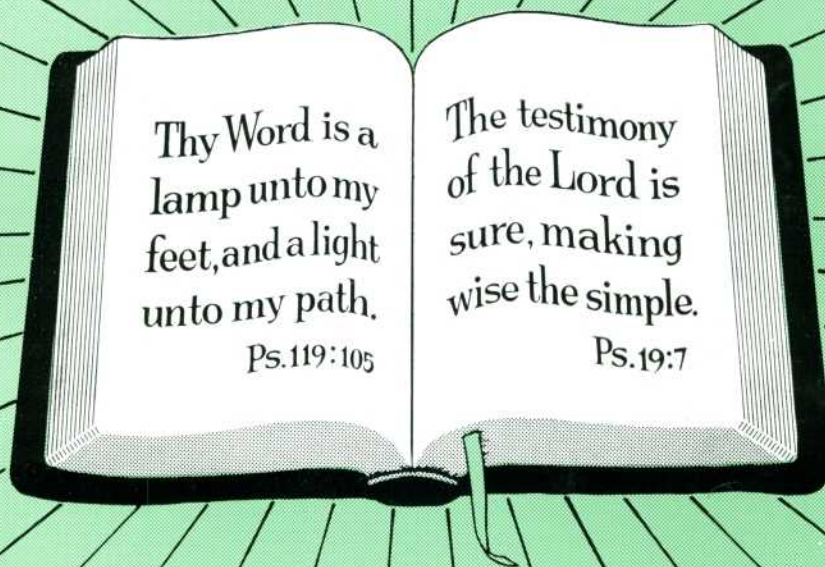


# Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



**Behold I Come--Suddenly!**

**A Thousand Years of Glory  
Understanding the Bible  
One Way--Forward!**



# Into the Thick of It

THE ESSENCE of life is conflict. If there is no conflict, there is no real life. However the conflict turns out, either in victory or defeat, somewhere along the course of action obstacles have been met and there has been the element of suspense. The greater the obstacle, the greater the suspense.

We have all heard the sentiment of "Let me live in a house by the side of the road, and be a friend to man"; but such a life knows little of conflict—or of victory. A life of ease and comfort, being "hail-fellow-well-met", does not bring victory; and eventually, whatever one's position in this world, comes a rude awakening to the fact that this mortal state is, at best, a struggle.

Instead of running away from the obstacles which lie across our pathway, we should welcome them as a means of strengthening the qualities necessary to insure a victorious ending. Obstacles have their value. The athlete would not put much effort into getting himself in top condition if he had no competition to meet. Often those who must contend against near-impossible handicaps accomplish the most. Conflict is the essence of success, and the winner is the man who learns to deal with the obstacles most effectively. There would be no point to any encounter if the winner did not have something to overcome.

We get no important victories cheaply. So why should we want a life of ease? Instead, why not welcome problems and obstacles that really test our strength and stamina?

If the essence of natural life is conflict, we should expect the essence of the spiritual life to be the same. We have promise of such rich and dazzling rewards, even eternal life. Should we expect it to come to us without effort? Where there is no conflict, there is neither victory nor defeat. Where there is no conflict, there is no character; and where there is no character, there will be no eternal blessing.

Our state of mind will have much to do

with the outcome. We should practice always thinking affirmatively. Unless we think in terms of victory, we shall find ourselves drawing back from the thick of the battle instead of facing it bravely.

From the time God first called laborers into His vineyard, this spiritual conflict has gone on. As Paul said, "I cannot understand my own actions; I do not act as I desire to act; on the contrary, I do what I detest" (Rom. 7:15, Moffatt). He experienced conflict as he made an effort to live the Christ-life. Unto each of us, he wrote, "it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me" (Phil. 1:29-30). The conflict must be; there is no escaping it if we want victory.

This inner conflict is between the old nature and the new. The "old man" must die, as we read, again quoting Paul: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:6-7). We must "put off . . . the old man, which is corrupt . . . and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22-24).

Dare we say that the thick of the conflict is too much for us—we who live in the "cool of the day" of salvation, we whose conflicts come principally from the "desires fighting inside [our] own selves" (Jas. 4:1, JB)? Is our conflict too thick, we who have no fear of "cruel mockings and scourgings, . . . bonds and imprisonment"; of being "stoned, . . . sawn asunder, . . . slain with the sword, . . . destitute, afflicted, tormented" (Heb. 11:36-37)? Is *our* conflict too thick? If it is, it is because *we* are making it so.

There is yet within our conflict the element of suspense: Shall we win or lose? If we really want life, we will get into the thick of the fray and stay there until we have brought every thought captive. We *can* win if we will. ●●



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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).

# Megiddo Message

Vol. 64, No. 8

August, 1977

## EDITORIAL

### 2 Into the Thick of It

If we really want life, we will get into the thick of the fight—and stay there until we have won.

## ARTICLES

### 4 Behold I Come—Suddenly!

What is the meaning of "quickly" as Jesus used it?

### 17 One Way—Forward!

Back-looking is worse than futile. Everything to be gained lies ahead.

### 21 Rewards

So much to gain—can you take it all in?

## SPECIAL FEATURES

### 8 A Thousand Years of Glory

Millennial Peace

Millennial Prosperity

Millennial Health

Crowns and Crowns

## REGULAR FEATURES

### 12 Our Readers Write

### 13 Understanding the Bible: *The Pre-Existence of Christ*

The meaning of the trinity. Jesus Christ: Who Is He?

### 18 Kathy Kandor's Korner: *Those Little Things*

Sometimes they get too big.

### 19 One Lord, One Faith: *The Devil of the Bible*

### 25 From Parent to Parent: *Correction Pays*

### 26 Letters

### 27 Scriptural Spotlight: *Genuine Ambassadors?* On Joshua 9:4. God will not honor our pretensions.

Bible Quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version

Other versions are abbreviated as: *New International Version* (NIV); *New English Bible* (NEB); *Revised Standard Version* (RSV); *The New Testament in Modern English* (Phillips); *The Living Bible* (TLB); *New American Standard* (NAS).



# Behold I Come --

## *Suddenly!*

**S**UDDEN events are part of this world. Sometimes for good, sometimes for ill, they remind us that we do not—and cannot—know everything that is or is to be. More than one of us has answered the doorbell, or the telephone, or read the newspaper to learn of the unexpected passing of someone close to us. Only a few days ago we were talking with him, and he appeared to be in good health; now he is silent in death. It is the sharp chill of the unexpected.

Sudden death creates a definite line of before and after, and we realize anew that we have no sure claim upon tomorrow. Life takes on a keener definition, and the importance of doing what we know we should do today is suddenly spotlighted by the lightning streak of death.

With equal suddenness can come good. “And suddenly” prefaces Luke’s account of the appearance of the angels the night Jesus was born. The first angel appeared suddenly in the shining glory of the Lord. The message he delivered was also sudden, telling of the birth of “a saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11), an event which cut sharply and suddenly between past and future. And just as suddenly as the first angel appeared, a myriad more joined in a grand chorus of praise to God—a sight and sound beyond the ability of the shepherds to describe or comprehend. Just as suddenly it was all over, and “the angels were gone away” (Luke 2:9-15).

Sudden events—death, earthquake, fire, tornado, hurricane, automobile accident, disabling illness—are the making of history and are constantly changing the destinies of men.

Even that which is foretold and to a certain degree expected can still be said to happen suddenly. More than once Jesus foretold His own death; yet, when it happened, His followers were struck with its suddenness. They had failed to comprehend the full meaning of the prophecy. And the resurrection which followed—also foretold—happened so suddenly as to be at first incredible.

After the resurrection, Jesus was with His disciples forty days. And then, as He was walking with

them one day outside Jerusalem something else happened—suddenly. While the disciples beheld, “he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.” He was gone; henceforth everything in their lives would be different. Only two angels tarried to deliver this important message: “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). He had gone away suddenly. And how would He return? “In like manner”—visibly, bodily, and suddenly.

### Jesus IS Coming

It has been said that the second coming of Jesus is mentioned 318 times in the 260 chapters of the New Testament, and that this teaching occupies one in every twenty-five verses between Matthew and Revelation. The return of Christ seems to have been continually on the minds of the leaders of those early Christians. And why not, as they realized that right then was their only chance to prepare for the great event?

From the abundance of New Testament teaching, the fact of His return is clearly established. Over and over the Master spoke words like these: “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again” (John 14:3). “The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels” (Matt. 16:27). “For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, . . . and commanded the porter to watch” (Mark 13:34). “The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him” (Matt. 25:31).

Should we not take His words seriously and remind ourselves of them *often*?

The apostles did. Paul, writing out of the depth of his soul’s conviction, expressed the personal hope of himself and his brothers in Christ: “For our [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned



like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:20-21). Peter added his words of understanding, that "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Pet. 5:4). James, writing in his usual practical manner, set forth the certainty of the second advent as a major reason for patience: "Be patient therefore, brethren," he wrote, "unto the coming of the Lord" (James 5:7). Out of a life rich in experience and hope, the beloved John wrote: "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (I John 2:28). Even the author of Hebrews, penning his profound comprehension of the plan of God, could not fail to mention this central hope of the followers of Christ: "Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).

Is it any wonder, then, that a modern scholar

can declare that we cannot question "what stands so plainly in the pages of the New Testament, what filled so exclusively the minds of the first Christians—the idea of a personal return of Christ at the end of the age. If we are to retain any relation to the New Testament at all, we must accept the personal return of Christ as Judge of all."

The question is often asked: Did the early Church expect Christ to return in their day? Serious belief in the return of our Lord has lent urgency to the life and work of His loyal servants in all ages. A man who professed to believe in the return of Christ in any age but who showed no spirit of expectancy or urgency in getting ready for the great event would have little with which to convince others of his belief. To any man in any age, "Now" is the "accepted time; now is the day of salvation." Whenever Christ might come, his own lifetime was his only chance to get ready.

But every believer has quite naturally wanted to know *when*: When will Christ come? Can I look

---

## Let Us Pray . . .

O God most holy, most wonderful, Thy power and glory is reflected in the beauty and majesty of the world which Thou hast created, and Thou hast given us hearts which respond to beauty, truth and love. We come into Thy presence with thankful hearts for all the evidences of Thy goodness in the world around us, and with repentant spirits for having failed so often to fix our eyes and thoughts on whatsoever things are lovely and true and of good report.

Deliver us, we pray, from the folly of allowing our minds to dwell long on those things which would retard our growth into holiness, things which would feed our fears or increase our doubts, or deflect us from the high and wholesome purpose to which we have dedicated our lives.

