

Megiddo Message

*Start where you are,
with what you have,
and make of it
something beautiful.*

Vol. 77, No. 8

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Of MOLEHILLS and MOUNTAINS

MAKE SURE THAT WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU IS IMPORTANT TO GOD

Of course we can distinguish between a molehill and a mountain. Or can we? It may be a bigger problem than we have realized.

The problem originates with our all-too-human point of view. It's only a little slight, a small hurt, an imagined feeling, a petty annoyance—a "molehill," to be sure. But we go over and over and over it in our minds until we really make ourselves believe it is a mountain.

There are other "molehill" problems in life. It might be the state of our health, or finances, or position in this world. At the moment it looks like a mountain, but viewed from the eternal perspective it is only a molehill.

Again, it might be some project we have undertaken, some hobby we enjoy, something we have contrived for "relaxation." Only a molehill, but we give it so much thought and concern that it becomes grossly oversized in our minds, and if not careful crowds out greater concerns. A molehill looks like a mountain.

What are the real mountains in life? They are the experiences, pleasant or otherwise, that lift us up, that force us to climb higher, that bring us nearer to God. They are the things God counts important.

And God forbid that we should ever view these as molehills!

Take, for instance, the virtues of holiness. Anything God requires of us is important, very important, and not to be set aside as petty. How we speak, how we think, what we think about, how we feel—all these are mountainous issues to the aspiring son or daughter of God, by which we shall be judged (II Cor. 5:10).

The Bible itself is an enormous mountain of faith and our only source of divine knowledge today. Here is wisdom from the high courts of heaven revealed to us in the beauty of the Psalms, the power of the Prophets, the glory of the Gospels, the insights of the

Apostles. There is nothing in all the world that can even remotely approximate its lifting power. Truly a mountain of stunning grandeur!

What does the Word of God do for us? Do we discern its importance, the significance and loftiness it should command in our lives? Do we read its warnings and take heed? Do we recognize all about us the fulfilling of the great events it predicted centuries ago, written to give us faith?

The Bible is a mountain, and mountains are high, exalted, mighty, moving us to reverence and awe. What a crime before God if we treat any word or letter of His Word with lightness or scorn! In its divine knowledge lies our only hope of salvation. What a mountain it should be in our lives!

Then there is the great mountain of prayer, the mountaintop that brings us near to God. Are we ever tempted to think it unimportant, or unnecessary, as though God did not matter to us? What, in reality, can be more important than our relationship with God? How can we think of living even for a moment outside His Providential care?

Is this effectual fervent prayer an easy thing? No, for in it we meet God on His level. He will not come down to us; we must rise to Him. We must climb.

But when we climb, when we pray according to His will, we will find the mountain one of the greatest lifting places in our lives. Prayer sets the stage for God to influence our lives. Prayer opens the window to let in heavenly sunshine, along with all that is spiritually beautiful, compelling, invigorating and true. Prayer gives us a time exposure to God. As we think His thoughts, we are oriented to Him, and this gives our lives perspective and direction. From this mountaintop we are able to see life and ourselves in true proportion, what really matters and what doesn't.

(Continued on page 26)

Megiddo means ...

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

Bible Quotations

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

NEB—New English Bible

NIV—New International Version

RSV—Revised Standard Version

TLB—The Living Bible

JB—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English

Megiddo Message

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

ordinary DAYS

TO BE DONE TODAY

Put trash out
Weed corn/thin carrots
Fran's music lesson
Call Mrs. Perry
Need milk
Doctors appt. 3:00
Have garage door fixed

Bible study - Spratt's

Important Thought for the day—

CONTROL YOURSELF!

There is something lacking when a man
can control his dog better than himself.

**Ordinary days call
for extraordinary vigilance**

It has been well said that men and women do not change; circumstances change. Human nature and human problems remain very much the same. From generation to generation and from century to century, the problems of Daniel, or Samuel, or David, or Job may well be, in some measure, our own. Does the sphere of our life seem a dull, monotonous routine of commonplace duties? Do we feel that we are confined by circumstances within narrow limits and that there is no opportunity for us? Are our days tiresome, demanding, uninteresting? Are we discontent, wishing for greener pastures or broader fields? We can look at what is written of the youthful David and see how God was preparing him for fields of service in later life. We can look at what is written of the early life of the prophet Samuel, and see how God was preparing to use him—and preparing him to be used of God.

We can look at the life of our Lord and see how from the very beginning the Heavenly Father was teaching Him the lessons He would need for His great career as King of the entire earth.

We can look at what is recorded of the early life of the apostle Paul, and see how God was preparing him for the field in which he would be needed.

Shall we think He stopped there? Is He not still training those who shall be "heirs of salvation"?

For none of these was life all spectacular. All of them found life difficult, trying, a test of their fortitude and endurance. For all of them had to be greatly developed, disciplined, and trained before they could be greatly used of God.

What of ourselves? The present time is *our* period of training. Our humble situation, which is not what we would have chosen, is our great field of opportunity. This is our preparation for great things, our probation for the kingly office that we have been promised in the Kingdom of Christ. This is our preparation before we are permitted to sit beside Him on His throne. Our present need is not to do great things for God but to do great things in the remaking of ourselves, in preparing the character He can use. It is to form ourselves to such a standard that we will be fit for the position which He has planned for us. It is our task now to carry out the instructions of our King, to subordinate our will and our judgment to His in all things. Our day for great accomplishments will come, but not yet.

To be ready when that Day comes, we must now recognize and grasp every opportunity as it comes to us.

The real materials out of which character is formed are the hourly occurrences of everyday life. Each small claim of duty, the employment of small moments of our time, whatever our situation; the trials we are called upon to bear, the momentary decisions we must make, the casual word with family, friend, or neighbor—all these, small as they may seem, are the real character-forming occasions. If we seize them, if we use them, we are developing the character

which will merit the approval of our King. If we let them go by, we are wasting life—worse yet, we are squandering eternity.

In one of Jesus' matchless parables He commended the steward for his faithfulness in a small amount of responsibility with these words: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matt. 25:21). Small responsibilities faithfully fulfilled merit great reward. In the same measure, small responsibilities neglected will bring bitter disappointment and regret in the great day when the Lord reckons with His stewards.

In the world today we frequently hear the unsuccessful say what they might have done or been if they had had the chance that others had. In some instances, no doubt, it is true. But many others could go on to explain, if they only would, that *they themselves* were at fault—that they were too lazy, or too shallow, or too disinterested, too imperceptive, or too neglectful to give their best to the task at hand, to recognize an opportunity, and to make the best of the situation at hand. The story is often: "I was not born for it." Or "I had no education for this." Or "I didn't have the right friends, I didn't have the right advantages." But it is usually less than half true.

Success is not so much a matter of fortunate circumstances as of purpose and persistence.

The same is true in the realm of the spirit. Countless opportunities present themselves from day to day to those who seek them. If we wait for the perfect opportunity, we shall die waiting. Never should we postpone the work that must be done. Never should we wait for the more important or more obvious

Success is not so much a matter of fortunate circumstances as of purpose and persistence.

Small responsibilities faithfully fulfilled merit great reward.

The days may seem dull and common, but they are not. They are laden with evidence of the working out of the Divine plan, if we but open our eyes to see it.

Countless ordinary opportunities present themselves from day to day to those who seek them. If we wait for the perfect opportunity, we shall die waiting.

display of our virtues. Before honor is humility and lowliness of mind, and in our daily walk, we should show our fruits—by our sincerity, our entire consecration, our earnest desire to serve whenever and wherever there is a need.

This was the lesson the Lord was teaching the youthful prophet Jeremiah when Jeremiah complained at the apparent prosperity of the wicked, compared with his own suffering.

Jeremiah had a problem which he had taken to the Lord. It was during the earlier years of his career as a prophet, when he was experiencing what were perhaps his first great throes of suffering. Sent by God, he had faithfully preached His word to all who had gathered in the court of the Lord's house. Priests, false prophets, and people were all stirred against him. They scoffed at his warnings and prophecies. It was incredible to them that the temple which had stood for four hundred years should be destroyed and the city become desolate. They were enraged. They took him, and, but for one man—the son of Shaphan—would have killed him.

Jeremiah was aghast. Was this the treatment that he was to expect? Hence his question to the Lord: "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" (Jer. 12:1).

In reply to Jeremiah, God did not try to comfort or coddle him; rather, He challenged him to greater courage and faith for more trying ordeals ahead. "If running on foot made you tired, how can you run a race with horses? If you fall down in a safe country, how will you do in the jungle of the Jordan?" (Jer. 12:5, Beck). We must build our

strength in the lesser trials for the greater trials that are ahead.

One of our chief points of distinction is that we have a desire for something higher than what we see; we have been called to something above the commonplace. Advancement of any kind requires pressure, especially when it is advancement to the highest possible attainment. We feel challenged; we feel motivated; we feel an urge to give every ounce of energy we possess toward the attainment of the goal before us. We feel like saying with the apostle Paul, 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).

Such is our persuasion. But when the days come and go in a seemingly endless succession, with nothing of the heroic or unusual; when weeks lengthen into months and months stretch into years, bringing the familiar routine of work, eat, sleep, worship, with perhaps a little recreation, repeated again and again, these are dangerous days. Our living faith so easily becomes a lifeless, mechanical, habitual thing. Our lips repeat memorized phrases while our thoughts may be miles away. The spirit droops for lack of sustenance, while the cares of life crowd in full force. Just another ordinary day, just another ordinary hour, we say, and go our way, not realizing that this opportunity may never come again.

