

Megiddo Message

*How precious to me are Your thoughts, O God!
How inexhaustible their themes!
Can I count them? They outnumber the grains of sand:
To finish the count, my years must equal Yours!*

—Psalm 139:17-18, NEB



He Gambled—and Lost

THOU fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:20). This is the epitaph of a prosperous and successful man God called a fool for the following reasons:

1. **HE THOUGHT** that prosperity and abundance, the things he possessed were a gauge of success. He was rich, but not toward God.
2. **HE DIDN'T** know the brevity of life. He counted on "many years," but God said, "this night."
3. **HE THOUGHT** that "man lives by bread alone." He forgot that in God "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). He left God out, so God called him a fool.
4. **PROSPERITY** didn't make him grateful. He forgot that while man can plow, cultivate and plant, it is still God who gives the increase. He didn't appreciate the miracle of seedtime and harvest. And so God called him a fool.
5. **HE BUILT** his barns on sturdy foundations, but his spiritual house he built on his riches, his own philosophy, his material success, his own morality, his own self-righteousness. "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell and great was the fall of it" (Matt. 7:27). So God called him a fool.
6. **HE PUT** his earthly profits in banks for that "rainy day," but he never gave thought to the treasure he should have been storing up in heaven. His treasures were all on earth; he was too busy to lay up a good foundation against the time to come, that he might lay hold on eternal life (I Tim. 6:19). And God called him a fool.
7. **HE HELD** the "ownership" view instead of the "stewardship" view. So God answered all his questions suddenly and unexpectedly, bought all his crops at one stroke, cashed in all his checks and foreclosed the mortgage on his life and called him a fool. "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21).

Take heed! Don't gamble with life and lose. Remember the man who intended to take his religion seriously at the "eleventh hour"—and lived only until the eighth!

Megiddo means . . .

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

Bible Quotations

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version. Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—New English Bible

NIV—New International Version

NASB—New American Standard Bible

RSV—Revised Standard Version

TLB—The Living Bible

TEV—Today's English Version

JB—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English

Berkeley—The Modern Language New Testament

Weymouth—The New Testament in Modern Speech

Goodspeed—The New Testament translated by

Edgar J. Goodspeed

Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation

AAT—The Bible: An American Translation

About Our Cover

Our cover photo is a view of Langland Bay, near Swansea, South Wales, taken by Margaret Tremblay.

Megiddo Message

Vol. 75, No. 7

July/August, 1988

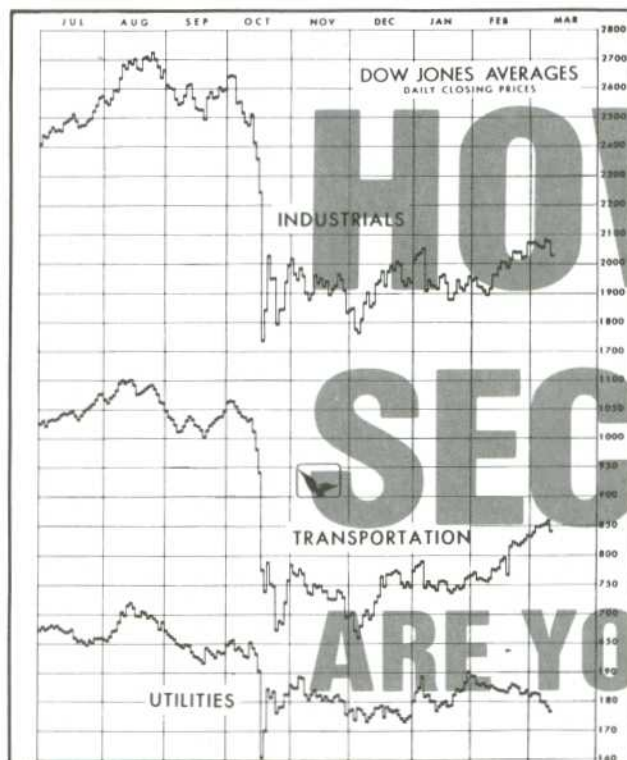
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The MEGIDDO MESSAGE is a religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ, and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Church. L. T. Nichols, Founder; Newton H. Payne, President and Editor; Ruth E. Sisson,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

The MEGIDDO MESSAGE is available in microfilm from University Microfilms, Inc., Serials Acquisitions, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI, 48106.

The MEGIDDO MESSAGE (USPS 338-120) is published monthly (except July) by the Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619. Second Class postage paid at Rochester, New York. SUBSCRIPTION RATE: One year, eleven issues, \$2.00. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619-1697.

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



HOW SECURE ARE YOUR SECURITIES?

A Lesson From Wall Street

HOW does the stock market affect the average person? Why should we care what happens on Wall Street?

The stock market is the barometer of the nation's economy. For this reason, what happens on the stock market affects everyone, either directly or indirectly. A financial barometer, it has everyday meaning for everyday people in terms of jobs, unemployment, prices of merchandise, availability of merchandise, money for building, interest on our savings accounts, retirement plans, and so on.

The precipitous drop in the stock market last October confirmed dramatically what the Bible says about the uncertainty of riches—and the old adage that you cannot count your chickens before they hatch. Those who suffered most were those who had borrowed heavily on the assumption that good times would go on and on forever. Which is far from true.

Prudent Christian living demands prudent spending and prudent money management. And prudent money management means more freedom from care and anxiety. God does not want His people to spend to the limit of their income. He does not want them to borrow from the future

and leverage the present. He does not want them to be reckless and careless in the management of money.

Good Christian living means moderate, sensible financial planning as well. We cannot separate Christianity from any aspect of our lives. Financial caution is a large part of Christian duty. The book of Hebrews advises, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have" (Heb. 13:5, NIV). And the apostle Paul advised Timothy, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (I Tim. 6:17-19).

Jesus also spoke strongly against setting our affections on earthly treasures. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:19-20).

It is not wrong to have, it is not wrong to lay up for our future needs.

But it is wrong to set our hearts on what we have, to trust in what we have, to think that it is ours to use as we please. And it is wrong to be controlled and dominated by our desire for more and more of what we have. We must realize that our money, like our life and everything else, is not our own. We have not a single penny that is truly our own. A man once said that he had earned a thousand dollars, and that it was his; but, upon sober reflection, he realized that it was not—the strength, the skill, the mind, the body he used to earn it was not his, so what claim could he lay to the results?

Everything we have is only loaned to us; the ownership is with God. It is all *His* property and is ours only for a very brief time. It is ours as a trust which must be wisely used according to His wishes.

We must also beware of the lure of money. Not without good reason is it called "deceitful," fleeting, and the root of all evil. Being a good Christian means being a good steward, and being a good steward means investing wisely, not dangerously. Stocks and bonds may be wise investments if well chosen, but our motive is important. What is first in our minds? what has our primary concern? We show ourselves very unwise investors if we devote most of our time and effort to the needs and

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It is not wrong to HAVE . . .

It is wrong to trust in what we have.

It is wrong to misuse what we have.

It is wrong to set our hearts on what we have.

It is wrong to be controlled and dominated by what we have.

It is wrong to think that what we have is ours to use as we please.

wants of this present life and very little to our preparing for the world to come—when our whole 70 or 80 years hardly equals a minute compared to eternity.

King David was pondering these same thoughts when he wrote, "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them" (Ps. 39:4-6).

Apparently people in David's time were just as bent on gathering wealth as they are today; the only difference is that the methods have become more sophisticated. The riches are just as fleeting, and our time for enjoying them has not changed significantly (Ps. 90:10).

God wants us to put the seeking of the spiritual necessities of life above the temporal. This command comes directly from Jesus: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [the temporal necessities] shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). If our priorities are in proper order, the seeking of the kingdom will be first, and we will not have to worry about our temporal securities.

As responsible Christians, God wants us to manage our money as we manage all of our lives, realizing that we are accountable to God for how we use it. Investing in stocks may be a serious, useful way to handle money that is our trust from God. But we must remember that whatever we do, or gain, or lose, it is all the Lord's.

If we have not yet learned this, perhaps He may use more lessons from Wall Street to teach us to trust Him, not money.

MM

WHERE IS YOUR

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal:

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"

—Matt. 6:19-21.

LIFE is like the gathering of wealth, this embryo parable is saying. A choice confronts us: we can have treasure on earth, or treasure in heaven.

In these verses our Lord deals with the true attitude of His subjects toward the material world. Here is a negative and a positive: "Lay not up,...lay up." Treasures upon earth, "Lay *not* up...." Treasures in heaven, "Lay up...."

Let us notice the comparison of values. Treasures laid up on earth are perishable. Moth and rust can consume. Thieves can break through and steal. Treasures laid up in heaven are lasting and sure, for to them neither moth, rust, nor thieves have access.

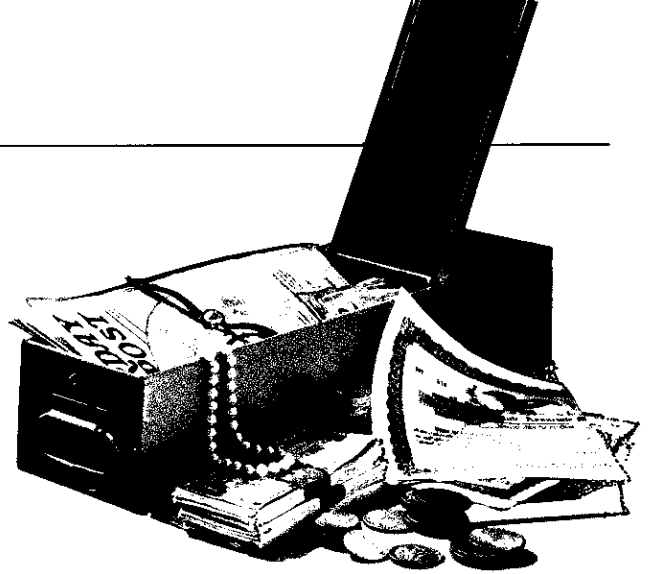
Next notice Christ's reason for this injunction: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Treasures on earth are beset by risks and end inevitably in total loss. Wealth in Christ's day was not only in coin and monetary exchange; it was partly in fabrics—in rugs, in fine and elaborate clothes and expensive hangings. Vermin threatened the stored treasures, and thieves could easily break through the mud walls. Many a man's wealth consisted in the corn and the grain that he had stored away in his great barns. But into that corn and grain could come the worms which would eat it away; rats and mice could invade, until the store was polluted and destroyed. In any event, death would soon overtake the owners.

