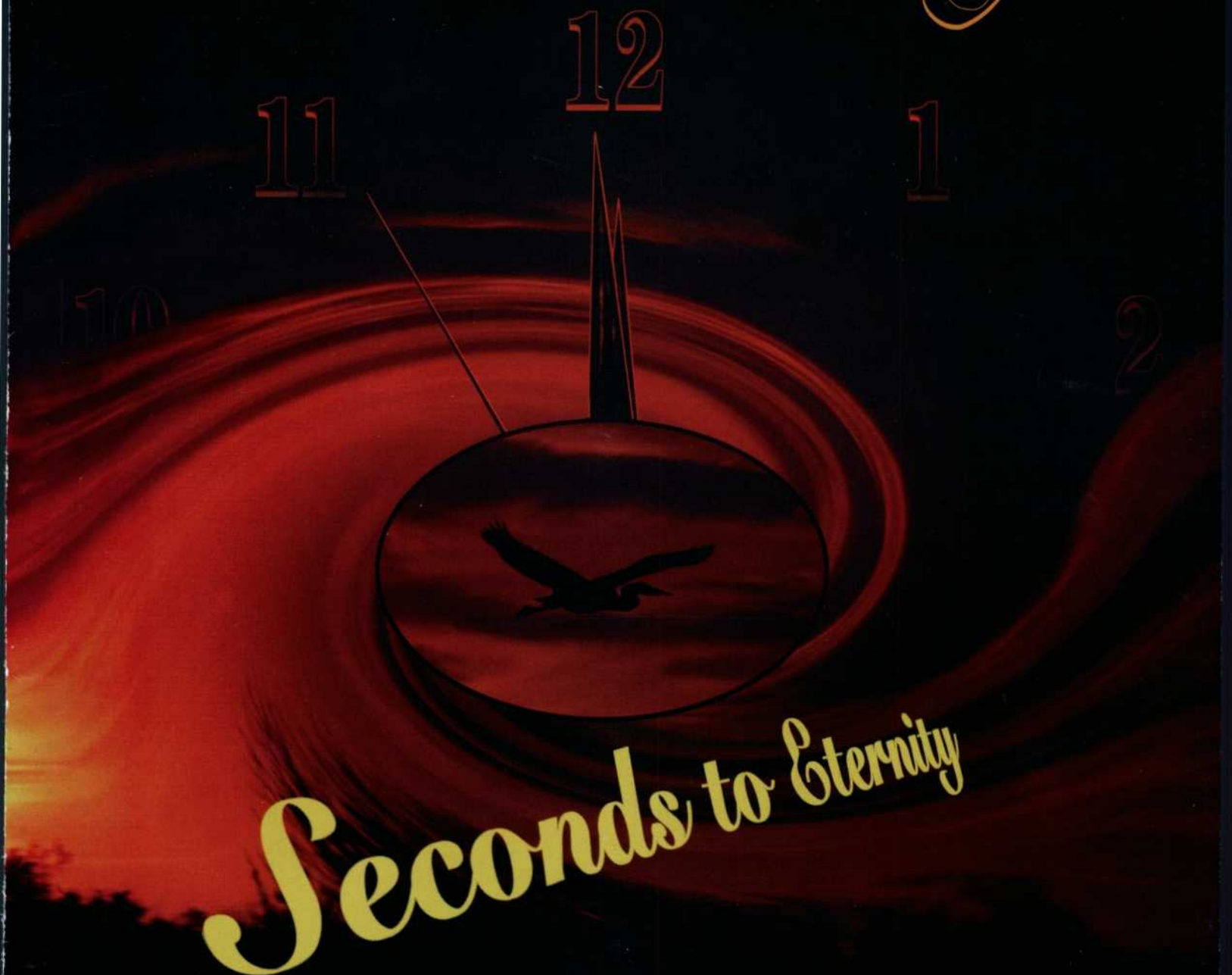
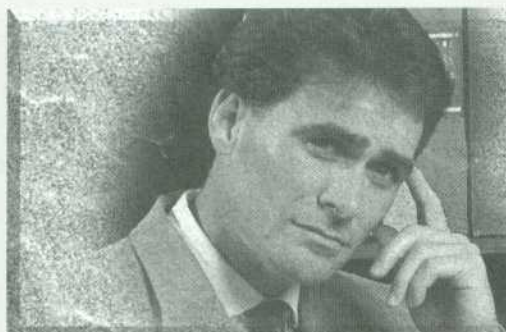


Megiddo Message



September 1995
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Lord, I Will Follow Thee, But...

ARE WE FOLLOWING—WITH INNER RESERVATIONS?

Two planes leave the same airport and travel for a time along the same route, and look as though they would reach the same destination. But one of them diverges slightly to the right. The further they go the greater the distance that separates them.

Two children are born into the same family. They grow up under the same conditions, are taught the same beliefs and exposed to the same influences. It would seem logical that they should, by the time they reach adulthood, share the same convictions and ideals. But they do not. One says, "Lord, I will follow Thee"—outright, unconditional, without reserve. The other says, "Lord, I will follow Thee, but..." A certain willingness is there, but also a string attached.

And so the story of the years confirms. The one goes steadily forward in a devoted life of service to God. The other begins with a spirit of hesitation, oscillating between decision and indecision, and twenty years later is still trying to decide between faith and doubt.

What do the two have in common at the outset? They both are instructed in the faith. They both learn and admit the great truths of the Gospel. They are both impressed by the surpassing excellence of the life of Christ. They both develop an admiration, reverence, and awe of the Creator. They both understand the plan of salvation, and the great reward God is offering. They both are able to say of Jesus, "Never man spake like this man." They both say "Lord, I will follow Thee."

But here they diverge. One says simply and absolutely, "I will." The other says, "I will, but..."

Complete Commitment

What are the possible "but's"? We all

have our own. It might be that we feel there is plenty of time, that we are young and can enjoy life for awhile before getting too serious about the things of the Spirit. There will be plenty of time later to serve God.

Or it might be that we are waiting for some decisive point of conviction. Yes, we believe, but not fully. Yes, we are convinced, but we still have reservations. There are still points about which we have questions. We are generally convinced, but....

Or it might be a matter of circumstances. We are waiting until...—and the claims of life are myriad. Demands on our time seem so urgent, so near, so practical, that soon we have no time to spare for God. Or it might be some bond of friendship which we know we will have to break, which seems too precious, too dear to endanger. Or it might be the claims of business, or a lucrative position, or, or, or...

Whatever the excuses we give ourselves, how small, how exceedingly small, is the little we are asked to give up compared to the possibilities we are foregoing with that little "but." For does God ever ask us to give up any good thing? Does He ever ask what we are not better off without? Does He not offer more, far more than anything we can find in this world's positions, or relationships, or challenges?

What can even compare with the prospect of sitting with Christ on His throne? What can even compare with having an active, vital role in the new government He will set up when He returns, which will grow until all who live shall know the Lord and enjoy the blessings of His regency?

Christ has called us to be part of a great campaign, in which we cannot be mere spectators. We must be soldiers

(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 who live 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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Megiddo Message

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Seconds till Eternity

Some time ago a newspaper carried a picture of an airliner stricken in flight. The plane in the picture is tilted at a steep angle and is clearing the tree-tops by only a few hundred feet. One engine is blazing, and disaster is written across the sky in the trail of smoke it has left behind. Under the picture in large black capital letters are the words: "Seconds till eternity." At the moment the picture was taken, all on board the vessel were living, animate beings. Only seconds later, it was all over; there were no survivors.

The picture is a grim portrayal of imminent doom. But we do not have to be on board a crashing airliner to have only seconds separating us from eternity. Every year, war, political atrocities and crime claim thousands of lives. Disease and famine take thousands more.

Seconds till eternity. Does the term "seconds" seem like a misjudgment of the human life span? Its meaning is twofold, suggesting both its frailty and its brevity.

We are all familiar with the small, soft-bodied insects we catch on our windshields during warm summer evenings. These little nuisance creatures, known as Mayflies, or dayflies, have a life span of from one to three days. In some species the life span is less than *two hours*.

