

Megiddo Message

Free
Only Under Law

Vol. 80, No. 7
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BIGGER

Is Not Always *Better*

Something in us is impressed by the immense, the great, the shocking. Bigger seems to be, for some unexplainable reason, better.

How different is the gospel story. Beginning with the birth of a child, in an unlikely place, to unknown parents, it continues through a handful of followers who are sometimes wavering, sometimes fearful, often scorned and rejected. Gradually, over a period of years, the movement decreases, becoming less and less until it is utterly extinct. Nowhere on the face of the earth is a true worshiper to be found.

Then according to the prophecy, it revives, though in a small and obscure setting, still seemingly threatened and insecure. Yet it is a work divine, and no human hand can overthrow it.

What makes it significant? Not its size, or its numbers, or the majority votes. All these make no mark with God. He is looking for qualities of seriousness, sincerity, earnestness of purpose, honest-to-goodness trembling before the Lord, and a deepened dedication to doing what He requires. These are the qualities which will make our lives important to Him—because they put us on His side, which in the final analysis will be the side of the majority.

"A king does not win because of his powerful army; a soldier does not triumph because of his strength. War-horses are useless for victory; their great strength cannot save....We put our hope in the Lord; he is our protector and our help. We are glad because of him; we trust in his holy name" (Ps. 33:16-17, 20-21). Here is the prayer of one who realized that bigger is not always

better, that the most powerful human or earthly forces are powerless against God. Hence the concluding thought in the prayer of the Psalmist: "May your constant love be with us, Lord, as we put our hope in you" (Ps. 33:22). "As we hope in you"—not in kings, or soldiers, or human mechanisms of defense.

God recognizes smallness just as readily as we recognize size. And for Him, bigger is not necessarily better. That is the constant message of the prophets and priests in Scripture. God's people in all ages have been a remnant. But in that grouping, as a creative minority, are the select few who can claim the authority of God in their lives. With God on our side, we can live with awe and trembling before Him, and obtain His eternal recognition. We can be that faithful remnant of whom it can be said: "God is their Lord," "their heart is glad because they trust in him." "This God is our God forever and ever."

Someone has said that we are living in a time of "no faith," or "easy faith." The writer pleads instead for "great faith," which he describes as life experienced through "the furnaces of suffering, or doubt, or hardship." Such faith "has distressed places and scorched marks on it." But it is faith triumphant. It is faith that triumphs not because it is bigger but because it is better.

Great faith includes a deep sense of humility before God, a genuine readiness to stand out from the crowd, and a firm and unshakeable conviction of heart. It involves standing firmly for the right, even though it be on the side of the minority. A remnant, by definition, is not the overwhelming mass of humanity. But what does that matter! It is a

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

Soon-coming events

The Herald and the KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: ... lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

The Bible pictures all events, all men and all nations moving together toward this one God-ordained climax, when "the kingdoms of this world" will become "the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15), a kingdom in which all will enjoy the blessings of peace, equity and prosperity. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants, bringing to reality the promise of our Lord in His prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

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Freedom: Only Under Law

Whenever the word *freedom* is pronounced—whether we call it independence, or liberty, or any other word in the language—it strikes a responsive chord in us. Everyone wants to be free.

Many countries celebrate a national holiday on the anniversary of the day on which they acquired freedom. In the United States, the Fourth of July is celebrated as a remembrance of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. In France, the fourteenth of July is observed as the day the French freed themselves from the shackles of autocratic monarchy. In Germany, Octo-

ber 3 is celebrated as the anniversary of the day in 1990 when the East German Republic was joined with the West to become the United German Republic.

In spite of the great importance given to freedom, there seem to be a significant number of misconceptions. Ask people to define what they mean by freedom, and you are likely to encounter many definitions very questionable. There are some who think that freedom is the ability to do whatever one pleases. Probably this would be the definition given by the man on the street if he were questioned. But if this is freedom, then it is something we do not have, because very often our wishes conflict with the wishes of others. If, for example, I wish to sit precisely where another

person is seated, and he wishes to sit there too—we have a conflict. There is no way in which both persons' freedom can be satisfied at the same time.

Recognizing this problem, some have adjusted the definition of freedom to read: "Freedom is the ability to do whatever one desires subject to the freedom of another." But by adding the words "subject to," you have set a limit on freedom, and it is no longer free.

But even apart from the conflict created by the need to consider others, we simply cannot do everything we please. If I should say I want very much right now to put my finger on the moon, I cannot do it.

We need to think of freedom in a better way, a way that relates it both to the realities of life and to the law which God has designed for our good.

Freedom then becomes the ability to do what one desires subject to the restrictions which the law of God imposes for our good.

Just what does this mean? Let us illustrate it from the realm of mechanics. If a locomotive could be lent a voice for the purpose of this illustration, it might say something like this: "I am terribly bored going all the time along precisely the same track. There are many interesting areas to the north and south which I would like to explore, instead of being strictly confined to these tracks, seeing only the same decrepit houses and the same decrepit factories day after day. I would like to wander around the hills and meadows and have a chance to be free from this constant following of the tracks."

Suppose for a moment we agree with the locomotive. "All right," we say, "go ahead and leave the tracks if you want to."

What would happen? You do not need to be a great train engineer to know what would happen. When the locomotive leaves the tracks, it does

not wander in pleasant places, in meadows or hills. Immediately it ceases completely to operate. You have what is called a derailment. A locomotive is so heavy that it cannot properly proceed on any other surface than its tracks. And it is not free until a very heavy apparatus is used to lift it up and place it back onto the tracks where it can operate. Freedom for the train consists in moving along the tracks that have been prepared for it. Outside these there is only disaster.

Or let us take an example from the animal world. Let us speak of a fish, and lend it a voice to illustrate our meaning of freedom. A fish could say, "I find it very annoying to be always in the water. It is true that on hot days people enjoy it, but I feel confined. Once in a while when I jump above the water I can see that there are other things in the world, that there are fields, meadows, houses. I would like to know these better. Why do I have to be always confined in the water? Water, water everywhere!"

So we say, "All right, Mr. Fish, you can get out of the water." But what then? You do not need to be a specialist in marine biology to know what would happen. When a fish is removed from the water, it dies. Some of the sturdiest might live as long as two hours, but most would not live even that long. So when a fish moves out of its natural environment, instead of finding liberty, it perishes. Freedom for the fish consists in staying in the water.

Or let us take an example from the motorist on the highway. Most of us drive a car, and we can understand the wistfulness that may sometimes come into the heart of the driver when he says, "Why do I have to be hampered by all these traffic regulations that limit my freedom? Why do I have to stay on the right side of the road? Why can I not park anywhere I

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The sooner we
begin to apply
Jesus' law of
truth, the sooner
we shall begin to
taste the joys of
real freedom.

please? And why do I have to bother about all those traffic signals that stop me at every turn? Why do I have to pay attention to the speed limit signs which curtail my freedom to move as I would like to move? I would like to be able to drive this car and not have to think about any laws or the police limiting my ability to enjoy myself."

Suppose now that the drivers could be granted their wish for just one day and that all traffic laws were temporarily suspended. What would happen? There would be accidents. There would be monumental traffic jams. There would be no freedom to go or come as anyone would wish to. There would be no way to know whether a trip would take three hours or seven, or whether it would be safe to venture out at all. The laws may seem galling at times, but their presence is absolutely essential for the usefulness of the automobile. We cannot dispense with laws and gain freedom.

This same truth applies in relation to physical law. We know full well that there are laws that govern God's universe, and we are not at liberty to disregard them. If someone should go to the top of a tower and say, "I am going to assert my freedom. I am going to float on air now, and I will show you how it is done," and then launch out without any kind of aeronautical device, you know very well what would happen. He would not float on air. The moment he left the solid support of the tower, the law of gravity would take hold of him, and he would crash to the ground. There is no freedom in breaking the law of gravity. We can only break ourselves against it.

All physical laws of nature—of God—are equally binding. We cannot violate those laws and not bear the consequences. The world belongs to God. It is the product of His all-wise design; His laws are at the very heart of it. We ourselves belong to it, and there is no escape. We must obey His

laws if we would be truly free to enjoy the world of His creation.

But we still have not reached the ultimate in our definition of freedom. There is yet another level, and it is found in subjection to another level of law. This higher law is far more stringent, far more demanding than any limits imposed by the laws of this world. But the freedom which it opens to us is infinitely greater.

To understand this law and this freedom, let us look first at the requirements of the law. This law requires the subjection of our entire being. To be subject to it we must change our taste, and our very nature—no small requirement. We must conquer our unruly dispositions, not allowing them free rein. We must subdue our rebellious passions, and must purify the motives of our conduct. We must seek the higher values of life, holiness, purity, righteousness, peace in everything we do, whether with our family, or friends, or strangers, or alone. We must be unselfish, thinking first of the interest of others. We must subdue our every inclination to jealousy, pride, sensitive feelings, and ill will. We must give our heart to the heavenly things, not to the fleeting interests of this world, using this world not as an end in itself, not as something to enjoy and fulfill us, but only as a means to a much greater end.