We rejoice that we have been given an insight into Thy eternal plan and purpose, that we know we are now upon the very threshold of the greatest change that has ever taken place on our earth: that a time is near when Thou no longer will be silent, but Thy voice will be heard demanding that men and nations forsake their evil ways, or be promptly swept from the scene of action.

Help us to look ahead with believing hearts to a time when mankind will be obliged to come under

the control of Christ, earth's coming King. We have been warned repeatedly that just such a day is coming, and to so live now as to be prepared for it when it arrives.

That day will come suddenly. One moment things will be normal—business as usual—and the next the new form of authority will have arrived, and will immediately begin action. After Thy long silence a short work wilt Thou make upon the earth. Thy great work of subduing all evil, once begun, will not halt or terminate until every knee bends to Thee and every tongue sings Thy praise.

That new and better Day will be initiated by the Lord's coming suddenly to His temple—His Church or worthy ones. The world at large will be taken by surprise as were the unbelieving masses at the time of the Flood, or the unsuspecting people of those cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah. Many centuries now separate us from those early times, showing us that the great Day of the Lord is near, and that soon Thy voice will be heard calling to men and nations to forsake their evil ways, and prepare for the demands of that new day when the Lord shall come suddenly to His temple.

Give us the good judgment to prepare for that Day while there is still time to prepare for it. May we who claim to be part of Thy true Church be living in perpetual expectancy, fully aware that that Day is coming, and run into the strong tower of complete resignation to divine law, that that better Day may find us on the winning side. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



for Him to come during my lifetime? this decade? this century?

Premature and misinformed answers to these questions have resulted in gross misconceptions and, unfortunately, much disbelief through the ages since Christ ascended. Even before He went away there was some misunderstanding as to the time when the Kingdom should be set up, for Jesus "spoke a parable" unto His disciples one day as they neared Jerusalem "because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear" (Luke 19:11). In the parable Jesus compared Himself to a "certain nobleman" who "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (Luke 19:12). In Matthew's account of this same parable, Jesus told them plainly that it would be a "long time" before He would return to reckon with His servants (Matt. 25:14).

But the disciples seem to have been slow to understand, for the day Jesus ascended they asked Him again, thinking the time might finally have arrived: "Lord," they asked, "wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). They had no concept of the long centuries which should intervene.

- At least part of the problem in their lack of understanding in the early days may have been in their connection with the Old Testament prophecies. Many of the prophecies, with which they were so familiar, foretold the birth of Christ and then went on to tell the great work He would do at His second advent (see Isa. 9:6; Mic. 5:2). Thus, when Christ came in fulfillment of the words of the prophets, these people saw the event as the dawning of a new age long foretold, the beginning of a whole series of prophecies to be fulfilled in succession. Only a matter of time, and all would be realized. They failed to comprehend the centuries that would intervene—or that He would have to go and return after a long time, a *very* long time.

#### New Testament Teaching

Some people today—even some Bible scholars and ministers—feel no need to look for Christ because they say the apostles expected Him in their day and were disappointed. If the apostles expected Jesus *then*—nearly two thousand years ago—and He did not come, why should we still look for Him?

Let us see what the New Testament tells us about the beliefs of the early Christians and those who actually knew Christ. Did they believe, when fully informed, that their age was the time for the fulfillment of the prophecies of Christ's Kingdom? Let us examine some of their statements.

The first to come preaching the imminence of the Kingdom was John the Baptist. His was the

special assignment of announcing the coming Messiah's earthly ministry, and his proclamation rang with urgency: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). His first word spelled action: "Repent." And his second meant that no time should be wasted in doing it: "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

How shall we take these words? For surely the "kingdom of heaven" was not "at hand" *then*.

First let us attempt to see prophecy and history as the people of that time saw it. For nearly four thousand years prior to this, the advent of Christ had been foretold. And usually these prophecies included mention of His greater Second Advent—*two* events were often combined in one prophecy. Thus, when the long-standing prophecy began to be fulfilled, these people saw the plan of God taking shape before their eyes. Prophecy was being fulfilled, and they very likely had no idea of the time that would elapse before the fulfillment of all parts of the prophecies would be complete.

Furthermore, the word translated "kingdom" in our common version means more than a royal dominion. It means also, "kingly power, authority, royal dignity, majesty." John was saying that the person who would hold the highest office in the Kingdom, He who would be the embodiment of its power and dignity, even Jesus Christ, the royal Son of God, was at hand. It would be the fulfillment of the first phase of the prophecies concerning the coming Kingdom.

Jesus began His public ministry with the identical words of His forerunner: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15). He may have done this so that people would associate His preaching with that of His forerunner John. But in any case, we can know Jesus did not expect to set up His kingdom at that time. Sometime later He compared Himself to a nobleman going into a far country who would not return until after "a long time" (Matt. 25:14). He knew the plan.

A correspondent has postulated that what the Bible calls Christ's second coming may not be yet future, but may refer to some other event fulfilled in apostolic times. "If Jesus' coming is still future," he queries, "please explain the following words: 'And as you go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matt. 10:17). 'For verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come' (v. 23)."

As already explained, the same Greek word translated "kingdom" also has the meaning of "kingly power, authority, royal dignity, majesty." Hence Jesus was saying, "the royal dignity has approached." The Person to hold the highest office in



the Kingdom, He who would be the embodiment of its power and authority, was at hand. Christ was then among them.

Matthew 10:17 refers to the time when Jesus had sent out His newly appointed twelve apostles on a preaching tour. And when He said, as in verse 23, "But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come," it seems probable that He referred to some planned visit to the same area where they would be preaching. In any case, He could not have referred to His second coming, for He had not as yet been away.

When Jesus stood before Pilate and was questioned as to what He had done, Jesus replied concerning His kingdom, "My kingdom is not of this world [this cosmos, this arrangement of things]: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36). God had not planned that He should set up His kingdom at that time, or in that cosmos; the time had not yet come for God to send His judgments upon the nations and compel them to surrender. Jesus showed this as He read from the Scriptures in the synagogue in his own home town the words of the prophet Isaiah. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," He read, "because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to . . . set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord"—and there He stopped and closed the book, saying, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:18-21). But He had omitted that part of the prophecy of Isaiah which applied to His second coming: "the day of vengeance of our God" (Isa.61:1-2). The time had not yet come for that, and Jesus was well aware of it.

In Matthew 24:34, Jesus made another statement which might sound as though He expected the people of His day to see the establishing of the Kingdom. He said, "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." Just prior to these words Jesus had been forecasting the signs of His second coming. He ended with a parable of the fig trees, saying that "when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand" (Luke 21:29-31).

Jesus was saying in effect, You know when the fig tree puts out leaves that summer is here; so when you see these things I have foretold coming to pass, you can know My coming is near. But He

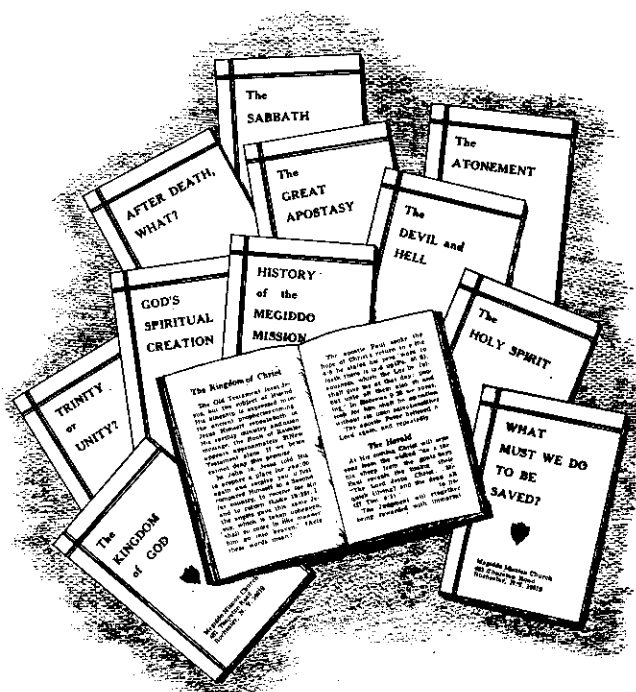
August, 1977

did not say that the generation *then living* would see "these things" fulfilled. The generation that would see their fulfillment would be that generation that would see and recognize the signs of His coming, those who would see the "fig tree," symbolic of the living Word of God, bud again and bear fruit in the latter days after the long night of the apostasy, who should not pass away "till all these things be fulfilled." In other words, there would be living believers to welcome Him when He should return.

Another passage sometimes misleading to those who believe the apostles expected Jesus in the first century is found in Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians. "We which are alive and remain," Paul wrote, "shall not go before" the sleeping believers, but they will be resurrected and "we"

(Continued on page 22)

## GOOD READING



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*This is the fifth in a series  
of articles on the coming  
MILLENNIUM.*

# A Thousand Years of Glory

**T**HE Millennium, that grand age when Christ will dwell among men and earth shall gradually take on the likeness of heaven, is the subject of many a prophecy of Scripture. We have talked about many of these prophecies. We have also talked about many aspects of that wondrous age, and many of the blessings that will come with it. But the Bible tells us more, much more. Let's think now about some of the worldwide benefits that will extend to all people who live on the earth in that blessed time.

## Millennial Peace

With trouble in every corner of our globe today, no word is sweeter than peace. And the inhabitants of the Millennium will know the real meaning of lasting peace.

*"Nation shall not lift up  
a sword against nation, neither  
shall they learn war anymore"  
—Micah 4:3*

It is the promise of the Word of God: "He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire" (Ps. 46:9).

"The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Ps. 37:11).

After the ravages of war through century after century, and after the final holocaust of Armageddon, peace will be welcome. Peace among the mortals of the new age will not come suddenly, or all at once, but it will grow and continue to grow. Once full grown, it will last: there will be "abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth" (Ps. 72:7). Says the Lord, "Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and . . . will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth" (Jer. 33:6).

*"And the work of righteousness  
shall be peace; and the  
effect of righteousness  
quietness and assurance forever."*

Military schools will be no more; there will be no armies, or armories; no war machines or war-torn areas, no strife and no enemies. Armaments will be converted into implements of peace. "Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Mic. 4:3). Or as paraphrased in the Living Bible, "there will be universal peace, and all the military academies and training camps will be closed down."

What a change!

*"And my people shall dwell in  
a peaceable habitation, and in  
sure dwellings,  
and in quiet resting places"  
—Isaiah 32:17-18*

How can the people of the New World feel secure with none to protect or defend? Defense will be of another sort. "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise" (Isa. 60:18). Who will be the aggressor? Against whom



will the defense be needed, when "the Lord shall be king over all the earth," when in all the earth there shall be "one Lord, and his name one"? (Zech. 14:9).