Now we would judge a lifetime of two hours, or even two days, as exceedingly short, compared to our seventy or eighty years. But how similar must our brief seventy or eighty years appear to the Being who "inhabiteth eternity," who is "from everlasting to everlasting"! Might He not think of us as human "dayflies"?

It is impossible for us to see our lives as they appear to the Omnipotent Creator, but a comparison with the age of the earth might be helpful. Scientists today believe the earth to be at least four billion years old. How long is our life span compared to the earth's age? Our seventy or eighty years are less than one forty-millionth of the age of the earth. Or to say it another way, if we let our seventy years represent the age of the earth, our actual life span in this proportion is a mere 39 seconds! What are we, then, in the view of Him who "inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy" (Isa. 57:15)?

*Where will
we spend
eternity? The
answer depends
on what we are
doing with the
seconds.*

No wonder the Psalmist extolled, *"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God"* (Ps. 90:2).

We talk so easily of time. We have time for this, and no time for that. But do we realize the intrinsic value bound up in each fleeting second? Only a few seconds, and we shall belong to eternity. And what will that mean for us—eternal death, or eternal life? Where will we spend eternity? The answer depends on what we are doing with the seconds; for when these seconds are gone, our destiny will be sealed; time will cease to belong to us; opportunity will be gone forever. Our probation will be over, and change for us will have become either impossible or unnecessary. The words of the Revelator will apply to us: *"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still"* (Rev. 22:11).

Only seconds until—? The eternity we reach will be the direct consequence of our wisdom, or our folly.

There is something within us that cries out against this impermanence, that longs for stability and security. We grasp for "things," for family and friends, a home, a bank account, land or investments, anything to give us an illusion of security and permanence. God in His merciful kindness grants us a measure of these, but we dare not set our hearts upon them, for in them is no lasting security. There is nothing among earthborns that is secure. There is nothing, even among man's most sophisticated creations, upon which he may look and say, "See, this is eternal." A few seconds, and all is gone.

This is God's point of view, and we should apply ourselves to acquiring His values; for through Him can we secure anything beyond the few seconds we now have? Upon Him we are dependent for all we are or ever hope to be. Only in His realm can we find ages and hours beyond these seconds.

There are two basic reasons why we this very moment are only sec-

onds from eternity. The first reason is that *human life is so brief*.

All people in all ages have had only seconds, as God measures time: only seconds to do their work, to seek their pleasures, or to offer themselves to His service; because a human life is so brief. As the Psalmist observed centuries ago, our life is as *"a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again"* (Ps. 78:39). Our days are as *"an handbreadth"* (Ps. 39:5). We are *"as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again"* (2 Sam. 14:14). *"Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding"* (1 Chron. 29:15).

There is another sense in which we have but seconds till eternity: *We are near the end of an age*.

No one has ever doubted the brevity of our lives. But today there is an astonishingly widespread feeling, even among those who profess no belief in the return of Christ, that in a larger sense the corporate life of the human race is reaching some kind of climax. The almost worldwide break with tradition, coupled with social problems beyond human solution has created a feeling that the foundations of civilization are cracking; human history is approaching some kind of end. In the words of a sage of yesterday, "Time that takes a survey of all the world, must have a stop."

It is the firm conviction of every believer that we are indeed living at the end of an era. Jesus foretold that there should be *"signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven [political powers] shall be shaken"* (Luke 21:25-26).

What does all this speak to us as Christians? Only "seconds," figuratively speaking, only seconds until the end of the present system of things and the establishing of a new and vastly superior order. Only seconds until—and the sentence can be finished with a thousand statements of the wonder and glory that is coming; for just ahead of us is the grandest event of the ages, the climax of all history, the apocalypse of the Son of God! When "men's hearts" are "failing

*Right
upon us is the
climax of all
history, the
apocalypse of
the Son of
God!*

*Eternity will
be, with or
without us.
Our presence
or absence
matters little to
Omnipotence.*

*The invisibles
are the realities,
and the
intangibles
are the
permanencies.*

*God sees all
things in
perspective of
endless time.*

them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth"—then—"then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:25-27).

What shall our reaction be, as we hear the seconds ticking, ticking away, and as we realize the end of the age is upon us? Jesus said it in these words: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh...Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:28, 34-36).

The arrival of the King—indeed, the arrival of His herald—will mark the end of the last second of the present age. And that time is, by God's measuring of time, only seconds away!

What Is Eternal?

Our lives are temporary; and the present age is destined to end. Yet in the midst of our changing and impermanent world, God has permitted us to see some things which are eternal—enough to assure us that the eternal IS. These things are not within our grasp—we cannot claim anything lasting because we ourselves are so momentary. But some of the commonest sights and sounds of our present environment will go on forever—which is visible evidence to us that there is power and life above and beyond our own. For example, look up at the heavens. Our telescopes reveal myriads of shining orbs, many so distant that the light they radiate requires millions and billions of years to reach our eye. Here is visible evidence of that which is eternal. Those stars were shining before we were born; they will be shining long after we are forgotten.

We see the sun rise every day, to give us heat and light. And though we know it will not always be needed to give us light, the Bible tells us it is

eternal. Even the ground we tread and till is more lasting than we are, for while "one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh,...the earth abideth for ever" (Ps. 72:5; Eccl. 1:4).

We can be thankful God has permitted us this much contact with things that are eternal. And through the knowledge He has given us in His Word, the solid promises of that which is eternal, God has set before us that which He assures us is without end. Jesus spoke often of eternal life, life everlasting. "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time,...with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30). The promise is "an hundredfold now,...and in the world to come eternal life." No wonder He advised, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6:27).

God sees and judges all things in the perspective of endless time, and that is the way we must learn to judge also. Then we will be able to say with the far-sighted Paul, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17-18). The invisibles are the realities, and the intangibles are the permanencies: "The things which are not seen are eternal."

In God is the promise of "salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10). Christ is the "author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9). In Him we may have "eternal redemption" and the "promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:12, 15), if we qualify as His people. He has pledged Himself to give to all who "by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life" (Rom. 2:7). Eternal strength, eternal

health, eternal happiness, eternal life—eternal *everything* which we may desire or imagine—and more—is offered us by the eternal God.

Someday immortal beings will tread the very soil on which we walk—and we can be among them. Someday the very air we breathe will vibrate with immortal voices—and those voices can include ours. Someday immortal music will echo between the hills and vales and across the lakes and meadows of our world—and we can be among the makers of that music. Someday—beyond the seconds—in eternity.

Eternity vs. Time

What do we mean when we speak of eternity in contrast to time? We take time for granted, but time has a limit for each of us. When our time is gone, what marches on is eternity, unmeasured duration in which we have no part.

The word “eternity” occurs but once in Scripture, and it is found near the heart of Isaiah’s message. The Prophet uses it to describe the habitation of the great Creator Himself: “*Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy*” (Isa. 57:15). What grander introduction could be given to Omnipotence—“*the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity!*”

Eternity is a great word—let it never be lost among the commonplace. We might do well occasionally to focus our minds upon its tremendous issues—not that we will be able to comprehend them; but, in the words of our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, it will expand our minds so that we may expand our actions.

First, let’s attempt to bring eternity within the reach of our finite conception. What does it mean?

We will have to use units of time known to us (as days and years), even though we know these have no part in eternity. So let us start with the “seconds” that belong to us, the average life span, our threescore and ten.

Then let’s imagine that we can add. Begin by adding to these seventy years one year of life for every leaf that grows on every tree in the world during those seventy years. Then add

to that figure a year for every grain of sand on every seashore of every continent. The result is staggering, but this is not eternity.

Then continue by adding a year for every blade of grass that grows upon the earth’s surface during these seventy years. We might also add a year for every drop of rain that falls during that period of time. We have surpassed our comprehension a million times, but we are still far from eternity. We might proceed to add a year for every time the sun has risen and set during the more than three billion years of earth’s existence. Still, our total is only a small fraction of eternity.

How do we apply this to the issue before us?