So far-reaching are the demands of this law that it must captivate every thought to the obedience of Christ. Does this sound like freedom? Perhaps not.

But has anyone ever calculated all the benefits of this obedience, all the delights of the freedom to which it entitles one?

The demands may seem overwhelming, but the benefits are beyond measure. And they begin almost immediately. For as we subject ourselves to this law, as we bring our unruly dispositions under control, we

begin to taste the new freedom, a glorious deliverance from the tyranny of our old self. And as we progress, as we learn more and more to obey this higher law, we find that we are no longer bound by the cares, worries, and anxieties of this world. No longer are we concerned about what others think of us. Gone is the competitive spirit that causes so much grief. Gone are the hates, the jealousies, the miserable hurt feelings, and that dreadful instinct to bite and devour one another. Have we longed for freedom?—here is a freedom greater than anything we could have ever imagined, an inner peace and satisfaction that nothing in this world can equal.

And this is only the foretaste. The ultimate freedom is yet future, when we shall be delivered from the bondage of mortality, freed from this corruptible body and made like unto the angels of God. Paul describes this ultimate freedom as “the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21). Free from death, free from corruption, free from the threats of disease and accident, free to enjoy life on the highest level, free to associate with all the family of God, free to explore the farthest reaches of God’s universes, on and on, world without end!

Can we begin to see the deeper meaning in Jesus’ words: “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32)? The sooner we begin to apply that law of truth, the sooner we shall begin to taste the joys of real freedom, a growing freedom which benefits us even now in freeing us from the struggles and anxieties of this world, and which ultimately will free us from everything that would harm or destroy us.

Why not submit gladly to that highest law, that law most stringent and demanding, which brings such wondrous freedom, now and for ever! For “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). □

MY DREAM

I slept one night and, sleeping, dreamed...A strange, strange dream; so sad it seemed....I had a friend, I loved him well,...His love for me none, none could tell.

The glorious message came one day...From this loved Friend so far away;...But, ah! my wayward heart was deep in sin...My blinded eyes had fallen in...Until I was so blind indeed...That I could scarce my letter read.

At last the precious Word I read,...“Behold I come,” the message said;...“Thou may’st not know the day or hour...When I shall come in might and power;...It may be midnight, morn, or noon,...Watch thou, and know I’m coming soon.”

Alas! I was so poorly dressed,...How could I welcome such a guest...From such high state how could he come...And deign to grace my humble home?

But, ah! my bitter needs he knew...And in his tender love so true...He sent a robe and bade me take...And wear it for His blessed sake;...A glorious robe, so fair and bright,...A spotless dress of purest white.

I took the robe, it seemed so fair,...I longed the glorious dress to wear;...But captured by the cares of earth,...Her revelry, her godless mirth,...I carefully hid my robe away,...Thinking to put it on—some day.

The days passed by with noiseless wing,...Winter, summer, fall and spring;...’Till—lo!—I heard, His chariot car...Approaching from the land afar.

I sought my robe—too late! too late!...The Bridegroom stood before my gate....All unprepared to meet my Guest...I stood, in filthy garments dressed.

I woke; day had begun to dawn;...I thanked my God ’twas but a dream—...And that I still might change my dress...For that white robe of righteousness.

—Selected.

Hallowed Ground Is...

Godliness bears no relation to geography, nor is it produced by being in a certain place. We cannot say, I will be holy here, but when I am there I will do as I please. Never are we permitted to cast our behavior according to our surroundings. True Christian conduct must be true and trustworthy—*wherever*.

Special places, special forms, special symbols, special words have often been exalted to a place of honor and influence they were never meant for, as though certain ground were more hallowed than other, as though worship in a certain place made the worship more acceptable to God.

Holy buildings, holy forms may have in them a certain value, but the value is for us, not for God. If one can think of God esteeming certain spots on earth as holier than others, it is only because of what has been done for Him in those places, not because the place itself is by nature distinguished.

Jesus made this point to the woman at the well (John 4). The woman said emphatically that mount Gerizim was "the place where men ought to worship" (4:20). Historically, two places had been designated as holy, mount Gerizim and Jerusalem. But the holiness of mount Gerizim had done little for the character of this Samaritan

woman; and the holiness of Jerusalem did little for those priests and law expounders who in their fanaticism put Jesus to death. Though the woman did not know it, her values were in the wrong place.

But both places were counted sacred. The competition between the Samaritans and the Jews was very real, the Samaritans performing their devotions upon the summit of Gerizim and the Jews in the city of Jerusalem, where was the temple of the house of God.

Jesus had one answer for both. In one short statement He put aside the controversy and emphasized the importance of the worshipper's condition of heart above the place of worship. He said: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24).

Jesus taught this lesson again when He said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). The place ("where") was not important, only the fact that the gatherers be gathered *in His name*. All places where Christians meet to exhort and

strengthen one another, where the spirit of the Master is present, become "holiness unto the Lord."

*Jesus, where'er Thy people meet,
There they behold Thy mercy seat;
Where'er they seek Thee Thou art
found,
And every spot is hallowed ground.*

Something in us likes to regard certain places with reverence. Where is the country in which there have not been consecrated mountains, or valleys, or groves? Where is the religion which has not boasted its sacred temples, its spots hallowed by memory, its devotions stimulated by place? And God does not condemn this. In fact, there was a time when in His wisdom He made use of a specific place to promote His own worship. The temple at Jerusalem was actually the house of God; and it *was* the holiest place; its beauty *was* the beauty of holiness. In this way God was teaching the principle of reverence, and a consciousness of the Divine presence by which the minds of men might be drawn to more elevated and holy concepts.

At the same time God was teaching His people to look beyond the place to the purpose it served. Never must the means be mistaken for the end, or the place for the purpose it was intended to serve. A place might elicit from us a special reverence because of the memories we cherish of it, because of lessons we learned there, or deep spiritual impressions we received. But let us be careful lest pleasant memories of the place become a substitute for true devotion. How often those who are most employed in sacred places, and who become most familiar with them, receive less than others of the stimulus of true devotion.

There is truth in the proverb, "The nearer to Rome, the further from God."

God does not condemn our attachment to a place. There is strength and encouragement to be gained from reflecting on the steps which have brought us here. Again in the words of the poet,

*Build thy great acts high and
higher;
Build them on the conquered sod
Where thy weakness first fell
bleeding
And thy first prayer rose to God.*

There is always danger that sacred places, sacred forms, sacred symbols, and sacred words may become an end in themselves rather than serving as a means to a greater end. In the time of Moses a sacred symbol was consecrated. God commanded Moses to set up a pole and put upon it a brazen serpent, that the plague upon the people might be stayed. Moses obeyed, the plague was stayed, and the pole remained. Several hundred years later it was still existing, having been turned into an object of worship. Now the only proper action was to remove it, because it had become an idol. It was called, appropriately, "Nehushtan" (II Kings 18:4).

True worship is not the fruit of a place but the fruit of a life. The apostle Paul could say, "Wherever I go, thank God, he makes my life a constant pageant of triumph in Christ" (II Cor. 2:14, Moffatt). Paul was not reserving his worship for a certain place, but *everywhere* he went his life was triumphing in Christ.

Those who draw near to the Father in living fellowship and affection worship Him "in spirit and in truth." And wherever they go, that place becomes for them

hallowed ground. Worship "in spirit" may be contrasted with that which is carnal, all mere shadows of good things, all mere ritual, all specialities of place or time or order. Such worship has value far transcending that of any place or form. The worth of wor-

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ship is in direct relation to the holiness of the worshiper, not of the place. "Worship...in truth" deals with reality, as an expression of one's genuine desires and emotions. For indeed, "the Father seeketh such to worship him."

How vividly this lesson was taught to the captives who were taken into Babylon. Jeremiah's parable of the ripe and spoiled figs (Jeremiah 24) prefigured this experience. The good figs were the Jews who were to be taken captive to Babylon, while the rotten figs were the Jews who would remain in the Holy Land. But Babylon was the evil place, Judah the good. So the rotten ones were in the good place, the good ones were in the rotten place—and God allowed it, even foretold it.

