

The background of the cover is a photograph of a stone bridge spanning a river in a lush, green forest. The bridge is made of large, rectangular stone blocks and has a simple, sturdy design. The river flows beneath the bridge, and the surrounding area is covered in dense vegetation, including trees and bushes. The entire scene is framed by a thin yellow circular line.

# *Megiddo Message*

*Dwell  
Deep*

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# What Happened?

*Is the good seed of the Kingdom bearing a maximum of perfect fruit in our hearts, changing our lives for now and for eternity?*

**W**hat happened to the seed of faith that was planted in your heart? Is it bringing forth a hundredfold of righteousness? or sixtyfold? fortyfold? even twentyfold—or has it all but disappeared?

Many of our Lord's parables were left to be interpreted by any who had seeing eyes and hearing ears and a measure of spiritual depth. But the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23) was different. After He spoke this parable, Jesus explained it in detail for all who down through the ages might want to know its meaning.

In this graphic little story, our Lord tells of the dangers that beset all in whom the seed of the Gospel takes root—including the attacks of adversaries, and various kinds of erosion of faith; also the blessings that proceed from the believing, responsive heart.

The seed is, as He clearly explained, the Word of God, and the four different kinds of ground in which it takes root are the hearts and minds of those who listen to and accept the Gospel.

This parable, like the rest of the Bible, teaches that we are individually responsible for our own destiny. The growth of the seed in our hearts is our personal responsibility. We may accept or reject what God has provided.

## **Different Soils, Different Responses**

What are the different responses, as Jesus pictured them?

**The hard ground.** Some who hear the Word of God are spiritually obtuse, not through ignorance but through a willful indifference to the good news. Such are untouched by the Word, and the seed blows away, leaving the heart hard and barren as it was before.

The apostle Paul describes the hardened heart, and offers an explanation: "And if indeed our gospel be found veiled, the only people who find it so are those on the way to perdition. Their unbelieving minds are so blinded by the god of this passing age, that the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the very image of

God, cannot dawn upon them and bring them light" (II Cor. 4:3-4, NEB).

This condition is unrelated to intelligence. The unintelligent and unsophisticated can grasp spiritual truth and accept it, and the wise and prudent of this world can be spiritually blind. God is not looking for intellect but for heart willingness and heart honesty.

Thank God for the fact that the good seed cannot be snatched away from the humbled, softened heart!

**The rocky soil.** The rocky soil represents the heart which weighs the benefits of the goodness and mercy of God against the temporary discomfort of becoming an alien in an hostile world, against the demands of the Christian life, and the suffering that it may entail, and after the weighing turns back to the world. In such a heart the seed cannot grow. It has no soil, no moisture, no warm and welcome lodging.

The apostle Paul, after suffering untold trials, persecutions and personal loss, evaluated the idea in these words: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

God never promised His children freedom from trouble, only the strength to bear it. He never promised freedom from persecution, only the power to endure. In fact, Scripture says that all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (II Tim. 3:12). But God will not allow anything to keep the seed from growing in the heart which is eager to receive the seed and has properly prepared its soil. This is the problem with the rocky soil: it is hardened against the Word of life, and not open to deep and vivid impression.

Jesus, speaking of the one whose heart is like rocky soil, said, "When tribulation or persecution rises on account of the word, immediately he falls away" (Matt. 13:21). The true believer needs depth of soil, strength to withstand tribulation, the ability to "take it."

*(Continued on page 27)*

## 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."

## In this issue ...

### Editorial

WHAT HAPPENED? .....2

### Article

DWELL DEEP! .....4

*Outward forms of religion need deep spiritual meaning.*

### Sermon

BURNED BRIDGES.....6

### Questions and Answers

WHO IS OUR SAVIOUR?.....12

*The Righteous to Become Angels?*

### Highlights

THE GAMBLING TRAP .....14

*America's self-exploiting pastime*

### Article

GOOD...ON THE WHOLE.....19

*(but not good enough!)*

### Book Feature

THE KNOWN BIBLE AND ITS DEFENSE *Section 3, Part 1* .....20

*CRITICISM AND HIGHER CRITICISM*

*Defining Our Terms...*

*Bible Criticism: Lower and Higher*

*Bible Criticism: Good or Bad?*

*The Bible Is Different*

*Critics Must Have Limits*

*One Purpose: Salvation*

### Nature Feature

SEEDS: MINIATURES OF LIFE.....24

*Lines to Live By* .....27

### Back Cover

WHO ARE THESE? .....28

*Cover photo:* Taken at Enfield or Robert Tremont Park, Ithaca, New York, by David and Marie Sutton.

# Megiddo Message

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# Dwell Deep!

**I**n this day of extreme spiritual shallowness and petty absorptions, two words from the prophet Jeremiah ring with Divine authority from the ages past: *"Dwell deep."* Spoken at the time of Edom's calamity, their message could hardly be more appropriate than to us today: *"Dwell deep...saith the Lord"* (Jer. 49:30).

We need the warning, perhaps even more urgently than the people of Jeremiah's day needed it. For the enemies which threaten us are fiercer than the armies of the king of Babylon. Enemies of confusion, perplexity, uncertainty, materialism and immorality challenge us on every side. There is only one sure refuge, and that is in obedience to the command of Jehovah: *"Dwell deep."*

In every area of life is so much shallowness—shallow thinking, shallow talking, shallow teaching. Deeper issues are set aside, and the multitude choose to forget them. Public views on spiritual issues of morality, honesty, uprightness and basic philosophies of life are sinking more and more to the lowest common denominator. Publicly acceptable modes of pleasure-seeking, speech, conduct and dress all evade the depths of purity and principle. Unless we, as professing Christians in the midst of such shallowness, give diligent heed to the word of the Lord and *"dwell deep,"* we shall find ourselves accepting to some extent their shallow ways.

Superficial religion is not enough. To meet and greet our Christian friends with a pleasant smile and a friendly word is not enough. To have a form of religion which holds us to a set pattern of religious pieties is not enough. To conform to outward aspects of our religious disciplines and serve with apparent reverence for God is not enough. To confess belief in the faith of the worthies of old is not enough. Our friendships must be founded in sincere brotherly concern for those of the household of faith, undergirded by an unshakable friendship with God. Outward forms of religion must have deep spiritual meaning that influences our every thought and word and deed through every waking moment of our lives. Our religious piety and our feeling of reverence for God must be soul-stirring and heart-rending. Our confidence in the faith of the worthies of old must be a living, growing, activating force deep within a heart filled with living faith. That which is outward, that which is formal, that which is traditional is not enough. We must dwell deep.

There is no such thing as genuine Christian faith except as it is rooted deep in genuine spiritual insight. We must feel and know the reality of Him in whom we place our confidence. We must have an overarching appreciation for the message of Him who has called us out of darkness into marvelous spiritual light and has permitted us a glimpse into His plans. To sustain a living, working faith, we must feel an unwavering devotion to the cause of Omnipotence. We must perceive to the limit of our limited perception the infinity of His wisdom. We must dwell deep. Only then can we exclaim with the apostle Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33).

Along with our spiritual insight we need a deeper sense of the reality and seriousness of sin. Never must we forget that the God we serve is of too pure eyes to behold iniquity—the world's iniquity, your iniquity, my iniquity—with any degree of tolerance. Sin, any sin, small or great, is nothing less than sin. Sin, any sin, is exceeding sinful. And before we can hope to know the magnitude of God's goodness in the future, we must learn to see sin as God sees it and eradicate every trace of it from our lives. Obvious sins—of dishonesty, drunkenness, revelry, fornication and deceit—may appall us. But let

us "dwell deep" and be sure there is not even *a trace* of these in our hearts. God does not classify sins as small, medium and large. He hates *all* forms of *all* sins; and we must learn to feel that same abhorrence in the depths of our being.

Effective faith must dwell deep if it is to survive in this day of shallowness. We must be able to recognize what is genuinely important and avoid confusing it with what is plausible but only secondary.

Our preoccupation with religious forms and phrases must be deepened into a firm and ordered understanding of the realities of life and death which are before us. We must take all the insights we have gained and use them to fashion the type of life and character that will endure unto the end. We must "*dwell deep*." Only so can we realistically look forward to a place in God's eternal scheme of things and have the strength to withstand all the shocks and frustrations that lie between, "*and having done all, to stand* " (Eph. 6:13). □

*Genuine Christian faith is rooted deep in knowledge, insight, and faith.*

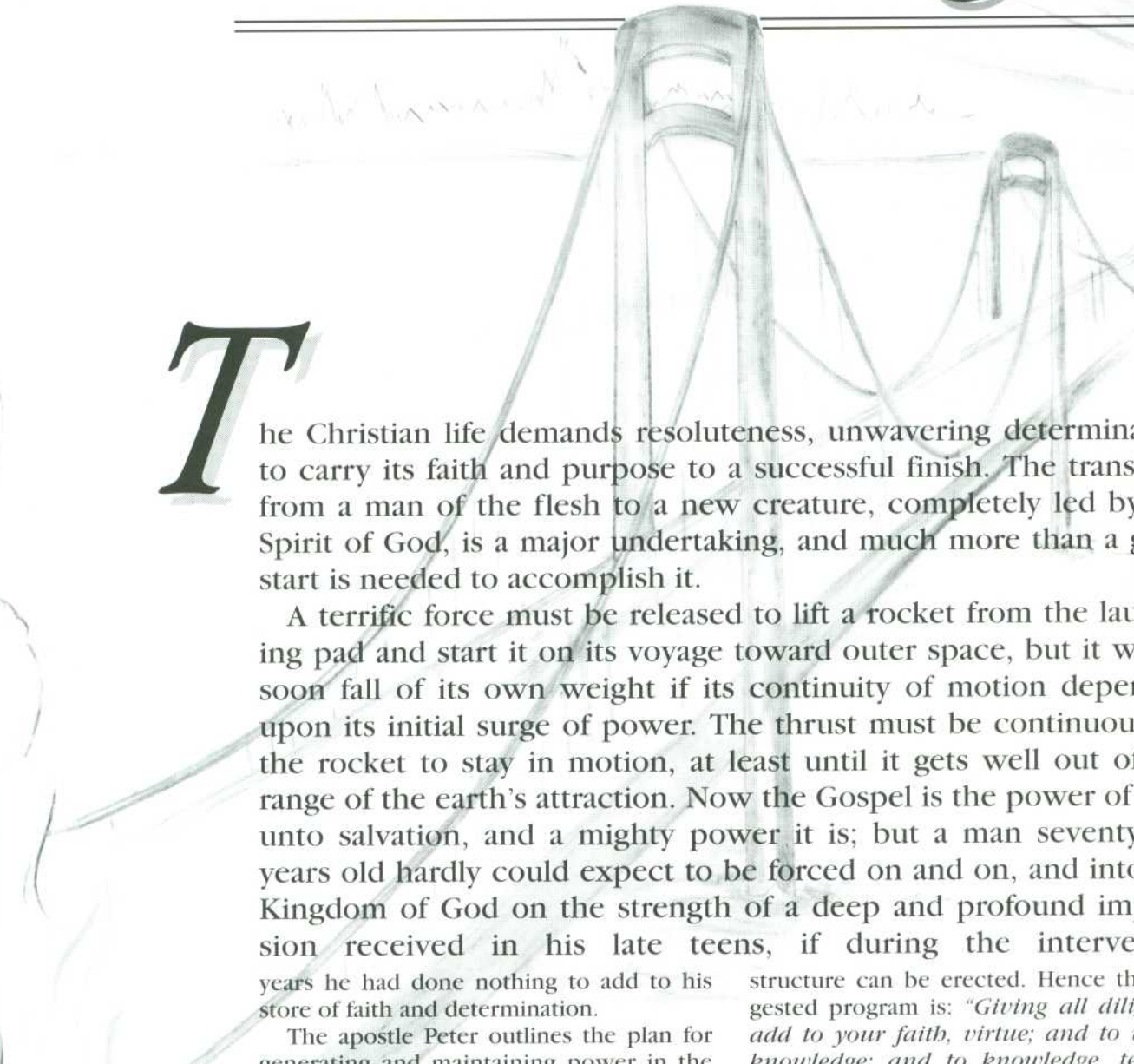
*Dwell deep! The little things that chafe and fret,  
O waste not golden hours to give them heed!  
The slight, the thoughtless wrong, do thou forget,  
Forget thyself in serving others' need.  
Thy faith in God through ev'ry hour still keep—  
Dwell deep, my soul, dwell deep.*