We are even now only seconds from eternity. And eternity for us will mean either eternal death or eternal life.

Eternal death is not difficult to comprehend. It is simply an unending state of oblivion, nothingness, non-existence. Our few brief seconds run out, and there is nothing more.

But what about the other possibility—eternal life? Life through millions and billions and quintillions of ages, life that goes on and on and on—forever! Every human attempt to describe this immeasurable boon God has set before us is necessarily feeble. As mortals we are neither mentally nor spiritually equipped for such a task. Even man’s most scholarly dissertations must sound like child prattle in the ears of the Infinite. Superlatives of language, or philosophy, or mathematics are wholly inadequate.

But let us think about what is ahead: eternal life, eternal growth, eternal expansion, eternal improvement. These are terms that will someday be understood by all the inhabitants of this planet. How shall we attempt to understand them now?

The simple expressions of John the Revelator are as equal to the task as language can be. Let us try to visualize his meaning as he attempts to describe the age that is coming:

“*And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his*

*We are even
now only
seconds from
eternity. And
eternity for us
will mean either
eternal death or
eternal life.*

*Life without
death; happiness
without sorrow;
day without
night; time
without end—
this is God’s
Eternity.*

head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth"—can we capture that picture? "And the angel...lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever,...that there should be time no longer" (Rev. 10:1-6).

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying,

It makes a difference to all eternity whether we do right or wrong today.

neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

"And the gates of it [the city] shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there" (Rev. 21:25).

"And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth,...heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:13).

Life without death; happiness without sorrow; day without night; time without end; the present moment forever present; life, life—LIFE! And love and joy and happiness and bliss in a glorious new world of ever-expanding knowledge and ever-widening horizons of challenge and opportunity: this is God's Eternity.

What of Us?

Do we realize the seriousness of the issues before us? Only seconds, seconds until...the dawn of eternity is nearer than it has ever been before.

Here is the perspective we need to build into our lives. We need to practice looking at time and life as our Creator sees it. Real life is not an endless struggle for that which sustains it, interspersed with brief periods of pleasure and pain.

*To breathe, and wake, and sleep,
To smile, to sigh, to grieve,
To move in idleness through earth,
This, this is not to live.*

To breathe, and wake, and sleep is merely existence. Real life is on another plane. We cannot fully describe it, for we have never experienced it; but it is a reality. A myriad of angels already possess it. And someday, we can also!

What will it be like? "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). More than eye has seen, or ear has heard, or heart has imagined!

Imagine, if you can, the thrill that must belong to perfect beings in a perfect realm. What perfect beauty can be expressed in the blending of perfect design and color and tone? What music can swell from the perfect combining of harmony, rhythm and tone? What about the bodily vigor that will result from perfect health that will never decline? What about the joy and happiness of knowing that we have achieved the highest moral excellence of which we are capable? God's eternal realm will have all this—and more.

Can we expect God, who has all this to give in ever-expanding measure through all eternity, to accept men and women who are only half-heartedly interested in what He offers? Can we expect Him who has all eternity in which to select the best from the human family, to accept those who are so preoccupied with themselves and their own small circle of existence that they cannot give their first thought to Him and what He has offered?

We need to remind ourselves often of our measure of time as God sees it—only seconds. How the thought should arouse us to renewed and multiplied effort in the perfecting of our lives now! Only seconds,

and how swiftly they are passing. If we are using each to its maximum spiritual good, the rapid passing of the seconds is our greatest joy and blessing; the sooner they are spent, the sooner we can know the joys of the greater life which is beyond.

If, on the other hand, we are neglectful, if we are not redeeming the seconds but are letting them slip through our fingers unclaimed while we absorb ourselves in the petty pleasures of the moment, we are this very moment only seconds from the bitterest disappointment, sorrow, shame and unending nonentity. While the saints and angels enjoy the life and magnificent glory of the new world, we will be a forgotten bit of dust. Forever.

Do we wonder why the seconds are so important?

It makes a difference to all eternity whether we do right or wrong today. It makes a difference, and that difference is the difference between eternal life and eternal death.

When we must make a decision in some temporal matter, a decision which will affect us for weeks or months or years to come, we weigh the issues carefully; we search out and consider every contributing factor. How can we give less concern to the decisions which are determining our destiny for eternity!

How seriously we should consider the little choices of every hour—choices of what we think about, what we talk about, what we read, what we do, what attitude we assume. How seriously we need to learn to consider all these, for *all eternity depends upon them*. This is the word we have from the Lord, delivered through His prophet Haggai: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways" (Hag. 1:5). And just in case we didn't feel the full impact of this message from the Eternal, the Prophet repeats it a second time: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways" (v. 7). Consider, and act wisely. "Consider these things, ye that forget God, lest he rend you, and there be no deliverer" (Ps. 50:22, Septuagint).

If the ancient Lawgiver of Israel were among us today, would he not yearn for us as he did for his people:

"O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always...O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" (Deut. 5:29; 32:29). Just so are the angels pleading for us this very moment.

Oh, let us feel the impact of this warning. Let us take it to heart, and act upon it. Only seconds, seconds till eternity. The thought should not discourage us; rather, it should awaken every latent power within us. It should warn and stimulate us to action, to heed the words written aforetime for our learning: "Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life" (Deut. 32:46-47). How this warning should put to death our inborn tendency to procrastinate. Only seconds, and it will be either eternal death or eternal life; our destiny will be sealed.

We have pledged ourselves to God, to be not our own but His—His, through every moment now, and on through the ages of eternity; His, to speak as He would have us speak, to think as He would have us think, to live as He would have us live. In return He has given us His pledge: eternal life, if we win; eternal death, if we fail.

Only seconds, but these seconds

will determine whether we win or whether we lose. No wonder the apostle Paul ran the race with unfaltering determination. No wonder he left this flying testimony for all who would follow after: "I forget the past and I strain ahead for what is still to come; I am racing for the finish, for the prize to which God calls us upward" (Phil. 3:13-14, Jerusalem Bible).

Only seconds till eternity! No wonder the first and greatest commandment of the law is God's demand for wholeness: all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, all our strength (Mark 12:30-31).

Only seconds...oh, let us feel the urgency of the time. "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door" (Jas. 5:8-9). This was not recorded for the brethren of James; it was written for us in the last days, when the end of the age is but a step away. Just one more step, and the Judge will be in our midst.

When that Day arrives and we must look back, how worthless will seem the little rivalries that threatened to divide us, the jealousies and hurt feelings that stabbed us, and all the little goals that caught our eye. How trivial will seem the irritations which vexed us, and the small thoughts and chitchat which so easily distracted us. As we look back, the

picture will seem entirely different. And if we mastered all these little things, how indescribably happy we will be!

The clock is ticking, a quiet reminder that the seconds are passing. Life is slipping by, and what are we doing with it? What are we accomplishing?

God's eternity is a reality, whether we choose to believe it or not. If we close our minds to the facts, they remain unchanged.

God has fashioned a plan that shall go on and on forever. Time and progress and motion and expansion in His realm are all eternal. Eternity is, and eternity will be—right here on earth. Eternity will be, with or without us. Our presence or absence matters little to Omnipotence. But oh, what it means to us! If we fail, God will not suffer; someone else can take our place. God's resources are inexhaustible; He can make more material, just as easily as He made us. But our opportunity will be gone forever!

How we should feel the thrust of things eternal, things grand, things noble, things Divine! They are just ahead, almost within our grasp. A few more seconds, and they can be our very own!

But oh, the seconds in between, those seconds that still separate us from eternity. What are we doing with those precious seconds? What destiny are they determining—for you... for me? □

Dear heavenly Father, we thank Thee that once again we are privileged to meet in Christian fellowship in Thy house.

We thank Thee for the birth, life and destiny of Christ Thy beloved Son. He was the great hope of the world. It was He who showed the world the perfect example of right living. He it was who burst the bands of the dark tomb never again to be held in its cold embrace. Though He were dead, yet He now is alive for evermore, giving realistic support to our hope that if we live as He lived, follow faithfully in His footsteps, we too can ultimately be placed beyond the power of death, and live forever.

