



Megiddo Message

The Lord
is our Maker...

we are the people
of his pasture.

—Psalm 95:6 RIV



What Really Matters?

Have you asked yourself this question lately? I have, and I know many others who have also.

Since the disaster on September 11, it seems that we have witnessed a dramatic shift in personal values across our nation.

A few days after the tragedy, we received an e-mail by an unknown author that I would like to share. The title of the e-mail is: "On Monday."

- On *Monday*, there were people fighting against prayer in schools.
- On *Tuesday*, you would have been hard pressed to find a school where someone was not praying.
- On *Monday*, there were people who were trying to separate each other by race and color and creed.
- On *Tuesday*, they were holding hands.
- On *Monday*, we thought we were secure.
- On *Tuesday*, we learned we weren't.
- On *Monday*, we were talking about athletes as our heroes.
- On *Tuesday*, we learned what real heroism meant.
- On *Monday*, people went to work as usual at the World Trade Center.
- On *Tuesday*, the day was anything but usual.
- On *Monday*, people were protesting the Ten Commandments on government property.
- On *Tuesday*, the same people were saying, "God, help us all," while thinking "Thou shalt not kill."
- On *Monday*, people argued with their children about picking up their rooms.
- On *Tuesday*, the same people could not get home fast enough to hug their children.
- On *Monday*, people were thinking about McDonald's for dinner.
- On *Tuesday*, they stayed home.
- On *Monday*, people were upset that their dry cleaning was not ready on time.
- On *Tuesday*, they were lining up to give blood for the dying.
- On *Monday*, politicians were arguing about budget surpluses.
- On *Tuesday*, grief stricken, they were singing "God Bless America."
- On *Monday*, we worried about the traffic jams and getting to work on time.
- On *Tuesday*, we wondered if any place was safe to work.
- On *Monday*, we were irritated that our rebate checks had not arrived.
- On *Tuesday*, we saw other countries celebrating because our people were dying.
- On *Monday*, some children had solid families, fathers and mothers.
- On *Tuesday*, they were orphans.
- On *Monday*, the President was going to Florida to read to children.
- On *Tuesday*, he returned to Washington to protect our children.
- On *Monday*, we were e-mailing jokes.
- On *Tuesday*, we were e-mailing prayers.

Isn't it sad that it takes something so horrific to bring life into perspective? And when things return to normal, we quickly revert.

This same pattern was seen in Bible times in ancient Israel. In fact, for these people it was a regular circuit: Fall into sin. Get into trouble (attack by enemies, hardship, pestilence, famine). Turn to God for help. Receive God-sent deliverance. Enjoy a time of peace and prosperity. Then fall into sin.

And the round began again, until once again God sent deliverance, and they enjoyed a time of peace, then fell into sin again. Round and round and round they went.

What is the problem? Can't we learn from history? Can't we learn from our own experience?

The Lord gives us lessons so that we can *learn*, not just repeat our mistakes. All options are not equal. Some are good, others are better. Some issues are bigger than others, but there's always a better choice. Good is the worst

(continued inside back cover)

WHO'S In CONTROL?

by RUTH E. SISSON



The Naval Institute magazine published a story about two battleships that were at sea on maneuvers in heavy weather. Because the visibility was poor, with patchy fog, the captain stayed on the bridge to keep an eye on all activities.

Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing of the bridge reported: "Light bearing on the starboard bow."

"Is it steady or moving astern?" asked the captain.

"Steady, captain," came the reply from the lookout, which meant that the ship was on a dangerous collision course with another battleship.

The captain issued an order: "Signal: We are on a collision course, advise you to change course 20 degrees."

Back came the signal, "Advisable for you to change course 20 degrees."

The captain was annoyed. "Send: I am a captain. Change course 20 degrees."

Came the reply: "I am a seaman second class, you had better change course 20 degrees."

By that time the captain was furious. Didn't anyone know that a captain's orders were to be obeyed? Angrily he shouted: "Send: I am a battleship. Change course 20 degrees."

Back came the message: "I am a lighthouse."

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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.

GOD Has the Last Word

(Psalm 2)

Psalm 2 gives us a graphic picture of the resistance Christ will encounter, and how God will deal with it.

When Christ returns, He will come with every blessing imaginable, yet millions will resist Him. Why? Why... when He will bring an end to crime and terrorism; an end to fear and danger; an end to pain and disease; an end to hunger and starvation; an end to poverty and oppression;...when we will not need any more policemen, or doctors, or lawyers, or guards;...when we will not need any more hospitals, or prisons, or military academies.

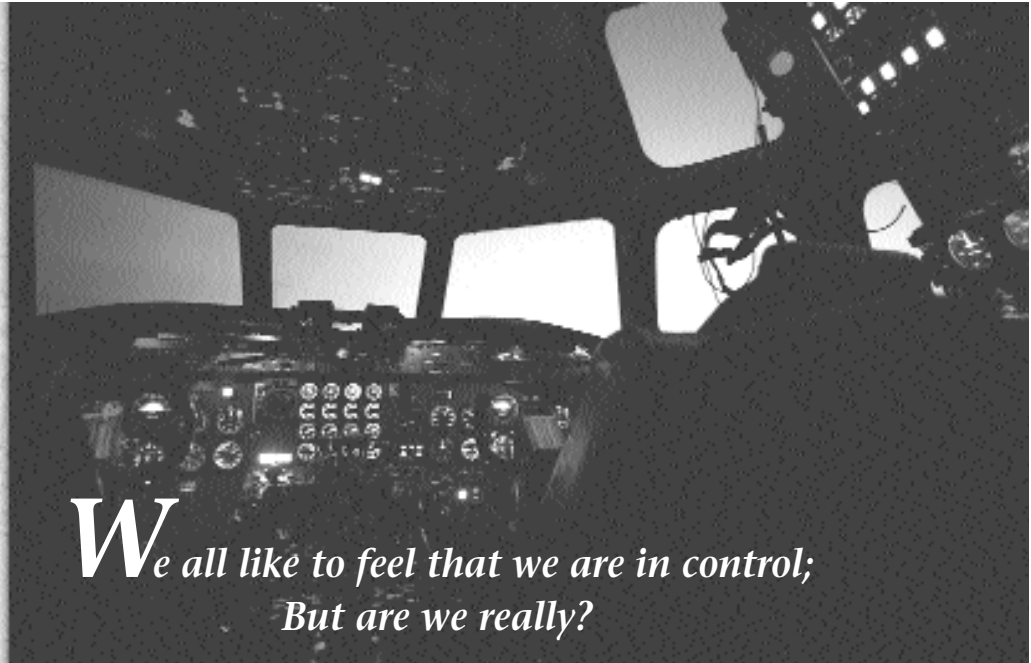
Why will anyone resist Him? Because He will demand, first of all, their allegiance. It will not be an option, they will have to acknowledge His authority. And second, they will have to obey His laws. Totally. No exceptions.

Will they do it? Some will. But many others will do just as they have done in every age when something displeased them. They will rebel.

Psalm 2 opens with a description of that rebellion. An unnamed on-the-scene narrator, who is obviously on God's side, is speaking.

"Why do the nations rage? Why do the people waste their time with futile plans? The kings of the earth prepare for battle; the rulers plot together against the Lord and against his anointed one. 'Let us break their chains,' they cry, 'and free ourselves from this slavery'" (NLT). The "nations," the kings and rulers of earth, assume a deliberately hostile position. Together they hold a high level conference and literally plot a coup. Unanimously they agree that they should unite their forces and go out against the new Ruler who has recently invaded Planet Earth. Of course their combined resistance can overthrow Him!

