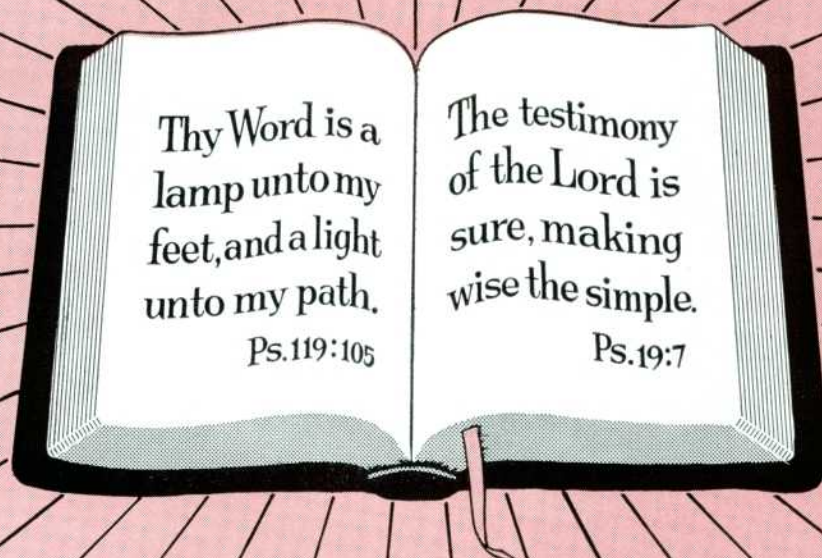


# Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



## We Are Coming to Judgment

How Long Driven and Tossed?

A Second Message from John

God Is Love



# Dedication to--What?

IT IS ONE of the ironies of modern language that a word can be moved from sacred to secular vocabulary until its Christian significance is all but lost in common usage.

Such a word is *dedicate*. The change in meaning is reflected in the dictionary definitions of the word. We find the following: "Dedicate: 1) To devote to the service or worship of a divine being. 2) To set apart to a definite use or service."

In accordance with this definition, any public figure who is honest and who takes his job seriously is sure to be called a "dedicated man" by some reporter or news commentator. The word is even used to describe persons deeply concerned about wild fowl refuges or the conservation of natural resources. It is also applied to ball players and stock car racers, and even to the participants in the gory and perilous sport of bullfighting.

The "dedicated" bullfighter would likely be the uncrowned champion of all who seek to waste their lives in the most foolish way. But dedication to vanity is not confined to bullfighters. The truth is, dedication of the life to anything or anyone short of God Himself is a vain sacrificing of the noble powers He has entrusted to us, and must bring a harvest of grief and disappointment at last. Only God is worthy of our love and dedication. Only what He has promised is worthy of our all-out commitment. To devote our lives to anything lesser, however seemingly worthy, is to sell ourselves short. Neither money, position, fame, or love for mankind can justly claim our first devotion. Even the arts and sciences fall short. If God is forgotten, even the loftiest and most unselfish task is unworthy of our full surrender. Complete dedication unto death in the cause of freedom is a touching and worthy thing in history; but it is insufficient to qualify as the fullest dedication of our lives. Only the God of freedom is worthy of our "last full measure of devotion."

Why is this? Because only God can give that which is of true worth; only God can give that which will endure. Only God can perpetuate our lives beyond the normal span. Only God can insure our eternal well being and a life of service that will continue to grow and expand through all eternity.

These are strenuous times, and men are being recruited everywhere to devote themselves to one or another master. Let us be careful. No one has any right to claim my life except the One who gave it to me. If He gets my full dedication, then I may engage in any good and worthy cause under His guidance. Anything short of this is inadequate and must end in futility. In the words of the poet, this is dedication, when we can say:

*Make me a captive, Lord,  
And then I shall be free;  
Force me to render up my sword,  
And I shall conqueror be.  
I sink in life's alarms  
When by myself I stand;  
Imprison me within Thine arms,  
And strong shall be my hand.*

*My heart is weak and poor  
Until it master find;  
It has no spring of action sure,  
It varies with the wind.  
It cannot freely move  
Till thou hast wrought its chain;  
Enslave it with Thy matchless love,  
And deathless it shall reign.*

*My will is not my own  
Till Thou hast made it Thine;  
If it would reach a monarch's throne  
It must its crown resign:  
It only stands unbent  
Amid the clashing strife,  
When on Thy bosom it has leaned  
And found in Thee its life.*

## 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 (II Cor. 10:4, 5).

### We believe

—in God the Creator of all things, all men and all life.

### We believe

—in the Bible as containing the genuine revelation of God and His purposes for men, and as being our only source of divine knowledge today.

### We believe

—in Christ the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was born of a Virgin, ministered among men, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.

### We believe

—in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.

### We believe

—in all mankind as providing the nucleus from which a superior, God-honoring people shall be chosen to receive the blessings of immortal life.

### We believe

—in ourselves as capable of fulfilling the demands and disciplines given us in the law of God, thus perfecting that high quality of character which God has promised to reward with life everlasting in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

### We believe

—in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth will be filled with His glory, His people, and His will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

## Bible Quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—*New English Bible*

NIV—*New International Version*

NAS—*New American Standard*

RSV—*Revised Standard Version*

TEV—*Today's English Version*

Phillips—*The New Testament in Modern English*

Berkeley—*The Modern Language New Testament*

Weymouth—*The New Testament in Modern Speech*

Moffatt—*The Bible, A New Translation*

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# We Are Coming to Judgment

**J**UDGMENT. The word has an awesomeness about it. It carries serious overtones weighted with solemn meaning. It tells us we are in the presence of One who is superior to us, One who has complete power over us, One to whose unalterable verdict we may not reply. Judgment means the application of a certain standard; not only this, it implies satisfaction when that standard is met, and condemnation and punishment when the standard is not met.

When we think of judgment, we think of the Great Tribunal of Christ which we as pledged servants of God shall someday face. Every covenant-maker shall be called to account. The apostle Paul said it this way: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). We shall stand before Him, and that moment of divine judgment will be the great determining point of our career; upon its verdict will depend our whole future. This thought of judgment is no remote possibility that has invaded our imagination, but a fact proclaimed by God. A real judgment will be a real and personal experience for each of us, soon or late. Whether we like it or not, whether for good or for ill, we are coming to Judgment.

What is this "giving account," this moment in His presence? Again we have the word of the apostle Paul. Christ will come, and He will "light up all that is hidden in the dark and reveal the secret intentions of men's hearts" (I Cor. 4:5, JB). This makes the thought of judgment even more meaningful. It is the great God of the universe looking at me, looking through me, examining the record of my thoughts, my actions, my motives, my life. The thought is awesome, for in that blazing and unsparing light of heaven all boasts of men melt away. Bluff answers to probing questions die on our tongues before they reach our lips. He sees. He *knows*. No need to color the facts. It is the moment of truth, and it discourages by its divine

solemnity any jest, banter or lightness.

The reality of the coming Judgment was vivid in Paul's mind. He pictured it again in these words: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). We will be summoned, we must appear; there will be no escaping it. And that is not all. A more literal translation of Paul's words in this text might be: "For we must all be *exposed* before the judgment seat of Christ." Do *we* need to be exposed? Oh, how the Lord knows us! He knows what tendency there is in every human heart to cover, to conceal, to shade, to make black appear gray, and gray a dazzling white, to call evil good and good evil. But God knows; He knows we must be made manifest, must be "*exposed in our true light*." No sham, no pretense, no hypocrisy in that all-discerning light. The great Judge will be able to see us exactly as we are, blemishes and all. And nothing that we may have tried to do to cover our deformities will avail. Whatever we have said, whatever we have done, whatever our innermost motives and purposes, all will be as clear as glass. The Judge before whom we stand will be perfect in *wisdom*, hence cannot be deceived; He will be perfect in *righteousness*, hence cannot be bribed; and He will be perfect in *knowledge*, hence cannot be mistaken.

A legend is told of the Judgment, in which the angel delivers an open book and says, "Read now thy book; thou wert the scribe, now testify this day against thyself." This is much the way it will be. Nothing will be brought against us at Judgment which we have not caused. There will be no blame transferred to us from another's sins, nor any credit from another's righteousness. Our record will be as we have written it. There will be nothing new, only an unveiling of the old. We will stand there as if there were no other in the world—just Christ, just I; and for me, life here will be finished and over and beyond the time of any amending, if my time and opportunity have been sufficient;

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NOTE: *We Are Coming To Judgment* is available as a recorded church-service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

and upon His verdict will hang everything future.

What is most awesome about the Judgment of God is its finality. A decision in a human court may be appealed, questioned, suspended. But from this heavenly court there is no appeal. If the verdict is rendered in our favor, no power in heaven or earth will be able to alter it; and if the verdict is not in our favor, there will be no higher court of appeal. The verdict will be final, and we will have to live or die with its consequences.

### Judgment Is Just

Does this seem harsh? Does this seem dictatorial, unbecoming to a God of love and mercy? Will God treat those who disobey Him so severely as to completely remove them from the land of the living without giving them further opportunity to amend their ways?

We talk easily and freely of the good news of the Kingdom of God, and it is proper that we should; this was the theme of Jesus' preaching, indeed, of His whole life. "Thy kingdom come," He taught His disciples to pray, "thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." But there is another side of this good news—which Jesus also taught—and which we avoid at our own peril. It is the side of God's severity and judgment. There is much of love, comfort and blessing with God. There is also just retribution for the disobedient.

It is the way of modern man to turn a blind eye to wrongdoing as long as possible. We try to tolerate it, and will do everything possible to avoid openly opposing it. Parents hesitate to correct their children, teachers to punish their pupils, and the public puts up with vandalism and antisocial behavior of all sorts with scarcely a murmur. The accepted maxim seems to be that as long as evil can be ignored, it should be; one should punish only as a last resort, and then only so far as absolutely necessary. Tolerance is seen as the all-time virtue, while living by fixed principles of right and wrong is censured.

Now this may be the opinion of mortal men, but it is not God's way. The Bible presents God as a Judge of right and wrong, according to His own standard; a God who vindicates the innocent and punishes the wicked.

This does not mean that God intends to frighten men into obedience. Milton's picture of a fiery place of torture has no place in the divine scheme. But when men accept responsibility from God, God expects them to be true to their agreement. If they fail, they must take the consequences; God must act in accordance with His agreement. This is judgment. He must also reward those who are faithful

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to their agreement; this also is judgment.

