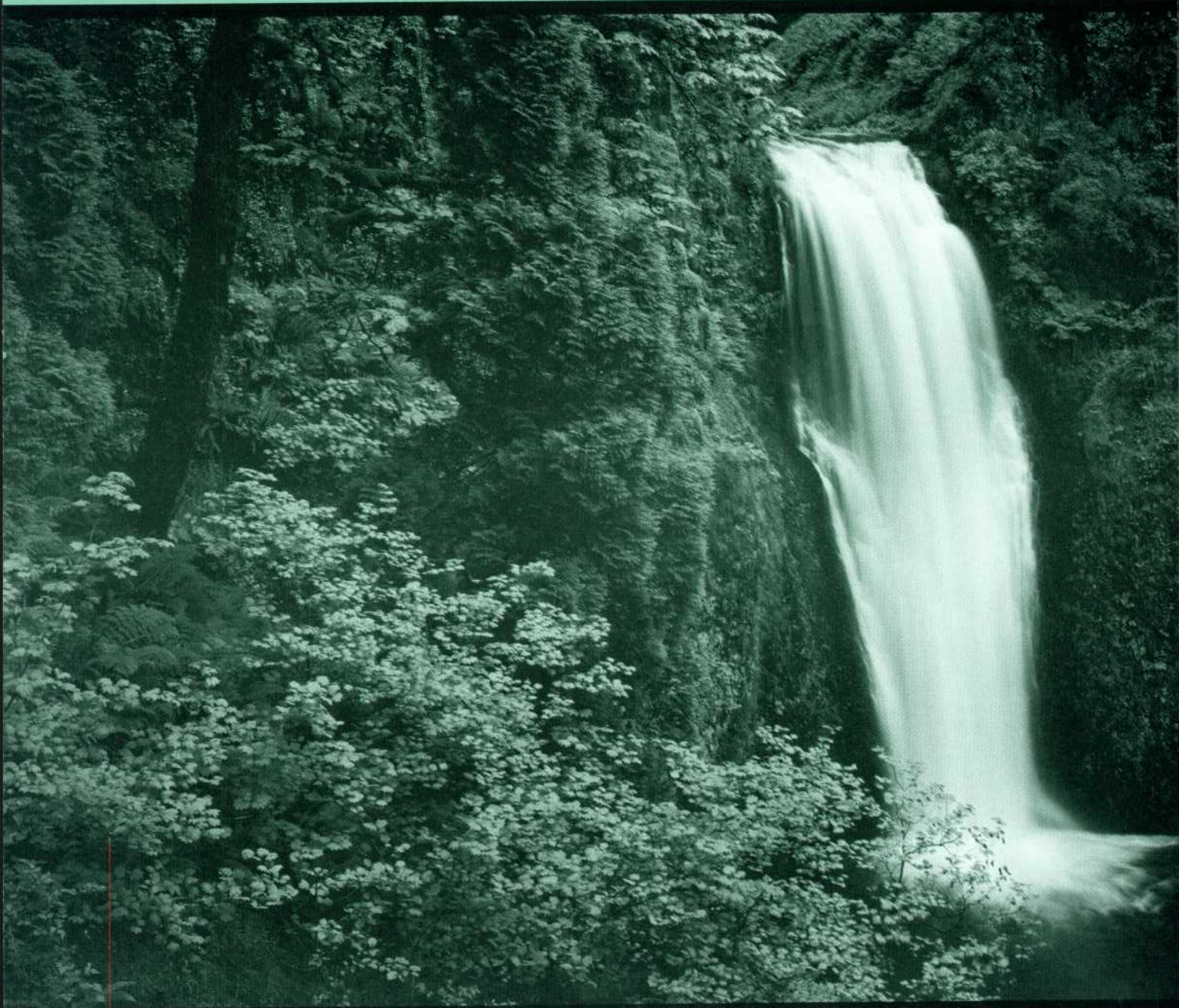


Megiddo Message



Vol. 69, No. 8

By Living Water

September, 1982



By Living Water

Come let us receive
Rivers of living water,
Let us be refreshed,
Strengthened,
Stimulated,
E'er the night of sin and sorrow
Rolls away.

There is a thirst in the world,
And the path to the spring
Of living water is overgrown
With the wild brambles of hopelessness.

Yet we have water,
More than we can drink;
So here we now pour forth
Our hymns and praise-tones,
Caught up in the tempo of the eternal
That moves us on.

We thirst, and we have found
Rivers of living water
Telling us of what is coming
On the earth.

These are the last days
But not the least—
They are our days
For matchless possibility.

We stand
On the stage of consummation
And through a crack
In the door of the future
We see the light of glory
Blazing as the day.
We see it now—
To steel the nerve within us,
To set the pure ingot
Of faith in the strongbox
Of our hearts.
Holy fires are smoldering
In the veins of possibility—
Possibility of what we yet may be
E'er morning dawns.

So here we are
On the verge of climax,
Our thirst and our trust
Our humility and our hope
Our longing and our love
Is all in Thee, our Lord.
At Thy invitation,
At Faith's culmination,
At God's intervention
We shall see!

Come, now,
Let us receive
Rivers of living water
E'er the night of sin and sorrow,
Rolls away.

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

TLB—The Living Bible

TEV—Today's English Version

JB—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English

The use of selected references from various versions of the Bible does not necessarily imply publisher endorsement of the versions in their entirety.

About Our Cover...

For our cover photograph we are indebted to the kindness of D. C. Lowe, who resides in Oregon. The photograph was taken at Lower Multnomah Falls, Columbia Gorge, Oregon.

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The ONE Baptism

“THERE IS one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph. 4:4-5).

In these words the apostle Paul addressed the complete commitment and confidence of every Christian believer. He spoke of “one body,” referring to the entire circle of true believers as “members one of another,” as sensitive to each other’s needs, as dependent upon each other’s gifts as are the various parts of the physical body. Then he spoke of “one Spirit.” His use of this term Spirit may have been twofold. The persons to whom he was writing were privileged sharers in a special outpouring of divine power—a fact which doubtless served to unite them with an even stronger bond to one another and to God. Our share in the “one Spirit” today is only in that Spirit which Jesus called the “spirit of truth,” the whole gospel of God which it is our privilege to know. We today have no divine, supernatural power from God.

“Even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.” They were not the common run of humankind. Paul was writing to those who were “called.” They had been “called” of God, and what a high calling it was, a calling “in one hope,” even the hope offered by Jesus and shared by His apostles, the glorious hope of life and beauty and happiness and joy in the everlasting Kingdom of Christ.

Then the Apostle continues: “One Lord.” Not two, not three, and not the multitude of mysterious deities proclaimed by the ancients, but the one of whom the Israelites reverently said, “The Lord our God is one Lord” (Deut. 6:4). Then “one faith,” the faith long ago delivered unto the saints, the true proclamation of the plan of God, sealed by Him and by Him destined for fulfillment.

But what about the Great Apostle’s last term, “one baptism”? What are we to conclude from this? How is it

that our church, in view of such a command, does not practice literal water baptism today? Are we side-stepping part of our duty to God?

In view of the fact that Jesus and His apostles did baptize new believers, many church people today sincerely practice the ceremony of literal baptism, believing it as much their duty as any other command of God. For many groups of Baptists, and others who believe in literal immersion in water, to be baptized means actually to be plunged into water, whether in baptistery, lake, river or pond. The sacrament of baptism as practiced by John the Baptist and by the apostles was on this wise. There are other groups today who feel that a simple form of baptism by sprinkling is all that is needed to perpetuate the rite and fulfill the command to baptize.

Among those who believe in literal water baptism today, opinions on *who* should be baptized and *what* that baptism means vary as widely as opinions on *how* the rite should be performed.

Various Practices Today

There is no indication from the Biblical record that any other than persons who had reached an age of understanding were baptized. But about the end of the second century, church leaders began teaching that baptism should be administered to infants to secure their eternal salvation. This idea was accepted by the apostatizing Church, along with a belief in the triune Godhead, and was the unquestioned conviction of Christendom until the present century. The rise in Bible study in recent years has caused a widespread change of opinion, so much so that by 1940 a survey showed that the majority of New Testament scholars agreed that in the Apostolic Age baptism was administered to believers only; but the view of many churches still has not changed.

What about the significance of the baptismal rite? To many it is a sign of conversion, part of induction into the church. To others it is a “blessing” of God. To still others it carries the further meaning of a cleansing from so-called (and non-existent) original sin, so that the be-

Note: “The ONE Baptism” is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

liever's life is wiped clean of old sins and he is free to pursue his new life in Christ unhampered. To some it has the further significance of actually cleansing one from the guilt of all sin, bestowing immortality, assuring salvation, and linking one with the life of God. "Christ and His full salvation" are given to the baptized, says one.

It seems that the significance of the practice has been variously modified to harmonize with other beliefs of the individual churches, and also to correspond to the capacities of the one being baptized. In other words, a church believing in infant baptism could not teach that baptism brought full understanding of the knowledge of God, Christ and His full salvation. To them, baptismal doctrine was modified to include a later stage in life for confession of faith. All this has been the subject of much fruitless discussion. Since the Bible says absolutely nothing about the baptizing of infants, we need not discuss it.

Still others today hold an entirely different view of baptism. They believe that water baptism was a part of the age that enjoyed the open manifestations of the Holy Spirit, that the command to baptize is not binding upon those who do not have that special power; that the "one baptism" which is binding today is a spiritual rite symbolizing a full consecration to God; a commitment which results in the crucifixion of the lower nature, the "old man" of the flesh, as we are "buried with Christ by baptism" into a spiritual death to sin and then resurrected with Him to a new life of Christlike service. It is our conviction that this is the deeper meaning which accompanied baptism when it was practiced as a literal rite and that this is the "one baptism" binding upon believers today.

Our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, believed in and sincerely practiced literal water baptism for some years, feeling it was a command of God and binding upon believers as much as any other command of God. But with further study he came to realize that the baptism God requires of us is the same which He has required in *all* ages: a thorough cleansing from sin. Literal baptism was a sacred rite, a command to be observed during the Apostolic Age. But there is nothing to indicate that it was binding upon all people at all times.

Baptism in Scripture

It is enlightening to note that during nearly four thousand years of recorded history of God's working with mankind no mention is made of any form of baptismal rite being imposed on His true worshipers. Our first introduction to any form of baptism is the baptism performed by John in Jordan. This was actual immersion in water, employed as a gesture to show that the worshiper desired to make an earnest attempt to amend his life, to

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism"—Eph. 4:5

"bring forth . . . fruits meet for repentance" (Luke 3:7-8). John claimed no saving virtue for his baptism. It was merely an outward sign of an inward penitence. The baptized was promised salvation only on condition that he "repent" and do works "meet for repentance."