Were Jesus speaking today, He might mention inflations, depressions, and the uncertainty of fluctuating stocks. He would remind us that "you can't take it with you." The only bank that will never break is the bank of worthwhile human character laid up in the presence of God.

In this parable Jesus is also showing that the physical and the spiritual cannot be completely separated. Dead-earnest life-seekers are spiritually minded, but they still have to touch, use and handle material things.

TREASURE?



However much the inner life may be sustained by that which is essentially spiritual, we continue to live with the things which are seen and temporal. And this is the lesson our Lord was teaching: Every Christian must live in the material world; but our heart must be elsewhere; we must be dominated by a superearthly consciousness. We must use the things of earth, but always be aware that they are not our real treasures.

There is danger that we will attempt to place treasure in *two* places, that we will be straining toward *two* goals. Should Jesus speak to us today, He might say: "You are not single-minded in your spiritual life; nor are you single-minded in your material life. And these crosscurrents bring collapse. You are trying to lay up treasure in two directions—in heaven and on earth.

The human heart cannot hold within itself two great loyalties. If we tolerate conflicting interests in our lives, sooner or later one of these interests will rise up and assume control. The treasure draws the heart after it.

To live a spiritual life in the midst of a material environment has ever been the problem of God's people.

What about Earthly Treasure?

What are we to do about earthly treasure? Notice that Jesus did not say, "Lay not up treasures upon earth." What He did say was, "Lay

not up *for yourselves* treasures upon earth."

Actually, we do not own anything, even ourselves. But we can, by proper use, turn the things of this world into the coinage of heaven. We can use the temporal to gain the eternal. We might think of our material possessions as the rough granite out of which, as careful sculptors, we are to chisel and perfect the ideal character image God is seeking.

And what about giving? The selfish Christian is a contradiction of terms, for no one can be Christian and be selfish. We all are beneficiaries of the Lord's goodness to us; we all owe it to Him to help others.

So easily our giving can become selfish, our prayers a showpiece for spirituality; our sacrifices may be performed for effect. Such works lay up only treasures on earth.

But when the same sacrifices are given from the heart and for God, they turn into "treasures in heaven."

**Where OUR
treasure is,
there will
OUR heart
be also.**

It is a choice each of us must make, for we cannot lay up value in two places; we will not be paid twice. We cannot have our rewards both in this world and in the world to come.

The moment we find ourselves laying up treasures for ourselves, the moment we discover a selfish motive animating us in pursuing the material, that moment we must let it go or lose our treasure in heaven, our genuine Christian character. If we find ourselves desiring the material in order to gain power, to gain prominence, to satisfy the love of display, to give us selfish ease, to hoard with no thought of using it in the service of our Master, then our earthly treasures will be only for ourselves, and they will drag us down to the dust.

To know just where the material interests in our lives cease to serve God and begin to spring from purposes of selfishness requires keen spiritual discernment.

The material world may be a cog or a clog. As long as it fits into God's purpose, it is a cog and we may use it. But the moment it becomes a clog to our spiritual life, we must break with it lest we ourselves be broken.

The heart of the Christian is an area where the currency must be not the coinage of this world, where no outside voice can rule and where the only whisper is that of divine law. Every man who desires to be truly Godlike must draw a line some-

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where in his life and say to material things, "Thus far shalt thou go and no further."

When we break the power of the material by dedicating it to spiritual ends, it then becomes for us a spiritual agent.

With riches often comes temptation to pride and many other evils. That is why Paul warns: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches;...that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (I Timothy 6:17-19).

Why this warning? "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Every one has something he treasures, whether it be wealth, home, earthly ambitions, knowledge or skill, or even his own opinion. In everyone there is a passion for possession. And Jesus does not condemn us for satisfying that passion; His warning, however, is that we satisfy it in the right way. For what we possess will have its effect upon us.

If we take our treasures and place them here, our heart will be here and we will be here; and we shall become of the earth—earthy, sensual, material-minded—because our treasure is here. But if we store up our treasure in heaven, from whence comes our reward, laying up our treasures beyond, our heart will be beyond and our life will be lifted; all the love of the infinite will dominate us, and the life of the infinite God will be ours, surging, beating, thrilling, throbbing through us.

By our daily life we show what place we have reserved in our hearts for God. We show by our actions whether we are giving Him first or second place. In every circumstance,

in every incident, no matter how petty the detail, we show where our affections lie. This fact is important; for where *our* treasure is, there will *our* heart be also.

Unlike earthly treasures, treasures of heaven are within the reach of all. A person does not have to possess outstanding ability, talent or wealth to store up treasure in heaven. In fact, when Christ rewards His faithful workers, they will be surprised that the small and seemingly unimportant tasks daily performed in His name could bring such vast returns (Matt. 25:34-40). Although their earthly habitation was modest, a mansion is prepared for them, for in their lifetime they provided all the necessary material.

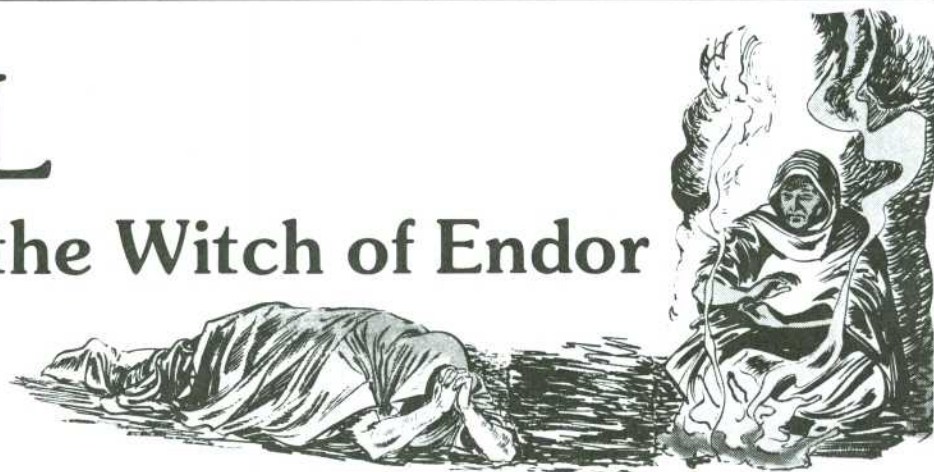
When the books are opened, many will be surprised to find they have no treasure laid up in heaven. They placed their treasures in the things of earth and had their reward as they went through life. The work they did may have been worthy, but they did it to be seen of men, not God. And Jesus said of such, "They have their reward." We may endure patiently for Christ's sake, yet show little investment in true riches because we refused to sell out *all* to the Lord.

But there will be those who will have an abundant store laid up, and when the Day reveals every man's work "of what sort it is," they shall receive a full reward. They put their entire trust in the Lord and devoted their all to Him. Of their substance they gave gladly and without grudging. Their time and talent they used freely in His cause, and whatever they did was done as "to the Lord, and not unto men." They labored unceasingly "in season, out of season," serving their God in sincerity and humbleness—their record of a perfect and holy character is in God's book of remembrance, and it will be there eternally.

(Continued on page 12)

SAUL

and the Witch of Endor



"The account of Saul's consulting the witch of Endor seems almost like spiritualism to me. What do you think of it?"

First Samuel 28 is the pathetic account of a man who, in a desperate attempt to receive a favorable word from the Lord, resorts to necromancy (soothsaying), and in so doing seals his fate. We read in I Chron. 10:13 that Saul died for this egregious sin.

The practice of soothsaying and necromancy in Israel was strictly forbidden. "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 19:31). "And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people" (Lev. 20:6). "When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee" (Deut. 18:9-12).

Saul knew these laws, and during the earlier part of his reign, had worked to purge Israel from the abomination (I Sam. 28:9). But at this point he had so lost touch with God and had come to such a pitch of panic that he actually resorted himself to the abominable practice.

Background

Saul, now an aged man, nearly at the end of his 40 year reign, is frightened by the gathering armies of the Philistines against Israel (I Sam. 28:1, 5). "And when

Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled" (v. 5).

The prophet Samuel has died (v. 3).

Desiring to know what lay ahead for him, he wanted desperately some word from the Lord. So "Saul inquired of the Lord, [but] the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets" (v. 6).

In his desperation he ordered his servants to find "a woman that hath a familiar spirit [a sorcerer], that I may go to her and enquire of her." They complied, and Saul decided to go—disguised.

So laying aside his royal robes for a humble disguise, he went by night to consult a medium in the city of Endor.

The Woman Recognizes Saul

When Saul arrived, disguised, the woman did not immediately recognize him, but was suspicious of being consulted. "Surely you know what Saul has done. He has cut off the mediums and spiritists from the land. Why have you set a trap for my life to bring about my death?" But Saul "swore to her by the Lord, 'As surely as the Lord lives, you will not be punished for this'" (I Sam. 28:9-10, NIV).

The woman then asked whom she should bring up. Saul replied, "Bring up Samuel."

At this point the woman recognized Saul: "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!"

This point is not obvious in our KJV, due to an error in the text. The King James Version, "When the woman saw Samuel....she cried with a loud voice, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul." Some manuscripts read "Saul" rather than Samuel, a correction which makes the passage realistic. *The Bible in Basic English* reads, "And the woman saw that it was Saul, and she gave a loud cry...". Her earlier suspicions were justified—Saul was hard to disguise, his height alone was liable to give him away!

The Seance

Spiritualists and those who believe in ESP (Extra sensory perception) readily see in this account support for their belief. However the Bible reveals necromancy for what it is, an irreligious superstition, totally condemned.