Ordinary days and hours call for extraordinary vigilance to maintain our level, nay rather, to climb higher.

We are not apt to forget God in times of stress or persecution, in peril or crisis; but we are not built

to stand continual strain. We should give thanks for the placid, uneventful days. But we should also build into them our own spiritual alerts. We should, so to speak, set our own spiritual alarm clocks to keep us awake and energetic through the dull and ordinary. At this late hour we simply cannot risk falling asleep. Not a single hour is without meaning. Each, however commonplace, is set with sixty diamond minutes of opportunity. None have more, or less. Whatever may fill those hours, they come and go never to return. And the supply is limited.

How are we doing? Are we using them to the best of our ability? Are we loading each with a maximum of spiritual power? We are expecting great and wonderful things to take place on this earth in our own age. It may be that we have tried to hurry the hand of God. The story may seem to have grown old. The days may seem dull and tame and common. But they are not. They are laden with significance. They are laden with evidence of the working out of the Divine plan, if we but open our eyes to see it. And some day, on just such a day as this, the change will come. So suddenly, so simply, so naturally will it come that we will wonder how we ever doubted. But it will also be so final, when faith changes to sight. At that very moment it will be "I did," or "I wish I had."

We simply cannot overestimate the value of our present opportunities. The noble character which we are striving to attain is a matter of growth, and growth takes time. But it is a matter of using the time at hand. A well-formed character is

not a ready-made product, but is the sum total of many ordinary days and hours well used. The strength which will enable us to do this great work will be the product of many ordinary, unromantic, unheroic days of discipline, of meditation on the promises of God, of painstaking watchfulness over every area of our lives combined with a determined and relentless crucifying of every manifestation of the flesh, even to the smallest detail.

We cannot risk putting off any character-building task. If we wait for a more favorable or eventful day to do the many small duties, the little opportunities for service, the study, the prayer, the strenuous thinking, the mental improvement, we shall wait in vain. Each hour gives us the potential to make another precious stone for our building of character; each day, however dull and filled with drudgery, is an indispensable part of a drama of high adventure, the greatest and most thrilling to which mortal man has ever been called.

Let us not overlook the apparently ordinary. When God pronounced the curse upon Sodom, her doom was imminent. The sentence was irreversible. Still the city slept on. So shall it be in our day. The last day before the fire fell on the slumbering city looked very much like the day before, and the day before that, and the day before that. The last hour saw no smoldering threats. The last moment was like every moment before—until the thunder crashed and the brimstone fell, devouring all in its fiery path.

Just so the last opportunity in our day will look very much like the one that preceded it. But it will be the last. From it there will be no recall. *(Continued on page 17)*

When we waste time, we are squandering eternity.

Be alert! Your last opportunity will look very much like the one that preceded it. But it will be the last.

Elijah, John the Baptist, or...?

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." —Malachi 4:5-6

According to the plan of God, a specific work is outlined for a certain outstanding and dramatic individual of Bible history, Elijah the prophet. The work: to announce the second advent of our Lord. A statement in the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, seems plain, leaving no room for doubt or misunderstanding. "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (4:5).

Yet a number of questions arise and different theories are advanced. What are we to believe? Which position is Scriptural? What can we depend on?

Living as we are in the era of Christ's second coming, this subject has special interest for us. In this article we shall examine several theories in the light of Bible teaching.

Prominent among the theories

about Elijah is the belief that John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecies concerning Elijah and therefore we need not look for the original prophet Elijah to return before Christ. Didn't Jesus Himself say of John the Baptist, "This is Elias which was for to come"?

One very serious problem, however, arises from this conclusion. Jesus did say in Matthew 11:14, when rehearsing John's mission, "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come." In Matthew 17:12-13, Jesus said likewise, "Elias is come already, and they...have done unto him whatsoever they listed," adding that "the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist." But in the verse immediately preceding (Matt. 17:11), Jesus said this: "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things," indicating a prophecy with a

fulfillment still future.

Here are two directly opposite statements, both by Jesus. In one of them Jesus says Elijah has come, and in the other He says Elijah shall come. How shall we understand Jesus' words?

We have two alternatives. We can say that Jesus must have been mistaken in either one statement or the other; or we can suggest that the problem lies in our understanding of His terms, that He referred to two different persons as "Elias," and each as the herald of a different "coming."

To state these two possibilities in other words, we can say Jesus was stating that John the Baptist fulfilled the role of Elijah and that He was mistaken in saying Elijah was yet to come. (We must remember that at the time Jesus spoke these words John had already been beheaded; they had

done unto him "whatsoever they listed"; so there was no future work for John.) Or, if we are not willing to charge Jesus with error, we can allow that Jesus spoke of two different persons as "Elias," each as a forerunner of a different "coming."

We believe the latter to be true, that Jesus spoke the truth and that He was indeed speaking of two different men as forerunners of His two different comings. John the Baptist was forerunner of His first advent just as Elijah will be forerunner of His second. Hence, both statements of Jesus' are true. John the Baptist had already come "in the spirit and power of Elias," as was prophesied (Luke 1:17), with the "same zeal and courage against sin" (Harper's Greek Testament); hence Jesus referred to him using the term "Elias." And, the great prophet Elijah of old shall yet come to announce His second coming, the same prophet who was taken from the earth in a chariot of fire so many centuries ago. This same prophet Elijah "shall first come, and restore all things."

There are several reasons why we believe Jesus did not say that John the Baptist was literally Elijah or that he had fulfilled Elijah's role so completely that the real prophet Elijah need not come.

- 1) John the Baptist was already dead when Jesus said "Elias truly shall first come," hence John could not possibly be the "Elijah" Jesus referred to as still to come. Elijah the prophet of old was not dead—he had been miraculously translated, taken up "by a whirlwind" to some other habitable realm in God's great universe.
- 2) John himself plainly testified that he was not Elijah. When they asked him, "Art thou Elias?...he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No" (John 1:19-21).

- 3) John came announcing Christ's first coming just as prophesied, as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias [Isaiah]" (John 1:23, quoting Isaiah 40:3-5). He did not come as was prophesied of Elijah, "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord," for there was nothing great or dreadful about Christ's first advent.

When Will Elijah Come?

A point helpful in differentiating between John the Baptist and Elijah the prophet is the description given by Malachi (4:5) of the time when Elijah would come: "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

First let us ask: Was Christ's first advent in any sense the great and dreadful day of the Lord? It was not. Jesus came the first time as "a lamb to the slaughter." He rendered no judgment, more than to destroy the two thousand swine when He healed the insane man, and to drive the money changers from the temple.

Jesus Himself tells us that His first coming was not a great and dreadful day, not a day of vengeance. A few short testimonies from Luke's Gospel give us a volume of evidence. We read in Luke 4 that "He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me

No, Jesus spoke of two men. First, in Matthew 17:11, He spoke of Elijah the prophet who shall be the forerunner of Christ's second coming, even the "great and dreadful day of the Lord"; and then, in Matthew 17:12, He spoke of John the Baptist (called Elias, as the disciples "understood"—see Matt. 17:13), who had already served as forerunner of Christ's first advent.

to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (vs. 16-19).

Jesus was reading from the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah, and notice how precisely He reiterated each point He was fulfilling—with one exception: Isaiah included a prophecy of the "day of vengeance of our God," but Luke tells us that at that point Jesus "closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down" without a word or comment about the day of vengeance foretold. He had a purpose in making this important omission: He was not yet King. He had not come at that time to rule the world with power and authority. The object of His first coming was to preach the glad tidings of His future kingdom and to prepare Himself morally for the position of its King, leaving His followers a godly example.

The fact that a time of trouble is to accompany Christ's second coming is definitely taught in the Bible. We read in Daniel 12:1, "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as

God in His
foreknowledge
and goodness
appointed two
forerunners each with
a different mission for
a different coming.

never was since there was a nation even to that same time." We read also of His second coming in Revelation 1:7, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him,...and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." And again of His second advent, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (II Thess. 1:7-9). These texts picture vividly the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

These forecasts agree perfectly with the proclamation in Malachi (4:1): "Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." And the chapter closes with: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." At Christ's first coming there was no day burning as an oven, devouring the wicked, leaving them neither

root nor branch. All the proud and all the wicked doers were not destroyed nor did the Sun of Righteousness arise upon those who feared His name so that they grew as "calves of the stall," enabling them to tread down the wicked as ashes under the soles of their feet, as we read in Malachi 4:2-3.

The destruction of Jerusalem has been projected as a possibility for the great and dreadful day of the Lord referred to in Malachi 4:5, but that does not agree in timing with Christ's ministry, which John had heralded. That destruction was forty years later. Furthermore, it does not fit chronologically into Daniel's forecast of a "time of trouble such as never was" *when Michael stands up*.

Suppose we assume for argument's sake that the destruction of Jerusalem was the worst cataclysm ever to be visited upon an urban community. Even that does not identify it as the "great and dreadful day of the Lord." That great and terrible day was to be a time of Judgment (Mal. 3:2, 5), when "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:1-2). Those events did not occur at that time.

We learn from II Timothy 4:1 that the Resurrection and Judgment are scheduled to take place at Christ's second coming; and the holocaust that will accompany that occasion will be a thousand times more devastating than the destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah informs us that the "slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth" (25:33). There was nothing to compare with this at the destruction of Jerusalem.