Here is a lesson for all of us, that God does not reckon value

by place, or He would have missed some of His brightest jewels. Joseph spent all but seventeen of his years in a center of wickedness, even in the heart of Egypt, much of it in the royal palace itself. Centuries later Daniel and his three companions had a similar experience. Born in the quiet homeland of Judea, and planning for a life in the land of their fathers, they suddenly found themselves transplanted to Babylon, and not to an obscure corner of the province but right into the royal palace! If goodness were reckoned by place, they would have been doomed. The captives with the prophet Ezekiel suddenly found themselves destined to live their entire lives in a foreign land, among a foreign people who worshiped foreign gods. But even in captivity, even far removed from their sacred homeland, these Jews could live pure and upright before God. Even in Babylon they could be true. Even in Babylon they could keep their commitment to God unbroken—if such was their desire—while preparing themselves for eternal rewards.

Good environment is not a precondition for salvation.

Good Israelites could be just as good in captivity, in a rotten place, just as truly as they could have been in their homeland. The right kind of character was *inside* them, not out-

side. Their heart could be right, even though their surroundings were evil.

The lesson is for us to take to heart. How easily we blame our friends, our family, our job, or our environment for hindering our progress in the Divine life. But the blame lies in our own negligence, not in our place. When we have done all we can to choose for ourselves the best environment possible, we must leave the rest with God, with a firm resolve to keep true to our convictions, to be godly—*wherever*. The battle is won or lost not outside but *inside*, right within our own hearts.

We have no reason to despair that we find ourselves in the midst of a wicked and adulterous modern Babylon. For us, too, Babylon can become hallowed ground, a place of victory—if our heart is fixed on God. Even the driest, thirstiest land, “where no water is” can be blessed with a touch of heavenly beauty (Ps. 63:1)—if we keep ourselves true to God and live ever as in His presence. God wants us to choose the best environment available to us—we must not make choice of contaminating associations—but He does not isolate us from evil. We must do our part to hallow the ground where we are.

And His promise is sure: “I will be with thee, whithersoever thou goest.” □

Looking inward...

What results has faith brought in my life?...

What has changed?...

In what way am I a better person?...

*Am I any more forgiving, more loving, more kind,
more noble in thought or feeling?...*

*Have I any more distaste for godless ways...and
more love for God?*

The Psalm of Life

Promise

The Lord is my shepherd	Protection
I shall not want	Supply
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures	Abundance
He leadeth me beside the still waters	Peace
He restoreth my soul	Healing
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness	Guidance
For His name's sake	Purpose
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death	Experience
I will fear no evil	Confidence
For Thou art with me	Omnipresence
Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me	Instruction
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies	Provision
Thou anointest my head with oil	Consecration
My cup runneth over	Joy
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life	Assurance
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever	Eternal Life

—Selected.

Don't Give In To Circumstances

A veteran pilot on the transatlantic air routes was quoted as saying this about his work: "The thing you have to fight in this job is monotony. You can sit there and get tired just from doing a lot of almost nothing. It's what they call static fatigue, and it's dangerous because it can make you drowsy and slow down your reactions without your realizing what's happening to you."

Static fatigue suggests an affliction from which many of us suffer. The word "static" meaning "at rest" or "in equilibrium" cannot be applied, perhaps, to the kind of life many of us live. We are constantly going somewhere, desperately busy. But when it comes to matters of life's deepest meanings and purposes, life's most significant values, there is danger that we may get tired just from doing a lot of almost nothing.

The author of the book of Ecclesiastes showed symptoms of static fatigue. "Vanity of vanities," he

cried, "all is vanity." The New English Bible reads, "Emptiness, emptiness, all is empty."

This man—Solomon, by name—is a king, with every conceivable gift and pleasure at his disposal. But take that away from him, probe beneath the surface, and you see a man foundering in despair, a man letting himself be beaten down by his circumstances. He is not the king but the slave, a slave to his passions, a slave to his pride, a slave to his circumstances—and by his own choice. He could have been the one in command. With God on his side, his life could have been one pageant of triumph from beginning to end. His record could have been one of victory, victory, victory. But instead, written large over the downward trail he followed are the words "Defeat, defeat, defeat."

There is no easy way to rise above ourselves. There is no easy way to be victorious over circumstances. But it can be done. With our faith in God, the love of future life in our hearts, and a strong determination to please God at the very depth of our being, we can meet the challenges of life victoriously. We need not yield to our circumstances. With God's help we can be victorious. □

"I Promise"

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." —II Peter 3:9

In the mind of every true believer is not the slightest doubt that what God has promised He is able to fulfill. He has given His oath that this earth shall be filled with His glory, His people (Num. 14:21; Isa. 46:13). Continually through the Prophets He reminds of what He has done in the past, and what He will do in the future. He illustrates the immutability of His word by the unchanging laws of nature that we see operating about us. Outstanding among these is His declaration through Isaiah (55:10-11),

"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

We are all familiar with the phenomenon of the rain and snow coming down to water the ground, the rhythm of the changing seasons, and the earth bringing forth abundantly for the needs of humankind. We expect these things to happen and are never disappointed. The Word of God, says the Prophet, is just that certain of fulfillment.

Today, as in the past, we can easily make promises that we have no power

to fulfill. With God it is different. His promises can be relied upon. The record of the past proves it. Consider the prophecy through Daniel concerning the four universal kingdoms of earth (Dan. 2:28-45). History reveals that all that Daniel foretold about these four kingdoms has been fulfilled. The next great event will be the beginning of the fifth Kingdom, represented by the stone which smote the image on the feet and became a great mountain which filled the whole earth. The reassuring part of this prophecy is the latter part of verse 45: "the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure." Just as surely as the four kingdoms of men came in their turn as foretold, so the fifth kingdom will follow, the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

When Peter was writing his Second Epistle, he wrote particularly to those who were already well established in the faith. He wished to stir up their "pure minds" by putting them in remembrance mainly of what would come to pass in the last days. We now have reached this time he spoke of and see the world as he predicted. During the past century many false prophets have arisen and fixed dates for the Lord to appear. They claimed Scriptural support for their belief, but time has revealed their positions to be incorrect.

Not knowing how to harmonize the Scriptures or growing weary of waiting for the fulfillment of the

promise, many have turned to infidelity and scoffing. By their actions as well as their words they say, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (II Pet. 3:4). It is not for lack of evidence that these scoffers arise, but as Peter tells us (verse 3), this class represents those who are "walking after their own lusts."

In spite of human failures and mistakes the Apostle reminds us (II Pet. 3:9), "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise," and in verse 10, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." No, the Lord is not slow in fulfilling His promises, but is "longsuffering to us-ward."

One of the greatest attributes of the Almighty is His longsuffering. The earth is His and all things upon it, yet consider how unappreciative has been the human race! They are unthankful for His goodness in causing nature to provide for their needs; they desecrate His property by destructive warfare, yet God silently waits. Through the ages man has rejected God's word and scorned His Prophets, yet for all this God's mercy is still extended. Truly, God is very patient in spite of the abuse and offense against Him.

It never has been the plan of the Almighty to save every individual. His proposition has always been: Obey and live, disobey and die. God wills that all should come to repentance but He knows full well they will not. From the very beginning the masses have chosen the broad road to destruction, the few the narrow way to life. God knows who will turn and truly repent, wherever they may be or whatever their present condition. He is not willing that any of these shall perish until they have had time to come to repentance. This is the class for whom Jesus prayed, those who would believe on Him through the Apostles' word (John 17:20).

The most important consideration for us is repentance. That was the main theme of Jesus and the Apostles in their ministry. If we were already in the right way there would be no need of repentance, but all are sinful by nature and need to amend their ways. Godly repentance is the greatest step we can take, but one of our common-

est errors is to think we are all right just as we are—when we are not all right.

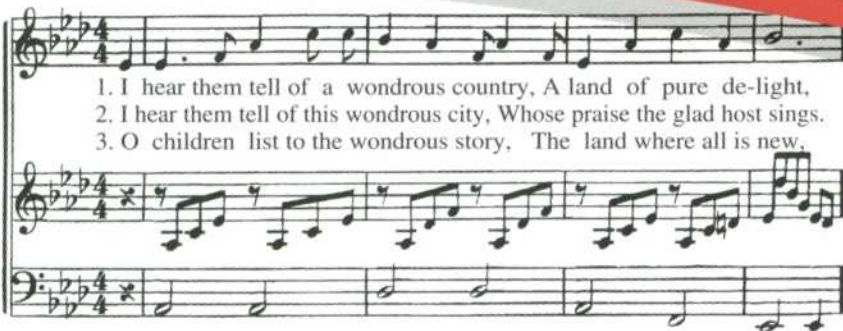
Repentance, to be of any avail, must begin with a knowledge of right and wrong. No one can deliberately go on in his wrong doing and hope to gain the favor of God on his deathbed. It is an error to believe that repentance is effectual just in the closing hours of life. Indeed, a righteous life is needful in the hour of death, but the one who has sown to the flesh during his years of health and vigor will be sadly disappointed if he thinks he can repent and reform when the shadow of death hovers over him. "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" says Paul (II Cor. 6:2), and the prophet Jeremiah cries out, "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness...Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (13:16, 23).

