jonathan and Ahimaaz, were sitting together once more. One person was missing—Mara, who had retired a few days before, claiming that she was getting old and was no longer able to do the work. The two guests were telling about their exciting mishap on their way to the king.

"A mischievous fellow of our acquaintance at the palace," Ahimaaz was saying, "spied us and made off with haste. Where? We could easily guess."

"Very fortunate for us that we recognized him!" Jonathan went on, "and that that kind woman in Bahurim was on David's side and had so much common sense. She told us to jump into a well that she had, and she would cover it with a cloth and put some drying corn on it. We had just tumbled in—"

(Continued on page 20)

Whether or not you give any credence to the spirit world, you will be interested in this one central spirit of the Christian Church.

The Spirit of Truth

IN THIS day of a thousand different faiths and a thousand other philosophies of life, the spirit world is very real and very near to many people. Some feel a mysterious, unexplainable power beyond their control or comprehension. Others imagine a sort of invisible person which can communicate with the deceased or thwart their best efforts and intentions. Psychic phenomena mystify and disturb numerous unsettled minds, and spirits transcending the human intellect are believed to be active in the affairs of men.

The New Testament Church also was surrounded by a world of mysticism. Theirs was a world which traded liberally in the spirit realm. Men of antiquity were quite familiar with the idea that a divine Spirit might possess a man. The presence of the spirit, it was universally held, was shown by an unusual ecstatic type of behavior. It was when a man acted like a "whirling dervish" that it could be known that the so-called spirit had come upon him. Even as much a thinker as Plato believed that a divine spirit could transform men into ecstasies.

Thus it was nothing new when the Christians began talking about the Spirit of God. But theirs was a concept entirely different from that of the pagan spirit world.

First of all, the early Christians had experienced a special gift from God in the power of the Holy Spirit. This "power from on high" which Jesus had promised before He ascended to heaven, descended like tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost and sat upon each of the disciples who had tarried in Jerusalem. "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4).

This gift of power, also called the "sprinkling rain," the "former rain" of which Joel had prophesied, was given for a limited time during the apostolic age to confirm the spoken word, and it ceased when its purpose was accomplished.

But the essential Spirit of the Early Church was a spirit which had belonged to God's people through all ages—the Spirit of Truth, as eternal as the wisdom of God. It is the spirit of which Jesus spoke, that "quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

The really significant thing about this Spirit was its entirely new and different characteristics: it

demanded a *quality of life*. Among the pagans, the hallmark of the spirit-filled man had been the unusual, the spectacular, the ecstatic. To Paul the *fruit* of the Spirit was "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22, 23). These qualities are not spectacular. They do not immediately impress themselves on the casual observer, as did the frenzied behavior of the spirit-filled priests of the pagan gods. But they are characteristic of the quality of life that Paul urged men to know.

This spirit, the Spirit of Truth, was not the extraordinary experience of a privileged few but was understood to be part of the normal day-to-day experience of all the people of God. "If any man have not the Spirit of God," wrote Paul in the negative, "he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). And again he spoke positively, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14).

It is unfortunate that the gospel is so often preached today as though all that is involved is one moment of decision. True, the moment of decision is significant. The whole of the rest of the life will be changed because of it. But the essential point is that nothing less than the whole of the rest of the life is involved. Christianity is not simply a matter of making a decision for Christ. It is a matter of steadfastly *following* Him day by day, of realizing in everyday affairs the consequences of the decision once reached. It is a quality of life and a life of quality; we must not settle for less.

The New Testament preachers did not offer their hearers some slight thing that might readily be compared with what men found in other religions. They saw Christians as men and women whose lives were being completely transformed. Thus the Christian is not the "old man" touched up a bit here and there but a totally *new* work of creation (II Cor. 5:17). The "old man" is dead. He has been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6). He has been buried with Him (Rom. 6:4), and the Christian thus crucified has arisen to "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3). "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). Words could scarcely convey more vividly the thought that an old way of life has completely passed away.

And just as the imagery of death is used to indicate the utter finality with which the old way has

been repudiated, so the imagery of resurrection is common for the new life. Christians have died to an old way of life, but they have also risen to a new one. Those who were once dead in their sins God has now made alive (Col. 2:13). They are exhorted, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above. . . . Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1, 2). The transforming power of Christ's life is to be made known to and in them.