The forecast of Malachi 4:1 is that "all the proud,...and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble," and as such shall be destroyed. All the

proud and all that did wickedly were not in Jerusalem at the time of its destruction. Hence, we must reject that disaster as the "great and dreadful day of the Lord."

One might assume from the wording of Malachi 4:4 that its fulfillment before the termination of the Mosaic law is indicated. But there is no evidence to support this. Malachi 4:4 is only a reminder to "Remember...the law of Moses...with the statutes and ordinances," a law still in force when Malachi was writing. (The Septuagint Bible separates verse 4 from the context of the prophecy, placing it *last* in the chapter as a final admonition to believers on the importance of obedience.)

Hebrews 2:1-3 expresses the same thought: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels [to Moses in the wilderness] was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation....?"

The great and dreadful day of the Lord is yet future. The work done by John the Baptist at Christ's first advent is not all that was contemplated in the prophecy concerning the sending of Elijah the prophet. There must be yet a greater fulfillment of it, to precede Christ's second advent, and to prepare or make ready a people for that great event.

Seeming Confusion

As straightforward as Malachi's prophecy concerning Elijah the forerunner of Christ's second advent is, critics have pointed out that in the Gospels the prophecies concerning the first and second forerunner seem to be confused.

For example, Matthew 3:3, Luke
(Continued on page 20)



Higher!

High hearts are never long without hearing some new call,
some distant clarion of God;
And soon they break up the camp of ease
and start on some fresh march of faithful service.

And looking higher still, we find those
who never wait until their moral
work accumulates;
who reward resolution with no rest;
who do the good only to see the better,
and see the better only to achieve it;
who are too meek for transport,
too faithful for remorse,
too earnest for repose;
whose worship is action,
and whose action ceaseless aspiration.

"Hear and Speak"

"And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee" —Ezekiel 2:7-8

Obviously the foregoing divine directive has special application to the leaders of Christian worship, but in a broader sense it applies to every loyal supporter of the cause of the Eternal. None of us lives to himself, each must be a brother's keeper. And the crux of this vital command is: "But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house."

God never maintains two standards of conduct, one for the flock and another for the leader. The leader must be an example to the flock, he must be the first to pay strict attention to the word of the Lord, and careful always to practice what he preaches. Even the Apostle Paul, the greatest of all the Christian missionaries, knew that the effectiveness of his preaching, as well as his personal salvation, depended upon his practicing what he preached. "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9:27).

One of the chief sins lodged against the Jerusalem religious leaders by Christ was their hypocrisy in

claiming to be what they were not. Of them He said: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say and do not" (Matt. 23:2-3). And in the scathing denunciation that followed, Jesus scored these points: they bound heavy burdens on others, but would not themselves move them with one of their fingers; they did all their works to be seen of men; they were self-centered; they loved the uppermost rooms at feasts, and to be called of men, "Rabbi."

Ezekiel lived during a time of great apostasy. He was among the Israelite captives in Babylon. Of priestly cast, he was one of the few priests loyal to the Eternal, and his faithfulness was rewarded by a greater than usual insight into the Divine plan by the way of visions representing the varying phases of God's work upon earth. The book of Ezekiel is not a vision of Jehovah in His temple at Jerusalem but of a God raised above the earth, appearing with all the splendor of heaven, above and independent of any earthly locality.

Ezekiel may have been born about

the time of the rediscovery of the book of the law in the days of Josiah, and so have grown up under the influence of its teachings. Separated from the temple at Jerusalem (the city and temple were not yet destroyed), the few who still feared God came to Ezekiel to learn of Him.

It has been said that Ezekiel was a priest without a temple, hence his interest was more especially centered on the spiritual temple, comprising the men and women who were faithful to the law of God. The apostle Paul phrased it: "Ye are the temple of the living God....the pillar and ground of the truth" (II Cor. 6:16; I Tim. 3:15).

As the spiritual leader of a people, and favored by direct messages from God, a great responsibility rested upon him. The people to whom he was sent were very rebellious. Not only was he warned against falling into their perverse way of living himself; but the dire results of such disloyalty were to be pictured to the people. His mission was to speak the word of the Lord whether they would hear or whether they should refuse to hear.

The responsibility of a God-appointed watchman was revealed to

Ezekiel (3:17-21). In any case the sinner should die in his iniquity, but if the watchman was negligent and failed to warn the wicked doer of his wickedness, two would be to blame.

The dire result of failure to warn our erring brother is stated with even greater clarity in chap. 33, and in one trenchant statement in v. 7 the importance of this Christian duty is spelled out: "O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me." Psalm 141:5 presupposes the need for warning and reveals the attitude the recipient of the warning should take: "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head."

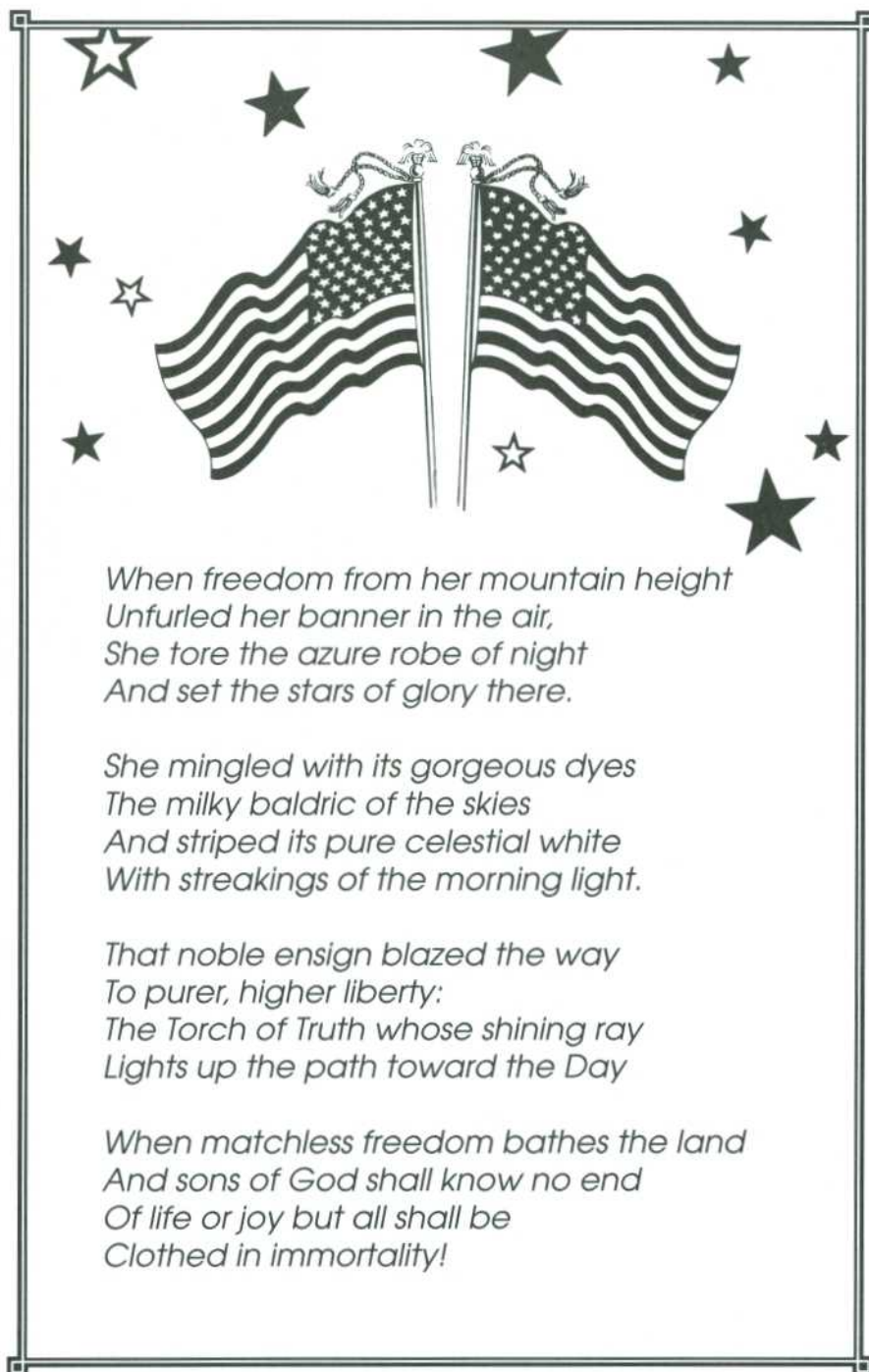
Ezekiel 2:8 closes with the words: "open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee." There must be a willingness on our part to eat what God gives us. God does not force anyone to eat the food He provides. Each must eat of his own free choice. Each must be convinced that it is to his or her eternal advantage to eat.

Jeremiah, a contemporary of Ezekiel, said he took great delight in eating the word of God (15:16). We find, however, just as in things natural, that what is best for us is not always sweet, and often that which works drastic reaction is needed. Ezekiel 3:3 reveals that upon eating the roll of the book—or the divine truths God wanted him to take in as nourishment—in his mouth the taste was as sweet as honey, but nothing is said of its reaction. A similar statement in Rev. 10:10 gives the reaction that often accompanies eating the word of God: "And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter."

The promises of the Word are usually sweet to our taste; but the real eating and digestive process of doing the commandments necessary to stir and change our fixed habits and manner of life seems unpleasant and even "bitter." It is then that we

need to look to the end of the matter, to the good that will be accomplished in us.