There is no evading the reality of God's work as Judge, past, present, or future. Often in times past He acted through human agents, or through angelic messengers, or forces of nature which He summoned to do His work; but always God as supreme Judge was in command. Nearly four thousand years ago Abraham, interceding for the city of Sodom which he learned from the angel was ripe for destruction, cried, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25). Jephthah, concluding his ultimatum to the Ammonite invaders, declared, "I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me; the Lord the Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon" (Judges 11:27). "God is the judge," says the Psalmist (Ps. 75:7). "Arise, O God, judge the earth" (Ps. 82:8). In the New Testament God is also called the "Judge of all" (Heb. 12:23).

God sets the standard for the children of men; and often in times past, when God was working openly in the affairs of men, men were judged according to that standard. He was not always "sugar and spice and everything nice." The first account of His severity is in the first few pages of the Biblical record. Adam sinned, with this result: "So he drove out the man" (Gen. 3:24). Symbolic? Yes. But it is a true picture of the way God promises to deal with those who disobey like Adam.

What happened to the ancient world when God looked down and saw that "every imagination of the thoughts" of man's heart was "only evil continually"? What happened to that corrupt world of Noah's day? God judged them by sending a flood to destroy all who would not listen to His words and obey the voice of His spokesman (Genesis, chapters 6-8).

What happened to the ancient cities of the plain who refused all entreaty to reform? God sent upon them His fiery judgments, engulfing them in a burning catastrophe; Sodom and Gomorrah and all the cities of the plain met swift destruction.

### God As Judge

What happened to Israel's Egyptian taskmaster, the obstinate Pharaoh who persisted in holding the Israelite people against the word of the Lord? First came the terrors of the ten plagues, climaxing with the plague of the death of the firstborn; then followed a stinging defeat when the Egyptian hosts attempted to pursue the departing Israelites through the Red Sea; the waters closed upon the defiant armies; God was rendering judgment.

In the days of the Israelite wanderings in the

wilderness, the judgments of God were felt many times. God judged severely, removing on more than one occasion the murmurers, the idolaters, the disobedient, the rebellious. God judged Nadab and Abihu for offering sacrifice on His altar contrary to the manner stipulated in the law (Lev. 10:1-6). He judged Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and all who sided with them because they opposed the authority God had placed over them; He destroyed them all suddenly. Time and again God sent His judgments upon the whole nation of Israel for their unfaithfulness and punished them by allowing them to fall into the hands of their enemies (Judges 2:11; 3:5; 4:1). Before they ever entered the Land of Promise, God threatened them with deportation as the ultimate in penalty for their impiety; and eventually, after repeated warnings from the prophets God sent, the judgments came. The Northern Kingdom (Israel) fell victim to the Assyrian captivity, and later the Southern Kingdom fell to Babylon (II Kings 17; 22:16; 23:26). In Babylon, God's judgments were active again, upon both Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar at different times for their impiety and lack of reverence toward Him.

## Judgment In the New Testament

Nor are the narratives of divine judgment confined to the Old Testament. Some people feel that the God of the New Testament is different from the God of the Old, that He is more loving, more merciful, less stern and exacting. But do we find this altogether true? Jesus pronounced a severe judgment upon the Jews for rejecting Him, even the destruction of their capital city (Matthew 24). Apparently some of the apostles had power to administer God's judgment, for when Ananias and his wife Sapphira lied unto God, there was judgment swift and terrible by the hand of Peter (Acts 5:3-7). When Herod exalted himself against God, again there was swift judgment. There was judgment upon Elymas the sorcerer when he tried to oppose the preaching of the gospel (Acts 13:8).

And when we turn from Bible history to Bible teaching, we find even more about the Judgment. God is definitely a God who judges between good and evil in men. The Mosaic system of law, in force among the Israelites for more than a millennium, had at the head of it the God who designed it, and who was ready to act as final Judge. The mandate

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## Let Us Pray . . .

Our Father in heaven, we rejoice in the revelation of Thyself in all the works of creation.

Thou hast revealed Thyself to mankind in the words and deeds of Thy servants of the past and present, and in providing for us Thy Word to guide us through our short journey of life.

We appreciate all Thy consideration for us Thy humble earthly creatures, for the unmerited blessings which we have received and are receiving. But give us the insight to know that these favors cannot long continue as at present. At best our life is as a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

But as limited as our lives are we are thankful for them, and appreciate them as the greatest gift to us. It is by them that we are provided the opportunity to qualify for continued life, glory, riches, honor, and a fame that will endure as long as the ages of eternity roll. But give us the insight to know that these future blessings can never be ours unless we now make ourselves worthy of them.

The reward that Thou hast promised, exceeding

abundantly above all that we can ask or think, will be given to us as a gift without money or without price—almost, but not quite. A definite effort is required on our part. Thou wilt share Thy abundant wealth, and choose for Thy eternal associates, only those worthy of that favor. To determine the winners there must be a day of reckoning. We are coming to judgment.

Thou hast revealed to us Thy plan for the remaking of our character. If we have accepted the challenge and covenanted to serve Thee, an accounting must be made to determine our worthiness. All covenant-makers must appear before the Judgment seat of Christ to give an account for what they have done whether good or bad. Grant us the strength to serve Thee faithfully so there can be no bad marks to be revealed when we face our record as it stands.

Be with Thy work in all its forms. Be with those who are absent from us today. Be with and bless all who are striving to learn and live Thy blessed precepts and to live above the world. Be with the sick and afflicted, and those who do not have our privilege of constant assembly. Give us strength to continue steadfast to the end that a crown of endless life may be ours in the world to come. In Jesus' name. Amen.



of that law—and indeed of every law of God—was, “Obey and live, disobey and die.” There would be judgment.

The prophets of Israel and Judah continued the theme of judgment; indeed, the greater part of their recorded teachings reflect their earnest desire for the disobedient people to repent and reform that they might escape the judgments of God. This was why they were sent—and how could they fulfill their mission except by telling the people what would come upon them if they did *not* turn? Even in the books of Job, Psalms and the practical maxims of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, God is the great Judge who “shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccl. 12:14).

If we examine the New Testament, the emphasis on God as Judge is still there—and intensified. Every servant of God is individually responsible for his or her conduct. The entire New Testament is written to tell the certainty of the coming final Day of Judgment. Why? So that believers in that age and every age following might get right with God and so find His favor in that Day. The New Testament looks on the “day of judgment” as the “day of wrath,” the “wrath to come,” and proclaims Jesus the divinely appointed Judge (Acts 17:31). Again, He is the “Judge” who “stands before the door” (James 5:9), who is ready to “judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom” (II Tim. 4:1, I Pet. 4:5). He is the “righteous judge” who will give Paul his crown of life (II Tim. 4:8), and punishment to Alexander the coppersmith who did him much evil (II Tim. 4:14). He is “the one designated by God as judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 10:42, NEB). To the Roman brethren, Paul wrote that “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Rom. 2:16). Jesus Himself said, “The Father . . . hath committed all judgment unto the Son . . . the Father . . . hath given him authority to execute judgment . . . the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:22, 26, 28-29).

### Nothing to Fear?

What does all this emphasis on Judgment mean? It means that dealing with God is serious business. It is written for us, because we are so inclined to take sin too lightly, to think that it doesn’t really matter what we do. We need to meditate often upon the subject of God’s role as Judge.

An article recently published in a popular news letter discusses the subject of God’s judgment in detail, and a friend has asked us to comment. The author of the article, Mr. Tennyson, believes the judgment of God is nothing to fear, nothing to be in the least concerned about. We quote:

“Perhaps no word in the English Scriptures has brought more fear and dread to the hearts of men than the English word ‘judgment’! Every human knows that his destiny with death cannot be long delayed, and whenever his thoughts turn to what he thinks is the ‘judgment’ before the great white throne, his whole being is struck with fear, dread, and often trembling. Certainly untold billions in the coming resurrection will be joyfully shocked to find that the so-called ‘judgment’ of the Lord is far from an event to be dreaded!”

He continues to explain why he believes this. “Like so many other myths, the myth of a dreaded day of judgment is due largely to mistranslations in our English versions of Scripture, and to religious teachings based upon the mistranslations. . . . Since the Lord’s ‘judgment’ or SHAPHAT means to ‘defend, deliver, and relieve the poor, the oppressed, the fatherless, and the widows,’ it is surely something to be desired, not to be looked forward to with fear, dread and trembling!” For authorities define the Hebrew term rendered ‘judge’ or ‘judgment’ as ‘to visit’ or ‘vindicate by governing or ruling.’ ”

### Universal Resurrection? Universal Salvation?

We cannot quote all that Mr. Tennyson has to say about the fallacy of confusing “judgment” with “punishment,” but if we understand his position it is that no one has anything to fear from Christ’s judgment. Christ comes back to earth to set everything right, to rehabilitate the evildoers and establish His kingdom. The incorrigible element will be destroyed, but only temporarily—until the end of Armageddon. After Armageddon, during the thousand year reign of Christ, they, together with all who have died since Adam, will be resurrected and turned to righteousness by education. So we have it: universal resurrection, universal salvation.

Now we have the plainest of evidence from the Word of God that neither universal resurrection nor universal salvation are in the plan of God. Moses stated the plan in Deut. 11:26-28, saying, “Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments

*(Continued on page 19)*

# How Long Driven and Tossed?

*"But he must ask in sincere faith without secret doubts as to whether he really wants God's help or not. The man who trusts God, but with inward reservations, is like a wave of the sea, carried forward by the wind one moment and driven back the next. That sort of man cannot hope to receive anything from God, and the life of a man of divided loyalty will reveal instability at every turn"*

—James 1:6-8, Phillips

UNSTABLE as water. Could James have used a more fitting simile of the professing Christian who vacillates between faith and doubt?

The King James Version phrases it, "For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed." The Moffatt Bible makes a graphic picture: "For the doubtful man is like the surge of the sea, whirled and swayed by the wind; that man need not imagine he will get anything from the Lord, double-minded creature that he is, wavering at every turn."

We have observed a body of water being whipped into whitecaps by the wind. We have seen the waves as they beat against the shore. We have watched them rushing across the lake. At such times, have we wondered what it is that actually moves across the lake? Have we ever stopped to realize that if all the water ran across the lake, it would pile up on the other side? The answer is simple: The water is not running anywhere; what the water is doing is bobbing up and down, up and down, up and down. And this is the way James pictured the professing Christian with divided loyalties, wavering at every turn, bobbing up and down, up and down.