*Dwell deep! Forego the pleasure if it lead  
Away from God; oh, consecrate each thought;  
Believe in Him who givest everything,  
And trust that all to wisest end is wrought;  
Be pure and true, let God thy record keep:  
Dwell deep, my soul, dwell deep.*

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# *Burned Bridges*

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**T**he Christian life demands resoluteness, unwavering determination to carry its faith and purpose to a successful finish. The transition from a man of the flesh to a new creature, completely led by the Spirit of God, is a major undertaking, and much more than a good start is needed to accomplish it.

A terrific force must be released to lift a rocket from the launching pad and start it on its voyage toward outer space, but it would soon fall of its own weight if its continuity of motion depended upon its initial surge of power. The thrust must be continuous for the rocket to stay in motion, at least until it gets well out of the range of the earth's attraction. Now the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and a mighty power it is; but a man seventy-five years old hardly could expect to be forced on and on, and into the Kingdom of God on the strength of a deep and profound impression received in his late teens, if during the intervening years he had done nothing to add to his store of faith and determination.

The apostle Peter outlines the plan for generating and maintaining power in the Divine life. It comes by adding all the Christian graces. Knowledge comes near the head of the list, and it is proper that it should. Knowledge forms the groundwork, the foundation upon which the spiritual

structure can be erected. Hence the suggested program is: *"Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall*

*neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (II Pet. 1:5-8).

Naturally, we are unstable, "double minded," inclined to halt between two opinions; we try to serve God and mammon at the same time. One moment we may be full of faith; and the next, doubt and uncertainty may fill our being. For this reason we must set to the task that we have chosen for ourselves with all the vigor of our body and mind. We must so build ourselves up that we can say with Isaiah: "I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed" (50:7).

One of the safety measures we could employ to advantage is to burn all bridges behind us as we progress. Once we make the decision to work for eternal life, we should sense the need to draft into service all possible assistance. Let us assure ourselves that the journey will not be easy. The way is long, the terrain rough, and the road always ascending, but the reward more than justifies the effort. But the flush of enthusiasm which accompanied our initial decision to enter the race may not always remain constant, and we should prepare for such an eventuality. There are bound to be times when the shadows cross our way. But this precaution to burn all the bridges behind us is a step that can be taken when our spirituality is at high tide. This will make backtracking the more difficult. Military commanders often have made use of this safeguard. It makes retreat the more hazardous, and at the same time harder for the enemy to steal up behind and attack from the rear.

Burned bridges can also be of two-fold advantage to the Christian. It is a safeguard against returning to old habits and sins, and a definite break with his past renders it more difficult for the old sins to fasten themselves on him again. But for one to break off an old sin reluctantly, or only halfheartedly, with the mental reservation that should the sacrifice prove too great, or the price of self-abnegation too high, he would take it up again at a later time, certainly is not burning the bridge behind him.

Too often we have done just this.

A man once said a good way to amputate a dog's tail is to cut it off a little at a time. It would hurt the dog less than to remove it with one quick stroke of the knife. But the folly of such reasoning is too apparent to delude an intelligent being. And delayed action in the work of banishing the evils from our souls is just as foolish. The Christian's life is a growth. The work of forming a character is a process which takes time; but why prolong the task by returning again and again to the old flesh pots, disregarding the Divine injunction: "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away" (Prov. 4:14-15).

When the children of Israel departed from Egypt they thought they had burned their bridges, and rejoiced to think that never again should they have to see their Egyptian taskmasters. After their miraculous Red Sea crossing, they joined with Miriam in a song of exultation for their deliverance: "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea" (Ex. 15:21). Yet they had not burned their bridges at all, and in less than a week were murmuring because the water was bitter, and before a year had passed, they were ready to make themselves a captain and return to Egypt. And too often this has been the case with us. As the glories of eternal bliss have been pictured, many times we have felt the surge of determination forcing us onward and upward, yet in the humdrum of ordinary days, or when in sin's bewitching thrall, we have allowed our zeal to flag and failed to maintain the spiritual glow.

The sinner in Jesus' Parable (Matt. 12:43-45), who in an attempt to reform his life separated himself from his former associates, made a good start but failed to burn his bridges completely. Upon returning to his old abode, he found it swept and in order. But feeling uneasy in such a wholesome atmosphere, he

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*We must set to the  
task we have chosen  
with all the vigor of our  
body and mind.*

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resumed his degenerate life, going into evil deeper than before; and so the *"last state of that man was worse than the first."* *"Evil communications"* always *"corrupt good manners."* Our only safe course is to follow strictly the advice of the wise author of the book of Proverbs: *"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not"* (Prov. 1:10).

The apostle Paul showed that he had burned his bridges when he said: *"This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 3:13). When the light, shining above the noonday sun, struck him to the ground, he *"conferred not with flesh and blood"* but was immediately obedient to the heavenly vision. He severed every connection with his past. He forgot and banished completely from his mind the aspirations that he had cherished as a young Pharisee. In his preaching, he held

his natural tendencies to please men in abeyance, for he knew if he pleased men he could not be the servant of God.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews might be called a page from the Almighty's Honor Roll, bearing the names of some of earth's most illustrious sons and

daughters, men and women who were destined to fill places of honor in God's new order. And one of the qualities that placed their names there was that during their lifetime they burned all their bridges, and they did it voluntarily. We read: *"If they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned."* But they avowed they desired a *"better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city"* (Heb. 11:15-16). They sought a heavenly city, and in doing so, preserved no link with their former life.

Lot's wife is the classic example of those who fail to burn their bridges, and

the dire consequences of such a failure. The angel of the Lord hurried Lot, his wife and two daughters, away from Sodom and Gomorrah before the fire of God's judgments descended upon those wicked cities of the plain and destroyed them. The angel straightly charged them: *"Escape for thy life; look not behind thee"* (Gen. 19:17). Lot's wife started as commanded, but the sympathetic cord was not completely severed. The welfare of her sons-in-law left behind in the doomed city seemed more important to her than obeying the voice of the Lord. She looked back, and lost her life.

Let us never forget Jesus' warning: *"Remember Lot's wife"* (Luke 17:32).

During the early days of labor unionism a workman in a plant who refused to join the union was derogatively styled a "scab." The union's explanation of the origin of the "scab" ran something like this: "After the Lord had finished making the snake, the lizard, and the bedbug, He had a little material left over, and from it He made the 'scab.'" No one believed this, of course; however the Lord's classification of the turncoat, the backtracker, the one who fails to burn his bridges and keep them burned, is not very flattering.

Speaking through Peter He says: *"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire"* (II Pet. 2:20-22). To extract the maximum personal lesson from Peter's words, let us alter slightly the wording so it will read: *"For if after we have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with us than the beginning. For it had been better for us not to have known the*

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way of righteousness, than, after *we* have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto *us*. But it is happened unto *us* according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

The thought of a dog turning back to what he had vomited nauseates us; it is disgusting in the extreme, but it expresses the way that we, ourselves, look to the Almighty if we return to a corroding evil after we have learned better than to yield to its influence. God loves purity. He wants those who practice self-control, men and women who can live above the petty demands of the flesh. He wants people who, like Himself, possess breadth and depth. He appreciates those who aspire to true greatness, who have an enlightened sense of values, who burn all the bridges behind them as they march toward the Kingdom.

The one who starts in the way of righteousness but fails to burn his bridges, and later returns to his old ways, is like the sow that was washed and returns to her wallowing in the mire. This one gives up many things which the law of God forbids; at the beginning of his spiritual life he makes phenomenal progress in overcoming the evils of his nature; he frees himself from many of the defiling evils that formerly held him a slave, but he doesn't keep at it; he lacks stability. Giving up the fight, he goes backward, and not forward.

### Degrees of Backsliding

External appearances can be deceiving. Some people can disguise their attitude more easily than others. Demas openly forsook Paul because he loved this present world. Solomon admitted that he had degenerated into an "old and foolish king who would no longer be admonished." But all

backsliders are not so frank about their attitude. Jesus spoke of the evil servants who were saying in their hearts, "*My lord delayeth his coming*," and who were beginning to eat and drink with the drunken. If we allow our minds to waver, or allow the slightest degree of doubt to exist in our hearts as to the certainty of Christ's coming, we have not burned our bridges, and may, in the hour of trial, decide to return to our old life where we will not have to be so different from the world, where we will not need to be so careful about what we say or do, or of what we read, or of our attitude toward others; and where we will not have so many sacrifices to make. But each such surrender detracts from our spiritual stamina, and lowers us in the esteem of Almighty God. Our bridges were not burned, in accepting the narrow way we made some provision for the flesh.