So let us hear what God says to us, open our mouths wide and eat what He gives us. We can know that in the end it will be good. MM

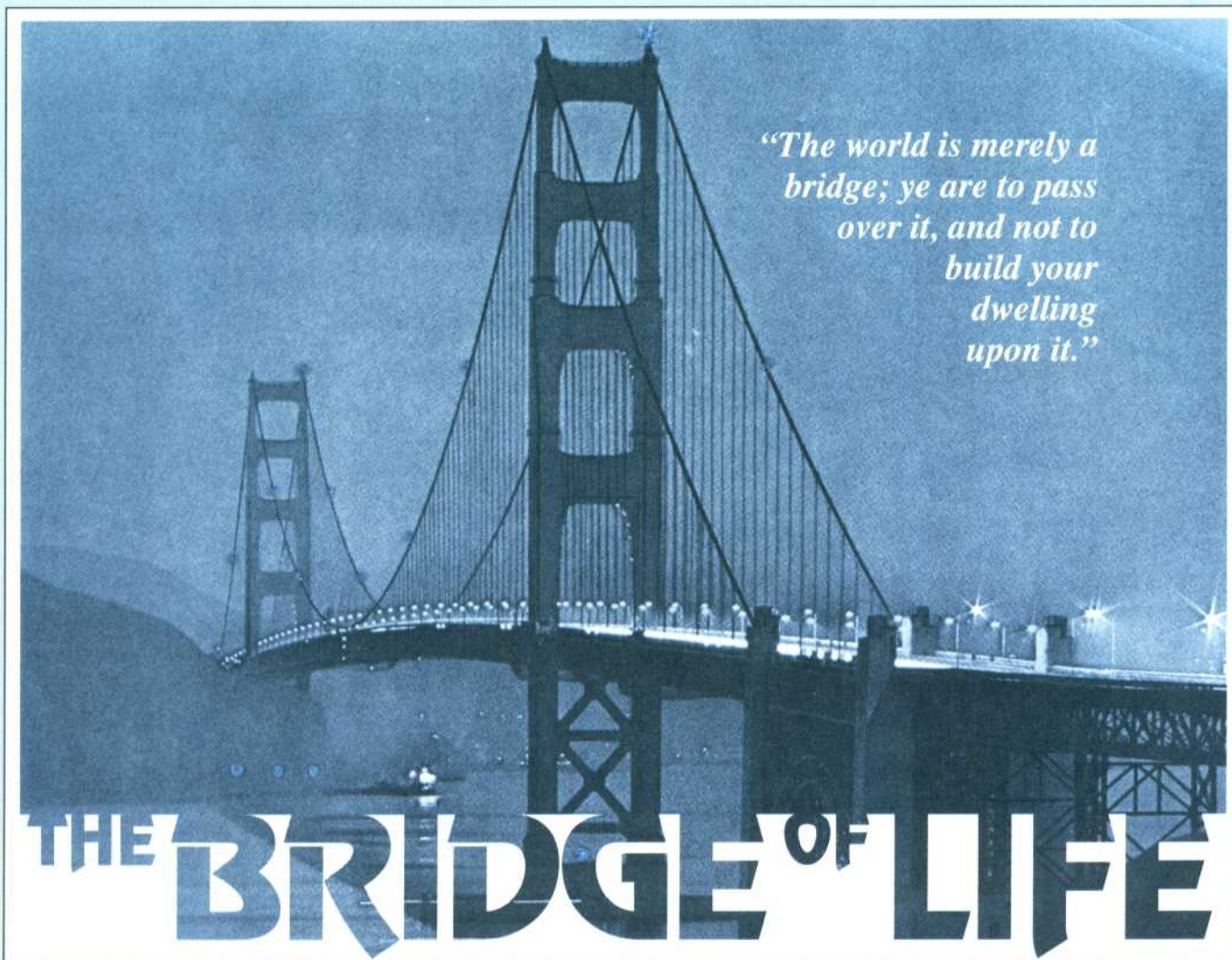


*When freedom from her mountain height
Unfurled her banner in the air,
She tore the azure robe of night
And set the stars of glory there.*

*She mingled with its gorgeous dyes
The milky baldrick of the skies
And striped its pure celestial white
With streakings of the morning light.*

*That noble ensign blazed the way
To purer, higher liberty:
The Torch of Truth whose shining ray
Lights up the path toward the Day*

*When matchless freedom bathes the land
And sons of God shall know no end
Of life or joy but all shall be
Clothed in immortality!*



In the Apocrypha is this saying attributed to Jesus: "The world is merely a bridge; ye are to pass over it, and not to build your dwelling upon it." Whether or not Jesus actually uttered these words, they express the fundamental truth, that life here on earth is only the preparation for an eternal existence.

Many people scoff at such a belief and call it "pie in the sky"; but the teaching of the Bible definitely is that we are here to fit ourselves for eternal life. The whole current of Bible teaching is that life

is a bridge which we are to use to pass over to something better.

The span of our life is altogether too short to spend pursuing the fleeting things of the present. We may gain riches, honor and wealth, and have every comfort the heart can wish, yet how soon they vanish.

How necessary, then, that we employ every power of mind, body and soul to gain that life without end.

When designing a bridge, there are three loads of stresses which the engineer must take into account: the dead load, the live load, and the wind load. The dead load is the

weight of the bridge itself. The live load is the weight of the daily traffic that the bridge must carry. The wind load is the pressure of storms. The designer plans the structure and bracings so that the bridge can bear all these loads.

In our lives, too, we need bracings to make it possible for us to carry the dead load of self, the live load of daily living, and the wind load of life's emergencies.

First let us consider the dead load. If we have been thinking that our load—self—is reasonably small, let us examine it more closely. Con-

tinually, throughout the day, our opposing nature will creep, wedge or bolt into our lives. In Romans 7:21-23, the apostle Paul reveals the extent to which the dead load of self was a problem to him: "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." We all have this dead load to carry, this "conflict" between the man of the flesh and the spirit man. Paul speaks again of this load in his letter to the Philippians: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me" (1:29-30).

Doubts, discouragements, suppressed hurt feelings, carefully concealed sins known only to oneself and God—these form part of the dead load our bridge of life must carry. As we succeed in taming these ingrained human tendencies our dead load will become lighter; yet some evils will tempt us as long as we live. Each step in this direction must be taken with the object of leading us higher, to a nobler life, to a more complete transformation, changing our ways from the natural and instinctive to the spiritual and God directed.

The live load of our daily living is the next load to consider. This includes the minor grievances and perplexities that result from our association with others, to bear them without becoming cross or irritable. It also includes weighing that volume of words which so effortlessly pours from our mouth. No small load is this, if we are not watching. The writer of the book of James thoughtfully prescribes caution in this area, for the danger to our bridge is great, as no man or woman alert to the human tendency to talk at random would deny.

Then we are naturally lazy-minded. We must add strength to be able always to think on the things that are true, hon-

est, just, pure, lovely, and of good report (Phil. 4:8).

Then, too, our eyes need watching, or we shall find that the description of the fool whose eyes are "in the ends of the earth" fits us.

If not guarding carefully our bridge, we shall find its traffic includes heavy loads of pride, sensitiveness, stubbornness, discontent. There is no way to build our bridge strong enough to support these; we must bar them from crossing, or eventually they are sure to break down our carefully designed structure. This is where we need God's Word to guide and direct our "traffic." If we do not, if we try to live without a high and holy purpose, we shall find at the end of our earthly pilgrimage naught but eternal death awaiting us. The bracings of our bridge will have failed.

The wind load of life's emergencies is the last but by no means the least of our considerations, for "wind" there shall be. God has foretold that we shall have tribulations, but He also tells us their purpose; that "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." All are not tried in the same manner, but each is tried sufficiently for his or her development. Without trials we should not be able to exercise certain graces. If all were continually in our favor, we could not rightly exercise contentment, nor could we practice forgiveness if no one ever did evil either to us individually or to the Cause we uphold.

But we should always remember that there is one force stronger than any wind that strikes, and, by the grace of God, that force is ours. We are not left helpless victims when winds of hurricane force howl about the upper structures of our bridge spans; for we are in possession of the Gospel of Christ, which is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). When we place our trust in the Almighty, He gives us the strength we need to withstand these loads. He thus gives our lives usefulness, stability, and durability. And when the last storm finally subsides, our bridge will still be standing. MM

Life is a bridge which we can use to pass over to an eternal existence.



VS

ETERNITY

What is time? We talk about it so easily and often. We have time for this, and no time for that. Our whole mortal existence is built around the presence—or absence—of time. All our thoughts, efforts and accomplishments must be within the limits of time, for in our mortal state, time is life itself.

But have you ever thought about the fact that time is only temporary? Time is a sequence of minutes and hours and days and years. And these are limited, so far as we personally are concerned, because time does not extend beyond the limit of our lives.

But there is yet another sense in which time has an end—because we are looking forward to the end of time and all its limitations. There is coming an age when time shall be no more, and that will be—?

You guessed it—eternity.

The word “eternity” occurs only once in the Bible. It is used by one of the greatest of the Hebrew prophets to describe the existence of God Himself. “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy” (Isa. 57:15).

We who live so close to time can scarcely imagine what it means to “inhabit eternity.” Confined by what we can see and touch and taste, hemmed in by this world of sense, we forget that the “invisibles are the realities, and the intangibles are the permanencies.”

