



Megiddo Message

"We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But...we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us. It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness."

—Abraham Lincoln

EDITORIAL

Our Heritage of Freedom

WE Americans today enjoy a heritage of freedom unequalled in the world. But this freedom did not come to us without a price.

We can trace our heritage back to the founding fathers and the days of the Revolutionary War. At the same time, we need to remember that man's struggle for freedom goes back even to 1215 when King John of England signed the Magna Carta. In written document for the first time were recognized the dignity of man and his inalienable right to certain specific privileges.

We should be grateful to our forefathers for their strong belief in individual liberty which prompted them to declare themselves free from a foreign yoke, to fight for their independence, and to add to our Constitution a Bill of Rights.

Had it not been for Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Adams and his correspondence committee, Paul Revere, Thomas Jefferson, and many others, it is anyone's guess as to what type of government we might have in our country today. But these great patriots paid a price.

Have you ever heard what happened to the Signers of the Declaration of Independence? First, what kind of men were they?

Twenty-four were lawyers and jurists. Eleven were merchants. Nine were farmers and wealthy plantation owners. They were men of means and well educated. They therefore signed the Declaration of Independence knowing full well that they might have to suffer, should they be captured by the British.

What happened to them?

Five signers were captured by the British as traitors and tortured before they died. Twenty had their homes ransacked and burned. Nine of the fifty-six fought and died from wounds or the hardships of war during the Revolutionary War. Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy trader and planter, saw his ships swept from the seas by the British Navy, was forced to sell his home to pay his debts, and died bankrupt. Thomas McKean

was so hounded by the British that he was forced to move his family constantly and keep in hiding. His possessions were confiscated, reducing him to poverty. British soldiers or vandals looted the properties of Effery, Clymer, Hall, Walton, Swinner, Heyward, Rutledge, and Middleton.

At the battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson, Jr., noting the British General Cornwallis had taken over the Nelson home for the British headquarters, quietly urged General Washington to open fire. The home was destroyed; Nelson died bankrupt.

Francis Lewis had his home and property destroyed. The British jailed his wife, who died within a few months. John Hart was driven from his ill wife's bedside. Their thirteen children fled for their lives. His fields and grist mill were destroyed. For more than a year he lived in forests and caves. Returning home after the war, he found his wife dead and his children vanished. A few weeks later he died from exhaustion. Both Morris and Livingston suffered similar fates.

Such are the stories that come down to us of the American Revolution. And these men were not wild-eyed ruffians. They were good-living men of means. They had temporal security, but they valued freedom and liberty more.

Today we live under the protection of the government they helped to found. Today the Constitution guarantees to us the rights for which they gave their lives. Do we appreciate it? Are we continually grateful to God who made all this possible—for us?

And now as we see our nation falling from the morality and principle which through the years has been its strength, are we holding firmly to our convictions? Ours is the solemn obligation to perpetuate the highest and holiest of ideals until a government surpassing the best that men can organize shall hold sway. Are we as ready to sacrifice ourselves for our Christian heritage as were those brave men who signed our Declaration of Independence? ●●

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Megiddo Means

"a place of troops"

—Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon

"a place of God"

—Young's Analytical Concordance

Geographically, Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, located at a strategic point, demanding heavy fortification; for Palestine is the age-old gateway between East and West, and the avenue connecting North and South. Supremacy there has long been the envy of aggressive nations, and the prevailing power has guarded it with jealous eye. The famous pass at Megiddo through a solid mountain range is the one means by which this avenue between continents may be traversed.

In the spiritual parallel, it is a place of troops, where soldiers are equipped for spiritual warfare against the forces of evil without and within. "The weapons we wield are not merely human but divinely potent to demolish strongholds; we demolish sophistries and all that rears its proud head against the knowledge of God; we compel every human thought to surrender in obedience to Christ" (II Cor. 10:4-5, NEB).

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What Are You Looking For?

THE question is a common one which each of us uses often. Someone has lost something and has instituted a search for it. He is rummaging here, there and everywhere, and if we break in upon the scene we inquire: "What are you looking for?"

But the question is more than a casual inquiry. It is the challenge which gives destination to life and keeps us continually thinking beyond ourselves and our small environment.

Looking for something suggests there is something we want that we do not have. What do you want? Is it recognition, the thrill of accomplishment, fame, or fulfillment? Is it a happy home, education, wealth, health, more leisure, or any one of a thousand goals that lure mankind?

This is the question the Bible poses. What are you looking for, anticipating, preparing towards? Where are your goals? Are they centered in this world or in the greater, glorious world to come?

If we are satisfied with the things at hand, the pleasures and experiences of sight and sound and taste and touch, we can disregard this question. But if we want something we cannot find here, something more lasting, something that we can call real living and expansion, then we ought to consider it seriously: *What am I looking for?*

The Bible uses the term "looking for" a number of times. Sometimes it is translated "look for" and sometimes "wait for," but the meaning is the same. Always it is associated with expectancy, concern, even anxiety. It is used where the people "waited for" Zacharias the priest to return and dispense the blessing (Luke 1:21). It is used in the question the people asked Jesus, as they wondered whether or not He was the Messiah: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Matt. 11:3). It is used several times in the book of Acts. The beggar at the Gate Beautiful gave heed to Peter and John because he was "expecting" to receive something of them (Acts 3:5). Cornelius, having seen a vision from God, "waited for" Peter and the brethren from Joppa (Acts 10:

24). When Paul was attacked by a viper on the island of Malta, the people "looked on" aghast, expecting him to die (Acts 28:6). In each instance there was tension, expectancy, eagerness or anxiety in the "looking for."

The verb "look for" is extremely important in the vocabulary of the Second Coming of Christ, where it carries the same tension and expectancy. It is used very early in the record of Jesus' life. Simeon was one who "waited for the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25) when Jesus was born. The Child of promise came as a fulfillment to those who "looked for redemption in Israel" (Luke 2:38).

Jesus Himself used this word of expectancy. He used it in His parable of the wise and evil servants to indicate that the master (Himself) would come in a day when the evil servant was not "looking for" him, and in an hour when he was not aware (Luke 12:46; Matt. 24:50)—a serious warning against the possibility of relaxing one's vigil. He used it again when He said, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that *wait for* their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately" (Luke 12:35-36). No placid settling down in complacency and idleness. No ease and leisure in this waiting. "Let your loins be girded"—for action; and "your lights burning"—with expectancy. For as surely as you relax the vigil, your lord will come.

After Christ was taken to heaven, His apostles continued to look ahead. Christ had lived and died and been resurrected and taken to heaven. The next great event in the sequence would be His return. Everything should be said and done in expectation of His return. Paul, writing to his son-in-the-faith Timothy, told of the power of the grace of God to teach us that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," all the while "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God [Christ, Imman-

uel, "God with us"—Matt. 1:23] and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2:11-13). Though Paul knew this "blessed hope" would not become a reality in his day, still he stressed the importance of living in expectancy—"looking" for it. This attitude of eagerness should impel the Christian believer to preparation in every age.

The "servant of Jesus Christ" who penned one short Epistle to "them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ" admonished them to keep building themselves up in their "most holy faith." Then he told them why: "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 1, 20-21). They were to keep alive the goal, the expectancy, the vision of the future. They were to keep "looking for" the mercy of Christ "unto eternal life," the reward that would be brought to them when Christ should come again.

More Looking

There are yet three significant "look fors" in the New Testament Epistles. They are found in the writings of the apostle Peter, that impetuous, outspoken, very human big fisherman who matured into an "elder" among the saints and who will be a "partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" (I Pet. 5:1). After describing the calamitous changes that will accompany Christ's return, he wrote: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (II Pet. 3:11-14).

We live in a generation that gives little or no thought to the expectation of our Lord's return. Present goals of pleasure and material profit totally absorb the masses of mankind, and any suggestion of divine intervention is thought of as an unwelcome intrusion, if it is considered seriously at all. The consequence is that we as Christian believers who are "looking for the blessed hope" of the ages must live and work daily in an atmosphere of near-total disbelief. This poses a continual threat to our faith. The attitude of indifference, if it worms its insidious way into our thinking, can be deadly. How diligently we should concentrate our minds each day, each hour, each

moment on the vision God has placed before us, to keep alive in our hearts the lively expectation and the eager longing of our confidence, "looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of . . . Jesus Christ."

The Event

We want to examine more closely the three "look fors" in the text of Peter's Epistle. The first look-for is the event which occasions the Christian's expectation: "Looking for and hasting unto the day of God." Something is going to happen. The "day of God" is coming. The day of men shall end. The coming of the "day of God" is the event which draws our gaze away from this world and centers our interest on the divine plan.

We are looking for the coming of the day of God. But this is not all Peter says. He gives added intensity to this expectation by the verb that follows: "looking for" and "*hasting unto* the coming" of God's great day. This does not mean we have any power to determine the date of its arrival; God has set the time; nothing we do can either advance or retard its arrival. What Peter is telling us is that we as believers are hastening toward that day with eager desire and fervent longing. We are intense, expectant, pressing with speed. We are running a race against time, against an unknown deadline—the coming of the "day of God."

The coming of the day of God is the day toward which all things move. It is the event which will open the way for a whole series of events which will culminate in God's will being done on earth as it now is done in heaven. It is the day when Christ, the "desire of all nations," will come and God will begin the work of filling the earth with His glory (Hag. 2:7).

It is also the day which will mark the beginning of the end of man's systems of management. Peter supplies a vivid symbolic description of this dissolution in which he borrows terms from the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 1:2, 10) and calls the ruling powers of earth the "heavens" and the people over whom they rule the "earth." The present arrangement will be destroyed by "fire," a term used often in Scripture to symbolize destruction, especially destruction caused by the judgments of God. When the "day of God" arrives, he says, "the heavens [the ruling powers of earth] being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (II Pet. 3:13). All who survive will have to pass through the purifying fire. It is a proclamation of doom upon every form and kind

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What Is Freedom?