When we waver, when we have doubts, we are like a wave of the sea, unstable, without confidence. There is motion but no real progress. It is all up and down, up and down, up and down, forward and then backward.

Faith depends on finding out what the promises of God are and then believing them. To have faith we must actually commit ourselves to Him, to live according to His will.

Asking in faith means that we are asking God for the things He has promised in His Word. In this way we ask with one hundred percent dependence upon God, nothing wavering, knowing that what He has promised He will fulfill.

The word "wavering" means one time "yes" and one time "no." First we ask for something, then we do not want it. Today we ask, tomorrow we do

not. We begin to think about what it would be like to be completely dependent on God and we become fearful. We do not know if we are ready to take it. We ask today and then fear that God may give it to us. We feel that we know the will of God and are seeking to do it when all we really want is for God to agree with us in our *own* will. All this is known to God. He looks into our hearts; he sees our reservations. He knows when we have an earnest desire to do right, and when we do not. When we ask for our own will to be granted, we are not really asking at all because we are not asking in faith.

God will do for us according to His will when we have asked in the integrity of our hearts without reservations or second thoughts, nothing wavering, when we are one hundred percent committed.

God will not accept a limp, hesitating obedience. He wants every fiber of our being used in His service. Nor will God accept a divided heart, one that strives to serve Him and also seeks its own pleasure.

We cannot serve two major causes because the moment we try to do so our allegiance becomes divided and we serve neither. God wants wholehearted service, our entire allegiance.

A Christian has no master but God. He cannot give a part of his life to God and another part to the world. With God it is all or nothing. A Christian is one who has surrendered complete control of his life to Christ; he holds nothing back. There is no wavering or double-mindedness, no divided loyalties here. It is the person who hesitates, who cannot make up his mind as to his primary allegiance, who is like a wave of the sea "driven with the wind and tossed."

Many times we have been guilty of claiming loyalty to two causes, sometimes depending on whom we are with. But we cannot be neutral; we must take a firm stand for God or we will be classed with those that hate Him.



There is yet another way in which we may be like the "wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed." For an example of this, let us consider the lesson in this true story.

The minister had just finished delivering a red hot sermon on hell (which we know does not exist). It was one of those sermons which made you fairly *feel* the heat of the flames licking up around you. The congregation stirred uneasily in their pews.

At that moment, a man on the street who was on his way to attend a costume ball rushed in. He was dressed in a red suit with a long tail and a skin-tight mask with horns; and with his pitchfork he certainly looked like the widely accepted picture of the devil.

As he hurried along, he was caught in a sudden rainstorm—a downpour; so he took shelter in the nearest building—which happened to be a church where service was just ending. Rushing into the building, he shocked the members, who thought he was the real devil. A flash of lightning and a clap of thunder added to the illusion. The congregation panicked and rushed for the rear exits. The intruder, thinking the church must have been struck by the lightning, raced after them. Everyone got out except an elderly lady. Turning in fear, she stretched out her hands and pleaded for mercy. "Oh, devil, please don't hurt me; I know I've been a member of this church for thirty years, *but I've really been on your side all the time!*"

Is God's Word such a force in our lives that those who once knew us no longer recognize us as the same persons—or are we professing allegiance to God when our heart is really not His at all? Is our attendance in God's house mostly out of habit or to maintain social status in the community? Are we in the church only in name? Do the weeks and months come and go without any real spiritual change in our lives? Is our Christianity in God's sight a sham, or are we genuine?

It is easy to *seem* to be religious.

How easily the mind wavers, wanders in by and forbidden paths. How quickly our minds wander even while the pastor is delivering a rousing sermon. "I wonder if we'll have company this afternoon. . . . I must speak to the Spencers right after Church about that little piece of business I failed to attend to last week. . . . Why, there's Art Mason! How good to see him in Church again! . . . I must go home immediately after service and make that phone call. . . . Oh, yes, the sermon. . . ."

How about our morning devotions? Do we sometimes find our mind more involved with the day's activities than with thoughts of God?

Or we may waver as we pray; we may *say* words we do not really mean. We may talk of God's prom-

ises when our thoughts are far, far away. Prayer at such times can only fall to the ground as nothing. It does not move upward. It is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, up and down, up and down all day, getting nowhere.

Who can compute how much folly and failure and sin have resulted from vacillation?

Today we are carried forward on the crest of enthusiasm, determined to serve the Lord with all our mind, might and strength, determined that we can and *will* accomplish the entire work of overcoming the evils of our nature; tomorrow we are driven back by gales of doubt, doubting our own ability to accomplish the work God asks of us, and even doubting the divine promises.

Let us muster all our spiritual might to conquer such wavering. And remember above all, there can be no compromise. There is no place in God's service for the double-minded, the divided allegiance, the in-and-outers, the maybe-yes maybe-no believers, who are constantly looking back at the things they left behind. Can we expect God to recognize such as His own? Can we expect Him to give full pay for part-time service?

If we have been contenting ourselves with a wavering profession, half the time for God and the rest to satisfy our natural desires, now is the time to make a change. If we would obtain the great promises God has set before us, our service must be earnest, wholehearted and continuous.

To be consecrated fully to the Lord, our devotion must cover every act of our life, every intent of our heart, every interest of our soul. We must decide what we want and how badly we want it, and then go after it with all that we have.

Strength of character is developed by clinching our convictions with decisive action; our moral foundations are undermined each time we defer decision. To hear the call of duty and do nothing about it, to have our emotions repeatedly stirred and then turn away, to keep on weighing our religion and never putting it to work—all this serves to disintegrate the rock of character into sand.

How long will we go limping with two opinions?

With deepest longing to yield our service wholly to the Lord, let us greet each new day with an earnest determination that His Word will govern our spirit that day; with such a desire permeating our soul, our service to Him will be not lip only but heart and life service. Then, having chosen whom we will serve, we will be able to serve faithfully unto the end and hear from His lips, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You were not driven by the wind and tossed, but were wholehearted in your allegiance. Come and share My Kingdom." ●●

From

*John the Elder*



First in a Series on the Epistle of Second John

## A Second Letter from John the Elder

### A Study of II John 1-8

After writing the first letter to his dear children—the followers of Jesus Christ everywhere—John the Elder sees the need of writing a second shorter letter. This letter he addresses graciously to “the Elect lady and her children.” There is no doubt that by this feminine appellation he is personifying a local Church of his time. While his first letter was directed to all the Churches in general, his second letter seems to indicate a specific church, now about to face for the first time the heretics already active in the wider area. Some pointed advice was urgent.

While John did not have us in mind when he was writing, the God of heaven was moving the mind of John, and He was mindful of us. He inspired John to pen words to be especially pertinent to us in the last days. Thus, John’s words and advice are as timely in the twentieth century as in the first.

### The Salutation

*“The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth’s sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever.*

*“Grace be with you, mercy and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love”(II John 1-3).*

“The Elder” is a title John was likely to employ in preference to his own name which he was accustomed to suppress. You remember in his gospel, when relating the story of the resurrection and referring to himself he said, “The other apostle did outrun Peter” (John 20:4). The cause of Christ was far more important to John than his name. And his identity was so well known, his authority

so well recognized that he could use the title without needing to qualify or amplify it. John was an “Elder” in every way. He was a teacher, a guide and a shepherd. He was evidently well known in a wide area of the province (then known as Asia). He is intimately acquainted with the churches and their affairs. He accepts responsibility for their spiritual oversight. He loves them and commands them. And the title “Elder” is appropriate, too, because John had outlived the other apostles. He was an eye witness of Jesus Christ, a veritable patriarch in age, experience and spiritual stature. There were other elders, *but* John was *the* Elder par excellence.

The word “elect” is derived from a Greek verb meaning “to choose, select.” It refers to the fact that God had chosen the Christians from among mankind. They were men and women who had responded to His call. “Lady” is a term of respect, and this feminine personification was not uncommonly used of a community. Israel was the “daughter of Zion.” Jerusalem was regarded as the “mother” of the nation. The faithful Church is called “the Bride of Christ.” Furthermore, John’s statement of love in verses 1 and 2 or his exhortation to love in verse 5 could hardly refer to his personal love for an individual lady. Such would not be termed a “commandment . . . which we had from the beginning” (v. 5).

John is assuring these Christians of his warm affection for them in the bond of Christian fellowship. It is much more than the flicker and flame of human attraction. Mutual faith in the true gospel is a bond of indomitable good will that endures all things. John’s assertion that his love is shared by all who know “the truth” indicates further that he is writing to a Church and not to an individual friend. Those who know “the truth” are they who accept it; it lives in them; it dominates and directs them. But—

There is danger. False teachers are active and heretics are emerging. The Church needs to be warned. John is writing promptly to uphold and strengthen the followers of Christ. He is confident that "the truth" which "dwelleth in us shall be with us forever." Indeed, this truth of the living God is not a transient thing. It will live on and on while the ages of eternity roll.

John's greeting is unusual. Instead of the usual desire or prayer for blessings to be bestowed on others, John makes a positive affirmation. "Grace, mercy and peace *shall* be with us" (note marginal reading and rendering in newer versions). These blessings are guaranteed to all who walk in truth and love; John is confident. And he includes himself in this circle of blessings.

*Grace* is a term which represents all the blessings that flow from the Father's throne, even the most extensive; however, it never suggests unmerited salvation. We all need the *mercy* of God, His unfailing compassion, His concern and readiness to help whenever and even before we call upon Him in truth. And how sweet is peace, that harmony between man and man, and far more, the harmony between God and man. Some of the terms which describe the original meaning of "peace" in this text are "the heart sitting quiet"; "an undivided heart"; "a well-arranged soul"; "a song in the body." These blessings of "grace, mercy and peace" are indeed among the choicest spiritual blessings. They are said to come from the Father and the Son. They are bonuses for walking in truth and love which are of God.