Jesus Himself was baptized by John, although John demurred on the grounds of his unworthiness. But Jesus answered, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15).

Recorded in the Gospels are a few references to baptism during Jesus' ministry. Without these we would know nothing of any baptism during those three years. John 3:22 reads: "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized." Verse 23 reveals that at this time John was still baptizing: "And John also was baptizing in Enon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized."

From John 4:1-2 we learn two other features of Christ's baptizing: its volume, and that He did the baptizing by proxy: "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, [though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples]." Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, but left the actual work of baptizing wholly to His disciples.

During the time of John's baptizing in Jordan, the Prophet told the people, who at the time were still wondering whether John might be the Messiah, that Christ was coming to inaugurate a far more effectual baptism. These are John's words: "I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Luke 3:16). In these words of John's is a prophecy with long-range meaning. The following verse (v. 17) reveals the reason for the use of the word "fire" and shows that the prophecy was long-range, reaching to the time of God's judgments at Christ's second coming: "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable"—total destruction.

In speaking of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, John was looking ahead three years to the day of Pentecost when special divine power would be poured out. Jesus' words in Acts 1:5 show that He Himself understood this: "For

John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence."

Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave this directive to His apostles and promised to be with them as follows: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. . . . And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:15, 17-18).

Matthew's account of Jesus' final commission to His apostles differs slightly from the account in Mark. It reads: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:19-20).

There appears to be some question as to the historical correctness of part of this text. Some Bible students believe that the command to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" was not part of the original rendering of the text but was added at a later date. A writer in *Hasting's Encyclopedia* points out that the baptism performed in the Acts of the Apostles was not a trine baptism as according to the traditional rendering of Matthew (see Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5). And the writer then comments, "The obvious explanation of the silence of the New Testament on the trine name [In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit], and the use of another formula in Acts and Paul, is that this formula was the earlier, and that the trine formula is a later addition. It would require very strong arguments to controvert this presumption, and none seems to exist."

The last sentence of Matthew 28:20, "Lo, I am with you

Let Us Pray...

O Lord, our gracious Father, our glorious King, Thou our sure Defense, and from whose lavish hand flow countless gifts of love: surely Thy goodness and mercy have followed us all our days. We come to Thee with grateful hearts, beseeching Thy help that we may covet earnestly the best gifts, those that make for happiness and peace now and eternal joy in Thy great future. We come seeking the light of Thy countenance wherein we may walk through each day, thus removing from our lives every vestige of darkness, every hidden confine of evil, every secret sin.

Lord, we come before Thee this morning with deep dissatisfactions for the things around us and deep longings for Thy New World. Thou hast set before us such joyous prospects that our hearts cry out for them. Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come; here we have no continuing joy, but Thou hast promised us fulness of joy; here we have no continuing pleasure, but Thou hast promised us pleasures forevermore. Here we have no surety of obtaining what we ask; Thou has promised us more than we can ask or imagine. Multitudes have no assurance of tomorrow, but Thou hast promised us that we may see tomorrow after

tomorrow after glorious tomorrow through all the cycles of eternity.

With such heavenly promises ringing in our ears, we pray Thy help in keeping clear from anything that might smirch or tarnish our characters. Help us to prove by our lives that we are able to drink the cup Christ drank, and to be baptized with the baptism He was baptized with. We long for the completion of that one holy baptism in us, that baptism which is a thorough cleansing from sin and all sinful tendencies, a total perishing of all that is evil in Thy sight. May we show by our willing and eager submission that we are able to bring the good work Thou hast begun in us to a successful and glorious completion.

We pray Thee to bless us in our worship today. Bless those wherever they may be who are one with Thee. Strengthen, comfort, and encourage as Thou hast promised. And may we all be awakened to a fuller understanding of Thy purposes concerning us, a truer estimate of the real values of life, and a deeper sense of our duty to Thee.

We pray for those in authority, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. We commend to Thee our nation and its civil authority with all its interests insofar as those interests coincide with Thine to the furtherance of Thy purposes.

And now, O Lord, help us to follow with ever more scrupulous care in the way that Thou hast appointed, that it may be Thy pleasure to accept us at last for a place in Thy glorious, eternal Kingdom; for Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

always, even unto the end of the world," is sometimes construed to mean that Christ would be with men through all ages in signs and wonders. This, however, was not Jesus' meaning, as through Paul He witnessed that the gifts of the Spirit should cease and only faith, hope, and charity would abide (I Cor. 13:8-13). The world to the end of which Jesus promised to be with them in signs and wonders was the age in which they were then living. The Greek word translated "world" in the KJV is *aion*, and has among its meanings "age." The word is translated with this meaning in Matt. 28:20 in several of the newer versions. For example, "And lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (RSV).

Jesus' commission to "go," "preach the gospel to every creature" and "baptize" was fulfilled by the apostles. During the Apostolic Age, the thirty-seven years separating Pentecost from the end of the Jewish age (A.D. 70), when Jerusalem was destroyed, a mighty evangelizing of the then-known world took place.

The last sentence of Mark 16:20 reveals this fact and also the extent of their preaching the gospel "to every creature": "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." Further proof of the breadth of their Christian preaching is revealed in Colossians 1:23. These are the words of the apostle Paul: "... continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister." Romans 10:18 adds further proof to the fulfillment of Christ's commission: "But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." The commission to go, preach, and baptize was fulfilled.

Baptism and the Holy Spirit Went Together

Baptism with water, also baptism with the Holy Spirit, were two of the main features of the Apostolic Age or "world" in which Jesus promised to be with them "with signs following." In the book of Acts four instances are cited where water baptism and the gifts of the Holy Spirit went together. In some instances water baptism preceded the bestowing of Holy Spirit power; in other instances the water baptism followed.

In Acts 8 we have the account of the evangelist Philip going down to the city of Samaria and preaching Christ to them. On this occasion, baptism preceded their receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:12-17).

After the miraculous conversion of Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road, when Jesus appeared to him as a light shining above the brightness of the noonday sun, temporarily blinding Saul, Ananias, who restored his

What about the significance of the baptismal rite?

sight, prayed also that Saul might "be filled with the Holy Spirit." And he "arose, and was baptized" (Acts 9:17-18).

Peter's experience with Cornelius, the first Gentile convert to Christianity, was another example of water baptism accompanying the Holy Spirit (Acts 10). Peter enumerated to Cornelius and his household the steps the Lord had taken (by way of a trance) to impress him that God is no respecter of persons. And "while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word. . . . Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:46-48).

In Acts 19 we find an instance where some who had received baptism by John had not received the Holy Spirit. The wording suggests that baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit power usually went together. Paul said to these "certain disciples" (there were about twelve of them), "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. . . . Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them" (Acts 19:1-6).

It is interesting to realize from this account that John's work in teaching, baptizing and preparing the way for Christ was more effective than it might have seemed at the time. Several years had passed, and his work was still bearing fruit. These believers were John's disciples. We cannot but wonder how they missed the ministry of Jesus so completely.

Baptism Today

From the foregoing it is evident that in Apostolic times baptism in water was usually accompanied by the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Today, we have no Holy Spirit power, so why should we still feel it necessary to observe the gesture of baptism in literal water?

Baptism was practiced during the first century by John, by the apostles, to a limited extent by Jesus, and to

During nearly 4000 years of recorded history no mention is made of baptism.

a still lesser extent by Paul. *Hasting's Encyclopedia* comments that in the light of Paul's statement concerning baptism in Romans 6, "it is difficult to think that he could have regarded baptism as more than symbolical." It was a practice by which the believer established a covenant with God and pledged himself to the obedience of Christ.

According to history, the practice of baptism continued after the first century; but it soon began to show the effects of the pagan world. As time passed it became increasingly ritualized by a people who preferred to think of it as a cleansing ceremony resulting in sinlessness than as an initiation into a life dedicated to obedience. Gradually a complex doctrine of baptism developed, uniting baptism with a confession of the trinity, resulting in a so-called "trine baptism" which was necessary for membership in the established church. But this was far from the original baptism commanded by Jesus, and still further from the symbolic baptism taught by Paul.

Many denominations and sects of the present time lay much stress on the importance of immersion in water. But the fact that it was fairly important in Apostolic times would not necessarily mean it is of primary importance today. Paul made one statement that suggests that even he did not place too much stress on the sacrament of literal baptism. These are His words to the church at Corinth: "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (I Cor. 1:14-17). Christ sent him "not to baptize" but to "preach the gospel."

The One Baptism—and Paul

In view of the foregoing, is there any baptism that is really important to the earnest life seeker today? Yes, there is, and Paul recognized and strongly urged his followers to engage wholeheartedly in this important baptism. Recall his words to the Ephesians: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism."

We should note the literal meanings of the original words translated "baptize" and "baptism." The Greek word *bapto* means 1) dip, 2) a dip into a dye, and so

"dye." *Baptizo* is an intensive form of *bapto* and means 1) dip, and 2) cause to perish (as by drowning a man or sinking a ship). It is said that while there is some evidence that *bapto* was occasionally used in secular Greek literature, the latter term *baptizo* was not used at all, probably because of its association with the idea of perishing.

But the association of the term "baptism" with "perishing" is deeply significant to us as Christians. Being baptized into Christ is a "perishing," a surrendering of ourselves and our present life to Him so completely as to render us dead to lesser interests. It is this thought which Paul incorporates in his discussion of baptism, as he speaks in Romans 6 of being baptized "into death."

In the book of Romans Paul stresses the importance of justification by faith, i.e., God's grace or mercy toward mankind even though they were often unworthy of that favor. In chapters 3, 4, and 5 he explores his thesis in a manner that has proved misleading to many who crave salvation on easy terms. But to avoid any ambiguity or misinterpretation, Paul in chapter 6 becomes distinctly explicit and clarifies his point of view by describing the death to sin under the symbol of "baptism," being "buried with Christ by baptism into death." This is the one baptism (Eph. 4:5).

Romans 6 begins: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" God's grace or mercy or loving favor in enlightening us, in overlooking our past sins before we were enlightened, and inviting us to become His son or daughter, does not assure us of salvation if we fail to follow through with the work on our part. As Peter phrased it, the time past of our lives must "suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles," the unbelieving world (I Pet. 4:3).