The needs and satisfactions of our physical existence are so ever-present that our minds become narrow and contracted, moving only within the sphere of our experience.

How can we break out of this mental restriction? How can we force our naturally small minds into larger spheres of thought and activity in the world that is real but for the moment unseen?

Our founder put the thought in meaningful terms when he said we must “expand our minds, that we may expand our actions.”

How can we expand our minds?

We might begin by impressing upon them the endlessness of the blessings God has promised the overcomers. Think of being granted a right to eat of the “tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7). Think of being a pillar in the temple of God—a structure that will never be taken down (Rev. 3:12). Think of receiving power over the nations, power to put down evil and exalt God and righteousness (Rev. 2:26). Think of sitting with Christ in His throne of authority—a position that, once granted, will be for ever (Rev. 3:21).

Let’s think about eternity. What is it?

Every human attempt to describe eternity is necessarily feeble and limited. We are neither mentally nor spiritually equipped for the task. Neither our language

nor our philosophy and mathematics can compass it. The simple expressions of John in Revelation are the best that language has yet been able to achieve.

Read and try to visualize his meaning. John sees it as time without end, the immediate moment forever present; light without sunset, day without night; no sin, no suffering, no death but life, life, abundant and eternal life! coupled with love and joy and peace and everlasting bliss and the glory of the Lord, every moment forever filled with the delights of God.

Eternity!!

What does all this mean in terms of duration?

Let us attempt to bring eternity within the limits of finite conception.

For a starting figure, take the age of the earth, both historic and prehistoric. Choose 7 billion years, or 14 billion if you prefer—scientists do not agree—but this number is scarcely a fraction of eternity.

Multiply the age of the earth by the total number of leaves on all the trees in all the springtimes in the world during all those ages (a rough estimate will suffice). The answer is enormous, but still finite—it is not the measure of eternity.

Multiply again by the number of the sands on every seashore in the world. The result is staggering, but even this is not eternity.

Continue multiplying—by the number of rain drops that fall on the surface of the earth in a single year, then by the blades of grass of every green field upon earth. And so on and on. Continue as long as you wish, until the sum is utterly incomprehensible, but you still do not have eternity—you have computed only a small fraction of a duration that is years without number and ages without end!

But the real question I ask myself in the face of such incomprehensibles is: How can the God of eternity ever recognize me? And how can I, this mere speck of

dust on one planet in His universe, ever forget—even for a moment—the magnificence of what He has offered me? How can I allow my mind to be centered even for one fleeting hour upon that which will so soon pass away? How can I become preoccupied with the things of time in the presence of eternity?

Whether we appreciate it or not; whether we comprehend it or not; whether we will be one to experience it or not, eternity *WILL BE*. And now is our time to choose. We yet can determine where we will be during the endless duration of ages ahead. Will we be a forgotten bit of dust, or a vibrant, living, active being, sharing the limitless joys and pleasures and experiences of the immortals?

The choice is ours, and the time for decision—and action—is NOW.

Let us expand our minds, that we may expand our actions! Let us not settle for a mere moment of time when we can have ETERNITY!

MM

ordinary • ordinary • ordinary • ordinary • or

Ordinary Days

(Continued from page 7)

The time past of our lives should suffice for tongue talk and good intentions. Let us not permit the dead weight of the commonplace routine to act as a drag on our feet in this narrow way any longer, especially at this hour when speed is so important. Let us use each new day in a new light, as a challenge, a test of our spirituality and progress, and by this new perception we shall live so fully, so abundantly that there will be in our lives no such thing as an ordinary day.

MM

**What will we be through eternity—
a forgotten bit of dust, or
a vibrant, living, active being, sharing the limitless joys and
pleasures and experiences of the immortals?**

Leisure Time

Must Can Be Christian



If we profess the name of Christ, the Word of God must maintain direct authority over our lives. Some things are clearly wrong and others are clearly right. But always there are areas which are not clear.

The Christian in an unchristian culture must have the fortitude to decide upon a wise course of action and hold to it, come what may. The question is, what is that wise course of action?

The question is especially difficult when one is faced with a multitude of options, as in the use of leisure time. What is the wise—right—choice?

Those who belong to Christ in a spiritually alien culture must use every possible safeguard in their encounters with the world in which they live, lest they compromise their principles and betray their sacred trust.

In the workplace this may be relatively easy—difficult though it be—compared to the spending of leisure time. But what should one do when there is nothing pressing, when one's time is one's own?

In an exhaustive study of the problem of leisure in British life ("English Life and Leisure," by R. Seebohm Rowntree and G. R. Lavers), religion is treated along with discussion of the cinema, the stage, broadcasting, dancing and reading, as a leisure-time pursuit.

This frightful misconception of the role of religion in life is all too common even among church members. Whether a Christian uses his leisure for playing a musical instrument, painting pictures, reading, walking, traveling, gardening, or any one of a thousand other activities is an optional matter. God has given us a host of pursuits which we may richly—and lawfully—

enjoy. The scriptural criterion for judging anything we do is unequivocally stated by Paul in I Corinthians 10:31: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." And again in Colossians 3:17: "And whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

Religion for the serious life-seeker is not an elective, spare-time pursuit like watching a sunset or planting a garden. It is life itself, and it comprehends everything we do and say and hear and think. To be sure, certain aspects of our religion, such as attending church, or reading the Bible, etc., are done in time set apart from the daily routine. Yet the claims of Jesus Christ are all-inclusive. No interest we cherish, no thought we harbor, nothing we say or do is irrelevant to "Him with whom

we have to do." There is no "time off" from our responsibility to God.

If Christ is Lord of our life, He is Lord of our time—free time as well as working time. Our Lord Himself was conscious of this duty when He said, "I do always those things that please him [the Father]" (John 8:29). He made no exception for leisure time.

As Christians we are responsible for the use we make of our time in a time-wasting world, for time is life itself. To waste it in meaningless pursuits is to be unfaithful to God, who has lovingly entrusted us with this precious gift. Nothing we have is more valuable than our time.

But what about *leisure* time? The word "leisure" implies freedom, because leisure is non-working time. But in the Christian life, freedom is always conditioned by responsibility. Our liberty is to be used to the glory of God, never for selfish gratification. We are free only to do as we *ought*, never as we *please*. We are accountable for the use of our leisure as well as of our working time.

All of us have need for leisure, time to relax, time to renew our bodies and minds, but from our Christian responsibility there is no release, not until our work is complete and turned over to God. No Christian is ever off-duty for God. We are never free to let our minds roam at will, or to indulge our sensual natures, or satisfy our natural cravings. Wrong is always wrong, whether we are alone in a motel room, by the seashore, or sitting in church. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3).

For all our leisure and all our working time we are equally accountable, and our Lord is always near with His loving, kindly reminder: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41). MM

Be Careful!

*Note the many warnings in Scripture to **BE CAREFUL** (quotations from the NIV)*

Only **BE CAREFUL**, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. —Deut. 4:9

BE CAREFUL not to forget the covenant of the Lord your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the Lord your God has forbidden. —Deut. 4:23

BE CAREFUL to obey all these regulations I am giving you, so that it may always go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and right in the eyes of the Lord your God. —Deut. 12:28

BE CAREFUL not to be ensnared by inquiring about [other] gods, saying, "How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same." —Deut. 12:30.

Be very strong; **BE CAREFUL** to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. —Joshua 23:6

You must always **BE CAREFUL** to keep the decrees and ordinances, the laws and commands he wrote for you. Do not worship other gods. —II Kings 17:37

I will **BE CAREFUL** to lead a blameless life—when will you come to me? I will walk in my house with blameless heart. —Ps. 101:2

BE CAREFUL not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. —Matthew 6:1

"**BE CAREFUL**," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." —Matthew 16:6

BE CAREFUL, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. —Luke 21:34

BE CAREFUL... that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. —I Cor. 8:9

If you think you are standing firm, **BE CAREFUL** that you don't fall! —I Cor. 10:12

This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may **BE CAREFUL** to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. —Titus 3:8

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us **BE CAREFUL** that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. —Hebrews 4:1

Elijah, John the Baptist, or...?

(Continued from page 10)

3:4 and John 1:23 picture John's mission as a fulfillment of Isa. 40:3. This is as we would expect.

However, Jesus in Matt. 11:10 and Luke 7:27, and Mark in Mark 1:2 apply the words of Malachi 3:1 to John also. Malachi 3:1 reads, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in." Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, in his jubilant exultation when his speech was restored after John's birth, prophesied of his son, John, "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways" (Luke 1:76). His wording suggests both Isaiah's and Malachi's prophecies.

The angel Gabriel related John's mission to the forecast of Malachi 4:5 (Luke 1:16-17).

What shall we conclude? It is quite understandable that if John was to go before Christ in the "spirit and power" of Elijah, the work planned for Elijah could rightly be related to John also, as part of his assignment.

Viewed from this angle, the relating of the work of John the Baptist to portions of the prophecies of both Isaiah and Malachi falls within the realm of reason. John came in the "spirit and power" of Elijah, hence the prophecies regarding the work of one forerunner could also apply to the other. But this in no way changes the events distinctly forecast to be part of each advent of Christ.

Elijah is to come before the "great and dreadful" day of the Lord. Malachi 4:1 pictures that event as a day that "shall burn as an

oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." No such period of judgment accompanied John's mission.

