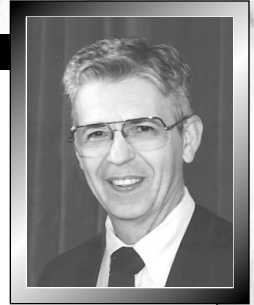


Weyland Message

*"Yours, O Lord, is the
greatness and the power
and the glory and the
majesty and the splendor,
for everything in heaven
and earth is yours.*

—1 Chron. 29:11 NIV

Vol. 88, No. 8
September/October, 2001



BEYOND THE POSSIBLE... WITH GOD!

The most successful companies have mastered the ability to do something “impossible.” Managers understand that motivation is the core of survival in a competitive market.

In a certain company, management distributed an editorial encouraging design engineers to go “beyond the possible” in producing new products. “It’s always intriguing,” said the editorial, “to speculate about the future and what we may be able to do with technology. And it’s always dangerous to say what can’t be done.”

For example, in 1899 the director of the U. S. Patent Office urged President McKinley to abolish the office, and even the position of Director, since “everything that can be invented has been invented.” (He wasn’t the only one whom time has proved wrong.)

Thomas Edison thought his phonograph had non-commercial value, and that alternating currents were unreliable and unsuitable “for any general system of distribution.” Today alternating currents are the most common means of using electrical power in the world.

In 1913 Lee de Forest, inventor of the vacuum tube, was brought to trial and charged with fraudulent use of the U. S. mail to sell stock. In the words of the district attorney: “de Forest has said in many newspapers and over his signature that it would be possible to transmit the human voice across the Atlantic before many years. Based on these absurd and deliberately misleading statements, the misguided public...has been persuaded to purchase stock in his company.”

Ransom E. Olds, an auto industry pioneer, sold his company in 1925, saying “the field holds no more interest for me because the motor car has reached the ultimate in design and technology.”

On December 10, 1903 the New York Times published an editorial that questioned the inventors of heavier-than-air machines. “There are more useful employments with fewer disappointments and mortifications,” said the editorial. Seven days later the Wright brothers made their famous flight at Kitty Hawk.

There is a serious lesson here: that it is dangerous to say something cannot be done. While you are declaring it impossible, someone is probably doing it.

Are you challenged by “impossibilities”? Chances are, you have come to accept the idea that a lot of work, patience, determination and training are in your future. How many explorers, researchers, doctors, inventors

have given time and resources, even sacrificing their lives, to go beyond the possible. The result: they DID what others had declared impossible!

How did they do it? They stopped their ears to any cries of “Impossible!” and kept going—and gave us a host of modern conveniences and benefits, from the lowly light bulb to the super computer, from the automobile to space travel.

There is yet another area of challenging accomplishment that has been generally branded “impossible.” And truly it would be impossible, if the Lord God had not designed a plan. But He has given a plan, set a standard, and—most important of all, an avenue by which we can obtain help.

What is the so-called “impossible”? Hear what God said to Abraham (Abram): “*I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect*” (Gen. 17:1). Or Jesus’ own words: “*Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect*” (Matt. 5:48). Generations have excused themselves, declaring that the word *perfect* means something less. In other words, as they see it, moral perfection is beyond the possible. “*It just means complete,*” they say.

What they often overlook is the element of growth. If God asked us to overcome all sin immediately, all would fail—the tasks would be truly impossible. But God sets a standard, and gives us time to reach it, to put off each (old) misdeed and to practice each (new) good and right deed. At the same time He has provided examples of men and women who accepted the challenge and went “beyond the possible”—with His help.

Are you willing to accept this challenge with God’s help?

That is the key: “with God.” If we stay with Him, we shall be able to go beyond the commonly assigned limits of possibility even to attain to the “*measure of Christ’s stature.*” This requires growth—growth in grace and knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18), growth through all the tests and trials of life. Patiently working with God we can grow and at last “*be perfect and complete, lacking nothing*” (James 1:2–4).

Why should we attempt it? Because it is God’s way to give us life and immortality (Rom. 2:7). Because it is God’s way of accepting us into His family (1 John 3:2–3). Because it is God’s way of making it possible for us to enjoy the limitless reaches of the universes of His heavenly family—world without end! ♦

"Heaven on Earth"

The Bible contains many texts proclaiming that Christ's Kingdom will be established right here on this earth made over new. Contrary to the belief of many, no one will "fly away" to a paradise somewhere in the great beyond in the "hereafter." Here are just a few of the texts verifying that earth made over new is to be the location of Christ's Kingdom, and the place where Earth's righteous ones will spend eternity with Christ their King:

"God himself that formed the earth and made it;...he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isaiah 45:18).

"The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever...For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth" (Ps. 37:29, 22).

"And the Lord shall be king over all the earth" (Zech. 14:9).

"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou...hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10).

"As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14:21).

*"Your Kingdom come,
Your will be done on earth
as it is in heaven." —Jesus*

...and why not apply some of those conditions now?

by RUSSELL HAMBY

When God's six thousand years of creating are completed (and that is just around the corner, so to speak); when the one thousand years co-rule with Christ is ended and the second judgment is over, then earth will no more be an island alone, for God's will shall be done here on earth as in heaven; and when it is, earth shall become a part of heaven!

Have you given these events, and these promises, much thought? How do you picture heaven on earth?

When I find myself thinking of this New Heaven promised in the Scriptures, I visualize an unlimited positive future in which the opposition to God and God's people is overcome and in which dreams for self-fulfillment are fully realized.

Perhaps one of the reasons why we pray is to keep hope in

our dreams in spite of the opposition we encounter in the world. We presume, and that presumption is verified with scientific evidence, that beyond the world of human beings the whole cosmic sphere operates by rationality and in strict obedience to natural law.

Only here upon the earth in the affairs of human beings is there disorder, disharmony, disobedience, distrust; and therefore, chaotic departure from the rational and kind law of God for human life. This prayer of Jesus directs us to obey the will of God so that, in this world of disorder, harmony might appear, distrust might be changed into trust, anarchy might be transformed into community and irresponsible freedom into willful service for the common human good.

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The **Megiddo Message** (USPS 338-120) (ISSN 0194-7826) is published monthly (except March/April and September/October issues) by the Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619. Telephone: 716-235-4150. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, New York.

Publication Staff: Ruth E. Sisson, Editor; Gerald R. Payne, Executive Editor; Newton H. Payne, Senior Editor (emeritus). Artwork and design by Margaret A. Tremblay; Subscriptions Manager, Donna R. Mathias.

Subscription Rate and Renewals: One year (ten issues) \$5.00. Send to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619-1697. Or call 716-235-4150.

Note: For the protection of our subscribers, we do not sell, rent, lease, publish or distribute our mailing list.

Address Changes? Be sure to notify promptly of any change in your address. Please include your old mailing label and your new address. Send to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619-1697. **Postmaster:** Send all changes of address to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, NY 14619.

URL: www.megiddo.com

E-mail address: megiddo@megiddo.com

Manuscript Policy: Unsolicited manuscripts for publication are not accepted.

The **Megiddo Message** is the official organ of the Megiddo Church, Inc., founded in 1880 by L. T. Nichols. Publication was begun in 1914. Maud Hembree, Editor-in-Chief (1914-1935); Ella M. Skeels, Executive Editor (1935-1945); Percy J. Thatcher, Editor (1945-1958); Kenneth E. Flowerday, President and Editor (1958-1985); Newton H. Payne, Editor (1985-1997).

The **Megiddo Message** is available in microfilm from Bell & Howell Information and Learning, Serials Acquisitions, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Indexing: The Megiddo Message is indexed annually, in December. Combined indexing available, 1944-1996.

Bible Quotations: Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version or the New King James Version. Other versions are identified as follows: NEB—New English Bible; NIV—New International Version; NASB—New American Standard Bible; RSV—Revised Standard Version; TLB—The Living Bible; JB—The Jerusalem Bible; Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English; Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation; NRSV—New Revised Standard Version; NLT—The New Living Translation; NCV—The New Century Version.

Note: If you wish to remove label on cover, warm with hair dryer and carefully peel off.

MEGIDDO MEANS...

"a place of troops" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon); "a place of God" (Young's Analytical Concordance). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

WE BELIEVE...

- ◆ in God, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- ◆ in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- ◆ in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to

heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.

- ◆ in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- ◆ in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- ◆ in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- ◆ in ourselves as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

- ◆ in the promise of God, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

THE HERALD AND THE KING

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

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

Heaven on Earth... Heaven on Earth... Heaven on Earth

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Can we dare to dream of such things? Or better put: Can we, in the face of the growing hopelessness of our age, survive if we do not build our hopes and efforts around such dreams? So, I find myself repeating the phrase found in several old gospel hymns, "One day." One day all the righteous men and women will be able to see each other as God sees us without prejudice of nationality, race, culture, economic status, or gender. One day there will be "no Jew or Greek, slave or freeman, male or female," for we will all be one new harmonious humanity in Christ Jesus. It may not be so now, but our hope is that one day it will be so.

One day our losses will stop and with them grief, separation, and loneliness. One day friends will not betray friendship, spouses will not disappoint with unfaithfulness, children will not cast aside parental instruction.

One day we will not betray our own abilities by taking alluring shortcuts, looking for an easy way through life. One day human freedom will be matched with responsibility, opportunity with effort, and generosity with thankfulness.

One day "Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they

study war any more" (Isa. 2:4). One day men shall "beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks." One day groups of men and women living in organized societies called nations will have a wider vision than that of tribal loyalty. One day the irresistible Prince of Peace will cry, "Enough," and the war machines of the world will stop. Don't tell me how strong the opposition is to that dream or how distant is the day. I know that one day it shall be so, for God has promised it..

So, what do you do in the meantime? While you are waiting, after you have prayed for the Kingdom of God to be visible, His rule to be total, His will to be irresistible, what do you do until God's great day when dreams are fulfilled? One day is the future. What about today?

I think the phrase "on earth as it is in heaven" tells us what we are to do once we have raised hope for the future through our prayers. God's people are supposed to live like they pray. If there are no artificial barriers between the hosts of heaven, destroy them here and now in your own life. So, if there is no disloyalty in heaven to cause distrust, live with loyalty today and give no cause for distrust by broken promises

and betrayed friendships. If in heaven there is none to bring charge against your character, practice now the sacrificial love that will make that future place, Christ's Kingdom, possible on earth. And if peace is the description of heaven where nations are nothing and race is nothing and wealth is measured by how much we trust in God, then dare to live now in this age according to that vision of the future so that weapons of destruction are unnecessary and instead the wealth of the world can be turned to productive good for all who live.

Do not turn away thinking that I have become an incurable optimist, for let me assure you that I know the phrase "on earth as it is in heaven" is filled with risk. It is one thing to dream of heaven on earth. It is a more desirous thing to pray that God will act decisively to bring our dreams to reality one day. And, believe me, it is something else to start living out our future in the present because the opposition to God is still very much alive. And that opposition has another destination, another desire, and a different dream.

