



Megiddo Message

Vol. 86, No. 9
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Show me the path
I should walk, for to
You I entrust my life.

—Psalm 143:8 NAB

Can You Admit It?

Making a mistake is one thing; admitting it is another.

Everyone makes mistakes. "To err is human." Mistakes are part of life. It has been said that the only person who never makes a mistake is the one who never does anything.

Fortunately for us, most of our mistakes have little consequence and involve no more than a slight alteration in our plans, a moment's inconvenience, or a second attempt. However, if we are trying to make every experience of our lives count toward spiritual growth, we will see in every small mistake an opportunity to check our spiritual stature. How big are we—big enough to admit that we made the mistake?

Some of the best lessons we ever learn come from our mistakes and failures. The error of the past often becomes the wisdom of the future. We did it. And if we could admit it, we would be a little taller. If...

A careful person is not so likely to make a mistake as the careless. The cautious person will avoid many of the blunders made by the swift. But we soon learn that it doesn't pay to belong to the cautious, "never-do-anything" class just to avoid making a mistake. Sometimes a mistake is plain evidence that we at least tried.

Mistakes in our spiritual lives are more serious by nature because they affect our eternal welfare. Each mistake lowers us in the esteem of God Almighty; and failing to admit it takes us still further down. In the words of the ancient Prophet, we "*add sin to sin*" (Isa. 30:1). For example, we say what would have been better left unsaid. We realize immediately that we should not have said it. But it is too late. And when someone points out our lack of good judgment, we defend ourselves—and double our wrong—instead of admitting it and going forward.

Deception is an art which the human race has been perfecting from time immemorial. The prophet Jeremiah wrote of it: "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*" (Jer. 17: 9).

Of course, simply admitting a mistake is not enough. No employer wants one who keeps making the same mistake over and over, however freely he admits it. Neither does God want those who keep making the same mistakes. Honest recognition of our mistakes is the first step. But before we can be right in God's sight, we must change (Prov. 28:13; Isa. 55: 7).

Admitting our mistakes may be painful; forsaking them may require much diligence. But when the Master finally pronounces our work "Well done," we shall thank God we did it!

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.

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Front Cover: Golden leaves in Bristol Hills, NY. Photo by Mr. and Mrs. David Sutton.

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Megiddo Message

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Does Jesus condemn us
for condemning wrong?

JUDGE

Or Fruit Inspector?

What did Jesus mean when He said,
"Do not judge, or you too will be judged"?

Jesus' command to "Judge not" may well be the most popular thing He ever said, at least in the view of our secular society. "Nobody can tell me what to do," says one. "I write the rules that I live by," says another. The results are tragic, as just about any conduct or misconduct is justified and "anything goes" in the absence of traditional values and standards. In religious circles the situation is almost as bad because they sincerely believe that to obey Jesus' command they must refrain from judging (condemning) anything in a fellowbeliever—because Jesus said "Judge not." And if we condemn them, we're sinning.

If we read the Gospels, we find that Jesus was very definite that some things are right (for you, me, anyone), and some things are wrong (for you, me, anyone). And a large part of our duty as His followers lies in learning to distinguish between the two in our own lives, and making the right choices.

Jesus was our example, and He didn't go around handing out gentle suggestions, like, "It might be well if you considered doing such and such," or "I would recommend this, if you're interested"—or who, hearing Him for the first time, would ever have marveled at the authority and power with which He spoke, as they did at the close of His first sermon (Matt. 7:29)? Hear the force in His words: "Verily, verily I say unto you," and He told them about obedience and sacrifice. Again He repeated it: "Verily, verily I say unto you," and He said He was the living bread that came down from heaven. "If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever" (John 6:51 NIV). Again He said, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:53-54 NIV).

Jesus is our perfect example, and what was the example He set? He did not hesitate to call wrong, *wrong*. He openly condemned those who drew near to God with their mouth and denied Him by their lives (Matt. 15:6-9). He denounced those

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged."

You can detect [false prophets] by the way they act, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit. You don't pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles.

A healthy tree produces good fruit, and an unhealthy tree produces bad fruit.

A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit.

So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire.

Yes, the way to identify a tree or a person is by the kind of fruit that is produced.

—Matt. 7:1-2, 16-20, NIV & NLT



who *said* but did not *do*. He condemned those who would not forgive their brother, or extend to another the mercy they had been shown.

Going still further, Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their hypocritical religion, their vain and empty show, their pretense in which there was no heart. Who, hearing Him, could miss His message? "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.... Woe to you, blind guides! ... You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.... Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean" (Matthew 23, NIV). Wasn't He judging? Of course He was.

But, says one, He was Jesus. Who are we, you and I, to judge?

But Jesus wasn't the only one to speak out against evil. Look at the prophets. Was Amos wrong in saying, "Hate the evil, love the good"? (Amos 5:15). Was David wrong in saying, "I will refuse to look at anything vile and vulgar. I hate all crooked dealings; I will have nothing to do with them.... I will not tolerate people who slander their neighbors"? (Ps. 101:3-5 NLT).

Didn't God himself direct Isaiah to "cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet"? (Isa. 58:1). What about Lot in Sodom, or Noah in the world of his time, where "all their thoughts were consistently and totally evil"? (Gen. 6:5 NLT). Weren't they judging those around them?

God's ministers in all ages have worked hard to save their people from those who would ruin them. And how could they do it without judging between the right and the wrong? Didn't Paul give some very direct warnings of this nature? Hear his words to the church in Rome (16:17 NLT): "Watch out," he said, "for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them." Again, on the opposite side, he gave this positive advice to the Philippians: "Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you" (Phil. 3:17 NIV).

Weren't they all obeying a command of Scripture that requires us to learn to "discern" between good and evil? And "discern" and "judge" stem from the same Greek root. "Discern" tells us to look closely enough to see the difference in an action or perception, and to act on the basis of that knowledge. This is just what we are commanded in Hebrews 5:14 (NLT), to learn "to recognize the difference between right and wrong." In other words, judge.

What Did Jesus Mean?

Since we know that Jesus wants us to judge and condemn wrong, what shall we do with His command to "judge not"?

In saying, "Judge not," Jesus was placing a large caution light over the area of personal judgments. But it is a *caution* light, not a *stop* light. And if we read carefully the context of His words, we shall find that at the same time He said "Don't judge" He has told us specifically how we *must* judge.

Some types of judgment are *forbidden*, others are *required*.



Jesus:

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to." —Matt. 23:13 NIV

Amos:

"Hate the evil, love the good... For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins." —Amos 5:15, 12 NIV

David:

"I will refuse to look at anything vile and vulgar. I hate all crooked dealings; I will have nothing to do with them." —Psalm 101:3 NLT



WHEN JUDGING

Is Wrong

ACCORDING TO JESUS



Don't let your differences breed feelings of dislike or distrust among you.

What kind of judging is wrong?

1 Don't Judge Someone Else When You Yourself Are Guilty on that Same Point

According to Jesus, we should be more concerned about being right ourselves and less concerned about others, remembering that we ourselves will be judged. *"In the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you"* (Matt. 7:2 NIV).

In the next verse He is specific: We must be careful not to judge another for a point on which we are at fault. Said Jesus, *"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?...You hypocrite!"* (Matt. 7:3, 5 NIV).

One of the distinguishing principles of Jesus was truth, and that included truth in judging others. The scribes and Pharisees were often guilty of condemning others while making themselves look good, a practice Jesus despised.

There may be meaning, too, in Jesus' choosing the symbol of the eye, because the eye is one of the most sensitive areas of the human body. The picture of a man with a two-by-four stuck in his eye, trying to remove a speck of dust

from another man's eye, is ridiculous indeed! But if we do not honestly face up to our sins, and confess them, we blind ourselves to ourselves. In such a state, how can we possibly see clearly enough to help others? The Pharisees saw the sins of other people, but they would not look at their own sins.

The point is: Don't condemn someone else when you yourself are guilty on that point without making full allowance for your own weakness. The apostle Paul said the same in his letter to the Romans: *"You...have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.... You who teach others, do you ever teach yourself anything?"* (Rom. 2:1, 21 NIV & Phillips).

Far more serious is our own "plank" than our brother's "speck." And even if our record is clear, we must still use caution. Anyone can be tempted, anyone can fall. Said Paul again, *"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted"* (Gal. 6:1 NIV).

2 Don't Judge without Evidence

Answering a matter before we are fully informed is a distressingly common form of reckless judging. *"He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame"* (Prov. 18:13 NIV). There can be no fair judgment of any matter until both sides are known.

3 Avoid Hasty, Critical Judgments

Flash judgments can come so quickly. We see something amiss, and instinctively form an opinion—what he *appears* to be versus what he *ought* to be. The habit is universal. Worse, it is reciprocal. The teacher judges the student, and the student the teacher. The employer judges his employee, and the employee his employer.

Judgment is everywhere, between men and women, children and parents, rivals and friends, nations and leaders of nations.

These harsh judgments impulsively drop into our conversation, where they do nothing but destroy. We assume, of course, that *our* judgment is right, and that others should agree. Such judgments surely fall into the category which Jesus forbids—that are better not made.



4 Don't Judge Others' Motives

We are forbidden to judge the thoughts of another's heart. Why? Because we can't accurately read them. Paul laid down this rule in 1 Corinthians 4 (NIV), where he discusses how his brethren were judging him. He said clearly that his accountability was to God, not to them. *"I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me"* (vs. 3-4). Paul's personal accountability to God was ever on his mind.

"Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God" (1 Cor. 4:5). They were judging his intentions—and judging wrongly. Paul in one word leaped from their judgment to the coming judgment of Christ—which all will have to face. And this judgment will be fair, this judgment will be impartial, and this judgment will be final; none of us will have any power to alter it.

The task most essential to our salvation, of course, is to judge ourselves. This is extremely difficult and requires a super degree of self-honesty. So rare and so difficult is it that it is always safe to judge others with leniency and ourselves with rigor. Then we may come somewhere near a fair judgment. But we shall always need the help of others to complete the task, for *"It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"* (Jer. 10:23).

What is our purpose in judging? Why are we concerned about judging others? Not to correct their course but to evaluate our own, so that we can make our own course right. As we observe others we obtain a better knowledge of our own heart and character.

When we see wrong in another, our first thought should always be, What is in my own heart? Am I harboring some of that same sin? Have I the strength to stand should I be tempted in that way? And having seen, we should go to work to build up where we are weak, realizing that all of us have our share of human weaknesses. None are exempt. Nature's "nobleman" does not exist.