Now realize that this saber rattling
continued on page 6, column 2



We all like to feel that we are in control;
But are we really?

The Problem of Authority

The subject of authority is always a sensitive issue. We like to feel that we are in control, that, within sensible limits, we can do as we please with our lives. Let others take care of themselves, I have the last word about what happens to me. I refuse to be subject to anyone. At least under my own roof, I'm in control.

But am I really?

Who is really in a position of complete control? If a hurricane or an earthquake strikes our town, are we in control?

If our sources of food and water are suddenly cut off or contaminated, are we in control?

If we find out suddenly that we have a serious, incurable disease, are we in control?

If our nation goes to war, are we in control?

If our country's leaders act irresponsibly, are we in control?

If our children grow up and decide to deny and defy everything we have taught them, are we in control?

Major areas of our lives lie beyond our control. If we put our hand in a fire, the laws of matter and energy dictate that we will get burned. If we jump from a 10-story building, the law of gravity dictates that we will get hurt. If we go too long without food or water, the laws of health dictate that we will die. We can deny and defy these laws, but we will only harm ourselves. The laws of nature are absolute.

The same is true of the authority of God. Brazen men and women may deny and defy Him, and live without regard for Him, but when He wants them out of the way, He will not ask their permission. And when the time is right for God to bring in His new government and take control of activities on this planet—as He will in the very near future—He will do it. No one will stop or even hinder Him. He will have the last word. ♦



Rebellion In The Wilderness

The human problem with accepting authority is not new. This was a lesson that God demonstrated many times when He was working openly with His nation on earth. His purposes were never thwarted. Let's see what we can learn from some people who lived about 3 millennia ago. It was the time when Moses was leading the Israelites out of Egypt. What were people like then? They were surprisingly—shockingly—similar to us.

Let's look in on the time that Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebelled against Moses and Aaron, and see what happened, and who had the last word.

The story is recorded in Numbers 16. There seem to be two incidents here, both examples of the same problem. One was instigated by Dathan and Abiram, two descendants of Reuben; the other by a man named Korah.

The Bible does not tell us where or when these rebellions took place, but because of their proportions, it seems probable that the Israelites had been in the wilderness some years before these rebellions erupted. Someone has speculated that it was during the fall of the year, at festival time. But we can only guess; sin knows no season.

Let's think first about the rebellion of Dathan and Abiram. These men were not the rebel type. If you could have met them, they would have looked like reputable, intelligent, well-mannered men, the kind you would expect to have positions in the community. Sons of Eliab, great-grandsons of Reuben, surely they knew right from wrong. And surely they knew that God was working through Moses and Aaron. They had seen the plagues in Egypt and the night of the miraculous deliverance. They had been among those who had walked across the Red Sea on dry ground. They had even looked back to see Pharaoh's pursuing army drowned. Surely they knew.

But they forgot.

There was one more leader with them, a man named On. But he is mentioned

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is not against a bin Laden or a Saddam Hussein but against "the Lord" and His "anointed" ones.

Why will they do it? Because they hate restraints, absolutes, and accountability. They want to be able to say, "I'm the commander of my ship. You aren't going to tell me anything!" No ruler of any nation will want anyone, not even the Lord or His Son, telling them how to run their government. And so they attack. It is a frontal attack on Divine authority.

Little do they realize that their resistance is doomed from the onset.

When we resist God, we harm only ourselves.

Is the new King concerned that the crown of sovereignty is slipping from His brow? Is there turmoil in heaven because of the turmoil on earth? Not at all! The Divine informant reports: "He who sits in the heavens is laughing" (verse 4).

When God laughs, beware! It is a laugh of scorn. He scoffs at their threats; so easily He can bring them down.

There is no change in the Eternal's plans; no delaying of His strategy, no commotion, concern or turmoil, only a simple reply. "In anger he rebukes them, terrifying them with his fierce fury" (verse 5). Their fiercest opposition poses not the slightest threat.

"Yet," says God, speaking of Christ, "yet [in spite of your attempt to frustrate My plans], I have placed my chosen king on the throne in Jerusalem, my holy city." Yes, this King is My choice, says God, and no petty human force is going to displace Him. "The king proclaims the Lord's decree: 'The Lord said to me, "You are my son. Today I have become your Father."'" These words, first spoken at Jesus' baptism, when He began His public ministry, are repeated as He commences His earth-wide Kingship.

So certain is the success of His reign that it is stated—prophetically—in present tense. In the view of heaven it is an accomplished fact. It is as if He said, Make no mistake about it:

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When we resist God we harm only ourselves.



Blue: Possible route the Israelites took to Canaan.

Red: Other routes between Egypt and Canaan

*Jesus shall reign where e'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom spread from shore
to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane
no more.*

What will be with the extent of His domain? "Only ask," He says, "and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the ends of the earth as your possession. 'You will break them with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots'" (verses 6-9, NLT).

It is a situation unprecedented in the history of the earth. Picture all the powers of earth, with all their high-tech weapons, their missiles and

only at the beginning of the story. Did he come to his senses before the final showdown?

Moses, apparently aware that there was trouble brewing, asked Dathan and Abiram to come and meet with him. They refused flatly: "*We refuse to come.*"

Why? They had their reasons. "*Isn't it enough that you brought us out of Egypt, a land flowing with milk and honey*"—notice that in their view, Egypt, not Canaan, was the "*land of milk and honey*"! They said, "*you brought us out of Egypt...to kill us here in this wilderness, and...you treat us like your subjects.*" Weren't these men rebels!

"*What's more,*" they continued, "*you haven't brought us into the land flowing with milk and honey or given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Are you trying to fool us? We will not come*" (Num. 16:13-14 NLT). Was it Moses' fault that they hadn't entered the land of Promise?

Dathan and Abiram felt safer staying in their tents. What they forgot was that God could reach them as easily in their tents as in front of the tabernacle.

How did Moses react to their contempt? Did he answer their railing with more railing? Did he threaten and retaliate in kind? Not at all. This noble man took his problem to God. "*Pay no attention to an offering from them,*" He prayed, "*...I have not taken so much as a donkey from them.*" God knew. Moses' record was clean.

But Moses was not placid. Three times it is recorded that Moses was angry. It is said in connection with Pharaoh, when Pharaoh refused to let the people leave Egypt. It is said in connection with the Israelites' sin in worshipping the golden calf (Ex. 32:19), and it is said here. What was this anger? Was it rage, or out-of-control behavior? It was more likely indignation in the face of wrong, as Moses took God's side against flagrant sin, for God condemns anger, and there is no indication that he condemned Moses here.

God does not want us to be complacent with wrong. Complacency in the face of wrong is sin.

Then what did Moses do? The Lord had obviously told Moses what He was going to do, so Moses ran through the camp. "*Quick!*" he said. "*Get away from the tents of these wicked men, and don't touch anything that belongs to them, lest you be consumed in their sins.*"

There was no hesitation. The people fell over each other as they hurried away.

All but the rebels themselves. We read, "*Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the entrances of their tents with their wives and children and little ones*" (Num. 16:27 NLT). Can't we see Dathan and Abiram standing brazenly in their tent doors, stubbornly holding their ground? In their opinion, they were right, and they weren't about to repent, recant, or run. Surely they weren't afraid of anything Moses would threaten—when they weren't even willing to acknowledge that Moses was God-appointed!