Then Paul continues in Rom. 6:3: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death." There was no efficacy in the literal baptism; it was an outward rite commanded for a time, but only significant as a symbol of the complete death to sin.

Romans 6:4: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Mere immersion in water could not effect such a drastic change in one's life as to impel him to walk in newness of life; being immersed in and completely engulfed by the life-giving water, the Word of God with its precepts and promises, could. The one baptism, when accomplished, results in our arising to walk in "newness of life"—new thoughts, new aspirations, new desires, new loves, new longings—new life.

Continuing further with his thesis of dying with Christ through burial with Him in baptism (the one baptism),

Paul tells us: "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him" (vs. 8-9). If we have been truly buried with Christ in a death to sin, if we have arisen to walk in newness of life as Christ was raised to a new physical life that never shall terminate, we likewise shall at the last Judgment be justified and favored with a life that will be eternal, as Jesus, our Pattern, has been blessed with.

"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" (vs. 10-11). Christ died to sin once; He is our great pattern and example. Hence, it is for us to die to sin as He died, to be buried with Him by baptism into death to sin.

The One Baptism—and Peter

The apostle Peter also believed in and taught the one baptism, as his words in I Peter 3:21 show. The passage is clearer from the newer translations. The passage in the Jerusalem Bible reads: "Baptism. . . is not the washing off of physical dirt but a pledge made to God from a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has entered heaven and is at God's right hand." The Berkeley rendering of the text is likewise comprehensive: "Baptism saves you, not by removal of physical filth, but by the earnest seeking of a conscience that is clear in God's presence." This is the one baptism, "the earnest seeking of a conscience that is clear in God's presence." Nothing evil, nothing God abhors, nothing to be ashamed of in His presence or beneath His scrutinizing eye—isn't this a baptism which we want to share?

As we noted earlier, Jesus Himself submitted to John's baptism in water. However, He was fully aware of the deeper meaning, the full significance of baptism, which was much more far-reaching in its effects and much more difficult to accomplish than literal immersion in water.

We read of this in Matthew 20. A mother's concern for the success of her two sons had led her to make an ill-considered request. The text reads: "Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him,

Being baptized into Christ is a "perishing," a total surrendering of ourselves to God.

Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be *baptized* with the baptism that I am *baptized* with?" (vs. 20-22).

There would be no difficulty if all Jesus meant by baptism was to be immersed in literal water. The Pharisees and Sadducees whom John addressed as a "generation of vipers," came to be literally baptized of him, and were baptized, as far as we are told. But here Jesus alludes to something far more drastic, so much so that He says, "Are ye able . . . ?" He was speaking of the baptism which is a perishing, the sacrificing of a life, a complete death to sin and all sinful tendencies, a total surrendering of our life and will to the heavenly Father. And Jesus did not fail to inform the two sons of Zebedee and their mother that if James and John would sit with Him in glory, they too must submit to that *one* all-inclusive baptism, which is a complete death to sin, a perishing of all our natural whims and desires that run contrary to the law of God. They must submit to this baptism, even as you and I must submit to it: "And he said unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with."

This is the *one* baptism which is binding upon all true believers today. It is binding upon *us*. Are we willing? are we *able* to make the sacrifice and do the things that will open to us the vistas of immortality? Are we able to surrender that which we cannot keep to secure our hold upon that which, once gained, we can never lose?

Let us say with conviction this very day, "Yes, we are able," and spend each day proving to ourselves, to one another, and to our Great Lord and Master that we are *able*.

MM

Amazing knowledge! vast and great
What large extent! what lofty height!
O may these thoughts possess my breast,
Where'er I rove, where'er I rest.

My soul, with all the powers I boast,
Is in the boundless prospect lost.
Nor let my feeble passions dare
Consent to sin, for God is there.

—Selected.

Privilege—and Obligation

IS IT NOT the greatest privilege afforded man to be called of God? To realize that He knows us and acknowledges that we are capable of creating a perfect character, to become "copies of the likeness of His Son" (Rom. 8:29, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*).

This is an election not to be taken lightly but to be remembered with humbleness, reverential awe and great joy. Many times numbers instruct us; and this is no exception. Just how many have lived and died during the past 6,000 years we have no way of knowing. But the number of faithful servants of God among them may be compared to a pail of stones collected from beside the sea.

To the untrained eye, this pail of stones is worthless. But upon careful scrutiny we discover a rare find. First of all, each stone in this pail has been carefully selected from the multitude of stones that could literally fill the sea. In fact, many more than these were originally selected because they showed some promise of worthiness. But only a few of those selected proved themselves of sufficient quality as to become the Lord's special treasure. "I will claim them," the Lord of hosts declares, "as my own prized possession" (Mal. 3:17, Moffatt).

Secondly, they were selected by God Himself. This is something we can be especially proud of. The Lord of Hosts has actually taken notice of us, just a little stone among the boulders and crevices of the world.

We are so very privileged to be counted among this few, *but let us beware*. Not every stone is workable. We have the potential of yielding vessels of pure gold, but we must be worked upon. It is said that gold-bearing rock with as little as one part of gold to 300,000 parts of worthless material may be worked at a profit. As soon as the chisel of "correction, reproof, exhortation" is applied, many will prove to contain less than 1/300,000 gold and will be cast aside. The remaining stones will be subjected to rigid tests which will eliminate all but 144,000. This very small and very special part will be refined and refined again, until only pure gold remains. If we aren't applying ourselves wholeheartedly, we will not be among this select group.

Let us look to ourselves that we be "lively stones" (1 Pet. 2:5), offering the living sacrifice acceptable to God. And what is this sacrifice? As the literal rock is crushed to extract the gold, "God's sacrifice is a soul with its evil crushed: a heart broken with penitence, O God, never wilt thou despise" (Psa. 51:17, Moffatt).

There is an old saying that "he (or she) has a heart of gold." This is what is acceptable to God. But we must be careful in our judgment. What we consider to be a heart of

gold may be a stone with less than 1/300,000 gold, a stone to be cast aside as paltry. Is it not written, as Jesus repeated in Matt. 22:37, Mark 12:30 and Luke 10:27, "Love the Lord thy God with all thy HEART," and again, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine HEART," Lev. 18:17; or, "Ye have obeyed from the HEART that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Rom. 6:17).

The message here is not easy to overlook. We can say we love the Lord, but do we really? When we obey the doctrine, is it something of a ritual, only skin deep? Do we really put our heart and soul into it? Jesus related a parable to certain people "who trusted in themselves," which is good to remember. The parable was of a Pharisee and publican that went up to pray. "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other" (Luke 18:9-14).

When we look upon a man, thinking he has a heart of gold, we can see only the outside. At the same time he shakes our hand in what seems the warmest and most affectionate greeting, he may be thinking some evil in his heart. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts" (Matt. 15:19). What we may see as "a heart of gold" may be a trumpery stone to be cast far away. For "the Eternal does not see as man sees; man looks at the outward appearance, but the Eternal looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7, Moffatt).

We may profess to live uprightly. We may fool many people, ourselves included; but God knows our heart. This is a test we can put to ourselves: Whatever I do, whatever I think, wherever I go, am I wholehearted in it? Is it glorifying God? Will it improve my character? Do I have a balanced diet every day of study, meditation, praise, thankfulness, prayer, joy, etc.?

If we can answer yes to all these questions, from the HEART, we are well on the way to being a most prized treasure of the all-wise, merciful and great God Himself. "And they shall be mine saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Mal. 3:17).

This day is our golden opportunity to serve God. A day to perfect our characters, forming a heart of pure gold that we may be accounted worthy at the inauguration of that new and glorious age of everlasting joy. —Contributed.

And Still She Speaks

Part Eight

The following lines are extracts from sermons, discussions, talks, comments by Rev. Maud Hembree (1853-1935).

If we are working we want to tend to our business. But we can tend to our business and have God's law of truth govern us at the same time.

Practice makes perfect. If we do not practice doing right, we will never reach the goal. Practice in the morning, at noon, in the evening and all the time between. The Lord allows us all the time we need for sleep, but in our waking moments He wants all our time. But that will never wear us out. We will never grow old under that.

"It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." It is good to bear this yoke of divine truth before our own ways have become so settled in us, having our own way. The young want to have their way badly enough! We are thankful we had some discipline when we were young, that we were not pampered children, were not looked at as some great thing; we sat in a corner and were scarcely even noticed. It was a wonderful schooling. Father and Mother took first seat and the children the back seat. Of course there were some exceptions, as there are now, but that was the rule. The rule is the other way now.

We want to do as Peter did when he had transgressed. "Peter went out and wept bitterly." We want that deep contrition, that humble spirit, not seeking honor in this life, not seeking to have our own way. I wonder what thoughts went through Peter's mind when he wept bitterly.

"Peter went out and wept bitterly," it says. No doubt he did not falter on that point again. He added courage, for when we turn over to Acts 4 we read of the boldness of Peter and John (v. 13).

When we have walked in by and forbidden paths, our natural desires governing us, we do not want to pass it by as a little thing. We want to realize what we have done, want to have heartfelt contrition; then God will look down with mercy on us.

We ask God for help, not for what we think we need, but what He knows we need. I do not know if there ever was a week in my life that I thought so much that the road to character is to cease having our own way. We all crave the things of the natural mind, and it is so difficult to want what is good for us to have, a mind reconciled. Naturally this old man, our old nature, wants his own way, in little things and in greater things, wants things to turn out as he thinks they should. But we must learn to let God have His way, be reconciled to what the Word commands. When we learn that our own way leads to death and destruction we will not seek to have our own way. We will consider what is for the best—not for our own desires, but God's plan and purpose, the glorification of the truth. When we once get that settled in our mind, and it takes hold of our affections, we will realize that is the way to the glorious Kingdom and we will be converted.

Many teach that Christ paid the debt you owe; just believe He did it and you are all right. But, no, said Paul, YOU must be exercised unto godliness, YOU must lay aside the weights and besetting sins, YOU must be washing and becoming clean, putting away the wrath, the anger and the malice. Does the Augsburg Confession or the Nicene Creed say anything about these? It does not.

The Augsburg Confession says: "The only rule of faith is founded on Christ's Sacrament, and not on a man or woman becoming righteous." But the Bible conditions salvation on our becoming righteous and following in the footsteps of Jesus. Christ left us an example to follow; He never paid the debt we owe.

The religion of the Bible is not a state of excitement; it is a calm reflection.