A careful reading of the passage reveals nothing out of the way.

What the Woman Saw.

The woman did not say she saw Samuel. She said, "I see a spirit coming up out of the ground" (NIV), or "I see gods ascending out of the earth" (KJV). When Saul asked for a description, her reply was sufficiently vague to allow Saul to draw his own conclusions. As in a typical modern seance, she leaves the identi-

fication of the one "called up" to her client. Notice that neither she nor Saul say they see Samuel. She sees "a spirit coming up" and "Saul perceived that it was Samuel" (v. 14).

Someone has observed that this word "gods" is "elohim," a term sometimes used of the angels of God. However, we see no reason to think that the woman saw any angels of God. The term is used only by the witch in her explanation of what she saw—a term which she chose skillfully to convey what she wanted her client to believe. But it is simply her report, not a statement of fact.

The sorcerer wanted Saul to think he was hearing Samuel and did everything in her power to create the atmosphere and the feeling that would

lead Saul to believe he was indeed communicating with Samuel.

How the Woman Spoke for Samuel

The woman was apparently skilled in the art of ventriloquism, a common skill among those who practice soothsaying or necromancy. She was able to disguise her voice in such a way that Saul thought that he was hearing the prophet Samuel. Then, too, in this state of shock and at night, Saul's powers of perception would have been greatly influenced by what he was thinking.

All the woman says to begin the conversation is one brief statement, which she makes sound as though it were coming from the one she has "brought up": "Why hast thou dis-

WHAT ABOUT ASTROLOGY...

Palm Readers...

Soothsayers...

Witchcraft...

Occultism...

Sorcerers...

Psychics...

Magicians...

Diviners...

Horoscopes...

Voodoo...

Fortune Tellers...

Necromancy...?

FORTUNE-TELLING

-CAN IT REALLY
HELP YOU?



quieted me, to bring me up?" By saying this she skillfully opens the way for Saul to present his own case. "Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do" (v. 15).

What about "Samuel's" reply to Saul? The woman has just learned from Saul's own mouth that the Lord has forsaken him, and she combines this with a rephrasing of what the prophet Samuel had told Saul some thirty years earlier, when Saul had disobeyed in smiting Amalek—history about which she could

well have had firsthand information (see I Sam. 15:11-31). So she makes Samuel say,

"Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? And the Lord hath done to him, as he spake by me; for the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David: Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day" (I Sam. 28:16-18).

The woman could have easily been fully informed of Saul's disobedience and rejection by the Lord, also that the Lord intended to take the kingdom away from him and

*Evil loves
darkness,
shadow, mystery.
Truth thrives in
full sunlight. Said
the Great Apostle,
"This thing
was not done
in a corner."*

give it to David. She also could have been personally acquainted with Samuel during his life, as he had died only a short while before this.

All fall into one category with this heading: Deceivers.

Any who by whatever means profess to have knowledge of the future outside any knowledge revealed by God are deceivers, liars, falsifiers, claiming powers they do not have, and are condemned by God. In fact, the deception, the deceiver and the deceived are all condemned together. "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14).

Christian believers will have nothing to do with any such, not because they believe witchcraft or fortune telling is inspired by some superpower of evil, but simply because it is vain, wrong, and condemned by God.

Proverbs 24:28 says clearly, "Deceive not with thy lips." Among the seven abominations to the Lord is lying (Prov. 6:16, 19). The Lord "abhors the deceitful man" (Ps. 5:6). The Lord says of all such, speaking to the prophet Jeremiah, "The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart" (Jer. 14:14). Again the Lord said, speaking through Jeremiah, "Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers" (Jer. 27:9).

"Deceit" is among the thirteen evils enumerated by Jesus (Mark 7:22).

The ability to know the future lies wholly and solely with God, and anyone professing to know anything about the future on their own, aside from what might be logically projected by studying the past, is openly assaulting His supreme right and in so doing is bringing himself under severe condemnation. All "the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars" are grouped together with those who will "have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8). They are among those "outside" the city, for we read that "without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" (Rev. 22:15).

No one can rightly profess to honor Christ and God and at the same time condone or support a profession that militates directly against Him.

If we endorse anything which God hates, abominates, or abhors, we bring ourselves under His condemnation. And we read plainly that the "lying tongue" is among the seven abominations (Prov. 6:16-19); that "lying lips are abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 12:22); that the Lord abhors the "deceitful man" (Ps. 5:6). MM

A Short-term Prophecy.

A question arises from the fact that the woman at this point stated a prophecy, which was fulfilled the next day: "Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines" (I Sam. 28:19).

How could the ventriloquist fore-know that Saul and his sons would all be killed the next day? The sorcerer had no power to know the future. But it seems altogether possible that the Lord spoke *through* her, much as he spoke one time through an ass, or through Balaam (Num. 22:28; 23). God has not always

used "holy" instruments. He has used whatever means He knew would reach the ears He needed to reach. The Lord knew that Saul was going to consult the soothsayer, and could have used her as His temporary instrument to tell Saul something He wanted him to know, and without the woman ever knowing it.

The Results of Saul's Consulting the Soothsayer.

In I Chron. 10:13 we are told the result of Saul's gross sin: "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it." MM

Where Is Your Treasure?

(Continued from page 8)

Where Christ found refreshing springs, He longed for us to dip our cup. On the mountain height He moved aside so that we could also share the view of the mind-expanding horizon. Then, after sharing His treasure with us, He turns tenderly to us and asks: "My child, where are *you* laying up *your* treasure?"

When we place before God ourselves and all that we have, and say, "These are for Your use, Lord, and Yours alone," then we are not laying up treasures upon earth. We are taking earthly treasure and transforming it into the coinage of heaven. MM

The Ultimate Life

A subscriber has written: "I have been looking at Hosea 6:1-3. May I have your opinion on these verses?"

THE sixth chapter of Hosea has a prophetic passage with great breadth of meaning in the plan of God.

The passage reads in our King James Version: "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

In these words the Prophet of God points up three significant events in the plan of God, focusing upon God's constant care for His people, the resurrection at the end of the age, and the final and glorious lifting to immortality of those who are worthy. Frequently the prophets caught glimpses of the distant future to give their people—and us—an insight into coming events.

The first phrase is an invitation, offering mercy, healing and restitution. What is the healing medium? The Psalmist writes, "He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions" (Ps. 107:20).

But the question might be asked: Why has He "torn"? Why has He "smitten"? Doesn't it sound as though the Lord has mistreated His people?

We must keep in mind the Hebrew practice of crediting everything that happened to God. Whatever He allowed could be stated as though it were His direct action. We must also remember that the whole disposing of the lives of God's people *is* in His hand, His one purpose to develop, to perfect, to recreate them into material that can be used in His eternal purposes. Just as the refining of gold requires heat, just as the shaping of clay requires pressure, just as the quarrying of stone requires the use of hammer and chisel and even high-powered explosives, so God must sometimes allow that which will tear and smite in order to remove our imperfections, to make something useful of us. But He never destroys any good; and after the smiting and tearing comes the loving "healing" and "binding up."

When this process is complete, then comes the next step: "After two days will he revive us."

All who have submitted to God's discipline during the first phase or first six thousand years of His work on earth have, with the exception of a very few, reach the end of their mortal career and die. Before they can be exalted and glorified they must be "revived," i. e., resurrected.

This "reviving" is said to take place "after two days."

What are the "two days"? We are not told. The period of two days may refer to two epochs of time during the six thousand years, or it may be a simple expression to represent an undefined period. If we apply it to specific epochs, we might identify one of these "days" as the period of time from Adam until the first advent of Christ, and the second "day" from the first advent of Christ to His second advent. Whatever division of time we select is not significant. The point is that at the end of the two days comes the "reviving," the time when all of God's servants will be resurrected and gathered together, to be judged and rewarded for their life work. Jesus said clearly, "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:14).

After the reviving comes the "third day" when He will "raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."

What is the difference between the "reviving" and the "raising up"?

The "raising up" suggests an event more significant than the "reviving." This fact is indicated by its result: "life." After the "raising up," "we shall live in his sight." This raising up may be the exaltation of the faithful to immortality, the crowning with immortal glory, also called the "better resurrection" (Heb. 11:35). The result of this raising up is a higher state of existence, *real* life, immortal life.

The apostle Paul also describes this better exaltation in I Corinthians 15, in his masterful dissertation on the resurrection. He first asks the question (v. 35), "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" then discusses it (verses 36 to 41). Then in verse 42 he discloses the thought behind his arguments: "So also is the resurrection of the dead." In other words, all the statements he has made in the preceding verses refer to the physical resurrection.

Then the Apostle goes further and discusses the relation between the physical resurrection and the greater exaltation. The body is first restored to the mortal state; it is "sown," or cast out of the graves as seed is "sown" upon the surface of the ground, in a corruptible state; then, if judged worthy at the Judgment, it is "raised" or lifted up to the higher level of life, to "incorruption." "It is sown [cast out] in dishonor; it is

raised in glory: it is [cast out] sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." When God raises the natural body to the glorified state, He changes it from the mortal substance familiar to us to something superior. We are not told what that substance is like, but it is a physical substance superior to flesh and blood because "flesh and blood can never possess the kingdom of God, and perishable cannot possess immortality" (I Cor. 15:50, NEB); or as otherwise translated, "the perishable cannot inherit what lasts for ever" (JB); "our physical bodies cannot take part in the kingdom of God; what is decaying will never take part in what is immortal" (Williams Trans.). "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (I Cor. 15:50, KJV).

This ultimate "raising up" in Hosea 6 is the glorious exaltation to immortality, when Christ will "transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21, JB).

We are now mortal; but if we are found faithful when Christ returns, He will transform our mortal bodies to the likeness of His own, to the incorruptible state, and "we shall live in his sight." That life will be the ultimate level of existence, made equal to the angels, never again to taste death or mortality (Luke 20:35-36).

Then the Prophet adds a comment: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." This "knowing" suggests the fullness of spiritual understanding; it is the result of "following on," of continuing patiently in well-doing day after day throughout one's lifetime, learning diligently the lessons of each day, "following on to know the Lord."