5 Don't Judge Trivia

In Romans 14, Paul warned in a different way against judging one another by the wrong standards. Apparently a problem had arisen in the church due to the varying backgrounds of the believers. Some came from Judaism, and had a hard time breaking their loyalty to its time-honored customs. Others came from paganism, and wanted to shun any-

thing associated in any way with the old pagan rites.

The question was about what was right to eat and drink. A simple issue, it might seem, but neither side wanted to back down. The result was a near-division in the church.

What was Paul's attitude? He did not condemn either side, but felt that the more mature should be willing to make some concessions for the sake of the weaker. Yes, everyone should be able to see that meat was meat. Even if it had been offered to an idol in a pagan temple, its value as food had not changed. But they didn't need to be so harsh with their younger, less sure-footed brothers and sisters.

We today don't have the same problems they had, but the same human nature is still with us. Then as now, we are inclined to be intolerant and irritated when others do not fit into the mold of our likes or dislikes.

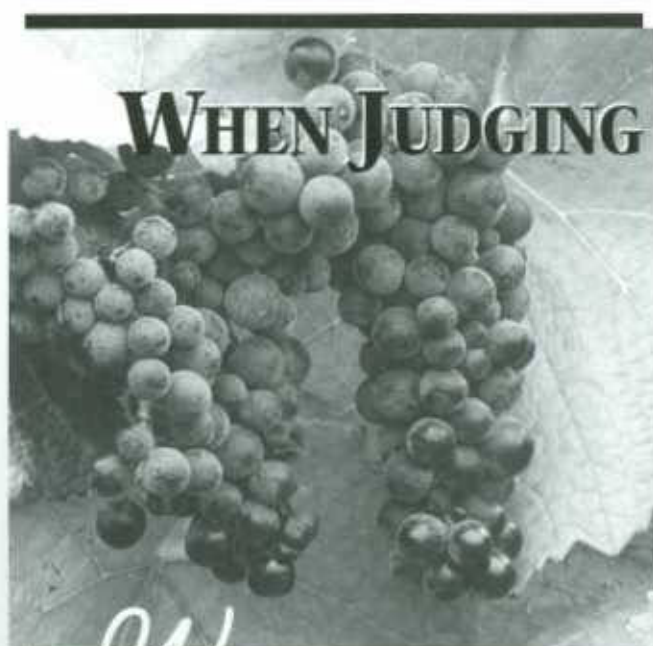
And there are still small issues which should be kept small. We are still tempted to confuse preferences with principles.

So Paul said, don't let your differences breed feelings of dislike or distrust among you. If you are firmly convinced that what you are doing is right before God, do it; but do not condemn the one who disagrees with you. Even issues that are not matters of right and wrong in themselves become such if they cause divisions in the church, if they become points of criticism or contention.

Who are we serving after all? Who must we answer to? In the final analysis that is all that will count, and no one has any right to criticize. Each of us is responsible to his own master only. All of us are servants of God. So—let God give us our instructions, and stop criticizing one another. *"For we are not our own masters when we live or die"* (Rom. 14:7 NLT). Even though we are not aware of it, we are constantly leaving something of ourselves in others.



*When I judge by
Jesus' principles, I'm
not a judge but a
fruit inspector.*



WHEN JUDGING

Is Right

ACCORDING TO JESUS

Why did Jesus put a caution light on judging? Because He knew how easily we condemn others and overlook our own sins.

Another time when Jesus talked about judgment, He said we should avoid judging by appearances but instead “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

What are some “right” judgments we can make?

Judge “By Fruit”

If Jesus told us to condone conduct which the Bible calls wrong, He would be teaching us to lie. And He who called Himself the “Truth” (John 14:6) would not want us to lie. Neither does He want us to call evil good, or good evil.

This means we must judge. In the same sermon where Jesus told us not to judge, He said also, “Watch out for false prophets” who try to deceive. They come in “sheep’s clothing,” but inside they are raging wolves (Matt. 7:15). Isn’t that a judgment?

Here is another principle He is teaching: “You can detect them by the way they act, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit” (Matt. 7:16 NLT). How do we know a plum tree from an apple? By its fruit. And how do we know a sincere, committed follower of Christ from one who is only play-acting? By recognizing the fruit.

So when I judge by Jesus’ principles, I’m not a judge but a fruit inspector.

Jesus judges us by the fruit our lives produce. And in the same way we may—we must—judge others. “You can detect them by the way they act, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit. You don’t pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles. A healthy tree produces good fruit, and an unhealthy tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit....Yes, the way to identify a tree or a person is by the kind of fruit that is produced” (Matt. 7:16–20 NLT).

Oh, what kind of tree are we? What does Jesus think of us? What kind of fruit are we bearing?

Is it wrong, then, to condemn one whose life shows sour fruit? Not at all. Jesus does not condemn us for being a fruit inspector. But we must be honest, truthful, and fair. Never must we call the sour fruit sweet. But if we see that person is willing to change, we must be ready to help him.

Jesus wants us to call the fruit what it is. Especially is this important in ourselves. And as we see where we lack, we can direct our effort toward improving. If we are weak in courage, we must add it. If we see we are weak in faith, we can read and think on things that will build up our faith. Recognizing a wrong is the first step toward correcting it. As long as we refuse to acknowledge where we are wrong, we will not improve.

What is the difference between being a fruit inspector and a judge? Simply this: that a fruit inspector is *observing* one’s character or behavior, not *slurring* it. If I make such an observation, I must be holding myself to the same standard and seeing my own fruit.

When Jesus said that every tree is known by its fruits (Matt. 7:20), He was saying also that we should judge by readily visible evidence—and that is all. We are not to judge by a feeling, impulse, or prejudice. We are not to suspicion another’s motives or thoughts. Visible evidence is just that, and no more.

And then, if the fruits are good, it is our duty to make a judgment that the tree is good. If the fruits are bad, it is our duty to make a judgment that the tree is bad. More than this we cannot judge, because we have no power to read the heart or mind.

The apostle Paul urged the members of the Corinthian Church to use the same basis of judging in temporal mat-



ters, and in this way avoid taking a brother or sister to the court of law. He said, *"Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?"* (1 Cor. 6:2 NIV). Certainly this sound advice indicates the right—indeed the responsibility—of the Christian to make judgments.

Why did Jesus put a caution light on judging? Because He knew our weakness. He did not want us to be tolerant of sin, but He knew how easy it is to find fault with others, how easy it is to make snap judgments, to try to put ourselves up and others down. He knew how easy it is for us to read wrong motives into what other people do—and to overlook the wrong in ourselves. Yes, Jesus knew that the greatest danger we face is the danger of sin in our own hearts.

Oh, how carefully we should



Jesus judges us by the fruit our lives produce. In the same way He allows us to look at others.

watch our own heart and conduct, we who are so easily influenced by one another! How serious the thought that someone may actually be turned to the right road because of our faith—or ruined because we lacked courage!

What should move us to act? Only this; that we believe it to be right and pleasing to God. If we do anything out of fear of unpopularity, or to please others, it is wrong. The great Day is near when *"the Lord will come and bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts"* (1 Cor 4:5, NIV) and each will receive from our heavenly Father according to what he has done. Why not rise above ourselves and our natural tendencies? Why not follow the King's principles in all of our judging?

Then that same King will accept us, and welcome us to share His Kingdom. ♦

Thinking It Through

1. Why do you think Jesus gave this warning about judging other people?

2. How does obeying Jesus' command to judge "by fruits" limit our judgments?

3. How does judging "by fruits" relate to His advice in Matthew 7:12?

4. Suppose you see your sister doing something you feel is wrong. Place an "X" in front of anything that you should NOT do if following Jesus' principles.

_____ Read to her the command in Scripture that she is violating.

_____ Point out to her the end result of what she is doing, to show her it is not in her best interest.

_____ Determine that what she is doing is wrong.

_____ Try to read her mind, to figure out WHY she is doing as she is.

_____ Carefully examine your own heart to see if you have the same weakness.

_____ Speak to her privately about it.

_____ The next time you see her in public, make a comment in front of everyone present that she "can't miss" as being directed against her.

_____ Tell her that you would never do a thing like that.

_____ Speak to your brother about it.

5. Go back to question 4 and number (1, 2, 3) the remaining statements in the order in which you think they SHOULD be done.

6. Why did Jesus use so large an item as a "plank" in the eye to illustrate "my weakness" and only a "speck" to illustrate my brother's weakness?

Jesus Is Coming!

*We see not yet the throne of Christ uplifted,
Nor yet all nations bowed to His commands;
Sorrow and sin His heritage have rifted,
He has not yet the scepter in His hands;
But we see Jesus, clothed in power supernal,
The keys of death and hell are His alone;
And He shall come, our Saviour, King Eternal,
To reign in glory, saving all His own.*

*We see not yet the holy consummation
When He shall rule, commanding every eye;
But we endure, amid earth's sharp negation,
As seeing One invisible on high.
The King is coming, to His own appearing,
And we would serve, nor shall we serve in vain;
For we know surely that the hour is nearing
When He shall come with kingly power to reign!*

*If you knew that Jesus would arrive next week—or next month—
how would it affect your plans?*

Yes, Jesus is coming. It was the promise of the angels who watched Him ascend: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." It was His own faithful promise: "I will come again" (Acts 1:10-11; John 14:3).

What does this mean? What difference does this make in my life?

An enormous difference! In fact, nothing at all is the same.

The thought of Christ breaking suddenly into our lives is shocking. It overhauls our entire scale of values. The more we think about it, the more we realize how abruptly everything will change at the sound of the trumpet. Things we take for granted, activities that demand so heavily of our time and attention, suddenly are removed from our realm of concern. Suddenly we realize that many of the things we cling to, and want more of, don't matter at all—and some things we almost forget to think about are really important.

True belief in the Second Advent causes us to loosen our grip on the things that are seen. The bottom line of everything becomes eternity.

Just how intensely ought we to focus on Christ's return?