Jesus said, "*No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God*" (Luke 9:62). It shows that we lack stability; we do not have the quality to succeed. We may be able to sail the calm waters, but will our ship stand up against the fifty-foot waves in the storm on the high seas? It is not the gala launching with the bands playing and the throngs cheering that tests the strength of the ship. It is her stability in the storm that determines her sea-worthiness. Likewise, it is not the start in the Christian race that singles out the winner, but the faith and endurance to keep going on and on over the long stretches of the track, that determines who will be the winner. "*If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small*," said a spokesman for the Eternal (Prov. 24:10).

### Holding Out to the End

Someone once asked our former pastor, Rev. Maud Hembree, how she knew she would always hold out to the end. She answered there was no way of actually knowing, but that it was her determination to hold out whatever might come. Even after our bridges are burned, it is always possible to rebuild them again. It is a thing that we are sternly forbidden to do, yet the natural mind will do it unless prevented from doing it by an iron will. Paul said, "*If I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor*" (Gal. 2:18). We should do everything within

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*We should do everything  
within our power to build  
spiritual strength.*

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our power to build spiritual strength. We should think faith, talk faith, act faith. We should read the things that will build up our faith, and read nothing that will tear it down. One must first be persuaded in his own mind before he can persuade others, therefore the faith-building steps must first be taken in our own minds. To accomplish this, let us count and recount the evidence. Let us go over again and again the things which God has foretold, and which have been fulfilled or are being fulfilled.

*Think faith...* We should go over in our minds the short term prophecies that were fulfilled during Bible times, also the longer range prophecies which are projected in the Bible, and their fulfillment related in the Bible or upon the pages of history; and that will build our faith to believe that the still longer range prophecies will likewise meet their fulfillment. Among the short range prophecies

that were fulfilled, there was the prophecy of a flood, foretold 120 years in advance; the departing of the Children of Israel from Egypt, foretold some five hundred years in advance; the prophecy of the termination of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, a century or more before their termination, the foretelling of the seventy years of captivity before that captivity began; the rise and fall of four world empires when only the first of these was in existence.

Daniel foretold the birth of Christ more than 483 years before He was born, also Christ's death at the hands of the wicked Jews. Jesus foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish people among all nations thirty seven or more years before it happened. Paul foretold the development of the "man of sin," and that mankind would be completely turned away from the truth to fables when that dreadful power was only in its infancy. The

Prophet Daniel had already foretold this.

Then among the longer range prophecies that we should canvass in our minds is the prophecy of Moses regarding the curses that should come upon Israel if they persisted in their rebellion, even pin-pointing it with the prophecy that the mothers would eat their own children in the dire circumstances they would be reduced

to, and that they would be sold into slavery in such numbers that the slave-market would be glutted, with no one to buy them. (We read this in Deuteronomy 28). These two prophecies were fulfilled most accurately.

Daniel prophesied of a long night of darkness; of the river of time with only the angel guarding the precious water of life, of the wonder on this side of that period of time who should arise and re-light the lamp of true religion; of the great upsurge of knowledge in the world in these last days. There is the prophecy

regarding the great advance in the war-making potential of the nations of the earth, that they would be crying peace and safety, and at the same time be preparing for war at a gigantic rate. Both of these forecasts have been fulfilled in recent years.

Taking notice of these fulfillments cannot fail to re-assure us that the yet unfulfilled long-range prophecies will most certainly meet their fulfillment. The forecast by the angels at the time of Jesus' ascension, "*This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven,*" (Acts 1:11) will literally meet its fulfillment. He *will* come again; He will come with power and dominion; He will come as Judge, Conqueror and King. Yes, and Christ will bring us our reward.

Then we should remind ourselves that, in keeping with the Divine declaration, we who have promised to serve God will have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ to answer for the things done in the body whether good or bad. If, like the washed sow, we return to our wallowing in the mire, we then shall try in vain to explain why we lacked faith and rebuilt our bridges after we had burned them. We shall try in vain to tell why we grew weary in well doing with such a measureless prize at stake. No, we shall have no logical explanation to offer for our misconduct. Like the man in Jesus' parable, we shall be "*speechless.*" We shall see our mistake when too late. This is the type of thinking we must promote if we would have the strength of faith to carry us through to the very end of our journey.

***Then we must talk faith.*** We should not let even a shadow of doubt appear in our conversation with others. It will do them harm as well as ourselves. Let us be convinced of the truthfulness of our hope. Even though we have waited long, let us say with Job: "*I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth*" (Job 19:25).

Let us say with Moses, speaking for the Eternal: "*All the earth shall be filled with my glory*"; or with the Psalmist, again

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***W***hile we can never get completely away from the pull of the earthly during our mortal life, the closer we get to God, the less we will feel the pull of the earth.

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speaking for God: though the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing, yet will *"I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion"*; or with Isaiah: *"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint"*; or with Enoch: *"The Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints"*; or with Malachi, *"Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings"*; with Jesus: *"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly [I] find you sleeping"*; (Mark 13:35-36), or with Paul: *"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day"* (II Tim. 1:12).

Let us say with the author of the book of Hebrews: *"For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry"*; or with Peter: *"Nevertheless the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night,"* and keep urging ourselves on to be ready for it when it arrives. Brethren, the Day of the Lord will come. The fact that it has not come yet is no sign that it is not coming. That Day will come, and let us busy ourselves getting ready for it. So let us act faith; let us show by our everyday walk that we are going to hold on steadfast until it comes.

**Then we must act according to our faith.** Our decision must be backed by determination. In the Sixth Century a missionary named Columba set out to evangelize northern Scotland. The adventure, because of the ferocious Picts who lived there, was dangerous. Columba and twelve men sailed to the nearby island of Iona. The first thing they did was to bury their

boat. Those men heaping rocks and stones on their boat, were burying their fear, and building a monument to faith. It shows their wryly realistic appraisal of their own weakness. At the same time it shows their resolute faith in God's power. Trust themselves with a seaworthy boat? They knew that so long as there was a way out, they might sometime be just weak enough to take it. They *knew* their fears. But they were not content with them. They took the decisive step to outwit anxiety. They burned their bridges behind them.

Paul kept his faith in lively exercise. He was thrilled and inspired by his sublime hope. We hear him saying: *"Wherever I go, thank God, he makes my life a constant pageant of triumph in Christ, diffusing the perfume of his knowledge everywhere by me. I live for God"* (II Cor. 2:14, Moff.). Even though for the time he knew that he had not yet apprehended, he had not yet fitted himself to capture the prize of immortal life, yet he left no place in his life for doubt or indecision. He didn't say to himself: *"O I know I can never make it. It just isn't in me to keep every commandment of God. I know I cannot do the whole work."* No, indeed, such faith destroying thoughts found no place in Paul's determined mind.

Paul knew what he wanted, and he knew how to get it, and he was not reluctant to make his determination known. He asks: *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter: Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."* Then he spoke forth his determination: *"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities,*

*nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 8:35-39).

Our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, gave the proper formula for burning our bridges in his "Letter to All the Churches," written February 1894. He said:

"What a rich boon the All-Wise, Omnipotent God has held forth as an inducement for us to faithfully serve and obey Him! And then to think, all we do, every good deed, will be set down to our account—we the ones to reap the benefit of our service; also to think the benefit will be unending in its duration, far above all we can ask or think in its wonderful volume of glory, joy and light! This thought should cause every nerve to spring into action, with a determination to completely render our bodies and minds a living sacrifice. This work can be done, but not by half-way workers; it will be absolutely necessary for us to throw our entire being into the work, without any reserve, in order for us to be successful in accomplishing this grand and noble work which alone can yield us life, glory and happiness in the good time to come.

"There is immediate need for everyone to be aroused and enter into a more critical examination of self, so that the weights can be discerned in order to lay them all aside. Yes, dearly beloved brethren, in the fear of Jehovah and a love of future life and glory, let us lay aside every weight."

**W**e can draw a further lesson from the satellite launching rocket which we mentioned at the beginning of our sermon. It takes a tremendous thrust to start the rocket rising from the launching pad. This first rocket engine drives the rocket some ten miles above the earth. Rocket No. 1, then  
(Continued on page 19)

## Who Is Our Saviour?

**Q** "Regarding our strong faith in our great Creator, I have a second thought on the text, 'beside him there is no saviour' (Isa. 43:11). This text provokes much controversy, in view of the fact that God's Son is also called 'our Saviour.' Realizing that there is more to this subject than appears on the surface, I would like to ask the Church for a safe approach to Scriptural understanding. May I hear from you in this matter?"

**A** You are correct in observing that the Scriptures state two facts which on the surface appear contradictory. The first of these is that God is the one and only Saviour. The second is that Jesus Christ His Son is also our Saviour.

The term saviour as used in either application is, "one who saves, preserves, delivers, restores, rescues, heals." All of these abilities clearly belong to God. He is truly the unchallenged and supreme Saviour, Deliverer, Preserver, Rescuer, Healer.

Now what about the role of Jesus Christ?

Jesus was the Son of God, and was commissioned to implement the Father's plan, to accomplish His work. "I must work the works of him that sent me," He said (John 9:4). Again, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). Again, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me...I do always those things that please him" (John 5:30; 8:29). In all He did He was doing God's work, and in such a capacity isn't it appropriate that He share the titles given to His Father?

At the end of His ministry Jesus

said to His disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," and He proceeded to commission His Apostles to teach in His name (Matt. 28:18-20).

When Jesus sent out the seventy, He spoke again of His Divine commission: "All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him" (Luke 10:22).

Again Jesus spoke of His commission when he said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do:...For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father...For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man" (John 5:19-23, 26-27). This passage shows clearly the Father's commission to the Son, and that Jesus' work was Divinely ordained. Under this commission He received power to raise the dead, to judge men, to receive honor from men, and to give life. Is it, then, beyond conception that He is also acting in the role of Saviour?

The word Saviour occurs 37 times in our King James Version. Seventeen of these refer distinctly to God, and seventeen refer distinctly to Christ as the Saviour. Twice the "saviour" is

unnamed (II Kings 13:5; Isa. 19:20), being one who brought needed deliverance. On one occasion the deliverer is clearly an angel (Isa. 63:8-9).

