

Megiddo Message

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*The field is the world;
...and soon the reaping time will come
and angels shout the harvest home.*

Open My Eyes

To see, we must have light. But light alone is not enough. We must have also a functioning organ of sight, the marvelous mechanism called the eye.

But even the presence of light and a functioning eye are not enough. There must be also the cooperation of the mind. Though the eye is the means of sight, seeing is actually dependent upon the command of the mind. We voluntarily choose to see or not to see as we open or close our eyes. If the will or the desire to see is lacking, the most beautiful sight will be lost.

The same is true of our inner sight, and naturally our inner eyes are closed, blinded by the glare around us. A story from nineteenth century Denmark illustrates the point. It is a picture of a rich man driving a carriage. Back in those days people used carriages for transportation. Now here is a rich man driving his carriage down the road. Presumably for his protection and safety he has equipped his carriage with all kinds of lanterns. Another carriage on the road belongs to a poor man, who can't afford any lanterns on his carriage. Now the poor man can enjoy a good view of the stars when he travels at night. The rich man cannot. Why? Because the glow of the rich man's lanterns obscure the stars.

But, one asks, wouldn't it be possible for the rich man to take the lanterns off his carriage and see the stars? No doubt it would be possible, but the rich man could remove all the lanterns from his carriage and still not see the stars. It's not all a matter of removing the lanterns. He must also *want* to see the stars. He must look up.

Do we wonder why the Psalmist prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Ps. 119:18)?

David prayed God to open his eyes, but his eyes were not fully closed. He had a measure of spiritual perception, or he would never have known that there were more wonders to be seen. He had eyes partially open, but he longed for the fullness of vision, the clearest, widest insight God could give.

How tragic to be in the midst of the noblest precepts and remain blind to their beauty!

"Open thou mine eyes." Most obvious are the wonders of God's handiwork which surround us, but we must have our eyes open or we will miss them. All around us are wonders beyond our ability to comprehend—wonders of budding trees and growing plants; wonders of steadily changing tides and seasons; wonders of a myriad stars and planets, vast beyond fathoming; wonders right within our own bodies that make us living, moving, conscious beings, able to hear and see, touch and feel, think and remember. Oh, let us not close our eyes to these wonders of God's creating!

Then there is another level of inner-eye seeing, and that is seeing God working all around us, seeing the opportunities He is providing for us to smooth the rough spots on our character; seeing Him at work bringing the world into the condition where Christ can intervene and deliver; seeing Him in the minute details of our lives, giving us the circumstances we need to train and discipline us for Eternity. Combine these with a realization of our dependence upon God, that without Him we could not take even one breath, or eat one bite of food, or use even a finger or a thumb to do the simplest task, and do we not feel grateful, humble, eager for anything else that God can show us?

"Open thou mine eyes *that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*" David knew he had not seen all, but he had seen enough to be thrilled and lifted. And he felt sure that there were more glorious things in God's law, more than he had yet seen or could even imagine. He knew that God had laid up great bounties in His Word, and he begged for the power to perceive, appreciate, and be moved by them.

What of us? We need to pray not so much that God should give us more benefits as that He should impart to us the ability to see what He has already given.

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things *out of thy law.*" Here was the mine of hidden wonders, wonders of doctrine, wonders of

(Continued on page 27)

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 and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be king of the whole earth.
- in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- in ourselves as capable of applying in our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.
- in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth shall be filled with His glory, His people, and God's will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

Soon-coming events ...

THE HERALD AND THE KING

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

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

The Bible pictures all events, all men and all nations moving together toward this one God-ordained climax, when "the kingdoms of this world" will become "the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15), a kingdom in which all will enjoy the blessings of peace, equity and prosperity. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants, bringing to reality the promise of our Lord in His prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

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ENTER YE IN

by Kenneth E. Flowerday

Pastor of the Megiddo Church, 1958-1985

In Matthew 7, the Sermon on the Mount is drawing to its close. Our Lord has explained the nature of that character to which He calls men, and that blessedness to which He invites them. The law from Sinai has been in part amplified and in part superseded by the new law from the Mount in Galilee, and under circumstances how different! At last it has reached that comprehensive summary of all duty: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do

to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12).

And there, we might say, the sermon ends, so far as its instructions are concerned. It remains only to urge men to enter in through the gate He has opened, and to caution them against seducing influences which might disappoint their hope of a final entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of their Lord and Saviour.

These are His two remaining subjects. First, there is a call to enter through the gate which Christ points out. The path leading to the gate is narrow, the gate itself difficult to open, and passing through is problematic. If we find anything discouraging here, let us not forget

those first three words: "Enter ye in." Jesus' words are not to daunt but to challenge us, to draw from us the best of which we are capable.

A Proposition

What is the parable He now propounds?

In the far distance are two gates. Beyond each, hidden from view, is a collection of dwelling places, a city of great or small proportions. We cannot see within. The wall hides, the gate intercepts our view. Yet we cannot fail to get the Master's meaning: One gate opens to destruction, the other to life.

One of these gates is wide and ample. It seems to invite access, to promise admission. Many may enter at one time. Judging by the appearance of the gate, we might conclude that the city beyond it must be the larger and more magnificent.

The other gate is confined. It appears as rather a postern, or back entrance gate. It looks in the dis-

tance as though it would scarcely admit one entrant at a time, as though the city must be poor, incommodious, and unattractive.

And to each of these gates there leads a corresponding way. Toward the wide gate there stretches out a road broad and smooth. There is ample room upon it for all travelers. In fact, many may be seen at any time, passing along commodiously and at ease.

Toward the strait gate there extends a narrow pathway, difficult to find, hard to keep. It winds over mountains, along abrupt precipices, here and there across marshy wastes, and if you would ask for companions on the journey you would learn that they are few and rare in comparison with the companions you could expect on the broad way.

Nevertheless, at the end of the broad way, inside that wide gate, is destruction, perdition, hopelessness, eternal oblivion. Inside is not brightness but only darkness; not happiness, not contentment, not honor, nor rest, nor peace; but rather misery and suffering and shame, as the Prophet of old wrote, "Shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2). The broad way, wide though it be, is a one-way avenue. How wisely the author of the book of Proverbs pictured this darksome passageway and its untimely ending as the path to the house of the strange woman: "For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life" (Prov. 2:18-19). Indeed, it is a one-way avenue.

Inside the strait gate, which seemed at a distance to promise nothing; at the end of the narrow way which seemed in prospect to lead nowhere, is that which Jesus calls life. This word is a two-aspect

term. It covers the present and the future. It denotes, first, Christian living and its consequence, life in the world to come. It denotes, second, the experience of the active Christian even now. The real Christian experiences real *being*, that expansion of every higher power and faculty that makes one feel and know that he lives; which makes existence an ecstasy and a delight; which calls into vigorous exercise every capacity of happiness and contentment. It brings the hundred-fold in this life and more, much more. And in the end it leads to "life everlasting."

The narrow way and the strait gate lead to unlimited duration, life, *eternal* life. Inasmuch as it is a life with God and in God, it is therefore a life without limit, because they who dwell there dwell "in the high and holy place" with the "high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" (Isa. 57:15).

Enter Ye In

Now Jesus issued the command: "Enter ye in at the strait gate." Luke's gospel adds the verb "strive." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." In other words, strug-

ness to walk alone. We are all by nature creatures of imitation. For one who leads, thousands follow. And even the one who leads has followed someone. No one enters this world as a unit, a being whose life is altogether detached and severed from those around him or before him. And this is as it ought to be. We ought to be influenced, and we must influence. In matters of mere outward custom, to be singular is to be foolish. It shows a care about trifles, which is unmanly; or else a desire to be noticed, which is ungodly.

In all things connected with the life of this world, its trades and professions, its arts and sciences, one must imitate to learn. To be original, for all except the one in a million, is to be wrong. But when we come to the things of the spiritual life, to questions of our duty to God, to questions of correct belief and practice before God, then one must not only be independent but often alone. "To his own master he standeth or falleth" (Rom. 14:4). There is no advantage in being able to say, Everyone says this, or everyone does this. That is not the issue. The question is only, What is

Jesus' words are not to daunt but to challenge us, to draw from us the best of which we are capable.

gle, wrestle, "strain every nerve," contend earnestly. Entering at the narrow gate is a work of difficulty; it demands exertion and pain. Those who would enter by this gate must exert themselves to their maximum capability.

Why? What is this entering in? It involves, first of all, a willing-

true? What is right? What does God command? To enter and travel the narrow way, one must be prepared to say, "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4). The faith in which the true believer lives and dies, is the faith once delivered to the saints, written down for us upon the pages of

God's holy Scriptures. And for it one must be willing to stand, even if he must stand alone.

Our Lord here warns us that the common opinion and the common practice, in things of the soul, is not only an insufficient but even a fatal guide for such as would be saved. For it is the way to destruction, and that way is crowded. It is the wide

be influenced by popular opinion. The Word of God must be the final arbiter of what is right and wrong for us. It would be well for each of us to search our own hearts on these vital questions.

This is one reason why the narrow gate is narrow. Each entrant must know for himself whom he has believed, and why; and he must

ing. We can work hard for an earthly prize. We can rise early, and take rest late, for the wages of this world, for a fortune, for something which is to gratify vanity or reward ambition. But the narrow gate in the far distance—who can see it? Who earnestly makes for it?

It is written of the Israelites of old that they scorned the "pleasant land" which God had promised them (Ps. 106:24). How is it with us? What resolute purpose is there in us to reach the prize at all hazards? Can we say with the great Apostle, "I count all things but loss...that I may...apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus"? (Phil. 3:8, 12).