Isaiah pictures the peaceful scene. "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; . . . there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars [no warship], neither shall gallant ship pass thereby" (Isa. 33:20-21). And this peacefulness will not be limited to one area; it shall extend over all the earth.

"And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isa. 32:17-18).

In Isaiah 11, the state of universal peace is symbolized by wild beasts and children playing together absolutely unafraid. All evil will be restrained; none will live in fear or danger. All wild, beastly natures will either be voluntarily controlled or forcefully silenced. And the result: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:6-9).

With peace will come safety. Micah pictures it in an agricultural setting, so familiar to the people of his time: "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it" (Mic. 4:3-4). In this new age, God will be glorified by all, and God is never glorified by war and division.

"In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely" (Jer. 23:6).

The prophet Isaiah uses even more dramatic language to describe the end of war, as in chapter 9: "Thou shalt break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. . . . For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult, and cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire" (vs. 4-5, NAS).

Won't it be thrilling to men like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Micah and Jeremiah, and the other prophets of God, to see the fulfillment of their prophecies, their cherished—though unseen—hopes? They will all be there when the vision turns to reality.

Remember, too, the glad tidings which the angels sang at the time Jesus was born? It was a song about peace, and it will be fulfilled in this Golden Age: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

## Millennial Prosperity

The Millennium will bring more than one kind of prosperity, but first let's think about physical prosperity.

Our modern world has prospered beyond the imaginings of our grandparents. But it is not without its problems. As a present-day author comments:

"Suddenly the world is experiencing shortage upon shortage—of things we have long taken for granted: gasoline, electricity, water, metals, food, wood, paper, plastics. The list grows ever more ominous. Mother Earth has put up with so much from us. We

August, 1977

*"Glory to God in the  
highest, and on earth  
peace, good will toward men"*  
—Luke 2:14

*"The Lord will bless  
his people with peace"*  
—Psalm 29:11

*"I will extend peace to her  
like a river, and the glory of the  
Gentiles like a flowing stream"*  
—Isaiah 66:12

*"I will also make thine  
officers peace, and thine exactors  
righteousness"*  
—Isaiah 60:17



have polluted her, sucked her treasures and abused her in ten thousand ways. She has given life and nourishment to her billions of heaven-defying people. But a time of reckoning is fast coming. Earth needs and will soon get her Millennium overhaul.”\*

There is no need to wonder how God will bring about perpetual prosperity with no fear of want or shortage. He knows how.

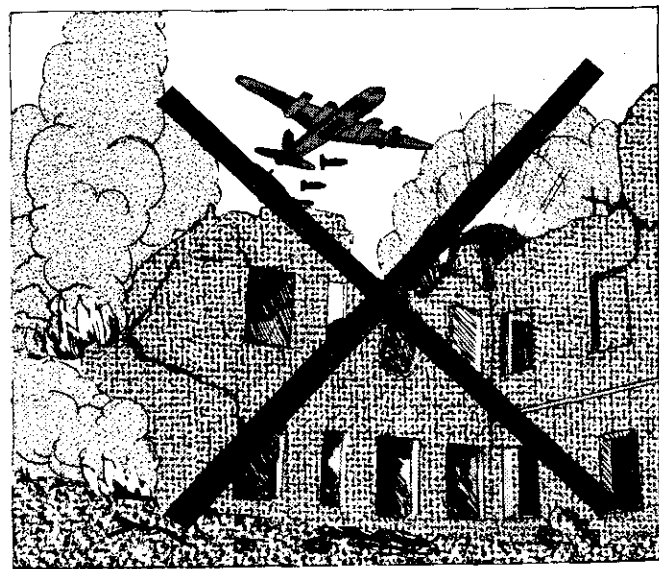
Today prosperity is measured in present-day terms—good wages, good business, fine and comfortable homes, a booming stock market, a successful career. It is not presumptuous to use our imagination a little and think about the wonderful prosperity of the age that is coming, for the apostle Paul wrote that God will reward His own with blessings beyond all that we are able to imagine (I Cor. 2:9, NEB): “Things beyond our seeing, things beyond our hearing, things beyond our imagining, all [are] prepared by God for those who love him.”

During the Millennium, the co-rulers with Christ will be enjoying the greatest of blessings in a new and immortal life. But there will be billions of mortal subjects engaged in natural living, who will know prosperity in a different way. Doubtless many of these will, at least part-time, be engaged in the age-old art of agriculture—growing fruits, vegetables and landscape gardening.

The Bible pictures Millennial prosperity in terms of this art, known and practiced for so many centuries against so many hindrances. Here are three outstanding prophecies of Scripture:

Ezekiel 36:30, “I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field”; or as translated in modern language: “I will give you huge harvests from your fruit trees and fields and never again shall there be a famine” (TLB).

Ezekiel 34:26-27, “And I will make them and



the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord.”

Again this prophecy is especially meaningful to us, as phrased in modern language: “I will make my people and their homes a blessing. There shall be showers of blessing. Their fruit trees and fields will yield bumper crops and everyone will live in safety.”

Isaiah 35:1-2,6: “Even the wilderness and desert will rejoice in those days; the desert will blossom with flowers. Yes, there will be an abundance of flowers and singing and joy! The deserts will become as green as the Lebanon mountains, as lovely as Mount Carmel’s pastures and Sharon’s meadows; for the Lord will display his glory there, the excellency of our God. . . . Springs will burst forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.”

Prosperity everywhere! Never again will any fear shortages. There will be billions of fertile acres for eager cultivators. And no more blight, no more devouring worms, insects or pests—there will be nothing “to hurt nor destroy.”

Other factors will contribute to greater and surer productivity also. The stabilizing and control of earth’s climate will multiply and enhance the quality and increase the quantity of production. No more drought, no floods, no damaging winds, no destructive frosts. Millennium inhabitants will know how to control all these, with the help of their immortal instructors. “They shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them” is the promise (Isa. 65:21)—and without the almost countless hazards that plague farmers today.

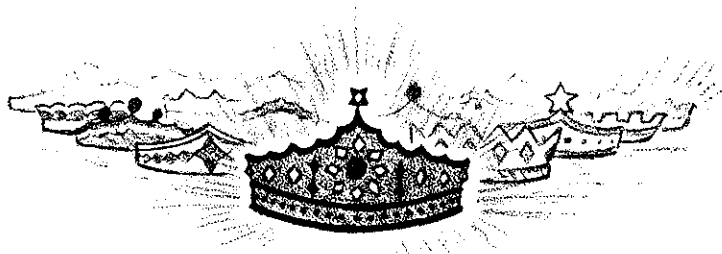
There is talk today of a new science of growing plants called “hydroponics,” or “water culture.” Using this new technique, “it is possible in a small 40 x 180 foot plot to grow more food than on ten acres of ground. Using such idealized agricultural methods, some remarkable products have already been grown. Eight-foot tomato plants, fruits that weigh a pound and a half, hundred-pound watermelons.” If scientists now can achieve such spectacular results, what will Millennium scientists do!

We can be sure that Millennium produce will make today’s finest look very ordinary.

Unaided mankind could never bring about world prosperity; but God? The power of God in the hands of immortals will find no earthly problems beyond solution.

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## Crowns and Crowns

**H**OW often in the Bible the victors of the six thousand years, those who will be rewarded with immortality when Christ returns, are pictured as having or wearing crowns. The crown is the headdress of a sovereign. It represents royal distinction, which these honored men and women will have. It is a mark of high honor and dignity.

Notice how the Bible speaks of the crowns of the faithful:

They are promised the "crown of life" if they stand the test (Jas. 1:12).

The faithful will receive "a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Pet. 5:4).

The "crown of righteousness" is laid up for "all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:8).

Those who are "faithful unto death" will be given "a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

It is important that one hold fast to his faith and virtue, "that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11).

The glorious being described in Revelation as riding upon a white horse and called "Faithful and True"—a being composed of Christ and His glorified saints—is said to have upon His head "many crowns," the rightful distinction that will have been awarded every faithful one (Rev. 19:12).

Jesus is already "crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. 2:9). And when He comes, He will crown each of His distinguished co-rulers. What honor and praise and happiness will be theirs! With immortal life and vigor pulsing through their being, these victors will know the meaning of supreme joy.

A present-day author describes the abounding happiness that will result from the crowning of these faithful servants of God:

"There is nothing more outstanding in Millennium prophecy than its record of joyous reverberating enthusiasm! Believe you me, the Millennium is going to be delightfully thrilling. Our reserved emotions will melt and all will break forth into full adoration. We poor singers will delight in our new Millennial voices. There will be exuberance, clapping hands, and glad hosannas! We sedate Christians will let loose our praise and break forth into joy and singing. As the Bible tells us, 'Shout, O daughter of Zion, be glad and rejoice with all your heart'; 'Oh, lift up your voice and shout from the top of the mountains. Let the heavens rejoice, let all the earth be glad!'" \*

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## Millennial Health

Health is one of the most valuable possessions a mortal can have, and all mortals during the Millennium will have it.

When we think of physical health during the New Era, we think of one short verse that says it all in few words: "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick" (Isa. 33:24). Other translations say it similarly: "No man who dwells there shall say, 'I am sick'" (NEB); or "no resident will say, 'I am sick'" (NAS). Even the healthiest person today would be able to appreciate this blessing; how much more those who have lived in constant pain.

But there is even more good news about Millennial health in Isaiah 35: All who are sick or

crippled or deformed shall be healed. What a time of rejoicing it will be, when the "eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped." Then "the lame man will leap up like a deer, and those who could not speak will shout and sing!" (KJV and TLB).

So many common aids to health will become obsolete—simple things like hearing aids, glasses, dentures, crutches, wheel chairs, surgical tools will be useless ornaments that need only to be dispensed with.

Christ and His apostles performed miracles. They healed many sick; they even raised a few people from the dead. But Isaiah's prophecy reaches down to the time when the Messiah will come to reign in power, when "your God [Emman-

*(Continued on page 12)*



# Our Readers Write...

## Do It Now

The way of life is narrow, so narrow that we cannot take our pride, or anger, bitterness, malice, jealousy with us. They have to be replaced by the wonderful fruits of the Spirit. The narrow way is broad enough for all kinds of good fruits, but too narrow for even one thing evil.

Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." Whatever we think about most will be our chief concern. So we must be seeking the Kingdom with all our heart, bringing all our thoughts into subjection and thinking on divine things—and not only thinking on divine things but applying the principles of right living to ourselves in everything and at every minute of the day. If the Kingdom is not our number one priority, we will never get it. A halfhearted worker cannot accomplish anything because he is not really interested in what he is doing.