True godly repentance consists of amending our lives, a complete change of heart and character, and this takes time. It is to believe only what God's Word teaches on all points of doctrine and to bear the fruits of righteousness by keeping every commandment as given by the Prophets, Jesus and the Apostles. This is not a work done in a moment—under emotion or otherwise—nor is it to condemn ourselves for one transgression and then commit another equally as bad. Rather, it is a lifetime task that necessitates our serving the Lord with all our mind, might and strength. Truly penitent persons will have learned to see themselves as God sees them. They will have learned to restrain their irregular inclinations, and subdue their rebellious passions. The motives of their conduct will be purified. They will have formed themselves to that temperance which no pleasure can seduce, to that meekness which no provocation can ruffle, to that patience which no affliction can overwhelm, and to that integrity which no self-interest can bribe. In short, as Jesus commanded (Matt. 5:48), they will be perfect. □

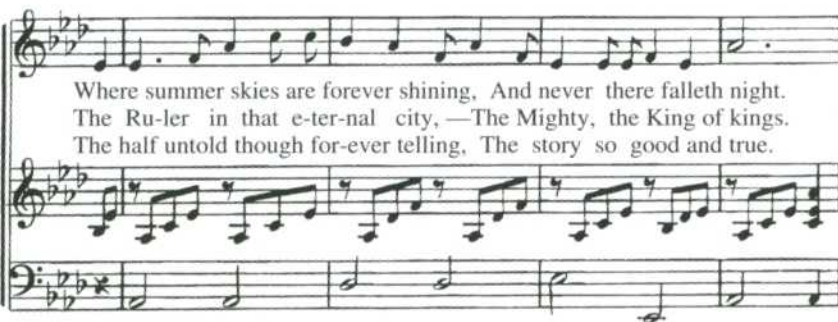
*True godly
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The Holy City,

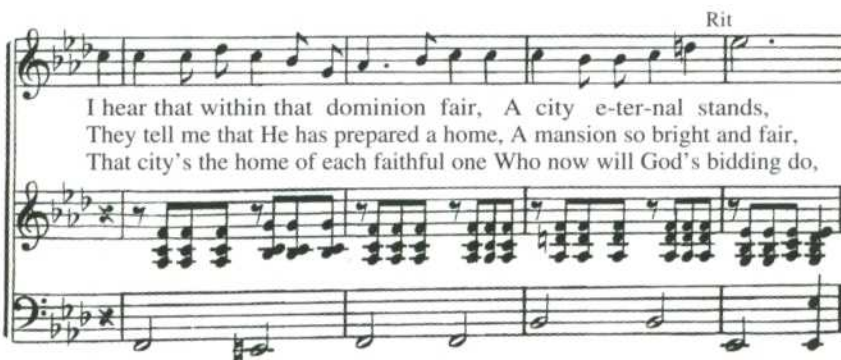
Charles H. Gabriel.



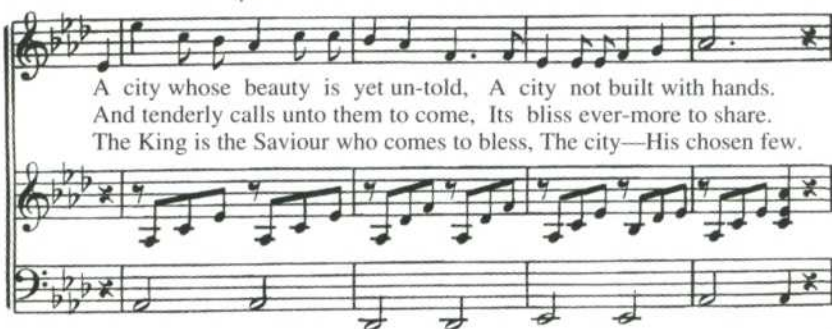
1. I hear them tell of a wondrous country, A land of pure de-light,
2. I hear them tell of this wondrous city, Whose praise the glad host sings.
3. O children list to the wondrous story, The land where all is new,



Where summer skies are forever shining, And never there falleth night.
The Ru-ler in that e-ter-nal city,—The Mighty, the King of kings.
The half untold though for-ever telling, The story so good and true.



Rit
I hear that within that dominion fair, A city e-ter-nal stands,
They tell me that He has prepared a home, A mansion so bright and fair,
That city's the home of each faithful one Who now will God's bidding do,



A city whose beauty is yet un-told, A city not built with hands.
And tenderly calls unto them to come, Its bliss ever-more to share.
The King is the Saviour who comes to bless, The city—His chosen few.

the New Jerusalem

A famous filmmaker once remarked that he wanted to produce a film "which begins with an earthquake and works up to a climax." This is precisely the picture Jesus has designed for the culmination of earth's history. As the picture is prophetically outlined in the last nine chapters of Revelation, the great King appears, His co-regents are chosen (Revelation 14), and immediately there is a great earthquake, a mighty convulsing of the world's affairs. Divine retribution must sweep clean the refuse of man's blundering and open the way for the new and better order. No human scheme can hinder the progress of the plan of God.

The pictorial language of Revelation 16 describes the cleansing process as the pouring out of different vials of the wrath of God, one after the other.

Next in the prophetic picture is the greatest cataclysm in earth's history—the fall of Babylon (Rev. 17 & 18). The universal domain of corrupt religion, corrupt politicking and corrupt merchandising collapses in a sea of tumult, and the howl ascends, "Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come" (Rev. 18:10).

Revelation 19 opens with a deafening contrast: the

sound of universal rejoicing. First is heard a vast multitude in heaven, all shouting "Alleluia," which is literally a combination of two Hebrew words, *balal* which means *to praise*, and *Jah*, which is the name of God or Jehovah. Again and again the cry is echoed, "Alleluia!" Why the joy? because the mighty stronghold of evil, the great city Babylon has been destroyed. Never again will she rise from her ruins. Never again will she hurt a single inhabitant of earth. There are shouts of praise from heaven, and shouts of praise from the earth, and shouts of praise from the throne of the new King, before whom all worship and bow down (Rev. 19:1-5)

"Then," John continues, "I heard again what sounded like the shouting of a huge crowd, or like the waves of a hundred oceans crashing on the shore, or like the mighty rolling of great thunder, 'Praise the Lord. For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns'" (v.6,

The Living Bible).

The next burst of praise is for the honor of the newly chosen bride of Christ, the wife who "hath made herself ready," who is now beautifully clad in the "fine linen, clean and white" which is "the righteousness of saints" (vs. 7-8).

It is time for the most joyful marriage ceremony ever to take place on earth: the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (v. 9).

This concluded, the Revelator follows with a brief picture of the battle of Armageddon and the King all victorious riding forth "conquering and to conquer." On His vesture is the name: "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:16). In resistance to His authority, "the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies" gather together "to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army" (Rev. 19:19). But the powers of evil are doomed before they fight: for the results of *this* battle have been predetermined.

The battle over, the next chapter (Revelation 20) opens with the dawn of the Millennium and the peaceful reign of Christ and the saints over a world subdued, a world ready to be restored, renewed and revitalized. Never in all earth's history has the prospect been more hopeful, or the route to progress more wide open. For the first time in history the execu-

**There are shouts of
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before whom all worship
and bow down
—(Rev. 19:1-5)**

“Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

—2 Peter 3:14

tors of the plan encounter *no resistance*—because the Devil is “bound,” shut up in the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:1-3).

The thousand blissful years pass quickly, and the blessed era is spent. Suddenly the forces of evil again rear their ugliness—it is their last futile fling before they are swept from the stage of action forever (Rev. 20:8-10).

One more judgment must be held, to recompense those who have lived during the Millennial age, so that each can receive according to what he has done (Rev. 20:11-14). This judgment is no small affair; for with the whole earth under the jurisdiction of the new King, there have been millions and billions of covenant-makers worldwide. Hence we read that the dead “small and great stand before God” to have their record reviewed and their deeds rewarded. Even at this point, God’s timeless principles are still in action, and all receive just “according to their works.”

Now the end has come, the glorious end for which the beginning was made. It is the end of sin, the end of evil, even the end of death. “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:14). It is the end of evil of every kind. Never again shall sin or suffering be seen on this planet; never again shall judgment be meted out, for the seven days of creation are complete, and everyone who lives is a glorious, shining, immortal being.

New Heavens and a New Earth

And yet there is more. The Revelator has one more picture—one great and glorious picture—to show us. And remember, we have now arrived at the end of the seventh day and the beginning of the glorious eternal eighth. So he continues (Revelation 21): “And I saw a new heaven, and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”

The picture is *all new*: there is “a new heaven and a new earth.” This

again confirms the time. It is the end of the Millennium, when the plan is complete, for not until then are the new heaven *and* the new earth in place. The new heaven—Christ and His co-rulers—have been in power for a thousand years. But the new populace, the new earth, has just now been completed. Only when the second judgment is past can the “new earth” be seen.