ALCOHOL

—the Deceiver

THERE IS the sound of screeching tires and shattering glass, and above the crash of steel against steel is heard an ear-splitting scream. A monotone voice repeats, "A little beer never hurt anyone; a little beer never hurt anyone." Then a voice says, "A little beer or wine *does* hurt a lot of people." The sound effects are strikingly real, but it is only a radio advertisement, aired during the holiday season in an effort to influence drinkers not to drive.

But drinkers, deceived by the advertising of an industry greedy for gain, continue to drive, and in all seasons the useless carnage on the highways continues. Many a party-goer ends up meeting violent death on the highway, and often taking with him to the grave a safe and sober driver.

The inordinate use of alcohol has reached alarming proportions in our nation—but the sad part of it is that so few people are alarmed. The latest statistics available show that more than ten and a half million Americans are alcoholics—more than half of them women. Each year another 200,000 are added to the toll. Not included in this figure are some three and a half million teenagers, or about 20% of the adolescent population of the United States who drink to excess, contributing to violence in the schoolroom and crime in the streets. Surveys made in schools across the nation show that more than

half the youths of high school age drink alcoholic beverages, with the majority having had their first drink before age 13—usually at home.

Reading the statistics one gets the impression that the American people are on an alcoholic binge of gigantic proportions, taking their own lives by their indiscretion. In the most recent year for which the figures are available, Americans consumed more than five billion gallons of alcoholic beverages, an amount equal to 32-1/2 gallons for every person over fifteen.

More than 30 billion dollars was spent for the stuff. But the real tragedy in these statistics is not the wasted money but the wasted lives, the untimely deaths, the grief suffered not only by the families of those who drink but by their friends, their employers, and their innocent victims.

Everyone admits that war is a terrible waste of lives. Much has been said about the lives that were forfeited in the Viet Nam war, where more than 50,000 are listed as killed or missing in the conflict which lasted some nine years. But during that same nine years, more than 425,000 Americans lost their lives in highway accidents in the United States, and more than half of these were directly related to drinking. Accidents are listed as the leading cause of death among youths in the 16 to 25 age group, largely creditable to alcoholism.

Alcohol consumption contributes to

disease. "Liver disease," writes a professor of clinical medicine at a leading university, "is the fastest rising cause of death in our nation, brought on by higher consumption of alcohol, largely attributable to the growing popularity of wine drinking. By 1985, liver disease is expected to rank behind only heart disease and cancer as causing the most deaths." The toll of death from alcohol-related diseases is frightening: Each year 200,000 succumb to the effects of alcohol; 2,000,000 have perished in the last decade.

Alcohol consumption contributes to crime. Law enforcement officials say that 70% of all crimes, ranging from murder to forgery, are directly related to alcohol. A judge of long experience says he is convinced that "intemperance is the unapproachable chief cause" of most crime. Our prisons are filled to overflowing with those who played with temptation and were caught in the snare of their own sin."

Cocktail parties have become the most common social gathering for the affluent, but as someone has said, "The cocktail hour may be more refined than the old saloon, but the leopard has not changed his spots." Billy Sunday, the well-known evangelist and crusader against alcohol in the early part of this century, struggled for words to picture the results of drinking: "God never gave any man imagination powerful enough nor lips nor tongue eloquent enough to picture its damnable wreckage and its ruin. If rabies produced one millionth part of the disease and trouble the saloon causes, every dog in America would be killed off before Monday morning."

The saloon of Sunday's day has been replaced by sophisticated restaurants, taverns and bars today, but the end result is the same: broken homes, ruined lives, disease, poverty and death. All too often, the one who starts out to be a "social drinker" becomes a statistic, adding to the mountainous toll of alcoholics. The theory is that everyone has to drink to be socially acceptable; everyone needs to know how to drink

wisely because social drinking is an accepted more in society today.

The Wise Man of old had such a theory; he would try drinking "with wisdom." "I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom," he said (Eccl. 2:3). We might paraphrase his words, "I decided to try social drinking, but keeping myself under control. I know when to stop; a little wine never hurt anyone."

But in the end, when it was too late, he saw the error of his ways and left some sage advice for all who would taste the intoxicating cup: "Look not on the wine!" The Scriptures are emphatic concerning the use of alcoholic beverages: Look not on the wine! Leave it alone! Don't take the first sip! So simple a safeguard could save millions from perishing through their own indiscretion. There is no need to pray to God to "deliver us from temptation" and then deliberately walk right into it. To indulge one's self, even with the best of intentions, is perilous, and one which is most likely to lead to ruin.

All alcoholism begins with the first drink. No one ever meant to become an alcoholic when he first imbibed the intoxicating cup. He may have been warned that others had lost their health, their jobs, their self-respect, their families and their money through the inordinate use of alcohol. But he assured himself he would know when to stop, he would drink only moderately, just enough to be sociable, just enough to conform to custom. But conformity to custom has led many from an occasional taste to the depths of alcoholism and destruction.

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1). Wine is a mocker! How true! It is advertised as contributing to success in business, as bringing pleasure to life. Such mockery! There is nothing more deceptive than advertising that portrays drinking as a sign of good fortune and good fellowship and refusal to drink as a sign of withdrawal from society.

More businesses have failed as a result of drinking than have prospered from it. (The only business to profit from it is the manufacturer and seller.) No lasting pleasure was ever gained from ingesting alcoholic beverages. No good ever came from the practice of evil. No sound business judgment was ever rendered under the influence of alcohol. It is best left alone. Those deceived by it are not wise.

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging." The Septuagint Bible renders the passage, "Wine is an undisciplined thing; drunkenness is insolent. Every fool is involved in such." There is a German proverb that says, "More are drowned in the wine cup than in the ocean." This is a true proverb. Millions have perished as a result of drinking, and millions more are living lives worse than death, slaves to alcohol.

"Strong drink is raging." Drinking literally causes raging. Drinking parties often end in fights. Many are the wives and children that have been beaten by drunken husbands and fathers, so steeped in alcohol that they have lost their reason.

"Whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Wine is a great deceiver. The first sip is exhilarating, deceiving the drinker by its initial effect. He thinks he feels good; he is happy-go-lucky. But actually wine is a depressant, affecting the central nervous system. It is an intoxicant, acting as an anesthetic on the system. It is absorbed directly into the bloodstream since it needs no digesting, thus is carried almost instantly to all parts of the body to get in its deadly work. The first ounce that reaches the brain begins to put the brain to sleep, rendering it incapable of proper action. Constant use results in permanently damaged brain cells and sharply curtailed mental acuity.

Wine is a mocker. The first drink cheers the drinker. But it is only a delusion. No real happiness ever came from the intoxicating cup. Its end is only sorrow. Listen to the words of one who tried wine: "Whose is the misery?

Whose the remorse? Whose are the quarrels and the anxiety? Who gets the bruises without knowing why? Whose eyes are bloodshot? Those who linger late over their wine, those who are always trying some new spiced liquor. Do not gulp down the wine,...in the end it will bite like a snake and sting like a cobra. Then your eyes see strange sights: your wits and your speech are confused; you become like a man tossing out at sea" (Prov. 23:29-34, NEB).

The physical results of intemperance are clearly stated in the Scriptures, and are illustrated by sad examples we have all witnessed. Solomon knew whereof he spoke: Drinking causes blurred vision, confused and slurred speech, a dulled brain. He compared it to the bite of a snake. Snake bite affects the whole body, often with fatal consequences. "Oh that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains! That we should with joy, revel, pleasure and applause transform ourselves into beasts!" wrote a sage of an earlier generation.

The best cure for anything is prevention. Paul provides us with sound wisdom: "Make no mistake: 'Bad company is the ruin of a good character.' Come back to a sober and upright life and leave your sinful ways" (I Cor. 15:33), and again, be not "partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure" (I Tim. 5:22). One of our former pastors said, "Choose your company, and watch your choice." Failure to heed these words have led many to ruin.

"Alcohol has many defenders but no defense," said Abraham Lincoln. It is as true today as in Lincoln's day. There is no acceptable excuse for taking the first taste. The only safe ground for the Christian is total abstinence. The Christian is commanded to "Abstain from all appearance of evil." And if there ever was an evil, it is alcohol. We can see its results all around us. Alcoholism is not a disease—it is sin. The first drink is the beginning of sin, and sin, "when it is finished bringeth forth death."

MM

There's

A New

TODAY'S date is so ordinary. We write it on a letter, or a check, or a record, scarcely giving thought to its meaning.

But can you picture yourself writing other dates someday—like 2000, 2416, or 2977? Do such dates sound strange and unreal? It is time to look ahead. All of these dates will come someday, and you and I may be living to see them come! It all depends on us and the use we make of today.

Time is a strange and hard-to-describe commodity. So much depends on our viewpoint when we describe it. Time past is history. Time present is NOW. Time future is—who knows?

We need to think more about time future. What do we see as we look toward the year 2000 and beyond? A civilization destined to collapse under the weight of its own blunderings? an endless repetition of the cycle of birth, growth, decay and death? the extinction of life in a great nuclear holocaust? or are we of the opinion that "all things continue as they were from the beginning?"

What do we see as we look ahead? What do *you* see as you look ahead?

Mr. Kissinger was asked this question not too long ago. Part of his

answer was this very significant statement: "We are moving into a new world," he said. "We are adjusting to a new environment."

Removing his words from their intended context and translating them into the vocabulary of divine prophecy, we have a tremendous thought: we are moving into a new world. We are adjusting to a new environment.

This very moment we are on the verge of stupendous events. All things do *not* continue as they have for centuries past. Change is upon us, change that will convulse the present system of civilization and government to its very foundation. It will be a change that will affect the United States, and Canada, and England, and the Soviet Union and China and every nation upon earth. It will affect the government of every land and the people of every land. The God of heaven has spoken: "Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth" (Isa. 65:17)—new heavens means new ruling authority and new government; new earth means a new populace, new inhabitants; and these will come into being in the age that is just ahead. A righteous government shall displace the present inadequate and corrupt systems of men, and a

superior race of holy men and women shall fill the earth with the glory of the Lord. The God of heaven has spoken; it is the promise of His Word: There's a new age coming!

God created this planet and populated it with a definite purpose in mind. The Bible tells us this purpose. He "created it not in vain," said the ancient Prophet Isaiah (45:17-18); "he formed it to be inhabited." And as truly as He lives all the earth shall be filled with His glory (Num. 14:21). The promise is as certain as the very existence of God Himself. Before His work on earth is complete, He is going to have a whole new world.