Today is our day of salvation. We can squander it or we can make the most of it. Our founder once said we can spend all our days living to gratify our animal nature and soon sink into the tomb or we can use our lives in the service of God and gain the immortal life with pleasure for evermore in a world made new.

It seems that we who have been redeemed from the darkness of the world would be consumed with zeal for righteousness. As Paul wrote, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" How can we who have been called with a heavenly calling continue to let sin reign in us?

Everything in our lives now is only temporary; so why should we let these temporal things keep us from gaining the eternal things? God cannot use us if we are always getting angry over things which don't go the way we want them to. He cannot use us if we are puffed up with pride and vanity. He wants dedicated people He can trust, and He will choose only such people to be His eternal friends.

Let us resolve now that we will begin today to work harder and bring all we possess under the yoke of Christ. ●●

— S. K., Athens, Tennessee

## The Secret of Happiness

The true Christian learns the secret of a happy life, that happiness without which life is dull. In the Word of the Lord we are promised grand and noble things of eternity. As we think about these "things above," the monotony of doing the same chores over and over again vanishes.

I will relate a little story which might be helpful to you as it was to me. It is of a certain monk named Brother Lawrence who learned the secret of being happy while at his work in the kitchen. He was a footman for a noble family in France. Dissatisfied with that, he decided he wanted to serve God. He became a monk, expecting no doubt to be given some noble task to do.

Instead, he was assigned to kitchen work.

At first he thought he could not stand it. What a distasteful job! But gradually as he peeled potatoes, washed dishes and even did the shopping for the monastery, he began to think of God, and the distaste wore off. In time he could say, "The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the altar of prayer."

Practicing what he called "the presence of God" was the great secret learned. He learned it so thoroughly that he wrote his friends about his joy of serving God in the kitchen.

I believe if anybody should learn this secret it should be us, who have the promises of much better things than washing dishes and marketing for food and clothes and doing the numberless tasks of this present life. There is no getting away from it: Beds have to be made, meals prepared, and dishes washed. But while our hands are engaged in these inescapable daily tasks, our thoughts can be fixed on God, our hope a pleasant meditation soaring high above earthly things. ●●

— Mrs. K., South Amboy, New Jersey

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## Millennium

(Continued from page 11)

uel, God with us—Matthew 1:23] will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you" (35:4). It is the time when "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isa. 52:10). Only then will these wonders be seen worldwide in all their fulness. ●●



# UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

## The Pre-Existence of Christ

**"IF** THERE is, among the distinctive articles of the Christian faith, one which is basic to all the others, it is this: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man for our salvation," writes F. F. Bruce, a prominent theologian and educator.

Mr. Bruce's statement would agree with the catechisms and teaching of the major part of Christendom. That Christ is eternal as the Father and has existed with Him from the beginning is almost universally accepted. The doctrine has been so long established that to the average layman its truth is beyond question. But is it the teaching of the Bible? Will it stand the test of "Prove all things"?

Were we to accept the words of man as evidence of its truthfulness, we would not lack for support. Library shelves are laden with volumes men have written attempting to explain and elucidate the doctrine. Nor do we lack for evidence from the hymnbook, as the lyrics of many familiar church hymns allude to Christ's pre-existence. "Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown when Thou camest to earth for me," run the words of an old Christmas hymn. And even more familiar are the words, "Love divine, all loves excelling; joy of earth from heaven sent down."

But we cannot accept Christ's pre-existence as fact because it is the subject of many volumes of man's writing. Hymnbook does not add authority to the doctrine. The fact that the doctrine has been long-established does not render it the truth of the Bible.

Christ is acknowledged as the foundation of the Christian religion by all who profess His name. But who was He? A man? A God? A God-man? The Son of God? God come to earth in the form of a man?

Was He with the Father at the Creation ages ago or was He born about two thousand years ago? Did He meet Moses on the Mount? Did He lead the children of Israel through the wilderness?

These are some of the questions we will attempt

to answer in this study of the pre-existence of Christ. As it is with all subjects we study, the rule is: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21). To prove or disprove any belief we must rely on the word of God, not on the words of men, voluminous though they may be. Historical evidence is acceptable only as it confirms the words of Scripture.

## I. UNDERSTANDING THE DOCTRINE

The doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ is self-defining; it is existence before existence. As used by theology it depicts a prior existence of Christ, an ethereal existence with the Father before His birth of the Virgin Mary. Theology says that Christ was one member of a Godhead composed of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The doctrine is inextricably entangled in the doctrines of the trinity and the incarnation. Thus, to understand one we must also understand the others.

According to the **New International Dictionary of the Christian Church**, Trinity is "the central tenet of the Christian faith," and states "that God is one, personal, and triune." **Incarnation** describes how this pre-existent Christ became a man and lived on earth. The same dictionary defines it as a "teaching that Jesus of Nazareth was the eternal Word who became flesh," and explains that this doctrine was adopted by the church at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A. D.

The word **incarnation** is derived from the Latin **in** and **caro**, meaning "in flesh." It is further defined as "the act of assuming flesh; in theology, the gracious voluntary act of the Son of God in assuming a human body and human nature." It is "the common confession of the church, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant."

It is readily admitted that the words **trinity**, **incarnation**, and **pre-existence** do not occur in the Scriptures, but they are said to be "implied," "inferred," "implicit rather than explicit," and "pre-supposed." These doctrines are attributed to the apostles. But were they the doctrines of the early Christian Church? Have we any reason to believe



that the apostles were teaching such doctrines? Could it be that the doctrines have been read into the apostles' words—not read out of them?

Let us look briefly at the history of these doctrines to ascertain their origin.

### A. History of the Pre-existence

It is for good reason that the words trinity, incarnation and pre-existence do not occur in the Scriptures: They were coined by poets, philosophers and theologians during the early centuries after Christ and were unknown and unheard of during the time of Christ and the apostles. All three doctrines have been written into church creeds by individuals influenced by Greek philosophy; the doctrines do not come from Scriptures.

Pre-existence has long been a philosophical idea held by poets and philosophers who made no claim to a Biblical origin for the idea. The 18th century poet William Wordsworth believed that all men enjoy a perfect state of pre-existence out of which they are born into this world of evil. He introduced the pre-existence idea to his students through these lines:

“Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar;  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home.”

Likewise, the American philosopher and poet Emerson explained his idea of the pre-existent soul with these words: “The soul of man, embodied here on earth, went roaming up and down in quest of that other world of its own out of which it came into this.”

A contemporary American author states that “Most, if not all, of the reflections upon pre-existence, at whatever level they have been mediated to our culture, draw upon the philosophy of Plato, the Greek philosopher.” Research done by Edwin Hatch, a devout English scholar of the 19th century, bears this out. Mr. Hatch made an in-depth study of Greek influence on Christian doctrine and wrote at length on the subject. His findings shed considerable light on our subject.

Greece has long been noted for its mythology and its philosophy. Many so-called “mystery religions” developed in Greece and spread throughout the area around the Mediterranean where the Christian Church was developing in the centuries that im-

mediately followed Pentecost and “influenced all contemporary religious thought and practice,” writes Mr. Hatch. The church fathers at first regarded the “mysteries” as heresy, and spoke boldly against them, warning the Christians of the danger of Greek influence, especially of the philosophers. But as more and more educated Greeks became associated with the Church, Greek influence became more apparent.

“The first point that is obvious,” writes Mr. Hatch, is “the change in the center of gravity from conduct to belief” which was “coincident with the transfer of Christianity from a Semitic to a Greek soil,” until “within a century and a half after Christianity and philosophy first came into close contact, the ideas and methods of philosophy had flowed in such mass into Christianity, and filled so large a place in it as to have made it no less a philosophy than a religion.”

It was by an evolutionary process that these doctrines developed through the mixing of Greek philosophy and Scripture. The ideas for the trinity and the incarnation came from the philosophers, not the Scriptures. The pre-existence doctrine evolved from the other two, for if Jesus was God incarnate, He must have had a previous existence, they reasoned.

Christian writers of the second and third centuries tried to make excuses for the acceptance of Greek philosophy into the Church doctrines. “We teach the same as the Greeks,” says Justin Martyr, “though we alone are hated for what we teach. The teachings of Plato are not alien to those of Christ, though not in all respects similar.” “Some of our number,” says Tertullian, a well-known early Church writer, “who are versed in ancient literature, have composed books by means of which it may be clearly seen that we have embraced nothing new or monstrous.”

Greek philosophy led these early church fathers to debate the ideas of Christ's pre-existence, whether He was God or man and how He could be part of a triune Godhead—three in one and one in three. The controversy over these matters raged for many years, and it was such theological debate, following the lines of the philosophers, that led to the development of the church dogmas that are to be found in the catechisms of today's churches. Philosophy was the victor, not the vanquished. The issue was settled, not from the Scriptures, but by the church hierarchy at various councils in the third, fourth and fifth centuries.

The doctrine of the trinity (stating that God and Jesus were co-eternal), and the incarnation (the process by which Jesus became God in the flesh) were described as a “mystery” when they



were debated in those early centuries, and today they are as much a mystery as ever. Volumes of theology have not clarified them in the least. A statement from **The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church** concerning the nature of Christ is a case in point:

"He had a human nature and He had a divine nature. He is God Himself not **like** God, but just **God**. . . . He is not God **appearing** as a man; He is a man. He is not **only** a man or **only** God; He is the God who **became** a man. He did not cease to be God when He became a man. He did not **exchange** divinity for humanity; rather He **assumed** humanity, so that as a result of the incarnation, He is both human and divine, the God-man."

This is double-talk, a senseless conglomeration of words; but it represents the common theological teaching concerning the nature of Christ.

Some present-day theologians boldly state their case for the pre-existence. A. T. Hanson, an English Professor of Theology, has written a book called **"Jesus Christ in the Old Testament."** In it he writes: "The pre-existent Jesus was actually present at certain points in Old Testament history." Citing I Corinthians 10:1-4, he says "Here we have, according to Paul, the actual presence of Christ." Commenting on another author's use of the text as a "type of Christ," Mr. Hanson says, "Where Christ is present there is no room for the type of Christ, and Christ was certainly present here according to Paul." Referring again to the same text, Mr. Hanson makes a broad statement: "This is the one passage in the New Testament where everyone admits that we have a clear example of Christ's pre-existent activity in Old Testament history."

"Everyone" admits to this statement? No! We reject the entire doctrine of a pre-existent Christ. Christ had no existence prior to His birth. He is not to be found in the Old Testament except by prophecy.

### **B. Jesus Christ: Who Is He?**

Ask this question of any theologian, and your answer will be comparable to this statement by S. J. Mikolaski, a Professor of Theology holding several college degrees: "Jesus Christ is the eternal second person of the holy Trinity who became incarnate at Bethlehem. Christian faith stands or falls with the truth that Jesus Christ is really God the Son and distinctly God the Son. Upon this the doctrine of the trinity rests firmly. He is called God unambiguously by the New Testament writers."