THIS month our country completes the second century of its existence and enters its third. It is a fitting time to look back. Two hundred years ago our country embarked on a great experiment of freedom, and we have spent the days and years since then trying to understand and interpret this magnificent concept. Where are we now? What have we accomplished in these two hundred years? How near have we come to our ideal?

Looking over our nation's past, we see many things which are right, and, unfortunately, many things which are wrong.

First let us consider a few of the "right" things in our heritage of freedom. Removed as we are two hundred years from our country's birth, we cannot accurately judge the motives of the Founding Fathers. But we can say that they at least possessed a strong love of life and liberty and tried to the best of their ability to correct the flaws which they could see built into the laws of other countries. In shaping our government's structure and writing our laws, they used as a basis the principles of the Christian faith and the love of humanity. They possessed a firm, undergirding confidence in God as the Creator and ultimate Controller of all governments and peoples, and wove their belief into the very structure of the nation. Civil law and civil religion were one, as they saw it. Our coins today still bear witness to their faith, being inscribed with the words: "In God We Trust."

There is no doubt but that God's angel was guiding those early patriots as they worked to establish an independent government upon a new concept of freedom. God's angel was directing the mind of Thomas Jefferson during that memorable summer of 1776 as he drafted the document that has come down to us as the Declaration of Independence. He is said to have drawn its contents from no other book or pamphlet but to have written the declaration totally from his own knowledge of government and his own experience. This may be true, but God was behind it.

And as the idea of democratic government took root and began to grow, God was still watching. One of the most notable provisions of the new

Constitution was the separation of secular and ecclesiastical powers. For many years in the old world, citizens were compelled or at least expected to worship and support the state religion. The priests and the clergy were paid by the state. This system was highly successful from the standpoint of organization, but it was a system full of evils and abuses. Human nature being what it is, a monopolism under the direction of men seldom works to the benefit of all, especially in religious matters. The Founding Fathers were determined not to perpetuate this arrangement, and the new Constitution, before it was adopted, included a Bill of Rights which was designed to prevent such a possibility. Every citizen of the United States was to be forever free from having to support a religion he did not believe in. He was guaranteed the freedom to choose for himself. Of all freedoms we enjoy, none can excel this one, and we should never take it for granted. The majority of the inhabitants of this planet are not so fortunate. They live under conditions where religious activities are either prescribed, or at least circumscribed.

In addition to this most important freedom (of religion), we today enjoy many other freedoms denied the people of some other lands. Our government does not tell us where we must live. It does not specify where we must work, or at what we must work. Within our abilities the choice is ours. We can travel almost anywhere on earth, if we have the funds. The materials are at hand to build superior housing, which millions of earthborns only dream of. Our country is blessed with abundant natural resources, which it has learned to utilize for the common good. Our fields give bountiful harvests which supply an almost unlimited variety of foods for our sustenance. The technology possessed by this country is superior to that of any other country in the world.

To list the advantages and accomplishments of this land of the free during the first two centuries of its life would take many pages, in fact, many magazines the size of this one.

But in spite of these and the innumerable blessings bestowed on our nation and its citizens by the beneficent Creator, we also see many "wrong"

things in our country—*too* many. In fact, the wrong seems too often to overpower the right. Moral depravity has reached a low point unimagined even a few years ago. Organized crime continues to grow and flaunt the laws of the land with unassailable power. Racial discrimination still prevents all citizens from sharing equally in the blessings which are rightfully theirs. The high divorce rate is a disgrace to any country and reflects a basic dissatisfaction and an inability to meet the demands of modern life. The use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco has reached alarming proportions. The news is full of stories of stealing, murder, kidnapping, violence of all kinds. Lying, graft, and embezzlement by public officials are commonplace. Justice is often unequally administered, the rich and influential faring better than the poor.

Nevertheless, with all the wrongs in our country today, we still have the best country in the world in which a Christian can live. Much as we regret its flaws, we cannot overlook the blessedness of our heritage of freedom.

But just what is the meaning of freedom?

To the slave, it means emancipation from bondage. For the young, it means absence of parental control. To the scholar it means school is out, no classes to attend. This is fine. But what does it mean to the average citizen, or more specifically, to the Christian?

Recently a man came into our local post office to mail a letter. On his lapel was a large button which read, "If you feel like it, do it." Is this expressive of the modern idea of freedom? Is that man or woman *free* who does whatsoever he or she might *feel* like doing? How far is one to carry such a philosophy? *Is* that freedom?

One might feel like returning evil for evil to his neighbor. But will that make him any freer? Or he might feel like letting loose a stream of harsh and violent words in reprisal for a wrong. Does his ability to do this mean he is free?

The answer is *no*. The man who is subject to his own uncontrolled emotions is the farthest from free. I recently read a story which illustrates this point.

SON: "You say he called you a donkey, Dad?"

FATHER: "Yes."

SON: "What did you do about it?"

FATHER: "Nothing."

SON: "Well, if someone called me a donkey, I'd kick him."

FATHER: "Any donkey would naturally do just that."

Who is freer, the son who would give way to his animal nature and kick his insulter, or the father who restrained himself? The man who can

rule his own spirit and control his natural instincts is the *free* man. He is not a slave to every passion. He rules his feelings. He does not allow his feelings to rule him. As the apostle Paul so aptly expressed it, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection" (I Cor. 9:27).

If Christ's teachings while here on earth mean anything, they mean that the Christian must exercise control over his own spirit. This idea is built into the beatitudes.

"Blessed are the meek."

"Blessed are the merciful."

"Blessed are the pure in heart."

"Blessed are the peacemakers."

And among Jesus' last recorded words are these: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14).

The Christian who keeps God's commandments and controls his actions is the free man. He has freed himself from the reign of sin in his life and ultimately God will free him from the bondage of mortality. What greater freedom could one seek? The man who gives vent to his evil passions under the guise of "freedom" will end up outside the pearly gates, and be classed as a dog, a sorcerer, a whoremonger, a murderer, an idolater, or a liar.

An English professor recently wrote on the meaning of freedom. He said, in part: "The world does have problems, because freedom is not only a solution but misunderstood it can be part of the problem. When the idea of freedom degenerates into mere escape, we are in trouble."

This is exactly what we see happening on such a large scale in this country today. Freedom has become part of the problem. Mankind, governed by his natural instincts, is incapable of governing himself. The politician who has the most money to spend and promises the most benefits, regardless of his administrative ability, gets elected. The union business agent who can get his membership the largest pay raise, regardless of how it affects others, is sure of continuing in office. Criminals and their crooked lawyers lie and deceive and cover up until it is almost impossible to distinguish between the guilty and the innocent. Pornographers under the guise of freedom of expression poison the minds of youth and the law is helpless to interfere. The liquor industry makes millions of dollars annually catering to the weakness of human nature; and the drug peddler carries on his nefarious trade, corrupting the minds and ruining the lives of adolescents. And the law is unable to

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Dwell Deep!

IN THIS day of extreme spiritual shallowness and petty absorptions, two words from the prophet Jeremiah still ring with the divine authority of ages past: "Dwell deep." Spoken at the time of Edom's calamity, their message could hardly be more appropriate than to us today as we read them: "Dwell deep . . . saith the Lord" (Jer. 49:30).

We need the warning today, 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 today 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, righteousness and basic philosophies of life are sinking more and more to the lowest common denominator. And 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 floating along to some extent with their shallow ways.

Superficial religion is not enough. To meet and greet our Christian friends with pleasantness and assumed kindness 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 friendship must be founded in sincere brotherly concern for those of the household of faith. 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 be 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 overwhelming appreciation for the message of Him who has called us out of darkness into marvelous spiritual light and has permitted us a small glimpse into His plans. To sustain a living, working faith, we must feel an unshakable 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 must come 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 now 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 own 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 in a day like this must dwell deep if it is to survive. 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 power to withstand all the shocks and frustrations that lie between. ●●

What Are You Looking For?

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and place of evil; none but the good material will remain.

The New Creation

But for the righteous there is something beyond the scene of destruction. Notice Peter's contrasting description of the believers' expectation. "Nevertheless we [in contrast to the unbelievers] look for new heavens and a new earth."

The New Testament uses two words that are translated "new." One describes that which has just come into being for the first time, as a newborn child. The other describes that which is new in contrast with what is worn out. It is the latter which Peter uses.

The Christian's expectation is not *renewed* heavens and earth, but *new* heavens and earth. It is not the old renovated; it is a totally new creation. The old shall be gone entirely. A new government, under new management, over a new populace, shall replace the old system. This is the promise voiced by the ancient prophet of Israel: "Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" (Isa. 65:17).

How we need to remember this promise during these days of testing and world crisis. Everything here is only temporary. A new order is coming which will completely displace the old. However men may decry the Scriptures, the end is coming. However men may scoff, every true believer will be holding fast to the promise of God in faith and hope and love. For "nevertheless"—despite all human opposition and disbelief—"we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." This is the vision that spurs us on.

The Incentive

The third of Peter's look-fors is an incentive to develop the righteousness which will be the identifying mark of the new heavens and earth. If we would claim allegiance to the blessed hope, we must live the blessed life right here and now. Furthermore, we must be diligent to this end. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

Nothing less than an intelligent, intense, unrelenting "looking for" can move us to such holiness of life that we can be found of him "in peace,

without spot, and blameless." These are the words used to describe Christ's attainment, and they must become ours also. For we will be found in Him then only as we have lived in Him now. Someone has said that "In Christ" should be the Christian's permanent address. This alone will enable us to weather the mortal storm in these atomic times.

Imagine the exultant joy, the honor, the thrill of accomplishment in having Christ discover us at His coming unspotted, unblemished, perfect, pure! This was Peter's eager aim and intense longing. Let us make it ours also.

What are we looking for? Let our life provide the answer, that we may be found in Him and worthy of the power and great glory which He shall bring. ●●

What Is Freedom?

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stop it. And sad to say, this freedom extends even to religion, where it allows many false teachers and fake healers, some even claiming divine power contrary to the Word of God.