Someday soon, Christ is coming back. We do not know just when, but it may very likely be within our lifetime, even within the next few years. The Bible states certain conditions which must exist at that time, and certain events which must happen in the world, and almost all have been fulfilled, telling us plainly that the Great Day is right upon us.

As soon as Christ comes back and sets up His new government, the new age will begin. We call that coming age the Millennium. The word "millennium" is a combination of *mille*, meaning a

Age Coming!

"thousand" and *annum*, meaning "Year." So when we talk about the Millennium we are talking about a thousand years, and *this* millennium will be the thousand-year-period foretold in Scripture; it will be God's Millennium. It will be the time when Christ will reign, and holiness and righteousness and justice prevail worldwide. It will be earth's Golden Age.

For Whom?

Who will live during that grand, glorious coming age? Who will be there during those thousand years?

We take our present lives more or less for granted. We are here, and we do not give too much thought to whether our presence in this world is wanted or unwanted. But life during the Millennium will be different. Anyone who survives to see the dawning of that thousand years will thank God for the privilege of living, for he will have witnessed the destruction of hosts of rebellious, warlike people. All who live will have showed a willingness to support the new government and cooperate with its programs. All will not be perfect and holy, nor will they all be wholehearted servants of God, but

they will have proved themselves willing supporters of the new regime.

Who will be there when the Millennium begins?

The King...

First, there will be the glorious King Himself. "The Lord shall be King over all the earth" (Zech 14:9). Jesus Christ will be the King, as Israel's prophets foretold long ago. "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:7).

Co-Rulers...

But He will not rule alone. The Bible says He will be "King of kings and Lord of lords"—indicating that there will be "kings" and "lords" next to Him. This is the position of authority Jesus promised those who should be overcomers: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (Rev. 3:21). No ordinary persons, these co-rulers with Christ. They will be men and women who, through the ages prior to Christ's return, proved themselves by their supreme quality of character: they are "called, and chosen, and faith-

ful" (Rev. 17:14). They are men and women whose obedience was complete and wholehearted; they are called the "saints of the Most High." To them will have been granted "glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life" (Rom. 2:7). Their bodies will have been changed and made like the incorruptible body of their glorious King (Phil. 3:21), and with Him they shall live, not only for the duration of the Millennium, but on through the endless ages of eternity. What honor, what glory, what reward!

Populace...

But the King and His immortal co-rulers will not be the only people living during the Millennium. A King, however glorious, and co-rulers, however proven and capable, must have someone over whom to exercise some authority and upon whom to bestow love and blessing. The third group during the Millennium will be the populace, the thousands and millions of mortals who will enjoy a happy, vigorous mortal life in the New World. This third group are the fruit of the great missionary effort which shall spread the "everlasting gospel" from "sea to

sea," to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue and people" (Rev. 14:6).

The prophet Zechariah reveals that two-thirds of earth's inhabitants will be "cut off and die" at the time Christ calls upon all people to submit (Zech. 13:8); they will have to die because they refuse to cooperate with the new and righteous regime. God will allow nothing to hinder the forward-moving plan; that which will not move with it shall be removed.

The third which remains—some 1,300,000,000 people—will be the nucleus from which will spring a whole new populace. Millions upon millions of children will be born, multiplying the population of the earth and filling it with a whole new race. So large will be the number of these new inhabitants of the Kingdom that the Bible describes them as "a great multitude which no man can number." The Millennium will not be a time of holy isolation! Far from it! There will be people everywhere. And they will all be taught the plan of God. It is written, "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord" (Jer. 31:34).

The Millennium will be their day of probation, their opportunity to serve God and obey His every command so that they may finally be rewarded with immortality and become the eternal inhabitants of the eternal Kingdom. Not all will want to serve God, but we can be sure a great percentage will, for serving God and living by His laws then will be the popular way of life. Everywhere you go, people will be doing it—and enjoying it!

A great number of these people born during the Millennium will be successful in their quest for eternal life, for the Bible pictures the time when they shall receive their crown of immortality at the close of the Millennium, and there is pictured a great throng.

What will life be like during the Millennium?

The new government will be superior to any ever known on earth before. All power will be vested in competent and responsible hands, so there will be no injustice, no oppression, no strife or discord anywhere on earth.

Peace...

It will be an age of abounding peace. With only one government, there will be no strife between nations. After the ravaging Battle of Armageddon, during which the forces of evil will be subdued, peace will grow and continue to grow. Military schools will be no more; there will be no armies, or armories; no war machines or war-torn areas, no enemies. "There will be universal peace, and all the military academies and training camps will be closed down" (Mic. 4:3, TLB). What a change! The glad song about peace, which the angels

God created this planet with a definite purpose in mind.

sang at the time Jesus was born, will be reality in that Golden Age: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men."

The Bible even tells us what city will be the capital of the New Government: "He will choose Jerusalem again" (Zech. 2:12). Jerusalem will be "the city of the great king" (Matt. 5:35).

Prosperity...

Along with the age of Peace will come prosperity such as we cannot even imagine now. Today prosperity is measured in present-day terms—good wages, good business, comfortable homes, a successful career. The Word of God promises all this and so much more: "Things beyond our seeing, things beyond our hearing, things beyond our imagining, all are prepared

by God for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). And these blessings will begin during the Millennium.

Prosperity will be everywhere! Never again will any fear shortages. There will be billions of fertile acres for eager cultivators. There will be a wealth of knowledge for those who seek learning. No one will be denied the opportunity to develop his fullest potential.

Opportunity...

Education will be popular and well nigh limitless for mortal millenarians. They will have opportunity, first of all, to take pre-immortal training, in which they will learn the full scope of God's plan and what is required of them to merit life beyond the Millennium. Training will be intense—and fruitful; thousands and millions will be fitted for life in the glorious eternal world just beyond.

Besides training in the basics, there will be training for special positions of service or administration during the Millennium. The possibilities for learning and its uses will be limitless.

But Millennium life will have one striking difference from life now. If a person heeds the admonitions given him and does what is right, he may live in happiness and blessing; if he refuses to listen to the law, he will prove himself unusable and unworthy material and will die; it is as simple and straightforward as that. "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isa. 30:21). Disobedience will not be tolerated. And if anyone refuses to adopt the new thinking of the new administration in the schools, he will be removed. Does this sound like dictatorship? It is, but it is righteous; it is just; it is for the good of all. It is the only way to progress.

Happiness...

The people of the Millennium will be a blessed, happy people. They will find

life far superior to any experience of mortals during the history of the earth, and they will delight in the normal functions of healthful living in a vastly superior environment. And what an advantage the children of that age will have! They will not grow up to die in war or live in meaninglessness; they will not even have to face the evil influences of a morally depraved society, for in that age "thou shalt not see evil any more" (Zeph. 3:15). They will be shown and taught the best way to live and serve God, and the morally fittest of them will be selected to live on forever and ever, filling the earth with the glory of God.

Along with the better living will come better health and a greatly increased lifespan. The prophet Isaiah reveals that during that time a person dying at 100 years of age will be considered still a child (Isa. 65:20); "for as the days of a tree are the days of my people" (Isa. 65:22).

Beauty...

The Millennial world will be a beautiful world. The glory of the Lord will be everywhere—and everywhere increasing; and with it will come beauty. All through the thousand years the beautifying of the earth will go on. The beautifying of our decadent and ramshackle civilization and desecrated landscapes

The new age is just about to dawn.

will be a glorious project of the Millenarians. All unsightly and imperfect scenes will be transformed. All the old slums, the night clubs, the dens of iniquity will be reduced to rubble and be carried off; then will begin the construction of the new and beautiful. It will be a glorious work!

Greatly enriching the beauty of the

Millennium will be the glorious immortal beings, shining with the glorious beauty of their new divine life. Isaiah pictures them, the "ransomed of the Lord," traveling the high road of Zion and singing their hearts out for joy as they travel. It is a new age. The sun has risen, and the shadows, the sorrow and sighing, have fled forever.

And "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35:10).

That new age is just about to dawn; and if we would live then, we must be preparing now; God will not let any live then who has not proven himself worthy. Don't you long to serve a God who has such a plan to unfold here on earth? Don't you want to live in that glorious new age that is just ahead?

The Millennium is coming; let's prepare NOW to live THEN. MM

On Paying Tithes

SHOULD we pay tithes?

The paying of tithes is a principle Biblically founded. However, the Megiddo Church does not request or require anyone to tithe. Tithing is entirely voluntary and is the decision of every individual.

The prophet Malachi mentioned the paying of tithes and the blessings that would result. Malachi 3:8-10 reads: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

The Megiddo Church feels that many religious groups overwork the Biblical demand for the paying of tithes, and that to stimulate members to pay tithes they overdraw the picture of God's blessing to the tither. We should remember that by far the greater portion of God's

blessing is future, not present, as Jesus answered Peter's query: "He shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, . . . and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:28-30).

Although the New Testament contains no direct command to give one tenth of one's increase as a tithe, the principle of giving according as one is able is stated repeatedly. Jesus denounced the hypocritical Pharisees for paying "tithes of mint and anise and cummin," and omitting "the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith," concluding His statement with the words: "these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." In other words, judgment, mercy and faith were of primary importance, but paying tithes should not be omitted.

For a time during the Apostolic Age the early Church had all things in common that they might more ably carry on the work of spreading the gospel. We are not informed how long this plan lasted but it was not a permanent institution intended for all time future.

A casual survey of the New Testament Epistles provides a glimpse into how the problem of giving to the Lord was handled during Apostolic times.

The King Is Coming!

*The news is out,
Old, even now—
"The King is coming!"*

*For some, the news is good,
For others, it rings without meaning;
For others, it is solemn.
But for all it is fact.
"The King is coming!"*

*History unfolds
With an eye toward the great event.
Each day brings it closer.
"The King is coming!"*

*When is He coming?
No man knows;
We can only know that
"The King is coming!"*

*So, ready one and all!
Get ready now
To welcome this King.
Watching.
Praying.
Working.
"The King is coming!"*

The church at Corinth were advised to take up a collection for needy saints (I Cor. 16:1-2). Acts 11:29 records that the brethren of Antioch were determined to send relief to the brethren which dwelt in Judea. But this was for every one according to his ability. No stipulated amount was binding on any individual.

In II Corinthians 8:1-4, Paul tried to incite the members of the church at Corinth to greater liberality in giving by pointing out the liberality of the church at Macedonia, which liberality was of a deeper sort: they had first given "of themselves." God wants us to give of ourselves. He wants givers, not gifts. Verse 12 points out this acceptable giving, but no amount is specified: "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." Galatians 2:10 speaks of remembering the poor, but again the amount to be given was left to the judgment of the giver.