Enter! Though the gate be difficult, it is not impossible.

gate, of which Jesus said, "Many there be which go in thereat."

The majority of people today take their religion second hand, from their parents, or teachers, or friends; or from current ideas, or popular notions of contemporaries. Seldom is their faith based on reflection, honest comparison, and an earnest study of the Bible. Not from God and His Word do they derive that little system of thinking, poor and unstable and precarious, which serves as their creed while they live and their hope when they die.

And let us ask ourselves: Are we independent of the opinions of our contemporaries in things pertaining to our eternal salvation? Have we the independence of spirit to travel the narrow way and enter the strait gate? Or do we in some measure bow to conformity, in apparel, in deportment, in speech? When the easy way leads the crowd astray, can the Captain count on you and me?

To force our way through the narrow and difficult gate we must dare to be different. We must dare to think independently; we must not

carry out that knowledge consistently in his own life. While the multitudes throng the broad way, he who would enter into life must be willing, if need be, to walk alone.

Again, the entrant at the strait gate must have a resolute purpose and a submissive will. He must have, over and above all, a strong desire for what lies beyond the gate. Though it be inconspicuous, and out of sight, yet he must know that beyond that gate is an ever widening, ever growing, ever expanding way of opportunity and delight. Beyond that gate, small and inconspicuous though it be, is everything his heart could desire.

Many an eye is caught by the wide ample portal which forms the terminus of the broad, commodious way. Meanwhile, the narrow gate is in danger of being overlooked. But those who would enter through it must keep the gate in view. We must see where we are going, or we shall certainly not keep the way.

Are we really bent upon being safe at last, upon entering into life, upon passing through the pearly portals? Nearer objects we all have, and they sometimes seem so allur-

Submission, Its Benefit

Then there is that other factor: a submissive will. It is not enough to see the gate; we must also keep the way, and the way is sometimes hard to find, especially when we prefer not to find it. This is why our Master said, "Few there be that find it." The direction of the road is not always obvious. It does not always seem to be the most direct way toward the designated end. Sometimes the way is steep, as well as narrow, rough, and full of obstacles. But in all this, the Christian must be submissive. One who would reach the gate cannot choose his way; he must take what comes. Is it not so in obtaining that which we desire in this world? The journey to the world to come is no different.

How hard to find sometimes is the path of duty, such ambiguous turns, such seemingly contradictory windings, such questions arising between safe courses and accomplishment, between rigidity and conciliation, between that which will please God and that which might attract and possibly win souls. Besides these, the more exceptional cases, such constant

temptations to compromise with the flesh, such incessant buffetings of inclination, such daily crossing of the will and mortifying of the affections. Indeed, it is not always easy to find—much less to keep—this way that leads to life.

How discouraging at times is the morning prayer in prospect of the day's trials. How dispiriting, too, may be the evening prayer, in the retrospect of a day's faults and falls. Having stumbled so many times in the same pitfall, it takes much courage to go once more to the throne of grace and ask for help to keep the narrow way. Small wonder, then, if some grow faint and weary, and walk no more with Jesus. And what wonder, too, if others, hearing of the trials and troubles of the pilgrimage, put off from day to day, from year to year, the serious work of beginning it, hoping against hope that some miracle may make them Christians someday without their seeking; that, though they neither see the gate nor keep the way, they may yet find themselves inside the City Eternal. But it shall never be, because Jesus commanded clearly: "Enter ye in."

This entering in is difficult because of another fact: that which lies beyond the two gates is beyond the view of sense. Destruction and immortal life—we have experienced neither. They can be known only by the exercise of faith.

Presently we find ourselves imprisoned in a body of flesh and blood, imprisoned together in a world of matter, of sense, of time. There is enough within these prison walls to occupy all our thoughts, if we would let them; sometimes with images of pain, sometimes with images of pleasure. The cares of this life are enough; the pleasures of life are enough, the affections of life, lawful and unlawful are

enough. What is left, either of understanding or interest, when all these are satisfied? Thus it happens that some are practically unbelievers in what they cannot see. Faith in the unseen, the spiritual apprehension of that which to the senses is invisible, may well be called the one distinguishing attribute of such as shall be saved.

*O, for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by many a foe;
That will not tremble on the brink
Of poverty or woe.*

*Lord, may I have a faith like this,
And then whate'er may come,
I'll taste e'en here the hallowed bliss
Of an eternal home.*

The Wide Gate: Destruction

Destruction, what is that? Can it mean being cast away forever? Many might say, "No, it cannot mean that. God is too good to destroy anyone. That surely cannot be the end of persons whose only fault has been that they lived by

tion. Our speculation was correct, for Jesus said, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."

The great masses, who never recognized God or His authority, are gathered in this supermetropolis. The Divine pronouncement is: "They shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts" (Jer. 51:57). Such will be the ultimate end of all of God's unfaithful servants.

Who in his right mind would wish to spend eternal years in such a community? The dwellings are too small, too dark, and the congestion unbearable. Just listen to the Psalmist's prediction of these places of habitation: "Nevertheless man being in honor abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish....Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their

He who would enter into life must be willing, if need be, to walk alone.

sight rather than by faith, that they enjoyed the pleasures of sin for a season."

But let us take God at His Word. Let us have the faith to believe that the broad road and the wide gate lead to destruction, and destruction does not signify continued life.

We observed earlier that both the narrow and wide gates led to places of habitation, and we speculated that the wide gate, being so much more commodious, might lead to a place of ever burgeoning popula-

beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling" (Ps. 49:12, 14). What a dreadful dwelling place!

Today God is silent. He has been silent now for many centuries. Men defy Him, and He does nothing about it. Rebellion brings no swift retribution. The wages of sin have not been paid, and we may have the idea that they never will be paid. But they shall, and with interest. The broad road *will* lead to destruction.

The Narrow Gate: Life

What lies beyond the narrow way and the strait gate? It is life. But one may ask, what is that? I cannot catch the meaning of a life altogether heavenly, a life lived wholly for God, surrendered completely to Him, voicing His praise or performing His service. Surely there must be an excuse for me if I cannot yet

27:13). Isaiah believed. Jeremiah believed. Daniel believed. Simeon believed. Jesus Himself believed. Paul believed; he expressed his honest belief when he quoted the Psalmist to the effect: "I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak" (II Cor. 4:13). And again: "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded

them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful" (vs. 3-5).

Mortality is to be swallowed up of life. "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (I Cor 15:54-55).

The way of salvation is *Death swallowed up in victory*. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

The way of salvation is difficult. We ourselves make it difficult by trying to bring our own way into the narrow way. Now let us lay to heart the solemn charge which bids us, nevertheless, notwithstanding the difficulty, at all risks, at any cost thus to *enter in*. "Enter ye in at the strait gate."

Enter! Though the gate be strait, difficult. For it is not impossible. With men it may be impossible, but not with God. With His help, and with the good counsel provided in His Word, we *can* enter the difficult gate; we *can* banish all sin from our lives. We can overcome the tendency to anger, to malice, to jealousy, to pride. We can learn to control the evil emotions of mind and body. We can cast down vain imaginations, and captivate every fleshly tendency that exalts itself above the knowledge of Christ.

The difficult gate is not beyond our ability. The work *can* be done, it has been done, and let us reassure ourselves often that *we can do it*, and say, God helping me, I will enter the gate to life. MM

God helping me, I will enter the gate to life.

desire this. For I cannot set before myself as an object that which I do not understand. I cannot earnestly pursue an end which to me is unreal, visionary, transcendent.

If we have not experienced the blessedness of a fully consecrated life, we have no one to blame but ourselves. If sin lies at our door, if we are double-minded, if our interests are divided, if we are trying to serve God and mammon, we are still in the broad way and cannot experience the joys of the fully dedicated life.

Why? Because we live in things which are seen, and therefore cannot apprehend the idea of life in the Kingdom, the life of God.

Unless we learn to picture ourselves as winners in the race for eternal life, how are we going to have strength to run the race?

How fundamental is belief? Three times it is recorded that "Abraham believed God," and it was counted to him for righteousness (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; Jas. 2:23). Moses believed God; Samuel believed God; King David certainly believed God when he said, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Ps.

that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Tim. 1:12).

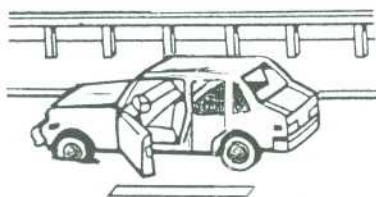
The future life, the real goal, is beautifully pictured many times throughout the Word of God. There are given to us "exceeding great and precious promises" of life in the age to come, on the other side of the difficult gate. After the toiling and weeping, after the sowing and reaping can come life, life in unspeakable bliss. For the overcomers the gate to life shall be open, and each one shall be granted an "abundant entrance" into the "everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:4, 11). The gate will no longer be narrow, but God will set their feet in a "broad place," a place with "no straitness" in it (Job 36:16).

What will that life be like? It will be a life free from sorrow, free from pain, free from disappointment. There will be no more accidents, no more old age, no more bending forms, no more death. That blissful life is pictured vividly in Revelation 21: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with

How Is *Your* Driving?

When we set out on a long journey, we first weigh the cost. How much will we need for fuel, for lodging, for—*forbid* the thought—repairs? Carefully we count the cost. Likewise, before we set out on the journey to the Eternal City, we must first count the cost. Do we have everything we will need to reach our destination? Enough faith? Enough zeal? Enough determination?

Some immediately consider the cost too high. Others decide to set out, only to be discouraged with the first flat tire and turn back to the easier road of a fleeting life.