What about Malachi 3? To whom does this prophecy refer? Verse 1 speaks of a "messenger," which could apply either to John or Elijah: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple."

Verses 2 and 3 depict a work which the Messiah did not accomplish at His first advent: "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." These texts indicate the program scheduled for Christ's *second* advent, not His first. Abiding the day of Christ that followed the preaching of John the Baptist was not difficult. Christ taught; He warned; He pleaded. He was strong in His denunciation of sin. His censure of the crafty scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23 was perhaps His strongest; but the work of separating the dross from the precious metal—the wicked from the righteous—awaits Christ's second coming.

Malachi 3:5 definitely pictures the judgments to accompany Christ's second advent: "And I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts."

We must remember that the people of Jesus' day were mistaken as to the application of the many prophecies regarding His coming—they confused Christ's second coming with His first. All the prophets had foretold the coming of the Messiah to set up His Kingdom, and that the people understood. But they failed completely to realize that He would be rejected at His first coming. They comprehended nothing of two comings, for they saw only the coming of the Messiah to set up His glorious Kingdom, and it was their hope that He would release them from the yoke of their Gentile overlords, and re-establish the kingdom of Israel. They saw neither the rejection incident to His first coming nor the long lapse of time before Messiah's Kingdom. As a result, they erroneously looked for Elijah to come before the first coming of the Messiah. But this misconception on their part in no way altered the prophecy of Malachi: that Elijah shall come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

God foreknew that Israel would reject the Christ when He came the first time; therefore, it was no part of God's plan that the Kingdom should be set up at Christ's first coming. His first work was to perfect His own character, to prepare Himself for the kingship. Not until His second coming should His kingdom be established. Hence, God sent John the Baptist as Christ's first forerunner. John therefore was the "Elijah" of the first coming, but Elijah himself is to be the forerunner of His second coming.

The Israelite nation rejected the King, as we read in John 1:11, "He came unto his own [Israel], and his own received him not." They rejected the King, and now instead of the Kingdom came the cross, the resurrection, the setting aside of Israel, and the calling out of the Gentile

church. Not until Christ's second advent will the Kingdom come.

Had God sent Elijah instead of John and then Jesus had been rejected as He was, it would indicate that God Himself did not know that Israel would reject the Messiah, and that even God was taken by surprise. But God in His foreknowledge and goodness appointed two forerunners each with a different mission for a different coming. John was to be the voice in the wilderness; Elijah was

to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers and the hearts of the fathers to the children; and failure of John's mission to accomplish this would have reflected upon God's wisdom. Indeed, John came in the "spirit and power" of Elijah, but not as Elijah himself.

Gabriel's words in Luke 1:17 show that he understood the plan of God: "And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias." Thus he applied Malachi 4:5 to show the

type of work which John the Baptist should do—the same that is prophesied to be fulfilled by Elijah in greater measure at Christ's second advent. Both the angel Gabriel and Jesus saw in John the Baptist a partial fulfillment of Malachi's words, and at the same time looked ahead to the Day when these words would meet their complete and greater fulfillment in the return of the prophet Elijah himself "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

Make Me UNcomfortable, O God

Make me uncomfortable about what I'm doing with the mind
You have given me...about studying too little
and thinking too sloppily...about giving too much of
my thoughts to the lesser things of life rather than
to the seeking of Your truth and knowledge.

Make me uncomfortable about my future hopes...of using
this world as an end rather than as a means to the
greater end which You have planned. Make me uncom-
fortable when I think too much of wanting a better
paying job, or more security, or social prestige;
these are not the things that You would have me seek.

Disturb me, O God,
Until I sense that my true calling as a Christian is:
To grow in that deepest, most vital knowledge of all—the knowledge of myself;
To find joy in reading and understanding the wisdom
that comes from You;
To seize now my awesome opportunities for attaining true learning;
To live richly and responsibly in prospect of the better Day that is coming;
To find my highest pleasure in grappling effectively with my own worst self;
To be constantly grateful for the capacity, the creativity and courage that
You have entrusted to me;
To do my best to better my own life and conduct that I may see the
fulfillment of the highest purposes You have planned for this planet
on which I live. AMEN.

Elijah Taken to Heaven?

Does it seem strange that Elijah, a mortal man, could enter heaven, when we read that "no man hath ascended up to heaven" (John 3:13)?

We have no reason to assume that Elijah was taken into the presence of God, or to the highest heaven simply because the Bible states he went up "into heaven." Are there not other places in the heavens where he might go? A person might live in the state of New York and yet say that he had never been to New York, meaning the city of New York. Heaven is an immense realm far beyond comparison with any place on earth—so vast, in fact, that we cannot begin to comprehend it. It includes, literally speaking, all of creation that is not the earth. In our own galaxy, the Milky Way, scientists estimate that there are one hundred billion stars like our sun. Surely in this vast ocean of space there are numerous habitable islands where God's work is not yet complete, areas still inhabited by lower levels of life such as we know, areas not yet glorified, to which Elijah could have been taken and where he could have continued in the mortal state.

It is written that Jesus ascended "far above all heavens" (Eph. 4:10). This was not said of Elijah. All parts of heaven are not the high heaven where God dwells.

How can we be sure Elijah was taken away from the earth?

Very simply, we can be sure of it because the Bible tells us he was taken away. The account of his translation is given in great detail. We read how Elisha followed Elijah from place to place before he was taken away, for Elijah had told him that only if Elisha saw him taken away could he receive the "double portion" of his spirit that he had

requested. But the record clearly states that Elisha did see Elijah taken away and that Elijah's mantle (a symbol of his divine power) did fall on Elisha. We can know also from the many miracles Elisha performed that he did indeed receive Elijah's spirit.

Nor was Elisha the only witness. We are told also that "fifty of the prophets followed them, and stood watching from a distance" (II Kings 2:7, NEB).

Nor does the Biblical record allow us to think that Elijah was picked up supernaturally and deposited beyond the next hill; nor did he merely take a trip into the "atmospheric" heaven. These are some of the various interpretations extant, but they are not Biblical. The Word of God declares that "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." If we believe what the Bible says on any subject, how can we fail to believe this?

Even in Elijah's time, some people wondered what might have happened to Elijah, so some men went to Elisha and said, "'Your servants have fifty stalwart men. Let them go and search for your master; perhaps the spirit of the Lord has lifted him up and cast him on some mountain or into some valley.' But he said, 'No, you must not send them.' They pressed him, however, until he had not the heart to refuse. So they sent out the fifty men but, though they searched for three days, they did not find him. When they came back to Elisha, who had remained at Jericho, he said to them, 'Did I not tell you not to go?'" (II Kings 2:16-18, NEB).

Is there any incident in the whole Bible better documented than this? It was common knowledge among the prophets of Bethel and Jericho

that Elijah was to be taken away to heaven. Elisha knew it. The event was witnessed by the prophets of Jericho. Elijah promised Elisha that if he saw him taken away his wish to inherit a "double portion" of his spirit (the portion of the eldest son) would be granted. That Elisha did see Elijah taken up and that Elisha did receive Elijah's power was confirmed by the prophets who were watching, who said, "The spirit of Elijah has settled on Elisha." The fact that fifty men searched for three days and could find no trace of him also confirms the fact that he was taken from this earth.

If we cannot believe this account, what can we believe? If God was just deceiving those prophets and giving us a fantastic tale, then it follows that the whole Bible is unreliable and we should discard it.

The Letter from Elijah?

What about the letter that came to King Jehoram from Elijah some ten or more years after Elijah was taken away? (II Chron. 21:12).

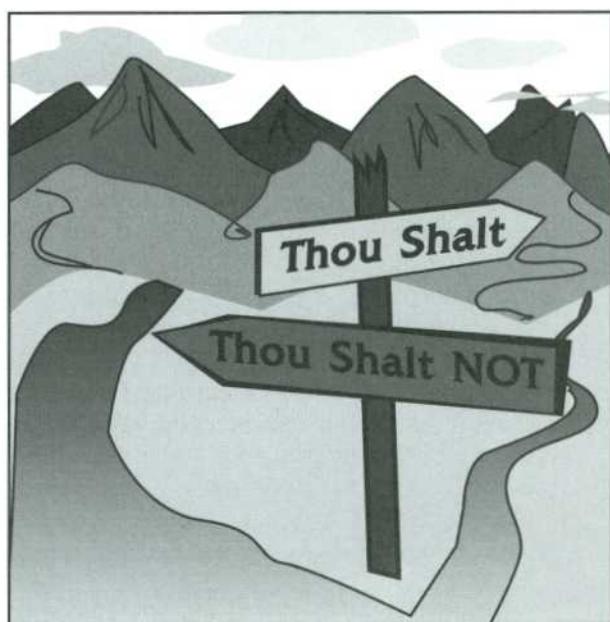
First, there is no evidence that it was a letter addressed to the king, as we would think of personal correspondence. Several translations say a "writing" instead of a "letter." The Hebrew word translated "writing" in the King James Version is *miktab* and means "a thing written, the characters, a document (letter, copy, edict, poem)." When we think of a letter, we think of a writing mailed to a person and delivered by the postal service in a reasonably short period of time. But this was not the meaning twenty-four or more hundred years ago.