To whom should I pay my tithe?

To the church which you are convinced is teaching true religion. If you wish to pay tithes, you should tithe to the church which in accordance with Paul's statement to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good," proclaims only what can be amply supported by and harmonized with true Bible teaching.

If I should decide to give a tithe to the Megiddo Church, what will my money be used for?

The money received by this church in tithes is not used to support the minister, the choir, the organist, or any church officials. These services are all voluntary, in keeping with the principle stated by the apostle Paul, who labored with his own hands that he might be "chargeable to no man" (II Cor. 11:9; II Thess. 3:8). Nor does tithe money contribute to the upkeep of any rental or business property which the church may own. Tithe money is used exclusively for the spiritual work of the Church itself, that is, to support the printing and publishing department, all advertising and mailing of church literature, and all missionary activities of the Church.

How should I figure the amount of my tithe?

A tithe is generally understood to be a tenth part of one's increase. If one chooses to pay tithes, "increase" would be the gross wages of a person employed, plus any additional income received from dividends on investments or interest on savings. If one is self-employed, increase would be one's net income (income remaining after business expenses are subtracted).

If I am in debt, should I pay tithes?

The Bible principle of giving, as aforementioned, is according to every man's ability. If you are in debt, the money is not actually yours to give. The Bible command is: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another" (Rom. 13:8).

Our honored founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, was aware

that among his followers were some who were just about able to make ends meet financially without that additional 10% drain on their meager income. Hence, he would not accept tithes from any member if that member were in debt—that is, if he owed a grocery bill, or a doctor bill, or his house rent was not paid, etc. (A mortgage on a home, a farm, or a business, could not be considered as a debt, but rather an investment.) MM

So What Do You Know?

The following questions are all on Daniel 2. How well do you know what this vision is all about?

- King _____ saw a great image in his dream.
- Why was the king angry with his astrologers, sorcerers and magicians?
- Who came to get Daniel and his friends to execute them?
a) Belteshazzar b) Arioch c) Mishael d) Ashpenaz
- Put in order what Daniel did when he found out why the king had ordered all the wisemen executed (number 1, 2, 3, etc.).

- _____ Daniel thanked God for revealing the dream and its interpretation to him.
- _____ Daniel went home and told his friends the whole story.
- _____ Daniel went before the king and asked for a little time.
- _____ Daniel told the captain of the king's body guard not to kill the wisemen but to take him before the king.
- _____ God revealed the dream and its interpretation by night to Daniel.
- _____ Daniel went before the king and gave both the dream and its interpretation.

- Draw a line from the word on the left to the part of the image it best describes. From the names on the right draw a line to the part of the image that represents it. Example: the head was gold and it represented *Babylon*.

Silver

Medo-Persia

Iron

Christ's Kingdom

Gold

Rome

Iron & Clay

Stone

Babylon

Brass

Wood

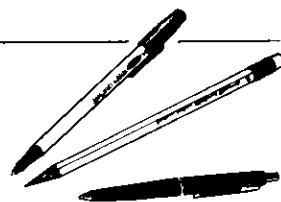
Grecia (Greece)



- How did the King respond to Daniel's revelation of his dream?
- How did Daniel feel about the attention and promotion he received from the king?
- Was Daniel selfish?
- What about this dream should be faith-stimulating to us in the twentieth century?

Answers (from Daniel 2):

1. Nebuchadnezzar (vs. 28, 31). 2. They could not tell him his dream and told the king that he was asking the impossible (vs. 5, 10-12). 3. b) Arioch (v. 14). 4. 4, 2, 1, 5, 3, 6. 5. Head of Gold = Babylon (vs. 38). Breast and arms of silver = Medo-Persia (vs. 32). Thighs of brass = Grecia (vs. 32). Legs of iron = Feet of iron & clay = Divided Rome (vs. 40). Little Stone = Christ's Kingdom. 6. The king worshipped him, made him a great man and gave him gifts (vs. 46-48). 7. Daniel gave God the glory and credit for the knowledge of the king's dream (vs. 28, 30). 8. No! He requested of the king that his 3 friends be promoted also (vs. 49). Also, the lives of the other wisemen were spared at his request. 9. The dream of the four universal kingdoms is faith-stimulating because we are in the time represented by the toes of the image. The next kingdom will be the fifth, represented by the stone cut out of the mountain without hands that breaks the image and grows until it fills the whole earth. This fifth kingdom is that of the Lord Jesus Christ.



Can You Take It?

SO MUCH of life is give and take. We often think about the giving, but at times it may be harder to *take* than to *give*.

There are things in life which, like it or not, we have to *take*. It may be sudden illness, the loss of a friend, a severe disappointment, a financial setback, a life dream collapsed. How do we respond? Can we take it?

The answer, broadly stated, lies in where we have set our affections. If our hearts are bound up in this world, then when this world falls apart we are in trouble. But if we have sold ourselves out to God, nothing that He allows can trouble us unduly. We will accept all as part of our discipline and know that He is allowing whatever is to our best spiritual advantage. In His strength we can surely take it—however severe the “it” may be.

The “it’s” may be large or small. Sometimes the little knocks of every day strike without warning. Are we prepared to take them?

Suppose, for example, we go out of our way for someone, and he or she seems not to even notice, much less appreciate it. Can we take it—when our best efforts are ignored?

Suppose we invest considerable time, effort or money in a seemingly worthwhile project—that fails. Can we take it? Can we take it without begrudging what we gave, knowing that the Lord will give us proper credit for our effort in due time?

In such situations, perhaps we should check our motive: *Why* did we do what we did? Was it to satisfy a desire of our own? If so, we are sure to be hurt when our effort is not appreciated or does not prosper as we had planned. If we did it as “to the Lord, not unto men,” realizing that by serving one another we serve God, we will feel no personal offense at another’s thoughtlessness, nor will we regret what we have given away.

Suppose we do or say something unkind without thinking. A friend calls our attention to this deficiency in our character. Can we take it? Can we take it without any feeling of animosity toward that person, without any resentment or feeling of bitterness? Of course we will be disappointed in our lack, but can we take their thoughtfulness graciously—and gratefully?

Sometime we may do the very best we know, and it turns out wrong—we realize when too late. Someone tells us of all this; can we take it patiently, without the least feeling of “You don’t need to rub it in, I already know”?

Suppose someone tries to amplify our wrongdoing seemingly to put us down, instead of “restoring” us, as Paul advised, in the “spirit of meekness.” Can we take it?

Perhaps we gave our wholehearted support to a project and feel inwardly satisfied (beware!) that we have done well. Someone comes along and offers suggestion upon suggestion of how we could have done so much better than we did, and, and—Or they just criticize, and criticize, without any regard for our feelings or the effort behind our sacrifice. Can we take it? Can we take it all graciously without any desire to return evil for evil?

The apostle Peter spoke knowingly about this. Apparently some of his brethren had wondered just how much they should have to take of undue criticism. Peter’s reply is soul-stretching. He says, “There is nothing meritorious in taking a beating patiently if you have done something wrong to deserve it. The merit, in the sight of God, is in bearing it patiently when you are punished after doing your duty” (I Pet. 2:20, JB). Of course we should take a rebuke in good grace when we have done wrong! The real credit is in taking it when we have done well!

How about this? Can we take it?

Perhaps we think ourselves slighted. Can we take it, even *dismiss* it, without carrying any offense toward that person? Can we forget it as completely as if we had never noticed?

Suppose another’s opinion is preferred—and accepted—above our own. Can we take it? Can we take it—even offering our support to their opinion?

Can we take it, *you and I*? A searching question, for the answer depends upon where we have set our hearts’ affections. If our first concern is for the fair speeches of men and our own gratification, we will find many things hard to take. If our whole concern is to give ourselves to the Lord and leave with Him “whether shall prosper, either this or that,” we should have no problem taking whatever comes. God will be our shield and buckler, and the greater share of the taking will be done by Him.

MM

Caught Unawares

TOM ALLEN was a lad of about twelve years. One day Tom's mother sent him to town for two loaves of bread and a dozen bananas. When Tom had made the purchases and returned to the street, he took a banana from the bag and began to eat it. Slowly he made his way along the street, stopping to gaze at window displays and to take in other sights that attracted his attention. At last he reached home with the two loaves of bread—but not more than ten bananas.

A few days later as Tom was returning from school with a group of his classmates, one of the boys invited Tom over to his house to see some photographs which he knew he would like to see. And so, with his mother's permission, he went.

I am sure no boy was ever more completely dumfounded than was Tom that night. There before his eyes was a boy of exactly his size, and who looked exactly like him, stepping out of a store on the main street carrying two loaves of bread and a bag. Tom Allen was looking at Tom Allen. He watched himself remove a banana from the bag and begin to devour it. He saw himself stopping to gaze into store windows, lean against an automobile fender and saunter leisurely along, eating a banana.

On the day when Tom went on his errand, his friend's father, a photographer for an advertising firm had been taking a moving picture of the main street from such a point that the camera was kept focused on him for a whole block, and there happened to be so few moving objects in the street at the time that Tom was the principal actor in the scene.

Tom Allen had been caught unawares.

This was an unusual experience, indeed; and no

doubt, young Tom remembered it a long time. But what of us? I wonder what our reaction would be if at the end of one of these ordinary days we were to sit down and view a picture of ourselves as we went about our daily duties? What would the picture be like if we were caught unawares? Would the picture be one we would invite the Lord to view?

Would we see ourselves strolling leisurely along this pathway to the kingdom, perhaps stopping to gaze at some of the attractions Babylon has to offer? Would we stop off at the House of Dainty Meats and purchase a nut cake from the devil to satisfy our fleshly cravings, thinking that no one had seen? Would we stop for a rest in the park of "Time Enough Yet" with the thought that the Lord's coming may still be a long way off?

Or would we see ourselves moving hurriedly along in the narrow way, allowing nothing to retard our progress no matter how strong the attraction? Would we see ourselves giving a flat refusal to every whisper of the tempter no matter how persistent? Would we be found eating the bread of heaven with trembling and with carefulness, lest that day come upon us unawares?

Each day of our lives the Divine Photographer is capturing our every word, thought, and action. And, someday—perhaps sooner than we think—we shall be called to view the final reproduction.