Others, ill prepared, run out of gas. They listened at the start, but soon let other concerns crowd

the place which should have been reserved for the fuel of life. They become cold, indifferent, lose faith, and stop traveling.

Then there is the group that start out with great zeal. Now this is the way we all should travel to such a Holy City, but some in this group have not quite given their all to God. They're lacking a little in trust, they worry over things that should not concern them. They are still carrying the load of yesterday's cares and mistakes, plus they borrow trouble from tomorrow, and before long the extra load takes its toll. The engine overheats, and their journey grinds to a stop.



They have two choices: They can unload the extra burdens and take on more cooling water of life, or they can continue to overheat until they have ruined their means of propulsion.

The speeder is yet another type of traveler. He speeds along, passing everybody else, or so it seems. He makes a good show outwardly, but pays little attention to the

road signs warning of dangers ahead. When the road gets narrow and filled with obstacles, he exercises no

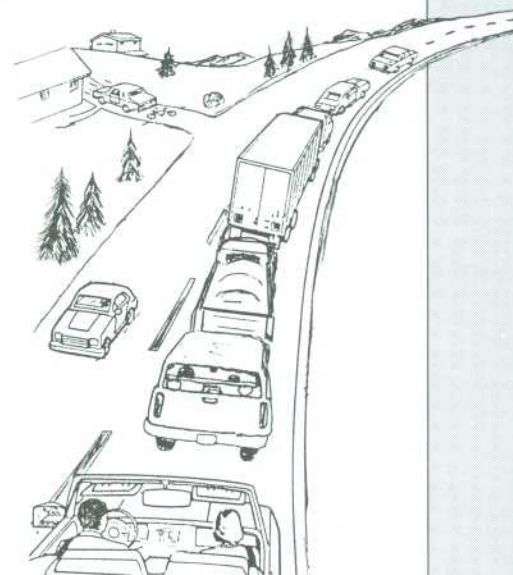


special caution. His confidence will see him through. His kind are the ones we see hauled off on the stretcher, or—if he is very

fortunate—he gets arrested before disaster strikes.

Let us be very careful that we do not adopt the speeder's habits.

Sooner or later in our journeying we are sure to come up behind the slow driver. He is the one we see on the expressway holding up traffic and causing others to take chances when passing him. He is really not a true Christian because he is breaking the minimum speed law. He is so lacking in zeal that he is hardly moving at all. His problem is twofold: he has no hope of reaching the destination of a "perfect character" on time, and in addition to this he slows others.



The slow driver and the speeder are equally hazardous.

While the speeder becomes aggravated at the slow driver, the slower one is discouraged at seeing how fast the speeder passes by him.

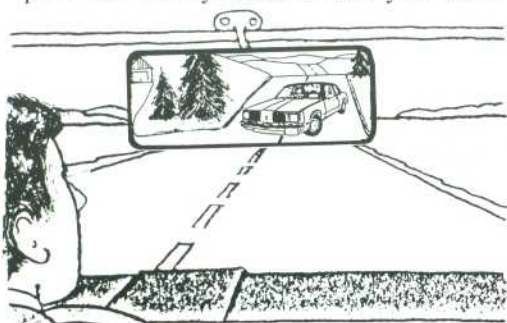
The next driver we overtake on the highway is the erratic driver. In the "no passing zones" he drives very slowly, much below the speed limit. Then just when you see a "passing zone" coming up and at long last the road ahead is clear, and you have an opportunity to get

How Is Your Driving?

around this obstacle that has been slowing your progress, alas! he decides to go the speed limit—only to slow down at the next “no passing zone.”

After several miles of speeding up and slowing down, at last the road ahead is clear again, and this time he does not speed up. Carefully and cautiously you steer over into the left lane. Again you check the road ahead. You think about the distance to that next curve, and judge the ability of your car to be able to pass safely if the worst should happen—perhaps another car suddenly rounding the curve. Judging all is safe, you accelerate, breathing a sigh of relief that at last you are getting around this problem that has been testing your patience. He has finally noticed your predicament and is having mercy. But no, just then, probably oblivious to your presence, he realizes he has been driving too slowly, and speeds up once again.

You drop back, reminding yourself that patience is a virtue, and await your next opportunity. At long last, your patience pays off. The road is clear, he does not speed up, and you go gliding past. He finally noticed that you were



trying to get by, you think to yourself, as you glance into your rearview mirror—just in time to see him...turning off.

How is our driving? Are we making all possible haste on the highway to the Holy City, driving steadily, not being distracted by the poor driving habits of others? Are we watching every thought and staying within “the Royal Law,” those bright yellow lines painted on the road for our safety? This is the only way we can reach our destination safely and on time.

MM

The Perfect Product

God offers such a precious and wonderful gift, even eternal life under perfect conditions. But unfortunately, the majority either do not want it at all or are not willing to pay the price.

I was thinking about this fact recently while at a seminar our company (where I work) organized for veterinary doctors from different parts of Poland. The purpose of the seminar was to introduce new kinds of veterinary products developed by our company. My boss from Austria stressed many times during his speech that our company's product to fight parasites was perfect, the best on the market. Other representatives from England showed how they had proved by experimentation that the product really was the best.

The veterinary doctors at the meeting presented the other side of the matter. They pointed out first that the Polish farmers would consider the product too expensive, and second, that the Polish farmers are not educated enough to appreciate its value. If the farmers should decide to use the product, it would be usually far too late when they made that decision, with the result that the animal would be so sick that treatment would require a much longer time, increasing the cost of medication. Polish farmers are largely shortsighted; they lack good, professional knowledge. When they are offered a very good product for fighting parasites, they are not able to estimate its value, therefore are not willing to pay the price. Another problem is the fact that they do not recognize the first stages of the disease in their animals. There are even farmers who refuse to apply the medicine when they are offered it free of charge. They claim that their animals are healthy, even when the first signs of the disease can be seen clearly.

Is it not the same with many people in a spiritual sense? God offers a wonderful product, His Word. He encourages them to apply it in their lives, for it assures better health even now, and most of all in the future. But the majority refuse. Either they consider themselves to be healthy, or the medicine is too expensive.

Thanks be to God for giving us the wisdom to appreciate His wonderful and perfect product, a product that is able not only to protect us against the parasites of this world but also to assure us eternal life if we make applying it a habit.

—Contributed

Choosing A Pastor?

We hear today of many small churches facing the problem of choosing a pastor.

There is a short account of a search committee undergoing this painful process, when they finally lost patience. A certain man had watched while the committee rejected applicant after applicant. Finally he stood up and read a letter purporting to be from another applicant.

"Men and women," the letter began, "I understand that your pulpit is vacant. I should like to apply for the position. I have been a preacher with much success, and also have had some success as a writer. I had a very distinguished ordination.

"I am over fifty years of age. I have never preached in one place for more than three years. In some places I have had to leave town because my work caused riots and disturbances. I must admit I have been in jail a number of times, but never because of anything wrong that I did.

"My health is not too good, though I still get a

great deal accomplished. I have founded several churches, which have remained small, though several of them are located in large cities.

"I have not gotten along well with other religious leaders in the towns where I have founded churches. In fact, some have threatened me, even attacked me physically.

"However, if you can use me, I promise to do my best for you."

The board members looked at one another, then at the committee. "Well, what do you think? Shall we consider him?"

The members of the search committee were aghast at the member of the board who would even present such an application. Consider an unhealthy, trouble-making, absent-minded, ex-convict? Was this board member out of his mind? Who signed the letter anyway? Who had the nerve to put in such an application?

The board member eyed them all keenly, then answered, "It's signed, 'The Apostle Paul.'" MM

YOU



*You are the fellow that has to decide
Whether you'll do it or toss it aside.
You are the fellow who makes up your mind
Whether you'll lead or will linger behind.
Whether you'll try for the goal that's afar
Or be contented to stay where you are.
Take it or leave it, here's something to do,
Just think it over, it's all up to you!*

—Anon.

In Times Like These

*"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up,
and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" —Luke 21:28*

Every age has its present, peculiar dangers; and in these abnormal times we must guard most carefully our inner selves and keep our spiritual equilibrium. Has not God for years been warning a complacent world of the coming of "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation" (Daniel 12:1)? Let us not, then, be amazed or alarmed as we find ourselves already in the foothills of the coming time of trouble. This is just as it appears in the Divine advertisement.

If we have been training faithfully during the ordinary days, it is but a beginning, a graduation to a higher class, the opening of a door into a better, cleaner, brighter, more enduring world. One year of the New Order will blot out every unpleasant memory of the world's bad past and unusually trying period of transition in which we now find ourselves.

This is what we have prayed for a thousand times: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Knowing as we do from the Word that the Kingdom of God on earth will have to be introduced forcibly, can we not accept the inevitable preliminary disorders? Since there is but one road to

that better Day, and that road lies through storm and stress, let us recognize the storm as a part of the Plan, and rejoice that we know of the peace which lies beyond, rejoice that we have the promise of protection through it all (Psalm 91).

Perhaps we are like the church which was praying for Peter's release from prison (Acts 12). When suddenly, in answer to their prayers, Peter stood before the door knocking, they were incredulous, and charged the doorkeeper with madness! So we, when the prayed-for Kingdom of God comes thundering at our gates, may perhaps fail to read the "face of the sky" (Matt. 16:2-3) and begin to worry, murmur, or despair as those who have no hope. This is the time for us to show our faith by our works, to demonstrate that we really believe what we have been saying.