In the work with Planet Earth, a number of assignments seem to be shared between God and Christ; God being the initiator, and Christ the One who implements the plan. For example, we read that God is called the King of the earth: "But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king" (Jer. 10:10). When the new government is set up, Jesus Christ will be the world-wide King. "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth"; "A King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth" (Zech. 14:9; Jer. 23:5). Jesus was clearly prophesied to be the future King, according to the word of the angels before His birth (Luke 1:32-33).

Even the role of God in relation to the earth is shared between the Father and the Son. Jesus, before He was born, was prophesied to come as "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23). The same is said about Jesus in His picture of the New World, given to John in Revelation 21:3-4, when "the tabernacle of God" shall be with men, and "he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3-4). Here is Jesus again as "Emmanuel, God with us." It is Jesus acting in God's behalf, fulfilling the plan of God.

When Christ is declared to be Saviour, He is Saviour in the same sense that God is Saviour, supreme Rescuer and Deliverer. And when Christ fulfills the plan of God and brings deliverance to God's people, God will still

be the Saviour "through Jesus Christ." The work will be His, the salvation His, though the Agent be Christ. And Christ, being Divinely deputed, has authority to act in His own right. Hence, He can do the work of God as God's personal appointee. In this way He becomes God's means of being the one and only Saviour. We have no other source of salvation, no other rescuer, no other protector or deliverer. Our only help and hope is in God.

One passage which often raises question is found in Titus 2:13, where Paul speaks of the return of Christ. He says, "Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Some have taken this passage as evidence that the "great God" and "our Saviour Jesus Christ" are one and the same. However, if we look more closely at the passage, we can see that such is not Paul's thought at all. The wording in the Revised Standard Version is clearer: "Awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." The New English Bible reads: "Looking forward to the happy fulfillment of our hopes when the splendor of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus appears." Paul is not saying that the great God and Jesus the Saviour will appear as one Being. He is saying that the *splendor* of the great God will accompany the appearance of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Jesus will come "in the glory of his Father with his angels" (Matt. 16:27). There is no evidence that the great God is the same being as "our Saviour Jesus Christ."

#### The Righteous to Become Angels?

**Q** "Do you believe after Christ returns the righteous will become angels?"

**A** Our best source of information to answer this question is Jesus. Talking with the Sadducees about the resurrection, He explained also the state of those whose lives are made perpetual. We read: "They

*which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, . . . neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection*" (Luke 20:35-36). "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world" are surely the righteous ones, those whom God accepts and upon whom He bestows His eternal blessings. And Jesus says that these are to be "equal unto the angels." This text indicates a state of immortality, a higher level of existence than we now experience.

The apostle Paul said that "Flesh and blood" cannot "inherit the kingdom of God," indicating that a physical change must take place in those whose lives are perpetuated. This physical change, we believe, is the change which the angels have already experienced. Paul spoke of it also as a change from corruptibility to incorruptibility, "that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (I Cor. 15:50-54; II Cor. 5:4). He spoke again of Jesus Christ returning, who shall "change our vile [corruptible, mortal] body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body"—another description of the change to a higher level of life (Phil. 3:20-21).

Jesus described the righteous as "shining," and the shining is indicative of the state of the angels. He said, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43). Here again is pictured immortal glory such as the angels know.

Many times in the Bible we read of the luminescent quality of immortal beings. Jesus appearing to Paul on the Damascus road struck him blind with the dazzling light of His countenance (Acts 9). The angels who were watching the empty tomb the morning of Jesus' resurrection were described as being clothed in "shining garments," or having a "bright countenance." And the promise is, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament" (Dan. 12:3).

The answer to your question is yes, we do believe the righteous will be made like the angels. This is the promised reward, the compensation for a life of faithful service which God has promised. Though we are not directly told, it seems that the plan of God is that a being in the mortal state develop and prove himself, then receive the transformation to the angel level. This plan harmonizes perfectly with the descriptions given in Scripture, also with the world as we see it and life as we know it. "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (I Cor. 15:49). Angels, instead of being created in a superior state, have been changed to that level of life as a reward for their faithful compliance with God's mandates, and we may receive the same. This seems to be the ongoing plan of God for the development and perfecting of His living creation, as we are many times told: "to give to every man according as his works shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

What an incentive to us mortals to make the moral change now, so that we can receive the physical change to immortality when Jesus returns in all His glory! For "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Pet 5:4). □

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*It takes courage to say what you believe when you know the reaction will not be favorable—and when you could remain silent.*

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### A Letter from a Subscriber...

"Let me share with you a predominate subject of discussion I am encountering these days. Texas, as you may know, is in the process of soon asking the voters to approve casino gambling. This pretty well completes Texas as a gambling state, since Texas already has horse racing, dog racing, and three levels of lottery (a daily point of sale "scratch-off," a Monday through Saturday daily "Pick three," and a twice weekly 3 million-dollar-drawing that increases when there is no winner and thus creates a frenzy for ticket sales that is sometimes almost unbelievable).

"Since many states are seeking to add gambling, while other states are planning how to increase already established gambling; and seeing with my own eyes and hearing with my own ears the lust people have for "instant riches," it seems to me that the American people are planning their own destruction by attempting to place God aside and to fulfill a dream or wish filled with greed and lust, both abominable to God.

"Is there anything wrong with legal gambling?" I believe there is.

"Let's remain alert against falling into such traps of destruction."

—R. H. Texas

# THE GAMBLING



wide. Add church bingo, card rooms, sports wagering, dog and horse racing and Jai alai (pronounced "hi-a-lie") to the mix and it becomes clear why Americans legally wagered \$330 billion in 1992—an 1800 percent increase over 1976."

State and municipal lottery sales in 1992 totaled \$24 billion.

What seems most shocking is the extreme lack of moral consciousness against it. Says the author of the article in the *U.S. News and World Report* (cited above), "Moral outrage has become as outmoded as a penny slot machine...." A few decades ago nearly everyone condemned it (gambling has a long history of affiliation with organized crime and political corruption). Now, 51 percent of American adults find casino gambling "acceptable for anyone," and 35 percent describe it as "acceptable for others but not for me," according to a recent survey.

"Apart from a handful of academics and the odd politician, few Americans are seriously questioning the morality of an industry that is expected to help gamblers lose a record \$35 billion in 1995 alone. Religious leaders have been oddly silent, perhaps because so many churches and synagogues rely on bingo revenues."

Awaiting the reopening of the Congressional session this year were more than 200 gambling-related bills. With the liberalizing of laws that restrain gambling Casinos in New Jersey were recently authorized to remain open 24 hours a day, seven days a week; including holidays: most authorities expect the problem to soar. Presently only an estimated 1 to 3 percent of Americans have a serious gambling problem at any given time—and the nation's revenues from gambling are staggering. With new laws

**G**ambling is letting yourself be voluntarily exploited and robbed—and enjoying it!



Is gambling really such a terrible thing? It seems so harmless. And just about everybody is doing it!

Why is it so popular? To the gamblers, it is pleasure; and to the sponsors (government, corporate or individual) it is high profit.

Some form of gambling now being legal in every state except Utah, the industry has grown faster than the general economy during the last ten years. An article in the March 14, 1994 edition of *U.S. News and World Report* discussed America's gambling craze. Data in this article has been drawn from the *U.S. News and World Report*, also from the 1994 *Britannica Book of the Year*, subtopic "Gambling"; also from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th Edition, Vol. 7, Subtopic "Gambling," and Vol. 29, Subtopic "United States of America."

"It took six decades," says the report, "for gambling to become America's pastime, from the legalization of Nevada casinos in 1931 to 1991 when Davenport, Iowa, launched the Diamond Lady, the nation's first legal riverboat casino....Casinos now operate or are authorized in 23 states,...the Midwest is overrun with slot hogs...Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and Missouri allow riverboat gambling," and there are "low stakes casinos" and "high stakes bingo halls nation-



# TRAP

making gambling easier and more common, the "total number of problem gamblers will soar," says an analyst. "When you make gambling legal and socially acceptable, people will try it and some of them will get hooked."

With the introduction of lotteries in almost every state during recent years, participation in gambling in the United States has soared. But the gambling craze is not limited to lotteries. The principal form of gambling in the English-speaking world and in France is betting on the result of a horse race, a major business where it is allowed. Next is casino gambling, where gamblers can risk their money against a common gambler, called the bank or the house.

## Who started it?

The Colonists opened the first lotteries in the United States. But this was not the beginning.

The Roman Emperors Nero and Augustus used lotteries to give away property and slaves during Saturnalia feasts and other entertainments.

The first European lotteries appeared in fifteenth century Burgundy and Belgium, the towns attempting to raise money to fortify defenses or aid the poor.

When the Italian nation was united, the first national lottery was created in 1863, with regular weekly

drawings organized for the purpose of providing income for the state. *Lotto* was the name of the organization, and is regarded as the basis for modern gambling games.

Queen Elizabeth I chartered a general lottery in England in 1566 to raise money for repairing harbors and other public purposes. In 1612 the Virginia Company obtained permission from James I for a lottery to help finance the settlement of Jamestown in the New World. Lotteries in England were responsible for all or portions of the financing of such projects as the building of the British Museum and the repair of bridges, plus many projects in American Colonies, until they were banned in 1826. Why the ban? Because, it was claimed, that lotteries encouraged mass gambling and that draw-

**Gambling:** the betting or staking of something of value (usually money), with consciousness of risk and hope of gain.

**Casinos (or, gambling houses):** places where gamblers can risk their money against a common gambler, called the bank or the house.

**Lottery:** a payment made for a chance of receiving the prize.

## HUSTLING WITHOUT ANY GUILT

*"Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush"*  
—Jeremiah 8:12

A Las Vegas casino operator is frank to admit how his casino operates:  
"When we put 50 machines in, I always consider them 50 more mousetraps. You have to have a mousetrap to catch a mouse."

About gambling "entertainment" he says, "You can't disguise this industry....It is what it is. It's our duty to extract as much money from the customer as we can. And send them home with a smile on their face."

ings

were fraudulent.

In 1776, the Continental Congress voted to establish a lottery to raise funds for the American Revolution. During the next 100 years, hundreds of lotteries were operated privately in various states, often filled with fraud and abuse. In 1868 the U.S. Congress declared it unlawful to use the mail for letters or circulars containing lotteries "or other similar enterprises on any pretext whatever." The opinion of the Supreme Court in 1878 held lotteries to have "a demoralizing influence upon the people."