It is far from the natural tendency of human nature to desire such a restricted way of living as is required of a true Christian. Such desire must be cultivated, and this takes time and practice. The Lord does not demand perfection in an individual until he has had sufficient time to attain it. God will give us time to overcome our many, many failures if we are determined to do so. Before He shows us the final reproduction of our life-picture, He will give us opportunity to produce the best picture of which we are capable. As each day we produce a better and still better picture, the old will be discarded; never again will we have to be ashamed because of it. If we have thoroughly accustomed ourselves to right doing every day, then at the arrival of the great Judge, we shall have no fear of being caught unawares.

The God whom we serve is merciful, far beyond what we deserve. To attain the noble achievement of mastering self will take time and effort; but what does time avail if we allow the days, months, and years to pass and we go not on to perfection? In this age, God is not going to give us a hundred years to work out our salvation. The work can and must be done in a shorter time than that. Therefore, He exhorts us to work speedily, to hasten!

What an opportunity we have! How can we bring ourselves fully to realize that every idle thought unchecked, every thoughtless word unbridled, every careless glance unrestrained is melting away our opportunity

(Continued on page 23)

Meditating on the Word



Why Humility?

**"By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life"
(Prov. 22:4).**

HUMILITY is not a popular word today because most people associate it with weakness, lack of character, lack of backbone. It is seen as spinelessness, non-aggressiveness and non-forcefulness; the direct opposite of strength and positiveness.

This was not the opinion of the holy men of old. The writers of the Bible considered humility one of the strongest virtues, something to be desired, esteemed and treasured. Why? Because God loves the humble, seeks out the humble, blesses the humble. James reported that "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (Jas. 4:6). "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom," wrote the Wise Man, "and before honour is humility" (Prov. 15:33). And Jesus in His first recorded sermon pronounced special blessing on the meek: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5).

Humility, as God sees it, is among the most prized and expansive of virtues. It is a love for God that reaches beyond the material, sinks self out of sight in the securing of a greater goal and the exalting of a greater love. The opposite of haughtiness and egotism, it is a virtue that teaches us to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God (Mic. 6:8).

Humility is an *acquired* characteristic. Not a single man or woman is born with the virtue of humility or the apostle Paul would not have found it necessary to write "to every man that is among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think" (Rom. 12:3). It is a quality that must be developed, sought for, perfected.

But what a lovely grace it is. Humility is that grace which permits us to do something for another without expecting anything in return. It is doing a service freely and willingly with genuine love and affection—because God would have us do it.

The humble person is always mindful of his relationship with God. By every thought and action he seeks to please God. Mindful of his insignificance, he has turned over the ordering of his whole life to God. This is no decision for weaklings. It is a decision requiring strength, power and virtue unrivaled. It manifests a love that is divine in nature and is an indication that God's law is supreme in the heart.

"Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility" (Prov. 18:12).

Humility has no part in fear; it has no connection with meek servitude that is forced by appeasement, weakness, or fear. Nor does humility indicate any lack of character, spinelessness, or weakmindedness. It is strong in patience, compassion, and understanding, submits eagerly and totally to the will of God, and stands valiantly for right.

In James 1:19-20 we are admonished to be "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." To obey this command one must be humble. The humble person will consider quietly, consulting God's viewpoint on a matter rather than his own.

The humble person is patient, never running thoughtlessly ahead or making decisions hurriedly which he will regret later. He takes time to listen, think, consider; he speaks with wisdom, and acts with self-control. His tongue is doubly guarded. He thinks thrice and speaks once.

The truly humble person is humble because God requires it. He is not humble in God's sight because he might have been born into poverty and have little ambition for the things of this world. He has the highest type of ambition, an ambition reaching even *beyond* this world. He is one who is so farsighted that he has

surrendered his naturally high opinion of himself for a higher opinion of God. He is willing to do this because he has a correct sense of values and knows where the real worth lies, and that God's thoughts and ways are as much above his as the heavens are above the earth.

The truly humble person is not humble by nature. He has trained himself to prefer God's viewpoint above his own because this is the way to greater gain. He is humble because the apostle Peter wrote "Be clothed with humility" (I Pet. 5:5); and again, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (I Pet. 5:6).

The person with humility can never become an egotist. He is self-effacing, never wanting the limelight of publicity; yet he is anxious for the approbation of God upon his work. Whatever he does, his first thought is, Will God be pleased? He is willing to do anything, be anything, attempt anything, if only God is watching. He has learned the lesson of supreme value: "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt. 23:12).

And he has the richest blessing, for "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life" (Prov. 22:4). Who does not desire this grand humility?
MM

Caught Unawares

(Continued from page 21)

like snow under the heat of a summer sun. And why is it melting away so rapidly? Because the time is drawing nigh, even at the door.

Never has the time been shorter than it is today; never has the coming of Elijah and Christ been nearer than at this moment. We have absolutely no time to waste, not a minute to delay or to fool with Gentile ways. It is time we were waking up. It is time we built high heaps around our pitfalls, lest we again be caught unawares. We have reached the place where it is too late merely to do better. Time is short, and we must actually accomplish what the Lord requires of us the next time and every time thereafter.

Let us be exceedingly careful, then, never to utter words that might not be fitly spoken if they should prove our last; never to be found in a place where we would not like to be found when Elijah comes; and never to do anything which would cause us regret in the Day of Reckoning.

Let us get right with God and do it NOW so when our Lord returns we shall not hang our heads in shame because we were caught unawares.
MM

Obedience the Secret

CRIED the Psalmist, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Ps. 27:13).

More than once it seemed the circumstances of his mortal life were about to crush and defeat him. Driven from pillar to post, he might have fainted and given up. But no, faith in his God and what He has promised stayed and sustained him. While he possessed many good qualities, while he was spiritually-minded and of a tender heart, he also, like us, had more than one disqualifying side to his otherwise good nature. He had to be keenly tested and tried before he became the David fitted for a place in God's Kingdom—humbled, self-controlled, and truly a godly character.

Come rubbings or buffetings, we must go forward, lay aside our own notions and be led and taught of God. Experience has proven to us that God never imposes any needless burdens upon us. Too often by our own obstinacy in resisting we have prolonged the suffering and made the yoke harder to bear.

When we are tempted to complain of burdens, very often we may discover it is but the old man, our own old nature, dragging us down into needless difficulties and trials. Because correction is designed for disciplining and not coddling, it is difficult to accept and profit by it. But the universal and abiding principle is still in force (Deut. 4:1), "Hearken and do, that ye may live and possess." It was true for Israel of old and it still remains true for us. Obedience, submission to God, is the pathway to life and the only secret to an abundant spiritual success.

Shall we come forth as pure gold, all shining and true? It all depends on me, on you.

—Contributed

LORD, Thou hast searched and seen me through;
Thine eye commands, with piercing view,
My rising and my resting hours,
My heart and flesh with all their powers.

My thoughts, before they are my own,
Are to my God distinctly known;
He knows the words I mean to speak,
Ere from my opening lips they break.

Within Thy circling power I stand;
On every side I find Thy hand;
Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,
I am surrounded still with God.

—Selected.

Inquiries and Answers

• About the Fiery Serpents

"Please explain Numbers 21:4-9, about the fiery serpents and the serpent of brass."

This passage tells us that the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people as a punishment for speaking against Him and against Moses. The plague had the desired effect (verse 7): the people were moved to acknowledge their sin and to repent. They asked Moses to petition God for relief. Moses did, and the Lord told Moses to make a fiery serpent of brass and place it upon a pole as a means of relief from the serpents. Anyone bitten by a serpent might look upon the brass serpent and be healed. This provision shows the mercy and justice of God, in providing an escape to those who would repent and obey. The brass serpent of itself had no efficacy; God was requiring obedience. Later, we read (II Kings 18:4) how Hezekiah removed and destroyed the brass serpent because the people of Judah were using it as an image to which to offer incense.

• Jacob Wrestles with the Angel

"Please explain Genesis 32:24, about Jacob wrestling an angel."

We are not told as much about this incident as we would like to know; however a few facts seem obvious.

First of all, it appears that Jacob had an actual physical encounter with an angel, as evidenced by Jacob's resulting physical disability (Gen. 32:31). This may seem strange to us, but we are certainly not acquainted with all of God's ways of working, nor are we given a full explanation of just what happened in this incident.

Second, it seems that the incident was highly significant in Jacob's spiritual life. It may well have been a serious point of spiritual renewal in Jacob's commitment of his life to God. Though he was at the time about one hundred years of age, he still had a major part of his life ahead of him.

Third, Jacob by his persistence obtained a special blessing from the angel. This may be God's way of telling us that He wants us to be persistent in seeking His favor,

that He wants us to desire so fervently that we will let nothing stand in the way of our obtaining what we seek.

The event was also significant because the Lord chose this time to change Jacob's name to Israel, "for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men" (v. 28).

It also seems possible that this experience may have been valuable to Jacob in establishing his faith in the reality and also the approachableness of the God he was serving. Jacob was deeply impressed, for as he relates afterward, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

• The "Evil Spirit" upon Saul

"Please explain I Samuel 16:23 and I Samuel 18:10-12 where the evil spirit from God was upon Saul."

We know from other passages of Scripture that God does not send "evil spirits" upon anyone. A "spirit of evil" may be present, but it is not a demon or any type of self-existing being. Nor is this "evil spirit from God," as would appear from reading the text. In Scripture, particularly in the Old Testament Scriptures, God is said to do that which He allows. The Hebrew people were strong believers in the concept that God was the cause of anything and everything that happened. An example is found in Exodus 7:13, where we read that God hardened Pharaoh's heart; in Ex. 7:22 where we read that "Pharaoh's heart was hardened," and in Exodus 8:15 and 32, where we read that "Pharaoh hardened his heart." The meaning is the same.

In I Samuel 16:23, Saul's "evil spirit" was what we might call a bad mood. It was a direct result of God's rejecting him as king, which was in turn the result of Saul's own disobedience (see I Samuel 15; also 16:14). In I Samuel 18:10, Saul was jealous of David, and that jealous spirit caused Saul to sin. Again, the cause was Saul's own uncontrolled, jealous nature, not God. And apparently David's harp playing helped to pacify the king.

• The Urim and Thummim

"What was the Urim and Thummim? Please explain Ezra 2:63, about the Urim and Thummim, and I Samuel

28:6 about the Lord not answering by the Urim."

The Urim and Thummim were part of the Lord's provision for directing His people in the early days. They were apparently special marked stones worn in a pouch in the high priest's breastplate: "and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the Lord: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually" (Ex. 28:30). By consulting the "Urim and Thummim" the high priest could obtain divine guidance in a particular matter.