Then the voice of Moses boomed through the camp: "*If these men die naturally like all others...then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord brings about something unheard of, something entirely new, and the earth opens her mouth and swallows them up, with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the grave, then you can know that these are men who have treated the Lord with contempt*" (Num. 16: 29-30 various translations).

Scarcely had Moses finished speaking, when there was a loud rumble. The earth shook violently, and the people screamed. And the "*ground split open beneath them, the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their houses,*"



The only true authority is God's.

HAZEROTH IN THE WILDERNESS

bombs and megamissiles and megabombs, their armaments on land and sea and air—altogether they are as threatening as so many *clay pots*, which can be smashed to shivers with a single blow!

What bit of history does this imagery bring to mind? Recall the vision of Nebuchadnezzar which Daniel interpreted, where he saw a great image which represented the kingdoms of men. And what happened? A little stone, "*cut out of the mountain without hands,*" struck the image's feet of "*iron and clay, smashing them to bits....The pieces were crushed as small as chaff on a threshing floor, and the wind blew them all away without a trace*" (Dan. 2:34-36 NLT).

What does the Psalmist say of the nations at this point? What options

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and all who sided with them, and all their goods, and all their households and wealth, and everything they owned went down alive into the pit. And the earth closed upon them. And all the Israelites around fled at their shrieks, thinking the earth might swallow them also" (16:31–33 various translations).

These men could defy the Lord, but God had the last word. Wasn't it a lesson never to be forgotten?

Another Lesson on Rebellion

There is a second incident in this chapter, and this time the instigator is Korah.

Who was Korah? Actually, he was a cousin of Moses and Aaron. Their fathers were brothers, sons of Kohath, who was a son of Levi.

Korah had 250 prominent Levites on his side, men who shared his feeling that they should be first- and not second-rank leaders.

Now Korah and Company came as a group to confront Moses and Aaron: "You assume too much authority," they said. "For each and every member of the community are holy," and "the Lord is in their midst." Why do you "set yourselves above everyone?" "You have gone too far" (various translations of Num. 16:3).

When Moses heard their charge, did he immediately use his authority to condemn them? No, he humbly took the matter to God. We read that he "threw himself on the ground and prayed" (Good News Bible). He would let the Lord tell him how to deal with this problem.

God responded so quickly that Moses could answer the opposition immediately. God had a plan. He would let the rebels themselves show their colors. He would even make a way for them.

Isn't this how God often works with us? When we challenge His authority, He opens the way for us to ruin ourselves, if that is our choice. Or we can take the better route and see our mistake, repent, and ask His forgiveness.

But there was no repentance in the heart of Korah and his company.

What was God's plan for them? Moses relayed God's words: "You, Korah, and all your followers are to do this: Take censers and tomorrow put fire and incense in them before the Lord. The man the Lord chooses will be the one who is holy. You Levites have gone too far!" Hear the ringing judgment in those words: "You Levites have gone too far!"

The 250 Levites were to bring their censers and come to the Tabernacle, and act as priests right along with Aaron—just as they wanted to do! (This was before the discovery of matches, and censers were bronze firepans which would hold glowing coals.)

Wouldn't you think those 250 Levites would have had second thoughts about what they were doing when they heard those words: "The man the Lord chooses will be the one who is holy. You Levites have gone too far"? The Lord also told them to bring their own fire—Aaron was instructed to use the fire from the altar. Wouldn't you expect them to be nervous, at least a little? Did any of them even think about what happened to Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, when they "offered strange fire before the Lord"? (Lev. 10:1-4).

Then Moses tried to reason with them. Didn't they realize they were already privileged Levites? "Now listen, you Levites! Isn't it enough for you that the God of

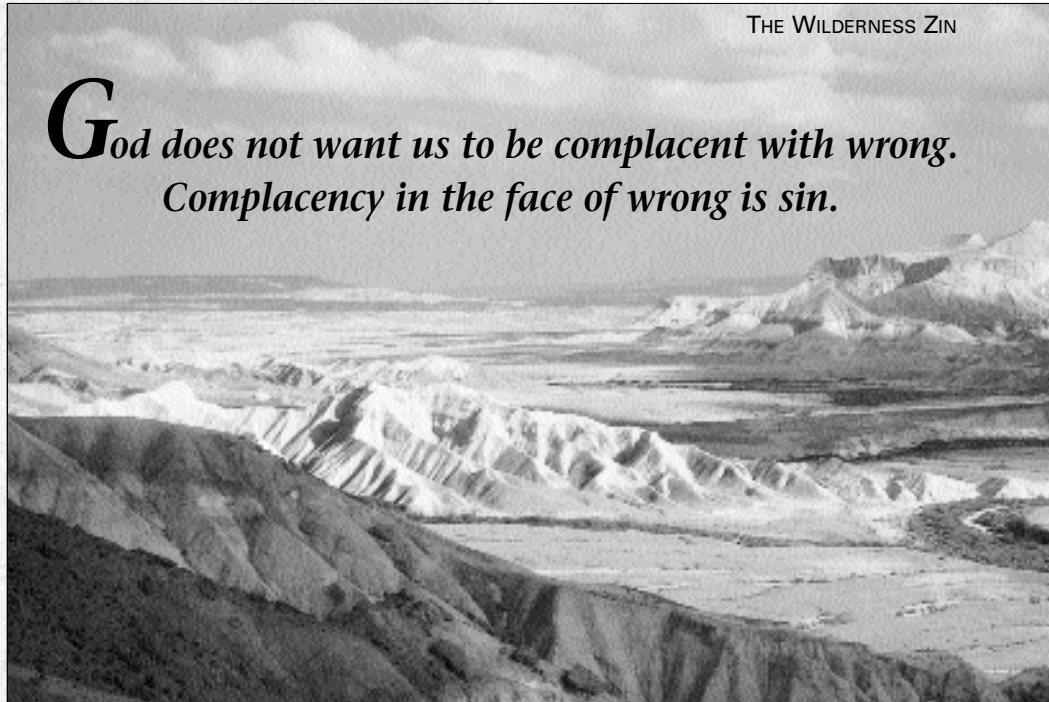
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are open to them? For the first time in history, they are totally at the mercy of the new Power. They have only two choices: Submit or perish. The heavenly Voice recommends that they submit, show reverence, do homage.

"Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the Lord with reverence, and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, lest he become angry and you perish in the way" (Ps. 2:10–12 NASB). It

THE WILDERNESS ZIN

**God does not want us to be complacent with wrong.
Complacency in the face of wrong is sin.**



will be literally, "Obey and live," or "Disobey and die." No more will any be able to do as they please. All will be compelled to give homage to King Jesus. All who refuse will die. Isaiah said it this way: "The nations that refuse to be your allies will be destroyed," (Isa. 60:12 NLT).

Do you get the picture? Do you see the angel standing there, pleading, pleading with them to submit? No, not now. Now it is the image of the angel of God with a drawn sword in his hand. It is the supreme moment of truth. These rulers of earth have had their time to rule as they pleased. Now they are under orders, and God will have the last word.

But, as always, there is blessing for the humble, the penitent, the obedient: "What joy for all who find protection in him!" (Ps. 2:12 NLT).

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Oh, God's plan is all for good. Let us not think of His control in a negative way. When Christ comes and takes over the governing of this earth, when He calls upon all to submit to His rule and begins to enforce His just and righteous ways worldwide. He will be opening the door to universal progress. There will be opportunities for service and growth and expansion beyond anything we can imagine. There will be eternal blessings of peace and health and prosperity and life for all who submit. His rule will extend from one end of the earth to the other; no hidden pockets of evil will remain. He has given His word: *"But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord"* (Num. 14:21).