The postal rules, however, did not ban all lotteries in America, because a very successful lottery was running in Louisiana, and agents for the Louisiana lottery were located in every city in the United States. In 1890, President Harrison and Congress agreed in condemning lotteries as "swindling and demoralizing agencies," and prohibited the interstate transportation of lottery tickets. The Louisiana lottery was killed, and there was no lottery business in



## THE GAMBLING TRAP

America until 1963.

French lotteries were abolished in 1836, and not re-opened until 1933.

Today state-licensed or state-operated lotteries are widely distributed about most of the world.

Australia has been called the real home of the state lottery. There, all the states except South Australia conduct lotteries for financing public programs and projects.

Casinos have existed at least since the seventeenth century. In Europe and South America they are permitted at many or most holiday resorts. Once limited to Nevada in the United States, they became legal in Atlantic City in 1976, and other states have subsequently passed laws legalizing casino gambling. In most other states, they operate by special license, or else illegally, through corruption of political authorities.

### State Lotteries

A state lottery is a form of gambling in which a large number of people purchase chances, called lottery tickets. Money collected by the sale of the tickets is divided by the bank or house controlling the lottery. Winning tickets are drawn randomly from a pool composed of all tickets sold or offered for sale to determine the winners of prizes. A large amount of the money collected (typically 40 to 50 percent) is kept by the promoter to cover "costs"—including profits for the sponsoring agent. The remainder is returned to the bettors in the form of prizes to the winning numbers. In most large-scale lotteries, a very large prize is offered, along with many smaller ones.

The result is a crazed and ill-informed mass of people who are anxious to give more and more in hope of winning the lottery. Underneath, the state is taking advantage of the people it is committed to help. And it is undermining the very source of its support, not to mention the virtues of industry, thrift, and patience which

are being destroyed by this promoting of avarice, greed, and lust.

Actually, lotteries are not even an efficient way to raise revenue. In an average lottery, we are told, about 60 cents of every dollar wagered goes to prizes and administrative costs. The cost of collecting funds by taxes is only about one cent per

dollar. Lotteries win because of popular appeal.

State lotteries represent bad criminal policy. Proponents argue that legalized gambling decreases criminal activity. Historically, organized crime has been heavily involved in the gambling industry.

## GAMBLING: WILLING EXPLOITATION

Gambling has often been defined as taking a chance. But this is not an adequate definition, for all of life is a gamble in this sense. Whether we buy a car, or ride in an airplane, or even sit in our own living room, almost everything we do carries an element of risk.

God does not condemn the taking of normal risk. In the Parable of the Talent, which of the servants was condemned? Only the one who was afraid to take a chance and invest the money his master gave him.

A person in business may invest funds, taking a high risk. But this is not gambling in the sense of a sweep-stake or a casino. One may invest funds by purchasing stock in a company, but this is not gambling because the money is exchanged for a share of ownership in the company and the possibility of gain is not left to chance (as is the result of spinning a wheel, or the fall of dice on a table).

Christopher Columbus took a great risk in 1492 when he set out across the Atlantic, but this risk was not determined by the toss of a pair of dice, nor was the reward received out of proportion to the time, money and effort expended.

Gambling is the taking of an artificial risk in the hope of monetary gain, and always at someone else's expense. The outcome may be determined by chance alone, or it may be purely random activity as with a tossed pair of dice; or it may be a combination of physical skill, training or prowess (as in athletic contests),

or a combination of strategy, chance and skill.

### Casino Gambling... Gambling to Lose

Thomas Jefferson said that gambling was like a voluntary tax. But he didn't know about the modern casino.

The casino gambler is the exploited victim of greedy casino operators. Modern casinos, it is reported, utilize every possible and imaginable scheme to get the gambler to part with as much of his money as possible, and to be happy doing it. Almost every element in a casino—the scent of the air, the color of the machines, the cushioning on the stools, the type and intensity of the lighting, the layout of the room—is designed to keep gamblers there longer and to separate them from as much of their money as possible. "Psychologically, casinos don't want gamblers to realize how much they are losing," says one dealer. A mathematician figured out that a gambler who wagered just one dollar every bet for two months straight would have *only one chance in 2 trillion* to win \$1000 dollars before he lost \$1000 dollars.

Casino gambling machines, upon which bettors "play" and stake their money, are designed to give advantage to the casino house operators.

"Since all casino games give the house a mathematical edge, the longer a player gambles, the greater the house's chance of winning."

"For an industry governed by odds, casinos leave little to chance," Says the

report. "To line their pockets just a wee bit more, they have added games with stunning house odds."

Casinos amass personal information on bettors to reward steady players with "comps"—complementary meals, show tickets, hotel stays—anything to get them to come more frequently and stay longer—and

so leave more of their money behind. Computers also track each bettor's "average worth" (how much he should *lose* based on his time spent gambling and the house's fixed percentages).

What is gambling? It's letting yourself be voluntarily exploited and robbed—and enjoying it!

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH LEGALIZED GAMBLING?

Governments may make gambling legal, but they cannot make it right, or moral, or even profitable for the gambler.

By legalizing gambling, our government is taking advantage of peoples' ignorance and uncontrolled lust for money. Instead of protecting the interests of the people, it is allowing them to be hurt. Statistics show that state lotteries encourage people to gamble who have not gambled before. A survey in the state of Delaware showed that 72 percent of the state's regular lottery players had never gambled before.

Gambling is anti-Christian, anti-faith, anti-God. It is even against one's best interests in this world. It is a consuming and misplaced allegiance, which is idolatry. It places the love of money ahead of the love of God, or family, or any other rightful interest. Money is necessary and lawful in its place, when used for lawful ends. But gambling promotes an overanxious desire or longing for money.

Gamblers by betting money are acting irresponsibly with property that does not belong to them. The Bible teaches us that all we have and are belongs to God. "In him we live and move and have our being." Whatever we possess, whether money, property, friends, ability—all is held by us in trust. We show ourselves irresponsible when we put any of these resources at needless risk.

The Hebrews cast lots to determine God's will. Was this gambling? No, because the Hebrew people believed that everything that happened was God's will. To them there was no "chance" or Lady Luck. Every event was the expression of God's will. Hence, when a lot was cast, the result

was believed to be God's decision. The book of Proverbs explains: "*The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord*" (Prov. 16:33). Does this mean that the Bible condones or even sanctions gambling?

There is no verse in Scripture that says clearly, "*Thou shalt not gamble.*" But many commands bear upon it, either directly or indirectly.

When Christ was asked which were the two most important commandments in the law, He replied, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength,*" and "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*" (Mark 12:30-31). The practice of gambling is directly opposed to both of these statements. Gambling is putting the love of money ahead of the love of God, and the love of one's self ahead of one's neighbor.

The whole gambling craze is an outgrowth of an excessive and uncontrolled love of money. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy that "*The love of money is the root of all evil*" (1 Tim. 6:10). The words of Hebrews 13:5 are rendered in the Revised Version, "*Be ye free from the love of money.*"

Paul says that "*They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition*" (1 Tim. 6:9). Gambling is just such a temptation and a snare, ruining those who develop an uncontrolled desire for it.

We are commanded to "*Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.*" The gambler is seeking first this world and the things it can offer. We cannot have our

**M**odern casinos utilize every possible and imaginable scheme to get the gambler to part with as much of his money as possible, and to be happy doing it.

**G**ambling is anti-Christian, anti-faith, anti-God. It is even against one's best interests in this world.



## THE GAMBLING TRAP

mental focus on money and upon God and His Kingdom.

The Bible declares, "*Whatsoever is not of faith is sin*," and gambling certainly is not an exhibition of faith in God.

Gambling is a master, enslaving the one who practices it. Jesus said, "*No man can serve two masters...Ye cannot serve God and mammon*" (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13).

Gambling is part of the world, its games, its pleasure-seeking, its lust, and

Jesus warned against "*the deceitfulness of riches*" and "*the lust of other things*" that can "*choke out the word*," making it become unfruitful in us (Mark 4:19). Gambling is all-absorbing, deceitful, and an evidence of uncontrolled lust.

Gambling is the fruit of greed, and produces more greed. Proverbs condemns those whose "*feet run to evil...they lurk privily for their own lives...so are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain*" (Prov. 1:15-16, 18-19).

Gambling places our treasure upon earth. Jesus admonishes us to "*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*" (Matt. 6:19-21).

Gambling breeds covetousness, which is a form of wanting what is not rightfully one's own. Gambling encourages both greed and selfishness.

Gambling is contrary to the work ethic taught in Scripture. The Bible rewards honest effort, thrift, prudence, and there is always a direct relationship between effort and recompense. Gambling mocks the core values of disciplined work with its "get rich quick" motivation.

Gambling often results in family neglect; the money risked should be used to meet family needs. The Bible admonishes each man to care for the needs of his family, and he who does not is "*worse than an infidel*" (I Tim. 5:8). The Bible also teaches that parents should care for their children (II Cor. 12:14) and eat the bread of their labors (II Thess. 3:12).

The gambling craze contradicts the Bible command to "*be content with such things as ye have*" (Heb. 13:7), and Paul's own achievement that he had learned in whatever state he was, "*therewith to be content*" (Phil. 4:11).

The gambler lusts for fame, success, and fortune, all without work or struggle. Gambling is the love of "something for nothing." In reality, it *takes* something and *gives* nothing.

What should we as Christians do with gambling? *Have nothing to do with it.* It is part of Babylon, and destined to fall with it in the soon-coming day of Christ (Rev. 18), when all the instruments of wickedness will be removed. □

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH GAMBLING?

- ❖ Gambling puts one's finances—which are in reality God's—at the risk of undirected chance—a total misuse of His resources.
- ❖ Gambling puts desire for money above the proper use of it as a trust from God.
- ❖ Gambling focuses one's mind on the things of this world.
- ❖ Gambling is rooted in a love of the world, a love of money, and a love of ease, as it seeks "something for nothing."
- ❖ Gambling is lust out of control.
- ❖ Gambling excludes gratitude and praise to God; the motivation to gamble is to undercut.
- ❖ Gambling thrives on an attitude that work is an intolerable burden to be avoided at all costs; that play is better, that the best success comes through luck, rather than through hard work.
- ❖ Gambling exalts money and material gain above all else.
- ❖ Gambling teaches that all things are controlled by chance, that ultimately life itself is a gamble. To the Christian, all is ordered by God and is under His direct control, according to His eternal purpose.
- ❖ The gambler chooses to trust "Lady Luck," rather than God.
- ❖ Gambling is directly opposed to joyful, meaningful, responsible Christian living.
- ❖ Gambling thrives on a "me first" mentality.
- ❖ Gambling puts personal advantage and gain above all else.

the Christian is commanded, "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world*" (I John 2:15-16).