Verse 3 is another statement of the time of the great exaltation: "His going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." This passage is much clearer in meaning as translated by J. B. Phillips, "For he will come back to us as surely as the dawn, as surely as the rains fall in winter, and as the showers which water the earth in spring." The second advent is absolutely sure, as sure as the dawn, as sure as the rains and showers which water the earth. MM

**"For he will come back to us as surely as the dawn,
as surely as the rains fall in winter,
and as the showers which water
the earth in spring"**

—Hosea 6:3, Phillips

To Be Alive . . .

"The Day of the Lord will come; it will come, unexpected as a thief.
... [In view of this fact,] think what sort of people you ought to be, what
devout and dedicated lives you should live!" —II Pet. 3 :10 -11, NEB

To be alive in such an age!
With every year a lightning page
Turned in the world's great wonder book
Whereon the leaning nations look,
When men speak strong for brotherhood,
For peace and universal good,
Yet build their implements of war
To devastate the other more;
When miracles are everywhere,
And every inch of common air
Throbs a tremendous prophecy
Of greater marvels yet to be.

O thrilling age,

O willing age!

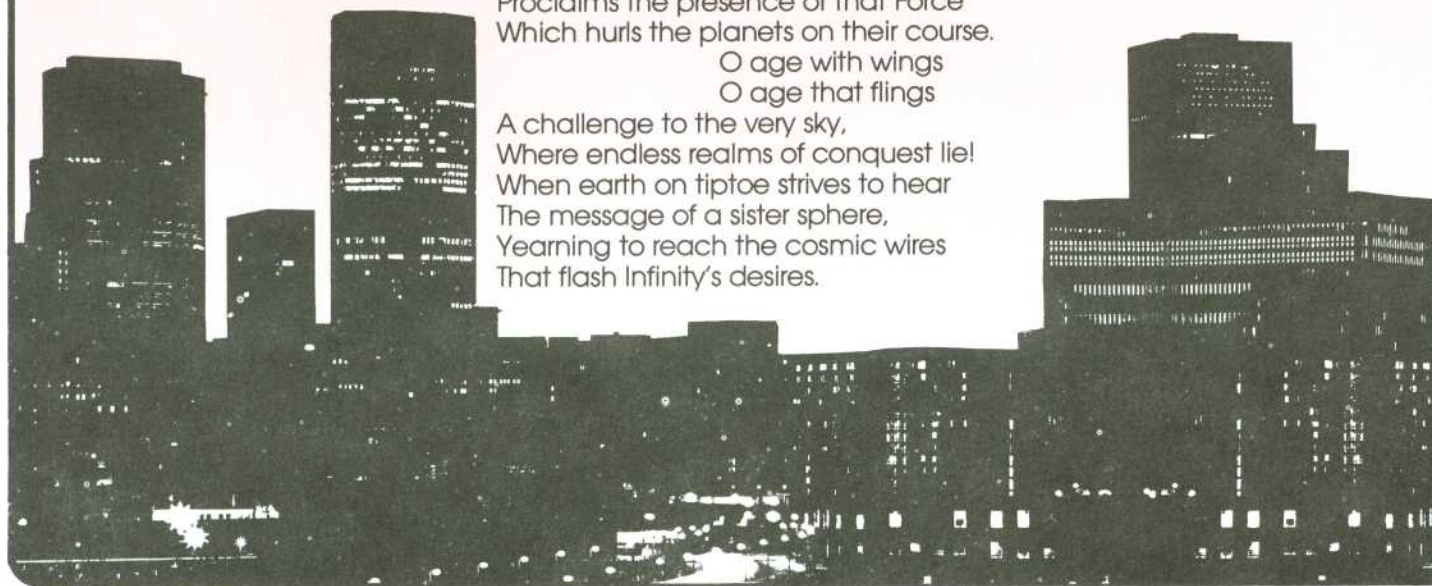
When steel and stone and rail and rod
Shall yet become the path of God—
A trump to shout His thunder through
To crown the work that He shall do.

To be alive in such an age!
When man, impatient of his cage,
Thrills to the soul's relentless rage
For conquest—reaches goal on goal,
Travels the earth from pole to pole,
Garners the tempests and the tides
And on a dream triumphant rides.
When, hid within the lump of clay,
A light more glorious than day
Proclaims the presence of that Force
Which hurls the planets on their course.

O age with wings

O age that flings

A challenge to the very sky,
Where endless realms of conquest lie!
When earth on tiptoe strives to hear
The message of a sister sphere,
Yearning to reach the cosmic wires
That flash Infinity's desires.



In Such An Age!

To be alive in such an age!
That blunders forth its discontent
With futile creed and sacrament,
Yet craves to utter God's intent;
Seeing beneath the world's unrest
Creation's huge, untiring quest,
And through Tradition's broken crust
The flame of Truth's triumphant thrust;
Below the seething thought of man
The push of a stupendous Plan.

O age of strife!

O age of life!

When Progress rides her chariots high,
And on the borders of the sky
The signals of the century
Proclaim the things that are to be—
The fall of nations from their place,
The coming of a nobler race.

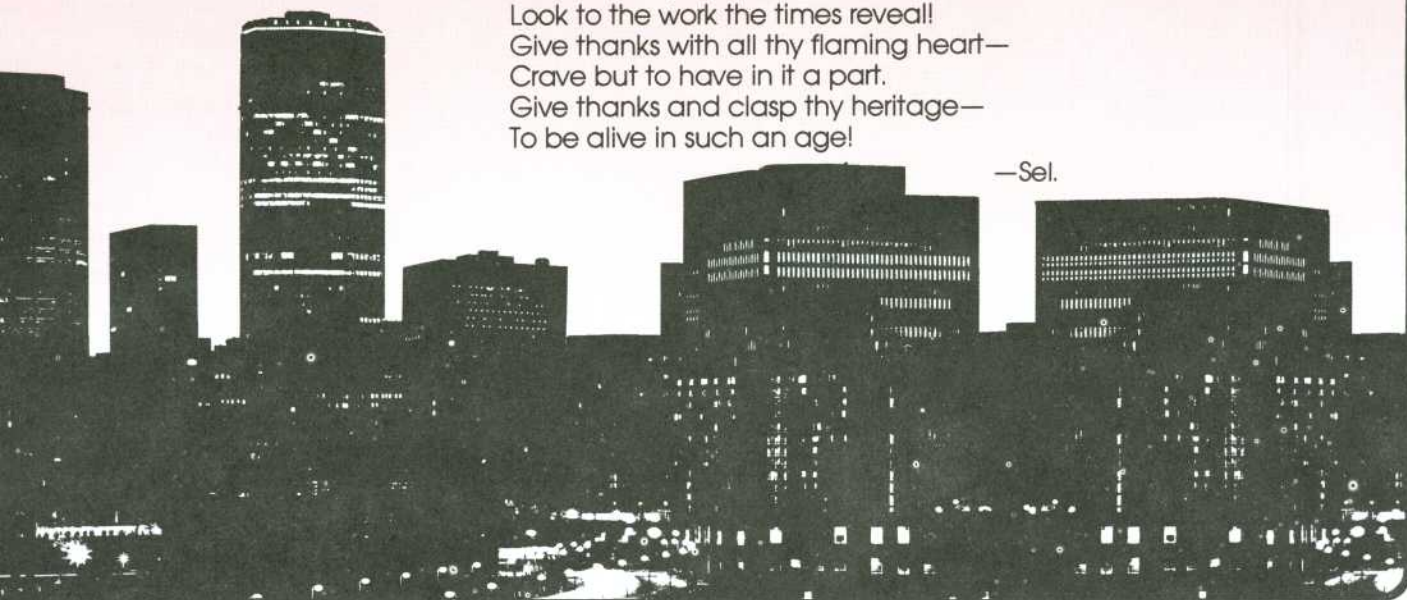
To be alive in such an age—

To live in it,

To give to it!

Rise, soul, from thy despairing knees,
See what thy Lord in heaven sees.
Fling forth thy sorrows to the wind
And link thy hope with God's own mind!
The passion of a larger claim
Will put thy puny grief to shame.
Breathe heaven's thought, do heaven's deed,
Thy King is almost here—take heed!
And what thy woe, and what thy weal?
Look to the work the times reveal!
Give thanks with all thy flaming heart—
Crave but to have in it a part.
Give thanks and clasp thy heritage—
To be alive in such an age!

—Sel.



A Marathon We Mean To WIN



Scripture Lesson: Hebrews 11:1-6; 12:1-3

**All the great
runners in God's
race for life
were great finishers.
They ran, and ran,
and kept on running,
all the way to the end!**

IMAGINE that we were granted the privilege, for one brief day, of looking into God's Book of Remembrance. Of course our first question would be, "Is *my* name written there?" But while we were looking for our answer, how much we would see! every one a winner! every one called! every one chosen! every one faithful! Ordinary men and women like ourselves, they used their lives in an *extraordinary* way.

One page of that book *has* been shown us; it is the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. And how many more pages there are, every one a shining account of victory!

What did these people have in common? They were all great runners in God's race for life. And they were all great finishers. They may have started well, but that is not why their names are here. The important point is that they *finished* well. They ran, and ran, and kept on running, all the way to the end!

There is a message here for us, a message of eternal importance. It tells us that it is not enough to have a spectacular beginning. God wants spectacular *finishers*.

A Marathon Experience

A religious teacher once told of a lesson he learned in his sixteenth year that stayed with him all his life. These are his words:

"I went out for the high school cross country team. On the first day of practice, the coach took us by bus to a course that ran up and down several hills over four miles. The prospects for those of us who were not in good shape, or who had never run distance races before, were particularly dismal on that late afternoon.