We must always temper the grand words of prayer, "on earth as it is in heaven," with the picture of a devout and obedient person backed into a cor-

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A Thousand Years on Earth

Before heaven can come to earth the Bible outlines a period of transition, a time of 1000 years, during which Jesus and His new regime will take the reins of government and establish the Kingdom of God on earth. The new regime will initiate broad, sweeping changes which will completely transform the world as we know it (corrupt, sinful, tragedy-stricken) into one new worldwide nation (perfect, peaceful, prosperous, ideal) where all will be members of one family and all work together for the good of each other.

The following article outlines the evidence that during this thousand-year period of transition, widely called the Millennium, Jesus and the saints will be literally reigning, living and working on earth.

Of all that the Bible reveals about the wonders and glory of Christ's Kingdom, perhaps no single fact is more arresting

than its reality. Jesus' Kingdom will be the real rulership of a real king and His chosen associates (Jesus Christ and the saints). And it will be a government of real territory (the earth). In the words of the Revelator, "We shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:10).

Yet some people believe that during this thousand-year period of transition, Jesus and His saints will reign from heaven. What in Scripture leads them to believe this? Many go to Revelation 7:9, where the Revelator saw in vision the saints standing before the throne, and they comment: "This Scripture shows plainly that the righteous are all taken to heaven immediately after the first Resurrection." They apparently conclude that because the saints are said to stand "before the throne," they assume that that throne is the throne of God in heaven.

Now God's throne is in heaven. "The heaven is my throne,"

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Be There! Enjoy...

Have you tried to imagine what life on the angel plane must be, where each new aion brings fresh raptures and joys in a cycle that goes on and on and on and on from glory to glory, with eternal youth, eternal health, eternal life?

What will the saints do in God's new world, when everyone who lives is immortal? What will life be like? What will we do—if we are among those supremely privileged ones—throughout Eternity?

In a day when boredom with the daily routine is the lot of millions, the idea of Eternity—a future stretching into infinity—might seem almost frightening. If we have trouble filling the next hour, what would we do with Eternity?

This problem is as improbable as it is unreal. Those who will be part of Eternity all have one fundamental quality: *they love life*. And all who love life have no problem filling it, even when it is cumbered with difficulties and limitations. Can we imagine that when all the difficulties and limitations are removed, what immense possibilities will be open for doing, being, and becoming?

What are a few of these possibilities?

The conventional view of heaven has little to offer. While most people don't expect to be sitting around on a cloud playing a harp, few think of heaven, or a new earth, as a particularly exciting or eventful place. Too often the future abode is described in terms that are at best vague and unreal.

But the Bible is neither vague nor unreal. It is exact in its picture of Eternity.

First of all, it tells us that the future life God has promised will be real living in a real place, with real people. The place will be the earth glorified and beautified, under the dominion of a real king and His associates. This territory will extend *"from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth"* (Ps. 72:8). *"All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God"* (Isa. 52:10). And the Lord Himself shall be king (Zech. 14:9).

What will life be like in that new world? Though we may not have all the details we would like, the Bible gives us a few broad promises that are all inclusive and thrilling beyond anything we can imagine. Our God has promised to

do for us *"exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think"* (Eph. 3:20). Stop and ponder this for a moment. The promise is not all we can ask or think, or above all we can ask or think, or *abundantly above*, but it even surpasses all that—EXCEEDINGLY!

Another expansive summary statement of the promises of God is found in 1 Cor. 2:9, where the apostle Paul is quoting from Isaiah: *"As it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for those who love Him."*

If this is not enough, the Psalmist adds on top of all this the promise of abundant satisfaction. *"They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of your house; and you give them drink from the river of your pleasures. For with you is the fountain of life: in your light we see light"* (Ps. 36:8–9).

And there is more. Wrote the Psalmist again with prophetic vision, *"You show me the path of life, in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore"* (Ps. 16:11).

The Bible also gives us pictures of

...on Earth...Heaven on Earth...Heaven on Earth...

what will *not* be part of Eternity and the new world God will bring into being. This may seem strange, but what better way could He communicate to us a real picture of a *new* world, we who see so much today of what needs to be eliminated!

The Revelator pictured clearly the new world as a world with *no pain, no sorrow, and no death* (Rev. 21:3-4). We will not even get tired. The promise is, *"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint"* (Isa. 40:31).

Add to all this the absence of frustration, disappointment and danger, for in that new world there will be nothing to hurt or destroy (Isa. 11:9). There will be *no poverty** and *no oppression* (Isa. 32:17-18; Mic. 4:2-4). There will be *no violence* or threat of it (Isa. 60:18). There will be *no war* or wanton destruction (Ps. 46:9). There will be *no night*, for the glorified earth will be filled with the light of its glorified inhabitants (Rev. 21:25; Isa. 60:19). Above all, there will be *no sin* (Rev. 21:27).

Now let us translate all this into everyday terms, and what is the Bible saying? With all the negatives of our world removed, what will there be to do and enjoy, to envision and become? What will there be in challenge and opportunity?



Perhaps you are one who associates happiness with music.

*In biblical imagery the fig tree symbolizes prosperity and peace (see Micah 4:4, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*).

The new earth will be a very musical place. Read the book of Revelation with your ears open, and hear how much there is of rapturous melody and singing, praise and adoration, rousing trumpets and ringing harps. Again and again when the throne of Christ is mentioned, the music is ringing. The throne of Christ is surrounded with angels worshipping and praising God and acclaiming the victory of the saints on earth.

If music is in your soul, either to perform or to compose, or even to sing or make melody in your heart, you will find the new earth a delightful place. What could be better than an eternity of time through which to sing and make melody in your heart—the happy expression of one fully satisfied. What could surpass an eternity of time in which to create and compose to the glory of the heavenly Creator—and the greatest voices in the Universe to perform your compositions!

Or perhaps you prefer to listen while others perform. There is coming a performance that you will not want to miss, when the victorious earthborns will join multitudes of the heavenly hosts, even *"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb...to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."* But you won't be a silent listener long, because it is written of that time that *"Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth"* will reply in exultant tones, *"Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever"* (Rev. 5:11-13).

You won't want to miss the music at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Read John's mini-preview of it in Revelation 19, where he tells of hearing *"a great voice of much people in heaven [angels and more angels!], saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God."* The chorus swells as yet more celestial voices join in, as *"the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."* And then, giving all honor to the victorious saints, rings out this song of triumph:

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give Him glory for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. 19:1, 6-8).

Has there ever been a performance on earth to equal it?



Or perhaps you are one who likes to travel. Most people do, but too often lack the time and means.

With citizenship in the new Jerusalem will come a passport to the Universe. Present-day space programs give only the tiniest tantalizing glimpse into the limitless handiwork of our great Creator and the myriad realms that lie beyond our little planet.

Do we wonder if space travel is a realistic possibility? Not if we have read the Scriptures, for remember the promise: *"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God, has prepared for those who love him"* (1 Cor. 2:9).

Observe the activities of the angels, and you will find them the greatest space travelers in all history. Wherever we read of an angel in Scripture, his appearance is always sudden; he is always either coming or going. Remember the introductory words of Gabriel to Zacharias: *"I am Gabriel, which stand in the presence of God."*

And the angels are not dependent on any earthly vehicles of conveyance. When we read that Jesus will send His angels to *"gather together his elect...from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven"* (Mark 13:27) we do not pic-

ture them scheduling transportation on jetliners or spacecrafts. Of course not! These heavenly glorified beings, whose home is some distant world, have life within themselves, and with that life comes knowledge of the laws of the universe. No longer are they planet-bound. They are travelers of the first *order*—*experienced* travelers.

Again and again through the Bible we read of the angels traveling between heaven and earth. It seems so near, so easy. Yet when we read of the vast distances between us and the stars, our little minds are stunned. Have you ever wondered what kind of celestial express route might link earth to heaven, upon which the angels can travel at speeds far beyond the slow speed of light? Might this not be what Jacob saw symbolized in a dream as a ladder reaching from heaven to earth, upon which the angels of God were continually ascending and descending? (Gen. 28:11-16). Were it not for such a possibility, travel between stars even within our local group of galaxies would take many hundreds of thousands of years!

Flying is as natural to angels as walking is to us. In the book of Revelation, how many times did the Apostle John see in vision an angel “fly” in the midst of heaven!

Interstellar and interplanetary travel is one of the most common activities of the angels, for many have been the visits of the angels to our planet. In fact, we have no way of knowing how many angels are here right now. And when heaven opens its doors and takes in our little earth, and earth becomes a part of heaven, all the space routes of the universe will be open to us. Blessed traveling!

Certainly one of the greatest fascinations of travel is the delight of meeting people of other lands and cultures. What could surpass the delight of meeting the inhabitants of other worlds—worlds that have been glorified for aeons, or worlds newly glorified, or worlds yet in the process of development.

In the words of our hymn,

*“We now may let our minds expand
with all their power combined,
And yet we cannot comprehend
the joys we there shall find.”*



Or perhaps you are one who enjoys administration, authority, organization—making things work, getting things done, everyone working happily together. It is an art sorely needed by our present governments. But because of the built-in weaknesses of the present system, little can be changed

But the new world will offer limitless opportunities in administration all the way up to the planet level. This, we are told, is a regular part of angel work. We read in the book of Hebrews that “*He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels*” (Heb. 2:5). In other words, our present world is under the direction of the angels. They are here, devising the means, performing the work, protecting, guiding, assisting wherever we have need. They know what it was to be in our place, and they can help us. Shouldn’t we thank God for these Divine administrators, “*sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation*”? (Heb. 1:14).

And do good administrators need authority? We have never seen anyone with authority such as the angels have. And they have no problem knowing who is right or wrong because they can read the human mind. Even Jesus, while still a mortal man, had this ability (John 2:25). With such an aid, the angels have no problem overpowering an evil force—because they can know its intentions before it even moves to strike. No human foe do they fear, for their resources are omnipotent!

Recall how the angel stepped into the fiery furnace and protected the

three Hebrew children from the wrath of the king. Neither fire nor fury could frighten that angel.

Recall the angel of the Lord marching into the camp of the Assyrians and smiting many thousands in one night, giving a tremendous victory to God’s people. A prodigious task from a human point of view, yet it was easy for an angel who knows the basic laws of life.

Picture the angels administering the law for the nation of Israel upon Mt. Sinai, ten thousand coming down to demonstrate God’s authority (Exodus 19, 20). It was a grandiose occasion, no doubt, even for angels. Some blew trumpets, others made the mountain shake, while others made it appear as a smoking, fiery furnace. It was an occasion long remembered—by angels *and* men!