When Jesus was teaching in the area of Caesarea-

August, 1977

Philippi, He asked His disciples a similar question: "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" And the disciples answered, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." He then asked: "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter had a ready answer: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:13-16).

Jesus did not rebuke Peter for his answer and make the claim that He was God. Had Peter's answer been incorrect, Jesus would have been quick to correct him, for He had rebuked Peter before. But He let Peter's answer stand, and it was recorded for all who would read it in the future: **He was not God, but the Son of God. We need no better authority than Christ Himself.** The idea of a "holy Trinity" of which Jesus is one part is not to be found in the Scriptures, neither is it implied.

The Scriptures are rife with testimony concerning Christ, who He was, His nature and His life. We will review some of them.

1. **He was born as any human.** "And she [Mary] brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger" (Luke 2:7). This was the beginning of His life; He was conceived in the womb by miraculous means, but born as every other human that has ever walked this earth. "And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcision of the child, his name was called Jesus" (Luke 2:21). His mother was following the ritual of the law of Moses regarding circumcision. All parents of male children were bound by the same Law and Jesus was treated as any other child.

2. **He grew and He learned.** "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom. . . . And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:40, 52). He was not a God omniscient, possessing all knowledge from the beginning. His development as a child was comparable to that of any other child of His day. Had He been born perfect He would not have had anything to learn. The writer to the Hebrews said of Him: "Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered, and once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (Heb. 5:8, 9, New International Version).

3. **He was not immortal.** To pre-exist through all eternity, Christ would have to have been immortal. Immortal beings cannot die (Luke 20:36). Christ died on the cross, hence He was mortal: "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost," or as rendered in the New English Bible, He "breathed his last" (Matt. 27:50). Had He been God, He could not have died. Now, seated



at the right hand of His Father's throne awaiting His return to earth, He is immortal, having been rewarded by His heavenly Father.

4. **He was not equal to His Father.** Jesus, through His own words, gives credit to His Father for His supernatural abilities: "I can of mine own self do nothing: . . . I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. . . . My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. . . . I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught

me, I speak these things. . . . I do always those things that please him. . . . For my Father is greater than I" (John 5:30; 7:16; 8:28, 29; 14:28). Jesus could do only those things delegated to Him by His Father; had He been God, He would have possessed the power to do all things at will. He always subordinated His will to that of His Father.

5. **He was the subject of prophecy.** Jesus said to the unbelieving Pharisees: "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me" (John 5:46). Moses spoke of Jesus in prophecy: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me" (Deut. 18:15). His coming was future, He was to be raised up—He was not already in existence, else He could not have been the subject of prophecy.

Isaiah prophesied concerning Him: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14). He was yet to be conceived; His was an entirely new life, not an old one incarnated.

6. **He was a Man, not God.** During His ministry, Jesus was known by the title Son of God, but this in no way suggests that He was God. Speaking of Him to Timothy, the apostle Paul said, "For there is one God [not two or three], and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5). The "**man Christ Jesus**" is to be the mediator **between God and men**. Jesus was a being distinct from God, of a different substance than His Father, as are any human father and son.

**He was part of a human family.** We read, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Judah, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?" (Mark 6:2, 3). Again we read of "his mother and his brethren" who waited outside to speak with Him (Matt. 12:46). His genealogy is recorded in the Scriptures, showing His line of descent through earthly human beings—something that would have been impossible had He been God incarnate. He had no existence prior to the family from which He descended.

**To be a messenger you must know the message.**

#### TEST YOURSELF

1. What is the source of the doctrine of the trinity? When was it adopted by the church?

2. Give two Bible texts that show Jesus' nature. Did He exist before He was born? How can we know?

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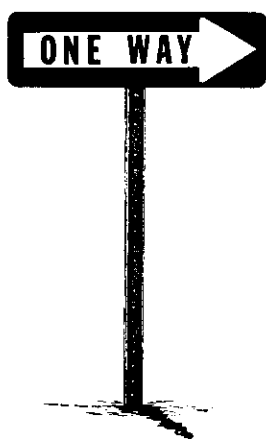
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# -FORWARD!

**C**AN YOU picture any church congregation singing "Backward Christian Soldiers"? Some may be interested in going *backward*, but such marching is not the way to victory; it is not the way of God. God wants His people to go not *back* but **FORWARD!**

Few acts in this world are as futile as sitting down and singing, "Backward, turn backward, O Time in thy flight." For we cannot turn the clock back. We cannot bring back the past. And it is not necessary or desirable that we should. Were we by some fantastic means able to go backward and visit some favorite period of our memory, we would in all probability find the experience grossly disappointing.

Time marches on, and we must march with it. God gives to each of us our own spot in history, and it is in this spot—today—where we must do our allotted work and prepare for the time that is coming, not in some pensive yesterday.

Psychologists attribute certain abnormal mental conditions to an unconscious desire to escape the responsibilities of mature life by returning to the quiet and security of childhood. Such back-looking might be compared to that of the Christian soldier who has lost the will to fight and lets golden opportunities for victory slip by while he revels in the bliss of battles already won.

All such back-looking is strictly forbidden. It suggests that one feels safer enjoying the glory of the past victories than in facing the realities of today, and such an attitude is deadly to spiritual progress. Said one of history's most progressive men, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

Today is ours, with all its fresh challenges and tests. No one at any time in history has ever had access to spiritual virtues and values which cannot

be ours at this very time if only we set to work to acquire them. If our times are morally darker, they provide a background against which the faith and hope and virtue of true Christians can shine the brighter. Our God is the God of today as well as of a glorious yesterday, and we can be sure that wherever He may lead us tomorrow, He will be with us if we are with Him.

We may dream and wish we had lived in the shadow of one of God's great prophets or teachers of the past; but had God deemed such a position necessary to our spiritual success, He could have placed us there. God has arranged that we be where we are, and it is well. Those great men did not need us then, and we cannot have them now. So be it, and God be praised—His wisdom surpasses our fancies. And perhaps we could not have survived the spiritual testings which made them what they were; God knows what is best for us.

In any case, back-looking is worse than futile. We have nothing to lose—and everything to gain—by living to our fullest in our own today. God gives us every opportunity we need—opportunities by which we can achieve all the character and virtue that others before us achieved in their time—if we will. We serve the same God and strive for the same crown which they will attain.

The whole direction of the Bible is not back but *forward*. From where they were to where they were going was always a forward step in their moral activities. It represented no retreat but a distinct advancement over their previous conduct.

Any motion toward God and holiness is always a forward motion. Even acknowledging our wrongs of yesterday is not a retreat backward but a decided step toward a better tomorrow when we may face another opportunity and do better.

There is, unfortunately, such a thing as going backward in our spiritual life. There is such a thing as retreating from a position we once held.

*(Continued on page 19)*



## Those Little Things

IN DISGUST I tore the letter to shreds and tossed them into the wastebasket. It was my third attempt at writing Aunt Kate. I couldn't seem to concentrate. Neal's words kept crowding into my mind.

He had been quoting someone else, but the words still stung. "Little people are bothered by little things." And then his simple suggestion: "Just tune out those little irritations."

More easily said than done. It must be that Neal's days are not infested with so many irritable situations as mine, I mused.

The past two weeks had been hectic. Even with the family's help, it had been extremely busy—and trying. The canning, freezing, gardening, and the usual household chores—plus the task of trying to keep the household running smoothly now that all the children were home for summer holidays—all in all, I was getting irritable and fretful. Little incidents which one time I had not even noticed now began to rub me. The more I noticed them and thought on them, the more they rubbed.

Just little things. Janet had developed an annoying giggle which seemed to accompany everything she said. Brenda, who was now feeling quite grown up, did not hesitate to voice her opinion on just about every subject that came up; and she could see nothing wrong with continuously telling the younger ones what to do.

Kenneth had long had a habit of whistling through his front teeth when he was trying to work out a solution to some problem. Now that whistle began to annoy me. But it was Keith who really brought things to a head. He never could enter a room without making you feel he was ready to challenge you to run a race with him; every muscle of his body was keyed for action. On top of it all, Keith had caught one of those hard-to-get-

rid-of summer colds, which had left him with a hacking cough which seemed to hack continually at my nerves.

Last night after supper, Neal must have sensed the multiple problems. "Come, Kathy," he had said. "The girls will clear the table and wash the dishes. You and I are going for a little ride in the country."

I quickly removed my apron, thanked the girls, and we were on our way. We rode in peaceful silence a long while, the cool breezes fanning my hot cheeks. Finally Neal spoke. "Kathy," he guided the car around a deep pothole in the road. "Don't you think you're letting the little things bother you too much?"

I knew he was right, but what could I do about it? The little things were *there*, and just about *all the time*.

"Why think about them so much? Instead, think of the marvelous opportunities they provide to grow spiritually. You know, we are only as big as the things that we let bother us."

"But Janet's giggle, Neal. It really bothers me. And Kenneth's constant whistle. And—"

"Tune them out."

"You said that before. But how can I?"

"Think about something else. Just concentrate on bigger, better things."

"Like—"

"Like the promises God has given us. Just think of them! Picture yourself as one of those glorious immortal beings. Imagine what it will feel like. God's promises are enough to lift us above any petty annoyance in this life. Just crowd out the annoyances."

"A splendid idea, Neal, but that's not so easy when you have to live with it all day long. You're gone a lot of the day; you don't get so much of it. That cough of Keith's really jars my nerves. And Brenda's know-it-all attitude. And Janet's incessant giggle. And Kenneth's—how are you going to tune all *that* out?"

Neal looked over at me. "Tune *what* out?" he asked.

I sighed, but then I realized. His mind was surely in another world—where mine *should* be too. ●●

.....

*"It is not the great boulders, but the small pebbles on the road that bring the traveling horse to his knees; and it is the petty annoyances of life, to be met and conquered afresh each day, that try most severely the mettle of which we are made."*



## ONE Way: FORWARD!

*(Continued from page 17)*

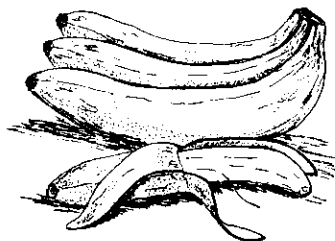
But such retreating is not the way to spiritual victory, and ground surrendered can be regained only at tremendous cost.

We as Christians must watch our directions scrupulously. And when we have the slightest suspicion that we have taken a single step backward, we should immediately take action to reverse our direction and go a longer step forward. The great realizations of superior spiritual understanding, the highest levels of personal living, the thrilling prospects of life forever in the Kingdom of God—all these lie ahead. Are we advancing toward them? Or are we going back? Where are we today? These are fair questions we should put to ourselves, and they demand a fair answer.