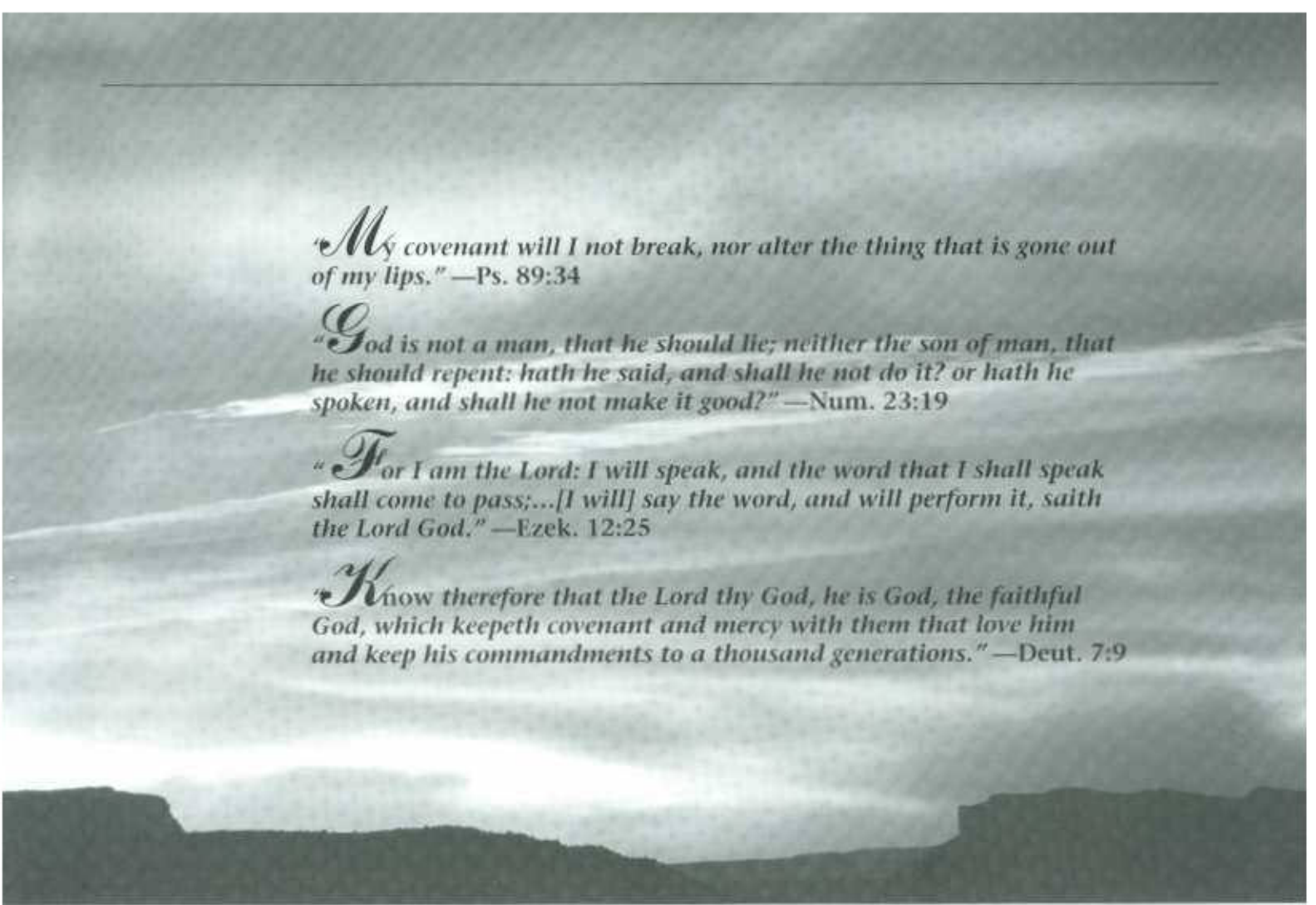
If we look to the apostles for our answer, we quickly

realize that we cannot focus on it too much. It is the very thing Titus 2:13 says we ought to do: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of...our Saviour Jesus Christ"

When is the last time you meditated on this fact? Practical people tend to reserve such thoughts for funerals or near-death experiences. Most of us are here-and-now thinkers, not then-and-there thinkers. But the Scriptures say we should be living every moment with this great expectation on our minds, "lest coming suddenly" He find us sleeping (Mark 13:35-37). We are to stimulate and encourage one another, and "so much the more" as we "see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:24-25). We are to "comfort one another" with words about His return (1 Thess. 4:13-18). The expectation of His coming, the resurrection, and the immortal crowns He will bring are truths that should keep us on our feet, "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58-58). If they do anything less for us, they aren't doing enough.

The Bible is literally running over with promises, encouragements and admonitions directly related to Christ's return. It doesn't just say He is coming—it emphasizes it. And re-emphasizes it. The second coming of Christ is mentioned more than 300 times in the New Testament alone.

Critics have denied it. Cynics have laughed at it. Schol-



"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." —Ps. 89:34

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" —Num. 23:19

"For I am the Lord: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass;...[I will] say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God." —Ezek. 12:25

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations." —Deut. 7:9

ars have ignored it. Liberal theologians have explained it away. Fanatics have perverted it. In the prophetic words of the inspired Apostle, they are saying, "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Peter 3:4).

But the fact remains, unchanged and unchangeable: He is coming again.

What does this mean in terms of everyday life for us? How does this affect my life and yours?

First, look at what you *don't* do. Don't sit down and wait for the bugle to sound. Don't stare into the sky. Don't quit your job and move to the mountaintop to watch for His coming.

Rather, live. Live richly, fully, abundantly, circumspectly, every day your best, every day as though it were your last. Live every hour with this expectation on your mind: that He is coming, and that you *must* be ready.

What does it mean to be ready? It means to have our life record such that Christ can look upon us with approval. It means having a character so like His own that He will count us worthy to live and work with Him eternally. It means that He will accept us, protect us, preserve us, reward us.

What will I want to be found doing when Jesus comes? *Do that now.* What will I want to be found saying when Jesus comes? *Say that now.* Where will I want to be

found going when Jesus comes? *Go there now.*

And watch. "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." If we would be ready, we must be watching. "Watching" in this context doesn't mean looking up, but looking *in*. It means looking deep into our hearts and scrutinizing every thought, every feeling, every motive. It means asking ourselves continually, Am I pleasing Christ in this? Am I by this thought, this action, this attitude, forming the character that will make my life acceptable to Him?

As true believers living in expectancy, we should be the happiest people in the world. Our faces should shine with the glow of His coming. Our daily conduct should be a living witness to Him, and our whole life and outlook radiant with our hope. Whatever our circumstances, whether to our liking or otherwise, our minds will not be absorbed in the present cosmos. Our whole thought will be: Is my life pleasing God? What will the Lord of the Harvest think of me when He comes? Will He find me ready?

To those who are ready, the arrival of Christ will mean joy and happiness beyond anything we can imagine, the realization of their highest expectations and hopes. To those not ready, it will be a day of defeat, of grief, and indescribable sorrow.

Let us focus all our effort on getting ready, for He is coming. ♦



Think— and Be Thankful

*H*ave you ever noticed that *thinking* always precedes *thanksgiving*? If our neighbor mows our lawn because we are temporarily incapacitated, we thank him because we see evidence of his sincere *thought* for us.

It seems so easy to be thankful in the midst of plenty, but such gratitude is only one small step toward living in a constant spirit of thankfulness. It is only one step toward that deeper gratitude which the apostle Paul described as “*giving thanks always for all things*” (Eph. 5:20).

Why should we who live in a land of plenty find it difficult to be truly grateful? It only proves that wealth, health and pleasure do not make thankfulness. Our appetite is for more and more. In fact, the cares and riches and pleasures of life only choke the plant of gratitude, and our lives become unfruitful. If we were to change places for a few days with our neighbors in a land of starvation, we might soon learn to be thankful for every morsel of bread. And we would be more likely to return thanks to the Creator.

Doesn't this pattern of thankfulness followed by discontent remind us of the Israelites of old? Must we be like them before we can be truly thankful? Must we suffer the pain before we can be thankful to be free from it?

Looking back we can see the precious values that have come out of the illnesses, the disappointments, the economic crises,

the family estrangements, the failures, the disloyalty of a trusted friend. But it is one thing to look back on past trials and be thankful for the blessings that have resulted from them, and quite another to be really thankful in the midst of them.

This is where we need to think—and be thankful.

*T*hankfulness is a product of careful cultivation. It is the fruit of a deliberate resolve to think about God and our privileges and responsibilities, and to react in a deliberate, positive way. “*Brothers and sisters, think about the things that are good and worthy of praise. Think about the things that are true and honorable and right and pure and beautiful and respected*” (Phil. 4:8 NCV). Then put these thoughts into action. As Paul continued in the next verse, “*Do what you learned and received from me, what I told you, and what you saw me do.*”

Now, think about yourself. Can you, can I make these same declarations in the presence of others—for whom we are responsible?

What led the early Christians to be thankful during the days when persecution was so grievous under the tyrant Nero? They thought about Jesus, who was so careful to live uprightly, showing the pattern of a life that pleases the Father. Their hope was sealed by the resurrection and

*If you pause
to think, you
will have cause
to thank.*

ascension of Christ, and by the power He sent from on high. Nor did they ever forget the powerful men and women like Paul, Peter, John, Junia, Priscilla, and Tryphena, who stood firm in the face of danger and hardship. These early Christians had a zeal that no power could crush because they were confident that whatever lay ahead for them, God would be true to His word.

Destitute of even the necessities of life, they could not be daunted. Hungry, sick, cold or in danger, Paul had learned to be content. No matter, he would be thankful in all things. Every morning when those early Christians opened their eyes to the dawn of another day, they were thankful for the opportunities it might bring in the service of Jesus Christ. They were thankful because they had the promise that Christ would return and they would be fellow heirs in His Kingdom. Nothing could divert their thoughts from this promise. Nothing could separate them from their love for God. Their minds were fixed on Him, thinking, "What do I lack of being like the great Teacher from Galilee?" or "How can I serve the Master and be loyal to Him?" They were thankful even for tragedies, if only they would help to forge a character pleasing to God. Whatever the opportunity, they were thankful. They thought about what lay ahead and were exuberantly happy. Others might view the next day with dread, but not them! There was nothing more certain than that every trial would work for their eternal good.

Only as we include God in all our plans can we be genuinely thankful for all things, not only when we need Him but in every situation, good or bad.

What keeps me from being thankful?

It seems the easy, comfortable life, like a terrible disease, destroys thankfulness.

Think about those who survived the first winter and summer after landing at Plymouth. They were thankful—to be alive. They were thankful for the corn and wild turkey, for turnips and beans, for the abundant game that would help to sustain them through the ensuing winter, for shelter and clothing, but most of all, for a chance to start a new life without oppression.

What keeps us from being thankful is

not thinking. Do we realize just where we would be without the providence of God? We could not draw another breath without His power! Life itself is a gift from our Creator. It is within His right to end it at any moment, but He doesn't. Do we appreciate His providence, or do we complain about not having as fine a home as our neighbor? If we had to do without for a while, perhaps we would be more thankful for any good.

Often our attitude keeps us from being thankful. We need to think about the Provider. It is part of the growing process to stop thinking of self as some great one and give all credit to God. The gifted musician and the great scientist were both given their talents. Their only part was the hours of study and practice that were needed to make it a thing of value. Yet how few of us stop to think and thank God for our gifts of talent. It is God who provides.