The authority of the angels has also been *felt* as well as seen. How would you like to have been the angel who wrote those blazing words of doom upon the wall in the Babylonian palace that night? (Daniel 5). That angel had authority which made the old king tremble, but the angel was not afraid. He was on a mission in behalf of God’s chosen ones, bringing to pass a prophecy made many years before. Who among all those “high” officials of Babylon could challenge him? That angel had authority!

Wouldn’t we delight in some of these angel duties?



Perhaps your greatest desire is to teach. Or study. In either case, eternity will not be one moment too long for you. In

fact, only in eternity will you have time to become a master in all the fields that interest you. Only in eternity will you be able to satisfy your desire to instruct and teach others.

Your first need will be of a mind that can comprehend and retain the vast resources of knowledge that will be opened. Our world has not seemed short on knowledge—but it has seemed so to us only because of our very limited brainpower, though scientists tell us we use only some ten percent of what we have. Yet to absorb the knowledge that will be available in eternity we will need much more than the remaining ninety percent. But when Christ refashions our mortal bodies into the likeness of His own resplendent, glorious body (Phil. 3:20–21), a “new mind” will be part of the package. God will abundantly meet our need!

And for the first time in the history of this world, all available knowledge will be perfect and error-free. This means that what you learn (or teach) today will not be contradicted tomorrow by some new discovery.

What subjects will be open for study? Let your imagination browse for a century, and you still will not have even scratched the surface of possibilities. There will be courses in every area of the explored and unexplored sciences known today—*plus*. What about learning the pre-history of our earth—and other worlds; the angels can write the course, for some of them were there.

Or what about a course in the background, progress and destiny of our Solar System. When we have mastered these rudimentary topics, we may want to go on with courses in interplanetary communications, courses in space travel, courses in planet guidance and development, and courses in the basic architecture and design of galaxies—all these and incomprehensibly more lie within the realm of the imagination. And—remember—we are not to be limited by this, for the Eternal's promise is that “*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*” (1 Cor. 2:9).

Or perhaps you favor the arts, creative or mechanical. These, too, will offer limitless opportunities.

What about teaching? Angels have been teaching for ages, even on our little planet. Angels were sent to instruct Abraham. The Law of Sinai was given by the disposition of angels, and angels were present to help with instruction of the people. Most of the time unseen, they have been the prime teachers of God's people through the ages.

But in the age to come there will be one great difference. For the first time, these angelic instructors will be seen. The promise is, “*Thine eyes shall see thy teachers*” (Isa. 30:20)—a great change from the era immediately preceding, though their work has never been in question.

Think you for a moment that you will be bored with Eternity?



Perhaps you are one whose strongest desire is to help the less fortunate, to relieve pain and suffering and the miseries of old age. This is a noble desire in the world of today, but in Eternity there will be no suffering to relieve—for all sickness, pain, old age and death will have been removed!

Or perhaps you long to relieve the trauma of the oppressed and underprivileged. This desire, too, will be out of date in Eternity, for in that new world—for the very first time in the history of our planet—there will be no unwilling subjugation of one people to another. You will have to find another

outlet for your spirit of helpfulness!

You will not have to look far, for God's whole plan centers in the people He is blessing. And when there is nothing more you can do for people on this planet, when all who live here are fully satisfied and immortal, there will be other people on other worlds, people yet unborn, who will need your help. There will always be people to instruct and bless, and that ministering is the happy duty of the angels (Heb. 1:14).

Oh, the fathomless reaches of God's mercy!



Or maybe you prefer less spectacular assignments—how would you like to serve on a “special services” committee, and take your turn in performing miscellaneous duties?

It's not likely that you ever aspired to becoming a messenger, but messenger duties are nothing to be despised—not when the angels are performing them! Indeed, message-bearing will be one of the most delightful tasks in Eternity!

Imagine the joy of the angel who was sent to announce to Abraham and Sarah the birth of their long-awaited child of promise. Or imagine the thrill of announcing to the youthful Mary that she was to be the mother of the Messiah, the future King of the whole world. No ordinary duties these!

Or think of the angel who was sent to deliver Peter from prison, to escort him through the gates and down the street to safety. Or think of the angel

who appeared to the Apostle Paul on the stricken ship, giving comfort and assurance. Think of the angel who was commissioned personally by Jesus to deliver His revelation to John on the Isle of Patmos. "I Jesus have sent mine angel"—think of *being* that angel, that personal messenger of Jesus Christ!

And think of the special assignment that has been given to myriad angels—to accompany Jesus when He returns to earth, for by His own testimony He is coming with His "holy angels," hosts of them. Perhaps some have already gathered for the great occasion!

Every step toward setting up the new system and removing the old will be assisted by angels. They will bring Elijah; they will "gather together his [Christ's] elect" (Matt. 24:31). They will even officiate at the Judgment seat of Christ. The prophet Daniel saw in prophetic vision the great King upon His throne of Judgment and "thousand thousands" ministering unto Him (Dan. 7:10).

Again our imagination fails—we cannot begin to conceive of all the special services we may be able to perform through eternity!



Perhaps your strongest yen is to be original, creative, the designer of something fresh and "new."

While there is "no new thing under the sun," "under the sun" does not describe all of God's realm. The new world will have possibilities for things

both under and above the sun—infinite possibilities.

The present world has no opportunity that can even begin to compare with the possibilities that will be open to you in the new world. For angels have power to *create*!

Yes, angels are instrumental in the creating process. They have been on this earth, and we have every reason to believe that it is the same on other worlds, for God is doing all according to His eternal purpose (Eph. 3:11). Just look at a telescope picture of our own Milky Way galaxy, with its hundred billion shining worlds—and it is only one among many billions of galaxies. Can't we "see" that the process of developing and perfecting worlds has been going on from time immemorial?

The art of creating might take on many forms, as lowly as designing the plants and flowers of a world like ours; as lofty as drawing the blueprints of a new universe. Does it seem impossible? There is only one thing sure about our speculations—that they cannot approach the reality, for remember that God has promised to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." The best that we can imagine is only enough to whet our appetite, to stimulate our curiosity and longings, and move us to muster all our God-given faculties to qualify for these exalted privileges.



Why dream about Eternity? Why

think about it? Why try to imagine what is unimaginable? Because no other incentive is strong enough to impel us to offer to God the complete sacrifice He requires of us, holy and acceptable to Him (Rom. 12:1).

Eternity with all its limitless possibilities is not a "free-for-all." The Bible tells us clearly and explicitly that God's matchless rewards are reserved for the pure, the meek, the upright, those who become holy as He is holy (Matt. 5:5, 8; 1 Pet. 1:15-16); for those who are "undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord" (Ps. 119:1); for those who "persist in doing good" (Rom. 2:7 NLT).

Keeping in our minds a vivid and glowing picture of what lies ahead will give us the power to complete the task of total self-mastery that God has assigned us. And this we must do, for He will have no old creatures in His new world. Everything in that realm will be "new," all new. "Behold, I make all things new." Nothing old or impure or ugly or contaminated will be allowed, for "there shall in no wise enter...any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27).

Why has God revealed so much of the possibilities of eternity? Because it is the stimulus we need; because nothing less would impel us to make the full surrender He requires, to perfectly love Him with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our mind, and all our strength (Mark 12:30-31).

That new world *will be*. It is not an idle dream. It is real, and soon it will be here. It was the prayer of our Lord, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). And said the prophet Isaiah speaking of the Eternal's plans for this earth, "He created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:18). Someday this earth will shine with the glory of its immortal inhabitants (Daniel 12:3), and shine through all eternity.

What will we be doing through Eternity? Be sure to be there, and you will find out! ♦

What Will Immortality Be Like?

*"They shall come with
singing...and everlasting joy."*

—Isa. 35:10

by GERALD R. PAYNE

What would it be like to be a shining immortal being? How would it change our lives?

First of all it would remove our instinctive dread of death. Try as we may to forget it, we cannot escape the knowledge that we are mortal, and that in the course of time we all must die. Immortal beings are beyond this. To them, the future is all life, life and more life!

Then too, it would remove all fear of sickness, debilitating disease, pain, and suffering. As the years go by, we would no longer be constantly reminded of our mortality as our eyesight, our hearing, our teeth, and on and on, begin failing with no possibility of full restoration. As a matter of fact, immortal beings no longer "grow older." The millenniums just pass on one after the other while they go from "glory to glory." This is a whole new avenue of thought: to no longer "grow older." But it is very real—because immortal bodies have absolutely nothing to wear out. They are always new, fit and strong. As time

passes, their minds grow wiser, stronger and more attuned—just the opposite

of mortality!

Then, being immortal would put us on the "other side" of the Judgment—we are accepted! No longer need we have any fear of sin, or of displeasing God. Having received His stamp of approval, we are His forever. No chance of failing or falling short.

Then, too, as immortals we would no longer have to fear for the temporal side of our world—for the depleting of the natural resources on which we are so dependent. We would no longer have to spend the greater portion of our conscious moments working to preserve life—acquiring food, clothing, shelter and medical care. We no longer would have to be concerned that we get enough exercise, that we eat the right kinds of foods and not overindulge. No longer would we have to be concerned for our homes, keeping them in repair and protecting them from flood, fire and storm.

There are many things that cause discomfort in this life that are necessary for survival—such things as

hunger, thirst and fatigue. Putting on immortality will eliminate any need for such.

Then add to all this another of God's promises, that of "everlasting joy" (Isa. 35:10). "They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Joy is a little word with great meaning. According to Webster, joy is a "very glad feeling, happiness, great pleasure, delight." Couple "joy" with immortality and what do you have? "Everlasting joy"!

What will immortality be like? Picture the happiest moment you ever experienced going on...and on...and on...and on...from joy to joy, with never a pain or sorrow or worry to mar that pure, rapturous joy.

The delights of immortality will surpass even that, for in the words of the inspired Prophet, mortal eye has never seen, mortal ear has never heard, and mortal mind has never imagined what God has prepared for those who truly love him (1 Cor. 2:9).

Isn't it enough to stimulate us to give God our very best—so that He may share these wonders of delight with us, world without end? ♦

What Will It Be To Be There!

An informal talk by L. T. Nichols, given on February 25, 1899.

To be found ready to engage in the future work of Jehovah should so inspire our inmost soul that we would be found all engaged at the present time in fitting ourselves to be ready when that glorious time arrives. It should cause in us such a longing to remove all obstacles, great or small, that may lie in the way of our entering upon the blissful shore of Jehovah's glory, that we should never weary or become negligent in doing this noble work.

"To have a right"—what a blessing! To have a right to compose a part of that happy throng that will glow with grandeur and beauty, thrilling with great swelling words of joy and gratitude, as we meet and greet and partake of the more than wonderful beatitudes upon eternity's shore. Such blessings, too wonderful for the human heart to conceive of! Beyond, yes, says Paul, *"exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think."* No wonder Peter styles them *"exceeding great and precious promises"*!