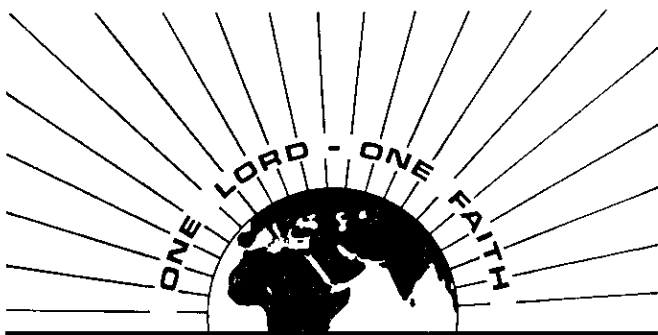
These are only a few of the visible cancers which are a direct result of freedom misunderstood. Self-government without self-restraint cannot succeed. It is certainly preferable to a dictatorship without restraint, but self-government is becoming less and less effective among freedom-minded people. To use Benjamin Franklin's words, "We are becoming unfit to govern ourselves." We might even change the tense and say we *have become* unfit to govern ourselves.

Communism legislates moral behavior by harsh, repressive measures. Our country claiming to be a Christian nation and founded on principles of justice and freedom should be an outstanding example of free and voluntary moral behavior. But unfortunately, this is not the case. In this area, many atheistic societies surpass us.

Many spiritual leaders today feel that the situation is not beyond hope, that our country can be turned around and restored to a God-fearing, law-abiding country. We do not wish to be pessimistic, but we believe they are wrong, if they depend upon men to accomplish this themselves. For human nature is not so inclined. A complete moral and spiritual regeneration will never happen under man's rule.

The situation, however is *not hopeless*. In fact, the future is bright, not only for our nation but for all the nations of the world. But it will take

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People God Used

Part 1

In this series of articles, we have looked briefly at the Bible, the written Word of God, and at the certainty of the God who inspired it. We have gleaned a few facts about the coming Kingdom of God and what it will be like. We have also discussed the life and work of Christ, the Son of God and the perfect example to us of the type of life that pleases God. We have surveyed the plan of God, which will culminate in a glorified planet, filled with inhabitants who under trial proved themselves to be of the highest quality of character; these are the "righteous" who will "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43). We have also talked about the possibility that we ourselves may have a part in that eternal Kingdom.

Do we realize what this means? You and I can become an eternal part of God's eternal Kingdom. This means that we can someday be accepted as members of His family, His own sons and daughters.

Think of being a son or daughter of the mighty God of heaven! Think of the honor of that relationship, and think of the permanence of that honor! For whom God chooses and glorifies He will never forsake.

Does such an honor seem too much for humble earthborns? No, the Bible promise is plain: "And ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:17-18).

When we talk about joining the family of God and the company of the saints from among earthborns, we are talking about a family whose legacy extends back nearly 6000 years on this planet. During nearly 6000 years God has been selecting the members of this highly privileged family. And since we are seeking membership among them, we want to know what the Bible has to say about some of its members. Learning about them should help us fit into the family of God.

From the Bible

FOR all our information about the early members of this family we are indebted to the Bible. And what a book it is! The inspired writer himself (this time, the apostle Paul), testifies to its value: the "things... written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15: 4). God meant for us to know something of what He has done with His people in ages past, how He worked with them, what He offered them, and what they accomplished as His people. So He had it recorded and preserved in the Scriptures. The Bible is this preserved record of God's dealings with men.

You will recall that the Bible is actually not one book but sixty-six, written by about forty different men over a period of some fifteen hundred years. Yet we have one book proclaiming one gospel and one God and one plan of salvation. Can you imagine forty different people all writing *at the same time* all telling the same story and proclaiming the same message and the same philosophy? Such a feat would be humanly impossible, to say nothing of their doing it over a period of fifteen hundred years. These facts alone prove that one divine Being was overseeing the work, that the men who wrote were "holy men of God" who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:21).

Now what about the Bible as the story of God's family?

The God of the Bible is the God of history as well, and much of the Bible story focuses upon His workings with His people as part of His overall plan.

The Beginning

The Bible opens with symbolic outline of the entire plan of God for the creating of a perfect world. Reading the book of Genesis, chapters 1-3, you might be tempted to conclude that here is an account of nothing more than the creation of the physical earth and the heavens, of men and animals, etc. But the Bible is not a scientific textbook; its purpose is not to tell how God created the physical universe, or when. The Bible tells us simply that God is the great Creator. Its purpose is to reveal the plan of God.

Were we to try to understand all the details given in Genesis, chapters 1-3, as literal, we would find ourselves involved in endless contradictions. Therefore we cannot believe this was God's intent

in causing it to be written. It is a Bible principle that we must compare "spiritual things with spiritual" (I Cor. 2:13). When we look upon the first of Genesis as an allegory, an account of God's Spiritual Creation, given to disclose spiritual truths for our guidance and inspiration, we find a story of great depth and beauty. We will look at the subject in greater detail in future articles. (If you wish further information on the subject, send now for our booklet "God's Spiritual Creation.")

Adam

The book of Genesis relates history in chapter 4, with the account of Adam and his wife Eve, the first people God called into His service. (We cannot accept the idea that Adam and Eve were the first two people created by God.) Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. Abel was righteous; and Cain, being extremely jealous of the favor Abel received, killed his brother. Cain might have had the honor of being the forebear of a race God would greatly use; but because of his wickedness he was cast out. And he "went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod" (Gen. 4:16). (Then Cain married a wife and founded a city—how could he do this if his parents were the first two people to inhabit the earth?)

Because Cain was wicked and Abel was dead, God gave Adam and Eve a third son, Seth, who was to be the forefather of such great characters as Noah, Abraham, and David.

This was long, long ago, but even in that early age God's selectiveness was evident. God wanted righteousness. God wanted faithfulness, so Cain was rejected. The human trait of jealousy was just as real and just as deadly then as it is today; human nature has not changed.

Noah

Of the next two millennia we are told very little in the Bible except for the story of Noah. The world became very wicked, so wicked that God decided the people He had been attempting to work with were not worth sparing. God appointed Noah as a "preacher of righteousness" (II Pet. 2:5), to tell the people of their wickedness and try to persuade them to turn to God. God also gave Noah specific instruction about a large vessel he should build, in which he and all who should listen to him might be spared from a great flood God was planning to send. Day after day for more than one hundred years Noah worked at the assignment God had given him, and preached to the people; but no one would listen. The Flood came, just as God had

predicted; and only eight souls—all of Noah's family—were spared.

God was just; He made known His displeasure with the wickedness of the people, and He gave them ample opportunity to turn to Him. But they would not believe. And the human trait of unbelief was just as real and just as deadly then as it is today; human nature has not changed.

Abraham

The next great Bible character was Abraham, a descendant of Noah, who lived about 2,000 B. C. Abraham occupies an honorary place in the plan of God, being called the "father of the faithful." His faith and obedience all through his long and active life was exemplary. Whatever the test, Abraham believed God. And Abraham obeyed. Because of his great faith and obedience, God promised that through his seed a great people should come, a people from whom God would select much material for His eternal Kingdom, and a people with whom God would deal as a nation for many centuries. God also gave to Abraham the greater honor of being called, figuratively, the "father of all them that believe" (Rom. 4:11).

(Continued on next page)

READ for Your LIFE!

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Abraham and his wife Sarah were visited by an angel in their old age, who told them that they would have a son. This child would be the means of fulfillment of all the promises God had given them, of blessing and honor and eternal reward. The word of the Lord was fulfilled, and Isaac was born. But even years later, when Isaac had grown to strong, noble manhood, righteous Abraham placed his commitment to obey God ahead of his love for his son Isaac. For when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son as a burnt offering, Abraham obeyed—and but for the sudden interruption of the angel of God would have slain Isaac with the knife. At this point Abraham's obedience was complete; his faith had been proven, and God vouchsafed to him the promise He had made years before: "Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore" (Gen. 22: 16-17).

It is recorded that "Abraham pleased God." The godly trait of obedience won the praise and honor of God then just as it does today; God's standard has not changed.

Abraham had *two* sons, Ishmael being the elder, Isaac the younger. Upon Ishmael also God conferred great blessings; but Isaac received the greater. And through Isaac was descended the people with whom God would be working in the years to come.

Isaac grew to manhood following in the steps of his godly father. He likewise had two sons; one, Jacob, was faithful; the other, Esau, was not.

Like his grandfather Abraham, Jacob was honored with several visits from God's angel during his lifetime. On one occasion the angel even changed his name—to "Israel." Jacob, or Israel, had twelve sons, who during a time of famine went with their father into Egypt. The family settled there and during the next several hundred years grew into the Nation of Israel, called the "children of Israel" or "Israelites" after their father.

But the Israelites were not well treated during all this time. Powerful, over-ruling Egyptian Pharaohs made them into a nation of slaves. However, they were a people with a destiny, and even in Egypt God did not forget them. He raised up a deliverer who would lead them to a new and better land, the Land of Promise, where they would be established as a nation.

And the God who delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt then will still deliver us from the bond-

age of sin and ignorance today—and will save us eternally in His kingdom, if we prove ourselves worthy of that deliverance. ●●

What Is Freedom?

(Continued from page 9)

divine intervention in the person of Jesus Christ to accomplish the turn-around. And then, people the world over will experience a new dimension to the word "freedom." Those who submit themselves to the laws and government of the new order will ultimately be made free—free from want, free from sorrow, free from oppression, free from pain, and free from death—forever. The Son of God will have made them free!

And "if the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." ●●

Fruitful

Fragments



Procrastination is not only the thief of time— it is the grave of opportunity.

You are not what you think you are: you are what you think!

Study the Bible to be wise; believe it to be elevated; practice it to be safe.

Fretting over present troubles makes us forget present blessings.

No one gets less pleasure from life than he who lives merely for pleasure.

Christians are like tea bags—they don't come to full strength unless they are put in hot water.

Sin is not a kitten to be petted but a deadly viper to be put to death.