And what a sight it is, glorious beyond human imagination! “For the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.” Gone are all remnants of the old, all the sights and sounds of sin and wrong. Gone are the old rulers, and all the old remembrancers. Gone are the rebellious and stubborn, the jealous and willingly ignorant; gone, gone forever. Only the good and pure remain.

How do we know that this is the meaning of the new heaven and earth? Numbers 14:21 gives a comprehensive statement of the completed plan: “But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled the glory of the Lord.” And the prophet Habakkuk extends the promise, that the earth shall be “filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14).

God did not create our earth in vain, “He formed it to be inhabited” (Isa. 45:17-18), but not by wanton, selfish, sinful, destructive creatures. Our planet is not doomed to be perpetually under the human mismanagement that has prevailed since the dawn of history. The promise of God through Isaiah pictures the same new creation that the Revelator saw: “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy” (Isa. 65:17-18). There is no idea of a new literal heavens, or a new literal earth, but a new set of rulers and a whole new populace.

The apostle Peter spoke of these non-literal heavens and earth when he said that "the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished" (II Pet. 3:5-6). The physical earth did not perish at the time of the flood—and certainly the physical heavens did not. But the wicked people perished, the "world of the ungodly" (II Pet. 2:5). Then Peter speaks of another heavens and earth: "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (v. 7).

Then the Apostle continues in v. 13 to speak of a new heavens and a new earth: "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." The physical heavens and earth, being inanimate, could embrace neither good nor evil. Only intelligent beings can embrace righteousness. Peter is speaking of the time when Christ returns and establishes new rulers (heavens) and a new populace (earth).

Let us return to Revelation 21, where John gets his first glimpse of the Holy City: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." We know immediately from John's description that this is no ordinary city—its splendor is beyond the power of words to describe. Here before him is a representation of the glorious climax of all creation, the finished and full beauty of God's magnificent plan for the earth.

But since we have only words to convey its beauty to us, we must exhaust the possibilities of

those words to get the fullest possible meaning from this brief picture of that perfect, new creation.

A Picture to See: A City

First, John sees a "city." In Scriptural phraseology, a people and its governing body are sometimes referred to as a city. The promise to the saints in Isa. 60:14 employs this phraseology: "...all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel." Isa. 62:12 uses the same description: "And they shall be called a holy people, a people long sought, a city not forsaken" (NEB). Jesus compared His disciples to the likeness of a city set on a hill, giving light to all the world (Matt. 5:14-16).

When our Lord comes the second time He will choose Jerusalem as the capitol city of the earth. He said in Matt. 5:34-35, "Swear not by...Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King." The physical city of Jerusalem will be chosen as earth's new metropolis at the beginning of God's great renovation program. Of that time the prophet Zechariah spoke when he wrote: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee,...and the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again" (Zech. 2:10-12).

But the "city" spoken of in Revelation 22 is more than this. The prophet Isaiah says of this city: "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks" (26:1-2). Can a literal city have

walls of salvation surrounding it? Here is a city composed of faithful men and women who have proved worthy of God's great blessings.

Returning to Revelation 21, the Revelator gives us an explicit definition of this city. He tells us it is "the bride, the Lamb's wife." We read in verse 9: "And there came unto me one of the seven angels... and talked with me, saying, Come

**"Behold, the
tabernacle of God is
with men, and he
will dwell with them,
and they shall be his
people, and God him-
self shall be with
them, and be their
God." —Rev. 21:3.**

hither, and I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." And what was John shown? "And he carried me away in the spirit...and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem...coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (v. 10, 2). The faithful of the six thousand years compose the city, its walls and foundations.

A Voice to Hear

John not only sees a picture of the Holy City but at the same time hears a voice accompanying the picture. "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and

they shall be his people, and God himself [Christ, Emmanuel, "God with us" (Matt. 1:23)] shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:2-4).

Can words describe a condition more ideal, a picture

more beautiful, or a love more assuring? John hears the great voice saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men." The tabernacle was God's way, in ancient times, of dwelling among His people. And so he says that God is wanting, in a very special way, to dwell (or tabernacle) with men. And in order that there may be no mistake, the words are repeated: "And he will dwell with them." Then the other side of the proposition is expressed as a veritable climax of all hope: "And

they shall be his people." As if it were not enough for God to dwell among them, those among whom He dwells will actually belong to Him, and be "his people." And as if this were not enough, another eager repetition follows immediately, along with another affirmation of God's abundant giving of

Himself: "And God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Can't we imagine that John was by this time stunned, unable to comprehend what he was hearing? How could words be framed with more solidity or reality? Here is a picture of an association of the human with the heavenly in perfect fellowship, perfect harmony, perfect bliss. And it is an association that is gloriously permanent.

Assurance follows assurance, and promise follows promise. Through all the centuries, tears have fallen like rain. But in this holy city there are to be *no tears*. The last heartbreak has been experienced, the last tear has fallen. With tenderness surpassing that of any human touch, the Divine Voice says, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." At last the deepest longings of the heart are fulfilled. And—promise surpassing all promises—death itself is no more.

Then follows yet another climactic promise: "Behold, I make all things new." *All things always and forever new*—what promise could be more encompassing? Here is the temporariness of time turned into the everlastingness of eternity. Here is ceaseless thought luminous with immortal beauty. Here is ceaseless action coupled with heavenly meaning, and it encompasses *all things*—everywhere—*always*!

It is too much for John—he has been truly "carried away"—he has even forgotten to write it down, and must be reminded of his duty: "And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful" (v. 5). Startled from his reveries, John picks up his pen and begins once more to write. For it is all true, as true as it is tremendous. It is all "true and faithful."

While John is busily writing, the voice continues: "It is done." This is the culmination. At last the plan is complete, and all that God has promised is gloriously fulfilled.

*There's a holy and beautiful city,
Whose builder and ruler is God;
John saw it descending from heaven,
When Patmos in exile he trod,
Its high, massive wall is of Jasper,
The city itself is pure gold;
And when Christ returns in His glory,
His children its beauties behold.*

*No sin ever enters that city,
And nothing defiling nor mean;
No pain and no sickness can enter,
No death in that city is seen;
Earth's sorrows and cares are forgotten,
No tempter is there to annoy;
No parting words ever are spoken,
There's nothing to hurt nor destroy.*

*No heart-aches are known in that city,
No tears ever moisten the eye;
There's no disappointment to mar it,
No envy or strife—it must die;
Pure, faithful ones, safe with their Savior,
Their trials and battles are past;
They overcame sin like their Pattern,
They've reached that fair city at last!*

Yet Jesus has more to say: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." Early in His message Jesus had said, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last" (Rev. 1:11). Now He says it again. What does He mean? Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, Omega the last. Used in this context, Jesus is saying that He Himself is the beginning and the end, the starting point and the culmination of this new creation. The word for "beginning" does not simply mean the first in a point of time but the first in a series. And the word for "end" is *telos*, meaning the last in a series of events. Jesus is speaking of the goal, the great consummation. It is the glorious "end" for which the beginning was planned, the culmination of God's great purpose on earth, the fulfillment of all that He has promised, the same "end" Paul spoke of in I Corinthians 15 when he wrote, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign" (vs. 24-25).

And yet there is more. Even at this point of full realization of every promise of God, there is still appetite and desire and inner longing. "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Rev. 21:6). It is as if God had summoned man from the lowland and now was letting him move from peak to peak. Always and forever, even throughout eternity there will be ever greater satisfactions to seek. What is happiness, but the seeking and achieving of more—and yet more? There is always *more* life, *more* blessing, *more* delight, *more* glory to be obtained from the ever-flowing "fountain of the water of life"!

How beautiful the simile: a fountain of water, ever flowing, ever fresh, ever bubbling up and running over. To those in the East where every drop of water was precious, what picture could offer greater delight than that of a flowing fountain! It is a picture which those of us who live where we can obtain water anytime at the turn of a tap can scarcely appreciate. In the East, in the dry deserts and the hot lands, water was, and is, quite literally life. Flowing water is a fitting symbol of the abundant life God offers His people, immortal and vigorous life.

Indeed, many of the Divine promises center around the simile of water: "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters" (Rev. 7:17). Then, there is the promise of Jesus: "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). The apostle John writes of the true believer, that out of his innermost being shall flow "rivers of living water" (John 7:38). The river issuing from underneath the threshold of the new temple of Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 47), the eternal fountains and rivers of pleasures pictured by the Psalmist (Ps. 36:7-9), the pure river of the water of life (Rev. 22:1)—all are symbols of life—vital, abundant, eternal LIFE!