Or the terminology of new birth may be used, as in Jesus' words to Nicodemus. Life in Christ is so completely new that we were not alive at all before we came to know Him. To enter the new life means a change so radical that it is to be born all over again. So Jesus could say, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Apart from this, there is no real life.

Or again, the imagery may be taken from slavery. Men in their natural state are slaves to sin (John 8:34). They are "sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14) to the cruel slave-master of sin. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6:16). In Christ they are free. "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness; . . . even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. . . . What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death" (Rom. 6:17—21).

Or the metaphor may be taken from the homely act of changing one's clothes. Christians have to "strip off" the old man and "put on" the new (Eph. 4:22—24). And there are other ways of expressing it. The New Testament writers were thrilled at

their new life in Christ, and they ransacked their vocabulary for ways to express their delight. "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:8—10).

The new life in Christ is characterized by the exercise of qualities like love, which is the first item in Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit. It is the love of God, not superficial sentimental love, but love that is expressed in a life of dedication, obedience and self-sacrifice. Elsewhere this same apostle has written a whole hymn in praise of this noble virtue (I Corinthians 13). He leaves us in no doubt that love is supremely important, and that it is a necessary quality in any truly Christian life. In a day when self-seeking dominates the lives of so many, we need this emphasis on Christian compassion, on that love which has been called "the annihilation of self-seeking life."

Paul tells Timothy that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (II Tim. 1:7). In a day as haunted by fears and forebodings as the present, this emphasis must not be overlooked. The Christian is not obsessed by a concern for security, but he has a sense of security. He is not afraid of what the world news will bring forth. This does not mean that he has a kind of private line enabling him to know that wars and destructions will not take place. He knows no more about these things than do his pagan neighbors. But he does know that God is over all, and that this supreme God will accomplish His own purposes, whatever men may do. He knows that God has given him "the spirit . . . of a sound mind" which can steady him through the

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The Rose

(Continued from page 17)

"When along came Absalom's men," finished Ahimaaz, "and galloped right up to the poor woman."

"Ooooh!" squealed Benjamin. "That must have been—" he shook all over.

Ahimaaz smiled and continued. "Did those two rascals come around here?" one of Absalom's men growled.

"Y-yes, s-s-sir!" the woman spoke mildly. 'Right over there they went, sir,' she must have pointed to the brook, and they dashed on, splashing right through it. Then she stuck her nose under the cloth and said, 'Stay there, they'll be back.'"

Everyone laughed. "What happened then?"

"Well," he said, "we didn't feel like laughing much right then, let me tell you. Those fellows came storming back. 'You lied, woman,' one snarled. 'We searched everywhere. No one is in sight. But no matter, we'll get them all in the end.' 'You, too,' another flung back as they clattered away—but they didn't."

"Upon my word, they didn't." Ithamar slapped his knees triumphantly.

Naamah slipped away unnoticed, and went out to the garden. The splash of deep red caught her eye. It was from her little rosebush, which had leafed out, budded and now one bud had opened up into a perfectly beautiful blossom. The whole bush seemed to be so alive that she could almost hear it saying, "Look at me, now. Behold the perfection of my flower, my buds, my glossy leaves. Feel the soft, velvety petals of my flower and smell its sweet perfume. Ah! The pruning was not in vain, nor was the pain too much to bear. The gardener knew best." A gentle breeze caught the buds and they seemed to nod their rosy heads in assent.

"I thank Thee, God!" Naamah breathed, "for the love and care Thou hast for Thy earthly children. And thank you for the wonderful lesson I have learned from this little rose. Prune me, O Father, as you see my need, so that I may be fit to live in Your ETERNITY." ●●

LETTERS

Concerned

Thank you for your literature. I have read your booklets with keen interest. The reasoning is temperate, documented and convincing. The state of the world and our country in particular is not only disturbing but frightening, with little counteraction.

It seems to be difficult to awaken people to what is going on unless they are frightened into it. If there is awareness, there is a tendency not to discuss what they think for concern about being considered "crack pots" or religious fanatics.