But does the fact that the King received a writing from Elijah mean that Elijah must have written it at that time? Might Elijah, as a prophet of the Lord, not have written the

message while he was still in Israel? We know from several passages in Kings that the Lord had informed Elijah of events which were to take place in the future (see I Kings 19:17 and 21:23). Elijah was clearly able to predict the future by divine knowledge. Is it not reasonable that Elijah could have written down a message from the Lord regarding Jehoram and that that message did not come to the attention of the king for a number of years after it was written? The fact that the writing was by Elijah in no way proves that Elijah was on earth at the time the king read the message. MM

Inner Calm

Calm me, my God, and keep me calm,
while these hot breezes blow;
Be like the night—dew's cooling balm
upon earth's fevered brow.
Calm me, my God, and keep me calm,
soft resting on Thy breast,
Soothe me with holy hymn and psalm
and bid my spirit rest.
Calm in the hour of buoyant health,
calm in my hour of pain,
Calm in poverty or wealth,
calm in my loss or gain;
Calm as the ray of sun or star
which storms assail in vain;
Moving unruffled through earth's war,
the eternal calm to gain.



From the beginning God has set limits on what we should do. He has not left us free to choose according to our whim, but has given His law, firm and clear. Upon many routes He has posted a definite "Thou Shalt NOT."

But along with the "Thou Shalt Not's," He has given also "Thou shalt's," with the encouragement to do right. We are commanded in the Book of books to have our senses exercised to discern both good and evil, and the Book offers every possible inducement and incen-

tive to help us, as well as cautions and warnings to alert us to the consequences should we yield to the wrong. Right doing takes us forward in the strait, narrow way which leads upward, ever upward toward perfection and life, while wrongdoing conducts us down the broad, easy way which ends in destruction.

If we live according to His Word, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mark 12:30-31), we shall be beyond the need of any "thou shalt not's." Wholly committed, we will be saying, "Not my will, but Thine, O Lord, be done." But alas! How often it is reversed; our own will comes first.

This ought not so to be; to put our will first is to disregard His. The natural man does not take kindly to following God's orders, hence there must be many "thou shalt not's." But obey we must—because God has said "No"—and use our energy in the right direction, flee temptation, forming good habits, practicing daily God's law of love.

If we make Jesus' words our rule of life, we will escape the penalties that lie along the road of disobedience. We will conquer our naturally evil ways and, bolstered by our growing faith in God, we shall one day hear the deep and musical sound of the ocean of eternity and repeat the poetic words of David: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." MM



Part 7

"I Have Finished My Course"

Synopsis

The Apostle Paul is confined in a gloomy underground cell in the noisome Mamertine Prison in Rome, awaiting final disposition of his case. As the curtain rises, he is greeting his companion, personal physician, and secretary, Luke, to whom we are so deeply indebted for our knowledge of Paul's stirring career.

Paul: It is good to have you with me again, Luke. I don't know how I could have carried on without your support. It is possible that this may be the last time. A decision is expected this week, so they tell me. Did you notice anything unusual as you came in?

Luke: No...except that your jailer seemed even more respectful to me.

Paul: Not a good sign. But let's forget it. There is work to do. I want to finish the letter to Apollos. Will you write for me?

Luke: Gladly. The light is bad, but I think I can see well enough. [He sits on stool] I'm ready.

Paul: Where did we leave off?

Luke: Well, let's see... For though I am a long way from you in body, in spirit I am by your side, watching like a proud father your success in this great new field which God has thrown open to us.

Paul: [walks to and fro as he dictates the conclusion of the letter] The fruit of your labors I shall never see until

the day of our Lord's appearing, for I feel that the last drops of my life are being poured out for God. This is His will, and I would not have it otherwise.

As for you, Apollos, I am trusting you to the full, remembering the pleasant days of our service together in the field where I have planted and you have watered the seed. In far-away Bithynia it is yours to do both planting and watering, and I am confident you will do it well.

Never lose your sense of urgency, for life is short and the work is great. Never let the story get started that the coming of the Lord is imminent; that day will not come until the Apostasy has come and gone. Nevertheless, we must all live expectantly; planning for eternity, but living as if we were to die tomorrow.

Stand fast in all you are doing, meeting whatever sufferings this may involve. Persecution is inevitable for those who are determined to live above the world, but do not be disheartened by it. Remember the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ and of me, His humble servant; remember that the final triumph is what really counts.

Be wise in your behavior toward non-Christians. Speak pleasantly to them, and let your own life be above criticism. It may well be that God will give some of them a different outlook, and some day they will be called our brothers and sisters in Christ.

O Apollos, guard most carefully your divine commission. Tell men of their duty, without fear,

reproving in love when necessary. But steer clear of these barren arguments about technicalities, which settle nothing and lead nowhere.

And may the Lord of peace personally give you His peace at all times and in all ways. All the brethren of Rome send their love. They are praying for you. Give my personal greeting to all the brethren. [Takes pen and writes, then reads].

This is the farewell message of Paul, written in my own writing, my mark on all my letters. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Luke: It is a long way to Bithynia, but Brother Apollos should have it before winter. It is good to know that his mission is succeeding so well. Soon there will be another church for you to look after.

Paul: Ah, no; that will be for some one else. None of us is indispensable, and it is well that it is so. The work will go on as the Lord sees fit to prosper it. Others will be raised up to carry it on, just as there have always been. When I am gone, Luke, it would be well for you to join Apollos there, if it is your pleasure. You know we planned long ago to go to Bithynia, but the Holy Spirit said No. Now the door is open.

Luke: [sadly] When you are gone....Life is strange, is it not?

Paul: [glowing] Life is beautiful, Luke, if we make it so. We put the dark spots in it ourselves. Life for me has been wonderful and richly rewarding.

Luke: And for me, since I have known you.

Paul: Together we have suffered much for Christ's sake, but it has been a glorious suffering, a light affliction, but for a moment, which will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. I would gladly—eagerly—do it all over again if I could, and I would do it better. I would welcome twice the hardship if I could avoid the blunders I have made in this life; if I could atone for my great error in persecuting the Church of Christ; if I could blot out the sight of Stephen as he fell before the stones of the mob.

Luke: This is all forgiven and forgotten, Brother Paul. Let us not speak of it.

Paul: Yes, I am confident it is. I have finished my course. I am ready to go, trusting in the great mercy and forgiveness of our heavenly Father.

Luke: You are weary, are you not?

Paul: A little, but it is nothing. My heart is so filled with thankfulness and rejoicing for all the Eternal has

done for me that I forget the weakness of this old body.

Luke: I had better go. I will leave you this medicine which will help you to sleep. Try to relax now, and get some rest.

Paul: You will come tomorrow, won't you?

Luke: I certainly will, if it is at all possible.

[They embrace affectionately, and Luke leaves. Paul kneels to pray beside his bed. The curtain descends, then rises with Paul in the same position. He rises and slowly paces the floor for a full minute. Then the door grates open and the Jailer descends the steps. His face is grave and his voice tense.]

Jailer: There is unfavorable news for you, sir.

Paul: I know, I know, my son. I expected it.

Jailer: I'm sorry, but you must go immediately.

Paul: Yes, I know. I am ready.

Jailer: [apologetically] I am very sorry, sir. You have been a model prisoner.

Paul: That is part of my duty to my God. I wish you could know Him as I know Him, my friend.

Jailer: Somehow I feel your presence has made me a better man. I have hoped all the time you would be released. I am very sorry. I shall miss you.

Paul: [a missionary to the very end] You will see that my physician, Luke, takes charge of my books and papers. If you should care to read any of them, he will be glad to help you. He will show you the way of salvation.

Jailer: I will, sir. I shall be glad to.

[Paul folds his blanket neatly and hands it to Jailer:]

Paul: I wish you to have my blanket. You have been most kind to me.

Jailer: [almost overcome] Oh, thank you, sir! I shall always treasure it. Now follow me, please.

[He steps outside, Paul arranges his few possessions on the bed, then approaches the steps, where he stands a moment with bowed head. The Angel, unseen by Paul, enters and stands behind him. As Paul mounts the first step and pauses, the Angel extends one hand as if in blessing. The second step—the third—and the great Apostle faces his end with his head up and eyes shining, still "pressing on."]

THE END.

Of Molehills and Mountains

(Continued from page 2)

Jesus described the molehills of life as what we shall eat, what we shall drink, what we shall put on—too small issues to trouble any serious God-seeker.

God would have us keep small what is small, and give real importance to what *He* counts great—faith, endurance, courage, and earnest devotion to God and truth.

Are truth and goodness ever small? Are the Bible and prayer and the challenging heights of Christian attainment ever molehills? We know they are not.

Fellow Christian, let us concentrate on what is really important. Set your sights on the heights. Be discerning. Be alert. Keep your molehills small and your mountains great.

And be sure you know the one from the other. MM

***Keep small what is small, and
give real importance to
what God counts great.***

Little By Little

Little by little the time goes by—
Short, if you sing through it, long if you sigh.
Little by little—an hour, a day,
Gone with the years that have vanished away.
Little by little the race is run;
And trouble and waiting and toil are
done!

Little by little the skies grow clear;
Little by little the sun comes near;
Little by little the wrong gives in,
Little by little the right must win;
Little by little the longing soul
Struggles to reach the shining goal.