Father, we once were walking in darkness, unaware of the value of time. But now that Thou hast enlightened us; grant us the wisdom to walk as children of light. Help us to show the influence of our enlightenment in our everyday living, and now

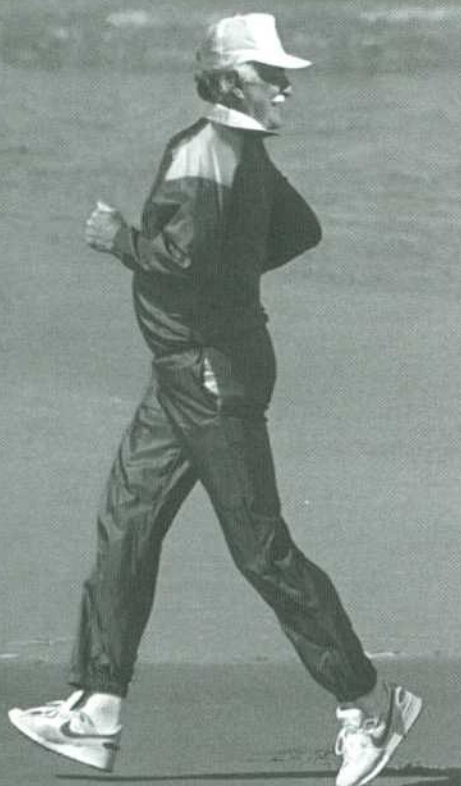
act like sensible men, not like thoughtless.

Alert us that time is our most precious commodity. We are living at the end of the ages. the time for Thy work upon earth to be revived is right upon us. May this fact be so vivid to us that we will not waste a single moment of it.

We rejoice to know of the position Christ is destined to fill, that in the fullness of the times He shall become King of kings and Lord of lords, the benevolent Ruler of the entire earth, and that in His days the righteous shall flourish, and an abundance of peace shall prevail as long as the moon endures.

Grant that our fervor to participate in that blissful Day may be more intense, and our determination to go the last mile of the way be unbounded. We ask all in the name of Thy dear Son, and our much longed-for King. AMEN.

Don't **KEEP** Looking Back!



To what degree is it safe or prudent to look back?

Life is a challenge which moves us inexorably on, and which will as it moves reveal the best—or the least—that we can be. Instinctively we find ourselves looking back. But should we?

There is a positive and also a negative side to back-looking. Many, times it is necessary to look back.

There are mistakes that need to be corrected, and how can we hope to correct them without discovering the cause of the error? There are also mistakes that need not be repeated, and how can we avoid them if we are not aware of the cause of our error?

We owe a great debt to the dedicated inventors who have made our lives so much easier and more enjoyable. What if they had not found the determination and courage to look back and analyze what they had done, what was right and what was wrong with their experiments? What if they had simply given up when their experiments failed?

But let us think deeper. Jesus said, *"No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God"* (Luke 9:62). The New English Bible translates the words of Jesus: "No one who sets his hand to the plough and then keeps looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." Jesus does not say that it is wrong to look back at all, but that the one who would go ahead must not *keep* looking back. Is it ever safe or prudent for the aspiring Christian to look back?

We might say that permission is granted us to look back only as we use the backward glance to get ourselves further ahead. We look back to see where we have failed, in order to avoid making the same error again. We *must* remember our evil ways and our doings which

were not good (Ezek. 36:31).

But we must also use caution in looking back. Dwelling on the past, on our evil ways and doings which were not good, cannot change them, and will only hinder us as we try to move forward.

What if Peter, after that dark and awful night when he denied his Master, had continued looking back? True, he went out and wept bitterly, but the next time we see him he is a changed man, a man of courage, a staunch and able champion of his Master's cause. He stopped looking back.

Think of the apostle Paul. What a mental struggle he must have waged, torn with remorse that he had been responsible for the heartless persecution of the young Christian Church. But what do we hear him saying? *"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 3:13-14). Paul worked hard to keep looking ahead.

Do you remember the story of the grandfather and the little child who were walking in the woods? The boy, for some reason or other, was intrigued with what was behind them along the trail, with the result that he kept stumbling and falling. Finally, after picking the child up several times, the grandfather remarked, "Sonny, why do you keep looking back? That isn't the direction we are going."

Back is not the direction we are going either, and we must stop looking that way. How can we become new if we are always thinking about the old? How can we go forward if we continue to yield to the call of the world around and behind us? How can we waste precious hours indulging in forbidden pleasures, when Paul has warned us to redeem the time because the days are evil?

Let us sever any craving we may have for those lazy-minded, procrastinating years. The old nature cries, "Slow down a little. You are expecting too much of yourself. The pace you are setting is too strenuous." But there is only one way to achieve our goal, and that is to stop looking

back, stop being a "yo-yo" Christian. We must make up our mind what course we will pursue and stick to it. And what assurance do we have that we can succeed? Listen to Isaiah's confident words: *"For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed"* (Isa. 50:7). After we have seen our mistakes and resolved to correct them, we must stop looking back. Back is not the way we want to go!

But no matter how high our aspirations, old habits and firmly entrenched besetments will be formidable enemies at times. It may seem that some of our besetments are set in concrete. At times like these we must be especially watchful, or we will find ourselves looking back, with self-pity and discouragement.

Others have faced discouragement and won; and so can we. Hear the heartfelt, honest confession of the apostle Paul. *"I often find that I have the will to do good, but not the power. That is, I don't accomplish the good I set out to do, and the evil I don't really want to do I find I am always*

doing" (Rom. 7:23, Phillips). Yes, Paul had the same struggles, the same tendency to look back. But just listen to his words of triumph, penned years later in his letter to his beloved Timothy. *"The glorious fight that God gave me I have fought, the course that I was set I have finished, and I have kept the faith. The future for me holds the crown of righteousness which God, the true Judge, will give to me on that day, and not, of course only to me but to all those who have loved what they have seen in him"* (2 Tim. 4:7-8, Phillips).

As Christians, we have accepted a colossal challenge. It will take our very best effort; but with confident, courageous, forward looking, we can succeed. And who can even faintly comprehend the magnitude of the reward promised the overcomer? Life, glorious, eternal life on the earth made over new!

After we have attempted to imagine the beauty, the overwhelming glory and pleasure awaiting each faithful one, a reward exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, what can we say? Only this: I want to be there, don't you? □

Back is
not the direction we
are going.

The Displacement Principle

You cannot recite the 23rd Psalm, while counting to 20.

You cannot run while walking, or read while sleeping.

You cannot fill your mind with faith, and distrust the God of creation.

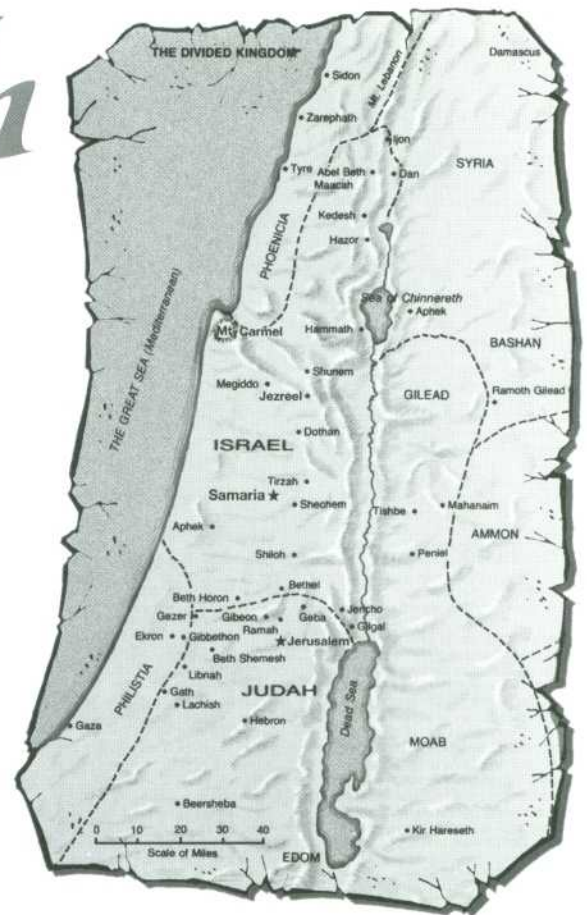
You cannot earnestly pray the Lord's Prayer, and be angry with your brother, neighbor, or customer.