God is going to carry out His plans. We do not know when, but this earth is His, and one of these days the time of transformation will begin. Elijah will arrive, Christ will follow, and all the great and wonderful things that God has promised will begin to happen. Don't we want to be part of it!

The sooner we submit to God's ways, the sooner we decide to cooper-

The sooner we cooperate with the Divine will, the better for us.



ate with His plans, the sooner we join His cause and pledge ourselves to a complete and full surrender of ourselves, the better for us. He has an infinite wealth of blessing to give, far, far beyond our ability to fathom, but they are reserved for the humble, the contrite, the obedient, the submissive; those who are willing to let go of the little they have in exchange for the great things He is offering.

Why not make that exchange now? Why not go for the very best He is offering...now! ♦

Israel has separated you from the rest of the Israelite community and brought you near himself to do the work at the Lord's tabernacle and to stand before the community and minister to them? He has brought you and all your fellow Levites near himself, but now you are trying to get the priesthood too. It is against the Lord that you and all your followers have banded together. Who is Aaron that you should grumble against him?" (Num. 16:8-11 NIV).

Moses was right. It was their privilege to handle and work with the holy things. They were supported by the tithes of the people. They were to receive an inheritance in Canaan without having to fight for it.

But right now, all they could think about was what they *lacked*, not what they had. They didn't have Aaron's authority, and they resented it. Couldn't Moses see they were just as qualified? If only they could be given a chance, they would show everyone that they could officiate at the Tabernacle just as well as he!

The day came, and the 250 pseudo-priests took their places in front of the Tabernacle, each with his censor full of live coals, right along with Aaron, each ready to present his offering of worship to the Lord.

Meanwhile, Korah was out stirring up the community to *"assemble at the Tabernacle entrance"* (Num. 16:19 NIV). It is likely that he was telling them something like, "Today it's our turn to serve. You've got to come and see the Lord put Aaron in his place and exalt us!" The people came, and came, and came. Hosts of them.

Suddenly, as all eyes were fixed on the Tabernacle, the glory of the Lord appeared, that fearful cloud that had appeared before when they had refused to enter Canaan (Num. 14:10). A breathless "Oh!" rippled through the crowd. This was not normal.

Then the voice of the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron: *"Separate yourselves from this congregation that I may consume them."* Not only the 250 pseudo-priests were in danger of judgment, but all who were gathered.

Unselfish Moses and his brother Aaron fell down before the Lord and pleaded for Him to spare the people. God consented, but said that any who would live must separate themselves. So Moses shouted in a stentorian voice: *"Separate yourselves from this company, says the Lord, so that I can consume them in an instant."*

There was no hesitation. The people hurry-scurried everywhere.

And what happened? We read that *"there came out a fire from the Lord, and devoured the 250 men that offered incense, even all the followers of Korah"* (16:35). A flash, and it was all over.

What a lesson! Who could ever forget it! Wouldn't it seem that this would have ended rebellion once and for all, at least for that generation?

No, we read that the very next day *"the whole Israelite community railed against Moses and against Aaron, saying, 'you are the ones who have caused the death of the Lord's people'"* (16:41). Couldn't they see that Moses was only God's instrument? Did Moses open the earth and swallow up the rebels? Did Moses bring fire from the altar and devour the 250 pseudo-priests?

The people were serious in blaming Moses. But God had the last word, and before the rebellion was over, 14,700 had died in a plague, in addition to the rebels.

Wouldn't it seem that the lesson should have been learned for all time? What would be the reaction now, if such judgment was seen? Wouldn't multitudes hear, and fear God?

When Christ returns and begins to dictate new laws and set up His new government, He will have those who resist Him. Jesus pictured it in His parable as those who say, *"We will not have this man to reign over us."* It is that same rebellious spirit: *"We will not."* But they will meet the same fate as the rebels of old. No human force will hinder Christ. ♦

FAITH in Action



by RUTH E. SISSON

Bible Text: Acts 8:26–39 NIV

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.”

27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship,

28 and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet.

29 The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

31 “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

32 The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

33 In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.”

34 The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?”

35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?”

37–38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

A NEW MISSIONARY: PHILIP

 READ ACTS 8:26–39

After the encounter with Simon Magus, the angel of the Lord “spoke to Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is desert” (8:26). A strange command indeed, stranger even than going to visit the Samaritans.

Can you imagine Philip saying, “But Angel, what is there to go down to? Nothing but desert! Wouldn’t it be wiser for me to at least wait here?”

Philip didn’t try to reason with the angel. He simply obeyed, and so the drama began.

But before Philip had heard a word or started down the road toward Gaza, the God who knows the end from the beginning had been arranging circumstances. He knew the position where the meeting would occur, he had even moved the Ethiopian to take the journey to Jerusalem at just the right time. And now, on the way home, a very special meeting was to take place, the details of which were all determined in advance.

On the Gaza road he came upon the chariot of a VIP, probably accompanied by guards and attendants. The passenger in the main vehicle was reading a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Even to have such a scroll was an indication that this person had more than ordinary interest in the Law, and to be reading it while traveling—how many VIP’s who travel today might be found reading the Bible? It was just as unusual then.

The Lord had so arranged the circumstances that at the moment of Philip’s arrival, the Ethiopian was ready for instruction. He didn’t understand his lesson.

“Do you understand what you’re reading?” asked Philip politely (8:30).

"Well, how could I unless someone helps me?" asked the Ethiopian, moving over on his chariot seat and inviting Philip to board.

We can visualize Philip and the Ethiopian with their heads close together so that they could hear one another above the noise of the jostling chariot and its creaking wheels. Philip didn't want to miss one word, as the Ethiopian asked questions about Jesus and the grand plan of salvation. Carefully Philip covered the points, one by one, quoting from the Scriptures to support his message. It wasn't long before the Ethiopian was persuaded, and asked to be baptized.



After Philip baptized the Ethiopian, his work for God on the Gaza road was finished, and Philip was miraculously snatched away. What did the Ethiopian think? We do not know, but he *"went on his way rejoicing"* in his new-found faith (Acts 8:39).

1. What was the difference between the conversion of Simon Magus (chapter 7) and that of the Ethiopian treasurer? _____
2. What does true conversion mean? _____
3. What means of conversion does God provide? (Ps 19:7) _____
4. How did Philip show that he was ready to cooperate with the Lord's leading? _____
5. How can we today show that we are ready to cooperate with the Lord's leading? _____

continued on page 15



Insight

Run! Philip, Run!

Can't you hear the Holy Spirit saying in Philip's ear, *"Run, Philip, run!"* There are times when the King's business calls for haste.

This incident illustrates the magnificent timing of God.

Just when the cultured, educated Ethiopian confesses his need for instruction, the Lord arranged for his servant to be right there, ready to instruct him, even on a road through the desert! The Eunuch could read the words, but he wanted more—he wanted the message.

That is often the way with Scripture. We have to see more than the words to understand what is being said. And when we need help to understand, God provides. It is His gracious promise. *"You will seek me and find me, when you search for me with all your heart"* (Jer. 29:13).



A closer look

Another Language Barrier Broken

Did you ever wonder how the prestigious Ethiopian could talk freely with Philip a Jew? Did Philip have to take a quick course in Ethiopian before he could communicate?

It seems very possible that this was another miracle of tongues, or rather, a miracle of understanding. We do not sense any difficulty in the communications between them. Philip could talk to the Ethiopian, and the Ethiopian understood.