"Before he fired the starting gun, that coach said something I have never forgotten: 'What I am asking you to do today is to finish the race. If you don't plan to finish, then I don't want you to start. Simply stay where you are when the gun is fired. But if you start, then you *will* finish. You may slow down, or even stop for a bit, but you will not quit. Once you start, I want you to cross this finish line—*no matter what.*'

"The first mile was almost euphoric. The cool, fresh autumn air was a natu-

Note: *A Marathon We Mean To Win* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

When we are serving God, every aspect of our lives deserves careful scrutiny; our one question: *Is this the fastest, surest route to the Kingdom?*

ral boost to my dogged determination to run a good race. But after a mile and a half or so the joy began to fade. By two miles, whatever pleasure there had been in all of this was totally gone. From then on, it was sheer drudgery. It was even worse for some of my teammates. Some would stop for a bit of relief, then fall back into the panting procession.

"My legs started to cramp. I did not know thigh muscles could ever get so tired. I felt my breath would leave me forever. My lungs and chest cavity were in almost unbearable pain as I approached an enormous upward hill near the 2-1/2 mile mark.

"There is one thing and one thing only that kept me going: *Before I started, I had agreed to finish.* My body was spent, my mind screamed, 'Quit!' But the choice had been made when the gun went off. The issue was not open for renegotiation. There were no options, no short cuts. In inexpressible agony, I kept on running.

"I can barely remember crossing the finish line. I was told I came in fifth or sixth, but even that was not important. Every ounce of energy I knew had gone into finishing."

Then he comments, "Over the years, I have thought back to that experience as being an incredible picture of what it is to live the Christian life. In fact, the Scriptures more than once use a race as a metaphor of our life with Christ. And it is no mere sprint—it is a marathon."

A marathon has three basic components: the start, the race itself, and the

finish. And you need to excel in all three to win. "You can have the fastest time out of the starting blocks known to man, but if you are slow on the turn or sloppy in the long stretch, your record start will not be sufficient for victory. Or you can be unbeatable on the open track, but if you drop out 50 yards short of the goal, the rest of the effort is for nothing. There will be varying degrees of speed and ability. But when we set out to run for the Lord, His word to us is *Finish.*"

That is what the record in Hebrews 11 is all about: the finishers. What we want to know is, *Why* did they finish so well? What kept them running all the way to the end? It was simply this: they had caught a glimpse of the eternal prize at the end of the race, and they *wanted* it! With all that was in them *they wanted it!* They wanted it more than anything else they could imagine!

They wanted it so much that they could think of nothing else! Whatever they were doing, the picture of that prize was on their minds. They were moved by it, driven by it, captured by it. Everything in their lives was seen in relation to it. That is why they are said to have lived "by faith"—faith in God and His ability to fulfill His promise to them; and faith that with His help *they could win and receive that prize!* That done, nothing else mattered at all!

Looking at the Winners

As we ponder our own prospects in this race for life, let's look closer at this record of the winners in Hebrews 11. Let us see it as a long corridor

where each wall is covered with large portraits of the winners. We see Abel, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Isaac, and many more. The corridor is too long for us to see them all. As we gaze far down the corridor, the pictures become less and less distinct; we can only guess at what is too distant to distinguish; but can we not imagine at the far end a small area where the wall is blank—a space reserved for portraits still in the making! for it is written that "they," speaking of those who had already finished the race, "without us"—those still in the running—"should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:40).

Near the front of the corridor, suspended in the center, is a large plaque on which are inscribed these glowing words: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:1-2).

"Let us...let us..." It is a personal appeal to each runner. "Let us run the race set before us." The winners are not *all* chosen; the portraits on the wall are not all in place. There is yet room.

How can we be sure of winning? How can we get our portrait displayed in this great hall of heavenly fame? How can we win this marathon? How can we get our name

**We have no time
for loitering,
no time for
indecision.
If we would win,
we must run.**

among those great men and women of God, those giants of faith?

This is the very thought that the author of Hebrews was pondering. His answer outlines a four-step action formula:

- 1) *Lay aside every weight.*
- 2) *Lay aside every...sin.*
- 3) *Run with perseverance.*
- 4) *Focus on Jesus our great Example.*

We, too, can be people of great faith. We, too, can live at the cutting edge of Christian growth and development. We, too, can succeed and some day be named among God's heroes, if we follow these steps.

Step One: Lay aside every weight.

Notice that "weights" are listed ahead of "sins." The author knew that we would be concerned about sin; but he wanted to be sure we didn't overlook something equally serious: the "weights."

The Greek word for "weight" is *ogkos* and means "a mass, a burden,

hindrance." It is literally used of that which makes the arm ache, that which causes bending or bulging or discomfort. It is something that would not be desirable to one running a race.

As runners in the race for life, we must rid ourselves of anything that hinders, anything that makes the running harder, even apparently innocent things, if it is within our power to do so. Anything that does not help *hinders* and lessens our chances of winning the race. We want to be as free as possible to *run* and WIN!

If we were standing still, some things might not seem burdensome at all. *But we are not standing still.* We are men and women on the run, and cannot risk carrying anything needless. And if it comes down to a choice between the weight we are carrying and the eternal prize...who would choose the weight!

But how can we discover these weights? How can we learn what hinders us?

One way is to take the advice of runners who have gone before us. If *they* found something an encumbrance, it will likely prove the same for us.

The second way to discover what hinders us is to *actually run*. As long as we take life easy and comfortable, the weights present little problem—we may even tell ourselves that they are needful. But when we start running, and look at them honestly, we quickly discover they are a burden.

What are some of these weights?

One might be the things we allow our eyes to look upon. How easily a picture gets lodged in our minds, and how hard it is to *dislodge* it. The best "cure" is prevention: whenever possible, avoid looking upon anything unholy, impure, unedifying.

Or it may be the things we allow ourselves to read. Here again, ideas once in the mind are hard to uproot. Read only the best, and you will have taken a long step toward thinking about only the best.

Sometimes we may find ourselves reading what is not "wrong," but neither is it edifying. Are we, in this subtle way, adding to our weights? For remember, we are runners, and we do not want *any* encumbrance.

What we do not put into our minds we do not have to worry how to get out.

Another weight might be an interest which lies beyond the call of duty. It might be music, recreation, or any healthful activity—good in its place, but so prone to get "out of place." Here is the Christian's challenge: to do all as to the Lord, allowing it to consume only a predefined portion of our time or interest. Our *first* concern must be the promoting of the spiritual growth of ourselves and others. Anything that does not serve this purpose is a weight.

Even our occupation may be a weight. *Some* circumstances are beyond our control, but many others are a direct result of the choices we make. When we may choose, it is

**If we really believe, if we are fully convinced
that the immortal crown can be ours, nothing
whatever will be able to keep us from winning it.
Nothing! We will run, and we will win!**

our Christian duty to choose wisely, governed first and always by our commitment to "run." The best "running" decision may look very unwise in this world; but if a lesser position means more time to serve the Lord and a less "draining" environment, shouldn't we be glad to make the sacrifice?

The highest positions, the best wages, the most eminent responsibilities may be attractive from a this-world point of view, but for the Christian runner they may be serious "weights"; and if they cost us the eternal crown, what have we gained?

The apostle Paul, a prime runner in this race, gave us an exercise very useful in identifying these weights. It is his standard for worthy thinking:

"And now, my friends, all that is true, all that is noble, all that is just and pure, all that is lovable and gracious, whatever is excellent and admirable—fill all your thoughts with these things" (Phil. 4:8, NEB). We must keep our mental vision focused on things spiritual, things true, right, and good. Whatever does not meet this high standard is a weight.

In our secular minded age, it is all too easy to depend on the earthly and forget the heavenly. When we are doing our best to discover the weights that hinder us, God will help us. Through one means or another, He will make known what we fail to see. It is His promise: "If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (Phil. 3:15). He is serious about helping all would-be winners. When He sees men and women putting forth a maximum effort in the race, demonstrating that they are really serious about running, He helps.

O how watchful we must be, and how we need to entreat God's help in discovering the weights that hinder us. How subtle they are, how easily they slip into our hands. What we see, what we read, what we think

Let Us Pray

O Thou Eternal One, whose power upholds both flower and flaming star; to whom there is no here nor there, no time nor near nor far; whose spirit wakes our every dawn and in whose love we rest: we come this beautiful morning to delight in fresh thoughts of Thee, to see Thy plan more clearly and grasp more fully our own responsibility to Thee.

Most gracious Father, Thou hast trusted us with gifts more precious than we can realize. May we never be so presumptuous as to think they are our own. Thou hast given us life, and the capacity to think, to feel, to learn; may we use each gift as Thine. Thou hast given us hearts to love Thee, hands to serve Thee, feet to carry Thy message to others; and strength to battle nobly against all that is low and sinful in us until we are worthy of Thy gifts to us.

Father, we are grateful to Thee for calling us to participate in this greatest of all contests, the race for eternal life. Help us to realize it is indeed a race *for life*. It will not always be easy, it will not always be to our liking; and it will be long—it is not a mere sprint, it is a marathon and will take all the strength we can muster; but with Thy help we *can* win if we will. If we run with all our might and keep on running, we shall at last be named among Thy honored winners and granted a place among Thine exalted sons and daughters, to enjoy the boundless privileges of Thy family throughout eternity.

Help us to be wholly absorbed in winning this race. Let the world go by, let others pursue their goals in this life: we are running a race we mean to win. Our eye is on the goal. We want nothing but Thy approval upon our lives, Thy blessing upon our way, and at last to be welcomed into Thy heavenly family and freed from the bondage of mortality.

Father, be with us in our service this morning. Be with Thy people wherever they may be. Uphold, bless, strengthen and protect according to Thy promise. Help each one to glean from the hearing of Thy words this morning some truth, some message, some thought that will stir us to run faster than we have ever run before that we may someday know the full joy of winning when Thy kingdom comes and Thy will is done here on earth as now it is done in the farthest reaches of Thy glorious universes. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

about, what we enjoy, what we love—all must be seen from the standpoint of winning the race. *Any* activity, even that which is lawful, can absorb too large a portion of our thought and interest and become a weight. When we are serving God, every aspect of our lives deserves careful scrutiny; our one question: *Is this the fastest, surest route to the Kingdom?* What else will matter at all, if only we can cross the finish line on time!

This brings us to the second step in our action plan.

Step Two: Lay aside...the sin which besets.