It is all the same principle of displacement. If you fill your mind with the heavenly thoughts of goodness, holiness, truth and the Divine promises, you will push out lust.

Elijah



God's Man of the Hour



During the ninth century BC, Northern Israel, shut off by political considerations from the central shrine of the true faith at Jerusalem, was slipping rapidly into idolatry under a series of wicked kings, of whom Ahab, the present ruler, and his queen Jezebel were the worst.

In the king's palace, preparations are underway for the dedication of the new temple to the Phoenician god Baal. Meanwhile, Jezebel, aided by jealous priests, has set afoot a dastardly plot aimed at the destruction of the schools of the prophets of Jehovah. Obadiah with the help of Jehu has launched a counter effort to save as many prophets as possible.

Into this den of lions comes the prophet Elijah, a strange, austere, lonely figure, who in the name of Jehovah sternly reproves the wicked King Ahab. Challenged to prove the power of his God, Elijah pronounces a curse on impenitent, apostate Israel. In time everyone in the nation will know who is the true and living God. But *until* then...

The Curse of the Living God

ACT 1 SCENE 3

Characters:

Ahab—King of Israel
 Baal-Zekar—Priest of Baal
 Arzaad—Priest of Ashtoreth
 Melchidek—the King's Treasurer
 Elijah—Prophet of God
 Jehu—Captain of the Guard
 Bidkar—Palace Guard

Setting: Interior of King Ahab's palace. JEHU and BIDKAR are on guard, while the priests are calling roll, checking figures, with Melchidek looking over their shoulders. They are adding up the first week's receipts from the new temple of Baal.

AHAB: Well, how does it tally up? Good as you expected?

ARZAAD: Splendid, my lord, better than we expected, for the first week. A great success in every way. We find that the offerings from all sources, except the gifts of the nobles and the king's guests of state—

AHAB: Leave out the gifts. They are mine, not yours.

(The priests look at each other in disappointment, start to speak, then think better of it.)

ARZAAD: The total is...a talent of gold and forty-five talents of silver, besides much valuable merchandise.

AHAB: Over and above expenses?

ARZAAD: Oh, no! But fortunately our expenses were light this week, due to the generosity of the king and queen.

BAAL-ZEKAR: We have made it clear to the people that we expect their support to continue at the same rate, or greater, if they are to have good crops this year and escape disasters.

AHAB: And I suppose, the king and queen are expected to keep up the good work too. Priests are all alike—never satisfied.

ARZAAD: My lord accuses us wrongly. Our only interest is the praise of the gods, and the glory of the king, and the prosperity of his realm.

AHAB: I read that one, too. But it's all right. The more you take in, the more I get back on my investment.

BAAL-ZEKAR: That brings up another point, a very delicate point, your majesty. We were both rather surprised—and shall I say—shocked to find that the crown was expecting so large a share of the receipts from the temple. In Sidon the customary division was—

AHAB: Never mind about Sidon. This is Israel. After all, *who* built the temple for you? Did any of your money go into it?

BAAL-ZEKAR: *(hastily)* Oh, my lord, we never forget the generosity of the king and queen. It's just—

MELCHIDEK: Anyway, you fellows get it all—through the back door. Who feeds all the horde of priests and hangers-on down there—eight hundred and fifty of them? Do you think that's any bargain? Perhaps I should have Obadiah show you the figures—

BAAL-ZEKAR: No, no, my lord. Who are we to doubt the good word of the king, or his faithful treasurer? I shall say no more about it.

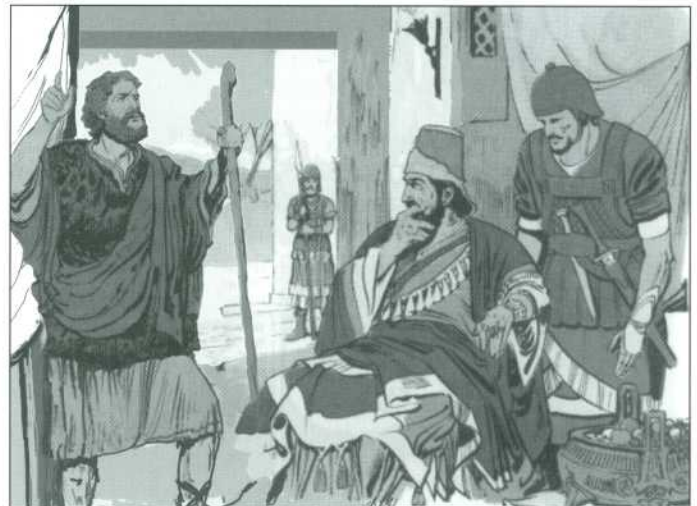
ARZAAD: *(loftily)* But while we are on the subject, is it fair that the groves should receive a smaller share of the remainder than Baal? Our rites are just as exacting and

as expensive as theirs, so why—*(Baal-Zekar tries to quiet him.)*

AHAB: I shall refrain from judging such matters. If you can't agree among yourselves, you have my permission to appeal to the queen—after I get my share.

MELCHIDEK: I suppose you fellows are breathing easier now that you have done away with the prophets of Jehovah. In a way, I don't blame you. One religion is enough for any nation, and sometimes too much. Nothing like simplifying matters when you can.

AHAB: I was rather annoyed about that affair, the way it was handled, but the queen convinced me that I was simply getting rid of a pack of dangerous rebels. I can



be broad-minded in religion, but political disloyalty is something else, that can't be tolerated. According to Jezebel, that's what it amounted to. How successful were the raids?

BAAL-ZEKAR: Well...we didn't do quite as well as we expected. Not quite. We got them all here in Samaria, and made a clean sweep in Jezreel. But the Mount Tabor group must have been warned, because we got only four or five stragglers. We've been examining them under torture, but so far they haven't talked. We're still hoping they will.

AHAB: That's good, give them some more. I want to know who's working against me.

ARZAAD: In Bethel and Jericho, we did fairly well too, but still failed to get about fifty whose names we had. But let my lord have no fear. The movement is completely suppressed, and those who are not killed are driven into hiding. Sooner or later we'll get the last one.

BAAL-ZEKAR: There was some resistance, and we had to kill a few on the scene, but not too many. And a few have recanted and sacrificed to Baal. But if it please your majesty, I might suggest that it is possible—now this is also a delicate matter—it is possible that there might

be an enemy right in the palace, who could be the cause of some of our bad luck.

AHAB: Aha! Out with it!

BAAL-ZEKAR: I hesitate to speak of it, but I sometimes wonder if the king's palace prefect, Obadiah, is to be trusted. Now if my suspicion should prove well-founded, I have a brother who is well qualified for the position, a devout and trustworthy worshiper of Baal.

AHAB: (*with spirit*) You keep your hands off Obadiah—understand? This isn't foolishness, it's an order. And don't run to the queen about it, either. If she even lays a finger on him I'll send her back where she came from, and if her father wants to fight about it, I'll fight. I'll be pushed so far and no further.

ARZAAD: My lord, we will say nothing more about it. It was Baal-Zekar's idea, not mine.

MELCHIDEK: How about the biggest fish of all?

BAAL-ZEKAR: —You mean...?

MELCHIDEK: You know who I mean. He comes from Gilead. Elijah the Tishbite. He was your prize catch—if you could ever catch him.

BAAL-ZEKAR: (*rather backwardly*) I regret to say that he slipped through the net. We tried hard enough, but nobody seemed to know where he was or had been for

a long time. But he won't last long. He's a marked man, and if he stays in the country, we'll soon have him.