However, as you note, the answer was not always forthcoming, as in the case of Saul's inquiring (I Sam. 28:1-6). The people could not be apostatizing and seeking God's will at the same time. God demanded consistency.

It seems very possible that the ability to consult the Urim and Thummim was an identifying mark of a true priest of God. This is why, after the Captivity when the Jewish people were again establishing their sacred services and reviewing their genealogies, the "Tirshatha" or governor suggested that "the most holy things" should not be partaken of until a priest should stand up who was unmistakably a true priest—"a priest with the Urim and Thummim" (Ezra 2:63).

We should not consider the use of the Urim and Thummim as some sort of legerdemain or pure chance as a coin might be tossed to decide an issue. The Urim and Thummim was a divine institution and served His people for an extended period of time. The priest no doubt knew exactly how the Urim and Thummim were used, and how to interpret, but this information has not been preserved for us.

• **Jesus Clothed with Purple?**

"Explain Mark 15:17 about Jesus being clothed with purple and Matthew 27:28 about Jesus being clothed with scarlet. Purple raiment was worn by the kings of Midian (Judges 8:26)."

Why should one gospel writer say the clothing was purple and the other say that it was scarlet? It was, as you say, customary for kings to wear raiment of purple. Scarlet was also considered a royal color. The soldiers mocked Jesus' claim to kingship by clothing him in royal colors. The Bible dictionary defines purple as a "rich red-blue color," which is much the same as scarlet. There seems to be no serious point of difference in the two descriptions.

• **Children Suffer for Parents' Sins?**

"Please explain II Samuel 12:14-15, 18 about the Lord's striking the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David."

Doesn't this make it appear that the child had to suffer for the sins of the parents?"

You are surely correct in believing that God does not punish the righteous for the wicked, nor does He ever condemn one man for the sins of another. A righteous son is never condemned for the sins of a wicked father, or vice versa. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20). "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son." We know also that God does not "willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men." He never punishes without having in view the long-range good of the people with whom He is working.

However, we must remember that God sees not as man sees, and His ways of working are not ours. He does not consider a human being in the same way that we with our far more limited insight must consider him. We must remember, too, that God knows the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:11). God could by divine foreknowledge know that the child would be of no consequence to His cause, and that David could be saved by a severe lesson; hence the reason for the Lord's acting drastically as He did to teach David.

The Lord in His wisdom knew what punishment would touch David and give him the deep lesson he needed. David had his heart all wrapped up in the child, as is indicated by David's servants fearing to tell him about the death of the child (II Sam. 12:18). By taking the life of the child, the Lord was teaching David that he could not disregard the law with impunity.

But God showed His mercy. Under the law of Moses, death would have been the penalty both for David's sin of adultery and also for his sin in murdering Uriah. Because David repented, God spared his life.

• **The Use of Wine**

"Explain Genesis 27:25, where Jacob brought wine to Isaac. The Bible warns of the intoxicating power of wine (Prov. 23:31-32 and Prov. 20:1). But in I Timothy 5:23 Paul admonishes, 'Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and for thine oft infirmities.'"

We know that drunkenness has always been wrong from the standpoint of a Christian. Whether God's people ever used fermented wine in moderation, we do not know. Some authorities believe that what the Bible refers to as wine was actually what we would call grape juice.

As a church, we practice total abstention from the use of wine as a beverage, due to the risk of addiction. However, it may be used as a medicine. Paul did advise Timothy to take "a little wine" for medicinal purposes—which could not be construed to support drunkenness.



Letters

Everyday Religion

Several times we are told that Jesus was a guest at some feast, and it was at a wedding at Cana that He wrought His first miracle.

What an insight into His life we get in the words "The Son of man came eating and drinking." They seem to show us that Jesus came not only eating and drinking every bit of knowledge that His Father had to offer, but that He was concerned with the whole of life—including the ordinary.

We are not to think that God's laws are only in effect in church. They are to be in force in everyday life for all. Ruskin tells of an inscription that was uncovered when excavating around a certain church, which makes it very clear how religion must follow the Christian into secular life: "Around this church let the merchant's weights be true, his contracts just, and his judgments without guile." Religion is to be taken into business life and social life.

Some good counsel can be taken from George Matheson's words: "Covet, for Christ's sake, each gift of body, each gift of mind; tune the harp for Him, train the voice for Him; twine the wreath for Him, plant the flower for Him; wear the garment for Him; keep thy hold on the world for Him." If we do this, we will have an effective everyday religion.

Minnedosa, Manitoba

E. H.

Only One Goal

Truly God is good to us, even more than we deserve. We may fail Him daily, but as long as we keep working and trying and gradually improving ourselves, He will never fail us. And some day, if we go all the way to the end, He will reward us with eternal life and all the blessings, the joys and pleasures that go with it. We can't even imagine all that He has prepared for us. It will be exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think.

There is no doubt in my mind that God is able to perform all that He has promised. There is no comparison between what the world offers and what God offers. The world offers so little and God offers so much that there is no doubt in my mind as to which road to take. The narrow way may be more difficult, but think of what lies at the end! As Paul wrote, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Cor. 4:17). Eternal glory, that is what we are living and dying for. It certainly is worth giving up everything in this life to get.

Cleveland, Tennessee

S. K.

In Humility

We who are striving for the Kingdom must give thanks for all our "tribulations." For we can know with certainty that God lets all things work for our good. In His lovingkindness and mercy, He allows some rain to fall in our lives. To use an old cliché, all can't be sunshine and no rain, or all would be desert.

But many times, we are our own worst enemy. We are, as it has been said, stubborn and stiffnecked. We must first be broken before we can start building. Our wills must be conquered if we ever expect to receive that crown of life that will be given to the conquerors. Indeed, we must be broken and remolded again by the Master's hand.

This remolding may not always seem easy to bear. But no matter what comes, we must look up. God promised to chasten those whom He loves.

Humility is the key to being an obedient servant. We cannot be proud when we look in the mirror and see what we actually are—nothing, except for the grace of God. Seeing our finiteness and His omnipotence, what manner of person ought we to be! Just what could we ever do to earn eternal life? The gift is so great and our works nothing to compare.

The greatest kindnesses bestowed upon us by our brethren are loving reproofs, even "an excellent oil which shall not break my head." If we don't possess humility, as David did, these "rubbing experiences" might cause us a lot of needless sorrow.

May this prayer ever be ours,

**Make me humble, O my Savior;
Make me holy, O my Lord;
Fill me with Thy Truth and Spirit,
Nothing less can joy afford.**

Conyers, Georgia

B. P.

Give Your Best

I have been greatly impressed with the necessity of giving of my best service to the Lord while I still have life and a degree of health. Daily, momentary self-denial is a must, all the more now as we see how fast the day is approaching.

One of the seeming paradoxes of the Christian life is that when one spends enough time with God, in prayer and Bible study, he will have a strange sense of leisure and quietness in doing his regular tasks and apparently more time.

When we are careful to be alone with God for a certain time every day—preferably the first thing in the morning—we shall find that other things fall into their rightful place and the work of the day goes more smoothly. How true.

South Amboy, New Jersey

L. K.

An Abundance of Food

Study to show thyself approved; that is what I am doing daily, to enable me to give an answer to everyone that asks for the reason of my faith. I have been given so much help via the cassette tapes. It's a strong statement: The truth is not popular, yet it is the only thing to bring eternal life. For me the Truth is foremost; all else secondary. Learning each day is rewarding, we use time wisely when thus engaged. We take time for literal feeding, so, too, the mind needs to be refueled daily. It's a privilege looked to with eagerness.

If we would gain life we must take what is set on the Lord's Table, whether we like it or not, for it is not for us to say how it is to be set or even what the meal should consist of.

To be a hearer so as to be a doer, even though across the world, is really marvellous. To be in on the doing now can lead to being in on the Harvest, when our Lord will judge us, everyone according as his works shall be. May it not be said of us, "Too late."

The food comes as fast as we can eat it. And at all opportune times, a real stimulus for each moment of each day too. Truly, my cup runneth over.

Crewe, England

N. T.

Finally, Brethren

Follow After Peace

1982 is not proving to be the golden year of peace. With war in the Middle East, war in Argentina, and political unrest and upheaval in many another nation, peace is little more than a pleasant dream far removed from the world of reality. Nearly everyone has an earnest desire for peace. But while top officials negotiate, the building and preparing of armaments—even nuclear armaments—continues. All want peace, but all want it on their own terms.

The God of heaven also offers peace, and it is likewise on His own terms. But how great the contrast between the terms which He offers and those offered by the great powers of the world today. To those who by "patient continuance in well doing" are seeking for "glory, honour, and immortality," God offers eternal life (Rom. 2:7). Jesus pronounced a blessing upon the peacemakers: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9). It is written in the Psalms, "Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them" (Ps. 119:165). Nothing will cause them to stumble as they walk the way of His commandments; nothing will disturb their peace of mind and quietude of heart. Why? Because God gives true peace.

This was the peace Jesus knew. On the night before the greatest trial of His life, He said to His beloved disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you." This peace did not come from the world's arrangement of things. His peace came from the knowledge that His Father was in full control, that He had finished the work His Father had given Him to do, and that His future—and endless—

career was sure. What else mattered? Thus on the very night before He was to face a cruel mob and suffer death, He could talk serenely of peace.

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Rom. 14:19) is the admonition that comes to us. We cannot control the nations of earth, but we are responsible for ourselves. Can we not follow this command, we who have knowledge of the plan of God and the work He is destined to accomplish on this earth? Can we not pursue peace as did Jesus? Have we not the same Father and God? Have we not the same confidence, that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28)? Do we believe it? If we believe it, we *will* have peace.

As members of the household of faith we must also be at peace among ourselves and avoid giving offense to others. This means we must not allow one spark of anger, envy, jealousy or selfishness to exist among us. If we do we are at fault; and until we turn from our evil way we cannot expect to be numbered among the redeemed who stand "without fault before the throne of God" (Rev. 14:5).

The apostle Paul tells us in First Corinthians 1:10 how we can be without fault and at peace with one another and with God. He writes, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same things, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Let us meditate seriously on these words: "that there be no divisions" among us and "Let this mind be in [us] which was also in Christ Jesus." Then we can know true peace.

MM

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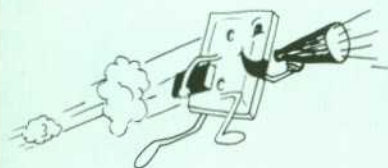
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