Now we come to that dreadful word which God hates, and which every follower of His must learn to hate: sin. "Sin" refers especially to the promptings of our lower nature, anything that would bring the disfavor of God upon us. Sin is anything God forbids (I John 3:4).

To refuse to
believe when
God has given
volumes of
evidence is an
affront to Him.

It is saying
by our actions
that we
know more,
we know better.
How can we be
so foolish,
so blind?

We are warned against the "sin that besets." The word "beset" is especially meaningful here. It is derived from two Greek words meaning that which "thwarts in every direction, that which hinders the competitor." Here is the peril of sin in the context of the race. It is deadly, it is threatening. Again and again it would thwart our efforts to run, and must be forcefully set aside.

The warning is to every runner in the race for life. No one is exempt. We all have sin that besets, though fortunately all have not the same sin.

For one it is pride, for another impatience, for another stubbornness, or sensitiveness, or jealousy, or deceit, or a combination of these. It is any of the evils that plague our carnal nature and separate us from God. Any sin—it matters not what its nature—will hinder our running and disqualify us from receiving the prize. If we would win, we must lay aside every "sin which besets."

In keeping with the thought of Hebrews 11, the author focuses especially on the sin of unbelief. This was a sin that confronted each of the heroes of faith, and which they conquered valiantly; to winning against this foe the author dedicated his Epistle. Four times he repeated the fact that the Israelites died in the wilderness "because of unbelief." Thirty-one times he reminded his readers of the power, or value of faith. The Israelites "entered not in because of unbelief" (Heb. 4:6). In them the spoken Word of the Lord brought no results, "not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb. 4:2). And the warning is given to all: "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 4:11).

Again we read, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3:12). The warning is solemn, the danger imminent to all. We are never completely free from the threat of unbelief. We are never so strong or so sure-footed that we do not need to reinforce our faith.

But do we realize the magnitude of the Israelites' failure? These people, who failed because of unbelief, saw mighty demonstrations of the power of God. To them was visible the glory of the Lord filling the Tabernacle. Angels guarded and directed their way, a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day. Angels stepped in to destroy or to bless, as needed. Could privileged people who saw all this fail "because of unbelief"? Yet they did.

What does this say to us, we who have seen neither cloud, nor pillar, nor open glory of the Lord?

Naturally we are inclined to think of unbelief as a minor thing, but it is not so in Scripture. In the eyes of God, unbelief is sin. To refuse to believe when God has given volumes of evidence is an affront to Him. It is saying by our actions that we know more, we know better. It is a rejection of His knowledge, His mandates, His law. It is a closing of our eyes to the wonders of His work and the marvels of His handiwork. How can we do it? How can we be so foolish, so blind?

History records many instances where unbelief was paralyzing, even deadly. This is why the book of Hebrews places such emphasis on faith. The author introduces the honor roll of faith with these challenging words: "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Heb. 11:6, NIV).

If we really believe, if we are fully convinced that the immortal crown

God's great saints set their hope
and their hearts on eternity. They lived
in the present as in the light of an eternal future.

can be ours, nothing whatever will be able to keep us from winning it. Nothing! We will run, and we will *win*! This brings us to

Step Three: Run with perseverance.

The third part of showing ourselves great men and women of faith is that we must actually run—and keep running.

What does it mean “to run”, in everyday terms?

Running suggests steady, rapid, vigorous, continuous action, by which we make visible progress down the racecourse.

To “run” means doing all in our power to be examples of the believers, in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity (I Tim. 4:12); to think right, feel right, do right. It means loving whatever God loves, and hating everything He hates. And it means doing it all quickly, rapidly, right now.

We have no time for loitering, no time for indecision. If we would win, we must *run*. We must, by any means we can devise, move ourselves rapidly down the track ahead of us. There is *no* time to stand still.

And we must run *with patience*. Naturally we grow tired of anything we must repeat over and over and over again. It is not natural to keep running day after day, year after year. But if we would obtain the prize, we must run today, tomorrow, and as long as God gives us another tomorrow.

This brings us to our final step,

Step Four: Focus on Jesus, our Great Example.

Perhaps the most important element in running the race with perseverance is where we focus our vision. We are to “fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”

A right focus is essential to a life

of faith. “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:1-3, NIV).

Why focus on Jesus? Because He is our perfect example. He ran the race, He set the pace, He achieved the goal. And if we follow in His footsteps, the same achievement can be ours.

What was His key to success? It was His concentration on the goal before Him. He kept His eye fixed on it: “for the joy set before him.”

Looking forward has been the pattern of all of God’s winners. It was the pattern of Abraham long ago. He was “looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Heb. 11:10, NIV).

Those great saints set their hope and their hearts on eternity. They lived in the present as in the light of an eternal future. Every one of them would have said with Paul, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.” (II Cor. 4:16-17, NIV).

These great men and women of faith were not victims of the society in which they lived. And they were not running by chance. They were running to win! They knew what motivated them. They were pilgrims, strangers, sojourners passing through life, not clinging to what was along the way but moving toward what lay beyond it. They believed that God had prepared something eternal for them, and above everything else they wanted it!

This was the dominant thought of the apostle Paul when he wrote, “But

our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Phil. 3:20-21, NIV).

Like Paul, our home is not here. We are not citizens of this world. We are here only for the purpose of running—and winning—the race. Our eye is fixed on what lies ahead. We live with an eternal perspective.

This is not natural. By nature we incline to the earthly, not the heavenly. Our natural bent is strong, and at times we must deal ruthlessly with it. The pain is acute, the temptation to relax almost overpowering. But we are not the first to confront these problems. Runners before us have had them, *and have conquered them; and so can we.*

That is why we have such aggressive advice as that found in Psalm 73:25. Apparently the Psalmist wrote this at a time when he was battling his earthward inclinations, and at this moment he glimpsed the high standard above him. “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.” This is living “by faith,” running with only the heavenly prize in view. With such a view, nothing on earth can hinder.

It is not enough
to have a
spectacular
beginning.
God wants
spectacular
finishers.

God is serious about helping all would-be winners.

This is our high calling in Christ, and we want to be sure that we live with that calling in mind. Whatever our interests, our concerns, our loves or ambitions in this world, *His* must be dominant.

Do we ever feel tired? Just think of the winners! Why do we reverence them? Why do we think so much of those men and women of great faith? Because they made a single-minded commitment of their lives to God. They knew God, believed God, and took God at His word. And when testing came, they rejoiced, knowing that the very testing of their faith would produce the patience that would keep them running to the end.

Are we ready to follow them? Are we willing to lay aside *every* weight? Are we willing to let go of *every* sin? Are we willing to use all our energy to run with patience, withholding not even the smallest part for fleshly satisfactions? Are we willing to focus every move, every step on *winning* the race? And will we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus as our constant pattern of *how to win*?

If the answer of our whole being is "Yes!" in thought, in word, and deed, then we are on the way to becoming men and women of great faith. Then we can look forward to receiving the laurels of victory, and the great prize that God has so graciously set before us.

A good beginning is important. But let us not think too much about it. We are running *to win*! And this is

no 40 yard dash. This is a marathon, and to reach the goal will require every ounce of energy we can muster. It is a race that requires perseverance. We must "hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first" (Heb. 3:14, NIV). If crossing the finish line is not our whole goal, our pre-occupying thought by day and night, we are only cluttering up the racetrack.

We have all watched a child learn to walk. That toddler, just able to stand on his feet, takes those first few victorious steps, alert, somewhat fearful, yet courageous. It is a great achievement. But if that is all the maturity someone shows at age 15, it is no longer cute. It is tragic. The same is true with the Christian. A good beginning is a great achievement; but more than a good beginning is required. We will be rewarded not for a good beginning but for how well we do in the long stretch, for crossing the finish line.

O let us guard warily against the temptation to think that just because we have made a good start, victory is automatic and quitting impossible. Our good effort must be *renewed* and *sustained, all the way to the end*. The warning Paul issued to the first century Galatians could apply equally to us: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" (Gal. 5:7).

In I Cor. 9:24-27, the apostle Paul shares with us his own personal concern. Here again he uses a race to picture the Christian life. And what a challenge it is. He writes, "Do you remember how, on a racing-track, every competitor runs, but only one wins the prize? Well, you ought to run with your minds fixed on winning the prize! Every competitor in athletic events goes into serious training. Athletes will take tremendous pains—for a fading crown of leaves. But our contest is for an eternal crown that will never fade. I run the

race then with determination. I am no shadowboxer; I really fight! I am my body's sternest master, for fear that when I have preached to others, I should myself be disqualified" (Phillips). "Lest...I should myself be disqualified." Well he knew, as every one of us knows also, that not every runner on the racecourse will be a winner.

Not that we *can* not—everyone *can*. But not every one *will*. This is one of the most sobering passages in all of Scripture, for in his own steadfast aim to run well in the long stretch of his earthly pilgrimage, he does not discount the possibility that "when I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified" (I Cor. 9:27). Do we wonder that in another letter we hear this powerful, stalwart determination! "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39). If he who had this determination issues this incredible warning to himself, who among us can take it lightly?

The Lord is exhorting us to get on with this business of living as holy people, *stay* on the track and *finish* the race. There is no time to dwell on past "good" running, no time to ponder our beginnings. There is only just time to finish the race.

What lies at finish line? It is "the crown of life" (James 1:12), the fadeless wreath of immortality, with glory and honour beyond our fondest imaginations. Is it attainable? Of course it is, or we would not be running. Our Lord attained it, and all the runners before us, and all the heavenly hosts of angels!

In their victory we can see the certainty of our own—it's a marathon we mean to win!

MM

Questions, Questions

BIBLE NUMBERS:

What is the correct number in each set below?