If candid self-examination reveals we have departed from greener pastures into poorer, what then?

Let there be no wasting of time in a futile mourning over the past. Rather, let us arise. The Land of Promise lies before us. There is but one way to get there—go FORWARD! ●●

## Fruitful Fragments



*Bad habits are like a comfortable bed—easy to get into but hard to get out of.*

*Faith in the unchanging God makes the uplook good, the outlook bright, and the future glorious.*

*Too many people advertise what they call spiritual "food" when it is only "dry goods and notions."*

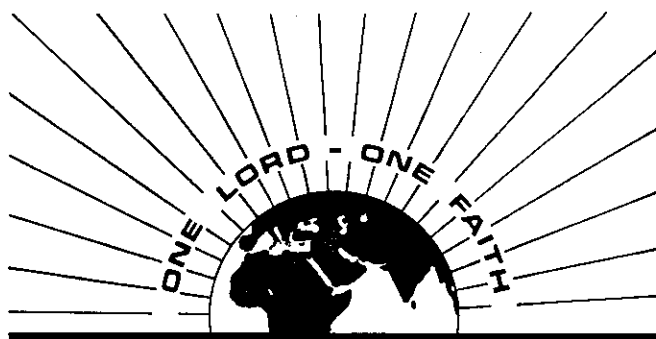
*Living without God is like driving in a fog.*

*In the dictionary of the true soldier you'll never find the word "retreat."*

*Our greatest gift to others is a good example.*

*A good traffic rule on the road of life: When you confront a temptation, keep right.*

August, 1977



## The Devil of the Bible

### Part 1

*In this series we have talked about the Bible, about God's Son and our coming King Jesus Christ, and the plan of salvation. We have also surveyed God's workings with His people during ages past, as recorded in the Bible for our learning.*

*Now we want to take up some other subjects of the Bible that pertain to our salvation. The first we will discuss is the Devil.*

ALL of us find ourselves strongly inclined to do the wrong thing. We feel ornery, disrespectful, revengeful, rebellious, or just plain perverse when things do not go our way. Other people let these feelings grow to such proportions that they go out and commit terrible crimes against other people—they kill, or steal, or harm and hurt in such a way that one would think they had no feeling for human need or kindness.

What makes people do evil? Why are all men not naturally kind, compassionate, loving and interested in the health and happiness of others?

Most people are strongly inclined to want to blame someone else for the evil. It is not "I" who am guilty; circumstances were against me, or I was in bad company, or—there are hundreds of excuses. But very often the *real* source of the evil is said to be some uncontrollable superpower of evil which is called the "devil." There are countless versions of the belief, but in general religious people credit the "devil" as being the source of the evil. Some have actually believed in a supposed monster that stalks in some unseen netherworld and sends agents (demons) into our world.

It may be comfortable to remove the responsibility for sin from ourselves and place it on some foreign power, but the idea has no foundation in fact. Is it taught in the Bible? It is not. Many people believe it is, but their confidence does not make them right.



We are convinced that God and His writers never believed in a mysterious superpower of evil. The idea of a superhuman being or spirit creature of evil that tempts men and women to do wrong is not found in the Bible. It was part of pagan mythology, and exists today among many superstitious cults. It is an idea found in some form in most religions of the world. It was introduced into popular Christianity by men who sought to make Christianity more "appealing" to outsiders. But it is not found in the Bible.

### ***What the Bible says:***

The Bible does talk about the "devil," sometimes called "Satan." But what does it mean?

Let us look at the words used in the original languages in which the men of God wrote the Bible, to get a clearer understanding of what they meant.

The word "devil" does not appear in the Old Testament Scriptures in the sense in which it is popularly used today. The Hebrew word *sa-ir* is translated "devil" (Lev. 17:7; II Chron. 11:15), and means "hairy one, kid, goat." It was a word used to describe an imagined demon which a superstitious people thought inhabited the desert, and whose evil influence, it was believed, could be averted by sacrifice.

There is another word in the Old Testament (*shed*) which is translated "devils" (as in Deut. 32:17), and this refers to something worshiped by the Canaanite people. This "devil" was an idol, and is not something that was believed in by any of God's people.

### ***Satan***

Also in the Old Testament is the word "Satan," which is actually an untranslated Hebrew word meaning "an adversary." Used as a verb in the Hebrew language, it means "to lie in wait, to oppose, to be an adversary." The noun form means "an adversary, opposer."

This is the way *Satan* is used in the Bible. There is no thought of a superhuman being or spirit creature bearing this name. In Numbers 22:22, the angel of the Lord is the *satan* who stands in Balaam's way—as an obstructor, an opposer, an adversary to Balaam. In I Samuel 29:4, the Philistines are worried lest David turn out to be their *satan* or adversary. David had his satans, or adversaries (II Sam. 19:22). In I Kings 5:4, we read that Solomon had such peace and prosperity given him that he had no one opposing, no *satan*.

In the English translations of the Bible, the Hebrew *satan* has been rendered both as "Satan"

and as "adversary." Numbers 22:22 (mentioned above) is an example: "And the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary [*satan*] against him." In verse 32 the verb form of the same Hebrew word is rendered "withstand," as, "Behold, I went out to withstand [*satan*] thee, because thy way is perverse before me." This is the same Hebrew word so often left untranslated in the Old Testament. In this case the adversary is the angel of the Lord, which no one would associate with the supposed "devil" which is commonly thought to be the source of all evil.

But when the "Satan" or adversary is an evil person, and the original word has been retained by the translators, people reading it often think only of the popular idea of a literal superpower of evil. For example, in Job 1:6, "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them." The "sons of God" who presented themselves before the Lord were the believers of that day who were gathering to worship God. And Satan, an adversary, an opposer, came among them as one of the true worshipers. Is there anything strange about this? It has happened among God's people in all ages, and it is still true today. Always there are those who oppose the cause of God, yet pose as loyal worshipers.

In the New Testament, we find the word "devil" used as causing illness, particularly mental illness. It was commonly believed that a "devil" or "demon," as the pagan nations of the day believed, entered into a man and made him ill or affected his mind. Thus, healing sickness was described as "casting out devils," or removing that which opposed a healthy condition of the body (see Matt. 12:22; 15:22; Luke 11:14; Matt. 8:16). In Luke 9, a child, evidently a victim of epilepsy, is described as having a devil, and Jesus is clearly stated to have "healed" the child, indicating a physical ailment (v. 42).

### ***Diabolos***

The other use of "devil" in the New Testament is a translation of the Greek word *diabolos*, which means "false accuser, slanderer." This word is used frequently, for are not false accusers, slanderers and adversaries common? Faith has enemies, and those trying to live by faith in God find they must contend with those who do not share their belief.

Of the many times the word is used, not in one instance is there any suggestion of the influence of a superhuman being. Frequently the "devils" were pagan authorities who could cast believers into prison (Rev. 2:10) and make them suffer for their faith; who could tempt (as Jesus was tempted of



the "devil," probably a Roman official with authority to bestow land and power—see Matthew 4:1-10).

In Ephesians 6:11, Paul advises his brethren to "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil [diabolos]." The armor is spiritual, consisting of the "shield of faith," the "helmet of salvation," and the "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." How could such weapons be used against a power of the spirit world, or a supposed monster, or a superhuman spirit creature? The "devil" is likewise spiritual, a representation of those who do evil and challenge faith, peace, obedience, and godliness, "the rulers of the darkness of this world, . . . spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12).

In II Timothy 3:3 and Titus 2:3, the same word translated "devil" in other texts is rendered correctly as "false accuser," and no one thinks of a literal "devil" or spirit creature beyond human control.

*(Continued next issue)*

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An essay by a seventeen-year-old schoolboy

## Rewards

HOW would you like to be able to do all the things Jesus did—cure the blind, cast out disease, raise the dead, cure infirmities, cure lepers, change water into wine, feed thousands with a lunch of a few fish and a few slices of bread? Even greater things than these are part of the reward that is in store for them that love Him.

The reward includes life eternal—that alone is a reward in itself. Just for a moment imagine a gift of eternal life. But the reward of the righteous doesn't stop there. It will be not only eternal life, but life without sickness, pain, disease and crime. There will be no war, graveyards, hospitals, no riots, droughts, depressions; it will be a perfect society, instead of a world of confusion and uncertainty; it will be a world of perfect harmony.

Yes, it will be a time when God shall wipe away all tears, "and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things"! (Rev. 21:7).

You have just read, in brief, the reward of the righteous. It is not a dream. It is not like Martin Luther King's dream that in these days all men will be brothers and freedom will ring through all parts of the world. No, as long as man rules man, freedom will not ring.

The Almighty's promise to all who will leave this sinful world and follow in the footsteps of Jesus is that in the coming Day of Judgment, Jesus will say to them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you" (Matt. 25:34). But those who will not leave their own ways and the follies of this present world shall hear from His lips the words, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity" (Luke 13:27). Which words would we rather hear? More importantly, which words *will* we hear?

Not until we enter that eternal city will we begin to realize the grandeur of the reward God has laid up for His faithful children.

What a happy time that will be, and to think,

*"When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we first begun."*

Can you take it all in? Now our lives grow shorter and shorter and shorter. Then they will go on growing longer and longer and longer.

What glories the Lord has described for us—gates of pearl, streets of gold—it is as great as our minds can take in. Then we are told, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9).

Let us each one work to be worthy of that grand reward, work to be worthy of abiding forever with God's people in a world of peace, of having health and strength, and a mind capable of retaining the knowledge of God, and the power to come and go as the angels with the freedom of the wind.

Will we be ready for the reward when Christ comes to give it? He could come tomorrow, you know.

Hark! is that Him now? ●●

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Four things a man must learn to do  
If he would keep his record true:  
To think without confusion clearly;  
To love his brother more sincerely;  
To act from honest motives purely;  
To trust the Word of God securely.



## Behold I Come--Suddenly!

(Continued from page 7)

with them shall be "caught up together . . . in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (I Thess. 4:17).

From the reading of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, it would appear that the people of the Church at that time received the wrong impression and that Paul felt impelled to send another letter to correct the misunderstanding. After a brief introduction, Paul returned to the theme he had discussed in his First Epistle, only more explicitly stating the time when Christ should be expected. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by [concerning] the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed. . . . Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things" (II Thess. 2:1-3, 5). He had told them all this before, but now he was trying to remind them that the great Day could not come until certain events took place. There should be an apostasy, a falling away from the faith—which had already begun at that time.