I wish you success in your good work, and would like to know more about it.

Lawrenceville, N. J.

D. T.

Grateful

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. I truly enjoyed the two booklets, *The Coming of Jesus and Elijah* and *The Kingdom of God*.

I do want to be a part of this glorious soon-coming kingdom and I want to learn all I can while journeying here.

Waynesburg, Pa.

B. P.

Studying

I have been doing a great deal of reading, or perhaps it is correct to write studying. Along with teaching an adult class, I am trying to help the members become acquainted with Bible facts that are so important.

Having been a high school teacher, now retired, I've done a great deal of reading. Now it is a pleasure to me to encourage religious education for people of all ages.

Chillicothe, Ohio

Mrs. H. C.

Learning

I really learned so very much more from just the two booklets you sent me (*The Kingdom of God*, and *The Coming of Jesus and Elijah*) than from anything I've read in many other sources.

Indianapolis, Indiana

J. M.

Roll Away the Stone

Greetings in the Name of Jesus. Yes, we must greet His Name together and forever.

I must thank you for the *Megiddo Message* month after month. I feel amazed after reading it for I learn something each time which I have never thought of before, such as Adam and Eve, when their son Cain had no difficulty in finding a wife in the land of Nod. I now believe there were more people in the world before, but Adam and Eve were simply the first man and woman to enter the garden of the Lord, the first to agree to work for eternal life. I was never taught so in Guyana. So you can please continue to send the *Megiddo Message*, because I want to know more about the Word of God.

I have made my decision to roll away the stone that is within me and cast my net on the other side of the lake to make a big catch. The harvest is ripe; the laborers, few.

May the Lord bless you that you may have a very Christ-centered life.

Guyana, South America

G. E. T.

Meditations

On the Word

"The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh" (Ecclesiastes 4:5).

Food is essential to health; it is essential to life. Starvation is a major cause of death in some parts of the world, due to food shortages. Sufferers from cancer of the liver actually die of starvation because the liver, the link between food intake and assimilation, is inoperative. The fresh supply of food eaten cannot reach the blood stream, therefore life ebbs away. The physical law that food must be taken to maintain life is as inexorable as the law of gravitation. If a plant, an animal, a fish, or a human being, is deprived of food, death is the result.

These same basic rules apply to the spiritual life. Jesus spoke much in a few words when He answered the tempter: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Eating every word of God is as essential to normal spiritual life as is food to the physical body. Neither can be omitted.

The man who tries to sidestep this rule of procedure is a fool. His very impractical approach to the problem reveals his foolhardiness. He says he wants life. The bread of heaven is within his reach, yet he is too indolent to make the effort to reach for it. He prefers to fold his hands and eat his own flesh. He feeds on the thoughts that appeal most to his carnal nature.

Among the great variety of human beings peopling the earth are chalk eaters, clay eaters, and those who eat earth. We may wonder why anyone should choose such a diet. These people lack something or they would not have such perverted tastes. Likewise the man who chooses to eat his own flesh lacks something; he is a "fool," his taste is perverted.

James the apostle lists the two choices of mental food as wisdom from above and wisdom from beneath. A brief analysis of the wisdom from beneath shows why it is so popular with the "fool" whose desire for inactivity prompts him to keep his hands folded together and eat only what appeals to him. "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work." Note the category: envy, strife, confusion, and every evil work. That is what appeals to the "fool"

who folds his hands and eats his own flesh. No effort is required to eat this food. He needs only to stop pressing, fold his hands, and gravitation does the rest.

But the man who eats every word of God, or feeds on the wisdom from above, must lead a very different life. He will be alert, energetic, always on the offensive against evil, always critical about the food offered him. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:14—17).

A man is literally what he eats; hence on this principle if one feeds on his own flesh, his own thoughts, the wisdom from beneath, his whole life will reflect his diet. "For where envy and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." Another example of similarity between food and eater is given in Isa. 28:9. "Whom shall he teach knowledge? . . . them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." From a root of the Hebrew word for "milk" we glean the idea of "milk of nations, that which causes a fat heart; foolish, torpid."