Oh! how they swell the goodness of God into a fathomless ocean, yea, like space unending in every direction. To think of basking forevermore in such wonderful sunshine of bliss, with more than ecstatic joy upon the evergreen plain of eternity's shore should keep our hearts filled with constant gratitude and deep settled devotion to the mighty and everlasting God; so much so that we will ever be found reverentially bowing in meek submission to His loving and sovereign will. It should cause each and every one to lovingly, willingly and joyfully take off their stiff necks, and throw away their hard hearts, and no longer refuse to obey His voice. He only asks us to seek the good and refuse the evil; He only requires us to perform that which will make us noble in His sight, that will make us more happy and joyful now

and in the end secure for us the endless beatitudes, the triumphant joys of every dweller upon Eternity's shores. Each move, each turn, every moment will increase our joy and comfort as we onward move upon this unending plain of Eternity; as we are introduced, perhaps by a Gabriel, to new worlds on high and are permitted to view their wondrous beauty and glory and participate in their more than wonderful joys. We will indeed stand filled with joyful astonishment and will be led to exclaim in the language of the Revelator, *"Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy"* (Rev. 15:3-4).

As soon as the grand and noble sentiment contained in the song of Moses and the Lamb has been uttered, we will hear a response from a great multitude, saying, *"Alleluia; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."* What a right, what a pleasure to be granted this untold pleasure of being one that will utter those words in glory and hear such a response!

O the glory! the glory that will surround this blessed throng! Yet, notwithstanding all this, few will take the pains to increase their faith so as to fully believe that such a gladsome home is in reality awaiting the truly God-fearing ones.

LIFELONG BIBLE STUDENT
AND TEACHER
FOUNDER OF THE MEGIDDO CHURCH

BORN OCTOBER 1, 1844



It would seem every sane, enlightened mind would make choice of the former and so conduct themselves each day, each hour, each moment, as to dispel all doubt, and thus produce that inward joy that will repay us a thousand times for the trouble we are put to in clothing ourselves with the robe of righteousness. To enter through the pearly gates into the Elysian fields of bliss, where we can enjoy for evermore the fruit of our labor, to be at home with the blessed throng of immortal ones; to be at home with such a company of high ones and realize that we are indeed a part of this stately band, will be pleasure far beyond our capacity at the present time to fully realize. Nothing short of experience will ever cause us to think of and fully realize this wonderful pleasure.

What a time, what a meeting, what a joyful meeting, what a happy meeting of the faithful that will be! Words fail to tell of that wonderful gathering; and to think, it is almost here. Yes, "that bright and golden morning when the Son of man shall come, and the radiance of His glory we shall see; When from every clime and nation He shall call His people home, what a gathering of the ransomed that will be." What a gathering that will be!

What power! What knowledge! What a birth that will be, indeed far beyond what we can now imagine. It is worth our whole mind and care to be found ready to be born into incorruption, into far more than every conceivable pleasure!

The Day of the Lord is coming, yes, it is surely coming. It draweth nigh, "it hasteth greatly." We must quicken our pace in order to be ready to enter through the pearly gates into the bright, shining portals of celestial glory. What a sensation it will be! What a feeling of delight! What keen, ecstatic, rapturous joy! Oh, how we will relish these delightful blessings there, safe in the harbor on Eternity's shore, where no tempest will ever come.

If we would only let our mind run out and behold this grand river of pleasure and consider that it will be an ever-flowing stream, it would seem that we

could not rest until we had secured a true genuine pass to enter Eternity's shores to drink of these endless pleasures. And to think that the pleasures so freely offered us are on condition that we simply awake to righteousness and sin not. To think of viewing Gabriel some day and listening to his marvelous voice, and joining with all the dear old saints of his grand home and planet! To hear them sing the wondrous song of their redemption will make the grand old shores of eternity ring with their joyful melodious voices until every world born into the celestial family will hear the praise and with hearts filled with peace and goodwill to all will raise

become a gladsome and happy reality. It does seem as though we would quicken our pace until our entire mind, might and heart with all our energy and power would be used to push forward into this lovely, delightful, and more than beautiful "City of God," until our mind with all its power would be lost to the low and groveling world by which we are surrounded and become all absorbed with Divine things. It will most assuredly afford much more joy and happiness than this poor, fleeting world, with its meager, short-lived comforts can possibly afford.

To think of hearing it said, "His wife hath made herself ready." I would rather

"The great day of the Lord is near, it is near and hastens quickly." —Zeph. 1:14

one grand response, "Alleluia! Amen, and Amen!"

As we form a part of this holy throng and begin to realize their nobility of action, their majestic appearance, sublimity of thought, stateliness of being, their loftiness in every way, our hearts will begin to well up with increased adoration to the High and Lofty One. It will be spontaneous, will gush forth in tones both loud and clear, speaking forth a joy no mortal ever knew, as the words are repeated in unison by all, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is, and is to come.... Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Who would not like to form a part of this happy company? We can if we will.

Oh, blessed be God, to think that we can prepare ourselves so as to hear these wonderful, gracious words, "His wife hath made herself ready." To think that these wonderful words will soon

have this one joyful pleasure than all the pleasures of this world combined. The pleasures of this world will soon, yes, very soon, come to an end; but the pleasures we gain by obedience to the truth will never end. They will not only last for eternity but will be on the increase, multiplying continually; not only multiplying but increasing in beauty and comfort, until we, like many waters before us will join in saying "Alleluia!" in gladsome response to world after world that is caused to bloom into the multitudinous family of God. And as we are busy performing many wonders yet untold, wonders that will so expand our capabilities, we will become more and more capable of enjoying ourselves as we are used in the unending plan of Jehovah. Our hearts will become more and more sensitive to the feelings of pleasure until we can testify from experience that it is indeed "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." ♦

Celestial Summerland

It is difficult to imagine how anyone could be fonder of envisioning the coming glory than was our founder, Rev. L.T. Nichols. Never did he address his people without thrilling anew at some aspect of it. He read about it in Scripture, and then thought about it, talked about it, dreamed about it, and above all, lived for it!

Occasionally he prepared a bit of verse in which he attempted to capture the vision.

As you read this simple rhyme, join him in his flight of fantasy, but realize it is more than fantasy. Someday it will be glorious reality!

by L. T. NICHOLS

O what great joy and peace Divine
Can all be yours, can all be mine
If we'll but walk in narrow way
With Christ our Lord each day by day!

O what a power our God will give
To all who now will godly live
And do His bidding, great or small,
As did our dear, beloved Paul!

O what a mansion bright and fair
We each one then will have and share,
If we'll but to all sin now die
And keep our mind on things on high.

O what a joyful, happy band
We'll join within God's Summerland;
We'll bask with them for evermore
In joys each day increasing more!

O what great joy we then will take
In passing through the pearly gate
With all the joyous happy band
Who'll enter that glad Summerland!

O wondrous Summerland of joy
Without a thing that can annoy!
Among the ones that reach this land
O may we be, this little band!

O how we long to meet you there,
And in these glories gladly share,
Where all the tugs and toils of life
Will all be gone, with every strife.

O what a joy we all will take
In hearing Daniel, Paul relate
The trials they in life passed through
While they were being made o'er new.

n Earth... Heaven on Earth... Heaven on Earth..

*Great Gabriel will be there in white
Who long ago passed weary night;
He has been learning, living more,
He'll have great things for us in store!*

*O what a pleasure, lasting, grand,
To have him 'mongst our little band!
We'll listen to his stories great
Which he to us will then relate.*

*'Twill make our hearts with joy expand
As Gabriel tells of his dear band,
Of all the wondrous things they've done
Throughout ten thousand ages long.*

*O what a privilege greater still—
'Twill give our hearts the grandest thrill
When he invites our little band
To go and see his blessed land.*

*May you be there to shout "Amen!
So let it be, Amen! Amen!
We'll gladly visit your own band
Within your own dear Summerland!"*

*O what a visit that will be
To go and Gabriel's homeland see;
We'll pass ten thousand worlds so bright
With all their inmates filled with light.*

*And we'll hear music, oh! so grand,
That sounds afar from Gabriel's band;
They've spied dear Gabriel! oh, the joy,
That nothing ever can destroy.*

*And then the welcomes! Oh, how sweet
As they come forth to Gabriel greet!
Yes, what grand joy, as love entwines,
Surpassing loves of humankind.*

*So upright, good and grand and bright
Are all his brethren dressed in white;
All clean and spotless, pure within,
All cleansed from every form of sin.*

*This trip alone will pay us great
To bear our cross and evil hate;
To do with all our mind and might
The things our God hath said are right.*

*Long time we'll stay at Gabriel's home
And with his happy, loved ones roam.
Our minds will grow, each day expand
As stay we do with Gabriel's band.*

*The time will pass so quick, so fast,
Ten thousand years will soon be past,
And then we hear a trumpet sound
In accents sweet, "Be homeward bound."*

*We bid Adieu to Gabriel's band,
And swiftly fly to our own land,
Where our own brethren, loving, dear,
Are anxious to our story hear.*

*Ten billion visits we'll repeat;
Each time 'twill be a greater treat;
Time ne'er will wane nor shorter grow
As to ten billion worlds we go.*

*Our minds they will expand and grow
As with the noble ones we go.
How happy will the dwellers be,
Enjoying all they hear and see!*

*O praise the Lord! can it be true,
These wonders are for me and you?
Yes, yes! they are for each one here
Who will perform what they do hear.*

*O brethren, will you each one go
Where there will come no kind of woe?
All will be joy supremely great
Within the Golden City gate.*

*Yes, we can join that faithful band
Who'll enter God's fair Summerland,
Those who will clothe in garments white
By doing what they know is right.*

*"Those counted worthy to
obtain that age...are equal to
the angels and are sons of
God." —Luke 20:35-36*

Dialogue

PART THREE

ANOTHER READER RESPONDS (see July 2001 issue, *Megiddo Message*, for preceding section)

May I respond to your article in the June 2001 Megiddo Message (Part one Dialogue "Did God command Abraham to Sacrifice His Son")?

My answer to the question is absolutely "No!" God definitely did not command Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac! How do I know? Well, to be brief, I have three KJV Bibles and all three use the term "tempt."

We truly appreciate the interest you are giving this topic, and I would like to comment.

I wonder if you are missing a point by applying the current (2001) English definition of "tempt" in reading the KJV rendering of Gen. 22:1. The KJV Bible, as you pointed out, does use the word "tempt" regarding Abraham offering Isaac. The NKJV uses the word "tested." The NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV, NASB 1995 also use the word "tested." The YLT and the 1890 Darby versions use "tried." The 1901 ASV uses "prove." The NJB uses "test."

Also, in Heb. 11:17, in regard to God's message to Abraham, the KJV Bible uses the word "tried."

Now if God "tempted" Abraham, this use of the word presents a disagreement when we consider the statement of God's spokesman James, that God does not tempt anyone. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:13-14). If God does not tempt anyone, what is the solution to this problem?