By saying "we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord," Paul had referred not to himself and his brethren but to the whole body of believers. Paul knew there would be living believers at the time of Christ's return, and all believers together compose one body, in which Paul included himself and his brethren. It is the same "we" who "must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (II Cor. 5:10), the same "we" who are "the body of Christ, and members in particular" (I Cor. 12:27).

Paul's hope was not to see Christ return during his lifetime but to have a share in the resurrection when Christ should finally come: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" was his life goal (Phil. 3:11). He would have felt no need to share in the resurrection had he expected Christ during his lifetime. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ," he wrote at another time when discussing the resurrection, "we are of all men most miserable" (I Cor. 15:19)—there could be no hope of anything beyond without the resurrection.

### "Behold I Come Quickly"

Another passage which has caused considerable difficulty are the words of Jesus Himself, recorded

in His last message to men. Jesus sent this message, as says the introduction, "to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1:1). And seven times in this book Christ speaks these words: "Behold, I come quickly."

The statement cannot be overlooked. It is important; it shouts at us by a word meant to capture and hold our attention: "Behold!" The fact stated is foremost through the whole New Testament: "I come." It is a definite statement; Christ IS coming.

But the last word, "quickly," has raised questions. Did Jesus mean to convey that the time of His reappearance was *soon*—during the first century? Did He mean that the events portrayed in Revelation would "shortly come to pass," as we would think of something happening "shortly"?

We need to look at the original Greek word translated "quickly"; it is *tachu*. This word, or some form of it, is used about 36 times in the New Testament. One of its meanings is "in a short time, soon." But the Greek-English Lexicons give other meanings, which are: "without delay, quickly; at a rapid rate; swiftly," and the word seems to be used more often with these latter meanings than with the former. *Tachu* suggests quickness, swiftness, haste, speed. It is used in Luke 18:8, "He will avenge them *speedily*"; in Acts 12:7, "Arise up *quickly*"; in Acts 22:18, "Get thee *quickly* out of Jerusalem." The same word occurs in Luke 14:21, "Go out *quickly* into the streets"; and in John 11:31, "She rose up *hastily* and went out."

This same word *tachu* is often used in combination with other words to suggest speed. For example, *tachu* plus "runner" is a fast runner. *Tachu* "fruit" is fruit that ripens quickly. *Tachu* "writing" is speedwriting. *Tachu* "work" is work done quickly. *Tachu* "death" is quick or sudden death. *Tachu* plus "sailing" means to sail fast. *Tachu* plus "motion" means to move fast. The idea is consistently one of speed, swiftness, haste.

If we apply this meaning to Jesus' words in Revelation, "Behold, I come quickly," or "the time is at hand," we do not have a statement of *when*. He will come but of *how* He will come. He will come as He described it Himself when talking to His disciples: "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). He will come like lightning, a figure of swiftness.

*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* adds still another thought to the meaning of "quickly" which makes Jesus' words even more comprehensive. *Tachu*, rendered "quickly," may mean "by surprise, suddenly." In other words, "Behold I come *suddenly*." One moment everything is business as usual; the next moment He will be here among us.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE



As one commentator says, "By 'quickly' is not meant that the Second Advent would occur soon after John completed the writing of this book. Rather, it means that the events of the Second coming will occur so fast, one event quickly following another, that many will be taken completely by surprise" (*Wycliffe Commentary*, page 1105).

Is not this the teaching of the entire Scriptures? Many times Jesus warned that He would come by surprise, suddenly, and coupled His statement with a warning to extreme watchfulness. For example, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24: 44). Again, "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, . . . lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:35-37). Again, "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:33). In His last message, He was still warning: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments" (Rev. 16:15).

The apostle Paul wrote something similar in a letter to the Thessalonians. "Yourselves know perfectly," he said, "that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (I Thess. 5:2). They knew perfectly, but the warning was so important that he repeated it yet again, and added, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (vs. 4-6). But we should keep in mind as we read these verses that Paul was writing by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that his words were to warn and encourage believers in all ages to come. And his illustration of Christ's coming "as a thief" carried no suggestion of *when* Christ would arrive but only of the manner of His coming. It would be sudden, a shocking surprise to those not ready; hence his admonition: "Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."

#### More Suddenness

Even certain of the Old Testament prophets conveyed the idea of suddenness. The prophet Malachi pictured the arrival of the King as sudden, even though it will follow the announcement by His herald. "Behold, I will send my messenger," he wrote, speaking for God, "and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who

shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap" (Mal. 3:1-2). "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come."

The author of the New Testament book of James felt the imminent suddenness with which the Day of Christ will arrive. And he combined his reminder with another solemn warning for very practical preparation: "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned. Behold, the judge standeth before the door" (James 5:9). Someone is going to be condemned, he warns. Don't let it be you. Get rid of all those grudges, those disgruntled feelings and memories of hurt—*lest you be condemned*. He who stands on the threshold even now is your *Judge*. His hand is on the latch. One more step, and He will be inside—suddenly.

We cannot fail to admire the lively expectation of those zealous first century Christians who knew that the Day was yet far in the distance. Could we have done as well? How much more easily we should be able to maintain an attitude of expectancy; to no other people has the great event been nearer than it is to us this very moment. And what if the Judge should lift the latch on our door this very morning and step across the threshold into our presence: How would *we* feel?

#### Imminence vs. Immediacy

We need to keep ourselves continually conscious of the imminence of Christ's coming, we who can see the prophecies of Scripture and can number nearly six thousand years of history behind us. But the words of Jesus are still true: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man" (Mark 13: 32).

These words of Jesus expressly forbid date-setting, yet the desire to fix the time of Christ's return by one formula or another has persisted through all the years since He ascended. Those who did not comprehend the scope of the divine plan were looking for Jesus at the end of the first millennium A. D. The year 1000 brought vast apprehension; surely that would be the end? But it was not. Dates were set again for a time between 1200 and 1260; but the end was not then. In the seventeenth century, a man named John Napier developed a new system of mathematics which he used to determine the date of Christ's return—somewhere between 1688 and 1700. His commentary went through 23 editions and several translations before 1700. After that, of course, it wasn't so convincing. (Continued next page)

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NOTE: "*Behold I Come—Suddenly*" is available as a church service recording on cassette. Price: \$3.00



In 1843 William Miller proposed a date for the return of Jesus, and on the appointed date multitudes climbed hilltops and rooftops to await the appearing of Christ. But He did not appear. Then Miller reviewed his calculations and discovered he had made an error of one year. Again his dutiful followers climbed to the hilltops to watch; but Jesus did not return then either.

In our generation men are still speculating on dates, but Jesus' words stand: "In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:44).

It did not suit God's purpose to reveal the exact time when Jesus would come, only to point to the times and seasons by the fulfillment of prophecy. There may be several reasons for this. Foremost is His desire that His people maintain an attitude of constant expectancy and prepare steadily. Date-setting tends to postpone preparation. If we do not look for Christ to come until September 25, 1980, we won't be too concerned with what we are doing today—there is still plenty of time.

But this is not the attitude Jesus wanted us to have. "Behold I come quickly"—suddenly, swiftly—means He could come today, and we should be getting ready *today*. And if He does not come today, then we should look for Him tomorrow. And if not tomorrow, then the next day, and so on, ever remembering His words: "Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping."

Date-setting also tends to dull expectation when the specified time turns out to be wrong. For example, I tell myself Christ will surely come within the next two years. Good. I can forego the things of this world that long, and then everything will be different. I am confident I can hold on that long.

But what happens when the two years are gone if He has not come? Is there not danger of my deciding to go after the things of the world while I can still enjoy them?

Such is not the attitude which will help us in getting ready for the great Day to come. Jesus would have us spend every day preparing. We need every day granted us, and every hour of each day. The work we must yet accomplish is great, and time at best is short. And if we are not making some definite progress each day, the Day of the Lord could easily arrive and find us sleeping.

Jesus' arrival will be a sudden interruption in a seemingly endless stream of very ordinary days, and will find most people all absorbed in the routine of life, unaware and unprepared. Jesus drew a fitting comparison with the times of Noah and of Lot, when God sent swift destruction upon people who had been amply warned. I would like to read His words as recorded by Luke, and as paraphrased in the Living Bible:

"When I return the world will be as indifferent to the things of God as the people were in Noah's day. They ate and drank and married—everything just as usual right up to the day when Noah went into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all." Then He spoke of Lot's day and a similar situation: "People went about their daily business—eating and drinking, buying and selling, farming and building—until the morning Lot left Sodom. Then fire and brimstone rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. Yes, it will be 'business as usual' right up to the hour of my return" (Luke 17:26-30, TLB).

What a warning to us not to become so involved in the everyday business of our lives that we forget what is just ahead; for any day—even today—could be the last.

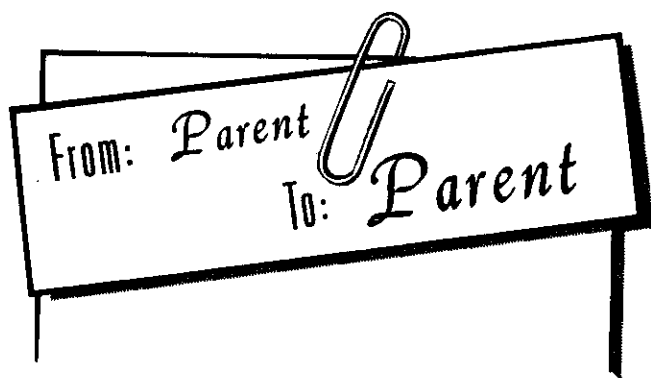
This, in essence, was Jesus' warning in His words: "Behold I come quickly." Behold I am coming, swiftly and suddenly. What an urgent admonition to constant readiness. What a warning to stop dabbling in that which God forbids, to quit playing with temptation, to learn to abhor what God abhors and love what He loves.

For upwards of a hundred years now our Church has been looking for Christ to come. This may seem like a long delay, as men count time. But we need to remember we are dealing with time as *God* measures it. And the time goes on just as God knew it would—and planned that it should—for *our* benefit. More than a few of us would have had no chance if Christ had come when our founder expected Him first. The day of Christ's return was imminent when he sounded the midnight cry; and it is still imminent—and much nearer—today. We today can repeat the words of the prophet Zephaniah even more meaningfully than could he: "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near and hasteth greatly" (Zeph. 1:14). And what a day it will be for each of us—either of unutterable grief or of indescribable delight and joy.