Wholesome food fosters growth, and God demands growth in the Christian life. One just starting in the way of holiness is likened to a babe. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Pet. 2:2). And the growth is as indispensable as the birth. The parents expect their newly born child to be undeveloped in body and mind, but if normal growth does not follow birth they at once become concerned. So God expects us to be weak and unable to withstand temptation at our inception into the divine life, but He does not tolerate our continuing that way.

The apostle Paul mentions growth in his letters to the churches. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 4, vs. 11—17, merit our attention: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, . . . but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

The second chapter of this same Epistle also speaks of growth, employing the simile of a build-

ing to exemplify growth into holiness: "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord" (v. 21). In his letter to the Thessalonians Paul defines the process of growth in even greater detail: "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth" (II Thess. 1:3). If a whole nation of these "fools" folding their hands together and eating their own flesh should pool their entire strength—spiritually speaking—they could not fill this bill so that it could be said of them, "Your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth."

This is not accidental, it is not the result of magic forces at work in our lives which effortlessly carry us onward and upward, but our faith must grow exceedingly and our charity one toward another must abound. Folded hands and an inactive mind always result in the fool's diet, eating his own flesh—and no spiritual growth.

Let us refer again to Paul's statement about the man *grown up* in Christ. Christ is our pattern, He shows the stature or size we must attain. We read in Rev. 19:7, 8 of a robe to be worn by all who partake of the marriage supper of the Lamb: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor 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."

This garment is of a fixed size or dimension and we must grow to fill it. A new born babe in Christ cannot fill it; a half-grown child cannot fill it; a dwarf cannot fill it. Full stature in Christ is God's changeless demand. ••

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"It was with great interest and delight that I read your MEGIDDO MESSAGE, until I came across a rather sour note on page 22, where you mentioned the fact that you do not believe Christ's literal death benefited anyone, that His death was not a sacrifice for sin but that He was murdered by a mob of wicked Jews.

"But have you never read I John 1:7, where we are told that the blood of Christ, God's son, 'cleanseth us from all sin,' since 'without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin' (Heb. 9:22)? All the Old Testament sacrifices pointed to One who was to cleanse us from sin by His own blood.

"We are purchased with His blood' (Acts 20:28).

"... justified by his blood' (Rom. 5:9).

"... redeemed by his blood' (Eph. 1:7). And there are many others that prove the effectiveness of His blood.

"Do you know the answer of Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy to this same question? She said, 'The blood of Jesus Christ was no more efficacious to cleanse from sin when He died on the accursed tree than when it flowed through His veins as He went about doing His Father's business.'

"But perhaps you have an answer to this question which I have missed."

I am not surprised that you were unpleasantly taken back when you read that we do not believe there is any efficacy in the literal blood of Jesus. Yes, that is what we sincerely believe the Bible to teach. The mention of the term "blood" in the Bible does not necessarily indicate *physical* blood.

You quote I John 1:7 to the effect that "the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Now I cannot conceive how the shedding of another's physical blood could cleanse me or anyone else from sin. If, however, the Word of God says so, I must believe it.

During Jesus' ministry He told us how we can be cleansed from sin: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). Jesus appeared to Paul after He had ascended to heaven and appointed him as an apostle to us Gentiles, and in his Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 4, he spells out how we can be cleansed from sin: "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; . . . and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. . . .

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (vs. 22—32).

Here is a formula for the purification of a human soul that we can understand and heartily endorse. And these sentiments can be found many, many times repeated in the Word of God.

Christ Himself placed no stress upon His literal flesh and blood as an agent to cleanse sin. In John 6 He was saying to the Jews who were listening to Him: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (v. 53). Being carnal they thought He referred to His

literal flesh and blood, and said, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

Then in verse 63 He showed what He meant by "flesh" and "blood": "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." And when many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him, Jesus said to the Twelve, "Will ye also go away?" Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (vs. 66—68). If obedience to the Word of God is the key to eternal life, what need of any help from Jesus' literal blood?