A wolf in sheep's clothing is still a wolf.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Second Advent of Christ

WHEN Christ was born, the event went almost unnoticed. The exact date was not even recorded by historians of that period. Today the birth of Christ is recognized almost the world over as the Advent, an English word deriving from the Latin *adventus*, meaning "coming." Approximately one quarter of the world's population, or about one billion people identify themselves as Christians, meaning that they accept the fact that the Christ, the Son of God once lived upon the earth. The story of the birth in a manger, the angelic voices in the night, the shepherds, the wise men and the guiding star is sacred to millions of self-styled Christians who observe what they call Christmas.

But His Second Advent, an event that will eclipse His birth as the noonday sun outshines the firefly; His judgments, His kingship, are events almost unknown to a large segment of churches bearing the name Christian. His coming is "spiritualized" and His Kingdom is explained as the church, a here-and-now organization that bears His name.

The Bible clearly teaches two advents—the one past, the other future. The first was fulfilled according to prophecy, and we can know for a certainty that the second will be likewise. It will be the most portentous event ever to come upon the earth. Should we not learn all we can about the event that we may be better prepared for the Day when it arrives?

IV. CHRIST RETURNS—HOW?

Jesus Christ will return. On no other subject are the Scripture prophecies more profuse. The thought of His return brought great joy to the infant Church. Luke records in the book of Acts the message of the angels at His ascension, and in the book bearing his name he writes: "And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great

joy; and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God" (Luke 24:51-53). Christians today can rejoice in this same hope.

In our last study, we discussed the rapture. This is a subject that finds many variations between church groups. Some believe that there will be no rapture, no tribulation, no millennium. Others hold to the belief that a period of "great tribulation" will occur before Christ comes to rapture the believers, while others believe that Christ's coming and the rapture will occur before the "great tribulation."

All cannot be correct, for the Bible gives but one answer. There cannot be a diversity of views all based on the Bible. A careful study shows clearly that the first event will be Christ's coming, followed by the "great tribulation," or the "time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation" (Dan. 12:1; Rev. 7:14). Both of these terms apply to the same period of time, the Battle of Armageddon, which will ensue when Christ calls upon all nations to lay down their arms and surrender their allegiance to Him as King. Armageddon will be a really great tribulation, but it is the result of Christ's coming, not of an event that precedes it.

B. The Invisible Presence Theory

This doctrine, now promulgated and believed by the Jehovah's Witnesses, was alluded to in our last issue under the date-setting heading. The group fixed a date for Christ to return. When the year 1914 gave no visible evidence of Christ's return, rather than admit their mistake, these forerunners of the Witnesses began to teach that He really did come, although invisibly.

1. **The doctrine.** It is somewhat difficult to get a clear picture of the belief from the Watchtower publications because the explanations vary. But on one point all agree: Christ came in 1914 and is now reigning invisibly over the earth.

In the book, *Things in Which It Is Impossible for God to Lie*, we find the questions: "In what manner would Jesus return?"; "Would the world in general see Jesus come again?"; "At Christ's second presence, will He be visible to human eyes?"

The answers given state their position: "At the time that Jesus ascended to heaven, the two angels who appeared did not say that the onlooking apostles would see 'this Jesus' come again... The angels' words, 'thus in the same manner,' do not say 'thus in the same body.' As to the manner of his going away, a cloud caught him up from their vision so that he became invisible to them. His return would therefore be invisible... The world in general did not see Jesus going into heaven; only the disciples... The words 'thus in the same manner' would accordingly mean that the world of mankind would not see him come again... The natural eyes of the world of mankind will never see Jesus Christ again on earth" (p. 330).

"The return of Jesus Christ from heaven is as a spirit person," says the text, because He was "resurrected as a spiritual body, and was made alive in the spirit." Hence, "His second presence (*parousia*, Greek) is unseen to natural human eyes. When Jesus ascended to heaven before his

onlooking disciples, a cloud rendered him invisible to them. Certainly if he came again, even with a literal human body, and was accompanied by clouds and had to remain at cloud level above the earth, nearsighted people on earth would not be able to see him, except with powerful binoculars or telescopes" (pp. 332, 333).

2. The doctrine vs. the Scriptures. The evidence used to prove the doctrine of an "invisible presence" at a level somewhere above the earth is flimsy at best, and at its worst it is an outright contradiction of the Bible. The Watchtower publication states that the two angels **did not say** that the apostles would see "this Jesus" come again, but this statement is contrary to fact. **Ten different well-known translations**, (including the Watchtower's own New World Translation) all **render the text "this Jesus," "this same Jesus," or "this very Jesus,"** proving beyond doubt that the angels did say that it was the same Jesus who went away who would return.

New Testament Words That Speak of the Second Advent

The common language of the people of Palestine, including the Jews, at the time of Christ was Aramaic. But the business language and the public language widely written and read was Greek. Hence the New Testament was written in Greek.

When the New Testament speaks about the Second Advent of Christ, it uses one of three Greek words: *parousia*, *epiphaneia*, and *apokalupsis*. Each word carries the idea of "coming," but with slight variations of significance. We will look briefly at each word.

1) *Parousia* (pronounced par-a-si'a). The Jehovah's Witnesses lean heavily upon this word for proof of their "invisible presence" theory, but a study of the word and its usage does not support their theory.

Parousia has for its meaning "presence," and is so translated in the phrase "his bodily presence is weak," speaking of Paul in II Corinthians 10:10. It is also translated frequently "coming" as in Matthew 24:3: Lord, "what shall be the sign of thy coming [*parousia*]?" and also "Christ, the firstfruits; afterward, they that are Christ's at his coming [*parousia*]" (I Cor. 15:23). It is translated the same in II Peter 3:4, "Where is the promise of his coming [*parousia*]?" Peter again used the word in reference to the Second Advent in II Peter 1:16.

According to the *Arndt and Gingrich Lexicon*, "This

word is used of Christ, and nearly always of His Messianic advent in glory to judge the world at the end of this age." It is so used in I Thessalonians 3:13, "... at the coming [*parousia*] of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints," an obvious reference to the Second Advent. When Paul wrote of being comforted "by the coming of Titus" (II Cor. 7:6), he used the same word, *parousia*, and again when he is "glad of the coming [*parousia*] of Stephanas" (I Cor. 16:17).

"Characteristically, in the New Testament *parousia* is the word for the Second Coming of Christ. What kind of picture would it convey to the minds of the early Christians? In Hellenistic Greek, *parousia* is the technical word for the arrival of an emperor, a king, a governor or a famous person into a town or province. For such a visit preparations have to be made... Always the coming of the king demands that all things must be ready."

It is also said that it was common to date a new era from the *parousia* of the emperor. A new king would mean a new dating of time.

With this in mind, Mr. Barclay comments as follows on the use of the word in the New Testament:

a. It is used as the basis of a demand to preserve life blameless against the coming of the king. The preparations must be made. (I Thess. 3:13; 5:23; I

The statement that Jesus was resurrected as a "spiritual body" and therefore will return as a "spirit person" is without Scriptural support. After His resurrection, Jesus made a surprise appearance at an assembly of His disciples. Recognizing Him in their midst, "they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit."

Jesus' own words prove conclusively that He was no "spirit." He said, "Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? [Why do doubts rise in your minds? (NIV) **Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have**" (Luke 24:36-39). And as if further proof were necessary, He asked them for something to eat, "And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them" (vs. 42-43). He was the same Jesus that had been crucified, not a spirit or ghost.

The argument concerning the clouds with which

Christ went away and with which He is to return borders on the ridiculous. Were Jesus to return in a literal cloud, there would be nothing to prevent His returning all the way to the earth, for He has the power of God at His disposal. He would not be forced to stop at "cloud level."

We believe that the Bible teaches the "clouds" to be more than the clouds of heaven which we see every day. The "cloud" present at the Ascension was a cloud of angels. Luke reported in the book bearing his name that He was "carried up into heaven," and in the Acts that He was "taken up," indicating the presence of unseen hands lifting Him from the earth. We learn from Psalm 68:17 that "the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels," and from Psalm 104:3 that the "clouds" are His "chariots."

Another text used by the Witnesses to support their "invisible presence" theory is I Timothy 6:16: "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no

John 2:28).

b. It is used as a reason for patience. "Be patient therefore, brethren unto the coming [*parousia*] of the Lord" (Jas. 5:7-8). The day is coming when the coming of the King will right all wrongs.

c. It is spoken of as something to desire and to pray for: "Looking for and hasting unto the coming [*parousia*] of the day of God" (II Pet. 3:12). He who awaits Christ has something beyond. . . . The Christian is one who awaits a king. ‡

2) *Epiphaneia* (pronounced e-pi-fan'e-a) This Greek word has the meaning of "appearing." According to the *Arndt and Gingrich Lexicon*, "it is used in the New Testament only of Christ's appearing on earth": 1) of coming in Judgment; 2) of Jesus' first appearance on earth (II Tim. 1:10).

The word is sometimes used of Christ's First Advent, but more often with reference to His Second Advent. Some examples of its use are:

a. I Timothy 6:13-14. "I give thee charge . . . that thou keep this commandment . . . until the appearing [*epiphaneia*] of our Lord Jesus Christ"

b. II Timothy 4:1, 8. "...the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick [living] and the dead at his appearing [*epiphaneia*] and his kingdom." A crown of righteousness is laid up for Paul in that Day,

as well as "all them also that love his appearing [*epiphaneia*]."

c. Titus 2:13. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing [*epiphaneia*] of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

3) *Apokalupsis*, (pronounced a-pok-a-lup'sis). This word means "revelation, be revealed, or to lighten." It is from the Greek *apokalupsis* that the word "Apocalypse" derives, another name used for the book of Revelation.

Arndt and Gingrich say of this word: 1) "Used of the revelation of truth in general, as in Luke 2:32, 'a light to lighten the Gentiles'; 2) "Used of revelations of a particular king, through the author, as Rev. 1:1"; 3) "Used in the eschatological sense of the disclosure of secrets belonging to the last days, of the *parousia*."