Some of us can endure suspense and uncertainty better than others. Most of us do not like it. But since it is our lot, we might do well to see how a group of eminently successful men and women made the very best of an exceedingly troubled period. Read the book of Acts again, if you have not read it recently. Its author, St. Luke, is recognized by news writers as a first-

rate reporter for his skillful handling, in a very condensed space, of the background, motion, and character study which enters into a good story. In other words, a good news writer with limited space touches only the really important points. Now let us see what Luke considered really important.

In the entire book the promulgation of the Gospel is the central theme. Even the biographies of the leading characters are subordinated to the history of the cause they represented. Of the contemporary wars of the Roman Empire there is no mention. There is a brief allusion to a famine, but only as a fulfillment of the words of an inspired prophet. Of local Palestinian and Asiatic political events, we are left in darkness. King Herod's horrible death, terminating his career as a persecutor, is given one short verse; while the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch is considered worthy of thirteen, and that of Cornelius is good enough for almost an entire chapter. "The word of God grew and multiplied." One might gather from the narrative that life in that part of the world was proceeding pretty much as usual.

On the other hand, the historian Josephus' account of the same peri-

od is a depressing chronicle of anarchy and chaos, of rapacious misgovernment, social unrest and unemployment, of bloody insurrection and savage repression, of brigandage and terrorism. Events for several decades had been working up to the fatal rebellion of A.D. 70 which brought the Jewish Age to a violent end, and the secular history of the time would give the impression that life was so miserable and uncertain as to be well-nigh unbearable. Yet of all this no word appears in the Acts of the Apostles! Why not? It was not that the writer did not know of it, but it simply did not matter; it was not of sufficient importance to get into the record. God's scale of values, His thoughts, are not those of men, as this comparison proves.

The apostles and their followers were men and women strong enough and wise enough to hold a true course in a stormy time; and while the Jewish world was going fast to destruction, they were going on to perfection. To them this was their great opportunity to make good, and they did it. To wait for things to settle down would have

been fatal; what they did must be done then, regardless of external conditions. Complete consecration lifted them to a stratosphere where the storms no longer mattered; minor inconveniences, "light afflictions," nothing more!

If they, men like ourselves, with all our weaknesses and temptations, could accomplish this work of overcoming self under such trying conditions, and do it uncomplainingly, we can—if we will. It will call for vigilance and watchfulness, for vision and faith to look beyond the day's good or bad news, to keep a straight course toward the City whose gates shall never close, where "violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders."

Let us, when doubts, discouragements, and forebodings threaten and crowd close, remember the words of Jesus: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Say to yourself, "This is the test, the hard pull that I have been training for. What am I going to do about it?

Am I going to be the man God expects me to be? This is the beginning of what I have been looking, praying, hoping for. Why should my faith fail, so near the end?"

Believing God's promise, we face the uncertainties of the immediate future confidently and without alarm, knowing that, regardless of what may happen in Europe, Asia, Africa, or in America, the final outcome will be the establishment by force of the literal Kingdom of God on earth, with Jesus Christ as universal King. The present distress is but the darkness before the dawn. The "times and the seasons" warn that the Day is very, very nigh at hand, even at the door. "For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth" (Rom. 9:28).

Remember the words of the Master, recorded in Mark 13:35-37, "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." MM

*"Happy are they who live within Thy house,
Praising Thee all day long!
Happy are they who, nerved by Thee,
Set out on pilgrimage!
When they pass through Weary glen,
Fountains flow for their refreshing,
Blessings rain upon them;
They are the stronger as they go,
Till God at last reveals Himself in Zion."*

Psalm 84:4-7, Moffatt Bible

When

Christ

*Of feats performed by small or great,
One incident will I relate,
To me most awe-inspiring:
I speak of Jesus on the day
When taken from the earth away,
From mortal scenes retiring.*

*It seems I see a little band
O'ershadowed by a mighty hand,
Relying on their Master
To once again restore to them
King David's throne—Jerusalem—
Nor dreaming of disaster.*

*Methinks I hear Him as He speaks,
"Oh, be not weary as the weeks
Elapse while you are waiting
To be endued with wondrous pow'r;
But tarry here until the hour
Arrives, with glory freighted."*

*Then, lo, a great phenomenon,
A wondrous thing to gaze upon,
Takes place while they're beholding.
They see their Master start to rise,
Ascending till the azure skies
Are soon His form enfolding.*

*They strive in vain to pierce the blue
That ope'd to let their loved one through,
But dimly comprehending
The thing that now has come to pass,
And saying to themselves, "Alas,
Have such events no ending?"*

*While thus they're reasoning they hear
A voice beside them, rich and clear—
"Ye men of Galilee!
Why stand ye gazing into heav'n?
Do ye not know to Him 'tis giv'n
From earth's chains to be free?"*

*"But do not fear, ye faithful few
Who keep His word the ages through,
The while your hearts are yearning:
For this same Jesus whom ye love,
Though gone now to the throne above,
Some day will be returning."*

*Oh, joyous thought! To know that we
Shall some day Christ our Saviour see—
He comes to reign forever.
Yes, Jesus Christ—our great High Priest—
Shall come to hold the wedding feast,
His faithful ones to gather.*

*E'en now we hear the chiming bells,
From sea to sea their music swells
The glad note of redemption
To all who, by His truth made o'er
Have conquered self, to sin no more,
And to them pay attention.*

*Beware, ye scoffers who deride
The thought that Christ at eventide
Shall usher in the morning:
Though true that many you deceive,
God's own elect will still believe
And heed each timely warning.*

*We look and see the dark clouds rise
Foreboding in the eastern skies;
And statesmen all acknowledge
The wind needs but a tiny spark
To fan to flame the passions dark,
And so renew the carnage.*

RETURNS

*And oh, my friends, we need not look
To foreign lands to fill our book
With signs of Christ's returning:
For here at home we see distress,
And men, with apprehensiveness,
Perceive the tide is turning.*

*With drugs and crime throughout the land,
They bribe the politicians, and
Thus judgment is perverted.
While perils lurk on ev'ry side,
And naught can turn the evil tide,
The upright path is thwarted.*

*Oh, say you that the bells that on
The hem of Aaron's garment hung
No longer ring their story?
They're pealing forth with vigor now,
Announcing that the world must bow
Soon to the King of Glory.*

*Ring out, ye bells, with tidings glad,
Though heeded not by world gone mad,
Yet there are some who listen,
And, as each note falls on the ear,
Prepare to greet their Master dear
In garments that will glisten.*

*Oh, what a gath'ring that will be,
Upon the shores of Galilee,
When bells have ceased their ringing:
When prophecies are all fulfilled,
And o'er the earth what God has willed
Is done with joy and singing!*

*The earth will not with blood be drenched,
Nor warring nations stand entrenched,
Preparing for the battle:
Nor will the criminal more roam
The streets and terrorize the home;
No more will bullets rattle.*

*Instead of war, which then shall cease,
There'll be a universal peace;
With none his brother hating:
Good-will the earth shall overflow,
And ev'ry one our God shall know,
His praises be relating.*

*When Christ inaugurates His reign,
No more shall barons reap their gain
Unjustly from the needy;
Nor will the labor of the poor
Be used to fatten any more
The treasures of the greedy.*

*When Christ returns, the lame shall leap
For joy, the dumb shall sing, nor weep
Because of his affliction:
For all shall strength and health enjoy,
In righteous ways their time employ,
With earnest dedication.*

*Oh, happy day, which ne'er shall end,
Now nearing, as the bells portend
To those who know their story:
One long eternal day of bliss—
What more could mortals ask than this
UNENDING REIGN OF GLORY!*

Whence Salvation?

A Written Debate

THESIS:

Resolved, That the Bible conditions our salvation and eternal rewards upon our individual obedience and virtue, and not upon any merits deriving from the literal death or blood of Jesus Christ.

*Megiddo Church, Affirmed.
Christadelphian Tidings, Denied.*

Affirmed

Megiddo Church statement in support of the above proposition.

General support

We take the positive side of this discussion because we want to believe only what is clearly taught in the Bible. Of what benefit is any belief in salvation, if God is not its author? For we cannot give ourselves eternal life; we cannot save ourselves from pain, sickness and death. Only God can bestow salvation.

Our whole premise, then, must be, what does the Bible teach?

While the subject of the inspiration and authority of the Bible lies outside the scope of this discussion, for purposes of this discussion we must establish that the Bible is the work of an all-wise God, and as such presents one plan of salvation. Whether the writer be David, or Isaiah, or Peter, or Paul, all taught one gospel, all "spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:21).

On the negative side of this discussion are a number of texts which, upon surface reading, seem to indicate that Christ's literal death and blood are the means of our salvation. But what about the other side of the question, where many more texts state just as clearly that God demands righteousness, holiness, purity as a precondition for salvation? Either we must conclude that the Bible is contradictory, or that it presents more than one plan of salvation—or that the problem lies in our understanding of the passages on one side or the other.

All of us recognize God as the Creator of life.

Denied

Christadelphian statement in opposition to the above proposition.

General objections

If our own righteousness and human endeavor will save us, then why is there the need for salvation through Jesus? Why was Jesus the Son of God, and not just an ordinary man who lived without sinning? The flesh (body) and blood of Jesus are associated in John 6:53; Heb. 10:19, 20; I Cor. 10:16; 11:27. To say that the blood of Jesus is not a precondition for our salvation is to say that his body was also unnecessary; i.e. Jesus was not essential; we can do it all ourselves, we don't need him. By saying this, we are not suggesting that Christ's example is unimportant; this debate is about the significance of his death.