Many religious leaders today declare that because John unites the Father and the Son as the source of these blessings that he is bringing into view the deity of Christ. But there is no evidence for such a statement. The Son and the Father were in absolute unity. God's thoughts and ways had so completely become Jesus' that He could truly say, "I and the Father are one." But Jesus was never co-equal or co-eternal with the Father. He Himself testified "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28), and "My Father . . . is greater than all" (John 10:29). John in his first letter referred to Jesus as "our advocate with the Father." He is not the Father but only our advocate with the Father. Jesus in His life became a perfect example of the Father's will. He led in the way for us to become holy and perfect as God is. John was devoted to Jesus. He had seen and heard Him. When he thought of the Father he thought of the Son. When he thought of the Son, he thought of the Father. With such a close relationship between the Father and the Son, it is no wonder that John unites them as the source of spiritual blessings.

*"I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father."*

*"And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another."*

*"And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it" (II John 4-6).*

Before giving any warning, the Elder generously expresses his joy and appreciation of those who are walking in truth and love. He says, "This is love, that we walk after his commandments." John implies that some are refusing to touch the popular false doctrines and are holding to the true gospel which Jesus taught from the beginning. They are showing the Christ-life in their daily conduct. How practical a thing Christianity is! The calling of God is not only to Christian profession but to Christian practice.

John now comes to the real motive of his letter. He seems to imply that all members are not wholly committed, all are not living a sound Christian life according to the commandment of the Father. John is especially thinking of true belief and brotherly love. All may not always agree on all points, but we had better be careful of what prompts us to disagree and on what points we disagree and in what spirit we disagree. John does not command but beseeches that in all circumstances they should remember the commandment to "love one another." If there are differences, a brotherly spirit must prevail.

Today religious people often say "all you need is love." But such advice is meaningless if the nature of love is not defined. John's definition is brief but pointed: love is walking "after his commandments." The apostle Paul describes it thus: "This love of which I speak is slow to impatience—it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive; it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails. Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading to its hope; it can outlast anything" (I Cor. 13:4-7, NIV). This love of which Paul and John speak touches the entire life. It is firmly grounded in the truth. Truth and love must be combined in Christian character. Where truth dwells without love it is likely to be cold, rigid



and harsh. Where love dwells without truth it is unreliable, self-indulgent, weakly and sentimental. Neither is truth in itself complete without love, nor love without truth. The combination of both is needful to the completeness of Christian character. John urges the children of the elect lady to persevere in the command, "Love one another." By so doing they would be strengthened to resist the deceivers that were about to creep in among them.

### Be On Guard Against Error

*"For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an anti-christ.*

*"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward" (II John 7-8).*

John is urgent; many deceivers have gone forth denying the truth of God. These deceivers are those who teach false doctrines. There were Gnostics, and there were heretics, and these were a threat to the followers of Christ. Their false ideas centered especially about the person of Jesus Christ. They claimed to be progressive Christian missionaries, seeking "higher thought." Gnostic means "one who knows" or "we know God." They boasted, "I am the light," "I have fellowship with God." But they rejected Jesus as the Christ. They declared the Son of God was never a human being; it was an illusion; the carpenter's Son was never the Son of God. The Son of God, to their way of thinking, could never be a material being, for all matter is evil; only the spirit is good. By their philosophical ideas they so divided and dissolved Jesus until He was simply another man on the street. The teachings of Jesus were of no importance, but the rules of Gnosticism had to be kept. John mentions in particular their rejection of Jesus' second advent. While our Common Version words this thought in the past tense, most other versions word it as future pointing to His second coming. The Revised Standard reads, "The coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh." It is evident if they did not accept Him in the first place they would not accept His coming again. Let no one say that John here is contending for the incarnation of Christ, His pre-existence, or His atonement for our sins. John does not say a word about these. John is completely devoted to the pure and holy example of Jesus' holy life, His message of salvation and His coming again. The world may be attracted to false doctrines and false ideas about Christ, and church members may be seduced by them, but John has their right name. They are deceivers and antichrist.

John expresses further the danger of being ex-

posed to false teachings, "Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for" (v. 8, NIV). Believers must be on guard. Their first concern must be to secure their own hearts. When error abounds, our first duty is not to attack it but to look to the citadel of our own souls and see that it is well fortified. If it is secure, we can meet the false teachers with confidence. In his first letter (I John 5:18), John pictured the believer as "keeping himself"; now he portrays the necessity of personal watch-care. The aim of this watching is that we lose not what we have worked for. It is very possible for Christians to be drawn away into error and so come short of the full reward.

And we, too, in these times are in grave danger of losing what we have worked for. Whatever the cause, a weakened faith will result in less love for God, less faithful obedience, hence, less reward. The most effective safeguards against the corrupting of our faith is a healthy vigorous spiritual life. Persons whose spiritual vitality is low are the most likely victims of the deceiver.

John includes himself as having the same need of caution, and realizes that he also ought to strive to obtain the full reward. The just God rewards everyone according to his works. By speaking of a full reward, John implies that there will be partial rewards. It would not be right that they who turn aside, or falter in their course, should have the same exalted reward as they who have devoted themselves to God with ever increasing fidelity. Unquestionably the partial rewards will be enjoyed during the Golden Age of the Millennium, that wonderful time when the earth is being prepared for the eternal ages of glory. Only those who have become perfect by making that the supreme business of their lives will enjoy that unspeakable and eternal glory.

Let us covet the richest reward, be ambitious for the crown of life, diligent in the pursuit of holiness, that we may receive "the full reward." ●●

*(To Be Continued)*

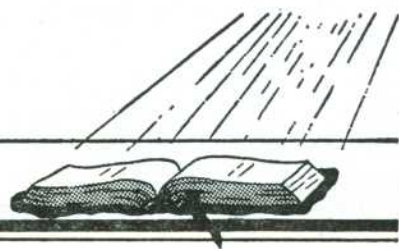
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As a vessel is known by the sound, whether it be cracked or not, so men are proved by their speeches, whether they are wise or foolish.

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*The difference between perseverance and obstinacy is that one comes from a strong will and the other from a strong won't.*

# BIBLE STUDY HOUR



## God Is Love

**"GOD IS LOVE,"** said the apostle John—and the whole religious world affirms his statement. But what is the love of God? Is it a sentimental affection such as humans know toward one another? Is God like a doting parent showering affection on all the inhabitants of the earth? Does He love everyone—regardless of character? Let us see.

*Q. The love of God is probably the most frequently preached Bible subject. But just what is the love of God?*

A. Certainly it is not like the love of humans which is largely sentimental and often overly protective. His providence toward humankind would be part of His love. He gives to all life and breath.

*Q. Yes, that would be part of His love. Can we have some further thoughts?*

A. He controls the movement of the earth and sun so that we have the changing seasons and conditions favorable for growing crops to provide food for ourselves. We could not grow anything without Him!

*Q. These things come to all, regardless of race or creed. Can we have Scripture proof for this?*

A. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). The sinner receives as much of the sun and rain as the righteous.

Paul said that God gives "us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). What this life has to offer is not denied anyone.

*Q. There is a little song we used to sing as children—something about the love of Jesus. Maybe someone can tell us what it is.*

A. Are you thinking of "Jesus loves me, this I know; for the Bible tells me so"?

*Q. Yes—but does the Bible tell us that Jesus loves everybody?*

A. No. Jesus said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and

he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). That would not include everybody, but only those who keep His commandments.

*Q. It might be comforting to think that God and Jesus love everyone, but if we cannot prove it by the Bible, we cannot believe it. Whom does God love?*

A. "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me" (Prov. 8:17). He also says "Them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (I Sam. 2:30). Only those who honor and respect Him will be part of His family and worthy of sharing His love.

*Q. What about Jesus—did He show favor to everyone?*

A. No. On one occasion He drove the money-changers from the temple, saying, "My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matt. 21:12-13). He showed no love for them.

His denunciation of the self-righteous Pharisees would not indicate that He had love for them either. He called them by some quite unflattering names.

In His prayer just before the crucifixion Christ said that He did not pray for the world, but for those that were then His and those that would believe in the future.

*Q. I can't believe He would love those He would not pray for. In the minds of most church members, the love of God is summed up in John 3:16. Would someone quote it, please?*

A. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

*Q. What does this verse mean to the majority who call themselves Christians?*

A. That God loved the world so much that He sent His only Son to die as a sacrifice for the sins of all mankind—past, present and future, thus freeing men from the penalty of their own sin.

*Q. One theologian has written of John 3:16: "In the whole Word of God there must be few if any scriptures which have appealed so irresistibly to so many. It is the gracious purpose of God toward His unruly world; and toward every one of us, without exception, who compose it. God so loved the world that He sent His Son for everyone; but it is only those who believe in Him that do not perish, but have everlasting life."*

*We can readily see why such a doctrine would be appealing because it provides an easy way to salvation. But these are the thoughts of men, and we are confident that this was not the message God intended to convey through His Word. Can we have some texts to show that Christ did not die because of the love of God for the world?*

*A. Christ's death was murder, not sacrifice. Peter testified to this fact several times—and he was living when the dastardly deed was done. In his Pentecost sermon he twice mentioned how they had "crucified and slain" Christ (Acts 2:23, 36), and in his later preaching he continued to press the charge. In Acts 3:15 he accused them of having "killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead," and again in the 5th chapter, he spoke of the risen Lord, "whom ye slew and hanged on a tree" (v. 30).*

*Q. There is another good reason why we know Christ's death could not have been a sacrifice. What is that?*

*A. God condemns human sacrifice. Jeremiah, speaking for God, condemned those who "burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which [God] commanded them not" (Jer. 7:30-31). And in Micah, in answer to the question, "Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" God states what is required of man: "To do justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God" (Mic. 6:6-8).*

*Q. We cannot believe God would have required the life of His only Son. He would be doing the very thing He condemns. That would not be justice—and God is a God of justice.*

*Can we have some thoughts now on the true meaning of John 3:16? How can we explain the death of Christ if it was not sacrifice? Practically all Christendom believes that it was a sacrifice.*

*A. Peter said that Christ "suffered for us, leaving us an example, that [we] should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21). He gave Christ to us as a perfect pattern, an example for us to follow.*

*Christ's death that avails to our salvation was His death to sin. He showed us the way. Paul said, "For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also*

*yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:10-11).*

*Q. What about true believers in Him having everlasting life?*

*A. Those who believe in Jesus are not those who simply profess their belief in the man Jesus, but those who believe to the point of action. One is not counted a believer unless he does something to prove his belief. Jesus set the standard during His ministry when He said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). All who do this are true believers.*

*Q. What about "everlasting life"? Is it possible for anyone to have it now as the verse might indicate?*

*A. No. Those who truly believe and follow Jesus to the end still have everlasting life only by promise. "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" (I John 2:25). We cannot get it until He comes to bring it.*