As examples of the number three definition the *Lexicon* gives: "That when his glory shall be revealed [*apokalupsis*] ye may be glad . . . with exceeding joy" (I Pet. 4:13); also, "That the trial of your faith, . . . might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing [*apokalupsis*] of Jesus Christ . . . be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:7, 13). ●●

‡ William Barclay, *New Testament Words*, pp. 223-224.

man hath seen, nor can see."

From this text they deduce that no one will ever be able to see Christ. But were we to accept this explanation, we would also be saying that no man has ever seen Christ, something we know to be untrue. Christ was seen by multitudes before His crucifixion and by as many as 500 brethren after His resurrection. Reading verse 16 in connection with verses 14 and 15, we see that Jesus Christ is the One who only has immortality. But the "light which no man can approach unto" in which He [Christ] dwells can only be that of His Heavenly Father—and it is He, God, "whom no man hath seen, nor can see."

Matthew 5:8 promises that the pure in heart, the righteous, will see God at some future Day, but that will be after they have been glorified and made like the angels of God (Luke 20: 35-36). Man in his mortal state has not seen and will not see God. **Only after man has attained immortality will he be permitted to dwell in the "light which no man can approach unto" now. Then, and not until then, can he see God.**

C. How Will Christ Come?

The Bible teaches that Christ's second coming will be seen, heard and known. To try to prove otherwise is to flout the plain teachings of the Scriptures.

1. Christ's coming will be seen: "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:27). Lightning is, above all things, visible! It cannot be easily concealed, even by clouds.

"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Mk. 13: 26; Luke 21:27). "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him" (Rev. 1:7). "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2). **Here we have testimony of three of the Gospel writers that we will actually see Christ with our own eyes at His second coming—not that He will be seen by our "eyes of discernment" but that He will be literally seen by the eyes of men.**

2. Christ's coming will be heard. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (I Thess. 4:16). "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt.

24:31). The sound of God's trumpet in the hands of His angels will resound throughout the earth as He gathers His people together. When the Law was given from Sinai all the people trembled at "the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud" (Ex. 19:16). The sound of the trumpet was often used as a signal of something important about to happen and it will be so used at Christ's coming.

3. Christ's coming will be sudden. Jesus stressed the suddenness of His coming in His teaching. He compared it to the coming of a thief, not in the sense of coming stealthily, but that He would come unexpectedly. "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" were His words to the disciples. "Watch...lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping" (Mk. 13:33, 35-36). "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Lk. 12:40). A few will be looking for Him, but to the masses He comes unexpected.

4. Christ's coming will be glorious. Christ's return will be the climax of history. It will bring to an end one phase of God's plan and usher in a new era—an era of peace and prosperity heretofore unknown. Should we not expect it to be spectacular?

Christ Himself described His coming as with "great glory," and also "in the glory of his Father" (Matt. 24:30; 16:27). Paul looked "for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of... Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2:13).

His second coming will be in sharp contrast to His first advent. He was born a baby, as helpless as any other infant, and as a child was carried by His parents into Egypt to escape the wrath of a cruel Herod. But when He returns in glory, He will have the power to subdue all the powers of earth and will reign with undisputed authority, the King of kings.

The glory of the Lord was evident on many important occasions throughout the Bible. It symbolized the presence of God. When the tabernacle was set up in the wilderness, "the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle"; when Solomon had finished building the temple and the people gathered for the dedication, "the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord" (Ex. 40:34; I Kings 8:11). And the promise is that when His plan is complete, "all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14:21).

Reprints of these studies are available upon request.

"For a time is coming when men will not tolerate wholesome instruction, but, wanting to have their ears tickled, they will find a multitude of teachers to satisfy their own fancies, and will close their ears to the truth and will turn away to fables"

—II Timothy 4:3-4, *Weymouth*

The Great APOSTASY

(Book Feature: Part Two)

"And It Came to Pass . . ."

GOD had spoken, and His word was destined to be fulfilled. But fulfillment did not come as one great dynamite explosion. It was gradual, as the light of day fades slowly when the sun has set. There is an interval of twilight while the darkness slowly envelops the land.

So it was with the sunset upon the day of spiritual enlightenment as the night of ignorance and superstition settled over all mankind. It was not the event of a moment; it took centuries.

The Roman Empire, into which the early Church had come, was a land predominantly pagan. There were various grades of religion. The philosophers recognized some supreme deity, though vaguely. The religion of the poets and artists was æsthetic, finding expression in a variety of deities: Zeus, Apollo, Venus, etc. These deities were thought of as the personified forces of Nature. Then there was the religion of the common people, a superstitious worship of malignant gods, demons, devils, also men-gods and god-men. Also there were the mystery cults, in which abominable rites were practiced.

Actually the ministry of Christ touched only an obscure corner of the Roman world. Yet the triumph of His resurrection imparted such indomitable conviction to the apostles that these men, aided by the power of the Holy Spirit, launched the greatest missionary venture in history. Tremendous things had happened—oh, that the world might hear of them! And so they went forth, zealous men of faith and courage, covering the miles from Palestine to Macedonia, from Italy to Spain, proclaiming everywhere the message of the one true God, the resurrected Christ, and the coming Messianic Kingdom. Wherever they found

ears to hear, they established churches where men and women, fired with the zeal and vigor of living faith, proclaimed the message to others. Thus Christianity flourished and spread in the first century, despite intermittent and severe persecutions from over-zealous Jews and Roman authorities.

But as the Church grew, there came

A Change

Slowly, at first almost imperceptibly, there came a change in attitude. Earnest and alert members of the Church could sense a subtle shift in emphasis, a weakening of moral stamina, together with alterations in basic Christian thinking and belief. What was it all about? Even Paul could see it in his day. "The mystery of iniquity," he wrote, "doth already work."

There were several reasons. First of all was the effect of time. The impact of Christ and His apostles was receding further and further in the forgettable past. This meant that less and less firsthand information was available. Connections were lost, and old stories, told and retold, lost their meaning as men became more and more involved in the present cosmos.

Secondly, the power of the Holy Spirit, which had brought conviction to thousands during the early days of the Church, was no longer present to convince and convict and "confirm the word." Its purpose having been accomplished and the written message of God having been completed, it had been withdrawn.

There was yet another cause for the change. As the Church grew, it came more and more into contact with secular-minded people of the Empire. Men and women were converted to Christianity who were more concerned with the affairs of State than with the affairs of the Church. This point is verified by historian Donald Spence, who

treats the subject of primitive Christianity. He writes:

"For the first 150 years of its existence, the story of Christianity is the story of a separate people: of something apart from the Empire. But after the death of Marcus their numbers and influence brought the Christians into daily contact with the Government in Rome or in one or other of the provinces" (*Early Christianity and Paganism*).

The very contact with the life of the nation proved infectious, for the rites of polytheism were so closely interwoven with all aspects of business and pleasure that one could scarcely escape their influence without breaking completely with the Imperial system. Jesus and His apostles had taught the necessity of such a separation, that Christians were to live *in* the world without being *of* the world. But their warnings were laid aside as new converts pursued daily life in much the same manner that they had when worshipping with the pagans.

The change in Christianity was accelerated by those who became its new exponents. Lacking the proper understanding of what the teachings of Jesus really were, they intermingled their own opinions. The message of the Gospel became the property of those who fashioned and interpreted it to suit themselves.

Perhaps the most serious factor among the causes of the apostasy was the contamination of Christian faith itself. As Christianity spread, it came more and more into the hands of the educated and cultured part of Roman society. Because of its sound, sensible foundation and clear thinking, it held special appeal to minds accustomed to principles of reason and logic. But these were men whose training had been grounded in the thinkings of Greek philosophy; and quite naturally they interpreted Christian teaching according to *their* ideas—their education, their rhetoric, their theology, their reasonings. Furthermore, they saw in Christianity a message which could be combined effectively with their thinking and presented to the world with an even stronger appeal than either philosophy or Christianity could have had alone.

Greek philosophy presented an insidious—and deadly—challenge to the true faith from its earliest days. Paul solemnly warned Timothy against its corrupting influence: "Have nothing to do with pointless philosophical discussions—they only lead further and further away from true religion" (II Tim. 2:16, Jerusalem Bible). Also to the Church at Colosse he wrote: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit [which

are] after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8).

But as time passed, the warnings were disregarded, and what Paul had foreseen became reality. The message of Christ was fresh, it was plain, it was simple. But it was *too* simple. And as the first and second and third century thinkers began to debate and discuss and reason and write about it, treating the true message as though it were the wisdom of this world, slowly there developed a new doctrine—wider in its appeal, but totally transformed in message and thinking. It was not philosophy, and it was not mysticism, and it was not Christianity, but a combination of all three.

This "new" faith, incorrectly called "Christianity," was presented to the world as such and soon became the religion of the State.

The secular victories of the new religion were many.

- 1) The new faith presented an easier way of life.
- 2) The new faith was acceptable to a broad cross section of people, providing temporal security and promoting peace and order and unity in a deteriorating Empire.
- 3) The "Christian" Church became the civil and sacred authority, a position it would hold for centuries to come.
- 4) The new religion, accepted by Constantine as the property of the State, could spread freely to all.

But let us emphasize: Christianity as a power within the Roman Empire was *not* the teaching of Jesus and His apostles. It was Christian in name only, for it was paganism and philosophy in new guise.

New Doctrines

The new Christian Church, as a result of its joining with the ideas of philosophy and paganism, adopted in the early centuries many new beliefs which came to be officially recognized at the various councils of the Church.

New doctrines centered around new ideas and concepts of God as a spirit or essence, rather than a real being; of Christ as a being eternally existent with His Father; of Christ as part God and part man by nature, or all God; of the Holy Spirit as a personal visitant rather than a special power direct from God. All ideas did not concur immediately. Discussion and debates were long, often heated, even violent at times as one school of thought contended against another. Some thought of Christ as a man; others contended that He was

God. Some thought of Christ as having literally descended from God; others said He was the *Logos*; still others debated whether He was created or uncreated substance or spirit.