When a word in a passage causes it to conflict with other Bible texts or teachings, we need to check the original language to see if an alternate definition might be found that harmonizes the text with the general teaching of the Bible. Checking in the *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon* for the definitions of *nacah*, translated "tempt" in Gen. 22:1, KJV, we find, "to test, try, prove, tempt, assay, put to the proof or test." Yes,

although God does not "tempt" anyone, He does "try," "prove" and "test."

Actually, the word "tempt" as used in the KJV may be the correct word if we recognize the definition it had at the time the KJV was translated. If you check its obsolete meaning, you will see that it used to mean "to make trial of" (*Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary*). So, it is very possible that the translator of Gen. 22:1 (KJV) intended the reader to understand that God tried (not tempted) Abraham.

But let's go one big step further: The God I know, love, and have faith in, knows the beginning, the end, and all the in-between of everything. So I can see no reason for God to "tempt" Abraham for His (God's) own personal gratification. Therefore, is it not more logical that the temptation was for Abraham's awakening, or preparation for further action as God's servant? In other words, God's tempting Abraham was not for God Himself, but rather for Abraham. God already knew. The problem at hand was getting Abraham to know.

You are surely correct that the testing, trying, proving was for Abraham's benefit, not God's. Abraham was the one who would have the honor of being called "father of the faithful." And Abraham was the one who would ultimately receive the great blessing of blessings and in whom "all nations of the earth" would be blessed.

As you state, we are not told how God made known the "temptation" [or rather, His message] to Abraham. According to the KJV, "He [God] said [unto Abraham], Take now thy son, ... and offer him there for a burnt offering" (Gen. 22:1 KJV). We are told that Abraham rose up early the next morning, so God's message to Abraham could have been through a dream, or an angel could have appeared to him, or maybe some other means. But the fact is, it was a message from God. How it was given to Abraham seems irrelevant.

And Abraham was sure that it was from God, as his immediate obedience showed. This fact is important.

Now, "tempt" and "command" are not one and the same. "Tempt" is to offer (or try to entice), and a person can accept or refuse without necessarily any consequences. To "command" is to set forth or order something to be done. True, a person may accept the command and do it or refuse, but consequences are usually attached to a command. And even if consequences are not attached, a command is still something ordered to be done, while "tempt" is to see if one will or will not do a certain thing.

By the temptation to Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt

DID GOD “TEMPT” OR “COMMAND” ABRAHAM?

by GERALD R. PAYNE

offering, God Almighty proclaimed His absolute dominion over the lives of those who are in the work of His Hands. However, at the last moment, when Isaac lay bound and Abraham had raised the knife to slaughter him, the angel of God appeared and prevented Abraham from carrying out the slaying of his son. By this revoking of the act, God manifested that He (God) did not wish His dominion over His people to be acknowledged by any sacrifice or burnt offering of human life. This second message was not only necessary but noteworthy to mankind, as the Canaanites offered such sacrifices and burnt offerings to their gods. The angel of God then renewed the promise that God would bless Abraham and would greatly multiply his descendants.

Was this message from God a command? It is true that “tempt” does not mean “command,” and it is equally true that the Hebrew word *nacah*, translated “tempt” in the KJV, does not mean “command” either. But one in authority could surely give a command to “test” a subordinate for some purpose. Even if the words came from an earthly commander to do a certain thing, it would certainly be taken as a command. I may add that a responsible commander would not likely tempt a subordinate. But he might give a command that seemed unreasonable to test his loyalty or to make him better in some way.

Now, if I received a message from God telling me to do a certain thing, and I was sure it was from God, I know I would take it as a command. In fact, I would seem extremely foolishly *not* to take it as a command.

Isn't this exactly how Abraham took it? He rose up “early the next morning” in obedience to this message (*nacah*). Again, the words translated “tempt” and the word “command” do not mean the same thing. But the words “obeyed” and “command” certainly have a lot in common. One obeys a command, which is what the KJV tells us Abraham did regarding his son. And God commended Abraham's obedience. He said, “*And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice*” (Gen. 22:18).

As you say, “God Almighty proclaimed His absolute dominion over the lives of those who are in the work of His Hands.” Then wouldn't any message from Him telling someone to do something be a command?

If you do not feel God's message to Abraham (“*Take now thy son, thine only son whom thou lovest, and offer him...*” etc.) was a command, would you be thinking it was just a suggestion to Abraham and he was free to take it or leave it? Abraham did not feel this way. Whatever it was, Abraham “obeyed” (Gen. 22:18, mentioned above). Had he not obeyed, he would have disobeyed. And I would venture to speculate that there would

have been consequences for his disobedience to God's command—perhaps repentance and forgiveness with more testing? Or something far more severe than this?

Another point: If the message from God to Abraham was indeed a temptation, it seems he would have been wrong to obey—and Abraham was commended for obeying! A temptation is something we should resist, not obey. If it was a message to tempt him, he should have seen it as something he should NOT do (isn't this the way temptation is thought of in Scripture?) But as we said above, a temptation is always from another, or from self (really from within—James 1:14), but never from God.

The first English definition of temptation is: “to entice to do wrong by promise of pleasure or gain”—*Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary*. If it was a temptation and Abraham fell into it, then God should not have been pleased. But we see just the opposite, He was very pleased that Abraham obeyed His voice.

It would also seem confusing if God intended some commands to be obeyed and others to be optional. How could one distinguish between the two and know which to obey?

The Burnt Offering

And as for the “sacrifice” translation, well, I'm having trouble understanding this too. My KJV Bibles all say that God's tempting of Abraham was for him (Abraham) to offer Isaac as a “burnt offering,” not a sacrifice. Again, we have words that have different meanings, especially as to how, when, and why they are to be done.

You say that the burnt offering was not a sacrifice. I am not sure of your basis for this conclusion, perhaps because it is not called a “sacrifice” in the text. But what is a sacrifice? If I were told to give my most prized possession, something very dear to me, as a burnt offering, I could not see it any other way. I would be parting with that treasure, giving it up as I had been told, and it would be gone once and for all.

As it turned out, Abraham did not offer Isaac as a burnt offering—though in his mind he had consented and done it. To say that it was not a sacrifice would seem to be saying that Isaac meant nothing to Abraham.

[Observe that] Abraham was sojourning with the Philistines for quite sometime, “and it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham.” A sojourner is a term designating a person or persons living in a place other than their own home or home country (and in many cases as a permanent resident, as Abraham was apparently living and prospering). Could this “temptation” have been

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FAITH in Action



by RUTH E. SISSON

THE NEW WAVE OF PERSECUTION

 READ ACTS 8:1-5

No sooner had grieving friends buried Stephen than a young man named Saul launched a full-scale persecution against the Church.

Saul, who looked with approval on the murder of Stephen, did not see it as murder. Religion blinded his eyes. As he wrote later, *"I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly"* (1 Tim. 1:13). Consenting to evil is as bad as committing it. Saul may have been too dignified to throw the stones that caused Stephen to die, but he showed his complete agreement by holding the coats of those who did it.

The death of Stephen was only the beginning. The word used in the Greek to describe Saul's campaign of terror means *"brutal, sadistic cruelty."* It is used of a wild animal savaging a body. He made havoc of the Church.

One might expect the result to be extremely damaging. On the contrary, it was beneficial. Unwittingly, the persecutors became the very cause of the spread of the Gospel. Like stamping on embers only to have the sparks fly and ignite a ring of new fires, the persecution scattered believers throughout Judea and Samaria, triggering the first great missionary movement.

The Christians were *"scattered abroad,"* and the story continues on a note of success. The scattering only gave them fresh ground to plant and cultivate.

Meanwhile, a new hero came onto the stage, a man named Philip. One of Stephen's comrades, he was also one of the seven selected for special service in the Jerusalem Church. Like many of his fellow Christians, he left Jerusalem. Philip chose to go to Samaria.

Why Samaria? Wouldn't the old quarrel between the Jews and the Samaritans have kept him away from such a place? But no, the religion of Jesus Christ did not honor ancient customs or prejudices. Hadn't the Jews in that area lost their identity and their racial purity? It did not matter. In Christ there was *"neither Jew nor Greek"* (Gal. 3:28). Nationality did not matter, only a willingness to hear and heed the Gospel.

Bible Text: Acts 8:1-13 NIV

1 And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

2 Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.

3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

5 Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there.

6 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said.

7 With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed.

8 So there was great joy in that city.

9 Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great,

10 And all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is the divine power known as the Great Power."

11 They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic.

12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13 Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.

And so the work went forward. Prudence might advise the believers to scatter, but nothing could advise them to be silent.

What self-respecting Jew would go to Samaria?

Jesus did. And now Philip did. And Philip preached there—not Judaism, but Christ! Might there have been in his audience the very woman whom Jesus had met at the well of Sychar? Did she help persuade others of the truth of Philip's message?

BELIEVERS AND FRAUDS IN SAMARIA

 READ ACTS 8:6–13

Luke records the success of the Samaritan mission: *“The people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake”* (Acts 8:6). Philip did more than talk: he reinforced his message with works that showed beyond any doubt that he was of God. Those who heard him preach also saw *“the miracles which he did.”*

What was the result? *“There was great joy in that city”* (8:8).

True religion brings happiness and joy because it is a message of hope. *“Happy is that people, whose God is the Lord”* (Ps. 144:15).

Immediately, though, the picture is spoiled. The next word is *“But.”* Into the midst of the joy intrudes one named Simon the sorcerer, also known as Simon Magus. What was he doing? He was selling himself, not Christ. The record tells us he was *“claiming that he was someone great”* (8:9).

Simon Magus had a good reputation, and was making the most of it. People were impressed with his mysterious, magical “powers.” They complimented his gift, saying, *“This man is the great power of God”* (8:10). Some of them ate it up.

Was Philip afraid of him? Not at all. Philip went straight forward with his work, and new believers were baptized into the faith, *“both men and women”* (8:12). The people responded to Philip's preaching. It was the real thing, and they recognized it. It was not trickery, but genuine.

So Simon Magus lost disciples, and Philip gained.

Simon had to do something to stop it. He thought about it, and devised a plan. He himself would become one of Philip's converts, and maybe even add Philip's gifts to his own! Then Philip and he would be on an equal basis, and Philip would have to *share* his success!

Simon's faith was spurious from the start. He was not won by Philip's message but only by his miracles. And he was not even won by the miracles, he only wanted what would profit him materially. Nevertheless, he posed as a convert, and faded into the background while he tried to work his scheme.

The work of Philip went forward, and word of his success reached the Apostles at Jerusalem. Peter and John were dispatched to see what was happening in Samaria.

When Peter and John arrived, they gave to the new believers what Philip could not: the power of the Holy Spirit. But they passed Simon Magus by—apparently they did not consider him enough of a believer to receive it.