- Jacob had (8, 12, 16) sons (Gen. 42:32)
- The Old Testament contains (27, 39, 66, 75) books.
- The New Testament contains (2, 4, 11, 27) books known as Gospels.
- One day Jesus healed (2, 6, 10, 15) lepers, but only (1, 3, 4) came back to thank Him (Luke 17: 12-14)
- The New Testament contains (20, 25, 27, 39, 42) books.
- The Children of Israel marched (2, 4, 7, 12) times around the city of Jericho on the (4th, 6th, 7th, 10th) day. (Joshua 6:15)
- There are (100, 125, 150) Psalms in the book of Psalms.
- Peter is the author of (2, 3, 4) epistles or letters in the New Testament.
- For betraying Jesus, Judas Iscariot received (3, 18, 30) pieces of silver.
- Jesus chose (8, 10, 12) apostles (Luke 6:13)
- There are (2, 3, 4, 7) books in the Bible which have women's names.
- Lazarus had (2, 3, 5) sisters (John 11).

Answers to "Bible Numbers":
1. 12, 2. 39, 3. 27, 4. 10, 5. 27, 6. 7, 7th, 7. 150, 8. 2, 9. 30, 10. 12, 11. 2, 12. 2.

UNSCRAMBLE-Able?

Spell these Bible books correctly:

- | | |
|------------|----------------|
| 1. Hajon | 8. Nosmar |
| 2. Loje | 9. Mitytho |
| 3. Soma | 10. Wehsebr |
| 4. Nidale | 11. Oletvarnei |
| 5. Kezeile | 12. Csat |
| 6. Themwta | 13. Sapmls |
| 7. Kuel | 14. Mijaheer |

Answers to "Unscramble-ables":
1. Jonah, 2. Joel, 3. Amos, 4. Daniel, 5. Ezekiel, 6. Matthew, 7. Luke, 8. Romans, 9. Timothy, 10. Hebrews, 11. Revelation, 12. Acts, 13. Psalms, 14. Jeremiah

QUICK CHANGES

By changing the first and last letters of each of the words below, you can find what is described at the right.

Example:

Mark PART—second book of the New Testament

- _____ ROAD—Ruth's second husband's name (Ruth 4:9-10)
- _____ PAIR—first son of Adam (Gen. 4:1)
- _____ ROAM—garment Jacob gave to Joseph (Gen. 37:3)
- _____ REAP—Rachel's sister (Gen. 29:16)
- _____ CARE—musical instrument of David's (I Sam. 16:23)
- _____ RIOT—animal killed by David (I Sam. 17:34)
- _____ ORE—boat built by Noah (Gen. 6:14)
- _____ FLY—young Samuel's teacher's name (I Sam. 1:25)

Answers to "Quick Changes":
1. Boaz, 2. Cain, 3. Coat, 4. Leah, 5. Harp, 6. Lion, 7. Ark, 8. Eli

WHAT OCCUPATION?

Match the name in the left column with his or her occupation:

- | | |
|------------|------------------|
| 1. Esther | a. prophet |
| 2. Peter | b. scribe |
| 3. Joseph | c. king |
| 4. David | d. garment-maker |
| 5. Dorcas | e. queen |
| 6. Saul | f. shepherd |
| 7. Elijah | g. taxgatherer |
| 8. Luke | h. physician |
| 9. Matthew | i. fisherman |
| 10. Ezra. | j. carpenter |

Answers to "What Occupation?":
1. e, 2. i, 3. j, 4. f, 5. d, 6. c, 7. a, 8. h, 9. g, 10. b

“Sun, Stand Still”

“Did Joshua command the literal sun and moon to stand still?”

The statement in Joshua 10:13, that “the sun stood still in the midst of heaven” has troubled many people. For of course the sun does not move, and the effects of the earth ceasing to revolve are difficult to contemplate.

By far the most difficult to understand is the fact that people refuse to allow to the Biblical writers the same privilege they allow to secular authors: that of using figurative or symbolic language. The literature of all cultures is filled with symbolism, figures of speech, metaphors, hyperboles, and the like. Shall we say that the greatest literature of all, the Bible, cannot contain these also?

Some figures of speech in Scripture are obvious. For example, Judg. 5:20, “Stars in their courses fought against Sisera”; or Judg. 5:5, “The mountains melted from before the Lord”; or Isa. 49:13, “Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains”; or Ps. 98:8, “Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together before the Lord”; or Ps. 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.” No one tries to say that the hills, trees, floods, stars, etc., in these passages are literal—so why must we think that the sun and moon in Joshua 10 are literal?

Allowing that the “sun” and “moon” may be understood in a figurative sense, what possibilities have we for understanding this text?

Background

First let us briefly recount the events leading up to this incident. The Israelites have crossed into the land of Canaan and are conquering its peoples. Jericho has been conquered, also Ai. At this point the Gibeonites, fearing for their lives, devised a scheme by which they deceived Joshua and persuaded him to make peace with them and to guarantee their safety (Joshua 9).

Almost immediately (in chapter 10) these Gibeonites are threatened by neighboring Amorite kings, who also fear the Israelites and who are aroused upon learning that the Gibeonites have made a league with Israel. They agree together to attack Gibeon.

The Gibeonites are frightened, and appeal to Joshua who, according to the terms of the new pact, is obligated to protect them from the invaders. Joshua turns to the Lord, and the Lord says to Joshua, “Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee” (Josh. 10:8).

The enemies attack, and the Lord fights the battle. Using the forces of nature, He “discomfited them,” “slew them,” “chased them,” and “as they fled from before Israel.” Then He “cast down great stones [hailstones] from heaven upon them...and they died” (vs. 10-11).

The manner in which the Lord worked for them is especially clear as translated in the Revised Standard Version. Apparently the Lord used the forces of nature to effect the victory. We read: “The Lord threw them into a panic before Israel, who slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon, and smote them as far as Azekah and Makkedah. And as they fled before Israel, while they were going down the ascent of Beth-horon, the Lord threw down great stones from heaven upon them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died because of the hailstones than the men of Israel killed with the sword” (vs. 10-11, RSV).

The Sun

The next verse is the text in question. It reads, as translated in the New English Bible, “On that day when the Lord delivered the Amorites into the hands of Israel, Joshua spoke with the Lord, and he said in the presence of Israel: “Stand still, O Sun, in Gibeon; stand, Moon, in the vale of Aijalon. So the sun stood still and the moon halted until a nation had taken vengeance on its enemies, as indeed is written in the book of Jashar. The sun stayed in mid heaven and made no haste to set for almost a

whole day. Never before or since has there been such a day as this day on which the Lord listened to the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel" (vs. 12-15, NEB). (Notice that the passage does not say that Joshua gave this command *to the Lord*; Joshua spoke to the Lord, and then "said in the presence of Israel." Notice, too, that Joshua is not addressing the literal sun in the heavens but the sun "upon Gibeon" and the moon "in the valley of Aijalon.")

Whom was Joshua addressing as the "sun" and "moon"? It seems very possible that he was speaking directly to the threatened city, i. e., Gibeon, and calling it the "sun" due to its chief position among the cities of that area. The context in Joshua 10 shows that Gibeon was an esteemed city. The opposing kings "feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities" (v. 2). The word translated "royal" means "dominion, rule, chief of rulers." In this sense Gibeon was a "sun" city; it was a city that might well be described as a "sun" in the political heavens of that time.

Stand Still

What is the meaning of the command to "stand still"?

We know from the account that "the Lord fought for Israel," they did not have to fight for themselves. The Lord assured Joshua in advance, "Fear them [the opposing kings] not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee" (Josh. 10:8).

The word translated "stand" has an alternate translation in the margin, "be silent." If we think of Gibeon as the "sun city," the command to "be silent" when addressed to this "sun" is meaningful. The Lord was going to do the fighting, and the city itself would not need to do anything. The definition of the Hebrew word translated "stand still" is, as given in the Hebrew Lexicon, "to be silent to any one; to listen to him in silence; to wait in silence, patience and confidence for his help." The cities did not need to take any part in the battle, therefore were commanded to stand still, be silent, to wait for Joshua's help, who was waiting upon the Lord.

The next chapter confirms this understanding of the passage as it records the results of the "standing still" (chapter 11:13), "As for the cities that stood still in their

strength..." Notice what "sun" stood still: "The cities that stood still in their strength." They did not have to fight but only to "stand still" and see the salvation of the Lord.

At the time Moses was delivering the children of Israel from the land of Egypt and the Egyptians were pursuing, Moses gave a similar command. The Israelite people were trapped, and Moses, relying on the Lord for deliverance, gave this directive: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (Ex. 14:13-14). The battle was to be the Lord's, and Israel did not have to fear or fight. When Joshua told the people of his time to "Stand still," he was giving the same directions, and trusting God for the deliverance.

Many years later the prophet Habakkuk, reflecting on God's means of delivering His people, says: "The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear" (Hab. 3:10-11). Here again the "sun and moon" refer not to the literal sun and moon in the heavens but to inhabited cities which "stood still in their strength." Notice "the sun and moon stood still in their habitation."

We see no reason to believe that the Lord had to interrupt or interfere with the courses of His heavenly bodies to effect a victory for Joshua. His ways of working are beyond our fathoming, but He also works by fixed and established laws. Everything about His creation and His work is orderly.

If Joshua's command for the sun and the moon to stand still was to the threatened cities, why was he issuing this command after the battle had been won?

It seems that the Biblical account of this incident is doubled, as several students of Scripture point out. The first account of the incident is in prose (vs. 7-11), the second in poetry (vs. 12-14).

The description of the battle is first given by the historian in prose, the victory of Israel comes as a surprise (v. 8) brought about by great hailstones that the Lord cast down. The hailstorm (v. 11) was not a happenstance but a provi-

**Our greatest need is not to see what lies
dimly at a distance but to do what lies clearly at hand.**

dential phenomenon. (We know of numerous times that the Lord used the forces of nature to accomplish His purpose—see I Sam. 12:17-18; I Kings 18:41-46; Judg. 4:15). Verses 12-14 are a poetical repetition of the same facts, which include the victory and the accompanying hailstorm. Together they form a song in which the author uses poetic imagery to describe the same victory. This song is an independent literary entity which should be understood as poetic. The text (v. 13) even says, "Is this not written in the book of Jashar?..." The book of Jashar was a collection of ancient heroic songs.