Other new doctrines centered around salvation. Some readily adopted the pagan idea of atonement, using Christian terminology, and pictured Christ as suffering once for all men. As far as attaining to salvation, the old idea of the immortal soul was generally accepted, though not a teaching of the Bible. The councils even defined what happened to the man who died at various points of life, inside or outside the Church.

The immortal-soul concept evolved quickly into a vivid picture of living spirits, enjoying the ephemeral blisses of a heavenly realm or suffering the eternal agonies of burning hell. And along with hellfire came its chief agent and wildly described superintendent, Satan.

So the false doctrines grew and multiplied, while the light of true religion faded steadily, with fewer and fewer loyal adherents proclaiming its unchangeable truths.

New Practices

Along with the new doctrines came a whole set of new practices—many of them borrowed or bought directly from the pagans.

There was reason for the adopting of pagan practices. Christianity was spreading in a world that was predominantly pagan, and in order to secure the loyalty of people firmly established in pagan practices, the Church thought it expedient to welcome the pagan people without unduly disturbing those customs to which they were attached. Pope Gregory I followed the pattern when he adeptly instructed his missionaries not to destroy innocent pagan customs which seemed inconsistent with Church doctrine, for they could be woven into the fabric of Christian ceremony.

Pagan temples were closed, and the worship of idols forbidden. But pagan deities were far from forgotten. For instance, as pagans had worshiped Isis, mother of the Egyptian god Horus in her aspect as the mother of Horus, now Isis could be identified with the Virgin Mary holding the divine child in her arms.

It was the policy of the Church to take over pagan festivals endeared to the people by tradition, and to give them a Christian significance. For example, Mithraism had been a formidable rival of Christianity. The birthday of the god Mithras was observed on December 25; that date was also recognized as the Nativity of the sun god Sol. It was also the season of the old Saturnalia, the most im-

moral feast that ever disgraced pagan Rome. The Church fathers, recognizing the strong appeal of these December festivals for the pagan world, took counsel and decided that they could retain them and Christianize (?) them by placing the celebration of Christ's birth at that time (how accurately fulfilling Daniel's prophecy that "times and laws" should be changed!).

The changes were too numerous to mention here. Suffice it to say that the divine prophecy was abundantly fulfilled.

Religious and Secular History Confirm

It is assuring to note that secular history and religious histories confirm the literal happening of what the Bible had forecast.

We will quote from several.

"The Church was in the beginning a community of brethren. All of its members were taught of God, and each possessed the liberty of drawing for himself from the divine fountain of life. . . . But the writings of these very apostles forewarn us that from the midst of these brethren, there shall arise a power which shall overthrow this simple and primitive order."

—*The History of the Reformation*, by D'Aubigne

"Evidently the same feeling was working in Tertullian at Carthage as actuated Hippolytus in Rome; a persuasion that the church in the persons of its responsible leaders had left its first love, and was sanctioning a more lax and easy way than had been set forth as the pattern of life by the Apostles and the teachers of the first hundred years of the existence of Christianity as a religion and a life. These troubles arose from the changed conditions, notably from the numbers and social position of the Christians, who were now largely recruited from the class which would naturally participate freely in public life. Hence the problem: Were Christians to 'come out from the world,' . . . or were they to go on a worldwide mission by more or less adapting themselves to Roman society, its ways, its laws, its customs? The Church, face to face with this new and changed position, chose the second alternative; to use the graphic language of a modern scholar: 'She marched through the open door into the Roman State, and settled down there for a long career of activity.' To do this the Church in some way had to abandon its old discipline, its apostolic simplicity."

—*Early Christianity and Paganism*, by Donald Spence.

"There were those in the first ages of the church who modified the religion of Christ by joining it with the Oriental philosophy, in regard to the

sources of evil and the origin of this material universe.... Hence there necessarily arose among them a multitude of opinions, which were extremely foreign to the precepts of Christ. As these extraordinary opinions required proof which it was not easy to find in the writings of the Apostles, recourse was had to falsehoods and impositions. Hence, as each one endeavored to accommodate his own philosophical opinions to the Christian religion, it was the necessary consequence that various systems of religion were produced. The noble simplicity and the majestic dignity of the Christian religion were lost, or at least impaired when the philosophers presumed to associate their dogmas with it. It appears, from a variety of testimonies, that they much preferred Plato, and embraced most of his dogmas concerning God, the human soul, and the universe....

"The new species of philosophy adopted by Origen and others, did immense harm to Christianity. For it led the teachers of it to involve in philosophic obscurity many parts of our religion, which were in themselves plain and easy to be understood; and to add to the precepts of the Saviour not a few things, of which not a word can be found in the Holy Scriptures....

"Genuine piety was supplanted by a long train of superstitious observances, which originated partly from opinions inconsiderately embraced, partly from a preposterous disposition to adopt profane rites and combine them with Christian

worship.... It would require a volume to detail the various impositions which were, for the most part successfully practiced by artful knaves after genuine piety and true religion were compelled to resign their dominion in great measure to superstition." —*Ecclesiastical History*, by Mosheim

"During six hundred years the gospel was the way of truth and salvation, but the Christians insensibly forgot both the laws and example of their founder.... True religion lay buried under a senseless mass of superstitions, and was unable to raise her head."

—*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, by Gibbon.

We can take the Bible in one hand, and history in the other and prove the Bible divine. The God of heaven could and did inspire His holy men to foretell events hundreds and thousands of years before they occurred.

Jesus had delivered to His apostles the pure, unadulterated truth, which they had carried to the world. The God of heaven had inspired men to write what was true. But Church leaders, more intent on popularity and power than on purity and truth, altered their message to suit their own fancy, until the original truth was no longer discernible, and "true religion lay buried under a senseless mass of superstition, and was unable to raise her head."

(NEXT MONTH: *The Power of Darkness Identified*)

An old-fashioned story for children to remind all of us that religious freedom has not been the heritage of everyone in all ages—

Safely Hidden

THERE lived during the reign of Queen Mary in England a blacksmith in the village of Har-rant. His small house joined the shop with a fine garden in the rear. The blacksmith's most precious possession was a leather-bound copy of the Bible, even though Queen Mary had forbidden any one to read that Book anywhere in her kingdom. The penalty for reading it was death.

The blacksmith's wife was dead, and his little blue-eyed daughter spent many hours that would otherwise have been lonely, playing about her fath-

er's shop, watching the bright sparks fly upward from the great forge, and making believe they were all jewels.

The little girl's name was Elsie.

One morning when she went out into the shop after her tasks were done, she found her father standing behind the door with his precious Bible in his hands, reading the sacred page with bent head. So intent was he in this that he did not hear her as she entered. So Elsie, not wishing to disturb him, kept very quiet.

She was greatly surprised to see that when her father had finished reading, he picked up a stick that stood behind the door, and touched the heavy beam above the door with it. As he did this, a block of wood fitted on hinges fell forward, disclosing an opening in the beam just large enough to hold the Bible.

The blacksmith thrust the Book into the space, leaving no sign of the opening. Then he turned

and saw Elsie staring at him, her eyes wide with surprise.

"Little daughter," he said sternly, "how dare you spy on me!"

Elsie's blue eyes filled with tears and she said with sobs in her voice, "I was not spying, Father, but you did not hear me come in, and I could not help seeing you hide the Holy Book. That is such a good place. I am sure all the Queen's soldiers could never find it."

"See that you tell no one where it is," said the blacksmith, still sternly.

"Have no fear, Father," returned the child. "I love the good Book as you do, and would guard it, if necessary, even with my life!"

"At the same time," replied the father, "I'd feel safer if you knew not its place of concealment. These are dark days for us. The Queen has ordered that all Bibles be gathered up and burned, and it is certain death to be found with one in my possession. Yet I cannot find it in my heart to part with my Bible. It is the only copy left between Harrant and the sea. Let me warn you again: tell no one of its whereabouts."

There followed dark days for the blacksmith of Harrant and all those who believed as he did. Agents of the Queen were sure that there was a Bible hidden somewhere in Harrant, and the town was searched again and again. The people of the village stoutly refused to accept the Queen's religion, and since the blacksmith was the only one among them who could read, he was thrown into prison.

Elsie's heart was very sad, and she spent lonely days in spite of the kindness of her neighbors. Her rosy cheeks grew paler and paler when she remembered the hidden Bible, and what her knowledge of it and her promise to her father might mean.

One day the soldiers came to Harrant and searched every house. "We'll burn the house and shop of the blacksmith," Elsie heard them say. "In case a Bible is hidden there, it will surely be destroyed."

As the soldiers approached the house, the little girl fled swiftly down the garden path and out upon the moor where she lay flat on her face, trembling amid the bushes.

She was terrified lest the soldiers might find her and, by torturing her, make her reveal the hiding-place of her father's treasure, which she knew was of more value than the crown jewels.

She began to breathe more freely as she heard the soldiers marching away. Then the smell of burning wood struck fresh terror to her heart. She

looked up to see that the thatched roofs of the cottage and shop were already in a blaze.

Then Elsie forgot all about herself. She remembered only that her father had said that his Bible was the only one between Harrant and the sea, and that it must be protected even at the risk of her life; and she was ready to obey.

Swift and sure as an eagle in its flight, she sped homeward past the departing soldiers, who in the approaching dark did not see the little figure who darted past them and entered the burning shop.

The angry flames scorched her clothing and blistered her face and hands before she reached the beam above the door where the Bible was hidden. She seized it in a firm clasp and in a few moments staggered out the door. When she reached the garden again, she sank on her knees, suffering with pain, and choking with the smoke that filled her lungs, but with a prayer of thanksgiving in her heart.

Then to make sure that the Book would be safe, she slipped off her woollen skirt and wrapped the Bible in it. Digging in the garden soil with blistered hands, she buried it from sight. She then crawled to the pump, and tried to bathe her face and hands in cool water.

There, an hour later, the villagers found her unconscious. They began at once to help her, and soon she was able to speak to them. They comforted her and praised her, and they went with her to the place where she had buried the Bible. Each man promised to guard it with his life. You may be sure also that as long as they lived, they told Elsie's story to their children and continued to praise her for her bravery.