Do we recognize the providence of God in our lives? When the Lord freed the Hebrews from slavery and led them out of Egypt by the hand of Moses, how many were thankful? Only two, Joshua and Caleb. They were thinkers: "With God's help we can overcome the enemy. He will fight for us as He did before," they pleaded. But the rebellious did not think. "We are not able," they moaned. They could not appreciate any good thing the Lord did for them because they did not think about previous blessings or beyond their present situation. They were in training for something far better. And here they were, heading toward the Promised Land. And just outside the gates they began to grumble and complain, and were ready to stone their leaders.

What of those who have covenanted to serve the Lord? What would make us most thankful? A sports car? or perhaps a million dollar home? Away with such! Give me life and more life in the Promised Land. Here lies real wealth, real happiness, real pleasure! Think on these things and be thankful you are among the Lord's servants.

We are just outside the Promised Land. Soon, very soon, we may hear the voice of our elder Brother welcoming us into that eternal bliss. Think about what that means.

Think, and be thankful. ♦

*What keeps
me from being
thankful?*

*Only as we
include God in
all our plans
can we be
genuinely
thankful for all*



"...my cup runs over" —Psalms 23:5

Today and every day, recognize the God from whom all blessings flow, and offer Him the praise of your lips, the love of your hearts and the consecration of your lives.

I THANK YOU

O God whose goodness fills my cup,
With every blessing meet!
I give You thanks for every drop—
The bitter and the sweet.

I praise You for the desert road,
And for the riverside;
For all Your goodness has bestowed,
And all Your grace denied.

I thank You for both smile and frown,
And for the gain and loss;
I praise You for the future crown
And for the present cross.

I thank You for the wings of love
Which stirred my worldly nest;
And for the stormy clouds which drove
Me, trembling, to Your breast.

I bless You for the glad increase,
And overflowing joy;
And for the solid, settled peace
Which nothing can destroy.

Nothing is more honorable than
a grateful heart.

WHAT KIND OF BUCKET ARE YOU?

"How gloomy you look," said one bucket to another as they were being carried to a well.

"Ah!" replied the second bucket, "I was thinking how useless all this is; for no matter how full we go away, we always come back empty."

Then the first bucket commented: "What a strange way to look at it. I have always been happy that, however empty we come, we always go away full."

An easy thing, O Power Sublime,
To thank You for these gifts divine,
For summer sunshine, winter snow,
For hearts that kindle, thoughts that glow;
But when shall I attain to this—
To thank You for the things I miss?

The hardest arithmetic to master is that which teaches us to count our blessings.

The person who feels no compulsion to say "Thanks" for the commonest courtesies is unworthy to receive more.

Thanksgiving, to be truly Thanksgiving, is first thanks, then giving.

*Even a dog will wag his tail at the person who gives him a bone.
So don't expect happiness if you live below the level of a dog.*

When you drink from the stream remember the spring.

A thankful heart is not only the greatest virtue, but the parent of all the other virtues.

*My God, I thank You—You have made
The earth so bright
So full of splendor and of joy,
Beauty and light;
So many glorious things are here,
Noble and right.*

Keep both eyes open to your mercies.

The one who has forgotten to be thankful has fallen asleep in life.

If life is sweet, give thanks; if bitter, give thanks—that you still have life, which gives you another chance.

It isn't the words we say on bended knee that count, but it's rather the way we think and live out our prayers.

rain sunshine
animals plants oxygen
soil

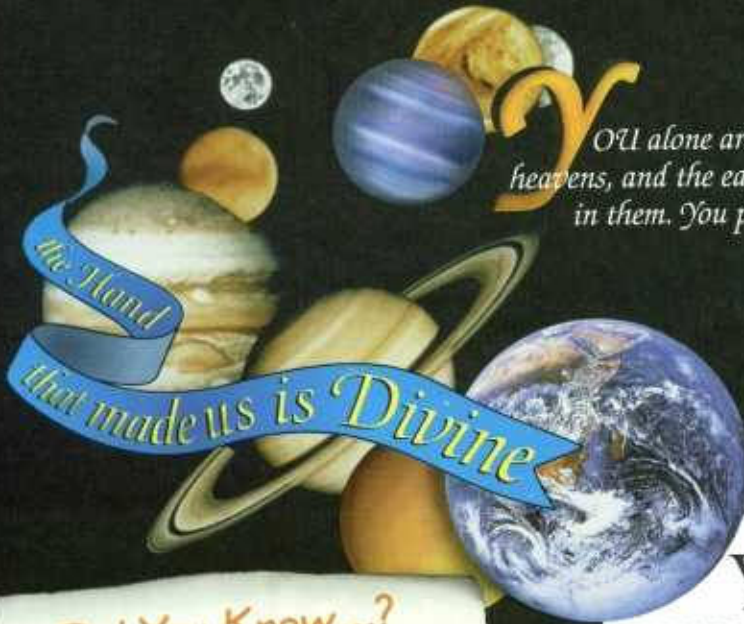
Our best blessings are apt to be the most common: sunshine, rain, oxygen, soil, plants, animals, and a thousand other workings of nature.

If commonness seems to lower the value of a thing for us, let us ask:

*Where would we stand if the earth caved in?
What would we breathe if the oxygen ran out?
What would we do if the water dried up?*

Pride, the vanity which feels that we do not get what we deserve, is at the root of all ingratitude.

There are those who revel in the adventure of life, grateful for its hardship and hazard—they live, while others whimper and whine. Robert Scott, dying in his tent at the South Pole, wrote in his diary, "How much better has it all been than lounging in too great comfort at home."



YOU alone are God. You have made... the heavens, and the earth and the seas, and everything in them. You preserve it all. —Neh. 9:6 TLB

God's Gentle Giants of the Sea

Did You Know...?

- ✓...that a whale can sing yet has no vocal cords.
- ✓...that the two "wings" on the end of a whale's tail (called flukes) are almost as strong as steel—you could hang a huge whale up by its flukes and they would not break.
- ✓...that Sperm whales may stay under the water as long as 1-2 hours—and they may dive as deep as 2 miles down.
- ✓...that a baby Blue whale gains more than 200 pounds per day.
- ✓...that the killer whale is harmless to humans.
- ✓...that the dolphin is really a whale. It has been seen swimming as fast as 70 miles per hour.
- ✓...that the great Blue whale is three times larger than the largest known dinosaur.
- ✓...that the whale has to think about every breath it breathes.
- ✓...that whales speak with a dialect.
- ✓...that the largest animals on earth (baleen whales) survive by eating some of the smallest animals on earth (plankton).
- ✓...that a large Blue whale can eat more than 9,000 pounds of food a day.
- ✓...that Blue whales can weigh as much as 32 elephants!

by GERALD R. PAYNE

You may not realize it, but you and the whale have a lot in common. You are both warm-blooded mammals, you both breathe air, you both enjoy a good fish dinner—and you are both remarkable examples of the intricate design skills of your Creator.

You don't like the idea that the whale is as remarkable a creation—in its way—as you are? Reserve that decision until you have taken a plunge into the deep and learned about this mammoth example of God's handiwork.

Gentle giants of the sea, whales are fascinating creatures. I say gentle because whales, apart from sustaining themselves by eating (all of us do plenty of that), they are as kindly as any animal in creation. Forget the horror stories about whales attacking humans—even the 8-ton, 22-foot killer whale with its 50 teeth has never done it (except in the story book), though whales are said to attack animals larger than themselves.

Many Varieties of Whales

"Whales" is the name assigned to a fascinating group of mammals, including approximately 80 different species. They range in size from the 4-foot Hector dolphin to the 100-foot Blue whale which weighs 150 tons. Yes, that is 300,000 pounds, the largest creature ever to live, three times larger than the most gigantic known dinosaur of the past. All are warm blooded, with features very similar to those of other mammals, despite their superficial resemblance to fish. All must come to the water's surface to breathe.

But they are designed exclusively to live in the water. Equipped with a powerful tail (their propeller) and paddle-shaped flippers (for steering and balance) they are able to move gracefully. Washed ashore, they are helpless, and without the support of the water their lungs may be crushed by the weight of their bodies.

Most whales aren't fast swimmers, but some species are terrific leapers. Humpbacks, for example, can jump almost completely out of the water, landing on their side with a tremendous splash. Other times, they slap the water with a flipper or pound the sea with their tail. They also have the curious habit of lying on their back with both flippers up in the air. The purpose? It looks like they enjoy play.

What's for Dinner?

As you can easily imagine, these giants of the sea have a giant need for food, and our Masterful Creator has provided for them.

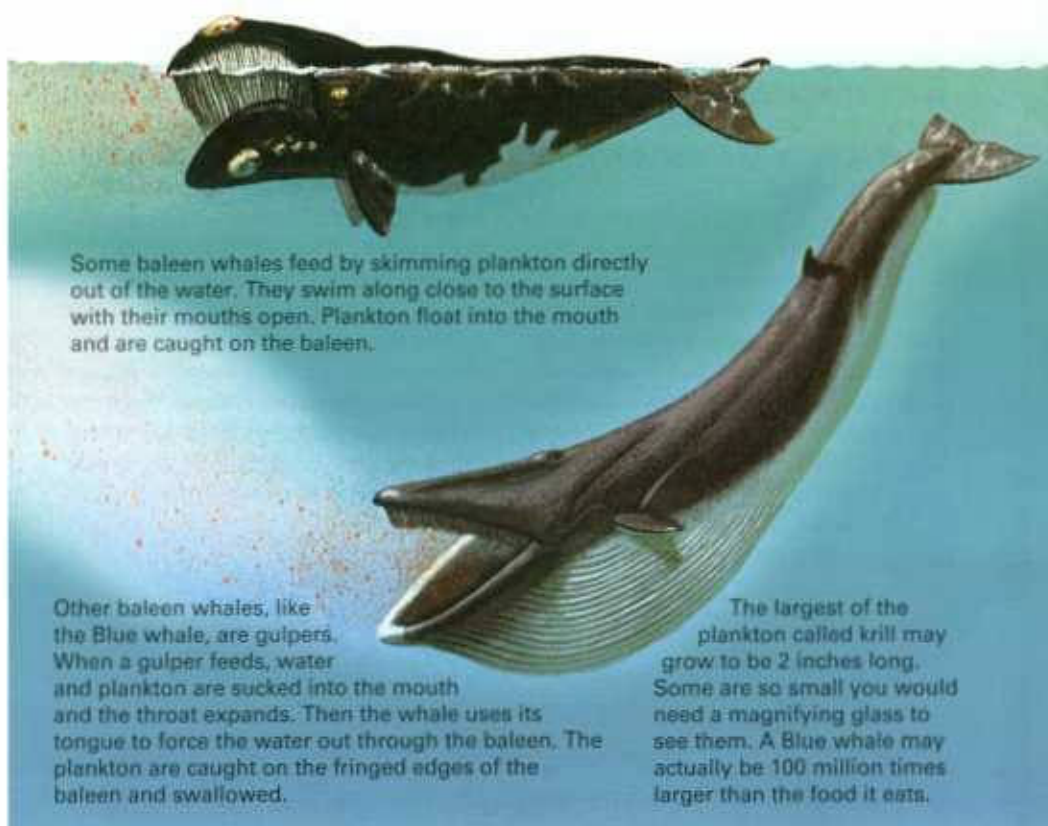
Whales are classified according to how they feed. The toothed whales, which include dolphins and porpoises, feed mostly on fish and squid which they can catch with their sharp, cone-shaped teeth.