AHAB: That's the one man I would like to get rid of. Elijah. If ever he shows his face in this place again, I'll have his life, if it's the last thing I ever do. I'll hang him up on the highest tower of the new temple for all Israel to see and be warned that King Ahab means what he says. (all cheer and shout: Long live the king, long live the king. Enter Elijah suddenly. All show alarm and surprise.)

ELIJAH: You spoke my name, O King?

AHAB: (*obviously frightened*) Who—who are you! How did you get in here?

ELIJAH: I am Elijah, servant of Jehovah the most high God.

Ahab: (*excitedly*) Elijah! (*turning to Jehu and Bidkar*) Guards! Jehu—Bidkar—arrest that man. Don't let him leave this palace alive! (*soldiers do not move*)

BAAL-ZEKAR: Praise be to Baal! He has delivered our enemy into our hands.

ELIJAH: (*to the priests*) Silence, all of you! My business is with the king. O king Ahab, this is the word of the Lord God of hosts: Why have you forsaken Me, your

NORTHERN POWERS

Assyrian Empire

Kings and Prophets

1043BC

931BC

1040BC 1020BC 1000BC 980BC 960BC 940BC 920BC 900BC 880BC 860BC 840BC 820BC 800BC

Prophets in ISRAEL

Kings in ISRAEL & Divided Kingdom

SAUL

DAVID

SOLOMON

ISRAEL 10 tribes

JUDAH 2 tribes

IDDO AHIJAH ELIJAH JEHU ELISHA

JEROBOAM NADAB BAASHA ZIMRI OMRI ELAH AHAB (Jezebel) AHASIAH JORAM (JEHORAM) JEHU JEHOAHASZ JEHOASH

REHOBOAM ABIJAM ASA JEHOASHATHATHALIAH

Shishak of Egypt removes temple treasures

Athaliah kills all but one of the royal line of Judah

Prophets in JUDAH

SHEMAIAH AZARIAH HANANI JAHAZIEL OBADIAH JOEL

1040BC 1020BC 1000BC 980BC 960BC 940BC 920BC 900BC 880BC 860BC 840BC 820BC 800BC

☆ = good king

AMOS = prophet that authored a book

IDDO = prophet only

Dates may not be exact.

Maker, the Creator of heaven and earth, to worship gods of wood and stone! Is it because there is no God in Israel?

BAAL-ZEKAR: Certainly there is, and his name is Baal!

ARZAAD: And Ashtoreth!

ELIJAH: (*speaking with authority*) Quiet! I am speaking to the king. Is it because there is no God in Israel that you have built a temple to Baal, that abomination of the Sidonians, and that you permit the filthy rites of Ashtoreth to be practiced in this land, instead of the pure worship of Jehovah? Verily, as God lives, there is wrath upon you for this abomination!

AHAB: (*helplessly*) Oh, who can deliver me from the wrath of God?

ELIJAH: And Ahab, you have done yet more: to fill up the measure of your iniquity you have murdered the prophets of the Lord, innocent men who could have been the salvation of your kingdom. Their blood stands witness against you this day, that you are a murderer of the people of the true God!

AHAB: (*whining*) Friend, friend, friend...I had nothing to do with the affair. They put that all over behind my back. I did not even see the order.

ELIJAH: Nevertheless you approved it after it was done,

and the guilty were not punished.

ARZAAD: (*to Baal-Zekar, softly*) He's talking about *us*...

ELIJAH: Silence, all of you! I—

AHAB: Elijah, let's be reasonable. You stand this moment in my power, and I could take your life. But I am a just and merciful man. Let's forget about this whole unfortunate affair, and I will give you a place of honor in my kingdom, if you will work along with me and be as tolerant as I am willing to be. After all, it's a big world, Elijah, bigger than you think.

ELIJAH: O king, your flattery is as emptiness, and your threats cannot touch the power of the true God. Your smooth words can never silence me nor turn away the wrath of Jehovah, so long as you allow the abominations of the heathens in your land. You talk of tolerance—you have sold yourself to work iniquity. You have departed from the true and living God, and He will judge you.

MELCHIDEK: (*sneeringly*) I've heard all that before, and never seen it work. We used to hear about miracles and judgments, but we haven't seen any for a long time. What makes one god better than another, anyway?

BAAL-ZEKAR: (*approaching Elijah*) See here, old man, if your God is so powerful—let's have a sample of it (*swings*

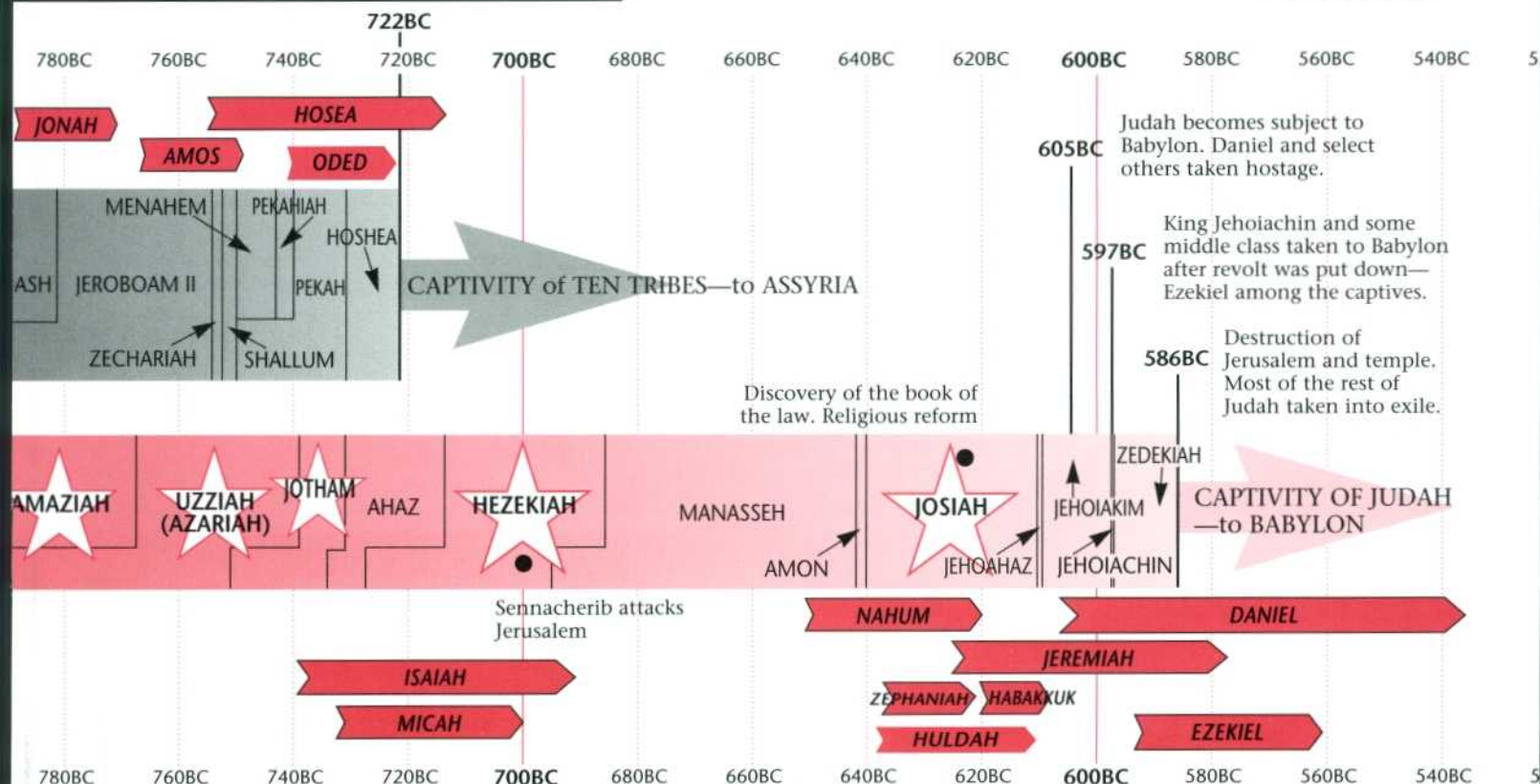
of Israel and Judah

Fall of Nineveh, the Assyrian capital

Babylonian Empire

Persian Empire

Fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians



rod in front of Elijah's face).