This was more than the sorcerer could take, to see others receive power which he did not get. His eyes gleamed. His imagination danced. He had to have that power! All his life he had dabbled in mysteries and deceitful arts, but here was power that no one could mistake! Just think what he could do with a little of that power! People would flock to him! His name would be known everywhere! One word lighted up in his mind's eye: Opportunity!

How could he get this special power? Simon Magus had a plan. He went immediately to the Apostles and offered them money in exchange for the power. In doing this, he set a cash value on spiritual things, just as Judas



Insight

Why Samaria?

Samaria was not the likely place for Jews to preach, because *“the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans”* (John 4:9).

Why? To the average Jew, a Samaritan was a nobody—a half-breed (half-Hebrew, half-heathen). Back in the 8th century BC, the Assyrians had conquered the Northern Kingdom, which had its capitol at Samaria. As conquerors did in those days, they had settled strangers in the land. These strangers intermarried with the Jews, and soon the people had lost their identity. During the captivity, this mixing of races continued, and because of it, bitter hatred and rivalry built between the Jews and the Samaritans.

So when Jesus talked to a Samaritan woman, He was marveled at.

And when Philip went to Samaria to preach, we can be sure many a steadfast Jew lifted his eyelids as if to ask, Isn't there anywhere else to preach?

God being a God who does not show favoritism or partiality, a natural Israelite and a Gentile are equal. Both share an equal opportunity to hear and heed the Gospel.



Did you know...

“Magus Popular”

Simon Magus was an exaggerated specimen of every modern-day popularity hunter. He simply could not work, or eat, or sleep, or breathe, or live without attention! He always had to be “Mr. Big.”

Where did Simon Magus' evil intent originate? Right where all other evil originates: in the human mind. Peter said to Simon, *“Thy heart is not right in the sight of God... Repent.”*



Insight

Why Simon “Magus”?

“Magus” was added to Simon’s name to distinguish him from Simon Peter. It is very fitting because when we first meet him he is “making out that he is some great one.” His business: magic.



Did you know...

“Preach the Word”

Literally, “declare, bring, announce good news”!

The Gospel was “good news” from Jesus. This term is one of Luke’s favorite words. He used it at least 10 times in his gospel and 15 times in the book of Acts.

It was good news of peace, hope, joy, release, deliverance, and a new and better life! Every part of the story was “good”! And most important, it was true because it was “the Word” (*logos*), from God.

had put a cash value on Jesus. (From this incident we get our word *simony*, referring to the purchase and sale of spiritual office and benefits).

But Simon wanted more than the power. He wanted also the ability to give it to whomever he wished. This was the extreme in covetousness. Many of the disciples had received the power, but only the Apostles could give it. By asking for the privilege of giving it, he was placing himself among Jesus’ closest elect.

What was Peter’s response? “*Your money perish with you, because you have thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money*” (Acts 8:20).

By wanting to buy the Holy Spirit, by that one act Simon Magus betrayed his utter spiritual poverty. Peter said to him in effect, “You and your money can perish together because you even thought of such a thing!” Having the Holy Spirit himself, Peter could see that Simon was a fraud, that his profession of faith was utterly worthless.

Peter’s experience with Simon reinforced Jesus’ words that “*Out of the abundance of the heart [the] mouth speaks*” (Luke 6:45). Simon could say what might sound good to others, but Peter could read his heart and see that he was not right with God. He said in effect, “You have nothing to do with spiritual things.”

But even the evil-minded Simon was not hopeless. Peter offered him the option to repent. “*Repent of this wickedness...Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart*” (Acts 8:22 NIV).

Peter said “*Repent*” to one whom everyone else thought to be a believer. Simon had deceived the other believers, but he had not deceived one who was of God. Peter says more of this man: “*For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness, and bound by iniquity*” (8:23). Simon was bitterly jealous of the Apostles. He envied them their power. His crafty mind was full of rage and resentment. Peter could see through the thin veneer and get a true picture of his heart.

When Peter spoke, Simon listened. Simon was frightened. But it was not godly fear that leads to repentance, it was fear of the consequences of a behavior he truly liked.

That is all we hear of Simon Magus. When Peter leaves him he is still outside the fold, one who will die in his sins because he will not change; one who had an opportunity and turned it down.

Oh, let us beware of the fate of Simon Magus!

At that, the Apostles left Samaria and returned to Jerusalem, preaching the Word in the towns and villages as they went, fulfilling the commission Christ had given them. ♦

(to be continued)

Heaven On Earth

continued from page 5

ner by the forces of opposition to God. He or she is there because they had a dream for a new humanity. He or she is there because they preached a practical, everyday love that creates and develops and forgives, and does not show favoritism to the rich, the cultured, and the mighty. He or she is there because they came to bring “one day” into today, the Kingdom of heaven to earth.

But how can the name of God be hallowed so that men and women live

with reverence toward God, and how can the active desire of God be put into effect so that men and women live now in obedience under God? This cannot happen until God’s people live the way they pray. Our willingness to do so is the first step toward an answer to our prayers, the active rule of God over the world, and deliverance from the effects of distrust. Yes, surely we should pray for that. And since it will happen one day by the grace of God, then why, sustained by the grace that shapes the future—why not now?

The question is: How do we get from here to there? How can we prepare to

live in Christ’s Kingdom—heaven on earth? There is but one answer: by living every day a life committed to God’s principles, obedient to His laws; by allowing in our lives now only what will be allowed in the Kingdom on earth!

Jesus will come and bring about the changes foretold, when the time is right. So shouldn’t we do our utmost to live by His laws now, so that we can be accepted to live in Christ’s Kingdom when the Lord’s prayer is fulfilled and God’s will is done on earth as now it is done in heaven?

No question about it—we must! ♦

A Thousand Years On Earth continued from page 5

says the Lord (Isa. 66:1). *"The Lord's throne is in heaven"* (Ps. 11:4). But this does not say that the throne of Christ is in heaven. *"The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men"* (Ps. 115: 16).

Is not Christ among the children of men, of the seed of Abraham, made like unto His brethren? (Heb. 2:16-17). And will not He as King have a throne on earth? We read the words of the prophet Jeremiah: *"At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem"* (3:17). Jerusalem is a city on earth, and the nations of earth will *"be gathered unto it"*—and surely all the nations of the earth will not be taken to heaven! There is no suggestion that the throne of the new government will be in heaven.

The angel Gabriel prophesied of Christ at the time of His birth that *"the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever."* This pictures an earthly setting for the Kingdom, for David did not rule from heaven. David's throne was on earth; Christ's throne will likewise be on earth.

Psalm 110:1 is sometimes quoted by those who believe Christ and the saints will reign in heaven during the thousand years, while the earth is being cleansed of all evil. The text reads: *"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."* The very next verse shows that when the time comes for Christ to take control He will be on the earth. *"The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion [a city on earth]: rule thou" from heaven until thy enemies are perished? No, "rule thou in the midst of thine enemies."* What enemies could He have in heaven? The chapter continues to tell of Christ's reign on earth: *"He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies"* (v. 6)—this surely could not happen in heaven.

The Bible contains text upon text

indicating that the earth will be the domain of Christ and His saints, and nothing whatever is said of a thousand-year delay.

Revelation 20:4 speaks of the reign of Christ and the saints: *"And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."* But is there any possibility that this may be in heaven? The chapter begins with an angel coming down from heaven, laying hold on the *"dragon," the "old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan,"* and binding him a thousand years. No one supposes this event to take place anywhere except on earth. In verse 3, Satan is cast into the *"bottomless pit,"* shut up, and a seal set upon him that he should

"You have made us kings and priests to our God, and we shall reign on the earth." —Rev. 5:9-10

deceive the *"nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled."* The term *"nations"* depicts an earthly group of people, not a heavenly.

According to Revelation 20:7-9, Satan is to be *"loosed"* at the end of the thousand years, and shall go out to again deceive the nations of the earth; *"and they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them."* Here again the earth—not heaven—is the base of operation.

Another text indicating the location of Christ's reign is in Revelation 2:26-27: *"And he that overcometh . . . will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron."* Do the saints in heaven need ruling *"with a rod of iron"*? It is the nations of earth that Christ and the saints will be ruling.

Rulership

Revelation 5 depicts the time of the opening of the *"seven seals,"* an act which only *"the Lamb"* was worthy to perform. To open the seals suggests

enacting the program of events which the seals represent. Then follows the triumph song of the worthy saints: *"You have made us kings and priests to our God, and we shall reign on the earth."* Nothing is said of a thousand years in heaven after which they should reign on the earth. They are redeemed, and at once their reign on earth begins.

The prophet Daniel tells us when this new government will be set up. In a prophetic vision given to Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon and interpreted by Daniel, a small stone (representing the kingdom of Christ) smote the great image (representing the kingdoms of men) on the feet. After the little stone

smote the image, it immediately began to grow; and it grew and grew until it *"became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth"*—not heaven. Daniel also tells that in the last days of the rulership of men *"shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed"* (Dan. 2:44). And it is *"in the days of these kings,"* not a

thousand years later, that God sets up His kingdom under Christ (Dan. 2:34-35, 44).

Conquest

All the events which the Bible outlines to follow the return of Christ center around solving the problems of earth's government and benefiting the people on the earth. Upon the arrival of Christ the King, the proclamation will go forth to every kindred, and nation, and tongue, and people, saying: *"Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come"* (Rev. 14:7). Mankind will be faced with the ultimatum: submit or perish. It will be the hour of decision (Joel 3:14). The result will be Armageddon, an all-out struggle between the forces of Christ and the forces of evil men (Rev. 16:13-14, 16).

This battle of Armageddon is to be fought on the earth, and the saints will be in command, directing, commanding. Christ Himself will ride forth *"conquering, and to conquer"* (Rev. 6:2)—how could He possibly be said to do this if reigning from heaven? The

nations of earth (Rev. 17:2) shall *"make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and those who are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful"* (Rev. 17:14). Here is pictured the King and *"those who are with him"* overpowering the forces of evil—how could this possibly be done from a heavenly platform?

Another chapter in Revelation pictures Christ and His righteous administration as a *"white horse"* and *"he who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war"* (Rev. 19:11). And *"out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it he should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron"* (Rev. 19:15). The next verse is definite: *"And He has on his robe and on his thigh a name written: King of kings, and Lord of lords."* This is Christ the King, and He is on the scene of earth, where there is evil to be put down.