(Since they do not chew their food, their teeth are designed merely for gripping their prey.)

How do these whales manage to live by swallowing whole fish and squid? This problem would have meant tough chewing for evolution, but for the Master Designer it was easy. The whale is equipped with a multi-chambered stomach, each chamber doing part of the food processing. (If this happened by evolution, why is it that after all the years of indigestion, humans still have only one stomach!)

The other group of whales have a unique feeding structure called baleen in place of teeth. The baleen is a flexible, fringed comb which hangs in rows from the whale's upper jaw, with a hard edge facing out and a fringed, hairy side facing in. (How did evolution produce this unique device after it was discovered that the whale could not move fast enough to catch larger fish?) The smaller the prey on which the whale feeds, the finer the "strainer" on the inside of the baleen in its mouth. (Did it just happen this way?)

Whales which live on zooplankton, including krill (shrimp-like animals one to two inches in length) and



small schooling fish, have longer baleen arranged as hundreds of plates, with coarse hairs on the inside. In this group are the Blue whale, the Fin whale and the Humpback. Swimming with mouth wide open, these whales suck in a lot of food-filled water.

How can the whale do it? The Creator thought of this need in advance and provided a special "pleated" bag along the sides of its throat that expands (to the size of a large living room!). Now it doesn't want the water, just the food swimming in it. So the whale uses its long tongue (as long as 20 feet in a Blue whale), and pushes the water out through the baleen, leaving the food trapped inside. In a matter of minutes, dinner is ready—maybe as much as a ton of small krill.

Since this group of whales likes to "gulp," it has a unique method for corraling its food. One or more whales will blow a ring of bubbles encircling a large amount of prey (usually small fish). Now small fish do not like bubbles, so they won't try to swim away. They just cluster inside the wall of bubbles. Then the whale dives underneath the school, and comes straight up with its mouth wide open. Then, *gulp!* What a catch!

Who taught the whale this artful method?

Another type of whale is equipped with very coarse, short baleen which is used in quite a different way. These whales swim along the bottom of the sea on their side, scooping up small marine life as they go.

The killer whale is different from other whales. Thought to be one of the most intelligent of marine animals, sever-

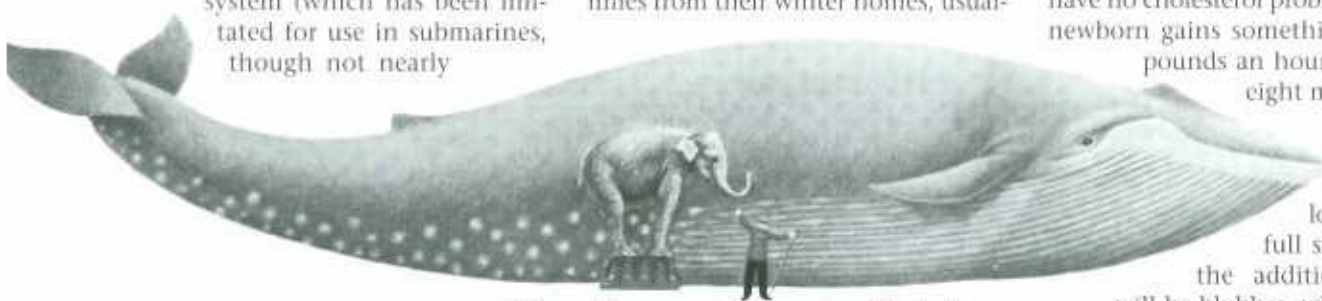
FAMILY TREE OF WHALES



al of its kind will surround a prey and attack using a united strategy. Where did the killer whale get its name if it does not attack humans? It has been observed killing other whales, even calves of the great Blue whale, so was given the name "whale killer." Later the name was reversed to "killer whale."

Navigating Through the Sea

How can the whale navigate through the dark underwater world where visibility is very poor, if not zero? The Master Designer gave many of the toothed whales a special echolocation system (which has been imitated for use in submarines, though not nearly



A Blue whale can weigh as much as 32 elephants.

so efficient as the whales use it). The whale sends a sound signal, and from the echo is able to identify location, and even color and composition of the object (metal, plastic, aluminum) by this method—quite a feat for undirected evolution!

Echolocation works because the whale has very keen hearing. (Porpoises, a member of the whale family, are capable of hearing sounds pitched ten times higher than the human limit.)

Communities Under the Sea

Whales in general are social creatures, especially the Killer whales. Families consist of five to thirty members. Two or three females and their descendants live together as a "pod" (community). No one knows how, but the members of each pod are able to communicate with each other. Without the aid of vocal cords, whales make sounds intelligible to each other. Researchers claim that each pod has its own dialect or accent, depending on what part of the world they come from.

Singing In the Sea

You probably never heard them, but whales sing (even though most have no vocal cords). In fact, whale songs are the longest and most varied in the animal kingdom. Sounds range from high notes to low and include a variety of screams, moans, trills, whistles and barks. What does it mean? No one knows, but perhaps the whales are telling each other who they are, where they are, or how they feel.

Long Distance Travelers

Whales are champions at migrating. Every year they migrate thousands of miles from their winter homes, usual-

breath of air. After the birth, the mother's first instinct is to push the newborn to the surface. And the Master Designer has supplied it with an extra amount of oxygen in its tissues, so you don't need to worry about the new baby passing out before it gets that first breath.

How fast does the baby grow? At birth the Blue whale is about 23 feet long and weighs 5,000 to 6,000 pounds. For most of the first year the mother nurses the little one (little at least for whales!), providing it about 50 gallons a day. This milk consists of 35% to 50% fat (apparently whales have no cholesterol problem), and the newborn gains something like nine pounds an hour for the first eight months;

Even then, the "baby" is still a long way from full size. Much of the additional weight will be blubber, which it needs to survive.

A Built-In Heat Exchanger

Being mammals, whales must maintain a constant body temperature. How can they do it, when their habitat ranges from the warm waters of the deep south to the chill waters of the Arctic? They do it because of another marvel of engineering by our Great Designer. Being massive in size, the whales' change in body temperature is naturally slower than in smaller animals. They also have a built-in overcoat (blubber) which varies in thickness from six to twenty inches, depending on the need. (If evolution did it, why can't we change the thickness of our fat layers with the season?)

But blubber is more than an overcoat. In it are many arteries with coils of smaller vessels surrounding them. The system acts as a very efficient heat exchanger that can either raise or lower body temperature as needed. It also doubles as an emergency supply of energy—if food is short, the whale can turn this fat into food energy.

Wasn't the Master Designer very kind to our gentle giant friends?

ly in the warm waters of the tropics, where their young are born, to their summer homes in Alaska, Antarctic or Greenland. If the calves were born in the frigid waters of the north, they would die—because they lack the protective layers of fat which they will develop later. How many generations died while they were "learning" this by evolution? Some travel as much as 4000 miles—a long way for such huge mammals to travel under water. But they were designed to swim. Their slender bodies offer little resistance, and their powerful tails can propel them at speeds up to 35 miles per hour.

A Baby Whale Is Born

Once every year or two, mother whales bear live young. Although a whale is huge, when a calf is born there is always danger due to sharks and Killer whales. So several "midwives" stay nearby to give protection.

Since the whale calf is born under water, how does it breathe? Nothing went unnoticed in the Master's design, not even the whale's first

A Breath of Fresh Air

Like us, whales must breathe to live. But unlike us, breathing for the whale is a multi-step process which has to be planned. It must swim to the surface, open the blow hole on top of its head, physically expel the old air through the blow hole, replace the air, then remember to close the blow hole before diving down into the sea again.

Who said breathing is easy?

But we can't compete in efficiency. Can you imagine replacing 2100 quarts of air in about two seconds? This is what the Blue whale accomplishes every time it comes up for air. (Compare this to your own lung capacity. Inflate a small balloon, which holds about one quart—can you do it in one breath?)

So efficient is the whale's use of oxygen that it can actually stay submerged between one and two hours. How? Again the credit must go to the Great Designer. Humans store only about 13% oxygen; whales store about 41%.

But this is only part of the design. During a deep dive whales actually

conserve oxygen for their heart and brain by reducing blood flow to other muscles. Even the heartbeat slows down to save more oxygen (a whale's heart is the size of a small automobile).

What happens if this mammoth animal runs completely out of oxygen at a depth of 3000 feet? Does it die? No, the Master Designer thought of this, too. The whale can actually build up an "oxygen debt" by producing energy in its muscles without using oxygen. When it comes to the surface, it will just have to take an extra bit of time to repay the debt.

So when these mighty monsters feel like plunging, they're ready—at speeds up to 35 miles per hour they can reach a depth of 3600 feet in a little more than a minute. How is that for an excursion!

Oh, who can say that whales have not been supremely crafted by God? "You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being"

(Rev. 4:11). What a mighty God we serve!

Lord, we give You thanks for life and breath, and for Your invitation to come and learn from the evidence of Your abundant handiwork. God of all creation, Your power and wisdom are without limit.

This same Master Designer invites us, through the pen of Job, "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind" (Job 12:7-10). ♦

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Dialogue

- ◆ What does it mean to be made in God's image?
- ◆ Who, if anyone, is now in God's image? Or who has the prospect of being made in God's image?
- ◆ Is being in the image of God the birthright of every human being, or is it an honor based on one's merit? And if it is merit based, what are the conditions?

What does it mean to be made in God's image?

Our first task is to determine the meaning of "God's image" as it is spoken of in Scripture.