"There is none righteous, not one" (Rom. 3:10). "It is not in man that walketh to (spiritually) direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Paul had a sinful tendency within him which stopped him being totally obedient to God; when he would do good, this "evil" was present with him (Rom. 7:15-25).

The Megiddo Church correctly understands that the "devil" refers to this principle of evil within us. But their understanding remains at an abstract, academic level. In practice, this principle means that it is impossible by our own endeavor and virtue to completely conquer the flesh.

It should be evident from these passages, as well

Affirmed

Accordingly, He has set laws in motion by which the human race is perpetuated and sustained. To each is given a limited span, which each is free to use as he pleases. At the same time God has through His written Word (the Bible) revealed His larger plan, offering a superior life—an eternal life, salvation. To whom does He offer this? What are the conditions God has placed upon the salvation He offers? Is it for all who are "reckoned righteous" because of the shed blood of Christ? Or does it depend on our individual obedience and virtue?

Jesus' teaching about salvation

What did Jesus teach? What did He say in the Sermon on the Mount? Is the state of eternal blessedness for the one who trusts in His blood or His righteousness to save them? Read the entire sermon (Matthew, chapters 5 to 7), and you will find not a single statement about the need for Christ's literal death or blood. Each blessing is linked directly to obedience and virtue. The blessings include comfort...the earth for an inheritance...complete satisfaction of every want...heavenly mercy...seeing the face of the eternal Creator Himself...a place in the kingdom of heaven. And what are the preconditions for all these? "Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are they that mourn...Blessed are the meek...Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness... Blessed are the merciful... Blessed are the pure in heart" and so on. According to Jesus, there must be virtue and obedience before there can be blessing.

And the obedience Jesus taught is not a mere outward formality. It is a heart obedience. Referring to the law of Moses Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it was said...But I say..." Where the old law demanded mere outward conformity, Jesus' law demanded inner purity. For example, the old law forbade adultery, but Jesus said "that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:27-28).

Through the remainder of chapter 5 Jesus spells out more commands. Then at the end of the chapter He makes this summary statement: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). He is saying, in other words, This is the sum total of all that I have been saying: "Be ye therefore perfect..." In other words, if you do all that I have been saying, you will be morally perfect.

Shall we say that He was not capable of stating what He intended, or that His words do not mean what they say? Or was He requiring something we cannot do?

If this were the only such statement in Scripture,

Denied

as from our own experience, that we cannot achieve salvation by ourselves. We cry with Paul: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ" (Rom. 7:25). Although we cannot save ourselves, God will not do it all for us. We must come to the correct balance between these two extremes.

The need for imputation of righteousness

"God imputeth righteousness...the righteousness of God" (Rom. 4:6; 2 Cor. 5:21). We can only be reckoned righteous by being in Christ, not having our own righteousness, but that which is imputed to us by God's system of justification (Phil. 3:9). Trying to establish our own righteousness is effectively rebelling against God's righteousness (Rom. 10:3 cp. Job 35:2; Ezek. 33:13; Deut. 9:4, 5). Our righteousness in God's sight is by reason of our association with Christ, "the Lord our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30).

Imputation means that God looks on us as if we are perfect, even though we are not of ourselves. Why is there such Biblical emphasis upon this idea of justification and imputed righteousness, if our salvation depends upon our own virtue/righteousness? (See Romans 2-4; 3:21; 4:3-6; Heb. 11:7; Deut. 24:13; Ps. 24:5). It is because of the imputation of righteousness that Jesus could say, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father...is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). We are surely being presumptuous to think that we can live on God's level of moral perfection even for a day, given the weakness of our own natures.

The believer will be presented "faultless" before the judgment seat (Jude 24), "without blame before him" because "he hath made us accepted (by being) in the beloved" (Eph. 1:4, 6). Christ cleanses us, that he might present us to himself (he does it, not us) "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:26, 27), as Jesus was "without spot" (Heb. 9:14). All these statements become meaningful within the context of righteousness being imputed.

The place of forgiveness

Megiddo members must admit that they are not faultless. Yet they say that only the faultless will be accepted. No matter how hard we try from now on to be faultless, we still need forgiveness. Megiddo must have a strange concept of forgiveness, if salvation is by human effort, with no reference to the sacrifice of Jesus. Surely Megiddo members try hard not to sin. But when they do, they must have a terrible conscience, because they know no way to put themselves

Affirmed

we might wonder if we are understanding it correctly.

But when we read elsewhere that we must become pure even as Christ is pure (I John 3:3); that we must come to the measure of the stature of Christ (Eph. 4:13); that we must be holy in our manner of living as God is holy (I Pet. 1:15-16), why not accept Jesus' command that we must become perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect? Unless we reject the plain teaching of Scripture that God will judge and reward each according to his works, whether good or bad (Eccl. 12:13-14; II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:12; Rom. 2:6; Jer. 17:10), that we reap exactly as we have sown (Gal. 6:7-8), we have no alternative but to believe that the basis of our salvation is indeed our own life of obedience and virtue before God. If we sow "to the flesh," live to please our natural instincts, we shall reap "corruption." If we sow "to the Spirit" we shall reap "life everlasting."

The remainder of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount spells out more commands to virtue and obedience. Comparing believers to fruit trees He says, "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit" is saved by the righteousness of Christ? No, it must be "hewn down, and cast into the fire." And if there has been any question about the need for obedience as a precondition of salvation, Jesus says clearly, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

Jesus follows this with a miniparable about two builders. One builds on the rock, the other on the sand; one's structure stands, the other's falls. What is the difference between the two? Only this: that one hears Jesus' sayings and obeys them, the other hears and does not obey (Matt. 7:24-27).

Notice again that there is no suggestion of any efficacy to be derived from Christ's literal death.

The Old Testament teaching on salvation

Centuries earlier the Psalmist was teaching the same standard of obedience as a requirement for salvation. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.... They also do no iniquity; they walk in his ways" (Ps. 119:1-3). They "do no iniquity"—here is the source of their righteousness, not in Christ's attainment but in their own strict adherence to the law of God, to the extent that they "do no iniquity."

Moses foretold the coming of Christ, that He would be a prophet, and that all would have to hearken to Him, and that "whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I

Denied

straight with God afterwards (cp. Heb. 9:14). Am I correct?

We need something more than our own "obedience and virtue;" forgiveness and the imputation of righteousness is made possible by the death of Christ.

The need for Christ's death

The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Because of this, God has ordained a life must be poured out (i.e. death) as a basis for the forgiveness of sins. Seeing that "the life is in the blood," it follows that blood must be poured out for sins to be forgiven. Just "trying harder next time" isn't the means for forgiveness. "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22; 10:11-12).

The consistent teaching of scripture is that we cannot atone for our own sins. The pouring out of our blood (or life) to the death would not get us forgiveness. Because we have sinned, and therefore deserve to die, it would be our receiving the wages due our sins, i.e. death. This is where the unique place of Jesus is so vital. He was of our nature, of our "flesh and blood," a suitable representative of us (Heb. 2:14-18). That blood was shed, a perfect life was poured out, with which we can be associated, and then share in the immortality which followed.

These ideas of shedding or pouring out of blood are concepts based on priestly acts, of killing the sacrifice. With regard to Christ, they speak of his literal death, "thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood" (Rev. 5:9). The shedding of his blood (his death) is the basis of remission of sins. One of the values of his death is in providing a suitable basis for our forgiveness. Without this basis no forgiveness is possible, "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves..." (I John 1:8).

The need for Christ's blood

In contrast with Megiddo's rejection of the importance of Christ's blood, scripture emphasizes that our reconciliation with God is on account of Christ's blood: "The Father...having made peace through the blood of (Christ's) cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself" (Col. 1:19, 20). We were "redeemed...with the precious blood of Christ" (I Pet. 1:19; Rev. 5:9). Those "in" Jesus "have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14; Eph. 1:7). Our redemption is paralleled here with our forgiveness. In Christ, and only in him, our sins are not held against us; we will not receive eternal death as the wages of sin; in God's grace, we can

Affirmed

will require it of him" (Deut. 18:18-19).

What did Christ preach as He traveled from village to village? Did He teach that He was going to die and shed His blood for the salvation of mankind, that this was the purpose of His life? No, "He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1). In fact, so little did He have to say about His approaching death that the disciples, when it actually happened, could hardly comprehend it, even though He had told them.

Repentance, then forgiveness

What did Jesus, as He was parting from His disciples, commission them to teach? He told them clearly: "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). If His death had been the key to their salvation, would this not have been a likely time to have said so? But no, even after He had died and been resurrected, it was still necessary for them to repent so that their sins could be forgiven.

If our ultimate acceptance before God depends upon the righteousness of Christ imputed to us through His death and not upon our own obedience or virtue, why does the Bible define so precisely the type of life God requires? When we see a sign posted along the highway announcing the speed limit or giving us directions to stop or to go, we conclude that the sign was set up to be obeyed. Similarly, when we read in the Bible, "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation" or "Let patience have her perfect work" or "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath" or "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth," is it not wise to conclude that these commands are to be obeyed? Why are there literally hundreds of admonitions to holiness, virtue and obedience if we are saved by the righteousness of Christ?

Not only does the Bible spell out the virtues God requires, but it also establishes clearly the link between our obedience and our salvation. The law of God is as straightforward as "Obey and live, disobey and die" (cf. Deut. 4:1; 8:1; 12:1; 30:6, 16).

What can the fact that Christ shed His blood on Calvary do to make anyone morally pure and upright? Suppose a driver has been consistently violating the rules of the highway. What must he do to become a law-abiding driver? He must stop violating the rules.