This was one great advantage that the Holy Spirit power gave those early missionaries. It broke the great language barriers that have always divided mankind. For a limited time, one's language made no difference (Acts 2:3-11).

If the Apostles had had to spend their time mastering other languages, they would not have had time to effectively fulfill their commission and preach the Gospel as they were commissioned to preach it.



Insight

He "Preached...Jesus"

The eunuch asked Philip, *"Who is the prophet speaking of? himself, or some other man?"* (Acts 8:34). This powerful question gave Philip the opportunity to explain to the eunuch all about Jesus, the central figure in the plan of God. He was reading a chapter of prophecy (Isa. 53), and Philip could tell him also of the beginning of its fulfillments, and the greater fulfillments yet future.



The *PERILS* of PRESUMPTION

by RUSSELL HAMBY

bership among God's elect as their ticket to the Kingdom, they had not produced the fruits of righteousness. Their error is a lesson for Christians today, because the perils of presumption are perennial.

Peril 1: Presumption of EASE

"Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to."
—Luke 13:24 NIV

Many of Jesus' contemporaries viewed God's kingdom as having easy access. Physical descent in the elect lineage of Judaism put one on the easy street to salvation. "No," said Jesus, "it is not an open street but a narrow door into God's Kingdom." In the great press of the crowds to gain entrance, many will not succeed in penetrating the narrow part.

This same presumption of ease is still with us. It is present with the many "social Christians" who consider a name on a church roll along with an occasional appearance at baptisms, marriages, and funerals, and perhaps an occasional attendance at special Church services, to be all that is necessary to assure their claim on eternal life. It is present in the sort of "cheap grace" evangelism that portrays a "trip down the aisle" as a guaranteed reservation to eternity. It is present with the popular "man upstairs" view of God as an all-forgiving, never-demanding dispenser of candy sticks. It is, in short, present wherever there is a view of salvation apart from commitment and discipleship and the *"works worthy of repentance."*

Peril 2: Presumption of TIME

"Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' 'But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'" —Luke 13:25 NIV

Jesus warns that some will arrive at the door too late. They will bang for entry, but to no avail. They are guilty of the presumption that there will always be plenty of time. For the crowds who listened to Jesus' message of the Kingdom, nothing could be further from the truth. His message may have attracted them initially, but they put off any response and He may never have passed their way again. For them, opportunity passed by, and the door was shut.

We all know how easy it is to presume on time. We put things off until a more "ideal" time. Sometimes, we never find that time. Other times the opportunity passes. Many people fall into this error and sometimes with disastrous consequences. It is no different with Christian commitment. No time is more opportune than the present. Tomorrow the door may be closed.

Peril 3: Presumption of FAMILIARITY

"Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.'"
—Luke 13:26 NIV

Those who found the door closed protested to the householder that they really deserved entry. They knew Him well and qualified as His guests. Theirs was the presumption of familiarity. They were Jesus' Jewish contemporaries who could claim an acquaintance with

No time is more opportune than the present.

Let's see how the Dictionary defines two words, presume and presumption:

To presume is to assume something is true, take for granted; to imply, presuppose (with 'on' or 'upon'); to take advantage of or rely on something or someone more than is warranted. Presumption is the act of presuming; unwarranted taking for granted of someone's approval; a too high opinion of oneself; a deduction made from known facts but lacking direct evidence.

To presume or be presumptive is not a good thing when referring to God and the coming Kingdom. The text for this study is Luke 13:22-30.

Warning the Jews against the perils of presumption was a major note in John the Baptist's preaching. His Jewish contemporaries were not to presume that their physical descent from Abraham was a guarantee of entrance into God's Kingdom (Luke 3:8-9). Later, Paul extended the same concept, warning his Jewish kin against taking refuge in their law or in their assumed birthright as the covenant people of God (Rom. 2:25-29).

The same note is sounded in Luke 13:22-30, where Jesus exhorts His Jewish listeners not to presume on an easy entrance into God's Kingdom. For many there will be no entry at all but exclusion, misery and destruction. Their fault is their presumptiveness. Counting on their Jewish heritage, and their mem-

Him. They had listened to Him preaching in their streets. They had sat with Him at dinner in the intimacy of table fellowship. They knew Him well and thus *deserved* a place at His banquet table. What they failed to see was that familiarity is not the same thing as commitment.

Peril 4: Presumption of SECURITY

"But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'" —Luke 13:27 NIV

Here is a particular danger for those who have established a longtime formal relationship to the Church. "After all, we never missed sitting at the table for the Lord's Supper. We heard the Bible taught in our Sunday Schools and the Gospel preached in our pulpits." It is almost the same words as those from the ones denied entry in Jesus' parable. What if He should respond to our "words," *"I do not know where you came from!"* (Luke 13:25–29)?

The key factor is commitment. Those denied entry were familiar with Jesus, but their iniquitous behavior belied any true commitment.

All true commitment involves obedience to the One to whom one is committed. Familiarity without commitment is useless. It can even be fatal, the most destructive presumption of them all. ♦

OBITUARY

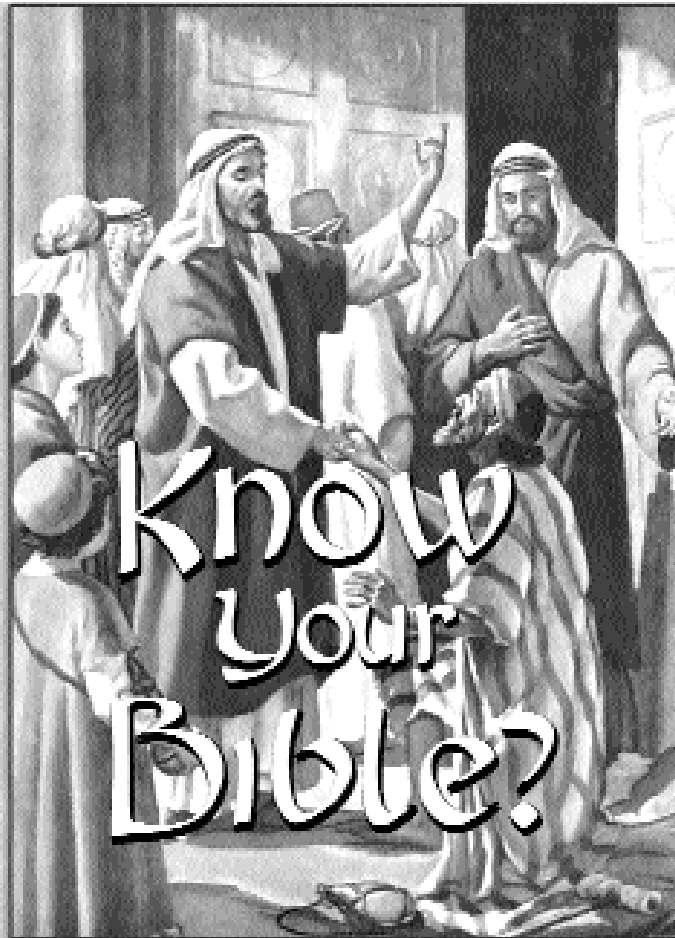
ELMA McQUEEN

We have received this note from Geneva Parton, daughter of Sister Elma McQueen, of Laurel, Indiana:

"Just want to let you know my Mom passed away on October 11, age 98. All the children were with her when she passed away. She was a believer in God, as you well know. I am going to miss her. We need your prayers."