Promise follows promise as the Revelator writes more of what he hears: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (v. 7). "My son"—sons of God. What an endearing term! After the long years of trial and sacrifice, at this special time of belonging, some are to be joined to God in a blessed, eternal relationship: "I will be his God, and he shall be my son." What an incentive to

overcome, to endure patiently, to become pure and holy so as to be fit to be God's own sons!

A City From Heaven

Continuing in Revelation 21, we read that John saw "the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God."

**All things
always and forever
new—what promise
could be more
encompassing?**

Someone may ask, Why is this city said to come from heaven, if it is composed of the saints, when the saints are actually here on the earth and have never been away from it?

First, the city is said to come down from heaven *because the authority for its establishment comes from heaven.*

Recall the time when Jesus was questioned by the Jews as to His authority for His actions (Matt. 21:23-27). He answered by asking them a question: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" The Jews did not want to answer this question lest they incriminate themselves, but Jesus clearly inferred that it was from heaven because authorized by God.

The apostle Paul spoke of this same authority or power by which all the members of that new world will receive salvation. He wrote, "We, by contrast, are citizens of heaven, and from heaven we expect our deliverer to come, the

**The holy city,
new Jerusalem,
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God in heaven.**

Lord Jesus Christ. He will transfigure the body belonging to our humble state, and give it a form like that of his own resplendent body, by the very power which enables him to make all things subject to himself" (Phil. 3:20-21, NEB).

Second, *immortality will be brought by Christ from heaven*. When the time is right, God shall, in the words of Peter, "send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:20-21). When He comes, His reward will be with Him and His work before Him (Isa. 40:10). Jesus Himself said in His closing remarks following the great revealings of His plans: "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

At the present time our reward is "reserved" or laid up in heaven, "...ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Pet. 1:4-5).

Paul said the same in II Corinthians 5 where, speaking of the eternal inheritance, he compared it to a "building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens" (II Cor. 5:1-4). Note that he did not say it would be *eternally in the heavens* but that it was "eternal" and "in the heavens," ready to be brought with Christ when He should come and this corruptible shall put on incorruption and this mortal shall put on immortality (I Cor. 15:52-54). Speaking of this clothing with immortality Paul said, "For in this present body we do indeed groan [send forth a longing cry]; we yearn to have our heavenly habitation put on over this one"—Paul wanted to be able to *add* the garment of immortality right over the present life—he did not want to go through the death state. He said, "We do not want to have the old body stripped off. Rather our desire is to

have the new body put on over it, so that our mortal part may be absorbed into life immortal" (II Cor. 5:2-5, NEB). He knew that this was not a realistic expectation for him—his personal goal was to be counted worthy of a resurrection (Phil. 3:11). But—blessed promise!—*some* of the believers *would* put on the new immortal life right over the old life, or why would he have even mentioned this possibility?

Why is the Holy City said to come from heaven? Christ, armed with unlimited authority, comes from heaven; immortality comes from heaven; God's new order comes from heaven. And it is from heaven that the faithful bride or church received her directions on how to adorn herself with that ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price, so that she can be presented to Christ as a bride adorned for her husband.

Is it not, then, very fitting that the eternal city is said to descend from heaven?

Light for the City

Let us return again to Rev. 21:9-10, where the "city" and the "bride" are used interchangeably: "And there came unto me one of the seven angels...and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem:...and her light was like unto a stone most precious" (v. 11). Some of the definitions of "precious" are, according to the Lexicon, "dear, beloved, honourable; valuable, honored, esteemed, held in reputation."

The "light" or brilliance of this city was like unto a stone most precious—the word for "light" is variously translated as "radiance," "light," "luminary," also "star." The imagery reveals its Divine nature. What a fitting residence for God and Christ and Their people! The word *shekinah* is the Hebrew for "glory of God." The word used here to describe the Holy City is *skene*. Though it is con-

nected only in sound, one could not use one word without being reminded of the other. To say that the *skene* of God is to be with men immediately brings the thought that the *shekinah* of God is to be with men. In the tabernacle, also mentioned in this description, and later in the temple, the *shekinah* appeared as a luminous cloud which "filled all the house," as at the dedication of Solomon's Temple (II Chron. 7:1-4). How fitting in the new age that the glory of God should be abiding forever among God's people, giving them a continual Divine radiance, a continuous reminder of the permanent presence of God.

Components of the City

Let us look now at the components of the city. First, it had *walls*. The city "had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" (v. 12). The wall of the city had also "twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (v. 14). The description shows the spiritual nature of the city, and its prime components: the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Can we imagine the thrill of joy in the heart of John when he saw his own name written in the wall of the eternal city!

The city has also specific dimensions, also symbolic: "And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal" (Rev. 21:14-16). A furlong is, according to the lexicon, a "stade," or a

"race-course." Twelve thousand furlongs is about 1500 miles, or a little more than the distance from New York to Miami. And notice that the length and breadth and height of the city are equal! What crystal clear evidence that this city is symbolic. The Seventh Day Adventists, believing that a literal city will descend from heaven, have gone to great lengths to explain its physical parts, but everything about the account suggests that the narrative is symbolic. Who could imagine a city 1500 miles wide and 1500 miles high? How much more reasonable to let John tell us what this city represents, and to let the Bible define its own terms.

The city is "foursquare"—everything about it is perfect, just according to the standard Jesus set for His disciples when He said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

What about the stones adorning its walls and foundations? In the original Greek, "jasper" signifies "a perfect stone." The words in meaning and in clarity all glow with something which comes from eternity. Every stone is perfect, most precious, of highest value.

"And the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass." Gold was considered the perfect metal, the most precious metal known at the time, hence was used to symbolize perfect lives. And this particular gold has another distinguishing feature. It is like unto "clear glass," it is transparent. Here is goodness open to the inspection of God. The lives of those successful Christians who make up this city are like clear glass. There are no clouded areas of guile, deceit or hypocrisy. There is nothing hidden—because they have no evil to hide. They are frank and open, honest and aboveboard.

The next verse continues the description of these righteous ones: They are compared to the most precious of stones. The Revelator borrows the most costly, the most valued of jewels to describe their glory and worth. The foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with "all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst" (vs. 19-20). All are of the very highest quality. Why? Because they were all completely obedient, because "they followed the Lamb whithersoever" he went, because they were every one "called, and chosen, and faithful."

Next we read of the gates of this glorious city. It had "twelve gates" composed of "twelve pearls." Again, the quality is the utmost describable. And what about the street of the city? "The street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass" (v. 21). Here again, it is all pure, all holy, no evil to hide, nothing even clouded or slightly contaminated.

What the City Does NOT Have

The Revelator, having exhausted language to describe the city, now turns to describing it by what it does *not* have. This city has, first of all, *no temple*. Does this surprise us? The Revelator answers our question immediately: "For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." In this city are residents worthy of worship. For remember, at this time, "God"—Emmanuel, God with us—is dwelling with men.

(Continued on page 26)

The Inspiration of the Bible: Its Purpose

The purpose of inspiration is to impart knowledge which could not be obtained by any normal (human) means or from any human resource. We can acquire knowledge of our surroundings by the use of our five senses. We can learn how to live in this world from previous generations. But we cannot obtain knowledge of God, or His plan, or His standards, or His requirements except this knowledge be in some form revealed to us. It is not part of our natural heritage, nor do we have any inner voice of conscience to tell us what is right or wrong. Nature in all her majesty and beauty is powerless to communicate any information about her great Creator or His plan for His creation. Without the spoken or written Word we are only a beholder, an admirer of grandeur beyond our understanding, wholly ignorant of God or His magnificent designs.

The apostle Paul called this knowledge from God which is above and beyond natural human experience "spiritual": "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (I Cor. 2:13). The word "spiritual" which he used here is defined in the Greek Lexicon as, "With reference to the thoughts, opinions, precepts, maxims that emanate from God, produced solely by God." God is the only source of this knowledge, and we can obtain it only as we are able to learn from the inspired words of those He commissioned to write, whose messages have been relayed to us, whose writings were His revealed thoughts.

The apostle Paul knew that he was writing by direct Divine authority. He said: "What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (I Cor. 14:36-37).

Again he wrote, "When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God" (I Thess. 2:13). Again, "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy spirit" (I Thess. 4:8). He spoke of the knowledge "which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour" (Titus 1:3). And of the means of dispensing that knowledge he said, "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery...Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph. 3:3-5).