*Q. Yes. Our observation shows us that those who profess to have been saved through Christ and to have everlasting life, are still mortal and subject to death.*

*A noted evangelist once said that "It is as natural for God to love as it is for the sun to shine." Is this true? Is it God's nature only to love?*

*A. God is love—but He is also capable of other emotions. We read of His wrath, His anger, His hatred—not like human emotions but no less definite reflections of His attitude. Paul said, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom. 11:22).*

*Q. God's love is reserved for certain individuals. It is not lavished on everyone. Some are not worthy of His love. Could we have an example?*

*A. "I have loved you, . . . Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob; and I hated Esau" (Mal. 1:2-3). Jacob and Esau are representative of two classes of people, faithful and unfaithful. God loves those who do His will, but hates those who defy Him and His laws.*

*Q. Some theologians say that "God hates sin, but loves the sinner." Is this possible? Is it Biblical?*

*A. No. "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps. 7:11). That sounds like He hates the sinner as well as the sin.*

*Q. Yes, God hates both sin and the sinner.*



A. "The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright" (Ps. 11:5-7).

Q. *There is some very good proof in Psalm 78. The Psalmist reviewed the history of the children of Israel, how they provoked God and kept not His Word; then he says, "When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel" (Ps. 78:59). God not only hated the things that they did, He despised them also.*

A. There is another good testimony in Psalm 5:5-6: "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man."

Q. *I think "abhor" is even stronger than "hate." To abhor is to loathe, or despise. It could not be stronger. It is not possible that God could hate sin without hating the sinner also.*

*We want to be among those whom God loves, not those He hates; hence we want to be part of His family. What is His description of those He does not love?*

A. "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity" (Isa. 40:15, 17).

The 22nd verse of the same chapter says that "the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers." Those counted as the dust of the balance or as grasshoppers would not be counted worthy of His love.

Q. *We should consider it a privilege to have the opportunity to become part of His family and to share His love. In the beginning of our lesson we mentioned God's providence, or His care for all people as one facet of His love. What do those of His family share that others do not?*

A. His watchful eye is over His own. "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (I Pet. 3:12). And in his second epistle Peter said, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (II Pet. 2:9).

Q. *There is more to God's love than watchfulness. What else does He offer His servants?*

A. He offers protection. "The angel of the Lord en-

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campeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Ps. 34:7).

His angels are "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14). We cannot see them, but we know they are there.

Q. *Both of those texts limit the angelic protection to those of His family. The ones that fear Him are the heirs of salvation. But we must remember that if we defy the laws of the land such as failing to observe the speed limit, we cannot expect His angel to keep us from an accident on the highway.*

*Is it correct to say that God shows fatherly concern for the welfare of His children?*

A. Yes. Psalm 103:13 says, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." But like His angelic protection, His pity is limited to those that fear Him.

He offers help to His children in trouble. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1).

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. 33:27).

Q. *God chose Israel to be His people and promised to be with them. But He laid down specific conditions that they must abide by to be worthy of His loving care. All too often they forgot and suffered as a result of their own disobedience.*

*King David leaned heavily upon God. God showed him much loving favor, and David did not fail to thank and praise Him for it. Could we have Ps. 18:2?*

A. "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower."

*To Be Continued Next Issue*

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Not too much time  
Remaining, Lord,  
So let me use it well;  
Not wasting minutes,  
Hours—days;  
But may my moments tell  
For Thee, that I may truly have  
A good account to give  
For every day  
On this bright earth  
That You have let me live!

# Concerning Job

WE HAVE recently received an inquiry concerning the general meaning of the book of Job. It is a difficult book to understand. But we must first realize that the Bible contains writings of various kinds. There are historical passages, prophetic writings, allegories, poems, and wisdom literature. The book of Job is counted among the latter.

The entire book seems to concern the question of whether prosperity in this life is the result of righteous living and whether, conversely, calamity and misfortune are the result of sin. This is an age-old question, and still current. It troubled David (Ps. 37:1-3); it troubled Jeremiah (Jer. 12:1-3). It troubles us today, until we learn to see the world and all things in it as God sees it.

We cannot consider the book of Job to be a historical account, though we do not question that there was a literal man named Job. Job was a very patient man (James 5:11). He was a notably righteous man whose righteousness we might like to be able to claim, if such were possible (Ezek. 14:14).

But there are a number of clues in the book to show that the story is not literal:

1) God as the Creator and Supreme Ruler of the universe would never allow a devil to come literally into His presence (see Habakkuk 1:13).

2) God would never create a literal devil to tempt men to do wrong (see James 1:13).

3) God, who is omniscient, would have no reason to ask the devil, "Whence comest thou?" for He would know without asking.

4) If Job had been smitten with boils from head to foot, he certainly would not have taken a literal potsherd and scraped himself to promote healing.

5) When Job's three friends came to see him, they sat upon the ground for seven days and seven nights without saying a word; this is most unlikely.

6) The rapid succession of calamities which came upon Job would be highly unlikely in real life; much more reasonable if used to illustrate a point in parable.

7) We read in Job 27:1 that "Job continued his parable"—a positive suggestion that the book is a parable and not historical narrative.

Symbolic illustration, parable, and allegory are not uncommon in Scripture. The first three chap-

ters of Genesis are far more reasonable, enlightening and harmonious when seen and studied as allegory. There were two literal people named Adam and Eve, however the Genesis story concerns Adam and Eve as representatives of all who agree to serve God. Jesus made frequent use of parables to teach lessons. The book of Jonah gains in breadth and depth when considered as parable; just as does the first chapter of Hosea.

In the book of Job, we do not know whether Job used himself as the major character for his parable and built events around himself to illustrate; or whether he drew from personal experience and magnified it for the purpose of teaching. Again, the narrative may be wholly unrelated to his life story. He may be putting into story-form the lessons he had learned through life, so that others may benefit. Whatever Job's immediate means or purpose, God saw fit to have the book preserved for us, so there must be something we may glean.

The first two chapters of the book may be considered a prologue, or introduction to the story, setting the stage for the debate in poetry which follows. Chapters 3 to 32 are a discussion between Job and his three "friends," Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. The friends take the position that Job's suffering was the result of his sin, while Job maintains his innocence and that physical sufferings in this life are not the result of sin.

Then in chapter 32, Elihu who up to this point has been silent joins the discussion, arguing that there is another side to the question which neither Job nor his friends have considered—namely, that calamities are sent by God for the most part as chastisements, not punishments; in love, not in anger, and have for their main object to warn and teach and restrain from evil courses, not to take vengeance on past sins.

Then in chapter 38 the Lord (or His representative, an angel) answers Job out of the whirlwind with questions that put Job or you or me or anyone else in proper perspective in relation to God. "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" (38:2). A further challenge follows: "Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me" (v. 3). The questions that follow prove the vast superiority

of God and His wisdom. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? . . . Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof? . . . Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place? . . . Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? . . . Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof, that thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof . . . ? Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great? Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, which I have reserved against the time of trouble? . . . Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew? . . . Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? . . . Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are? . . . Who provideth for the raven his food? . . . Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich? which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them. . . . Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south? Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?" (See Job, chapters 38-41).

What was Job's reaction to all this? Hear Him reply to the Lord in deep humility: "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. . . . I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:1-6). The drama ends with Job's health restored, and he again has a family—seven sons and three daughters and twice as many animals as before. "So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning" (Job 42:12).

The book contains much of wisdom for the striving Christian; but to consider it as real history turns it into a travesty. The believers in a literal devil find support for their theory by giving literal interpretation; but there are too many plain texts to the contrary to make such a position tenable.

The devil is simply an adversary, an opposer, the wickedness in men personified, the wicked man himself.

From the book of Job we may gain deeper insight into the workings of God's wisdom and know that He is supreme; whatever He in His wisdom sees fit to give or to withhold, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." All things ultimately work for our eternal good if we love God and are called according to His great and eternal purpose. ●●

## Leaving Our First Love?

PERHAPS the keenest of all earthly appetites is that of love. It is a passion among humankind that has an appetite nothing short of uncontrollable. The man or woman gripped by it can think of nothing else. There is simply nothing that person will not do for the person he loves. That is what "first love" means among humankind. It is love that is out-and-out.

If mortals can have this kind of desire for one another's presence, how much more should we desire God, who can do for us infinitely more than any mortal, even more than we can ask or imagine! How much stronger should be our passion for His kingdom if we are gripped by that divine "first love" that Jesus spoke of!

What does God's Word say about true, godly love?

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*

*I Corinthians 13:4-8, NIV*

Can we bring ourselves to love like this? Do we today love like this, or have we lost the love we once had for our Lord and His service; perhaps the love of the world has taken its place?

Do we really love the Lord? Do we really long to serve Him, or has the service we do become a duty we must do to hide that which is within our



hearts? Are we still in our "first love," or do we now make excuses?

"Well, you see, I had to work late." Or, "I am too tired tonight." Or, "You know I had so many other things to do." Is this how you are treating your Lord? Are you making excuses? Have you lost the desire you had to do your best for Him? If so, you have left your first love.

When night comes, do we now feel too tired to kneel at our bedside to pray, and are we too lazy in the morning to get out of bed a half hour earlier to pray? Didn't we spend half the night in prayer at one time? Didn't we wake in the early hour and feel compelled to tell the Lord how much we appreciated the great things He had done for us?

And when things seemed to be going wrong, when we had heartaches, when we had doubts, when we felt we had "let God down," didn't we lay hold of prayer until we had the victory? Yes, we prayed the thing through. But now we are too tired to spend a moment or two on our knees before getting into bed. If this is true of us, we have left our first love.

Can you now go all day without giving your Lord a thought, when once you sang praises and thanked Him for His goodness as you did your daily toil? Is your mind full of other things rather than being fixed on the Lord and His interests? Yes, you have something to do for the church, but is it for God—or is it for your own satisfaction, the pride of achievement rather than for the Lord? Have you forgotten now that you are in the service of the King of kings, or do you now let little things creep into your mind, things which once you would not have allowed? Is the world thus creeping into your life and pushing God out? Are you the same away from home as you are among your Christian friends? Oh, we might fool others, we might even fool ourselves; but God is not mocked; we do not fool Him. Christ says, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil" (Rev. 2:2). "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not" (Rev. 2:9). At the same time Christ says, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2:4).

Christ is saying, I can see all your good works and they please me; but you have neglected the love you once had for me.