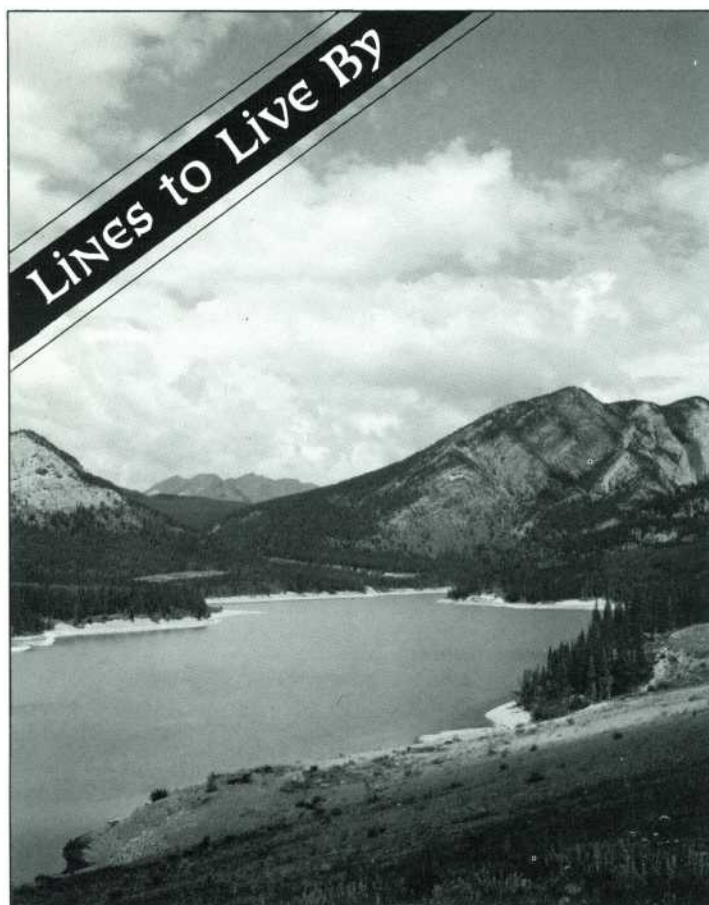
So What Do You Know?

Old Testament Queries

1. Who says "in his heart, There is no God"?
2. Who acknowledged gratefully that "the lines" were fallen unto him in "pleasant places"?
3. Who said, "All men are liars"?
4. Who said, "He who ruleth his spirit is better than he who taketh a city"?
5. Who said, "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly"?
6. Who does the Bible say "will not prosper"?
7. Who prayed, "Give me neither poverty nor riches"?
8. Who said, "There is no discharge in that war"?
9. To whom was it revealed several hundred years in advance that the Redeemer should be born of a virgin?
10. Who lamented, "the harvest is past, the summer is ended"?
11. Who asked, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin"?
12. What other nation besides Israel is to be scattered to all people?
13. Who was Belshazzar's successor as king?
14. Who said, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone"?
15. What prophet was a herdsman?
16. What prophet was sent as a missionary to the Gentiles?
17. What prophet said, "In wrath, remember mercy"?
18. What prophet said, "They save wages to put into a bag with holes"?
19. Who prophesied, "At evening time it shall be light"?
20. Who asked the question, "Will a man rob God"?
21. What became of the golden calf set up by Aaron in the wilderness journey?
22. Who said, "For the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed"?
23. Who said, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

ANSWERS:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. The fool.—Psalms 14:1. | 14. The prophet Hosea. |
| 2. David.—Psalms 16:6. | —Hosea 4:17. |
| 3. David.—Psalms 116:11. | 15. Amos.—Amos 1:1. |
| 4. Solomon.—Prov. 16:32. | 16. Jonah.—Jonah 1:2. |
| 5. Solomon.—Prov. 18:24. | 17. Habakkuk.—Hab. 3:2. |
| 6. He that covereth his sins. | 18. Haggai.—Hag. 1:6. |
| —Prov. 28:13. | 19. Zechariah.—Zech. 14:7. |
| 7. Agur.—Prov. 30:8. | 20. Malachi.—Mal. 3:8. |
| 8. Solomon.—Eccl. 8:8. | 21. It was ground to powder, |
| 9. Ahaz.—Isaiah 7:14. | mixed with water, and |
| 10. The Jews.—Jer. 8:20. | the Israelites forced to |
| 11. Jeremiah.—Jer. 13:23. | drink it.—Ex. 32:20. |
| 12. Elamites.—Jer. 49:36. | 22. Hannah.—I Sam 2:3 |
| 13. Darius.—Dan. 5:31. | 23. Mordecai.—Esther 4:14 |



Two natures struggle in my breast—
The one is foul, the other blest;
The “new” I love, the “old” I hate;
The one I feed will dominate.

*If you forgot to start the day with a
smile, start practicing now for
tomorrow.*

When you break your word, you
break something that cannot be
mended.

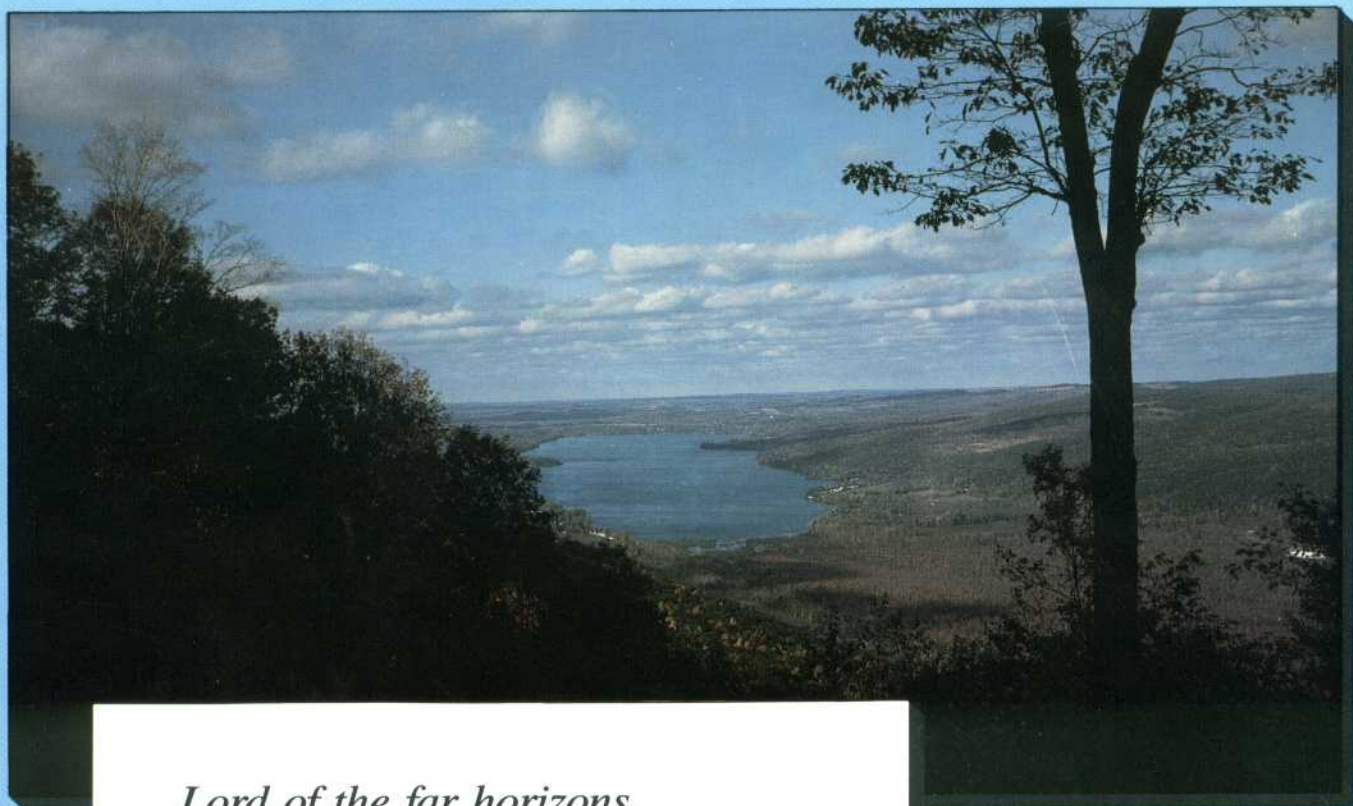
*Avoid even **looking** at temptation;
the more you see of it, the better it
may look.*

The easiest thing to find is fault.

*Seekest thou great things for thyself? O seek them not!
Earth's fame quickly flies, its glory soon forgot.
Wouldest thou then know wherein true greatness lies?
Stoop thou lowest down, and thou wilt highest rise.*

There is an old story which tells of an Italian duke who went on board a galley ship. As he passed the crew of slaves he asked several of them what their offenses were. Every one laid the blame to someone else, saying his brother was to blame or the judge was bribed. One sturdy young fellow said: “My Lord, I am justly in here. I wanted money and I stole it. No one is to blame but myself.” The duke on hearing this seized him by the shoulder, saying, “You rogue! What are you doing here among so many honest? Get you out of their company!” The young fellow was then set at liberty, while the rest were left to tug at the oars.

*'Tis strange we trust each other and only doubt our Lord,
We'll take the word of mortals and yet distrust His Word;
But oh, what light and glory would shine o'er all our days
If only we'd remember He means just what He says!*



*Lord of the far horizons,
Give us the eyes to see
Over the verge of the sundown
The beauty that is to be.*

*Give us the skill to fashion
The task of Thy command,
Eager to follow the pattern
We may not understand.*

*When the skein of life seems tangled
And the lead of sense is blind,
Foster the fire to lighten
Our unilluminated mind.*

*Lord of the far horizons,
Give us the faith to see
Beyond our mundane duties
The eternal life to be!*