► *"All Scripture,
divinely inspired,
is indeed profitable
for Teaching, for
Conviction,
for Correction, for
that Discipline
which is in
Righteousness."*

—II Tim. 3:16-17,
Wilson's Emphatic
Diaglott

The Background of the Doctrine of Inspiration

The original word translated "inspire" is used in five places in Scripture (Gen. 2:7; Matt. 22:43; Mark 12:36; II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21). In Matt. 22:43, Jesus spoke of David writing Psalm 110 "inspired by the Spirit." The parallel passage in Mark 12:36 reads "inspired by the Holy Spirit." The New English Bible reads that he wrote "by inspiration."

The Bible writers were influenced and directed by God, so that the words they wrote were the words God wanted written, though they were spoken through human lips or written by humanly directed pens. Because of this fact, inspired Scripture has a double authorship, the primary author being God, who supervised and superintended each human writer.

But to what extent is Scripture inspired? Is every word and thought and letter necessarily a product of Divine revelation?

In religious circles today are two widely divergent categories of thought: 1) a belief in *partial inspiration*; i.e., that inspiration is a relative term, that Scripture upholds only a limited view of inspiration; and 2) a belief in *verbal plenary inspiration*; i.e., the belief that every thought and word of the Bible is "God-breathed" or God-inspired.

During the years since the Bible was completed, the belief in inspiration has gone through a process of evolution. The Apostles, Jesus, and those immediately following their time referred to all prophecy as a revelation from God. They demonstrated their belief in the inspired nature of the Old Testament Scriptures by quoting freely from the Old Testament. They also demonstrated that the *thought behind a passage* was more important than the precise wording of it by the fact that very often they rephrased a passage, conveying the general thought rather than quoting it

verbatim. And when they did quote directly, most frequently the New Testament writers quoted the Septuagint Translation of the Old Testament, not the original Hebrew.

As the Roman Church became more and more the custodian of the faith, adapting it to suit its own ends, both political and religious, the Church took on also the duty of being the custodian of the Scriptures, along with the total task of defining and interpreting them to the people. As civilization declined and fewer and fewer people were able to read and write, the Bible became more and more the exclusive property of the Church.

During this time, the belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures was unquestioned and unchallenged, the Bible being in the hands of those who wished to be its sole interpreters. The Church's belief in human weakness and total depravity served to strengthen its position even more. At the same time it reinforced belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures to such an extent that the independent personali-

► *Inspired Scripture has a double authorship, the primary author being God, who supervised and superintended each human writer.*

"I wish to examine how far and to what degree the Bible writers received divine help—In short, what is it exactly that we mean when we talk of the Scriptures as the Word of God?"

"The plain truth is that inspiration is a miracle. And like all miracles, there is much about it which we cannot fully understand. We must not confound it with intellectual power such as the great poets and authors possess. To talk of Shakespeare, and Milton, and Byron being inspired like Moses and Paul is to my mind almost profane."

—J. C. Ryle

ties of the writers were all but obliterated and the operation of the Holy Spirit was all in all. One Abbot went so far as to assert that the Holy Spirit even formed "the very verbal expres-

▶ *We cannot learn the knowledge of God, except this knowledge be in some form revealed to us.*

sions in the mouth of the apostles."

When the arrival of the Reformation forced the Church to relinquish its self-declared position as the sole protector of the Bible, the authority of Scripture was still accepted throughout Christendom. The Bible was revered, and the Holy Spirit was considered to be its supreme author.

But the progress of independent thought began slowly to change this, and as the doctrines and practices of the Church began to be challenged, the authority of the Bible was challenged also, along with the nature and method of inspiration, and the qualifications of the Bible writers. This trend has continued until today the Bible is recognized among many as little more than a literary classic—mainly because

they have no knowledge of its true teachings and no faith in its Author.

Plenary or Partial Inspiration?

Supporters of plenary (or complete) inspiration hold that the writers of Scripture were under the immediate influence of God to such an extent that they could not err in any point; that every statement is equally God-given, whether "religious, scientific, historical, or geographical" (Charles Hodge, *Theology*, I. 163). This viewpoint of inspiration gives solid support to the authority of the Scriptures as a guide to life, but leaves many difficulties unresolved (i.e., why New Testament writers quoting the Old Testament usually quoted the Septuagint Translation, not the original Hebrew; or why they paraphrased passages quoted; or why details of

Inspiration A Miracle

by J. C. Ryle

The extraordinary contents of the Bible are a great fact which can only be explained by admitting its inspiration....He who dares to say the Bible is not inspired, let him give a reasonable account of this fact, if he can.

"There is an extraordinary unity and harmony in the contents of the Bible which is entirely above man. We all know how difficult it is to get a story told by any three persons not living together in which there are not some contradictions and discrepancies. If the story is a long one, and involves a large quantity of particulars, unity seems almost impossible among the common run of man. But it is not so with the Bible. Here is a long Book written by not less than 30 different persons. The writers were men of every rank and class in society. One was a lawyer; one was a warlike king; one was a peaceful king; one was a herdsman; one had been brought up as a Publican; another as a physician; another as a learned Pharisee, two as fishermen, several as priests. They lived at different intervals over a space of 1500 years and the greater part of them never saw each other face to face. And yet there is a perfect harmony among all these writers. They all write as if they were under one dictation. The style and handwriting may vary, but the mind that runs through their work is always one and the same. They all tell the same story. They all give one account of man, one account of God, one account of the way of salvation, and one account of the human heart. You

see truth unfolding under their hands as you go through the volume of their writings. But you never detect any real contradiction of views.

"Let us set down this fact in our minds and ponder it well. Tell us not that this unity might be the result of chance. No one can ever believe that but a very credulous person. There is only one satisfactory account to be given of the fact before us: the Bible is not of man but of God.

"With all our boasted attainments in science and art and learning, we can produce nothing that can be compared with the Bible. Even at this very hour, in 1877, the book stands entirely alone. There are no weak points, or motes, or flaws, or blemishes. There is no mixture of infirmity and feebleness such as you will find in the works of even the best Christians. Holy, holy, holy seems written on every page. To talk of comparing the Bible with other sacred books, so-called, such as the Koran, the Shasters, or the book of the Mormons is positively absurd. You might as well compare the sun with the rushlight, or the Portland vase with a garden pot, or the Kohinoor diamond with a bit of glass. God seems to have allowed the existence of these pretended revelations in order to prove the immeasurable superiority of His own Word. To talk of the inspiration of the Bible, as only differing in degree from that of such writings as the works of Homer, Plato, Shakespeare, Dante, and Milton, is simply a piece of blasphemous folly....

parallel narratives are not always exactly parallel). Within this broad category are many degrees of interpretation, but the overall point is generally accepted, that every word and thought of Scripture is inspired.

The second theory, of partial inspiration, is the belief that the writers of Scripture enjoyed the influence of the Spirit to such an extent that the Bible contains the will and Word of God, as well as much that is human knowledge and subject to error. The problem with this view is that it leaves to human discretion the decision as to what is inspired and what is not; or what is to be accepted and believed, and what is not. This viewpoint removes a hindrance for those who would gladly believe the Bible if it were not for certain statements or demands. □

(To Be Continued Next Issue)

"To tell us that man's unassisted mind could have written the Bible is simply ridiculous. In short, the difficulties of unbelief are far greater than the difficulties of faith. No doubt, there are things hard to be understood, if we accept the Scriptures as God's Word. But after all, they are nothing compared to the hard things which rise up in our way and demand solution if we deny inspiration."

"The men who wrote the Bible had no special advantages. They lived in a remote corner of the civilized earth. They had, most of them, little leisure, few books, and no learning, such as learning is reckoned in this world. Yet the Book they composed is one that is unrivaled. There is but one way of accounting for this fact: They wrote under the direction, the direct inspiration of God.

"The plain truth is that inspiration is a miracle; and, like all miracles, there is much about it which we cannot fully understand. We must not confound it with intellectual powers such as great poets and authors possess. To talk of Shakespeare, and Milton, and Byron being inspired like Moses and Paul is to my mind almost profane. Nor must we confound it with the gifts and graces bestowed on the early Christians in the primitive church. All the Apostles were enabled to preach and work miracles, but not all were inspired to write. We must rather regard it as a special supernatural gift bestowed on about 30 people out of all mankind in order to qualify them for the special business of writing the Scriptures. I firmly believe that miracles are possible, and have been wrought; and among great miracles I place the fact that men were inspired by God to write the Bible.

"The exact manner in which the minds of the inspired writers of Scripture worked when they wrote, I do not pretend to explain. Very likely, they could not have explained it themselves. I do not admit for a moment that they were machines holding pens or like typesetters in a printing office, and did not understand what they were doing. I abhor the mechanical theory of inspiration. I dislike the idea that men like Moses and Paul were no better than

organ pipes employed by the Holy Spirit, or ignorant secretaries who wrote by dictation what they did not understand. I admit nothing of the kind. I believe that in some marvelous manner the Holy Spirit made use of the reason, memory, intellect, the style of thought, and the peculiar temperament of each writer of the Scriptures. But I can no more explain the process than I can explain how the water became wine at Cana, or how five loaves fed 5,000 men, or how a word raised Lazarus from the dead. I do not pretend to explain miracles, and I do not pretend to fully explain the miraculous gift of inspiration.