ARZAAD: Yes, show us what your God can do.

AHAB: That's what I say.

ELIJAH: Very well, you have asked for it. You challenge the power of the Eternal? You shall see it. (*All listen breathlessly as Elijah speaks*) As the Lord lives, from this day there shall be neither rain nor dew upon all the land of Israel—except as I give word. (*Elijah exits suddenly.* The priests and Melchidek rock with laughter. Ahab looks dazed, serious and fearful.)

BAAL-ZEKAR: A weather-god! A rain-maker!

ARZAAD: No—a rain-stopper! Ha, ha! When it rains next month, he'll say he gave the word—let's just see if he's still alive and around!

MELCHIDEK: Quite an entertainment! quite an entertainment! Breaks up the day and gives us all a good laugh—just what we needed.

AHAB: Be quiet, you idiots, this is a serious matter. Jehu! Go out with all speed and arrest that man! Don't let him get away from here! After him! Away!

(*Jehu and Bidkar exit quickly, while others become suddenly sober.*)

AHAB: We just might be in real trouble, all of us. Don't think this matter is over yet.

ARZAAD: We have lakes, and rivers, and reservoirs—what does Elijah think he and his God can do to us?

BAAL-ZEKAR: And the great spring of Bezek bubbling right up inside the temple of Baal itself! What does Elijah think he can do to us?

(*Re-enter Jehu and Bidkar*)

JEHU: (*out of breath*) I'm sorry, my lord, but he's gone.

BAAL-ZEKAR: What do you mean, gone?

BIDKAR: That's right. He's nowhere to be seen, and no one saw him go. We cannot pick up any track of him whatever. We looked all around, but he is just not here. He has completely disappeared.

AHAB: (*raging*) Go look again! I've got to have him, go! It's his life, or yours!

(*To Be Continued*)

Are You a Transformer?

All of us have seen the electrical apparatus called a transformer hanging from poles, or sitting on the ground at sub-stations by large buildings. Transformers come in an almost infinite variety of types, sizes and voltages, from a tiny audio transformer to one weighing many tons. There are step-up transformers, which raise voltage; step-down transformers, which lower voltage; isolation transformers, buck-and-boost transformers, auto-transformers, and many more.

To be successful every Christian must be a transformer. In fact, that is what the Christian life is all about. Real Christians are step-up transformers. They are called to a higher plane than satisfies the low level of the carnal mind. Said God through the prophet Isaiah, "*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts*" (Isa. 55:9). This is not an easy task. The natural mind resists change, just as a transformer resists the flow of electricity. But this resistance must be overcome.

How can it be overcome? By increasing our faith in God's promises we lower the resistance of our stubborn wills. A willing mind is a definite aid. And the greatest aid to having a willing mind is keeping the mind fixed on the eternal prize God has offered.

How complete must be the transforming work in us? Our whole life must be made to conform to the image of Christ. There can be no part which is not touched by this process. Our minds must be transformed. The natural mind thinks low and groveling, or good and elevating thoughts as the mood of the moment dictates. The transformed mind thinks only on things which are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report (Phil. 4:8).

Our ears must be transformed. Naturally we want to hear whatever sound falls within the reach of our ears. But transformed ears are selective. The tones of the voice of flattery are too weak to penetrate, but "a reproof of life" is transmitted as a signal strong and clear.

The tongue must be transformed. This is perhaps the most difficult member to regulate. In fact, James says, "*the tongue can no man tame.*" But he also goes on to give the real solution: "*Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom*" (James 3:13). With God's help the tongue can be transformed.

Our hands and our feet must both be transformed. Before the change we are free to do as we please and go where we please. But once we are transformed, we must do all and only that which is to the glory of God. We must go to no place, where we would not want to be found if Jesus

should come. The first concern of transformed hands and feet is to serve the cause of Christ, to do His work, to further His cause; serving self is always secondary.

The best type of transformer for us to duplicate in our spiritual life is the step-up transformer. We must be always reaching up, to the higher levels which the law of God demands, to higher planes of faith and obedience. Christians must never become step-down transformers. The downward process requires no effort, accomplishes no good, and results in no reward. The world today is full of examples of step-down transformers. We see them on every hand, without hope, without God in the world. And saddest of all is the covenant-maker who had the opportunity to step up but decided instead to become a step-down transformer.

Another type of transformer with characteristics common to human nature is the buck-and-boost transformer. We have all known individuals who seem to be against everything. Sometimes politicians, especially if they are of the opposing political party, try to buck whatever legislation their opponents propose. No matter how needful it may be, they seem to delight in their bucking or delaying tactics. Whatever good may come from such childish actions is hard to imagine. At any rate, it is a manifestation of the flesh, and as such is forbidden the Christian.

The booster is the opposite. He is the promoter, the one who gets things done. He is an asset to his community, his family, and his cause. Actually, the buckler and

the booster are both activists. But there is a difference. The buckler slows down and impedes progress, while the booster promotes it.

Bucklers are never happy; boosters are always happy. Boosters have willing minds. They are promoting the work of the Lord, both in their own lives and among their friends. Boosters are good examples; bucklers are poor ones.

Another type of transformer which has a lesson for us is the isolation transformer, which isolates one circuit from another. In this transformer, no connection exists between the primary and secondary, only in induction. There is a sense in which the Christian must be an isolation transformer—though in the world, he can be no part of its ungodly practices in thought, word or action. Jesus prayed to the Father not to take His disciples out of the world but to keep them from the evil in the world.

The Christian must also be an auto-transformer. The Bible states clearly the need for a complete change of heart, a whole new creation. This is a work which we must do ourselves. We cannot expect another to do it for us; we have no right to any merits which are not our own. God will help, but the responsibility to make the change is upon us. We are called to be auto-transformers.

What kind of transformer are you? Are you one which Christ can use now, and which He will continue to use when He returns? □

How Bendable?

If you wanted to put a bend in a piece of wood—not a temporary bend but a permanent one—how would you go about it? Would you give it a few hard knocks or apply sudden, violent pressure? Not if you know something about woodworking. You would apply steady, gradually increasing pressure and maintain it over a long period of time.

Bending people is much the same problem as putting a bend in wood. It isn't easy. Breaking old habits and learning new ones is a slow process. If you expect too much too soon, it won't work. People get discouraged and disgruntled. It takes steady, gradual pressure. It also takes time. And keeping at it. If you slacken your efforts too soon, they will just spring back into their old way, and all your effort will be lost.

Are you really serious about bending people? The best place to start is with yourself!

For the Biblical basis of this article, read Ezekiel 20:1-32.



Here Come the Elders!

There are few characters in Scripture more colorful or dramatic than the prophet Ezekiel. Born into a priestly Israelite family, he probably went into training as a priest during his mid-twenties, and was looking forward to serving in the temple like his father before him when, with little warning, King Jehoiachin surrendered Jerusalem to the Babylonian army. The result: 10,000 men—statesmen, soldiers, craftsmen—including Ezekiel—suddenly found themselves marching into exile in faraway Babylon. All Ezekiel's fine dreams and high hopes were at an end.

But five years later, when he was 30 years of age, God called him to be not a priest but a prophet, and entrusted to him both a mission and a message.

Ezekiel's congregation was sorely in need of his message, though they did not always appreciate it. And can we wonder, when it was often a message of lamentation and woe, of judgment and peril? No wonder the people did not like it!

After Ezekiel had delivered one of his woe-filled messages, a delegation of elders knocked on his door. They had decided they wanted some *new* word from the Lord. They *had* to have it. *Immediately*. Of course, Ezekiel didn't know what to tell them. And so they sat down to wait while he went to see what the Lord would say.

The Lord did not keep them waiting long, but quickly let Ezekiel know what He had to say to these inquiring

elders. We do not know what they expected, but they probably didn't expect what they received. The Lord said, in effect, "Tell these elders that they have a lot of audacity to come inquiring of me like this, Ezekiel. I have spoken to them again and again, continuously, and they have not listened. Do I have any word for them now? The answer is No."