Suppose a man is making his living by robbing banks. Now suppose this man accepts Christ and His righteousness, yet goes right on robbing banks. Is he immediately counted righteous, pure and holy because of Christ's death for him, even though he

Denied

be given immortal nature, salvation from our sin-stricken condition.

"Christ died for us...being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:8, 9). Thus Jesus "washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1:5; notice how Jesus does this to us, rather than we achieving it for ourselves). "The blood of Christ (can) purge your conscience" (Heb. 9:14). In this way, Christ "purchased (us) with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

"His own blood" highlights the very personal relationship which we have to Jesus, once his blood covers us. We cannot have this if we seek reconciliation by our own virtue. We are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood" (Rom. 3:24, 25). If the blood of Jesus is irrelevant to our salvation, how are we justified through faith in his blood? Surely these passages invite us to focus our mind upon the blood of Jesus?

If the blood of Jesus is not one of the preconditions for salvation, then it must mean that the life and death of Jesus are not necessary for it either. If we were to analyze the literal blood of Christ with no regard for the saving work which he did for us, then it would not be meaningful. It is not some kind of talisman in itself, as Catholicism teaches. But we cannot analyze Christ's sacrifice by supposing that, for the sake of argument, he did not die for us. The fact is that he was born and he died, "for us." This was his very reason of being. We cannot analyze his work apart from the purpose for which it was done: i.e. our salvation. It is as a result of such separation of Christ from his work that the conclusion has been reached that the literal blood of Christ is insignificant.

The teaching of the Mosaic Law

Under the Mosaic Law, the Israelite found atonement with God by placing his hand on the head of an animal, which then represented him. This animal was killed, and the blood poured out. This was because "the blood...I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17:11). But we must compare this with Heb. 10:1-10: "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins," and therefore the sacrifice of the body of Jesus was needed.

But according to Leviticus 17:11, the animal blood did make atonement for sin. It was not the literal blood which did so on its own; that blood made atonement because it pointed forward to "the blood" of Jesus. With this blood as well as that of Jesus, it is

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continues his same sinful habits? To be cleansed and forgiven, must he not change his manner of life? He must stop robbing banks and earn his living honorably. The blood of Christ can do nothing to change his record; he himself must reform.

The basis of salvation God prescribes is the same. It is a simple, practical summons to personal reformation: stop doing wrong and do right. "Cease to do evil, learn to do well" (Isa. 1:16-17). The "wicked" must "turn from his transgressions...and do that which is lawful and right." Then, once we turn from our sin and do right, no guilt from our former sins remains. "None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live" (Ezek. 33:14-16). Where is any need for the sacrifice of Christ?

Isaiah stated the same fact: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7). When God has abundantly pardoned, what more can we need?

We are forgiven our sins as we forsake them. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13). We "purify" our souls by "obeying the truth" (I Pet. 1:22). If our weakness has been to steal, Paul has the simple formula: "Let him that stole steal no more" (Eph. 4:28). If we have been telling lies, we must stop lying and tell only what is true (Col. 3:9). If we have been using profanity, we must stop it (Eph. 5:1-5). If we have been getting angry, we must be patient and kind (Eph. 4:31-32).

When we stop disobeying any law of God, we become clean on that point—not because Christ shed His blood for us but because we stopped committing the sin, just as the bank robber must stop robbing banks and take an honorable job to earn his living. As long as he continues to rob banks, the blood of a thousand Christs could do nothing to make his record clean. He must actually stop committing the sin before He can be forgiven.

Just as we can become clean on one point, so we can become clean on another, and another, until our whole life and character reaches the standard God requires and we are "holy and acceptable unto God" (Rom. 12:1).

Salvation conditional

The Bible does not offer salvation on a free-for-all basis, nor does God impart or impute the righteousness He requires. Each aspirant must purify his own

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not the blood as literal blood that is efficacious, but its relation to something of which the blood-shedding is expressive.

Megiddo must have difficulty accepting that the blood of the animal sacrifices points forward to that of Jesus. If his blood is irrelevant, then why did the Mosaic system of reconciliation with God achieve this through blood, which pointed forward to that of Jesus? We must remember that the body and blood of Jesus was the actual fulfillment of the Mosaic types. Those types did not just point forward to Jesus as our example. The New Testament says that Jesus was typified by the altar, the high priest, the mercy seat and the blood on it; all the elements of the Mosaic Law pointed forward to him (Heb. 9).

Furthermore, Jesus was the equivalent of the Passover lamb. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us...(Jesus) the lamb of God that taketh ("beareth") away the sin of the world...sprinkling of the blood of Jesus...the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Cor. 5:7; John 1:29; I Peter 1:2, 19). These are all obvious allusions to the Passover lamb as that lamb had to be without spot, having its blood sprinkled around the lintels of the door. Did the blood of the Passover lamb point forward to that of Jesus or not? If the answer is "No," then why do Megiddo still keep a "Passover" feast on 14th of Nisan? But if "Yes," then as the lamb's blood brought salvation for Israel, so must the blood of Jesus bring salvation for the new Israel (I Cor. 10:1, 2).

Our Association with Christ's Death and Blood

By baptism

By associating ourselves with his death, God looks on us as if we are sinless. Jesus died for us (I Cor. 15:1, 2), so that we too might share his death and therefore his resurrection. The divinely appointed means for making this association is immersion (water baptism) (Rom. 6:3-6; Phil. 3:21; 2 Cor. 4:10). Because Megiddo fails to understand the need to associate ourselves personally with Christ's death *in this way* and resurrection in this way, they have rejected the doctrine of water baptism.

Many verses in the Bible speak of baptism as a one-time act. Why is this so, if baptism is only symbolic of some inner spiritual process? How can we be baptized into the death and body of Jesus by this? (Rom. 6:3-5; I Cor. 12:13). Water baptism beautifully symbolizes dying with Jesus, and then rising to new life with him.

By the breaking of bread

Because forgiveness and the hope of salvation is only available through Christ's own death, we need to

heart and character (I John 3:3), by his own initiative, with the help of God, before God will bestow salvation. We must not overlook the help of God, because God provides the knowledge of what we must do, along with the mental and physical powers we need. But it is our responsibility to use all these to develop the character He requires. We cannot expect Him to change our disposition. This is our part of the agreement.

Every promise of God has two sides, a human side and a Divine side. God says, You do this (indicating obedience and virtue on the human side)...and I will do this (indicating God's bestowment of eternal blessings). God says, "IF" you do thus and thus, "THEN" I will do thus and thus (II Chron. 7:14).

Jesus promised to save those who would endure unto the end (Matt. 24:13). The Psalmist promised God's deliverance to those who pay their vows to God (Ps. 50:14-15). Isaiah said that God will recognize "him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at [His] word" (Isa. 66:2). He promises salvation "to him that ordereth his conversation [conduct] aright" (Ps. 50:23). He will "render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life" (Rom. 2:6-7). The promise is based on the expressly stated condition that the believer patiently continue in well doing, not that he accept any righteousness imputed to him by Christ.

Jesus' last message emphasizes the same point: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14).

If Jesus' literal death and blood was the key to salvation and forgiveness, why did Jesus in His parable commend the obedient servant for what he had done: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things" (Matt. 25:21). If the servant had not been good and faithful, could Jesus have said this?

Paul himself says clearly that there is an "if" condition in the matter of salvation. Writing to the Corinthians he spoke of the gospel he had preached to them, "By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain" (I Cor. 15:1-2). They had heard the gospel, and they might or might not be saved—there was still an "if" in the picture.

Hebrews is likewise specific, that salvation depends on our individual obedience. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man

associate ourselves with him. "Except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you"

(John 6:53); we must intensely associate ourselves with the sacrifice of Jesus. Without regularly breaking bread, are we really associating ourselves with Christ's saving work? The early church broke bread very often (Acts. 20:7; 2:42, 46). Megiddo's failure to frequently do this is explicable by their lack of appreciation of the value of Christ's sacrifice. One mistake has led to another.

Jesus: our sin-bearer

Jesus "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (I Pet. 2:24). How can Jesus be a sin bearer if salvation is just conditioned on our own virtue? How do the Megiddoes understand Christ being our sin bearer (Isa. 53)? "We are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus" (Heb. 10:10); we are "reconciled in the body of his flesh through death" (Col. 1:21, 22).

Also note that Jesus has brought about our salvation "because he hath poured out his soul unto death" (Isa. 53:12). Our salvation is obtainable because of the fact that Jesus offered himself—his life, his blood, his very soul. The parallel between Christ's body and blood and himself is because the giving of Christ's life involved the giving of his complete self; including his literal blood. Separating the body and blood from the whole self of Christ is not a valid biblical distinction. Accordingly, if the blood and body of Jesus are not necessary conditions for our salvation, then neither was Jesus.

If Jesus was only our example, then he was useful but not essential. Megiddo must assume that the Bible records of many other men, e.g. Joseph and other types of Christ, could be our ideal example. Yet the Bible stresses that salvation is through the literal death, not just the example of Christ.

Jesus redeemed by his sacrifice

As one of the human race, Jesus' sacrifice was partly for his own benefit; he was redeemed by his own blood, thus he totally represents us, who are also redeemed by his blood (Heb. 5:3; 7:27; 9:7, 12; 13:20). Because Jesus was of our nature, he destroyed "the devil...(and) abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (Heb. 2:14; 2 Tim. 1:10). The Megiddo Church teaches that Jesus benefited from his own sacrifice; if he benefited by his own blood, and he was of our nature (which Megiddo also believe), then surely we too must benefit from his blood?

shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

James is equally direct, that only the "doers of the word" will merit eternal rewards. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves....Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:22-25). Notice that one must continue in the law, and be a "doer of the work," and then "this man shall be blessed in his deed."