First Corinthians 13 makes very plain that without love "I am nothing." I am reminded of the story of the rich young ruler. Here was a man who had kept God's commandments from his youth—so he thought. Yet Christ told him he lacked one thing.

"Sell all that thou hast, . . . and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me" (Luke 18:22). And when the young man heard this, "he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich" (v. 23). The rich ruler did not understand that Christ was asking him to give up his old life filled with the riches of this world in exchange for eternal wealth.

What does Jesus say in Revelation 2:9? "But thou art rich." We can never imagine the glory, the power, the wonderful blessings that are in store for those who attain, for those found worthy. We may like Paul keep under our bodies, bringing them into subjection. We may even have done great service for our Lord. But have we still our first love, or will that day come when with bowed head we hear those dreadful words, "But I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." ●●

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## Grow Up—to Salvation

"Put away all malice and all guile and insincerity and envy and all slander. Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation" (I Pet. 2:1-2, RSV).

Here is a command that touches every one of us. For who can say that he has never been guilty of malice, that he has never been spiteful, deceitful, hypocritical or envious, or critical of others?

No Christian can remain as he is; if he does, he is not a Christian. A Christian is a living being, and like every other living being, must grow. When he ceases to grow, he ceases to live, hence is no longer a Christian.

"All malice . . . all guile . . . insincerity . . . envy and all slander" must be put away, outgrown forever. All such un-Christian traits and attitudes and customs must be forcefully removed, stripped off, discarded, put away. It means a veritable spiritual warfare against degrading and disintegrating practices which constantly threaten the new life and alienate from God.

Then we must "grow up to salvation." As the newborn child craves the nourishment of milk, so those who have been born into a new life in Christ will crave His words, His laws, His correction, His discipline—everything which will make for spiritual power and growth. For above everything else, the Christian must *grow*. ●●

## We Are Coming to Judgment

(Continued from page 7)

of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day." The prophet Ezekiel told how the man who turned from his wickedness and did right would surely live, and the man who turned from his righteousness and did wickedly would die—and there is nothing said about that death being temporary, after which he should be given a second chance he could not fail, and so live forever (Ezek. 18:21-29). The prophet Jeremiah tells of a class who shall "sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake" (Jer. 51:57), showing that there are those who will not be resurrected. Jesus in His last message to John places this limitation on the dispensing of salvation—it will not be universal. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." The "right" is not for everyone, for we read of some—the "fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable . . . and all liars"—who shall "have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

### God's Love Conditional

If the Scriptures indicate anything regarding the nature of God, they clearly show His love and compassion, but it is as clearly stated to be toward those who obey and serve Him; at the same time they show His displeasure with evildoers. The apostle Paul expressed it well in Romans 11:22 as the "goodness *and* severity of God." The "and" must not be overlooked; both exist at the same time. God could not be the God of justice and right who protects the innocent and righteous without at the same time judging and punishing the evildoers. One cannot support two sides of a cause and give true support to either.

The modern idea that God is love and nothing but love is not Biblical, and we do not want it to be if we are interested in winning His favor. We find every indication in Scripture that when Christ returns to earth to set up His kingdom, those same standards of justice will prevail. We are not left with an alternate definition of "judgment" from the Greek or Hebrew that contradicts the plain teachings of the Bible. Truly, "judgment" can mean something other than "punishment," but the Bible clearly portrays the horror of that time for the unfaithful and rebellious. There will be punishment. To some it will be a "day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the

mountains" (Joel 2:2). There will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" among those shut out of the glorious new world (Luke 13:28).

The judgments of God are also termed His "wrath," a term which has no relation to any judgment that is merely a "teaching of righteousness by education." Paul said that the "wrath of God is revealed . . . against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). He spoke also of the day when the "Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (II Thess. 1:7-9). This does not sound like a temporary death after which all will be raised and taught righteousness and be given everlasting life. Paul also speaks of the day of judgment as "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God: who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:5-6). What will He render to those who are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness"? It will be "indignation, and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil" (vs. 8-9). This does not sound like any gentle rebuke followed by universal salvation. He says also that those who commit such evil are "worthy of death," not worthy of a second chance and continued life after a period of re-education (Rom. 1:32). And notice that all of these passages are not dependent upon any one word for the idea they convey—if we should remove the idea of punishment from the word "judgment," all of this truth would remain.

Why will the unfaithful be resurrected and brought to judgment? Jude tells us that it will be "to convince all that are ungodly . . . of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Who are these? They are "murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 15-16). Let us beware—here is judgment decreed which may easily touch us, if we do not cease from these evils. Now is our opportunity to turn.

### A Time of Trouble

The Bible contains every indication that there is a time of trouble coming, a time when we will want and need God's favor, a time when we shall wish that we had done those things that will place

us on God's side. If not, why did Jesus say, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36)? Why did John come preaching, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits, meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:7-8)? And why does the book of Hebrews issue so many timely warnings? Why ought we to "give the more earnest heed" to these things, "lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb. 2:1)? It is because we know that the "word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward." Judgment was meted out according to man's actions; the disobedient did not escape. Can we think it will be any different with us if we do not obey, if we do not give diligent heed to the commands of our Lord? Is it not something to consider seriously? They received a "just recompense" for what they did; so shall we; "we shall certainly not go unpunished" if we "neglect" the great opportunity that is ours. This is judgment.

Hebrews 12:25 repeats the warning: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." Why? Again we should take a lesson from those who refused to listen in times past. They could not escape their just punishment; neither shall we—in fact, "much more shall not we escape" because we are turning away from Him who speaks from heaven!

This does not mean, however, that judgment is to be feared and dreaded. God is never cruel, harsh or unjust. It is not His will that any "should perish, but that all should come to repentance." And so He warns. He warns us, so that we can prepare. It is much like the student in school. He knows when he begins that before he can graduate he must be tested; before he can stand among the masters in his field he must appear before them and be examined. And toward that day he works—not in dread but in anticipation of the honors of attainment. He looks forward to passing the examination and standing approved. So he works. The certainty of testing stimulates preparation. God's plan is much the same. He will have the best; He will have the choicest; and to find them, He must test and try all His prospective sons and daughters; we must meet His standards of righteousness; we must be all that He wants us to be, all that He knows we can be, all that He has decreed we *must* be. The thought of appearing in the presence of Christ and being judged fills us with a certain awe, but it is not a dread of punishment; our hearts yearn with longing for what that Great Judge will have to give us. If we are

ready, there will be in us a certain eagerness to present ourselves and receive our lot in the Kingdom of the Messiah. We will go to Judgment much as the accomplished student goes to graduation, to receive our diploma—and what a diploma it will be! A right to the "tree of life" immortal! A right to all the joys and blessings that come with our Lord from heaven! This is what Paul was anticipating when he thought of Judgment near the end of his course. "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day, and"—blessed thought—"not to me only, but unto all them also"—even to you and me—if we have passed our tests.

### Judgment and Promise

Again and again in Jesus' parables He pictured the Judgment, the time of separation, the time of dividing. But always it is the time of blessing for the righteous. To the sheep He will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." The man who is faithful in the few talents entrusted to him will be made "ruler over many things." The righteous shall "shine forth" in the kingdom of their Father. The man who hears and obeys, his house on the rock shall stand—and stand forever; nothing shall be able to shake it. The wheat shall be garnered into God's granary to abide forever; faithful stewards shall be blessed with eternal inheritance which will be their very own. Always there is judgment and separation, but it is to remove the evil and separate the good for the purpose of bestowing upon them the greatest of rewards and blessings.

So it may be with us. We are coming to Judgment, to that moment when God shall look upon our record and decide whether or not we qualify. If we have given all diligence during these days of preparation, if we have been meticulous about removing everything that offends Him, if we have set our hearts upon purity and have labored feverishly to remove every trace of sin as soon as it was discovered, what will we have to fear? The revealing eyes of the Judge will be able to disclose nothing but more purity, more uprightness, more honesty, and more godly virtue! And such "exposing" will only bring us more and more joy, glory, and blessing through all the Ages to come!

The Judgment is inescapable, but it need not fill us with dread. You and I will be judged—so that we may receive the reward of our life's work! We must be inspected; but if we are ready, shall we not even look forward to it? Shall we not be anxious for the great crown of glory which God holds in store for every faithful, loving servant? If our



record is pure and free from blemish, shall we not present it eagerly in His presence and "with exceeding joy"?

This was the longing of the apostle John, that his brethren would so labor that they might have "confidence in the day of Christ" and "not be ashamed before him at his coming." It is a standard *we* can reach; a reward for which *we* can qualify; an honor *we* can obtain.

Oh! What diligence should be ours in these days of preparation! How continually conscious we should be of God's greatness, His power, His love and also His severity. How seriously we should regard our obligation to Him. At Judgment we shall learn nothing new; we shall not be condemned for any but our own failures—which we could have corrected; and we shall not be rewarded for any but our own righteousness. There will be justice, fairness, and right toward all. But what supreme joy will be ours if our record reveals naught but that which is worthy of the crown, that which meets with God's approval and will assure us of His favor through all the ages to come! What exaltation for lowly mortals! It is too much to take any chances of missing. What enormous possibilities shall come with that great day of Judgment!

There is just one word for us to be concerned with now! Preparation. ●●

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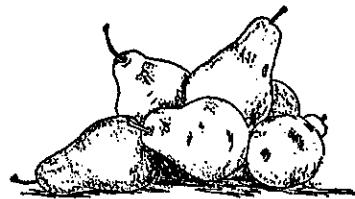
## HIS

His stone am I, set as He shall please,  
In arch or vault or pediment,  
In cornice or in frieze;  
A pillar in His temple made,  
Or in the lowly pavement laid,  
To hold the torch that He lays down,  
Or sparkling jewel in His crown.

His lamp am I, to shine where He shall say,  
And lamps are not for sunny rooms  
Nor for the light of day;  
But for dark places of the earth,  
Where men have need of light and glorious worth;  
Or for the murky twilight gray  
Where wandering ones may sometimes go astray;  
Or where the light of faith grows dim  
And men are groping after Him.

And as sometimes a flame we find  
Clear shining in the midnight dark,  
So bright we do not see the lamp,  
But only see the light,  
So may I shine—His light the flame—  
That men may see and glorify His name!  
—Selected.

## Fruitful Fragments



A pint of example is worth more than a gallon of advice.