# GOOD... *On The Whole*

A certain farmer was well reputed in his community, well respected as a Christian, and generally quite satisfied with himself. "I know I'm not perfect," he would say, "but on the whole I'm a pretty good man. Sometimes I lose my temper, but everyone knows I'm honest. I'm kind to my family, I always give to the poor, and I've never been drunk in my life."

One day the farmer asked his hired man to build a fence around one of the large pastures. When the fence was finished, the hired man went and told the farmer that the job was done. The farmer asked, "Is the fence secure and strong?"

The man replied, "On the whole, it's a very good fence."

"What do you mean—'*On the whole*' it's a good

fence? Is it good or isn't it?" asked the farmer excitedly.

Very calmly the man repeated, "On the whole, I'd say it's a very good fence. There may be a few spots that are a little weak, but most of the parts are very strong, even extra strong. I dare say that most of the fence is fine and will surely keep the cattle in the pasture."

"What do you mean, building me a fence with *any* weak places in it? You might as well have built no fence at all! If there is just *one* weak place in it, the cattle will be sure to find it."

The workman replied pensively: "I used to think so, too. But I have heard you talk so much about being good '*on the whole*' that I thought I would try it on your fence." □

## ***Burned Bridges***

*(Continued from page 11)*

burned out drops off, and rocket No. 2 takes over and forces the satellite another 150 miles or so into space and detaches itself. Rocket No. 3 then takes over and thrusts the satellite still higher and curves it into an orbit around the earth, accelerating it to an approximate speed of 25,000 miles an hour. If the rocket has functioned as intended through these three stages, the satellite is now far enough into outer space to be nearly free from the earth's gravity, and may orbit the earth for months or perhaps indefinitely.

Now while the life-seeker can never get completely away from the pull of the earthly while in mortal life, the closer he gets to God, the easier it will be for him

to keep himself unspotted from the world, and the danger of his ever being drawn back into the broad way to destruction will be greatly reduced. By becoming so accustomed to doing good that doing evil will be absolutely abhorrent, is the surest way for us to burn our bridges.

It is said that habit is a good servant but a bad master. Throughout the life of a Christian good habits are the cornerstone to perfection of character. The lessons in right living that we impress repeatedly upon our minds become habit, so that we follow the right course automatically in routine matters, leaving our conscious mind free to discern between good and evil on things of greater import. To do good can become second nature in the same degree that we formerly were accustomed to do evil.

The habit of burning bridges will have paid profitable dividends

to the one striving for holiness, and the good effect of his "safety first" plan will carry over beyond Judgment Day. The moment the blissful words "*Well done*" have been uttered, a "great gulf" will separate him from everything that is past: from fear of harm, fear of death, from distress, from the possibility of sinning, from all the limitations of mortality. The promise is: "*Thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.*" The decision of the Judge has separated the "sheep" from the "goats," creating an impassable chasm with no bridge to span it.

Do we want to break eternally with mortality so we may be able to cry: "*O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*" Then let us burn every bridge, break completely with our old carnal nature, and lose no time in doing it! □

## Criticism and Higher Criticism

► *Any unfounded claims of the critic do not change the facts of Scripture one iota.*

It is no surprise that a book claiming total authority over the lives and destinies of men and nations should have its critics. What rational human being wants to acknowledge this type of authority? Who wants to be told what to do, or what is right or wrong? Or who wants the future—their future—all fixed and unchangeable by decree of a higher being? Don't we know that independent human creatures like to make some decisions for themselves? Don't we like to claim some bit of authority for ourselves?

And so the Bible has become an object of criticism, censure, even abuse. Some would destroy it altogether. Others are content with challenging or ridiculing—anything to lessen its authoritative grip, anything to release them from its dread accountability.

In deference to our fellow human creatures, we will allow that often the motive for attacks upon the Bible is subconscious, the underlying purpose being a desire for accuracy and a solid foundation, hence the need for careful scrutiny and justifiable, honest criticism.

There is yet another factor often influencing scholars' judgments of the Bible. It is the human loyalties which Bible scholars feel toward fellow students, alumni, and those in higher academic positions. If one belongs to a certain school, he may feel an obligation to support the school's position even though it may not be his own personal conviction. Unfortunately, many of those in higher scholastic circles often

support the viewpoints of the negative higher critics.

On this point J. Barton Payne, a life-long Bible student and researcher, has observed that scholars whose work consists of critical evaluation face a built-in "occupational hazard of pride. It is not without reason that time after time Christian organizations have found their educational institutions to be the initiators and leaders in apostasy from Scripture," totally resisting the Biblical demand to cast down "every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God" (II Cor. 10:5). "There is a certain scholarly desire," says Payne, "to defend one's school of thought, to look well among one's peers, and to teach the accustomed school of thought. If this is not done, the pain may be acute"—making honest, sincere evaluation all but impossible.

### Defining Our Terms...

What is Biblical criticism? The word criticism is derived from the Greek word *karino*, meaning, "to cut," hence "to judge." With regard to literature, the word is used in a constructive sense, the purpose being to analyze and evaluate. Literally, criticism means "fit for judging." To be critical means to be "decisive."

The *Merriam Webster Dictionary* defines criticism as "the art of evaluating or analyzing works of art or literature." *Britannica Webster* adds, "the art of judging expertly the merits and faults of works of art or literature."

Honest literary criticism is not capricious faultfinding but simply a vehicle for serious study. Truly great works do not suffer at the hands of critics; rather, they are opened for deeper study and understanding. And when the subject of study is the Scriptures, any unfounded claims of the critic do not change the facts of Scripture one iota. If we say that the sun rises in the west and sets in the east, we do not alter in any way the pattern of the sun. We only show ourselves uninformed. The same is true of those who criticize Scripture unfairly; they only reveal their own lack of knowledge.

But the damage of unfair criticism to the uninformed and non-investigating may be incalculable. This is why we feel compelled to investigate for ourselves, especially since it is a matter affecting our eternal destiny. It is the command of Scripture itself: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (1 Tim. 2:15). It is also the command of Jesus, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

#### **Bible Criticism: Lower and Higher**

Biblical criticism divides into two basic groups: lower and higher. Lower criticism, usually called textual criticism, is the study of the original documents behind Scripture in order to determine as closely and as carefully as possible the intended meaning of the original text (called the Autographs), so that the passage may be understood and appreciated. Lower criticism tries to understand the original words used by the Biblical authors and the context in which they were used. When we study the relevant meanings of the original Hebrew and Greek words that underlie our familiar translations, we are doing the work of a textual critic.

In contrast to this type of Bible study is the "higher" critic. Higher criticism is not concerned with the words themselves or their meanings but rather with investigating the *source* of the original

texts. Think of "lower" or textual criticism as a study of the text, and "higher" criticism as the study of external factors (the identity, purpose and literary style of the author; the author's purpose in writing, the date of the writing, the language, the location, influence of circumstances or outside factors upon the author, etc.).

#### **Biblical Criticism: Good or Bad?**

What makes higher or lower criticism good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable?

Criticism in and of itself is neither good nor bad. It is simply the science of inquiry, the evaluating of knowledge. It becomes good or bad according to the accuracy, integrity and understanding of the critic.

We have a problem with much Biblical criticism because:

1) Critics disregard the divine authority and authorship of Scripture, judging the Bible from the viewpoint of human knowledge and human experience, as on a par with any other literary work. In this way they make themselves superior to God, seeking to judge the validity of His work.

2) Critics often reason from erroneous pre-assumptions.

3) Critics often miss the message of the Bible and overemphasize the insignificant. Not being concerned with what the Bible is saying, they focus on meaningless details which they consider defects, while wholly ignoring the incomparable wonder and perfection of the overall plan and general teaching of the Bible.

#### **The Bible Is Different...**

Because the Bible was written under the supervision and direction of the Holy Spirit, we cannot allow to critics of the Bible the same liberties which might be appropriate in evaluating ordinary literature. If we put the Bible on a par with other works, we completely rule out any consideration of miracles, of the descent of Divine judgment, or of prophecies pertaining to the future. If we limit the Bible to the scope of a human work, we

*In all fairness to the Bible, we must deny to anyone the right to contradict what God says he has said.*

► *The question of proper Bible criticism becomes one of deciding just where the critic should begin and to what extent he should go.*

rule out anything a normal human writer could not know by his own experience, exposure or education. We disallow the words of Peter, that "the prophecy came not of old time by the will of men, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (1 Pet. 1:21).

If we judge the Bible as any other book, we have to reject much of the content of the four Gospels, because how could any man remember exactly the words he had heard some years previous? Or how could any man write of an incident of which he was not personally a witness? We would have to disallow much of the book of John, particularly his recording the words of Jesus' prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. He did not hear it, and if he did, he surely was not equipped with pen and ink that night in the garden.

But no, the Bible is not a normal human product, nor can it be judged and evaluated from a normal human viewpoint. And those who attempt to do so only lose the power and meaning of its message.

The higher critics' insistence upon approaching the Bible as any other book has in recent years seriously undermined faith in the Bible and has made the critics' findings largely unacceptable to serious-minded Bible believers.

Higher criticism goes wrong when the critics' conclusions contradict clear Scripture statements. For example, if the critic takes the position that the book of Revelation was composed by the apostle John when the book says clearly that it is "the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him," which Jesus "sent and signified...by his angel unto his servant John" (Rev. 1:1).

Higher criticism goes wrong when the critic reasons from the standpoint that the Bible is false until proven true.

Higher criticism goes wrong when it places the Bible on a par with all other human histories and philosophies and writings; when it assumes that if the Bible is not treated as being on a par with other books that criticism is "biased."

Yet another problem arises with the higher critic's opposition to the inerrancy of Scripture. One who refuses to believe that the Bible is without error cannot hold the Bible as the sole authority for his faith and practice. He must claim some other authority as well, and that other authority is, more than likely, his own mind and his own ability to reason. As one critic summed it up, "I am the final judge of what I will believe or not believe." Can we imagine God's attitude toward such, He who loves a humble and contrite heart?

### **Bible Critics Must Have Limits**

Every critic starts with pre-drawn conclusions and assumptions. For example,

1) the Bible critic must believe in God, or how can he deal fairly with His written Word?