"The position I take is that while the Bible writers were not machines, as some say, they only wrote what God told them to write. The Holy Spirit put into their minds thoughts and ideas and then guided their pens in writing them. When you read the Bible, you are not reading the unaided self-taught composition of erring men like ourselves, but thoughts and words which were suggested by the Eternal God. The men who were employed to indite the Scriptures spoke not of themselves. They spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, 'For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit' (II Pet. 1:21). He that holds a Bible in his hand should know that he holds not the word of man but of God, 'For this cause also thank we God without ceasing because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe' (I Thess. 2:13)." □

(Continued from page 21)

Next the Revelator addresses the subject of *light*. Every city needs light, and its glory is often expressed in terms of the quantity and intensity of the light it radiates. Here again, this city is different. It has "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it." Why? "For the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (v. 23). This city has light from within. All its inhabitants are glowing, radiant immortal beings. They have no need of the sun, nor of the moon, because the inhabitants are each and every one a shining sun!

This was the promise to Daniel: "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:3).

The next description of the city is another negative: "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (v. 27). Here is the grandest statement that could be made about this glorious city: *that it has no evil inside, and none can enter.*

And what about the roster of this city's population? The name of every inhabitant is written in one place: "In the Lamb's book of life." Every inhabitant of this city, whether ruler or subject, is a shining immortal. We are told that the walls and foundations of the city are "the bride, the Lamb's wife." And inside the city is the populace, a multitude of happy,

young immortals, all clothed with life, all ready to enjoy the ages of eternity together. And the name of every one of them—and there are billions and billions of them!—is inscribed forever in "the Lamb's book of life." What a book! What a record! What a place to have our names written! For once our names are written there, they will be there forever. There will be no erasing a single name from that book.

The Lesson for Us

How shall we prepare to be part of this city? We must begin now by eradicating from our lives everything that defiles, for if we are not pure and holy, we shall not be part of that city. Hence our need to heed the warning of Peter, "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings"—it is no small work to lay aside all these human perversities and "as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word (I Pet. 2:1-2) that [we] may grow thereby." But it is a work that must be accomplished if we would be part of that city.

Peter also describes the stones which will be part of that city as "a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious" (I Pet. 2:4). He says further, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (v. 5).

We are called to be these living stones, disallowed indeed of men—but what difference does that make? If this world counts us of little value, what do we care, if only we can be chosen of God and precious! if only we can be part of that eternal, glorious city.

Oh, these vivid portrayals of approaching grandeur should

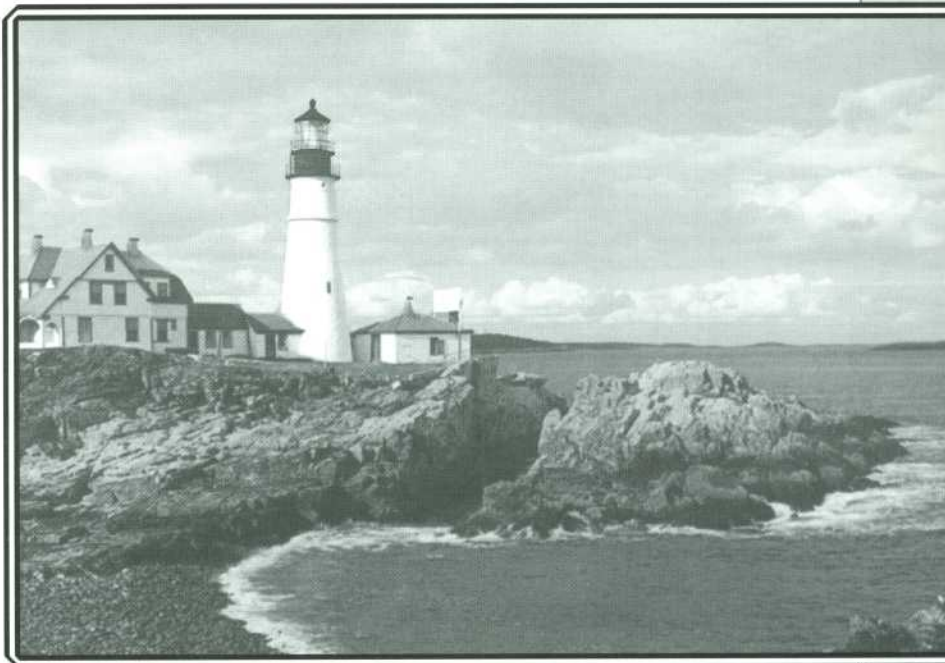
encourage us to go to work and lay aside every evil, give up our natural ambitions, set aside our miserable, selfish dispositions and take on the holy, pure, upright likeness of Christ. They should impel us to rule our tongues, to rule our whole lives, to bring ourselves into subjection to the law of Christ. What a glory to be called the city of the Lord, the Zion of the holy One of Israel! What a glory to be one of those spiritual stones, a part of the spiritual city which John saw in vision.

Our former Pastor Maud Hembree once commented about this holy city, the new Jerusalem, and all its coming glory, "I would love to be part of that heavenly city, whether a ruler or a subject, and be made equal to the angels, never to taste of death. I long to have the power to do greater works than our Master performed when upon earth. Would you not like to be able to open the eyes of the blind, cause the deaf to hear, and to heal the sick? We have the promise that we shall surely do all these things, even greater things than these shall we do, if now we make ourselves worthy of it. God grant that we may thus do." □

*God gives His
very best to those
who leave the
choice to Him.*

Piety means letting God bend your will—not just your knees.

The air from the sea of affliction is extremely beneficial to invalid Christians. Continued prosperity, like a warm atmosphere, has a tendency to unbend the sinews and soften the bones; but the cold winds of trouble make us sturdy, hardy, and well-braced in every part. Unbroken success often leads to an undervaluing of mercies, and forgetfulness of the Giver; but the withdrawal of the sunshine leads us to look for the sun.



BIGGER

Is Not Always *Better*

(Continued from page 2)

company of select individuals founded upon a great faith, having a great God behind them and a great future ahead of them. What matter if at present they be few in number?

Very related to all this is Jesus' instruction to His followers, that they be like leaven, or like salt, or like the tiny seeds of the mustard plant. True Christianity is not and never has been the majority opinion. But it represents a vitality that is mightier than size. To quote H. G. Wells, it represents "a profoundly serious minority in the mass of our generally indifferent species." Mr. Wells goes on to say that this serious minority truly is the "salt of the earth"—"people capable of devotion and of living for remote and mighty ends." And little could he grasp how mighty the end shall be, when "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isa. 52:10).

From the remnant that is nourished in the great faith, great character can be shaped and perfected.

The Bible provides many illustrations where bigger was not better. Abraham—one individual who became the father of a great nation—was assured by the angel that if even ten righteous persons could be found in Sodom, the city would be spared. Ten is no

strong majority, but it would have been enough to save the city. Jeremiah the prophet searched for a single conscientious inhabitant of Jerusalem, "One who does justice and seeks truth." He was confident that such a one could save the city. And Ezekiel saw in vision heavenly inquisitors going through Jerusalem, placing a mark on the forehead of "everyone who will sigh and cry for all the abominations that are committed in the city" (Ezek. 9:4). In each case the minority was the better part.

God is not looking for great numbers but for great character, the faithful few who provide encouragement and fresh impetus to His work in every age. We do not have to wait to be bigger. We can be better right now. We do not have to be dominant to be good. Like salt, we can be genuine and preserving. Like leaven, we can quietly change the shape of things in our own lives. Like seeds, our tiny strength can grow and multiply through the power of God. Though small, we are capable of great things—if we are on God's side.

May such be our prayer and aim. "May your constant love be with us, Lord, as we put our hope in you." Amen and amen! □

Praise All the World

All the world shall come to serve Thee,
And bless Thy glorious name,
And Thy righteousness triumphant
The islands shall acclaim.
Yea the peoples shall go seeking,
Who knew Thee not before,
And the ends of earth shall praise Thee,
And tell Thy greatness o'er.

They shall build for Thee their altars,
Their idols overthrown,
And their graven gods shall shame them
As they turn to Thee alone.
They shall worship Thee at sunrise
And feel Thy kingdom's might
And impart Thy understanding,
To those astray in night.

With the coming of Thy kingdom
The hills will shout with song,
And the islands laugh exultant,
That they to God belong.
And through all Thy congregations,
So loud Thy praise shall ring,
That the utmost peoples, hearing,
Shall hail Thee crowned King.