Sister McQueen was a long-time subscriber to the Message, and took her religion seriously. Even in advanced years she kept her mind active rehearsing her knowledge of Bible subjects, keeping her foundation of faith solid.

Sister McQueen's letters were regular and always welcome, and her home was always open to visitors from the Church. One of her favorite sayings, at the conclusion of almost every letter, was: "You can't do my work for me, and I can't do your work for you, but we can help each other."



WHERE WAS (WERE)

1. Judas when he cast down the thirty pieces of silver?
2. Aquila and Priscilla when they first met Apollos?
3. Haman when his scheme to murder the Jews was revealed to the king?
4. Publius when Paul first met him?
5. The lame man when healed by Peter and John?
6. The site of Rachel's tomb?
7. Rahab's house located?
8. Moses when he lifted up his rod and the waters parted?
9. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, when he was crowned king?
10. John when he wrote the book of Revelation?
11. Zacchaeus when Jesus first saw him?
12. Absalom when he announced himself as king of the Israelites?
13. The rainbow which the Apostle John saw in his wondrous vision in the Apocalypse?
14. The home of Samuel's father and mother?

BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Name the seven churches of Asia to which John wrote.
2. What great Jewish prophets were captive in Babylon?
3. How did the Israelites isolate lepers?
4. What is the name of an important angel in the Bible?
5. For what deed is Rahab remembered?
6. How many disciples were in Jerusalem immediately after Christ's ascension?
7. What food did Daniel and his friends obtain to take the place of the king's wine, meat, and dainties?
8. What great event occurred at Pentecost?
9. What are two prominent mentions of ravens in the Bible?

answers on page 17

What Does It All Mean?



As we recover from the shock and horror of September 11, many of us find we are still having to come to terms with its meaning.

What does it mean? How does the spectre of terror fit in with the plan of God?

Religious terrorism has been called the communism of the 21st century. This fact was already clear to those who have been watching its spread during the 90's, and now, since the carnage of September 11, it is clear to everyone. The intent of the terrorists is to shock, and by shocking to stimulate fear and alarm. And since the religious terror war is directed not against the military of a nation but against its culture, there are no civilians. No one is innocent; all are legitimate targets.

Which makes us wonder: what does it mean in the plan of God?

Our only source of information being the written Word of God, we do not have all the answers. Or maybe we do not recognize all we have. But a few points stand out.

What the Carnage of September 11 IS NOT

1) It IS NOT a judgment from God.

Some people have advanced the idea that God was showing His disapproval of our modern way of life, our materialism, our variant lifestyles, our weak social structures, our vices and tolerance of evil by allowing the destruction of the Twin Towers and the loss of thousands of lives.

What is our reply? Emphatically, *no*. While God is displeased with the decadence of America (and the world), He is not bringing judgment against America. In fact, there is no evidence that God ever used terror as a means of coercion. Jesus' principle was, "*Let both {wheat and tares, righteous and wicked} grow together until the harvest*" (Matt. 13:30). And that harvest is yet future.

During the time of Jesus an incident occurred which brought some of the same comments we are hearing today. The tower of Siloam fell and killed a number of people. Was this a judgment from God because these people were such awful sinners? they asked. Jesus' reply was definite: "*I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish*" (Luke 13:3-4).

God is not sending judgment on evildoers at the present time. When His judgments come upon the earth, everyone who lives will know it, and the result will be: "*the people of the world will learn righteousness*" (Isa. 26:9 NIV).

2) It IS NOT a signal of the arrival of doomsday.

Terrorists do not advance the cause of a God of justice and right. His plan is to remove evil and carnage from the earth and fill it with His glory, bringing about the promise made by the angels at the birth of Jesus: "*Peace on earth, good will to men.*"

Terrorists are not His instruments to cleanse the earth and fill it with a happy, prosperous, God-fearing people. On the contrary, this task has been assigned to His saints (Ps. 149:9). When Christ takes control of the earth, He and His righteous co-rulers will be in command (Rev. 3:21), and the rule of the day will be justice, order, happiness and peace. The prophet Isaiah describes the result: "*The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever*" (Isa. 32:17).

3) It IS NOT an early step toward worldwide dominion by terrorists or worldwide devastation.

Do we need to be concerned that the terrorists are going to overrule—or demolish—civilized life as we know it? The answer from Scripture is No.

Several prophecies of Scripture point to the fact that when Christ returns normal life will be continuing, with no evidence of impending change.

The apostle Peter spoke of those who would deny the promise of Jesus' coming, saying, "*All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation*" (2 Pet. 3:4).

Jesus compared the time of His coming to the days of Noah just before the flood, and to the time of Lot, just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. In both cases it was "business as usual" right up to the time of the calamity. "*They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built*" (see

Luke 17:26–30)—until the judgment descended. Said Jesus, “*Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.*”

What the Carnage of September 11 IS

1) It IS a confirmation of Paul’s words, that the last days (the time before Jesus’ return) will be “a time of peril.”

The apostle Paul described the last days of this age as “*perilous times,*” and then continued by describing some of the perils. “*For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good*”—all of which we see today (2 Tim. 3:1–4).

Clear as this prophecy and others are, however, we have no way of knowing the extent or degree to which they will be fulfilled before Jesus comes. But it surely seems that the prophecy fits this period of time.

2) It DOES align with Jesus’ prediction of worldwide fear in the time just before He returns.

Jesus said, “*And there shall be...upon the earth distress of nations,...men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken*” (Luke 21:25–26). The original word translated “fear” in this text is *phobos*, and has for its principal meaning, “fear, dread, terror; that which strikes terror.”

Could Jesus have foreseen our day more precisely? The very purpose of the terrorist is to incite fear—often fear that is greater than the reality of the threat because of the feeling of unknown, unpredictable, impending harm.

But He told also the final outcome—not more and more terror but His own joyous return to bring the situation under control. “*And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory*” (vs. 27).

3) It IS a real, sustaining promise of hope to every believer.

The terror only shouts that better times are coming! They are just ahead! This was Jesus’ concluding comment after He had forecast the terrorizing events of the end times. And His assurance is more than just a promise to end the terror. He said, “*When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near*” (Luke 21:28).

The long-awaited redemption, deliverance, salvation, and blessing are near—these events signal the nearness of the time for the fulfillment of all that God has promised!

4) It IS a warning that life is uncertain.

The real pain of the news of the collapse of the Twin Towers came when we realized people were suffering and dying by the thousands in terror and horror. These people got up that morning never imagining that this day was their last.

We all tend to think ourselves bullet-proof, disease-proof, accident-proof, as though life will go on forever. How wise the words of the Prophet: “*Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near*” (Isa. 55:6).

5) It IS a wake-up call: Get Ready!

We cannot set any dates. None of the prophecies give us any clear indication of time. We do not know how near the end of the age is, for Jesus said clearly, “*You do not know what hour your Lord is coming*” (Matt. 24:42). But one fact is sure: the end of this age has never been so near as it is right now.

And as the signs of the end become clearer, shouldn’t we recognize God’s mercy in each extended day of opportunity? This is no time for parleying with sin, no time for doubt and indecision, no time for self-indulgence and weak-kneed faith. This is the time to be out-and-out for Christ, to be firm in our commitment, living everyday as we will want to be found living when Jesus comes.

Because one of these days He will come—suddenly, when the prophecies leading up to His coming are all fulfilled. This was Jesus’ message repeatedly during His ministry. He said in effect, You don’t know when I’m coming, so be on the watch, alert, ready...all the time!

“*Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming; in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning; lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!*” (Mark 13:35–37).