2) the Bible critic must believe that God has arranged for this message to be communicated to men, and see himself as an instrument in that communication. Otherwise what can he possibly accomplish?

The question of proper Bible criticism becomes one of deciding just where the critic should begin and to what extent he should go. Should he start by assuming that everything is wrong until proven right? And should he carry his task beyond that objective description into one of sifting ideas so as to establish the message of the Bible? Higher critics in general would say yes. Without the right to sift and reject what seems unworthy, the critic cannot be true to himself, and his criticism is worthless. But the conservative critic says no. By claiming the right to sift, accept and reject, says the conservative, the critic cannot be true to the inerrant nature of the Bible itself, and his criticism will be misapplied. Furthermore, the critic in assuming the ability to judge, sift and reject is saying that he knows more and better than God, therefore is placing himself in a blasphemous position.

If we try to understand the Bible from the viewpoint of the scientific

community, we must assume that all historical events are capable of being explained by other events. In other words, what we call supernatural is not the activity of God but belongs to the area of myth or legend.

We will discuss the authority and credibility of miracles in another chapter. Suffice it here to say that we must either limit the Bible or limit the critic. And what fools we make of ourselves if we attempt to limit God or His work!

Even higher critics themselves have allowed that criticism of the Bible must be checked at points or it will result in "irreconcilable fronts." Who are we, human creatures of dust, to judge the work and power and possibilities of our Mighty Creator? Who are we to say what can or cannot be done in His vast realm of power and omniscience? Who are we to judge Him by what *our* small minds can comprehend?

Higher criticism becomes misplaced criticism when it attempts to judge what is beyond human experience. What happens or does not happen in *our* experience is not a realistic yardstick by which to judge the works of God.

A scholar named E. J. Young has commented on the "scientific" method of Bible study, which "assumes that man can approach the facts of the universe, including the Bible, with a neutral mind, and pronounce a just judgment upon them," as follows: "It is time that we ceased to call such a method scientific. It is not scientific, for it does not take into consideration all the facts, and the basic fact it overlooks is that of God and His relation to the world which He has created."

### Critics Often Emphasize the Unimportant

Those who believe the Bible have observed that critics often spend an inordinate amount of time and effort on very insignificant points, which he considers defects in the Bible, while passing absolutely unnoticed the incomparable beauties and wonders that adorn its pages. It is much like an observer looking at a great masterpiece of art, and centering his whole attention upon a flyspeck. A large part of higher criticism is the investigation of supposed flyspecks—and who blames the artist for a flyspeck on his work of art?

How much more profitable would be the work of the critics if they would devote their effort to understanding and applying those words which will "make...wise unto salvation," focusing on the unrivaled beauties and majestic splendors of the book, instead of pursuing meaningless details.

### One Purpose: Salvation

Higher criticism, i.e. the study of the circumstances surrounding the writing of the Bible, its authorship, its literary style, its pattern and form, need not be negative. The information gleaned by higher critics might be a useful support and accompaniment to serious Bible study, if based on the right assumptions. But the core of useful Bible study will always be that of the text, as it addresses the meanings of the words, the inspiration behind its message and the effect that that message should have upon us. Our purpose in all our study of the Bible is not the acquiring of interesting knowledge but knowledge which can bring us to *salvation*.

*(To Be Continued Next Issue)*

*"The man who is not willing to squander the major portion of his time in the erudite investigation of flyspecks but prefers to devote it to the study of the unrivaled beauties and majestic splendors of the Book is counted in some quarters as not being up to date."*

—(Unknown Bible student).

Our purpose in all our study of the Bible is not the acquiring of interesting knowledge but knowledge which can bring us to salvation.



# Seeds: Miniatures of Life

## Did You Know...?

- ✓ ... that 1% of dandelion seeds travel a distance of six miles?
- ✓ ... that seeds range in size from a mere speck of dust (the rhododendron) to more than 60 pounds (the coconut)?
- ✓ ... that a large pigweed may ripen as many as 10,000,000 seeds in a single season?
- ✓ ... that the long stiff bristle or awn of the wild oat seed bends like a leg when it is cool and moist. But in warm, dry sunlight the awn straightens out with such force that the seed hops some distance away?
- ✓ ... that the seeds of land plants will not grow if the soil is waterlogged, but water lilies germinate and thrive in water?
- ✓ ... that a seed contains a whole miniature plant, complete with root, stem and one or two tiny leaves?
- ✓ ... that there are over 300,000 species of flowering plants, all of which produce seeds?
- ✓ ... that it takes fire to release the seeds from the cone of a certain tree and start them growing?
- ✓ ... that water lily seeds have sprouted after 800 years of dormancy?
- ✓ ... that oaks depend on squirrels to "plant" their seeds—an acorn will not sprout unless it is buried.

Scientific data in this article is from *The Secret Life of the Forest*, by Richard M. Ketchum; published by American Heritage Press, New York; *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 27, pages 670-682; also *The Book of Popular Science*, Vol. 4, "From Seed to Seedling, The Vital Process of Germination," by Harry J. Fuller.

Take a seed in your hand, any common, ordinary seed. It may be so small that it looks like a bit of dust, or it may be as large as a coconut. But inside that seed is something very special—something *alive*, just waiting to burst out and grow when the conditions are right.

Actually, a seed is a tiny container. If it grew on a tree, such as a maple or elm, inside that container is a miniature living copy of the mother tree, complete with root, trunk, and one or two tiny leaves, along with rich food reserves—protein, starch, and oil—everything to support the baby plant until it is able to root itself and be on its own.

It is not hard to imagine our scientists putting together the elements to make a seed. But how about making that seed grow on its own and produce more seeds? Can we picture a greater wonder of our Creator's design? Even our most advanced scientists can scarcely comprehend the miracle of life. Yet it surrounds us, constantly shouting, "The hand that made us is Divine."

And when we look closely at the various seeds in the plant world, we see in how many very specific ways each is designed for its very specific environment.

First of all, a seed is designed to germinate. Give it the right conditions, and soon the secure case cracks open and out comes a root, tender and new. As the root emerges from the seed case, by some ability unknown to us it knows which way to grow—it seeks the ground. And when it reaches the ground, it is all prepared—again by wonderful design—to dig in, for its tip is hard and pointed, just what it needs to penetrate the surface of the soil.

### Dormancy: defense against extinction

Seeds of some plants are able to germinate as soon as they have matured on the plant (wheat, sweet corn, peas, beans). But all of these are cultivated plants controlled by man. Most seeds growing naturally in the wilds require a period of dormancy before germination. Why? Imagine what would happen if every seed germinated just as soon as it dropped from the mother plant. What if all weed seeds sprouted immediately, or all maple (or ash or poplar) seeds began to grow as soon as they fell from the mother tree? Several problems would arise immediately:

1) Plants would be germinating just when the season was closing, the new crop would be wasted (not having time to mature before the season ended), and the orderly cycle of nature would become haphazard;

2) There would be little or no seed available for the next growing season (because it would have already sprouted the season before);

3) The usefulness of many seeds for food to animals and man would be lost;

4) The seeds would not have opportunity to get dispersed;

hence they would be growing right beside the mother plant, resulting in an imbalance of plant growth.

To avoid these problems, our Creator has built into the mechanism of life some remarkable controls. One of these is the seed's forced period of dormancy. Almost no seed is ready to grow just as soon as it drops from the mother plant.

### **How does a seed know when to germinate?**

No one knows exactly, but it is thought that many seeds have some built-in sensor by which they are able to sense the length of the daylight hours.

But this is not the whole answer. Leave a potato in a totally dark environment, where it "sees" neither day nor night, and it will still start to grow in early spring—another marvel of our Creator's design. And here again, let us observe how ideally the plants' requirements are suited to their environment—an elaborate evidence of the Creator's handiwork.

Germination in many plants takes place only after a series of little-understood changes inside the seed (called afterripening). In this group are many forest trees and shrubs such as pines, hemlocks, dogwood, hawthorn, ash, linden, holly, and many fruit trees such as apples, pears, peaches, plums, and cherries. In some species, one winter suffices for the afterripening process. In others, the process is drawn out over several years, with some germination occurring each year. This may be an insurance against a catastrophe that might completely wipe out the growth in a certain year. If all the plants were destroyed and no new seeds were made during a certain year, the species could continue because there would be more seeds waiting to sprout the next year. (How did evolution develop this remarkable precaution?)

A remarkable "double dormancy" has been discovered in lily-of-the valley and Solomon's seal plants. Here, two successive cold treatments separated by a warm period are needed to complete the seed's development. The first cold treatment eliminates the dormancy of the root; the warm period permits its growth; the second cold period eliminates the leaf dormancy, and finally, after nearly two years, the complete plant is ready to grow.

Seeds of some plants (Scotch broom and related species) can be boiled without losing their ability to grow. Other seeds require alternating higher and lower temperatures before they will germinate. This is true especially of seeds of plants growing in the desert, where temperature fluctuations between day and night are extreme.

Laboratory experiments have shown that light is a main controller of seed dormancy in a wide array of species. In one study, the absence of light was found to be responsible for the nongermination of 20 out of 23 varieties of weed seeds. But in specific environments, seeds have very specific needs. In regions of shifting sands, seeds of the Russian thistle were found to germinate only when uncovered, and only after being buried for several years. The seeds of certain desert melons growing in the Negev Desert are strongly inhibited by light. This fact is valuable

to the survival of the species, because if seeds germinated without being buried deeply, the young plants would soon die, due to the hostile environment. In other species, seeds buried too deeply will not germinate. Certain seeds native to sandy terrain need exposure to a very small amount of light—just the amount that filters through a thick layer of sand. Seeds native to some arid lands germinate in relation to the amount and duration of rain received.

Some seeds must be exposed to light at intervals, along with moisture and a certain temperature to germinate. Birch seeds, for example, will not germinate until they have gone through a cold period after absorbing water.

Some seeds must undergo a chemical change before they are ready to germinate. Though mature, the new seed's coat contains chemical inhibitors which prevent germination.

Oxygen is another critical factor in seed germination. For many types of seeds, if the soil is waterlogged, the water will drive out oxygen from the cell spaces and the seed will not sprout. What about the seeds of water plants, such as water lilies? These seeds are especially equipped with a built-in oxygen supply, and are able to sprout when oxygen concentration is very low. Only land plants require abundant oxygen for normal germination. (What law of evolution designed this?)