The Hebrew word translated "image" (*tselem*) is defined as "image, likeness, i.e., that which is a pattern, model, or an example of something...the exact reference of whether this is moral, ethical, physical, nature, etc. is not clear" (*The Dictionary of Bible Languages with Semantic Domains*). Being in God's image, then, might suggest sharing God's likeness, either physical or spiritual. Its physical aspect suggests in some way being like God in physical or mental features. (*It never suggests that we become God or are equal with God.*)

In a spiritual or allegorical sense, being in God's image suggests that we are like Him in ethical or moral values, that He is our model, pattern, or example in character.

Let's think more about each of these possibilities.

God's Physical Image

What can we say about God's physical likeness? What are we told in Scripture?

Is God's physical likeness the

human form as we know it? The Bible writers speak of God having the ability to see, hear, smell, and move very much like a human being. Does this suggest that God actually "looks like" us, that He has features resembling ours? Or did the Bible writers, being human, use human terms to express what was Divinely revealed? We do not know.

But God being Almighty, all-powerful, from everlasting, and possessing wisdom beyond our farthest ability to imagine, and we being finite creatures of His making, it does not seem that we are in a position to say what He "looks" like in physical form. Words like glorious, majestic, mighty and wonderful are used frequently in Scripture, but they do not say much about His physical form or appearance. And does it really matter?

How far shall we take the issue of physical likeness? Given the almost infinite range of physical diversity among the human family (in height, weight, skin color, and every other physical feature), doesn't it seem almost preposterous to claim that any of our race are physically "like God"?—unless we keep it in the most general terms, and then we contradict the meaning of His "image," as it is usually understood.

How can we describe God's physical nature?

All we know is what we read in Scripture, and we do not have any direct description. Reading the Bible, one would expect God to have human features. The writers describe Him as being able to "see" (as having eyes) and "hear" (as having ears), etc. But how else can we understand any

"being"? Belonging to the human race, which is the highest form of earth's creatures, and having never seen anything higher, we can only think of God in relation to ourselves. To draw any firm conclusions about God's physical features, we must wait for further revelation.

Of one fact we can be sure: He does not share our corruptibility, our mortality, our susceptibility to disease, pain, and accident.

What of His duration? He is described as being "from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps. 90:1-2).

What about His strength? He "fainteth not, neither is weary;" (Isa. 40:28).

What about His range of knowledge? "Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite" (Ps. 147:5).

Though we do not know how God is able to see, hear, smell, etc., all of these descriptions suggest one basic fact: that He is not an immaterial spirit, as is widely believed. A breath, a spirit, an apparition would not have any ability to see, hear, smell, etc.

The writer of the book of Hebrews says that Jesus was made in the "express image" of His Father's "person" (Heb. 1:3). This suggests that His Father has personhood. The word "person" describes a living entity. But here again we get quickly beyond our range of knowledge, for we cannot perceive God depending on any physical elements (food, air, water, light) as we must, or being a creature of flesh and blood. He is of a substance beyond our human knowledge.

God's Character (Spiritual, or Moral) Image

What does the Bible tell us about the character image of God?

MADE IN HIS IMAGE

The Bible portrays God as the ultimate in purity, holiness, perfection, goodness. Taken together, His attributes make up a likeness that is perfect and complete. He is the embodiment of all that is upright, holy, true, righteous and good. He is *"righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works"* (Ps. 145:17). Says Moses speaking of God's attributes, *"I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he"* (Deut. 32:3-4 NIV).

What can we say about our human likeness as compared to God's? What does the Bible say about the human physical state?

The writer of Ecclesiastes describes the human image as vanity. *"Surely men of low degree are vanity and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity"* (Ps. 62:9 NIV).

Abraham, when speaking to the Lord (His representative, an angel), referred to himself as being *"but dust and ashes"* (Gen. 18:27).

The Psalmist described the human state as on the level of the animal kingdom. Speaking generically of man, he said *"He is like the beasts that perish...he shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man that is in honor, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish"* (Ps. 49:12, 19-20).

The writer of Ecclesiastes reinforced this thought by saying that *"A man hath no preeminence above a beast,"* and that God *"tests them [men] so that they may see that they are like animals"* (Eccl. 3:19).

Our Human Character (Moral) Image

What does the Bible say about our human moral condition? Are we naturally like God, pure, holy, and good? Far from it. By nature we are prone to sin and selfishness, pride and every evil. The Psalmist says, *"Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me"* (Ps. 51:5). Says the prophet Jeremiah, *"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?"* (Jer. 17:9).

How do our thoughts compare with God's? The prophet Isaiah describes our thoughts as being as far removed from God's as the heavens are above the earth (Isa. 55:6-9).

Now let us address the question being asked: How are we, human creatures of flesh and blood, in God's image? When the Bible places the human state on the level of animals, can we think that we are physically in the image of God? To be in His physical image, wouldn't we have to share something of His physical likeness, i.e., His immortal, undying, incorruptible state? Or are we in His moral/spiritual image? To be in His moral image we would have to share something of His attributes, His love, holiness, truth and uprightness. Since we have neither His physical nor moral likeness, isn't it possible that we are drawing a wrong conclusion from the Scriptures,

that we are not properly understanding the Divine revelation?

Looking Deeper...

In what conceivable way are we in God's image?

For every part of our physical being we are dependent upon our Creator, and the natural forces He set in motion. Far be it from us to claim any physical likeness to Him. We do not see as He sees, we do not hear as He hears, we do not have His mentality, or His capacity for wisdom and understanding.

And if we think of being in God's image in a physical sense, how far shall we take our comparison? Should it include color of our skin, our physical stature, our mental acumen, our bodily strength? For we all know that the human race varies widely in all of these. If the entire race is in God's image, what can "being in that image" mean?

No, we must conclude that we are not naturally in God's physical image. If the Bible says we are, we are not properly understanding the Divine message.

Nor are we in God's moral or spiritual image. We do not naturally have His purity, His perfection, His goodness, His longsuffering. These godly virtues are not ours by nature. We may acquire them only by the most diligent concentration and practice, by using our mental powers to their utmost. The people of God in Bible times showed that it is possible for human beings to acquire these qualities, but they are not ours by right of birth, which being "in the image of God" would imply. ♦

(To be continued)

"I am God and there is none like me....what I have planned, that will I do."

—Isa. 46:9, 11 NIV

WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

| God's MENTAL Image | God's CHARACTER Image | God's PHYSICAL Image |
|--|---|---|
| describes the limitless extent of God's knowledge and wisdom | describes God's perfect moral character and attributes | describes God's physical characteristics |
| GOD IS THE ULTIMATE SOURCE OF ALL WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE. | GOD IS THE PERFECTION OF VIRTUE AND GOODNESS. | GOD IS PHYSICALLY SUPREME AND PERFECT BEYOND HUMAN KNOWLEDGE. |
| <p>God has full knowledge of all His creation:</p> <p>"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning" —Acts 15:18.</p> <p>God has knowledge beyond human understanding:</p> <p>"How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" —Rom. 11:33;</p> <p>"His understanding is infinite" —Ps. 147:5.</p> <p>God has knowledge of future events:</p> <p>"... I am God—I alone....Only I can tell you what is going to happen even before it happens" —Isa. 46:9 NLT.</p> <p>"I the LORD have spoken it; it shall come to pass" —Ezek. 24:14.</p> | <p>The Bible pictures God as</p> <p>Holy</p> <p>"I the Lord am holy" —Lev. 20:26</p> <p>Pure</p> <p>"Every word of God is pure" —Prov. 30:5; "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong" —Hab. 1:13 NIV</p> <p>Just</p> <p>"God is just" —2 Thess. 1:6 NIV; "and without iniquity" —Deut. 32:4</p> <p>Upright and Good</p> <p>"The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him" —Ps. 92:15 NIV; "Good and upright is the Lord" —Ps. 25:8</p> <p>Righteous</p> <p>"The LORD is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made" —Ps. 145:17 NIV</p> <p>Merciful and Gracious</p> <p>"He is gracious and merciful" —Joel 2:13; "The Lord is merciful and gracious" —Ps. 103:8</p> <p>Forgiving</p> <p>"But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love" —Neh. 9:17 NIV</p> <p>Loving</p> <p>"God is love" —1 John 4:8; "You, O God, are my fortress, my loving God" —Ps. 59:9 NIV</p> <p>Longsuffering</p> <p>"The LORD is longsuffering" —Num. 14:18 NKJV; "The Lord is... longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" —2 Pet. 3:9</p> <p>Perfect</p> <p>"...your Father in heaven is perfect" —Matt. 5:48 NCV; "His work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment" —Deut. 32:4</p> <p>True</p> <p>"God is true to the promises he made" —Rom. 15:8 NLT; "A God of truth" —Deut. 32:4</p> <p>Faithful</p> <p>"The LORD is faithful to all his promises" —Ps. 145:13 NIV; "The Lord...is the faithful God..." —Deut. 7:9</p> <p>Provident</p> <p>"Everything comes from him; everything exists by his power" —Rom. 11:36 NLT</p> | <p>The Bible pictures God as</p> <p>Undying</p> <p>"I live forever" —Deut. 32:40; Dan. 12:3 NLT</p> <p>Immortal</p> <p>"the immortal God..." —Rom. 1:23 NIV</p> <p>Never tired</p> <p>"He who watches over you never tires or sleeps" —Ps. 121:4, NLT; "The LORD...the Creator of the ends of the earth...will not grow tired or weary" —Isa. 40:28 NIV</p> <p>Glorious and Majestic</p> <p>"Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty" —1 Chron. 29:11</p> <p>Everlasting</p> <p>"Then Abraham called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God" —Gen. 21:33 NKJV</p> <p>Almighty (Omnipotent)</p> <p>"O LORD Almighty, God of Israel, you are enthroned between the mighty cherubim! You alone are God of all the kingdoms of the earth" —Isa. 37:16 NLT</p> <p>Omnipresent</p> <p>"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" —Prov. 15:3</p> <p>Not subject to sickness, sorrow, disease and death</p> <p>"In that life they are like angels and cannot die. They are children of God" —Luke 20:36 NCV</p> <p>Sovereign</p> <p>"O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" —Ps. 8:9 NRSV</p> <p>Wonderful</p> <p>"His brilliant splendor fills the heavens, and the earth is filled with his praise! What a wonderful God he is!" —Hab. 3:3 NLT</p> <p>Omnipotent</p> <p>"... the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" —Rev. 19:6</p> <p>Invisible (to mortal eyes)</p> <p>"He is the image of the invisible God" —Col. 1:15 NIV; "whom no man hath seen, or can see" —1 Tim. 6:16</p> <p>Awesome</p> <p>"... holy and awesome is his name" —Ps. 111:9 NIV</p> |

Are we
by nature
in God's
image?
We are not!

Solomon or Jedidiah?