What should we be watching? Not the sky, but our manner of life, our conversation, our relationships, our diligence, our commitment. This was the message of Jesus’ apostle Peter: “*what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming*” (2 Pet. 3:11–12 NIV). ♦

The Acts of the Apostles continued from page 11



Did you know...

Joy! Joy! Joy!

Did you notice the Ethiopian eunuch’s joy? After being baptized by Philip, the eunuch “*went on his way rejoicing.*” Joy is the natural expression of one who is taken off the road which leads to death and set on the highway that leads to life.

At this point in the story, one feels the joy of hope and victory ahead. For the first time in his life, the Ethiopian knew true joy because he was looking forward to a true and sure hope, along with the loving guidance of a God who is faithful and will do as He has promised.

Philip, continued

After Philip was miraculously transported away from the eunuch, the next we hear about him he is at Azotus.

Azotus was the name of an old Philistine city Ashdod, about 20 miles north of Caesarea (Acts 8:40).

Caesarea had been built by Herod the Great in honor of Caesar Augustus. It was the capital of all Roman administration for Palestine, and a thoroughly Gentile city. Here was stationed a man named Cornelius, who was soon to come into the picture as a new convert to Christ. Though Philip was not chosen to have a share in that significant conversion, he was there when it happened, a key man in a key place, partnering with God in the glorious work of His coming Kingdom.

Philip seems to have settled down in Caesarea. The next time we meet him, 20 years have gone by, and he is a family man with four grown daughters zealously following in the footsteps of their faithful father (Acts 21:8–9). ♦

(to be continued)



FOLLOW the INSTRUCTIONS!

(and not “when all else fails”)

by SPENCER KINCANNON

clear instructions by the angels, “Run for your lives!” and, “Do not stop anywhere in the valley. And don’t look back!” But Lot’s wife disregarded the instructions, and lost her life.

We don’t really know why Lot’s wife looked back. Perhaps her heart was still back in Sodom, and she had to take one last look. Or maybe it was just a careless and unintentional mistake. Perhaps it was both of these reasons.

What can we learn from her fatal mistake? First, that when God gives instructions, He means what He says. Our disregard, or forgetfulness, or

negligence or carelessness does not change His instructions.

And second, He has told us what to do and it is up to us to stay focused. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isa. 26:3). To stay focused on the goal, eternal life, we must keep our minds focused on obeying the Divine instructions. If we get careless about what we read, what we think about, where we go and who we associate with, it will only bring us down. We will take our eyes off the prize and become absorbed in the things of this world. And in the end we will reap destruction.

Let’s take a brief look at **Saul**, who was anointed to be Israel’s first king. His story covers more than half of the book of 1 Samuel. Saul certainly got off to a good start. He was picked by the Lord Himself! But, he soon headed downhill.

One day Saul had some very specific

instructions. On this occasion he was instructed to prepare the burnt offerings and peace offerings and then wait for Samuel the prophet. Saul made the preparations, but then he became impatient and went ahead and made the offerings himself. Just as he was finishing up, Samuel arrived. Samuel rebuked him saying, “You have disobeyed the command of the Lord your God. Had you obeyed, the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your dynasty must end, for the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart. The Lord has already chosen him to be king over his people, for you have not obeyed the Lord’s command” (1 Sam. 13:13 NLT).

After this Saul went on to more disobedience. The instructions from the Lord were to go and destroy the nation of Amalek. Men, women, children, animals—everything that pertained to Amalek was to be destroyed. Nothing was to be spared. What did Saul do? “Saul and his men spared Agag’s life and kept the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything, in fact, that appealed to them. They destroyed only what was worthless or of poor quality” (1 Sam. 15:9 NLT).

When he was found out, Saul tried to justify his actions to the Prophet Samuel by saying that he had spared the best of the animals to be sacrificed to the Lord. But Samuel replied, “What is more pleasing to the Lord: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Obedience is far better than sacrifice. Listening to him is much better than offering the fat of rams. Rebellion is as bad as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as bad as worshipping idols. So because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you from being king” (1 Sam. 15:22–23 NLT). This was the end of Samuel’s dealings with Saul.

Pride, jealousy, rebelliousness, stubbornness, anger—these all contributed

Sometime ago I saw a sign which pictured an open Bible. Under the Bible was a caption which read, “When all else fails, read the instructions.”

Certainly it is always good to read the instructions. But as with everything, there is a right time, and a time when it is too late. God gave us the instructions to save us the grief and pain of blundering—what message do we send to Him when we do not care enough about His instructions to even read them!

God gave us His instructions to be read first, not to be turned to as a last resort. What God says should always come first.

If we fail to read and follow God’s instructions, we will someday find ourselves in tragic circumstances, as some Bible characters have. “Remember what happened to Lot’s wife!” warned Jesus (Luke 17:32 NLT). We learn about Lot’s wife in Genesis 19:26 NLT, “Lot’s wife looked back as she was following along behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.” Lot and his family had been given

to Saul's downfall. Self-justification also played a major role in his life. In his mind his intentions were always good, his motives always pure, even when he was blatantly disobeying the Lord. It never occurred to him that he needed to change his way of thinking. He never attempted to do better, but steadily sank into the jaws of destruction.

I also want to mention **Solomon**. Of all the people in the Divine record, probably no one fell so far as Solomon. At the beginning of his reign he prayed to the Lord for wisdom. In answer to his

influences to creep into his life and ruin him slowly, just as cancer slowly kills its victims. But the end result was the same. By the time Solomon realized what was happening, he had reached the point of no return. All he could do was express regret for the way he had lived, and leave us some good advice on how not to follow in his footsteps (Eccl. 12:1, 13-14).

What a different man was **David**, whose reign came between that of Saul and Solomon. David did not live a perfect life from the beginning to the end.

**No time is more opportune
than the present.**

prayer he was given greater wisdom than anyone before him. In addition he was given riches and honor above all the kings of the earth at that time. But, in violation of the Lord's commandment, he married many foreign wives. His wives led his heart away from God.

From reading the book of Ecclesiastes, it seems that Solomon came to his senses late in his life. Finally he was ready to heed the instructions! But by then it was too late. Hear his sad lament: *"Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished"* (Eccl. 4:13). When we read these words, we cannot help but think that Solomon was speaking of himself. In the book of Ecclesiastes he recounts his many accomplishments, and concludes that it was all vanity. He was a success in this world, but he threw away the opportunity to gain eternal life.

When we read the accounts of the first three kings of Israel, it is amazing what a contrast in character they were. Actually it's not amazing, because there are still people like them today.

Saul, stubborn and rebellious almost from the beginning of his career, was a spiritual wreck who seemed to have no desire to do better. Solomon was somewhat different. He allowed corrupting

He committed some terrible sins. But when he was confronted by the Prophet of the Lord concerning his misdeeds, he was always humble and penitent. How different from Saul, who thought only of justifying himself!

In the end David's life became the standard by which all the later kings were measured. A few such as Hezekiah and Josiah followed in the footsteps of David and served the Lord with all their hearts. There were others who followed the way of the Lord, but not with a per-

fect heart. But most were evil.

We are fortunate today that we have the records of these people. We don't have to try everything first, we can read God's instructions. By reading and taking to heart the lessons of others' experiences, we can grow spiritually. We don't want to be careless and lose the prize, as Lot's wife lost her life when she forgot the warning of the angels and looked back toward Sodom. We need to keep looking forward, not backward. Only by looking ahead can we secure that eternal future.