Psalms 149 describes this world-shaking event which will take place on earth, with the saints in command: *"Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King...Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud...Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance on the heathen, and punishments on the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron"* (vs. 2, 5–8). This would be possible nowhere but on earth; and Christ and the saints will surely be present, for the text concludes with *"This honor have all His saints."*

Malachi 4:1 pictures Armageddon as the *"day"* that shall be *"burning like an oven,"* in which all *"the proud, yes, all who do wickedly, will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that will leave them neither root nor branch."* Verse 3 reveals that the righteous shall be present, directing this work of cleansing the earth from the incorrigible element, not far away in heaven: *"And you shall trample the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day that I do this, says the Lord of hosts."*

Progress, Renovation, Education

The wicked, rebellious element removed, the road for progress will be wide open, and progress there will be, *"For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea"* (Hab. 2: 14). Jeremiah, depicting this same period of time, said of the inhabitants of earth, *"And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them"* (Jer. 31:34). People on earth will be taught of God, and who will teach them if all the people of God are absent for a thousand years?

"The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." —Hab. 2:14

Proverbs 10:30 declares forthrightly that *"the righteous will never be removed."* Would not a thousand years in heaven involve the removal of the *"righteous"*—especially if the earth is to be desolate during that time?

The Psalmist, inspired by God, describes the extent of the new government as *"from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth"* (Ps. 72:8). And the details that follow show definitely that this will be true when Christ first takes office, while there are still mortal people on earth in need of education and help. We read that *"kings" shall "fall down before him,"* and *"all nations shall serve him";* He shall *"deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also";* He shall *"redeem their soul from deceit and violence"*—all this must meet fulfillment prior to the time when all men everywhere on earth are immortal, as they will be during the Age beyond the Millennium.

Happiness and Prosperity

Isaiah 65 pictures in heart-warming words the conditions under which

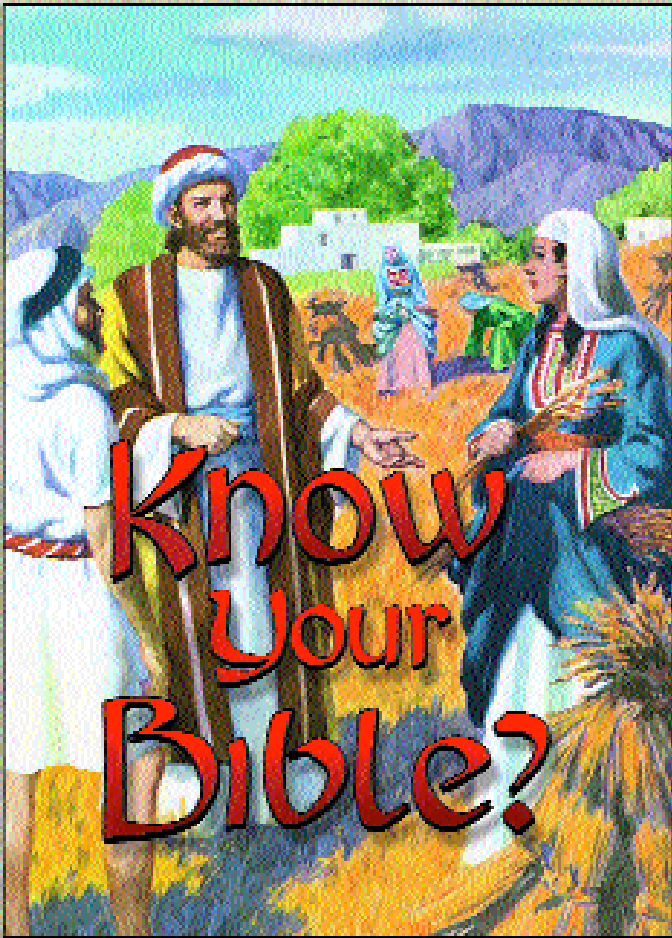
earth's blessed inhabitants will live during the glorious Millennium when Christ and the saints will be reigning on earth. And we can know that the description applies to the Millennium rather than to the Age beyond because during that time a *"child shall die one hundred years old"* (Isa. 65:20)—and there will be no death in Eternity (Rev. 21:3–4). Physical suffering will be unknown, and the life span will be greatly lengthened: *"Anyone dying under a hundred years must be accursed by God"* (Isa. 65:20, Moffatt).

"And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Isa. 65:21–22).

These prophecies of Isaiah are not being fulfilled anywhere on earth today, nor can they fit into the scheme of the finished handiwork of God when there will be *"no more death, neither sorrow nor crying"* (Rev. 21:3–4); hence they must picture life on earth during the glorious Millennial Age, when Christ and the saints will *"live and reign...a thousand years."*

The prophecies of Scripture all point to the throne of Christ being established on earth. The words of Zechariah confirm again: Christ comes to dwell among the people of earth. We read, *"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord."* And this prophecy cannot apply to the Age beyond the Millennium, for again the *"nations"* of earth are in the picture: *"And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee...And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again"* (Zech. 2:10–12).

The Bible leaves no question: Christ's reign will be *on earth!* ♦



WHERE WAS (WERE)

1. Miriam when she became a leper?
2. Deborah when she judged the people?
3. Ruth when she married Boaz?
4. Mary Magdalene when she first saw Jesus after His resurrection?
5. Mary for three months after the visitation by the angel?
6. Lydia when she was baptized by the Apostle Paul?
7. Aaron when he was gathered to his people and expired?
8. Joab, David's chief of the army, when he was slain?
9. Solomon when the Lord appeared unto him in a dream by night?
10. Wicked Jezebel when she was thrown to her death from a city wall?
11. Peter, James and John when they witnessed Christ raise a young girl from the dead?
12. Paul when he sent Onesimus home to his master Philemon?
13. Nathanael when Jesus first saw him?
14. Philip when he interpreted the Scripture to the Ethiopian eunuch?
15. Philip when Paul visited him?
16. John, the apostle, when he wrote to the seven churches of Asia?

WHO

1. Who was told to *"Be strong and of good courage"*?
2. Who prophesied that King Ahaziah would die?
3. Who was loyal to God and was also cupbearer to a foreign king?
4. Who gave the exhortation to *"pray without ceasing"*?
5. Who *"walked with God: and he was not; for God took him"*?
6. Who is called *"the weeping prophet"*?
7. Who wrote a prophecy including a description of a plague of locusts?
8. Who said *"Let patience have her perfect work"*?
9. Who was the father of Noah?

ABOUT KINGS

1. Who was the king of whom it is said that he *"knew not Joseph"*?
2. What king received from the Lord the sign of the shadow going backward on a dial?
3. What King of Judah profaned the temple and was punished with leprosy?
4. What Hebrew king killed himself after a defeat in battle? And what was the battle?
5. Who was king of Judaea when Christ was born?
6. What king displeased Elisha by striking the ground only 3 times with arrows? Why did it displease Elisha?
7. What good king of Judah worked with Isaiah?
8. What king dreamed a dream and required his wise men to tell not only what it meant but what it was?
9. What very fat king oppressed the Israelites?
10. What king issued a solemn decree that every man should bear rule in his own house?

FINISH THE QUOTATION

1. *"For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous"*
2. *"For the law was given by Moses, but"*
3. *"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and"*
4. *"The fool hath said in his heart,"*
5. *"The fear of the Lord is"*
6. *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it."*
7. *"As far as the east is from the west,"*
8. *"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib"*
9. *"The lines are fallen unto me"*
10. *"Seest thou a man diligent in his business?"*

answers on page 24

Dialogue

continued from page 17

God's way of getting Abraham's attention and getting him back into God's service? It was not the first nor last time God would use startling ways to gain His servant's attention.

I agree that all this is possible. But doesn't the purpose of the Divine message still come down to one of training, to help Abraham grow spiritually? Would not Abraham's faith and his endurance have been stronger after going through this? When everything seemed against Abraham and the fulfilling of God's promise to him, Abraham was still believing, and God was still true to His Word. If Abraham had ever been lacking in faith, it seems that after this experience he would never doubt God again.

As the conclusion begins for "Part one" of the article, the following question is asked, "What does the New Testament say about God's command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac?"

James 2:21 probably covers the lesson here best—it is our works that count! James 2:17 also reads: "Even so faith if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." And that is what Abraham's temptation is really all about—faith with works—it takes both!

Nevertheless, I await the continued writing on the subject. I will keep my mind open until I have first-hand information—especially if the writings discover that the theme of "Faith with Works" is the lesson portrayed, for this is what I have found it to be thus far. In other words, I believe "faith with works" to be the full thrust of God's tempting Abraham.

I'm sure that most of us (myself included) do not sufficiently appreciate the value and importance of true faith, nor what it takes to build and strengthen it. That is why the 11th chapter of Hebrews was written. It was through faith that these mighty men and women of God did the works they had to do to be worthy of God's favor and eternal salvation. "Without faith, it is impossible to please" [God] (Heb. 11:6). And James said, in regard to Abraham's offering of Isaac, "by works faith was made perfect" (James 2:22). Could this perhaps have been the reason behind God's testing Abraham? The building of faith, loyalty or character is always accomplished through faith (belief) coupled with works (obedience to God's commands), whether we choose to call them commands, messages, or simply a communication (all these terms are used in the Bible), or, as in the case with Abraham, "[God] said unto him."

I wholeheartedly agree that the narrative regarding Abraham's offering Isaac "is all about faith with works—it takes both." As you quoted, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17). And "works" cannot (will not) be done without that faith which the offering of Isaac brought to perfection (James 2:22).

Faith and works do go together. ♦

The building of character is always accomplished by faith (belief) coupled with works (obedience to God's commands).

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 23

WHERE WAS (WERE)

1. At the door of the tabernacle (Num. 12:4–10)
2. Under a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel (Judg. 4:4–5)
3. Bethlehem (Ruth 1:19, 4:13)
4. Near Joseph's tomb (Matt. 28:8–9)
5. In the house of her cousin Elisabeth in Judea (Luke 1:36, 39, 40, 56)
6. In Philippi (Acts 16:9, 12, 14, 15)
7. Mount Hor (Num. 20:22–29)
8. The Tabernacle of the Lord (1 Kings 2:28–34)
9. In Gibeon (1 Kings 3:5)
10. Jezreel (2 Kings 9:30–33)
11. In Jairus' house (Luke 8:41, 42; 49–55)
12. In prison (See Epistle to Philemon)
13. Under a fig tree (John 1:45–48)
14. In the chariot sitting beside him (Acts 8:26–35)
15. In his home at Caesarea (Acts 21:8)
16. On the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:9–11)

WHO

1. Joshua (Josh. 1:6)
2. Elijah (2 Kings 1:17)
3. Nehemiah (Neh. 1:11)
4. Paul (1 Thess. 5:17)
5. Enoch (Gen. 5:24)
6. Jeremiah (Jer. 9:1, 10; 13:17; 22:10; 48:32; Lam. 1:16)
7. Joel (Joel 1)
8. James (Jas. 1:4)
9. Lamech (Gen. 5:28–29)

ABOUT KINGS

1. Pharaoh of Egypt (Ex. 1:8, 11)
2. Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:1–11)
3. Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:18–19)
4. Saul, after the battle of Gilboa (1 Chron. 10:1–6)
5. Herod (Matt. 2:1)
6. Joash. He could have completely destroyed the Syrians (2 Kings 13:14–19)
7. Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:14–20)
8. Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:1–5)
9. Eglon, the king of Moab (Judg. 3:12–17)
10. Ahasuerus (Esther 1:15, 22)

FINISH THE QUOTATION

1. "but the way of the ungodly shall perish" (Psalm 1:6)
2. "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17)
3. "be glorified, even as it is with you" (2 Thess. 3:1)
4. "There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good" (Ps. 14:1)
5. "the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever" (Ps. 111:10)
6. "For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success" (Josh. 1:8 NKJV)
7. "so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12)
8. "but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isa. 1:3)
9. "in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage" (Ps. 16:6)
10. "he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men" (Prov. 22:29)



Easy To Grab, Hard To Let Go

by GARY RICHMOND*

The zoo where I worked had a thirteen-foot giant that to me seemed to be the embodiment of evil. He had a scar over his left eye that made him look mean and, more significantly, kept him from shedding his skin in a normal fashion. At least twice a year we would get the dreaded phone call from the reptile house: "The king cobra shed his skin last week, but the eye cap didn't come off. Looks infected. Suppose you and the doc could come down and clean it?"