Times grew better in England, and the people gradually came to have more religious freedom. Many years afterward when Elsie's great granddaughter went with her Puritan husband across the ocean to make her home on the lonely New England shores, she carried the Bible of the blacksmith of Harrant with her to her new home.

Now in our wonderful country we do not have to hide the Bible for fear of punishment. But God does want us to read His Word and hide it in our hearts, so we can have it with us all the time.

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." ●●

What is the largest room in the world? Room for improvement.

**Kathy
Kandor's
Korner**

Kindness Can Burn!

ILL get even with that Linda!" Janet's angry young voice alerted me that there was trouble afoot. Something had gone wrong. I laid my pencil on the desk, folded my papers and went out to meet the girls in the vestibule. Janet and Brenda were just coming in from picking raspberries.

"I'll make her wish she'd kept quiet. I know how to make her smart!"

Brenda went into the kitchen and carefully set a basket on the table.

"What do you mean you'll get even, Janet?" I tried to interpose, casually.

"Linda told a lie on me—she's telling it all around school. Just because I studied harder and did better on the history test than she did. She says I cheated! Somehow I've got to get even with her!"

"I really wish you wouldn't, Janet," I pleaded with her.

"But Mom!"

"Getting even won't help anything, Janet," I persisted. "It won't help you, and it won't help Linda."

"But Mom, it just makes me boil. Linda telling a story like that all around school. What will everyone think of me!"

"Janet," I put the question to her squarely: "Did you cheat?"

"No, I did not. And Linda knows it."

"Then you don't have to worry about anything Linda tells about you. If you did right, God knows and He will take care of it. Remember what Jesus said about what we should do when people speak evil about us falsely? Did He say we should get angry?"

Brenda had the answer. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall

say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."

I looked at Janet's flaming cheeks and into her flashing eyes. "When someone tells something about you that is false, you don't have to worry."

"Then I suppose I just let Linda go on telling more lies about me!" Janet was belligerent.

"Leave her to God, Janet. If you try to get even, you'll be interfering with God's business and making more trouble for yourself."

"But Mom, you have no idea what it's like to have someone circulating a story about you. It just sets me off!"

"But Janet, what good does your anger do? It doesn't hurt Linda, and it *does* hurt *you*. See how unhappy you are right now. Janet, when you try to injure another person, even if just to 'get even,' you injure yourself more." I placed my hand on her shoulder. "What does God say about vengeance?"

"Well, er-r-r," Janet stammered.

"Help her out, Brenda," I suggested, nodding to Brenda who was listening intently.

"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

"Come on in where it's cooler, girls," I invited, noticing the beads of perspiration on their faces. I've had the air conditioner on a little this afternoon in the den. I've been trying to get a few letters written."

"Now Janet," I began when the girls were comfortably seated and enjoying a glass of cool lemonade that Brenda had found for each of us in the refrigerator. "Do you still want to get even with Linda?"

"Of course I do!" Janet's answer was emphatic. She was still feeling the effects of the lie Linda had circulated about her.

"Well, if you really want to get even, the Bible tells of a very sure way."

Janet looked surprised. She hadn't expected this. "What is it?" she asked.

"It is to heap coals of fire on her head. You know what that means."

Janet's face fell. She knew, we had talked about these coals of kindness only a few days ago, coals that make your enemy burn with shame for what he did.

"If I do something kind to Linda, for the wrong she did me, that won't hurt her any."

"You try it once," I urged. "Treat Linda kindly. Do her a real favor when you have a chance, and just see if she isn't ashamed and unhappy about the wrong she did you."

(Continued on page 28)

Growing and Growing

AS I watch our young children grow, I am continually reminded of my own spiritual growth.

Children grow so fast and learn so much from infancy onward—to the toddler stage, to school age. How to grasp, how to crawl, how to walk and talk and reach and climb, how to read and write—all these skills and so many more are developed in less than ten years.

I often think that if I can grow at a comparable pace in developing my Christian skills, if I can have that same perseverance and determination in my character building, my own growth into a mature Christian will be as phenomenal.

It is a joy to see a child's attitude toward the world around him—so curious, so often trusting, so filled with expectancy and eagerness for something new. Here again I find a parallel in my own Christian life. What is my attitude toward the little challenges I meet every day? Do I have a keen desire to learn God's laws? Do I trust absolutely His plan and its ultimate fulfillment even though I may not understand everything that lies between? Only as I become eager to expand my

knowledge and experience in divine things can I make maximum spiritual growth.

Guiding our children in *their* character growth is very beneficial to *my* character growth. First, it means that I must be watchful all the time of the example I am providing them. Their understanding of Christian virtue is determined by what they see in their parents. This thought keeps me "on my toes" spiritually.

Then, as someone has said, an apple never rolls very far from the tree. Our children are likely to have the same personality traits as their parents. By observing them, we learn so much about ourselves and the areas in which we need to watch and change and improve.

Children provide such open, all-round, typical examples of human nature.

There is a parallel, too, between their relationship to us their parents and our relationship to our heavenly Father. Our little ones have to be impressed on a point over and over and over again, sometimes with strong disciplinary action. Obedience doesn't always come easily. Isn't that the way God deals with us, His earthly children? We need to remember this relationship to Him and how open and obvious to Him are all our little schemes and motives.

I am trying to be more thankful for the opportunities the Lord is providing by giving us young children to care for. It keeps me constantly checking up on my own spiritual growth.

I trust that you are benefiting in the same way from your family experiences.

Kathy Kador's Korner

(Continued from page 22)

Janet leaned on an elbow, chin in hand, brow puckered. "I can't see for the life of me how a kind deed can burn when somebody has done you wrong."

"I'd like to see you give it a try, Janet. I've seen it happen, when coals of kindness burned up malice, or envy, or ill-feeling and left cold hearts warm and happy."

"Well," Janet started to speak and stopped. She was trying to think of what she might be able to do for Linda.

"You keep thinking, Janet. There's something you can do for Linda, and when you do it, you'll

find *you* are happier too—because you'll be free from that desire to hurt someone else. Leave your enemy to God, Janet. Make it your business to be kind."

As the girls left the den to go back to their berry-picking, I thought of the many times I had been so eager to "get even" that I couldn't wait for God to administer the revenge. I wanted it right then and in my own way.

But I could also think of many times when that coal of kindness has worked, just as God said it would.

"Lord," I prayed, "help me to set up a coal yard. Love is so much stronger than hate!"

Yours for more coals of kindness,

Kathy

Questions

"How can you be sure that the sins we committed before we learned what is right are not still held against us? Some sins are very hard, even impossible, to make right, especially if another person was involved."

The first thought to consider is that "sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). Until one has agreed to live by the law of God, he is not responsible for his actions. God would not be just if he held men answerable to a law they did not know. That would be like our being United States citizens and having to answer for something we did because it was contrary to the laws of the Soviet Union. Paul repeated this principle when he wrote, "Where no law is, there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15). Jesus recognized this same principle when He said: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin" (John 15:22). When they did not know what was right, a cloak of ignorance covered their transgressions. But knowledge removes that cloak of ignorance; hence, having knowledge, they become accountable.

The prophet Ezekiel spoke definitely on the responsibility of knowing the law and placing ourselves under it when he wrote: "But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live" (Ezek. 18:20-21). Learning the law of God and living by it automatically erases our guilt for sins of the past.

Jesus applied this principle when speaking to the woman taken in adultery. He said to her, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:10-11). Her past sins were beyond her control to change; her duty was simply to "Go, and sin no more," and

she would not be condemned.

The prophet Isaiah stated God's principle of erasing sins of the past when a person turns and does what is right. He said, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18). And the condition for this generous forgiveness is plainly identified: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well" (vs. 16-17).

The prophet Ezekiel, in chapter 33, restates the fact that once the sinner has turned from his sins which he has committed, none of those sins "shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live."

But Ezekiel also offers a thought about the possibility of making amends, where possible, for the times one may have injured another in some way. The text reads: "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity: he shall live, he shall not die."

If it be possible to make amends, the earnest life-seeker should do it. But there are cases where that would not be possible. The injured person may not even be living, or one may not know his whereabouts. But if, as in the case of Zaccheus, restoration is possible, it is our Christian duty (see Luke 19:1-8).

"How will God deal with the man who does right all his life, but never knows Christ or His way? Must there not be some allowance or some special reward for such a man?"

The situation you describe is impossible. I cannot conceive how any man could possibly do everything the law of God requires without specifically knowing that law. The law of God is so contrary to our natural instincts and ways of thinking that any and every man who learns it must change himself drastically in many ways.

For example, what man would instinctively follow Paul's command: "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly" (Rom. 12:3). Paul specified that this command would affect "every man that is among you"—human pride is so much a part of us by nature.

Or what man would "cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of Christ" and bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:4-5). The fulfillment of this command would

require a knowledge of the meaning of the "obedience of Christ."

We read that "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6), and how could anyone have faith in God if he had no knowledge or acquaintance with Him or His laws?

No, a person may uphold a higher standard of conduct than his associates and discipline himself to live by a superior law of life, but he could not unknowingly fulfill all that God requires of men.

"Why does the Bible say 'Honour thy father and thy mother' (Eph. 6:2), and also, 'Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house' (Ps. 45:10-11)?"

The 45th chapter of Psalms is a poem describing in beautiful language the marriage between Christ the Bridegroom and the faithful, His Bride. It is all, of course, in symbolic language. The first nine verses describe the King, while the last eight represent the Bride, the faithful Church. In this case, the Bride is joining another family, a royal family, God's family, and is required to pledge allegiance to her new husband and family, even to Christ and God's family.

Several texts in the New Testament show clearly that the followers of Christ must put their natural families, even their own lives, in a secondary place. Allegiance to God and truth and right must always be first. As Jesus said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37-38). Again, "Anyone who wants to be my follower must love me far more than he does his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, or sisters—yes, more than his own life—otherwise he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26, TLB). Jesus Himself set the example. It is recorded that "while he...talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.... But he answered, ... Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. 12:46-50). Jesus was not showing any dishonor or disrespect to His own mother and family, but was simply using the opportunity to teach the closeness of spiritual affinities, as compared to mere physical relationship.