James says again, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:12). "The crown of life" is to the one who endures under trial.

The apostle John concurs, making this plain statement: that the world passes away, and the lust thereof, and only "he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:17).

Three steps to salvation

Briefly, the Bible outlines three steps to salvation. These three steps are summarized in Rev. 1:3: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."

The first step in the process of salvation is learning what God requires of us. Knowledge comes first. This is the normal pattern of life. The newborn child must spend years in learning before he is able to live as a responsible adult. And if he wishes to pursue a profession, he must acquire even more knowledge. This knowledge is not automatically transplanted into his mind. He must apply himself and learn.

The same is true for the aspirant to eternal salvation. He must first learn what God requires. And the source of that knowledge is the Book God has provided for our instruction, the Bible.

The second step to salvation is to apply the knowledge one has acquired, to live according to the law of God, to develop in one's life the standard of virtue God requires.

The third step is the physical change from mortality to immortality. We are now mortal, subject to death. We must depend upon God for this third step, because we cannot save ourselves. Only God's power can "change our vile [mortal] body and fashion it like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). Only He can make us like unto the angels, so that we will not die (Luke 20:35-36).

We are responsible for taking the first two steps during this present life, given the tools and the help

Baptism into the body of Christ

By being baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus, we are counted by God as being part of Jesus, and therefore our bodies will also be glorified at Christ's return. The reconciliation made available through the offering of Christ's body is only available to those in him (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). By baptism into Jesus, we are baptized into the body of Jesus, we become part of his body (Eph. 1:23; 4:16; Col. 1:18; I Cor. 12:13, 27). At Christ's return, he will "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). "The life also of Jesus (i.e. the eternal life given through his resurrection) (will) be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. 4:10).

Jesus was perfect by character; yet in order to represent us who have to die, he "died for us." Because he had done no sin, he was raised again to immortal life. By being baptized into Jesus, he represents us, and therefore if we remain "in him," we will also share in his immortalization. Thus our salvation is on account of Christ's death.

Megiddo teaches that a person must develop perfection to be saved. Until they reach that point, they are without hope. The scripture position is that we are considered part of the eternal grace of God now, unless we fall away from it: "Even when we were dead in sins, (God) hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:5-6). Although this salvation will not be physically manifested until the return of Christ, we are spoken of as having received it in prospect. Having received this great gift, our works should be motivated by gratitude for God's "unspeakable gift," rather than provoked by a feeling that our obedience will bring our salvation. In prospect, we have been saved.

The place of good works

Our ultimate acceptance will be on account of our living faith in God's grace, not our works: "For by grace are ye saved through faith...not of works, lest any man should boast...And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise works is no more work" (Eph. 2:8, 9; Rom. 11:6). If we really believe that we are acceptable to God, then we will show our faith by "works" of obedience (James 2:14-26).

"Works" do not just refer to the actions prescribed by the Mosaic Law, as the Megiddoes have claimed. James 2:14-26 says "works" include giving food and

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which God provides. Then Christ when He returns will accomplish for each worthy one the third step, the physical change to immortality. "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory" (I Pet. 5:4). This reward will be brought "at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:13). Jesus Himself said that He was coming to bring His reward with Him (Rev. 22:12).

Summary

The Bible is contradictory if it teaches that salvation is the reward for an upright and holy life and also teaches that our salvation depends upon the death and shed blood of Christ. However, upon careful study we find that the problem is not with the Bible but with the false and misleading doctrines which have for centuries been taught in its name. God has one plan and one basis for salvation. And when we take the statements about Jesus' death and blood as a symbolic representation of the complete sacrifice we ourselves must make (Rom. 12:1)—and which Jesus Himself made—we have harmony.

We, too, would prefer to trust in Christ's sacrifice to atone for our sins, if only we could be sure it was God's way. But how tragic to go to Judgment depending upon the righteousness of Jesus, only to learn—when too late—that we are to be judged and rewarded according to what we ourselves have done.

Ruth Sisson, July, 1992

Next month: Rebuttal/Discussion

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clothing to needy Christians. Romans 4:2–5 speaks of "works" being done before the Mosaic Law was given. The argument of Romans 2–7 which negates relying on the works of the Mosaic Law for salvation, also negates relying on obedience as a means of justifying ourselves before God. The real work of God is to believe in the work of Christ (John 6:69).

Christ's cleansing our conscience by his sacrifice means that therefore with works we "serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14; Tit. 2:14). We can never have this kind of clear conscience if our relationship with God depends solely upon our own obedience.

Summary

While the Lord Jesus set an example of perfect obedience, his literal death, the shedding of his blood, is critical to our salvation. We all need forgiveness of sins which God only grants upon our association with the death of Christ. The necessity of death as the basis of the forgiveness of sins is set forth in the Mosaic Law, the vocabulary of which is applied to Jesus Christ. By association with Christ through baptism, God imputes righteousness to us; He counts our faith for righteousness. Our good works must spring out of our rejection of sin which is implicit in our association with the death and resurrection of Christ.

Duncan Heaster, July, 1992

Next month: Rebuttal/Discussion

Our every effort toward holiness is recorded in heaven. The constant discipline in unnoticed ways, the spirit silent on selfishness, becoming the hidden habit of the life, give to it a true saintly beauty which is the result of careful and lowly love in little things. Perfection is attained most readily by this constancy of faithfulness in all the minor details of life, consecrating the daily duties of life to God.

The secret is to be always doing all things for God, and not to mind because they are such very little ones.

Always remember that holiness does not consist in doing uncommon things, but in doing the commonest things with a pure heart.



About Devils and Angels

"Thank you for the literature you sent me. I am studying it. *The Hell of the Bible* confirms my beliefs. *The Devil of the Bible* stirred many questions. I also share the belief that the Word of God is true and not to be disputed. Many times, however, the interpretation of the Word needs to be clarified.

"How do you explain the many accounts of people who claim to have seen angels or demons today? Also, what is your understanding of Ephesians 6:12 and Mark 5:13?"

The concept of a devil, or a being created by God and opposed to Him, that stalks the universe and influences men to do wrong is part of an ancient superstition which appeals to those who wish to escape responsibility for their actions. It is not reasonable, and it is not Biblical.

The Bible pinpoints the source of evil as the heart of man. Said Jesus, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries," etc. (Mark 7:21-23). James confirmed this when he wrote, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed"—*of his own lust*, not when he has an encounter with the devil (James 1:13-15). Both of these passages show the source of temptation to be from within man himself, not from any external source.

In this age when God is not working openly with His people, we are dependent upon His Word for all Divine knowledge, and no one has seen angels or demons. For any claims to the contrary, solid evidence is lacking.

What is the meaning of Ephesians 6:12? The passage reads: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Paul is describing the "spiritual" nature of his battle, as opposed to literal fighting. He contended against the wicked elements in the world, not against flesh and blood soldiers. He was fighting a spiritual battle against stubborn Jews who clung tenaciously to their old law. He was fighting against all who

opposed God, against "spiritual wickedness in high places," against evil in esteemed positions of authority (as in Athens, where he found the people worshipping the "unknown God"—Acts 17), as well as against the evils of his own nature (Rom. 7:21-25). There is no suggestion that he was fighting a spirit being, a literal devil. His battle was the same battle we must fight today, using the God-given weapons Paul lists in the verses that follow (Eph. 6:13-18).

Of how much value would be a "shield of faith" against a superpower of evil? But it is of great benefit against the thoughts of doubt that steal into our own minds. This is the battle we must be daily fighting, and winning.

◆ Is God responsible for deformed children?

"Do you believe that God created or made everyone? We see people, especially children, born with so many birth defects, and I wonder how God could give such children."

God is responsible for the laws that govern the earth and all life upon it. But He is not directly responsible for the existence of each of us. God designed and set in operation the laws whereby life is sustained and perpetuated. But he also gave to the human race an intelligence capability by which they could discern how to properly use those laws. If they choose to abuse them, they must suffer the consequences.

When people disregard the basic laws of health and life, there are bound to be consequences. Many of those consequences we see today in children born with birth defects, deformed, diseased, etc.

Many times these defects are the result of misbehaving parents. However, there are no doubt many cases where they are also the result of time and chance. God did not design this creation to be perfect. He does not guarantee to every human being a specified number of years or a perfect physical condition. This period is a probation time, a period during which God is selecting those who will be part of His eternal order, those who

will inherit the earth forever. He gives this life as an opportunity in which to prepare for that eternal existence, along with the mental and physical equipment one needs. Each can choose to live as he pleases, or to follow the Book in which God has laid out His instructions, the Bible.

Very soon Christ will return to set up a universal kingdom of righteousness and peace, and that order, when complete, will be perfect. In it will be no children born with defects. In fact, there will be nothing to hurt or destroy, no disease, no sickness, and no death (Rev. 21:3-4; Isa. 65:17-18).

◆ About speaking in tongues

"I cannot find anyone who can satisfactorily explain to me the issue of speaking in tongues. Can you help me understand?"

Speaking in tongues, as it was called, was one of the Divine gifts of the Holy Spirit, which the Apostles had following the outpouring on the day of Pentecost. By these gifts they were able to prove that God was behind their work.

Speaking in tongues apparently took several different forms. On the day of Pentecost, those who received the power could be understood by the listeners, each in his own native language (17 different languages were present). At other times it seemed that the Holy Spirit made a person able to praise or to utter Divinely inspired words in a language he had not learned (I Corinthians 14). On such an occasion, the presence of an interpreter was required so that the message could edify the hearers.