It is the question which each of us should take with us today, as expressed by the modern songwriter:

Say! will you be ready for the coming of the Lord?  
Will you be ready when the King returns?  
Do you long to see Him with a heart that yearns?  
Will you at all be taken by surprise?  
Will His words, "Well done!" be a waiting prize?  
Will there be any shame or regret when you look in-  
to those piercing eyes?  
Will you be ready when this age adjourns?  
Will you be ready when the King returns?  
When the King returns—  
*will you be ready?*





## Correction Pays

WHILE shopping one afternoon recently, I made a few observations which gave me something to think about.

A young mother was struggling with her two unruly children in the baked goods section of the supermarket. Despite her efforts to restrain him, Junior insisted on running ahead of her and pulling packages off the shelves. "Put those cookies back," she growled as he laid one package down and picked up another. Just then the other child, noticing that his mother was preoccupied, took the opportunity to dash away. "Johnny, get back here!" she shouted, but Johnny quickly disappeared around the nearest corner as though he hadn't heard. Their whole shopping trip seemed a battle of wills.

That's probably why I noticed another mother with her youngsters in the cereal section. There were four of them, including a baby that rode contentedly in the cart. But there was no grabbing, no yelling, no "Johnny, get back here!" and no running around. Quietly the mother chose the items she wanted, and the youngsters delighted in helping her load the shopping cart. They were a picture of harmony and happiness.

What made the difference in the way the two sets of children behaved in the store that day? I believe the Wise Man had the answer when he said, "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul" (Prov. 29:17).

Parents who take the time and trouble to correct their children and teach them to obey, experience the delight of obedient children—instead of the discontent, frustration and frazzled nerves that follow the battle of wills. By teaching our children to obey when we speak to them, we save ourselves the worry, embarrassment and struggle of the first mother I observed. Correction makes all the difference.

Then I began to wonder: What kind of picture do I present to other shoppers when I must take my children with me? How about you? As striving Christian parents, we are responsible for the example we set before the world.

But correction does more than weed out unruly behavior in public places. It brings blessing in many other areas of our day-to-day living. When we go to church, or meet with Christian friends in our homes, don't we appreciate children who can participate quietly or entertain themselves without creating a disturbance and hindering the study and worship of the other people present? Correcting our children's undesirable behavior whenever it appears will help give us that assurance.

How much happier are all of us if our children can eat what has been prepared for them at mealtime without muss or fuss—instead of taking whatever they want whenever they want it. And we can know they are getting the foods they need to be healthy.

Bedtime, story-time, pick-up time and all those other "times" go so much more smoothly when the children have learned to do what we tell them to do and we parents have been consistent in correcting them.

And did you ever stop to think that by correcting our children we may someday be able to keep them from some real harm or danger? Suppose our three-year-old runs into the street into the path of an oncoming car. We call him to "Stop!" Is he used to obeying—and obeying instantly—when we speak? If he is, there is a good chance he will stop. But if he is used to finishing whatever he has made up his mind to do before he obeys, what will make him do any differently now?

Would we be free from the discord and frazzled nerves which plague so many parents today? Then let us take the Wise Man's words to heart and correct our children kindly and consistently. Then we will be able to enjoy the harmony and peace which will result.

Following God's ways always brings happiness. And correction is God's way. ●●

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There's a work for us to do each day,  
There's a yoke to meekly wear,  
There's a cross to overcome our way  
And the Saviour's image bear.

There's a work to lay all self aside,  
And the Saviour's precepts do;  
If we stumble, now, to bravely rise  
And to be more faithful, true.





## LETTERS

### From A Schoolboy

We study the Bible at home, but we don't get too far really, because we come across some sentences we can't understand and then it takes so long until we think we have it figured out. Mother tries hard, but I wish I could attend your church and Sunday School and get ahead faster.

I represented our school at the science and engineering fair. My project was on plants. It was very hard to do. Next year I'm going to do my project on humming birds. It won't be easy, but then, things that are worthwhile usually aren't easy and being a good-living person and pleasing God in all we do is an example of how hard we have to try to force ourselves and mold our ways to suit Him—not us.

Ayr, Ontario, Canada

B. H.

### For Pro & Con

Please keep "Pro & Con" coming in your magazine, on a monthly basis, as I have gained so much from it. Keep up the good work.

Columbus, Ohio

E. W.

### Words of Life

Our thanks to all of you for making the truth available in these many media—the *Message*, tapes, letters, books and leaflets. We enjoy them all immensely and are always anxious to receive them. It reminds me of Peter's reply to Jesus, "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). And so I am convinced that you have these "words of eternal life" also, thanks to the work of the Rev. L. T. Nichols, and to God most of all.

Though Holy Spirit power ceased to exist on earth about 70 A. D., if we only open our eyes we can still see the workings of God all about us. We see Him arranging many circumstances for His people, even in our own individual lives: Circumstances which may bring us into contact with others that we may be a witness to them, circumstances to help us overcome those little things like envy, pride, backbiting, gossip, unthankfulness, jealousy, impatience, and lovers of our own selves. Or perhaps God may give us plenty for a time that we may see just how unthankful we are. How blessed America has been these past 200 years. I stand in amazement and wonder if we surely aren't the most unthankful people on earth, as I see so much waste and the negative attitudes of people in the face of a major crisis.

I pray, and I know that God will watch over His people. "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" is His promise (Joshua 1:5). And "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Conyers, Georgia

G. P.

### Looking Ahead

If we heed the warnings in God's Word and be a doer not a hearer only, we can be eligible to live forever in God's Kingdom.

I just read a letter in our hometown paper from a boy I used to know when going to school. He had written the editor a very entertaining letter of old memories of school-days back in Clarence, Missouri. But I thought as I read, how glad I am to be thinking of future events instead of looking back at the past which is gone forever!

Sometimes the traveling may get rough, but we have God's wisdom, our compass, the Word of God to guide us. Angels are faithfully keeping our record of victory or failure. What is our rating?

Davenport, Iowa

W. P.

### Scriptural Spotlight

(Continued from page 27)

covered. The people of Gibeon could not be harmed—the covenant had to be honored. But Joshua condemned them to serve as bondmen, to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for Israel, and all because of the pretending ambassadors.

What is our evidence that our mission is genuine? Are we doing our duty as true ambassadors of our King?

The Gibeonites were pretending ambassadors. Are we? It is so easy to pretend to be what we are not. Do we think we can make a crafty league with God? We may seem to deceive the Joshua and the elders of our day; we may even deceive ourselves; but we cannot fool God.

Just as the Gibeonites' scheme was found out and the people condemned, so if we have lived disguised lives in any degree we too will be condemned. Our guilt will be made known. The veil of hypocrisy, of pretention, insincerity and Pharisaism will be drawn aside. Each of us will be known for what we are. The Book will be opened, and the pretenders will become bondmen, servants to carry the iron yoke of servitude until they are finally destroyed.

Why not be true ambassadors for Christ and discharge our duty thoroughly? Why not count it an honor to represent so great a King, even the future King of the whole earth? Why not subordinate personal desires to principle, and personal ambition to an exalted love for our King and His country? It will pay us greatly in the end—we shall receive our King's eternal endorsement, "Well done," and shall then be permitted to live in a country that is *our own*, for the whole earth shall be our King's government—the Kingdom of God on earth! ●●





# SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

*"They did work wilily, and went and made as if they  
had been ambassadors"*

—Joshua 9:4.

**T**HERE is perhaps no office demanding greater responsibility to one's government than that of ambassador. An ambassador is "an official representative of his own government or sovereign" (Webster). He must be a respected citizen of independent fortune, and is usually selected for his ability to speak and act diplomatically in behalf of his country though living among people who speak a different language, honor a different tradition, and pursue a different way of life.

Each follower of Christ is also holding a position of ambassador. Each has been "called" away from the interests of this world to be the Eternal's representative among people who honor a different tradition and pursue a different way of life. Jesus' own words to His apostles were: "I have acquainted you with everything that I heard from my Father. You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and I have appointed you to go out and produce fruit" (John 15:15-16, Berkeley). And Paul's instructions are, "Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do" (Eph. 5:15-16, Phillips). Again he adds, "Be wise in your behaviour towards non-Christians" (Col. 4:5, Phillips).

The Christ-ambassador is a "citizen of heaven," and must regard himself as a pilgrim and a stranger in an alien world. Physically not able to escape the world, he belongs mentally and morally to another society.

He is here as an ambassador bearing important tidings from his country. He does not speak his own words or opinions or state his own personal views; he brings a message of divine certainties from the King. It is Jesus' message and principles that He continually strives to convey.

Each of us who has covenanted to serve God is under obligation to be such an ambassador. It is

a position of high and solemn responsibility, as we go about our King's business. The question is, how seriously do we take our appointments? Do we realize that we are public representatives of the future King of the earth? Are we genuine ambassadors, or are we only pretending, only feigning to be what we are not?

Christ wants men and women who are genuine and committed. There is a great difference between the real Christian statesman and the pretender. The whole energy of the one is focused on the future; the other regards only the present. The one lives by the day and acts on expediency; the true ambassador of Christ acts on enduring principles and for immortality—which Christ will bestow upon him if he is faithful in his mission.

Perhaps we can take a spiritual lesson from a company of the inhabitants of Gibeon long ago, who presented themselves to Joshua and the princes of Israel as ambassadors.

From the days of Joshua we may learn how pretending ambassadors are regarded. It was the time when the conquest of Canaan was just getting underway. Terrified by the fate of nearby Ai and Jericho, the people of the city of Gibeon devised a scheme by which they hoped to save their lives. A company of them disguised themselves as official travelers from a far country seeking a covenant of peace, and as such they presented themselves to Joshua and the elders of Israel. The Bible reads that "they did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors" (Joshua 9:4). As evidence of the great distance they had come, they showed Joshua their worn shoes, their old sacks, their torn wineskins and their moldy bread.

Joshua and the elders of Israel believed their story, and agreed to the covenant they desired. Three days later, however, their deception was dis-

*(Continued on page 26)*



# *Before Thy Throne*

*Before Thy throne, O God, we kneel;  
Give us a conscience quick to feel,  
A ready mind to understand  
The meaning of Thy chastening hand;  
Whate'er the pain and shame may be,  
Bring us, O Father, nearer Thee.*

*Search out our hearts and make us true,  
Longing to give to Thee Thy due;  
From love of pleasure, lust of gold,  
From sins which make the heart grow cold,  
Wean us and train us with Thy rod;  
Teach us to know our faults, O God.*

*For sins of heedless word and deed,  
For pride ambitious to succeed;  
For crafty trade and subtle snare  
To catch the simple unaware;  
For lives bereft of purpose high,  
We do repent; Forgive! we cry.*

*Let the fierce fires, which burn and try,  
Our inmost spirits purify;  
Consume the ill; purge out the shame;  
O God, be with us in the flame;  
A newborn people may we rise,  
More pure, more true, more nobly wise.*

—Selected.