There is nothing in this concept which militates against the requirement to "honour thy father

and thy mother." This has always been a divine principle. Under the Mosaic law, the penalty for cursing one's father or mother was death. Children were to be taught respect and to show gratitude to those to whom they owed their place in the world.

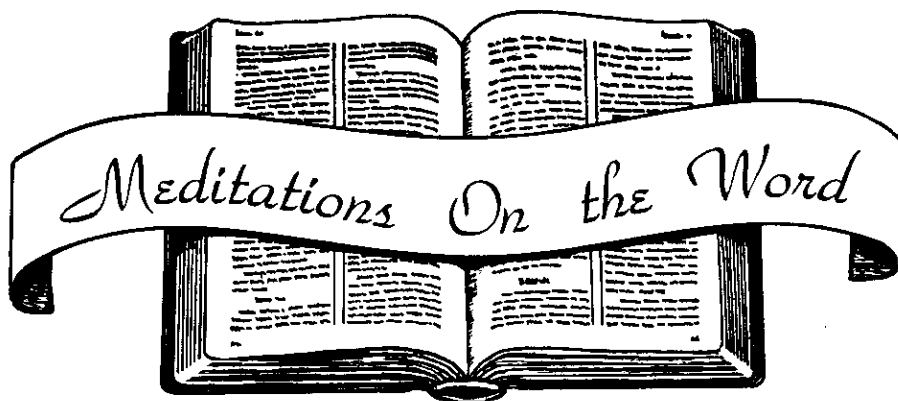
Paul exhorted, "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord" (Col. 3:20). He also said, in the passage quoted above, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise" (Eph. 6:1-2). In this instance, Paul does say "your parents *in the Lord*." Parents which are continually violating the law of God are not worthy of the same respect as those who are living upright lives. But in either case, proper respect is due. And in either case, one's first allegiance must always be to Christ. ●●

Meditations On the Word

(Continued from page 27)

now, it will be multiplied in the coming Kingdom of God into a magnificent "new name." John the Revelator mentions it more than once: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.... Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out, ... and I will write upon him my new name" (Rev. 2:17; 3:12). Reverend L. T. Nichols once gave a fuller rendering of this text from the original Greek, as follows: "*My new name, which is power, life, joy and happiness.*" In other words, eternal life at the end of the road.

Paul passed through the mortal stages of this evolution, gaining for himself a good name in the church in his own day, and a name which shines the brighter after nearly nineteen centuries, when Jewish high priests, Roman governors and supercilious Athenian scholars have become nameless and forgotten dust. And at the close of his career he could look forward to the next step, the advancement to a higher plane: "I have fought a good fight: I have finished my course; I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day" (II Timothy 4:8).●●



"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold" (Proverbs 22:1).

LIKE many another divine saying, this proverb is good on the surface, yet grows better as we sound its depths. The surface meaning is perfectly obvious: reputation—good name—is a priceless asset in this life, a thing to be diligently sought and jealously guarded. The very familiar lines from Shakespeare come to mind:

"Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate treasure of their souls;
Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands,
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed."

And the less familiar quotation:

"The purest treasure mortal times afford
Is spotless reputation: that away,
Men are but idled loam or painted clay."

On the other hand, it is unfortunately true that in actual practice, "reputation is an idle and most false imposition; oft got without merit, and lost without deserving."

So fragile and inconstant a reputation is a poor thing, hardly worth spending our lives for, unless that is the upper limit of our ambition. Those who court popularity in the world are playing a dangerous game, for the world is fickle, and the hero of today is the outcast of tomorrow. A reputation gained without merit is easily lost; in fact, it is practically foredoomed to failure. Not only so, but even the deserving are seldom understood or appreciated by their own generation, and posthumous honors are cold comfort.

No, the "good name" which is preferable to great riches is something far more substantial and

enduring than anything this world can give; it is nothing less than a good name with the Eternal. Paradoxically, this good name is not recognized as such by the world at large, but is more often than not cast out as evil. God's standards and man's are and always have been at antipodes (Isa. 55:8-9). "That which is highly esteemed among men," said Jesus, "is abomination in the sight of God"; and *vice versa*. "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you," is as true today as in the Apostolic era.

It is not that the world—the portion of it worth considering—will find fault with our honesty or truthfulness or morality; but the enmity begins in earnest when we dare to insist, because God insists, upon perfection of character, the crucifixion of every affection and lust of the flesh; when we separate ourselves from all their systems in obedience to the divine commands (II Cor. 6:17-18; I John 2:15-17); when we refuse to offer one grain of incense upon a pagan altar, even though it be falsely named Christian. The narrow way is constantly under fire from both sides. To the creed-bound and intolerant we become dangerous heretics; to the shallow and indifferent we are fanatics; to the worldly-wise we are beneath notice. These attitudes are as old as the plan of salvation. They are strikingly exemplified in the recorded experiences of the apostle Paul, when the frenzied religionists howl, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live!"; and at the other extreme the worldly Roman procurator, for whom these things of eternity are much too profound, cries, "Thou art beside thyself! Much learning doth make thee mad"! And the Athenians, smug and contented in the possession of their Hellenic culture and education, mock at

the mention of the resurrection of the dead. The great Apostle found, as all thinking men and women have learned, that it is impossible to please everybody, and it is useless to try.

The only successful formula is to forget all about worldly fame and follow strictly the line laid down in the law of God, and leave the rest with the Almighty. If we do this, our reputation with the world will be good enough; for the command is, "Having your conversation [conduct] honest among the Gentiles" (I Pet. 2:12). Many and fantastic will be the lies that may be told about us by the enemies of Truth; but if sheltered in the "strong tower" (Prov. 18:10), they will do no harm. Only let us be very careful that they are really falsehoods. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you *falsely*, for my sake" (Matt. 5:11).

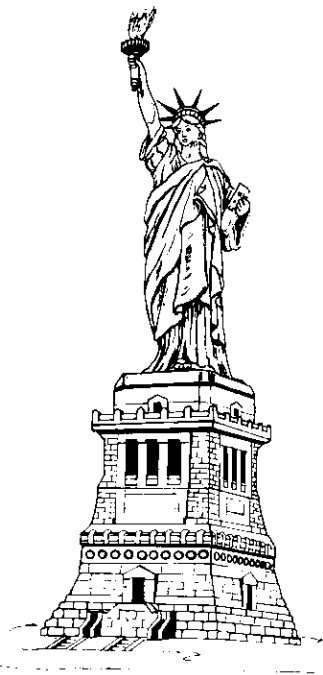
Daniel, when holding office under the Persian king Darius, was made the target of a clique of

envious politicians. Following the old political custom of all lands and times, they searched the record and watched their subject narrowly in hope of finding some blunder, however slight, which they might magnify and use as a lever to pry him out of his high position. But it was no use: "they could find none occasion or fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." At length they were forced to say, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God" (Daniel 6:4-5). Let us be like Daniel, remembering that if we possess this good name before our God, no permanent harm can come to us; the very hairs of our head are numbered. The world will find fault with us concerning this divine law, make no mistake about it; but what of it?

This "good name" is not static, a goal to be reached and rested upon, but is twofold, expanding and unfolding in its nature. If we possess it

(Continued on page 25)

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES



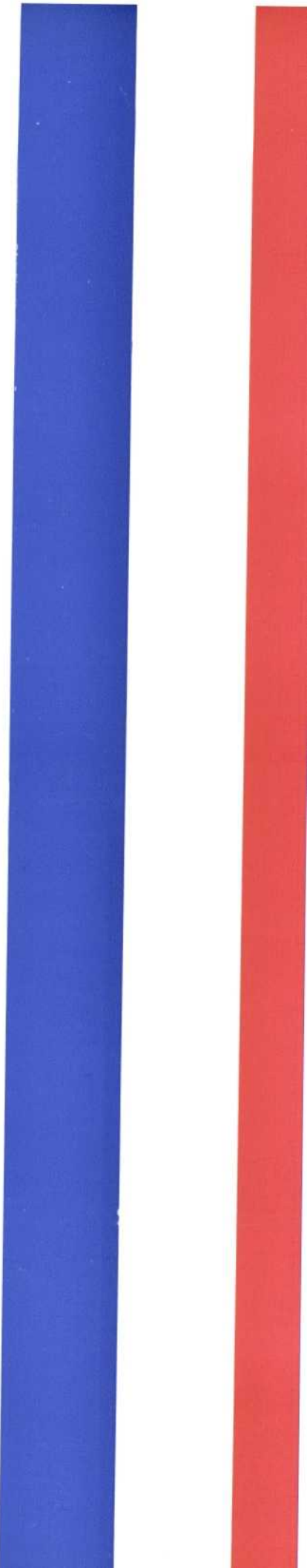

WE BELIEVE in religious liberty, and hold that this God-given right should belong to every inhabitant of earth, and that it is exercised at its best when there is separation between church and state.

WE BELIEVE in civil government as divinely ordained to protect men in the enjoyment of their natural rights, and to rule in civil issues; and that in this realm it is entitled to the respectful and willing allegiance of all.

WE BELIEVE in the individual's natural and inalienable right to freedom of conscience; to worship or not to worship as he shall choose; to profess, to practice, and to promulgate his religious beliefs, or to change them according to his own convictions, holding that these are the essence of religious liberty; but that in the exercise of this right he should respect the equivalent rights of others.

WE BELIEVE it is our duty to be subject to the laws of our government, insofar as they do not conflict with the superior laws of God, and to respect and obey them. We are grateful for the protection and the liberty of thought and conscience our government allows each individual, and know that it is God-ordered for this time that the plan of God might move forward.

These our principles we believe and declare, until the establishing of a superior form of government upon this earth shall have been accomplished. • •



*God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform:
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.*

*Deep in unfathomable mines,
With never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sov'reign will.*

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.*

*His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour:
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.*

*Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.*

—Selected.