We do not know all we would like to know about the gift of tongues speaking, but we do know that the apostle Paul did not consider it of primary importance. In fact, he even discouraged its use. "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (I Cor. 14:19).

The gift ceased along with the withdrawing of the Holy Spirit at the end of that Age (I Cor. 13:8-10), and has not been reinstated. Hence, anyone today who professes to speak in an unknown tongue by means of God's Spirit is a deceiver. Today we can be instructed by what is revealed in the written Word of God, and in no other way.

◆ Salvation Earned?

"In my New International Version of the Bible, Matthew 5:3 reads: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Then in a foot-

note is this comment: '...poor in spirit. In contrast to the spiritually proud and self-sufficient, theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom is not something earned. It is more a gift than a recompense.'

"I find this last sentence hard to believe. Aren't we to work hard to make ourselves over into a new creature? But I suppose that our rewards for hard work can be said to be gifts from God, and all are His blessing, even today. It all depends on how one thinks, more or less. I would appreciate your thoughts on this. Thank you."

We must always keep in mind, when reading Bible commentaries and even comments in footnotes of various translations of the Bible, that those notes are not part of the inspired text of the Bible. They may be helpful at times in understanding a passage, but they have been added by translators, editors or publishers who many times did not understand the plan of God or the true teachings of Scripture.

The last sentence in the comment you cite is an example of this. Nothing in Matthew 5:3 suggests that the Kingdom is "not something earned." As you say, the author of the comment seems to infer that there is nothing for us to do, no requirement from our side. But how can anyone read the Beatitudes and not realize what Jesus is saying—when He pronounces His blessing upon the "meek," upon those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness," upon those who are "merciful" and "pure in heart"—how are we to acquire these traits if we do not give them any conscious effort, just as we would work to acquire any other skill?

In another sense, the Kingdom cannot be earned. "Earned" implies an equivalent compensation for services rendered. The reward God offers is compensation far out of proportion to anything we can do in the longest lifetime. What can forty, fifty or sixty years of the most dedicated service be worth toward a reward that will continually increase in glory age after age after age? The best we can give is not even remotely equivalent to what God has promised. At the same time, we must meet His requirement: complete obedience. We must love the Lord with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength (Mark 12:30). If we do not, we shall not receive what He has offered.

The reward is properly called a recompense in that God will give "to every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:14).

We cannot trust our own judgment, however. We must be sure that everything we believe has its foundation in the Bible, so that we are thinking and teaching God's thoughts and not our own. That is all that matters. MM

Ambassadors for the King

To be ambassadors for our soon-coming King is a heavy responsibility. As ministers of light our standard must be kept high, both in precept and example. Our influence on others may cause them in time to consider our deep faith in the Word of God and to seek after His wonderful knowledge and hope.

How precious is the companionship of others who travel the narrow way to life, working for the King. As the Wise Man said, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise" (Prov. 13:20).

We have been promised eternal life and pleasures beyond our greatest comprehension in return for building a pure and holy character. This level of holiness involves a crucifixion of our own ways, a purging and cleansing to become pure, even as Jesus left us an example. We also must be examples in our daily living, that we portray the Christlife in word and deed.

We need to be stimulated in these evil days to put our all into the work to be worthy when the King returns, for we know every man will be judged according to his works.

Newfoundland

D. T.

The Greatest Satisfaction

There is no greater satisfaction in this life than in conquering our lower nature, putting away all evil inclinations and becoming new creatures, governed by higher thoughts and motives.

*"A character we must now build,
God's blessed precepts in our hearts instill;
So let us gladly our own ways yield,
And shape our deeds to God's great plan,
Working with patience to form that
"New Man."*

Missouri

H. W.

Determined

With such a wonderful salvation before us, we can press, crowd, thrust our way through or over or around any and every obstacle which stands between us and our goal.

Georgia

S. J.

Coping with Abundance

Every situation of life brings its own peculiar testing. As Christians we need to learn how to take abasement as well as how to abound.

I like the thoughts in the article "Coping With Abundance." We think of abounding as a pleasant experience — having the things we need, being able to do the things we want to do, having enough and to spare. We see no problem in abounding. But careful!—Paul did. He needed the strength of Christ as much in abounding as in being "abased."

Abounding brings its difficulties. We may be tempted to too much self-confidence, too much pride, too much forgetfulness of God (any is too much!) We may be tempted to try to run the course of our life without God, being too contented in the abundance of the things which we possess. We forget that all good comes from God.

Poland

E. K.

Renewing

We need to constantly renew our vision of the coming Kingdom of God. The Bible encourages us in this. "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:23).

In the Sistine Chapel is a painting by Leonardo da Vinci which has been named, "The Last Supper." Present generations were of the opinion that artists during the medieval days were limited in the colors they could use, that rich colors such as we have today did not exist.

Then one day, conservators set about to renew the painting by Leonardo da Vinci. When the centuries of dust had been cleaned off, the original painting showed a beauty and richness of color never imagined.

So it is with our hope of Christ's coming Kingdom. Our mental picture of that Kingdom needs continual renewing, rubbing, cleansing, so that it can be always alive, always full of color, always before our eyes, attracting our attention and impelling us to apply ourselves more and more earnestly that we may be able to rejoice when He arrives. This coming reality will be more beautiful and more wonderful than anything we can now imagine.

— Contributed

Obituary

Emma J. Klapp

On July 13 we met to pay our last respects to a friend and sister, Emma J. Klapp, who has been part of our Rochester community for nearly 70 years.

Sister Klapp's first acquaintance with the Church came through her older sister Laura, who had purchased the set of booklets published by the Church from a group of missionaries. Apparently Laura and Emma were talking about religion one day, when Laura made the comment to her sister, "If you want something that has the *proof* for it, you ought to look at *these books*," and she showed Emma the set of books by the founder of the Megiddo Church. Sister Klapp recalled that she took the books, read them, was impressed, and shortly made her decision to relocate to Rochester to join the congregation.

Sister Klapp was a trained and capable clerical stenographer, and willingly used her skills and talents for the Church. She served many years as assistant to the editor of the *Megiddo Message*. She also was Church secretary for a number of years. Probably most memorable were her colorful character portrayals in Church dramas, where her talents were outstanding.

Sister Klapp is survived by two nieces, Mrs. Dorothy A. Wilson, of Delmar, New York, and Carol Horstman of Rancho Murietta, California; also one nephew, Robert Duerr, of Schenectady, New York.

Open My Eyes

(Continued from page 2)

precept, wonders of promise. By praying for opened eyes, we pray for a trained and disciplined insight into these wonders. For who can appreciate the most spectacular wonder—with closed eyes?

"Open *thou* mine eyes." The Christian feels that his perceptions of truth are at best obscure, that there are always greater wonders for him to see than he has yet perceived. He longs for keener and yet keener spiritual eyesight.

At the opposite end of the scale are those willingly blind, yet who think they can see. Our Lord rebuked the Pharisees for this very reason. Their condition was still worse because they had stood in the presence of the Divine Light, yet regarded it not. They professed to see, but their hearts were closed to the light. Hence Jesus' command, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9:41).

There is no fate more dreadful than to think we can see when we cannot. For to such there is no will to open the eyes, nor any caution against taking a misstep.

Or we may be half-blind and half-seeing, like the church at Laodicea. To them Jesus said, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see" (Rev. 3:18).

The opening of soul eyes is a figure of speech for the quickening of spiritual discernment. Nothing do we need more urgently than a keen sensitivity to Divine and eternal things, a sharpness and clarity of inner vision that can detect at once the pointing of the Divine finger.

So long as the eyes of the servant of Elisha remained "closed" he could see nothing but the chariots and horsemen of Syria. But when the Lord opened his eyes, he saw the hills round about filled with the chariots and horsemen of God, angels from the high courts of heaven.

God grant us this glorious inner vision, this power to see beyond the limits of things seen. Though ours is not the privilege of beholding open manifestations of God's power, still there is much for opened eyes to see—of clear, fresh insights, the "eyes of our understanding being enlightened," that we may know what is the hope of our calling, and what is the riches of the glory of our inheritance in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:18).

Lord, open my eyes.

MM

Lines to Live By



Today, beneath Thy chastening eye,
I crave alone for peace and rest;
Submissive in Thy hand to lie,
And know that it is best.

O Lord, Thou who art as a shadow of a
great rock in a weary land, who beholdest us
weary creatures of labor, weary of self, weary
of sin: in Thine abundant compassion and ten-
derness, grant us such hope and strength that
we may find true happiness in Thee.

Grant us above all things that we can desire
to have a heart at peace, that perfect peace
which comes from knowing Thee and staying
our minds upon Thy law. In this very peace let
us abide.

His love has no limit, His grace has no measure,
His power has no boundary that's known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth and giveth and giveth again.

*This is the field, our world below,
In which the Sower came to sow,
The saints the wheat, the wicked, tares,
For so the Word of truth declares:
And soon the reaping time will come,
And angels shout the harvest home!*

*Oh! awesome truth—and is it so?
Must all the world that harvest know?
Will every life be wheat or tare?
Then for that harvest O prepare!
For soon the reaping time will come,
And angels shout the harvest home!*

*To love my sins—yet saint appear,
To grow with wheat—yet be a tare,
May serve me well as here I go,
Where tares and wheat together grow:
But soon the reaping time will come,
And angels shout the harvest home!*

*For only those who righteous be
Their Father's Kingdom then shall see;
And shine like suns forever there:
He that hath ears, now let him hear;
For soon the reaping time will come,
And angels shout the harvest home!*