"I have a problem. David committed adultery with Bathsheba, then he had Uriah killed and he married Bathsheba. He had several children with Bathsheba, including Solomon, whom the Lord called Jedidiah, but Bathsheba and David called the child Solomon. Any answers?"

In 2 Samuel 12 we find the account of this portion of David's life. Nathan came to David and rebuked him for his sin, which David immediately acknowledged: *"I have sinned against the Lord."* Nathan replied, *"The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die"* (2 Sam. 12:13-14).

This prophecy was soon fulfilled, and their first son died (2 Sam. 12:18-23).

Because the narrative is told in the next verse (verse 24), it might appear that Solomon's birth followed closely the death of the first child (there is some debate regarding this). However, it seems that there was a long interval of time between the two children, during which several other children were born (see 1 Chron. 3:5). In any case, God chose Solomon as the successor of David, and commended his good qualities, whether prophetically or after the fact we are not told. The earliest mention of this was during a second mission of Nathan, which God used to convey to David a mark of Divine favor by assigning the child the name Jedidiah, which is equivalent to "beloved of God," "darling."

It seems possible that this was an honorary title only, that God did not intend that the child's name be changed.

Actually, the name "Solomon" was God-assigned even prior to the child's birth. In 1 Chronicles 22, David is telling his son Solomon how God denied him the privilege of building the house of the Lord. David tells him, *"The word of the Lord came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name...Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name"* (1 Chron. 22:8-10). In naming the child "Solomon," David and Bathsheba would have been obeying an instruction from the Lord. Doesn't it seem that if they obeyed the first command, that if God had told them to change his name they would have complied?

It might be said that God's giving the child Solomon the name or title "Jedidiah" was a sign that God had accepted David's repentance. David's sin was punishable by death, but when David repented, God forgave. And even though the name given to the child Solomon means "beloved of Jehovah," perhaps indicating this Divine for-

givenness, still David had to pay for that sin for the rest of his life in the fulfillment of the prophecy: *"The sword shall never depart from thine house"* (2 Sam. 12:10). From that point forward, David's family was plagued with strife, cruelty and bloodshed.

By naming the child Solomon (equivalent to "a man of peace") God was recognizing also that the wars were now over, and that an era of quiet had begun, a time which should be consecrated to the building of the temple. It was a time when the kingdom could enjoy peace, even though the family would still be ravaged by strife and rebellion.

♦ About Translations

What Bibles do you recommend?

As everyone knows, there are many Bible translations available today, all of which are the work of human hands and minds and none of which are completely accurate. But the imperfections in the translations are not an obstacle that keeps one from understanding the Bible. The variety of translations are actually a help, providing alternate readings where the one rendering may not seem to offer a thought in harmony with general Bible teaching. If the meaning is still in question, it is often helpful to consult a lexicon to determine the meaning of the original Greek or Hebrew word at the time the text was composed.

To the serious Bible student, the King James Version (or the recently updated New King James Version) remains a good basic study source because it is linked through Strong's Concordance to various other study tools such as Hebrew and Greek lexicons.

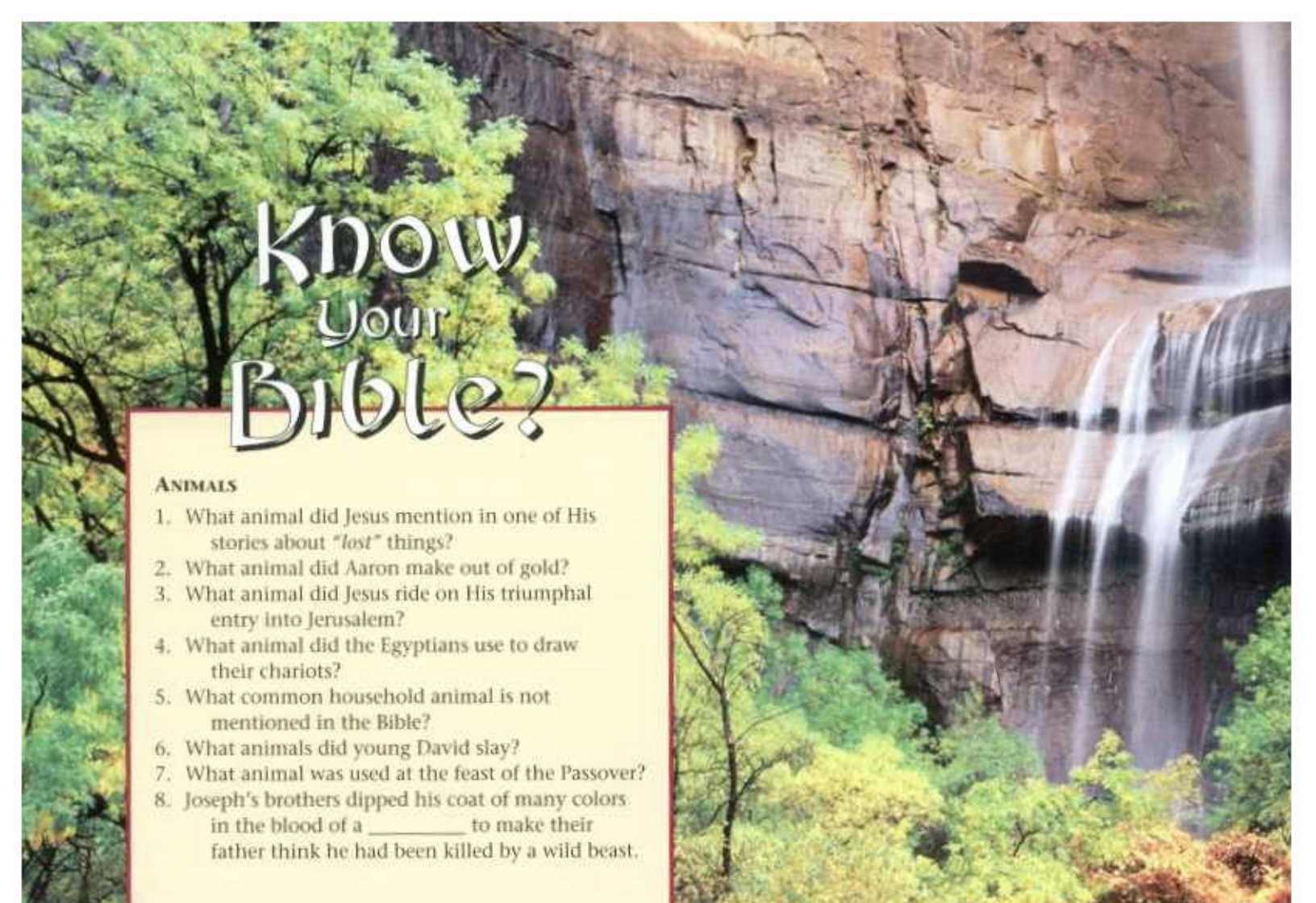
Also there are several excellent computer Bible programs available today. Two of the most popular are QuickVerse and Logos. Available with these programs are multiple translations of the Bible along with other tools and study aids. Some of these programs are actually "libraries."

It would be difficult to recommend one translation over another, but as a general guide we might suggest that you select a study Bible (if you intend to use only one Bible) that is a "translation," rather than a "paraphrase."

Listed below are some of the better translations in modern English:

- New International Version
- New King James Version
- Revised Standard Version
- New Revised Standard Version
- New English Bible
- New American Standard Bible
- New Century Version
- New Living Translation

We feel that the Bible is the greatest "library" of books ever written. Although written millenniums ago, it remains our only source of knowledge about God and our most important source of guidance today. ♦



Know Your Bible?

ANIMALS

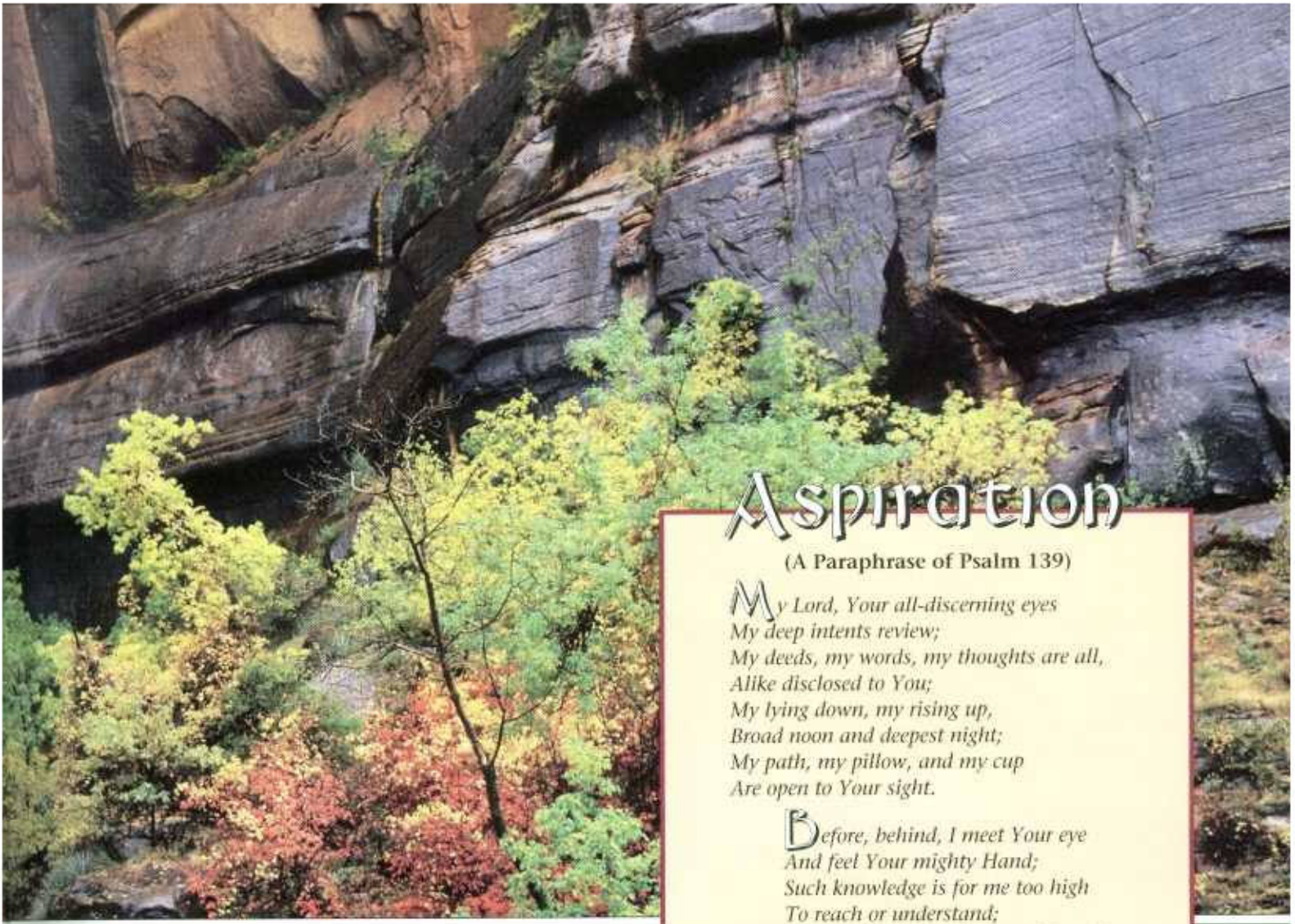
1. What animal did Jesus mention in one of His stories about "lost" things?
2. What animal did Aaron make out of gold?
3. What animal did Jesus ride on His triumphal entry into Jerusalem?
4. What animal did the Egyptians use to draw their chariots?
5. What common household animal is not mentioned in the Bible?
6. What animals did young David slay?
7. What animal was used at the feast of the Passover?
8. Joseph's brothers dipped his coat of many colors in the blood of a _____ to make their father think he had been killed by a wild beast.