A few varieties of seeds actually need intense heat before they sprout. Sound impossible? Fire is the very means of germinating some seeds. Take the knobcone pine tree. This tree saves its seed even while the parent tree is crashing in flames. The knobcone holds its ripe seeds sealed inside very tough cones. As the tree burns to ashes, the cones are freed and explode like popcorn, scattering their seeds. When the fire is over, these seeds are soon seen sprouting among the fertile ashes.

A few species of plants have another built-in precaution against extinction. These species produce two or more sharply different types of seeds, with different dispersal mechanisms and dormancy periods. In this way, germination is spread out, both in space and in time.

Altogether, do we not see a masterful pattern of design? Who can say that all this complex structure of life just "happened"?

### **How long will a seed remain alive?**

Some seeds are capable of germination after very long periods, others after only a very short time. The seeds of certain orchids remain alive for only a few weeks. Seeds of other species may live for centuries. The root of the plant inside the seed is not in any soil; its leaf is not in any sunlight. But it is a complete, living plant and in its dormant state can live many years on the nugget of pure food packaged around it. According to various magazine and newspaper accounts, grains of wheat and barley placed in Egyptian tombs some 4,000 years ago have been planted—and sprouted. Water lily seeds have germinated after 800 years. A test was recently conducted with 20 species of common Michigan weed seeds, preserved in dry sand. After 80 years, three of

the varieties were still viable (able to germinate).

Seeds of the willow tree, which can be quickly established on sandbars in the river, have a lifespan of only one week. Tropical rain forest trees frequently have seeds of low life expectancy also, because conditions for germination are near perfect. Intermediate are seeds of sugarcane, tea, and coco palms, with lifespans of up to a year. Seeds of a certain mimosa tree preserved in the Museum of Natural History in Paris were found to be still "alive" after 221 years.

Seeds of land plants die if submerged in water for a period of time. On the other hand, seeds of certain rushes have been found to grow after being kept under water for as much as seven years. Seeds of the lotus tree found in a peat deposit in Manchuria and estimated to be more than 1,000 years old by radioactive dating germinated rapidly and flowered when the seeds were filed to permit water entry. Seeds of the arctic tundra lupine, found in a frozen burrow with animal remains and established to be at least 10,000 years old, germinated within 48 hours when placed in favorable conditions.

### How big is a seed?

Seed size is, in most plants, directly related to lifestyle—another evidence of our Creator's workmanship. The smallest known seeds are found in orchids and other parasitic plants, which have seeds weighing about 3.5 hundred millionths of an ounce. Why is this type of seed so small? Because being a parasite, it does not need to include its own food supply (how did evolution design this?).

Since seeds form the main source of food for many birds, rodents, ants, and beetles, our Creator has designed that these species produce very large numbers of small seeds, rather than a few big ones, to meet the need.

### How many seeds does a plant make?

Since most seeds never germinate, most plants and trees produce vast numbers of seeds. A single plant of red clover turns out some 500 copies of itself. Weeds have remarkable powers of reproduction. An annual crop for the average weed is about 20,000 seeds per plant. A single crab grass plant may make 90,000 seeds. (Do we wonder why crab grass is so prolific?)

An average-sized pigweed will produce from 100,000 to 200,000 seeds in a single season, and a large pigweed may ripen 10,000,000 seeds.

### How are seeds dispersed?

Perhaps nothing shows quite so marvelously the wonder of our Creator's touch as the ingenuity with which trees scatter their seeds in order to reproduce. Some seeds simply fall to the ground. Others float on the water to find a place to germinate (like the coconut). Still others are fired like buckshot over surprising distances from the parent tree or plant.

Some seeds, equipped with spines, hooks, claws, bristles, barbs, grapples, prickles or sticky pods, are genuine

hitchhikers, clinging tenaciously to their carriers.

Some seeds are enclosed in nuts or fleshy fruit, to be carried away by animals and birds. Other seeds, like the maple or the ash, sail through the air on wings of the wind. Some have one wing, some have more. Other seeds are attached to a plume, which allow them to be carried on the wind. Dandelion, milkweed and some thistles make a buoyant parachute on which the seeds float for many miles.

The tumbleweed is in a category all by itself. The whole plant breaks off and is blown across the open country, scattering its seeds as it goes. Poppies have still another method of dispersing their seeds. The mature fruit stalk is slender and sways back and forth in the wind, throwing its seeds out of pores near the top of the capsule.

Willow seeds are embedded in light, fluffy tufts. These seeds, once planted in the moist earth, are capable of putting out new green shoots within a few hours.

The peanut plant buries its seeds deep in the ground, at the end of root-like runners.

The mistletoe of the western United States is another unique creation. By some chemical reaction it builds up internal pressure in its seed pod, which ultimately leads to a lateral blasting out of the seeds over distances up to 49 feet, with a velocity of 60 miles per hour.

How shall we account for such varied mechanisms? Shall we say that each plant decided how it would disperse its own seeds? Shall we say that these wonders developed over a long, long period of time by chance, perhaps trying first one method then another, before arriving at the one most suited to its shape, size and environment?

What shall we say? Only this: "the hand that made them is Divine." □

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*We are called to be lights in the world, light bearers, light reflectors, candlesticks, lamps. We are to be kindled ourselves, and then we are to burn and give light to others.*

*We should be shining all the time. Shame upon us if the light in us be darkness!*

*God does not put a meteor in the sky to tell us when to shine. We are to be giving light all the time, wherever we are, at work, at school or at home. We should feel always that we should shine now because we may never have another opportunity to shine for Him.*

## Kindness Wins

A Quaker had a quarrelsome neighbor, whose cow often broke into the Quaker's well cultivated garden. One morning, having driven the cow from his premises to her owner's house, he said to his neighbor: "Friend Thomas, I have driven thy cow home once more; and if I find her in my garden again—"

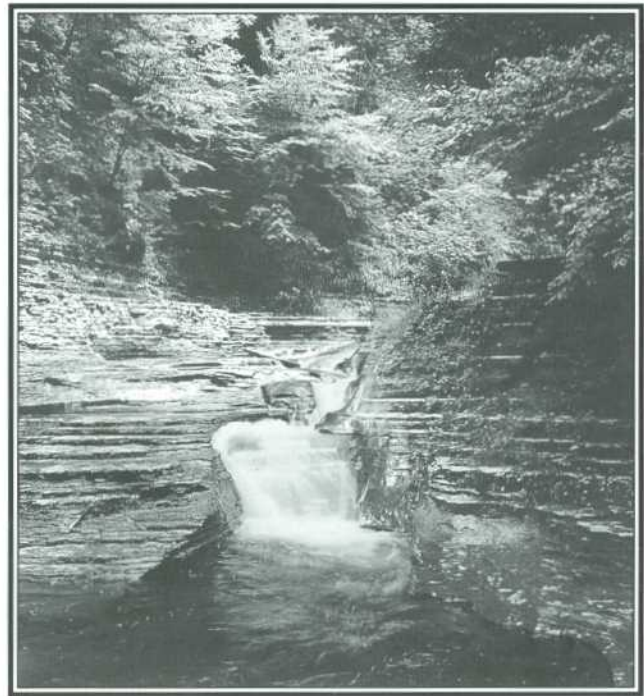
"Suppose you do?" his neighbor angrily exclaimed. "What will you do?"

"Why," said the Quaker quietly, "I'll drive her home to thee again, friend Thomas."

The cow never again troubled the Quaker.

*Freedom is not the right to do as you please, but the pleasure of doing as you ought.*

The advantage of living does not consist in number of one's days but in the right improvement of them.



## What Happened?

*(Continued from page 2)*

**Thorns.** Here we are on truly dangerous ground—more dangerous than tribulation or persecution, because the danger is so pleasant.

Here is the danger of the normal pressures of everyday life, which can choke the seed into being unfruitful. In such a heart, interests of the present take precedence over the interests of eternity. The simple pleasures of life, or economic success, or "delight in riches" of which our Lord speaks, can stunt or totally destroy the growth of the good seed of the Kingdom.

It is the danger of which Jesus warned in another passage: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

To forget that we do not live by bread alone is to suffer a perilous lapse. Letting tangible things take precedence over the unseen but real blessings of God is a sure route to spiritual oblivion—and how many have followed that course!

When our interests in this world are above our interest in the matters that concern the Kingdom of God, we are on the brink of disaster. Paul kept a proper balance when he said, "Meanwhile our eyes are fixed, not on the things that are seen, but on the things that are unseen: for what is seen passes away; what is unseen is eternal" (II Cor. 4:18, NEB).

One may revel in every comfort and luxury this world can afford, only to have them all vanish. It is the lesson of another of Jesus' parables, of the man who said, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry"—only to hear the next day from the mouth of God, "Thou fool!" (Luke 12:19-20).

**The good soil.** When the seed of the Gospel falls on good ground, a tremendous change takes place. The seed starts to grow and bear fruit. The one who hears the Word and understands it immediately begins to be transformed by it.

And this is only the beginning. For such a one will go on growing, and growing, and growing, bearing fruit unto holiness, until the end is "everlasting life."

Surely we would be wise to search our hearts and lives to see where is our priority. What has happened to the good seed of the Kingdom that was sown in our hearts? Has it been destroyed or crowded out, or is it bearing an abundance of good fruit for eternity? Is the seed bearing a maximum of perfect fruit, or have the world, and the flesh, and the evil of our own hearts destroyed what should have changed our lives for now and eternity?

Let us act now, while life and opportunity are still ours. We want to be among those in whom the seed of the Gospel brings forth an abundant harvest unto eternal life. □

## *Who Are These?*

*Who are these like stars appearing,  
Who before God's throne now stand?  
Each a golden crown is wearing:  
Who are all this glorious band?  
Hallelujah! hark, they sing,  
Praising loud their heavenly King.*

*Who are these in dazzling brightness,  
Clothed in holy righteousness;  
These, whose robes of purest whiteness  
Still their lustre bright possess,  
Still untouched by time's rude hand?  
Whence come all this glorious band?*

*These are they who have contended  
For their Saviour's honour long,  
Wrestling on till life was ended,  
Following not the sinful throng;  
These, who well the fight sustained,  
Triumph by the Lamb have gained.*

*These are they whose hearts were riven,  
Sore with woe and anguish tried;  
Who in prayer full oft have striven  
With the God they glorified;  
Now, their painful conflict o'er,  
God has bid them weep no more.*

*These are they who watched and waited  
Offering up to Christ their will.  
Heart, head and soul they consecrated  
Day and night to serve Him still;  
Now in God's most holy place  
They abide before His face.*