Another explanation of this passage has been offered by a Bible scholar named Joseph Kudasiewicz, who sug-

gests that the words translated "stand still" and "stayed" may be terms used to signify atmospheric obscurity caused by some kind of storm. Whether or not this is true, we know from the historic account (vs. 10-11) that the Lord did use a storm to bring about the victory.

The same scholar suggests that the passage should be taken as a "hyperbolic expression used to highly accent the extraordinary nature of the victory," not to say that the literal sun and moon in the heavens stood still. "We violate the meaning of the passage," he says, "if we try to take literally the poetic expression and the metaphor contained in the song about Joshua's victory." MM

OUR READERS WRITE

Creators

God surely knew what He was doing when He created nature. *Human* nature now, that is another matter. God wants *us* to do the creating there!

Michigan

D. J.

Everything Ahead

Each of God's high achievers have said "I cannot go back." It is an expression of determination, that we are determined to go on. There is nothing to go back to, so we must not go back. If we go back we lose everything now and future. Everything is ahead; everything beyond what we can imagine or think. "Back" is not the direction we are going.

We must make haste and not delay, for it is later than we think.

Michigan

E. H.

Jesus Our Hope

I am renewing my subscription for the wonderful magazine, *Megiddo Message*. I enjoy all the chapters and poems about God and Jesus Christ, which are so good to read.

We are waiting for the Lord's return soon to this earth. I believe the Lord is coming.

It is wonderful that your church has lived through a century of progress, service and difficult times. The world's ills have to be solved, and only Jesus can do it. He is our only hope for this troubled world.

Michigan

J. H.

Something Money Can't Buy

Let us work harder than ever before. We are thankful to God for the great privilege we have of being guided by dear ones who are interested in our spiritual welfare.

God has blessed us. The world has gone mad after money and all kinds of sports; but thank God we have something money can't buy. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psa. 119:165). What does the world have to offer us in the line of pleasure that is compared to what God has to offer us? "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted" (Psa. 89:15-16).

Newfoundland

D. T.

Workers Together

God calls us to be workers together, doing His will. He asks us to forsake our own ways and our own thoughts and replace them with His ways and thoughts. In this way we draw near to Him and His Beloved Son Jesus.

First Elijah and then Christ. May we when that time comes be found clean, without spot and blameless; and may we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

South Wales

M. S.

Obituary

Gladys Sanders

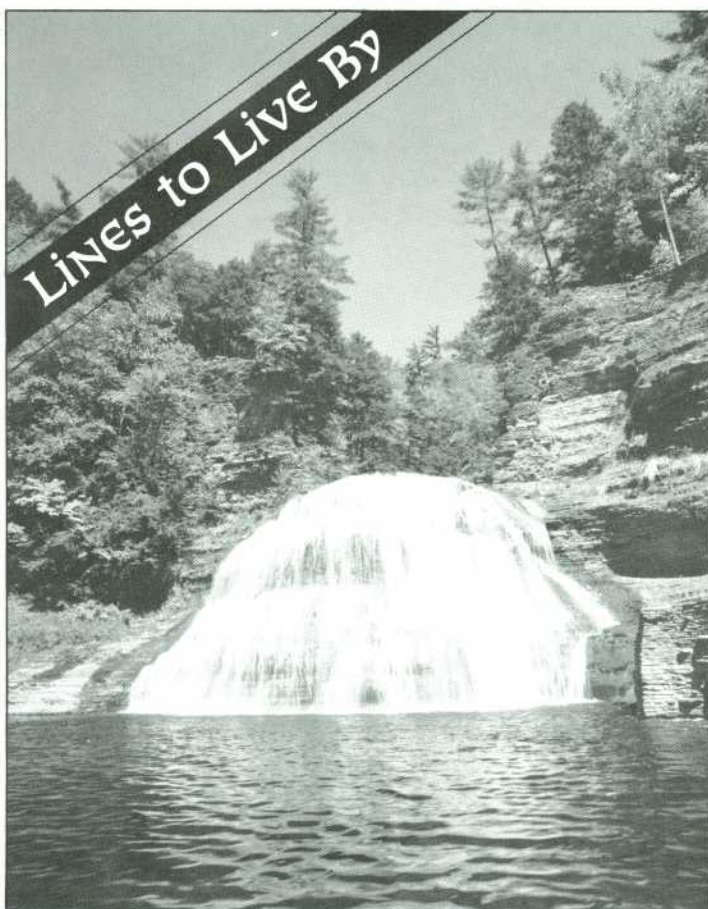
As this issue goes to press, we have just received word of the death of a long-time subscriber and zealous correspondent, Sister Gladys Sanders, of Swansea, South Wales. Sister Sanders had experienced rapidly failing health during the last year, and passed away the end of May.

The acquaintance of the Sanders family with the Megiddo teaching was a direct result of the work of our founder, L. T. Nichols, who made two trips to England during the 1890's to visit interested brethren. Among these brethren were the Sanders parents, who were diligent in instructing their very large family.

Sister Sanders maintained a lively expectation of the coming of Jesus and His fore-runner Elijah, and the great work they will perform, and was always eager to tell others of her faith. Though living alone for many years, she kept up a very regular correspondence with members of the Church in Rochester as long as she was able.

Sister Sanders was an exceptionally generous, unselfish and caring person, always helping someone in need. During her life she looked after the needs of many aged members of her family, even sharing her home with them and giving them personal care through their years of failing health.

Sister Sanders is survived by a sister, Mrs. Ruby Balsdon, of Swansea, South Wales, and a niece, Mrs. Jean Treharne, of Banbury, Oxfordshire, both of whom are active members of our Church; also a brother, Gordon Sanders, and another sister, Amy, both of Swansea.



*Sometimes I go to God in tears,
My heart so full of pain;
Discouraged and disheartened,
He lifts me up again.*

*Sometimes I go to Him, distressed,
I grumble and complain;
He chides me—which is what I need—
And lifts me up again.*

*Sometimes I go to Him in fear,
I fight my dread in vain;
He tells me I must trust in Him,
And lifts me up again.*

*And then I turn to Him with thanks
For all that He has done
To help me keep the narrow way
Until my race is run.*



Life is too short to wear a long face.

Painting "Faith Pictures"

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"
—Hebrews 11:1

Faith's Hall of Fame is found in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, and the first verse gives a meaningful definition. It declares that faith is the "substance of things hoped for" and the "evidence of things not seen." When something has substance, it can be visualized; when there is evidence, we believe it. When we visualize what we hope for, and believe to be true what we cannot yet see with the natural eye, we move into the realm of achieving faith.

The best way to give substance to what is hoped for is to picture what ought to be on the screen of the mind. As this picture is projected, we start acting as if our hope were already realized and seeing it as already accomplished.



Write your name each day in gentleness, kindness, patience, courtesy. Good deeds are life's brightest stars. They shine in the daytime as well as at night.

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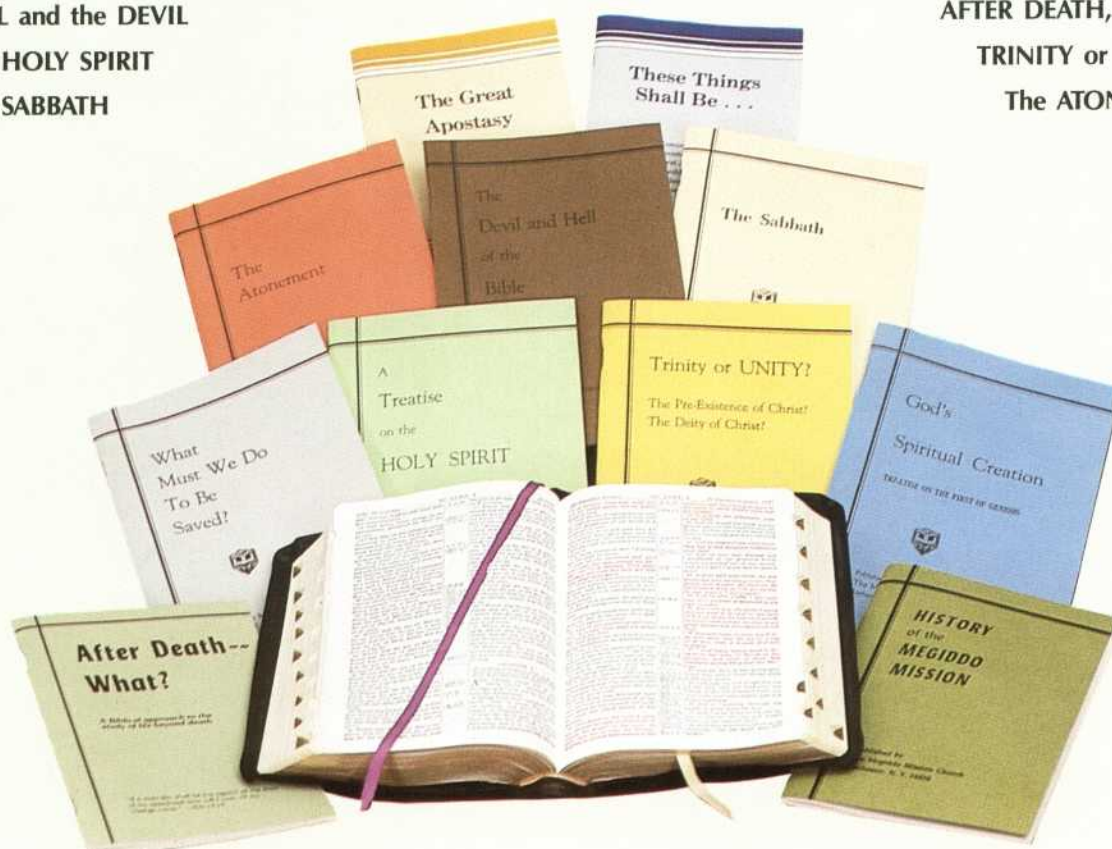
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?

THESE THINGS SHALL BE

AFTER DEATH, WHAT?

TRINITY or UNITY?

The ATONEMENT



The Tools You Need

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