AFRAID!

1. Who was the first person in the Bible to say: "*I was afraid*"?
2. What wonderful sight did Moses see on the mountain side, which made him afraid "*to look upon God*"?
3. Who said: "*It is I; be not afraid,*" and on what occasion was it said?
4. The man who had been given one talent said: "*I was afraid,*" and what did he do with his one talent?
5. About whom was it once said: "*The glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid*"?
6. What occasion do these words bring to mind: "*Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god*"?
7. Who was afraid to go to Jesus when he saw the boisterous waves? He cried, "*Lord, save me.*"
8. Why were Aaron and the other leaders afraid to look on Moses' face when he came down from the mountain?
9. Why were Joseph's brethren afraid when they found their money in their sacks of corn?

STREETS

1. Who was honored by being arrayed in royal apparel and brought through the street on horseback?
2. In which parable was the servant ordered to go into the streets and lanes of the city?
3. Why did the people lay their "*sick in the streets*" in the time of Jesus?
4. Who, according to Jesus, loved to "*pray standing in the corners of the streets*"?
5. According to Proverbs, what kind of man says "*A lion is in the streets*"?
6. Who read the law to the Israelites who were gathered in the street before the water gate?
7. Into what street did the Lord tell Ananias to go to find Saul (Paul)?
8. In John's vision of the new Jerusalem "*the street of the city was _____*."
9. What did John see "*in the midst of the street*"?
10. Zechariah, speaking of the restoration of Jerusalem, says: "*The streets of the city shall be full of _____ and _____ playing.*"



Aspiration

(A Paraphrase of Psalm 139)

*My Lord, Your all-discerning eyes
My deep intents review;
My deeds, my words, my thoughts are all,
Alike disclosed to You;
My lying down, my rising up,
Broad noon and deepest night;
My path, my pillow, and my cup
Are open to Your sight.*

*Before, behind, I meet Your eye
And feel Your mighty Hand;
Such knowledge is for me too high
To reach or understand;
What of Your wonders can I know?
What of Your purpose see?
Where from Your spirit shall I go?
Where from Your presence flee?*

*If I ascend to heav'n on high,
Or make my bed below,
Or take the morning wings and fly
O'er ocean's ebb and flow,
Or seek from You a hidingplace
Amid the gloom of night—
Alike to You are time and space,
The darkness and the light.*

*O Lord, Your all-discerning eyes
My inmost feelings know;
O grant that all my secret thoughts
May pleasing be to You.
And may my going in or out
At noonday or at night
Disclose the beauty of Your truth,
The radiance of Your light.*

—Selected

ANGELS

1. What was the name of the angel who announced to Mary the glad tidings that she would be the mother of Jesus?
2. Who saw three angels at his tent door, and entertained them?
3. On what occasion did the angel of death visit many homes in Egypt?
4. What food sent by God to the Israelites was called "angels' food"?
5. On what occasion did angels come and minister to Jesus?
6. Who was released from prison by an angel?
7. What great leader of Israel was afraid to take up the task of delivering his people from the Midianites, until an angel of the Lord appeared to him, and as a sign of his worthiness, brought fire out of the rock and consumed his offering?
8. Who was hindered three time by an angel because he was bent on temporal gain?

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 26

Prophecy Fulfilled

I have been thinking lately of the condition of the world and how it fulfills the ancient prophecies. You recall how Jesus said that in the last days men's hearts would be failing them for fear of the things coming on the earth. Ever since I can remember people have been fearful of a nuclear war. As believers, we know that God would not allow the earth to be devastated by nuclear war, but still it is a valid fear to many people. However, now it is reported that people are more fearful of violent crime than of the threat of nuclear war.

What is the human answer to the problem of violence? Some say we need more laws. But the lawless will ignore the law and continue in their lawlessness. Others will say we need more police protection, but they don't want to pay more taxes to pay for more police. So it's not difficult to see that the whole world has become a tangled up mess. But did not the ancient writers say it would be so in the last days? We

Christians have no need to fear because we know why the world is as it is, and we also know that it will not continue this way very much longer. Soon Jesus will return from heaven and, as we read in Malachi 4, when He is finished all the wicked will be as stubble and as ashes under the feet of the righteous.

At present God's people on this earth are so few in number, but I remember reading in the Message a few years ago that though we are few in number we are actually part of the biggest family in the universe—God's family! If we prove worthy, all the numberless angels of heaven and billions of immortalized earthborns will someday be our family! What an illustrious family to call our own! Let us daily work hard to become worthy of being an eternal member of God's family.

S. Kincannon, Tennessee

Promises, Promises

God has laid in store for those that continue to love and obey His laws eter-

nal joy beyond our wildest imaginations. What could some of these joys possibly be that should drive us to love His laws and keep them?

To imagine just a few, follow this line of thought:

(A) A desire to live for ever would be achieved.

(B) A desire to be in perfect health would be fulfilled.

(C) A desire for knowledge would be constantly fed eternally.

(D) A desire to achieve in every worthwhile thing or thought would be fulfilled over and through eternity.

Need I go on? What could you want more than what the perfect love of God can give you? Peace, happiness, health, joy without limits, life without limit, success in every endeavor, and above all to be with all the angels in the very presence of God, with Christ superintending our section of God's Heavenly Expanse.

Isn't it reason enough to go on serving God and strive to be among the chosen ones who finish the race?

J. and J. Nall, Arkansas

*Following Jesus costs more than anything else—
except not following Him.*

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 24**ANIMALS**

1. Sheep (Luke 15:3-7)
2. Calf (Ex. 32:4)
3. Colt (Luke 19:35)
4. Horses (Ex. 14:9)
5. Cat
6. Lion, bear (1 Sam. 17:34-36)
7. Lamb (Ex. 12)
8. Kid (Gen. 37:31)

AFRAID

1. Adam, when he hid from God in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:9-10)
2. The angel of God who appeared as a burning bush which was not consumed (Ex. 3:1-6)
3. Jesus, when He walked on the sea, to the disciples in the boat (John 6:19-20)

4. He buried it in the ground (Matt. 25:25)
5. The shepherds, at the time of Jesus' birth, when they were keeping watch over their flocks (Luke 2:8-9)
6. The story of Jonah (Jonah 1:4-5)
7. Peter (Matt. 14:30)
8. Because his face shone with the glory of the Lord (Ex. 34:29-35)
9. They were afraid it was some kind of trap. Simeon had been kept as a pledge that they would return with Benjamin (Gen. 42)

STREETS

1. Mordecai (Esther 6:7-10)
2. The great supper (Luke 14:15-24)
3. That Jesus might touch and heal them (Mark 6:56)

4. The Pharisees (Matt. 6:5)
5. A slothful man (Prov. 26:13)
6. Ezra (Neh. 8:1-6)
7. The street called Straight (Acts 9:11)
8. Gold (Rev. 21:21)
9. The tree of life (Rev. 22:2)
10. Boys and girls (Zech. 8:5)

ANGELS

1. Gabriel (Luke 1:26)
2. Abraham (Gen. 18:2-6)
3. During the last plague in Egypt (Ex. 11:5 & Ex. 12:29)
4. Manna (Ps. 78:24-25)
5. After the temptation (Matt. 4:1-11)
6. Peter (Acts 12:7-11)
7. Gideon (Judges 6)
8. Balaam (Num. 22:22-28)

Prayer of Thanksgiving

I ought to be thankful...

For grief unsuffered, tears unshed;
For clouds that scattered overhead;
For pestilence that came not nigh;
For dangers great that passed me by;
For sharp suspicion soothed, allayed;
For doubt dispelled that made afraid;
For fierce temptation well withstood;
For evil plot which brought forth good;
For vital links in friendship's chain
That, sorely tested, stood the strain;
For harmless blows with malice dealt;
For base ingratitude unfelt;
For hatreds keen unuttered word;
For bitter jest, unknown, unheard;
For every evil turned away,
For all these things, I thank you, Lord.

Religion is not a way of looking at certain things.
It is a certain way of looking at everything.

God wants more than a pompous proclamation of
thanks on one Thursday in November; He wants
humble, grateful service from us every day of the year.

To live well needs a faith fit to live by, a self fit to
live with, and a purpose fit to live for.

Sin may come upon thee by surprise, but do not let it
dwell with thee as a guest.

Gossip is what may be called Ear Pollution.



Give thanks to God, for good is He,
His grace abideth ever;
To Him all praise and glory be,
His mercy faileth never.

True Thanksgiving is a cultivated habit.

You can learn a lot by reading the Bible; you can
learn still more by practicing it.

The Bible promises no loaves to the "loafers."

Always Thankful

It's easy to be thankful with a bountiful table spread,
But could I offer sincere thanks for just a crust of bread?
It's easy to be thankful when I'm feeling well and strong,
But what about the pain-wracked hours when time seems oh, so long?

It's no effort to be thankful when the sun shines bright all day,
But how about the other times when skies are gloomy gray?
It's no effort to be thankful when all things are going good,
But how about the times when things don't go the way they should?

"In everything give thanks," I read; and this I know is right;
The sacrifice of praise to God I know is His delight.
So help me, Lord, to always do the thing that pleases You;
And count my blessings every day and praise the whole day through!





*"Blessed be
your glorious name, and may
it be exalted above all blessing and
praise.*

*You alone are the Lord. You made
the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all
their starry host, the earth and all that is on it,
the seas and all that is in them. You give life
to everything, and the multitudes of heaven
worship you." —Nehemiah 9:5-6*