*Where I understand the will of God, I will do it; where I do not understand, I will trust . . . and do it anyway!*

Patience is a virtue that can carry a lot of WAIT.

*Truth stored in the head should be used to stir the heart and strengthen the hand.*

You can't put your sins behind you until you have faced them.

*You can't change your life too soon—because you don't know how soon it will be too late.*

"Watch ye therefore." They who WALK the closest and WORK the hardest, WATCH the best.

*If you have the smile of God, you can expect the frown of men.*

Do you have God in your plans? Does He have you in His?

*The Christian finds victory only as he starves the old nature and feeds the new.*

While we must live in the world, we must not allow the world to live in us.

*The God who knows our "load limit" graciously limits our load.*

You can measure a man's progress in holiness by the degree of his humility.

*Some people treat God like a lawyer—they go to Him only when they're in trouble.*

Beware of unfair judgments. Don't judge a thing by the way it looks to you but by the way it looks to God.

*You can never bury your influence, no matter how deep you dig.*



# SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

*"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it  
is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"*

—Jeremiah 10:23

AMONG the many wonders of Holy Writ is its ability to compress into a single sentence a truth so vast, so complex, so far-reaching as to require a volume to expound. Even a single phrase may glow with light like that of the ancient pillar of fire.

Such a passage is Jeremiah 10:23. After the Lord had spoken of the vanity of idols and had set in contrast to the gods of the heathen the glory of the living God, the King of Eternity, the Prophet responded in an inspired exclamation that very well states the whole problem of humankind: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

The Prophet uses a figure of speech which appears in Scripture so frequently that we almost forget it is a figure. Man is seen as a traveler making his difficult way from a past he can but imperfectly recollect into a future about which he, of himself, knows nothing. And he cannot stay, but must each morning strike his moving tent and journey on toward—toward what? Here is the heavy problem.

It is a simple axiom of the traveler that if he would arrive at a desired destination, he must take the right road. How far a man may have traveled is not the important issue always; the first question is, Which road is he taking? for the further he travels on the *wrong* road, the further he is from his destination. Every road has an end, and that end may be sooner than he knows; and when that last step of the way has been taken, where will he be? Will he find himself in a tomorrow that will be the fruition of all his dreams, or will the day be a "day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness"?

For the Prophet, it is the moment of self-revela-

tion, the moment when he sees himself as he really is—a traveler lost, without guide, without compass, without direction except it come from above. "I know that the way of man is not in himself." It is something to realize, that we do not of ourselves know the way. The way to what? It is not the way through this world, for to find that we have but to look to the hundreds of thousands of millions who have gone before us. These show us many a way to travel through this world and secure what it offers. But here is a way we cannot know of ourselves; it is the way of righteousness, the way of life, the way *to* life. Toward that life "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

Could truer words be spoken? It is the truth, and we had better face it squarely. However severe the blow to our pride, we would do well to bow our heads and admit it with Jeremiah. We need God; we need Him desperately. We need Him to tell us what lies beyond, for we have not seen it; we need Him to tell us what lies within ourselves, for we are so apt to deceive ourselves. We need Him to tell us the right road to travel if we would arrive at that which lies beyond, for such knowledge is beyond the limits of our perception here.

Should we not, then, realizing all this, utter the next prayer that escaped the lips of Jeremiah: "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing"! In other words, "Lord, tell me where I am wrong now; set me on the right road before I go any further. I do not want the road that leads to eternal oblivion. I want to be set right *now*. Direct my steps that they may take me straight into Thy Kingdom. This is my prayer. Amen." ●●

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There is no reward from God to those who seek it from men.

An ancient Jewish teacher named Judah ha-Nazi used many means to transmit ethical values to his students. Once he invited several of his contentious students to dine with him. By his prior order, a platter of two cooked calf-tongues was placed before each of his student-guests. One tongue was well cooked, properly seasoned, and soft; the other was just parboiled, overseasoned, and quite tough. After sampling each tongue, the students with one accord turned their entire attention to the soft, well-seasoned tongue.

"My sons," said the sage, "consider this matter and learn from it: Is it possible that there is anybody here who does not prefer a soft tongue to a tough one? Then let your tongues be soft to one another."

## Why Us?

WHAT A marvelous God we have. What attributes our God has, to be able to tell the end from the beginning! It makes one wonder what God ever saw in such weak vessels as you and me. If God wanted beauty, He had the lily, or for that matter, any one of a thousand flowers which are not just beautiful to look at but also lovely to smell. Then, too, if He wanted grace and beauty of a different kind, He could select most animals. Why should God ever look upon men? Yet it is *we* who can someday be made in His image!

Why is it, then, that men are sinful?

Throughout Biblical history we find men and women who were counted righteous in the eyes of God. Yet for every such one there are millions who are sinful. The fact, however, that one or two live up to God's standard is proof enough that a clean life is possible to live, if the desire and determination is there. To bring home this fact, God put His Son in our midst. He was tested and tried, He was without any special powers against sin, except that He had faith and obedience in God His Father. He showed us the way God wishes us to live out our lives.

We have no excuse not to do our reasonable duty and serve our God as He would be served and to live up to God's standards. Above all we must never cease to thank God for giving us a wonderful example in His Son Christ Jesus.

—Contributed

## There Am I

WE KNOW that we shall have trials for the perfecting of our character. If we fully realize this, it will help us to endure. We do not have the sufferings Brother Paul had, and he could call his afflictions *light*. He was in the heat of the day; and if he could call the sufferings he went through *light*, what of us who are not called upon to bear so much? Can we not suffer without complaining? It is only a short while, and all will be over. And if we have "done all to stand," oh, the unspeakable joy that shall be ours.

"There am I." It is indeed a blessed thought. But oh, sometimes He seems so far away. If we are earnestly striving, all things will work together for our good.

I know that we must be careful to form good habits and to resist temptation at all times; to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation. To do this certainly takes a lot of self-discipline. Oh, this mind of ours. Someone has compared it to a "wild horse," and the comparison fits perfectly. It is ever running here and there. The only way I find I can control it is to keep it filled with the commandments and promises of God night and day, full and running over lest—beware—we *think* we have it under control when we have not.

If we do not firmly believe in our great cause and work constantly, doubt will certainly creep in and keep us from working.

There are so many scoffers and scorners in our day. So much is being said about "religious cults." If you do not worship with the popular religions of the day, you are branded as a "religious cultist." There is nothing bad about this in itself, but in my case they do mean I am not right. I do not hesitate to stand up for my beliefs, and I try to show by my life that I am striving to become a tree of righteousness.

We know that one can deceive himself into thinking he is right when he is not; but if we hold the Word of God in one hand and our soul in the other, we will be more sure of being right.

I for one do want to be right. I want to make my escape while I have time and opportunity. I do want to become perfect, and James says, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." Therefore I must work on my tongue, to keep it in subjection; I must become a new creature, and—there am I!

—From a Friend in Mississippi



# Questions

**"I have read in your literature where you say the Rapture is not taught in the Bible. But doesn't Paul say it in Thessalonians, that when Christ comes He will take the righteous up with Him to heaven?"**

The passage from Thessalonians to which you refer reads: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:16-17).

This passage describes the arrival of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead in Christ having taken place, and then the believers, living and resurrected, together being "caught up together . . . to meet the Lord in the air." I can detect no reference whatever to any going to heaven in these words. Meeting the Lord "in the air" does not seem equal in any way to being taken to heaven with Him.

According to Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*, and any other reliable lexicon, the original word translated "air" (*aer*) has no idea of heaven in it.

Paul is saying that the living and resurrected believers will rise to meet Christ as He comes to earth; but there is no indication here or elsewhere in Scripture that He will turn right around and depart with them. On the contrary, "the righteous shall never be removed"; "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth"; "thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Prov. 10:30; Matt. 5:5 Rev. 5:9-10). So shall "we ever be with the Lord" because "the tabernacle of God is with man, and he shall dwell with them, . . . and God himself shall be with them and be their God" (Rev. 21:3-4). So shall "we ever be with the Lord" because "it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isa. 25:9). "His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount

of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east" (Zech. 14:4)—a location definitely on the earth, not in heaven. We do not go away to be saved, but "he will come and save" us (Isa. 35:4).

**"I believe Matthew 17:11 which reads, 'Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.' But the following statement you make under the heading 'Elias Comes—Why?' I cannot find in the Bible. Your statement reads, 'Elijah comes to restore all things. What things? He comes to restore to mortal life all those who sleep in Jesus, that they may go forth to meet the coming King of the earth.'"**

**"I cannot find this statement in the Bible. Is this your own imagination?"**

The Bible does not directly say that Elijah will come to restore to mortal life all who sleep in Jesus; but if he does not, who will? If Jesus was right in saying "Elias truly shall first come and restore all things," what would he restore, if not the Holy Spirit power? And would not the Holy Spirit power include power to raise the dead?

The apostle Paul indicates in I Thessalonians 4 that the resurrected dead will be living and ready to greet the Lord when He descends; in fact, they will rise to "meet the Lord in the air." How can this happen, if someone has not already raised them to life?

Paul tells us, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." The meaning of "archangel" is "chief messenger." Doesn't it seem logical that this "chief messenger" who comes will raise the dead, and that it will be the prophet Elijah, whose coming is directly foretold? (see Mal. 4:5-6; Matt. 17:11). If the living covenant-makers and those who have been sleeping are to meet the Lord together in the air, someone must resurrect them.

**"You say angels were once mortal creatures like ourselves. How did they get to be glorified before we or the resurrected dead get glorified? Please give Scripture proof."**

The Bible does not tell us as much as we would like to know about angels; however, if we take all that it says on the subject we can get some idea of their nature and how they received their glory.

First of all, angels were often called "men." This would indicate that their appearance is similar to that of "men." The "men" journeyed to the city of Sodom (Gen. 19:1-5). A "man of God" appeared to Manoah, to announce the birth of a son (Judges 13:8-11). The angel Gabriel who appeared to Daniel and years later to Mary was called "the man Gabriel:" (Dan. 9:21). In Revelation 19:10 is a definite indication of the likeness shared by angels and mortal servants of God. When the apostle John fell at the feet of the angel to worship him, the angel said, "See thou do it not, I am thy fellow servant and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus; worship God" (Rev 19:10). The context of this verse shows that the speaker was no ordinary man, yet he said, "I am thy fellow servant," likening himself to the Apostle. Compare this passage with Revelation 22:8-9, where it is clearly said to be an angel speaking.