A snake's skin includes a clear scale over the eye to protect it from sand and foreign objects. Snakes have no eyelids, so have no way to blink for protection. Since the snake's scar prevented a normal shed, the eye cap needed to be surgically removed.

Only two people at the zoo could take responsibility for grabbing the more deadly snakes, and this was the most deadly. (This snake's venom glands contain enough poison to kill one-thousand adults.)

The next day the curator of reptiles was assigned to grab the head. Two reptile keepers were to steady the body. When the snake was subdued, the veterinarian would begin the delicate surgery. His arena kept him inches from a lethal injection. My job was to furnish scalpel, sponge, hemostat, and anything else to expedite the procedure.

The five of us carefully took our positions: the two keepers on either side of the large cage door, the curator in front of the door, about six feet away. The vet and I stood on either side of the curator, about ten feet from the door. The keepers' only defense was sheer bird nets with two-foot handles.

With a nod of his head, the curator signaled for the door to be opened. Seconds later the king cobra appeared. As soon as he saw us, he stopped, spread his cape, and raised to full stature. The cage was two feet off the ground, so we were all looking at him at eye level.

The cobra was trembling with excitement as he, in turn, stared at each of his five enemies. He seemed to be choosing who would be his prey. The curator was chosen, and with shocking quickness the snake lunged forward, hissing and

growling with malevolent rage. With lightning speed, the skilled keepers placed the sheer nets over the snake's head. And as he pushed to get through, the curator firmly grasped his neck just behind his venom sacs. The keepers grabbed the writhing body, then the curator nodded and said, "Let's get this over with."

The pressure was incredible. The vet's hands were trembling and beads of sweat began to run down the curator's forehead. The curator turned to me and said, "Do you have any cuts or scratches on your hands?"

I looked and said, "No."

"Get a wad of paper towels, quick," he followed in a strained voice. I did so,

"Now, put it in the cobra's mouth."

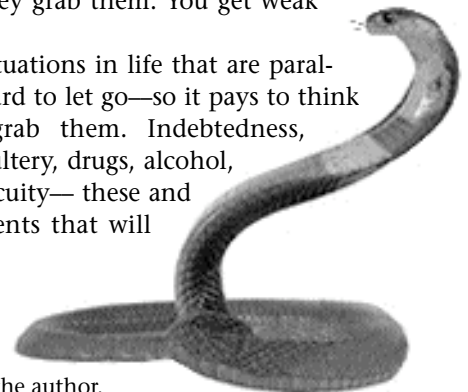
The king watched the paper towels as they were carefully positioned to allow him to bite them. He bit down violently and began to chew. The towels became yellow with venom until they began to drip.

The curator continued, "Did you know that several elephants die every year from king cobra bites? A man could never survive a bite from a full load of venom. That's why I'm having you drain his venom sacs. My hands are sweaty and my fingers are cramping. When I let him go, it may not be quick enough. More people are bitten trying to let go of snakes than when they grab them. You get weak quick!"

There are many situations in life that are parallels— easy to grab, hard to let go—so it pays to think twice before you grab them. Indebtedness, vengeance, lying, adultery, drugs, alcohol, pornography, promiscuity— these and many more are serpents that will drain your strength...

[And kill you!!] ♦

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In the Wake of TERROR!

As this issue goes to press, our nation has just been shocked by horrible crimes. They are crimes not only against the nation but against civilization itself. Our condolences go out to all those whose lives have been touched by these terrible crimes.

The Megiddo Church supports our Government in its efforts to deal effectively with each and every perpetrator of terror. We pray for our leaders and those in charge of our defense that they may make such decisions as will restore peace and safety in our land.

It is a time of crisis, a time of fear. But in the bigger picture, even now we can take comfort knowing God is in control. And when the time is right, He will intervene, and show Himself mightier than all the forces of wrong.

In His time He will *"remove all weapons of war from the land...so [all] can live unafraid in peace and safety"* (Hos. 2:18, 19 NLT).

May this hour of crisis awaken each to a closer walk with God, a deeper self-examination, and a more careful compliance with His law, as we look forward with eager expectancy to the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

He is a true Christian who is neither ashamed of the gospel or a shame to the gospel.

Making the most of today is the best way to get ready for tomorrow.

An important part of praying is a willingness to become part of the answer.

There is a continuing city for the continuing Christian.

The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts.

*The ancients used an interesting little instrument called the *tribulum* to beat grain to divide the chaff from the wheat. Our word "tribulation" comes from this word. Tribulations separate the chaff from the wheat in human character.*

Humility is a strange thing—when you think you've gained it you've lost it.

TEACH ME, LORD

Teach me, my Lord, to be sweet and gentle in all the events of life—in disappointment, in the thoughtlessness of others, in the insincerity of those I trusted, in the unfaithfulness of those on whom I relied.

*Let me put myself aside,
To think of the happiness of others,
To hide my little pains and heartaches,
So that I may be the only one to suffer from them.
Teach me to profit by the suffering that comes across
my path.*

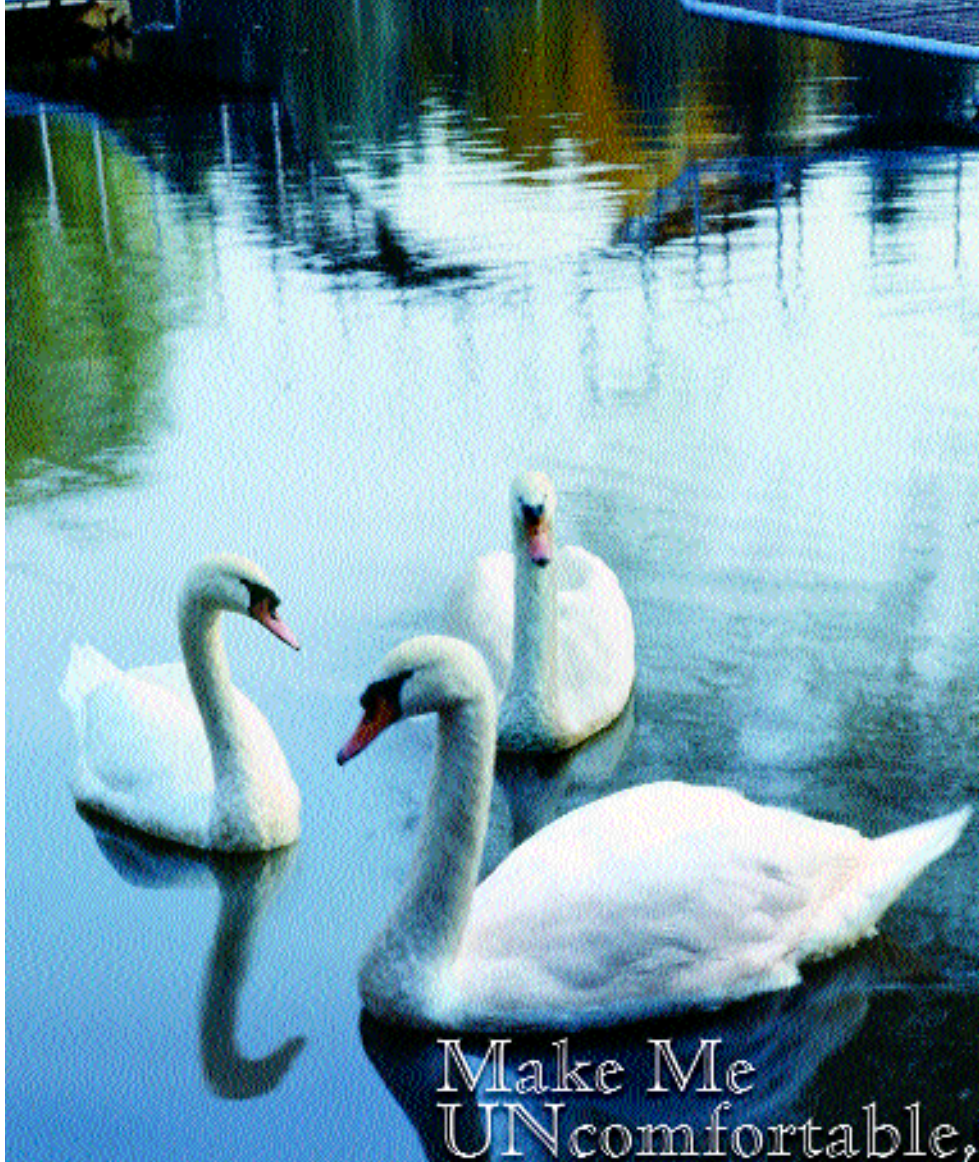
*Let me so use it
That it may mellow me, not harden or embitter me;
That it may make me patient, not irritable,
That it may make me broad in my forgiveness, not narrow,
haughty and overbearing.*

*May no one be less good for having come within my influence;
No one less pure, less true, less kind,
less noble for having been a fellow-traveler
with me on the journey toward ETERNAL LIFE.*

"Teach me thy way, O Lord." —Psalm 86:11

*The roots grow deep
when the winds blow
strong.*

*Forethought is better
than repentance.*



Make Me UNcomfortable, O God

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

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

Disturb me, O God,

Until I sense that my true calling as a Christian is:

To grow in that deepest, most vital knowledge of all—the knowledge of myself;
To find joy in reading and understanding that wisdom that comes from You;
To seize now my awesome opportunities for attaining true learning;
To live richly and responsibly in prospect of the better Day that is coming;
To find my highest pleasure in grappling effectively with my own worst self;
To be constantly grateful for the capacity, the creativity and courage that You have entrusted to me;

To do my best to better my own life and conduct that I may see the fulfillment of the highest purposes You have planned for this planet on which I live. AMEN.