You quote Heb. 9:22, "and without shedding of blood is no remission." You should also have quoted verse 23: "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these [referring to the sacrifices under the Mosaic law]; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." It was literal blood in the type, hence must be figurative blood in the antitype. Christ surrendered the life-blood of His natural desires all during His adult life, which was climaxed by the death on the cross. This was the vital life that He laid down. He witnessed, "I do always those things that please" My heavenly Father (John 8:29).

You say the Old Testament sacrifices pointed to One who was to cleanse us from sin by His own blood. This is true, but as aforementioned, the blood of the sacrifices under the Mosaic law being literal, the blood of the antitype could not be literal.

Under Moses' law the people were forbidden to eat the blood with the flesh, "for the blood is the life of the flesh." So when the blood is spoken of, that is but another way of saying the life. Hence in Acts 20:28 we are "purchased" with His life. I Peter 2:21 agrees with this approach: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."

You cite Rom. 5:9, that we are "justified by his blood." Note the reading of verse 10 also, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." *We shall be saved by His life*—not by His death or shed blood.

If we apply the definition of Christ's blood as referring to His life, Eph. 1:7 fits in with the general teaching of the Bible, "In whom we have redemption through his blood"—through His life.

Mary Baker Eddy's explanation of the blood of Jesus is quite realistic: "The blood of Jesus Christ was no more efficacious to cleanse from sin when He died on the accursed tree than when it flowed through His veins as He went about doing His Father's business." Let me repeat, "We are saved by his life." We are saved, or fitted for salvation to be revealed at the last time (I Pet. 1:5), by dying

to sin as Christ died, by living His life (Rom. 6).

A point to remember in connection with the literal sacrifices under the law of Moses is that they were of no value, were unacceptable to God, unless accompanied by right living, or the death to sin which they represented. Read Hebrews 10: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, . . . can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. . . . For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (vs. 1, 4). "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God" (Heb. 7:19). God abhorred those sacrifices which were empty and insincere (Isa. 1:11—16), desiring rather a clean heart.

God never approved of human sacrifice, much less to indulge in such a practice Himself. The prophet Micah said, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? . . . shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Mic. 6:6—8).

Obituary

Harry F. Hendricks

Life is fleeting. Even when by the grace of God it extends to fourscore and ten years, when it is over it is still "as a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." But to the man who has spent his life seeking and preparing for a better life, there is hope—hope of life anew in the glorious Day of the Resurrection.

Such was the hope of our Brother Harry F. Hendricks, of Winterset, Iowa. Following a vigorous, active and happy life of 92 years, death came as a release from many months of illness.

Our brother became interested in the Megiddo Mission about forty years ago, and during the intervening years carried on an active correspondence with other members, made several visits to the Church at Rochester, New York, and participated actively in meetings with the local group of interested readers in Iowa.

Our brother is survived by his wife, Sister Flora Hendricks, with whom he lived happily for 67 years; two daughters, Florence Burkett and Edith Hull; two sons, Lawrence Hendricks and Francis Hendricks; seven grandchildren, twelve great grandchildren, all of Iowa, and many nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were conducted by Brother Newton H. Payne, assistant pastor of the Megiddo Mission Church. Interment was in Sunnyside Cemetery, Milton, Iowa. ●●

O blessed be the Lord, my strength,
Who nerves with might my arms and hands;
My goodness, fortress, and high tower,
My Great Deliverer, He stands
My shield, in whom alone I trust,
Who brings my foes to bite the dust.

Deliverance

(Psalm 144)

Lord, what is man, frail, sinful man,
That Thou dost think of him in love?
Or what the son of man, O God,
That Thou dost guard him from above?
Man is but vanity and clay.
His days, like shadows, pass away.

O bow Thy heavens, come down, O Lord,
The mountains touch, and they shall blaze;
Make sharp thine arrows to Thy foes,
And scatter them who hate Thy ways;
Lord, from the hand of treachery,
And lying mouths, deliver me.

So that our sons may be as plants,
Full grown and flourishing in youth;
Our daughters be as corner-stones,
Polished and fair, and pure as truth;
Our garners full of choicest stores,
While God abundance round us pours.

And that our oxen may be strong,
Our substance grow, our flocks increase;
No breaking in nor going out,
But in our streets the voice of peace.
How happy they who thus are blest,
The Lord their purest joy and rest!