A number of times in the Scriptures when angels appeared to mortal people, they were said to "shine." One example was when Moses came down from the mountain after spending some time with an angel; his face "shone" so brightly that the Israelites were unable to look upon him. The prophet Daniel makes the following statement regarding the faithful, the "wise," those who are faithful servants of God on earth: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever" (12:3). If the angels which visited men "shone" and faithful men from the earth will shine as the "stars," cannot men become shining angels? Even more convincing are the words of Jesus in Luke 20:35-36, "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead . . . are equal unto the angels, . . . neither can they die any more. The apostle Paul tells us the Lord Jesus shall come and "change our vile [corruptible] body" and fashion it "like unto his [Christ's] glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21).

How did the angels, who inhabit other worlds, get glorified before us? We must remember that this earth is only one small part of God's universe or plan. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him" (Ps. 103:17), hence we may conclude that He has always in time past had someone, somewhere, upon whom to bestow His mercy, and will have in all time future. The earth is not the first planet to be created, populated, and prepared for glorification. The universe contains countless billions of shining worlds, many of which must be already inhabited with a higher form of life than is known to us, and probably many more which are going

through stages similar to those our earth is and has been going through. The God we serve is called, and rightly, "the Lord God of hosts." He is not a God dwelling in holy isolation; He has not been sleeping through ages past and only recently awakened to work; He has been constantly planning, working, fashioning, glorifying, and expanding; and when the time is right on any planet, He performs the great change and makes worthy inhabitants immortal. The fact that this has already been done elsewhere in God's universe is expressed in the Lord's prayer: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). "As it is in heaven"—there *are* heavenly worlds where His will is fully done. We look forward to the time when it will be done as fully on earth and mortal earthborns are changed and made like "unto the angels" of heaven, a process which will begin with the resurrecting of the dead and the judging of all His servants on this earth at Jesus' second coming. ●●

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*Our Lord has told us all to watch  
His coming to discern;  
For in an hour when we think not,  
Our Saviour shall return.*

*Suppose that He had come today,  
At morning, or at noon,  
Or in the evening—? for we know  
It will be very soon.*

*Would I have been ashamed before  
Him, as He looked on me?  
Have I been glorifying Him  
Whose truth can set me free?*

*What thoughts possessed me as about  
My daily tasks I went?  
What of those hasty words I spoke,  
When I was tired and spent?*

*That visit which I meant to make,  
That word of comfort say;  
I'd ne'er have had another chance,  
If Christ had come today.*

*When pausing on the step to greet  
My neighbor with a word,  
How strange I did not say one thing  
About my coming Lord.*

*I know my days are numbered, and  
I've much to do and tell;  
And yet I go my tranquil way  
As though all things were well.*

# Spending and Saving

**M**ONETARY values are not easy to come by, but a lifetime spent saving wisely can usually gain one financial independence to a degree.

Andrew Carnegie was often asked what his formula for success was. To each he gave the same advice: "Accumulate in savings at least one year's salary as soon as you can, and then save ten percent of all you earn for the rest of your life."

How few of us follow this advice is borne out by these figures: Only five men out of one hundred become financially independent by the time they are sixty-five and only one out of one hundred is "rich." Fifty-four will be dependent on government or family aid; the other forty-one will still be working, dependent on a paycheck till the day they die.

Money is very necessary in this life, and we are told in Ecclesiastes that money is a defense (Eccl. 7:12). But while money is very necessary in this life and the need to use it wisely very important, still we need to hold things of this world with a loose hand, for it is also true that "a failure is the man who goes through life earning nothing but money."

The wisdom of God is the treasure we want to grasp firmly with both hands and not let slip. Now in this time when the Lord seems to delay His coming it would be so easy to slacken the tension and deceive ourselves into thinking that "we have it made," so to speak. There is a saying that might help us here to see what folly this would be:

*To spend before earning is to rest before working,  
to teach before learning, to speak before thinking,  
and to build before planning.*

If we are found worthy in that glorious future day of the Lord, we will be able to spend, rest, teach, speak and build more than we can ever imagine now with our limited senses, but the line must be kept taut with never one inch of slack to catch us unawares.

*E. H., Minnedosa, Manitoba*

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*A superior man is modest in his speech but exceeds in his actions.*

## Work to Overcome

A merciful God has given us extended time to finish the work of perfecting our character, that we may be counted worthy of being ushered into His presence. We must not stand idle, for there is so little time. We must be up and doing. So much work to be done, so little time in which to do it. Jesus said, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21). To overcome the evils of our nature takes work. We must be constantly on guard for every idle word, every bit of pride, foolishness, anger, malice, anything that would mar our character. If we would be like Jesus, we must also overcome, as He overcame. But if He could do it, so can we.

*M. W., Carrollton, Ohio*

## We Are What We Allow

**T**HE FOLLOWING quotation has been recommended for people in trouble who exempt themselves of personal responsibility for that trouble.

"Little befalls us that is not in the nature of ourselves. There comes no adventure that does not wear the shape of our own thoughts. Deeds of heroism, for instance, are but offered to those who for many years have been heroes in obscurity and silence.

"Whether you climb the mountain or go down into the valley, journey to the ends of the earth or merely walk around the house, none but yourself will meet you on the highway of life.

"Be false, and falsehoods will ever haste to you. Give love, and adventures will flock to you throbbing with love. They all seem to be on the outlook for the signal we hoist from within.

"Fix this somewhere in plain sight, as a daily reminder, that 'it is in ourselves that we are thus and thus.'"

This is what Jesus said, "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23).

Someone once said that we hold the knob to the door of our heart, and we can keep that door closed against evil if we will. But once we open the door to evil, to just one, more will come trooping in. If we open only to the good, we will have only good in our thought-company. ●●

MEGIDDO MESSAGE



## Our Readers Write...

### Will We Welcome Elijah?

It is always very thrilling to hear a knock at our door when we are expecting someone whom we wish to see. How ready and anxious we are to open it to them.

One of these days a knock will come which will determine our destiny. It will be the advent of Christ's messenger, Elijah. He will not be coming to ask the question, "How long halt ye between two opinions" this time; for all who have had opportunity to change, that opportunity will be gone forever. Whether we stand or fall will depend on how we are living now; so let us examine ourselves and work with a will, and turn our hearts back again to God that we may be prepared to open the door to that final knock immediately and be ready also to welcome the grand Prophet with joy and gladness.

How bold and brave Elijah was, to demonstrate the power of God; yet obviously he felt very lonely at times. One time he thought he was all alone until God informed him otherwise. How good it is to know that we are not all alone and that there are people who belong to God who "have not bowed the knee to Baal."

Though some of us must live very much on our own, we certainly have everything to live and fight for. Doubtless just one week with Elijah will compensate us for everything we might have endured during our probation here. How we will feel in the presence of so noble and majestic a personage will depend on how we have worked in God's vineyard. He will have no use for idlers; so may we this day and every day redeem the time, pray for a stronger faith, and strive to cleanse our hearts from all sin.

How very happy we shall be then if we are found worthy to be accepted when the Son of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings. May God spare us from the time of trouble as a "man spareth his own son that serveth him."

Swansea, South Wales

R. B.

### The Day Is Near

I do believe our Lord's coming is very, very near indeed; and it certainly behooves us to take care how we conduct ourselves, "take heed," those who think they stand, lest they fall.

There will be thousands of so-called Christians who at the Lord's return will get a shock. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. But on the other hand, those who are found to be worthy will find that even the best of this world cannot compare with the glory that awaits them.

As the Day approaches, we ought to make doubly sure by renewing our efforts. The time is right, the door of the Ark is open. We have heard the call to enter in. The signs of the times show with certainty that soon the door will be shut, and just as in Noah's day, God will be the door-keeper. He will shut the door, make no mistake. Soon it will be too late to enter in.

Nottinghamshire, England

H. L.

### Time Is Running Out

It is time to be about our Father's business and put the knowledge we have received into daily practical use, and be in dead earnest about it. Building a character for eternity is no small task, as we all have experienced. The carnal mind is always up to no good, ready at the slightest provocation to push the new mind into second gear. To cut off entirely from the old is not a one-day process of elimination and then forever done. No, no; more than once we have had to retrace our steps over the same road, hopefully wiser, and begin all over making a painful comeback.

Our time is running out; may the Lord help us one and all not to commit the same blunders again and again.

South Amboy, New Jersey

L. M. K.

### Driving in the Twilight

Our living in the closing hours of salvation's day may be compared to driving our car in the twilight. In the dimmer light, our perception of distance may be in error, causing things to appear far away that are really near to us. In these ordinary days when time stretches on with no apparent change, it is easy to conclude that all things "continue as they were from the beginning"—when in reality these are momentous times. These ordinary days are rushing us toward the returning of Elijah and Christ the King. It is only our faulty vision that causes things to appear to stand still.

Tyro, Kansas

C. F.

### Deceased

We have just received word of the death of Ethel C. Knights on July 6. Mrs. Knights of Toronto, Ontario, Canada was a subscriber to the *Megiddo Message* for more than fifty years. She is survived by her son, Kenneth R. Knights, who kindly informed us and wrote how he appreciated "the knowledge she passed on."

### Deceased

We have received word of the death of Edward Knapp, of Coleman, Florida, on July 10. Brother Knapp had been in failing health for a number of years. He is survived by his wife, Agnes Knapp, with whom he shared his faith and hope. The Knapps have been subscribers to the *Megiddo Message* for twenty-eight years.

## Twelve Booklets

HISTORY OF THE MEGIDDO MISSION  
THE COMING OF JESUS AND ELIJAH  
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?  
GOD'S SPIRITUAL CREATION  
THE KINGDOM OF GOD  
THE GREAT APOSTASY  
HELL AND THE DEVIL  
AFTER DEATH, WHAT?  
TRINITY OR UNITY?  
THE HOLY SPIRIT  
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ALL for \$3.00, Postpaid.



## *My Lifework*

*To acquire a thorough knowledge of my own  
heart and character;*

*To restrain my irregular inclinations;*

*To subdue every rebellious passion;*

*To purify the motives of my conduct;*

*To form myself to that temperance which  
no pleasure can seduce,*

*To that meekness which no provocation  
can ruffle,*

*To that patience which no affliction  
can overwhelm,*

*And to that integrity which no  
self-interest can bribe.*