We don't want to be like Saul, too blind to make any spiritual progress. And we don't want to be like Solomon, who was blind also. He did not realize his condition was getting worse until it was too late to change. We don't want to be like King Amaziah, who served the Lord, but not with a perfect heart (2 Chron. 25:2). Amaziah grew in the Lord but he did not grow enough. He ran the race but did not reach the finish line. We don't want to end up the same way.

We want to be like David and the others who were wholehearted in their dedication to the Lord. A job done halfheartedly will only be half done, and will never meet the approval of the Great Judge. If we want to be approved at the Judgment, we need to be wholehearted now.

Let us read and follow completely God's Book of Instructions FIRST, *before* all else fails.

We will be eternally glad if we do. ♦

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 13

Where Was (Were)

1. In the temple (Matt. 27:3-5)
2. Ephesus (Acts 18:24-26).
3. At a banquet given by Queen Esther (Esther 7:1-6)
4. Island of Malta (Melita) (Acts 28:1-7)
5. At the gate of the temple called Beautiful (Acts 3:1-8)
6. Bethlehem (Gen. 35:19)
7. On the wall in the city of Jericho (Josh. 2:1, 15)
8. At the Red Sea (Ex. 14:21; 15:4)
9. In Shechem (1 Kings 12:1)
10. On the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:1-3, 9)
11. Up a sycamore tree (Luke 19:1-5)
12. At Hebron (2 Sam. 15:7-10)
13. Round about the throne (Rev. 4:2-3)
14. Ramah (1 Sam. 1:19-20)

Bible Questions

1. Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea (Rev. 1:11)
2. Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:1); Daniel (Dan. 1:1-6)
3. They made them live outside the camp (Num. 5:1-4).
4. Gabriel (Luke 1:19, 26)
5. She sheltered the two spies whom Joshua sent into Jericho (Josh. 2:1-14; Heb. 11:31; Jas. 2:25)
6. One hundred and twenty (Acts 1:11-15)
7. Pulse (vegetables) and water (Dan. 1:12)
8. The coming of the Holy Spirit to the early church (Acts 2:1-4)
9. The raven sent forth by Noah from the ark (Gen. 8:6-7); The ravens which fed Elijah (1 Kings 17:2-7)



Where Are Your *Thank You's?*

The day after Mr. Haglund's visit, the Johnson children still found it hard to forget their grumpy Grandad's ways. "Why," said Melissa, "I didn't hear him say 'Thank you'—not once!"

"Every one of us tried to be nice to him, but do you suppose he could even smile at us?" asked Ann.

"Well, do you remember when Christ healed the ten lepers?" questioned Mom. "How many of those lepers—who had been so very sick and wretched and outcast—how many of them bothered to say 'Thank you' to Jesus after He had entirely healed them?"

"Only one of them thanked Jesus," said Mark.

"That's right. And each of you may as well learn now that you are going to be disappointed in life if you expect folks to actually thank you every time you do something for them. Even though a lot of folks will appreciate what you do for them, not many of them will say so. Maybe they intend to say thank you, but they just never get around to it. So, it's a good idea not to expect to be thanked. And yet we should remember to thank others even though they may not thank us—that's part of the Golden Rule" (Matt. 7:12).

Mom pulled several trays of cookies from the oven. Six pairs of eyes lit up with delight at the sight of those fresh-baked cookies.

"Those who would like a cookie form a line to my right," announced Mom.

In a twinkling, six young Johnsons stood in a row. Then, with Mark at the head, they

marched up to the cooling cookies, each one reaching for a cookie. As they happily munched cookies, they pranced around the big kitchen. The cookies eaten, Mark winked at his mother, then headed his sisters and brothers for the cookies again. When each had finished a second cookie, Mark headed his company back to the counter for a third time, but Mom shook her head. "One dozen cookies will take care of you until supper!"

"Say, I could eat a dozen all by myself between now and supper," Mark told her.

For a few moments, Mom stood quietly watching the beaming faces of those who had enjoyed her cookies. Then she said, "I'm waiting!"

Six Johnsons looked at her, wonderingly.

"Waiting for what, Mom?"

"Waiting to hear just one cookie-gobbler say 'Thank you.'"

Sheepishly, the children glanced at one another. Then there was a whole chorus of "Thank you's."

"Hmmmm," said Mom, winking one eye, "seems like I heard some young folks around here finding fault with a certain old man because he didn't say 'Thank you'. Reminds me of a verse in the Bible that says, '*Judge not that ye be not judged*'" (Matt. 7:1).

Paul looked up at her, his freckled face puckered in thought. "Guess we aren't any better'n ol' Gramps—and he doesn't have a Mom to teach him to say 'Thank you.' ♦

Taken from "*Happy Acres*,"
by ERLING NICOLAI ROLFSDUD



A Psalm of Thanksgiving

Psalm 100, New Living Translation

Shout with joy to the Lord, O earth!
Worship the Lord with gladness.
Come before him, singing with joy.
Acknowledge that the Lord is God!
He made us, and we are his.
We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving;
go into his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him and bless his name.
For the Lord is good.
His unfailing love continues forever,
and his faithfulness continues to each generation.

Never believe anything bad about anybody unless you positively know it to be true; never tell even that unless you feel that it is absolutely necessary—and that God is listening while you tell it.

To guard yourself against evil, be zealously occupied in doing good.

A soldier was once asked to give a definition of repentance. He thought a moment, then replied, "Halt...about face...forward march!"

You may depend on the Lord, but can He depend on you?

When we make God's will our will, duty becomes a pleasure and service a delight.

There are no detours along the strait and narrow path.

There is so much need to study and learn. We know when we earnestly seek, we will find.

What Really Matters?

(continued from page 2)

enemy of great. We might be choosing something good, but can we choose better?

Maybe it's something we really want. Or maybe it's an argument where we feel we just *have* to have the last word. Here is our opportunity to give up. That argument is going to end just as soon as we stop talking. It just won't be there any more. And isn't that the better way? Because what matters more? Not winning the argument, not having the last word but *giving up*. Maybe we knew we were right, but it is better to give up than to have that last word.

Or maybe the issue is maintaining a reputation. We want to look right and seem right—it is a natural instinct. But that's not the important thing. What matters much more is *being right*. If it takes a lie to cover us and make sure that we look right, it isn't worth it. We're going

down instead of up. Not appearing good but *being* good is what counts.

Jacob said that he did not feel worthy of the least of God's mercies. I think all of us can say that. We aren't worthy of even a small part of the blessings we enjoy, and we need to acknowledge it. We need that humble attitude, that attitude of gratitude to God, that He is still giving us life, that He gives us another and yet another chance to try again, to show ourselves bigger than these little issues that keep getting in our way. Thank God for His mercy! With all the mistakes we've made, all the wrong turns we've taken, He could have cut us off *long* ago.

In the national picture, it is encouraging to see a change for better values, even if it is temporary. But let the change be revolutionary in our own lives. Let us take this opportunity to review our own values and get ourselves right with God.

Then other issues will be small by comparison. ♦

Thank You Again!

Dear Heavenly Father,
I know what You think
Of all my good intentions
Without action.

I know what You think
Of all my planning, and praying,
And feeling, and saying—
Without doing.

I know, too, what You think of me
When I try to look big,
And appear what I am not.

I know also what You think of me
When I act like a spoiled child
That could not have his way;
When I get “out of sorts”
And spunky.

You want—you must have
Better than I have given you.
Yet sometimes when I know better,
I do worse.

Thank You, Lord,
For another chance
To try again.

Tomorrow.

No, Lord, TODAY!