Imagine Ezekiel going back to the elders with a message like that! Imagine Ezekiel saying to them, "The Lord says He has told you all He is going to say to you."

We can almost hear the protests of the angry elders. "Here you are, Ezekiel, telling us over and over to inquire of the Lord. And now when we *want* to hear what the Lord has to say, when we *want* some word from the Lord, you say there is none. Surely there must be some mistake, Ezekiel."

Can't we feel Ezekiel's dismay as he tries to reason with them? "Certainly the Lord wants you to seek Him, but the Lord has spoken to you again and again, and you have done whatsoever you pleased. So now He has nothing more to say."

To be confronted with a message from God may be challenging, disconcerting, awakening. But to be told that He has nothing more to say to us—and to know that it is because we have rejected Him one time too many—what a shock would be such a message! To realize that we have reached the end of His long, longsuffering; the

end of His mercy; the end of His goodness; that we have disregarded His mandates one time too many and He has withdrawn His hand.

Does a merciful, loving, munificent God ever reach such a point? Is there danger of exhausting God's patience, of resisting His will again and again, to the point where He ceases to speak to us?

There is. We read of the time of Noah, that *"the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing"* (1 Pet. 3:20). It waited, but there was an end. The longsuffering of God allowed time for Lot and his daughters to get out of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and then the fire fell.

If we pay no attention to the

said and written about God's long-suffering, God's mercy, God's boundless forgiveness and love. And it is all true; God's mercy is beyond anything we can imagine. He is *"ready to forgive"* and *"plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon [him]"* (Ps. 86:5).

But His mercy is not unlimited. His goodness is not unmerited. His longsuffering has a limit. And that limit has been fixed in advance. He has decreed a point beyond which He will not allow the disobedient and rebellious, the impenitent and hardhearted to go. Only the righteous shall inherit the land and dwell therein forever (Ps. 37:29). Only the pure in heart shall see God (Matt. 5:8). Only those who repent

value of persistence in our asking?) But again it was probably not the message they wanted to hear. The Lord told Ezekiel to explain why He had no interest in further debate or discussion with the elders of Israel. "Give them a brief review of the history of the Israelite period, Ezekiel. Take them back to the time of the Exodus, show how I was with them, how I was leading, how I pleaded with them to listen and obey, and how they rejected me. Remind them of how their children were rebellious, stubborn, and hardhearted. Give them a straightforward lesson from history, and tell them that if they do not obey me and stop going their own way, they are going to end in disaster."

History is of special importance to

Divine warning, how can we expect God to hear us when we cry for deliverance from what He told us would come? This very plight is described in the book of Proverbs:

"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh...Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof" (Prov. 1:24-26, 28-30).

Much has been

and turn to Him with all their heart shall find mercy and forgiveness (Joel 2:12-13). For all others, the end will come, just as foretold.

There is a solemn truth to be learned from the Lord's way of answering the delegation of elders in Ezekiel's day. God is supreme, and He reserves the right to speak or to refrain from speaking as He wishes. And He always says what He means, and means what He says.

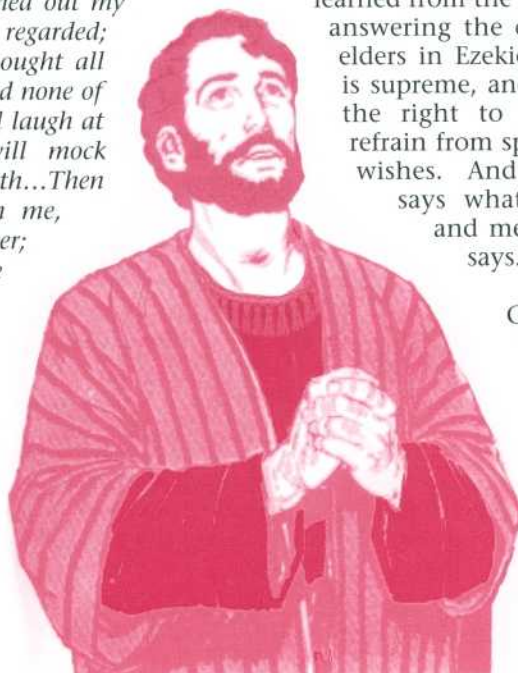
It seems that God did relent that day when the elders insisted that they wanted a message from the Lord. (Didn't Jesus teach the

us because it tells us how God will deal with us—as we respond to Him.

The other thing to remember about history is that it is not hypothetical, not "If...then," but the record of events which actually occurred. It is the written record of *God at work*.

God chose the nation of Israel and made them His people. He introduced Himself to them, and brought them out of the land of Egypt into a *"land...flowing with milk and honey,"* a land which was, according to Ezekiel's description, *"the glory of all lands"* (Ezek. 20:5-6). These were facts that Ezekiel knew. And the elders knew. And the people knew. But the best facts were useless unless their lessons were taken to heart, believed, and applied.

These events showed God calling, delivering, providing for His children in a superlative manner. But there was always—from their point of view—a large and ugly fly in the ointment. The Lord insisted that they leave their idols behind. When they refused, He reproved them. He took them into the wilderness,



gave them strict laws and judgments, insisted that they be a unique and separate people. But at every opportunity they took up the worship of idols and followed the example of the pagan nations around them.

We cannot blame God for dealing forcibly with His recalcitrant children, yet He determined to give them another chance. And another. And another. He removed one generation of rebels to give opportunity to their sons and daughters who might—hopefully—have learned from the mistakes of their parents. But these people, too, proved rebellious. So the Lord gave them yet another chance. Again and again the routine was repeated. The Israelites seemed to think they were missing something in their relationship with God—and they were right! They were missing the rich blessings He reserves for loving, obedient, wholehearted children.

No sooner had the Israelites reached Canaan than they headed

tory of the Israelites, how they had repeatedly rebelled and gone their own way, and God had extended His mercy once again.

It was a long lesson, and very likely some of them walked out after awhile. But before Ezekiel concluded, he brought the lesson right up to date. *"Are you polluted like your fathers were? How dare you sit there and say to yourselves, We will be like the heathen, worshipping stone and wood as the people of the nations do?"* (see Ezekiel 20:30, 32, TLB).

Ezekiel's statement was a clear description of what was going on in the hearts of the elders even as they sat listening to the Prophet and purporting to be "inquiring of the Lord." Even then they were impenitent, hardhearted, set in their ways, going through the motions of an empty formality while their hearts were far from God.

In God's eyes, they were not as bad as the people in the wilderness had been—they were worse! Why? Because theirs was the advantage of history. They should have known better. They had the Prophets from which they could learn. To them more had been given, and from them God expected more. In the words of Jesus, *"To whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required."* But instead of learning from history and heeding the Prophets, they had gone headlong into sin and were still making plans to go further, even as they stepped aside to inquire of the Lord. (Were they hoping to give their sinfulness a cloak of apparent goodness?)

Finally God said it was enough.

What of us? Could it be said that we are going ahead with our own ways, our own type of idolatry, while at the same time we maintain a posture of religious rectitude and piety?

We inquire of the Lord, but have we learned the lesson that He means what He says, that His mercy is not forever? Have we learned that we must turn *now*, that we must listen *now*, that we must repent *now*?

But even as Ezekiel reviewed the history of God's dealings with His people, there was with it a loving promise. God still had blessings to

Have we learned the lesson that God means what He says?

for the pagan shrines and the pagan deities of the Canaanites. God told them that they would be scattered among the pagan nations. They would have to pay for their sinfulness, and it would be a costly lesson.

Despite all warnings, His people were bent on going their own way.

All the while Ezekiel was listening to the Lord review these lessons from history, the elders were sitting in Ezekiel's counseling room, waiting, waiting for the special message from God that might be forthcoming.

At last Ezekiel went out to them, and began to review their history with them. Can't we hear them muttering in their beards that they hadn't come to learn history? But Ezekiel persisted. He showed them point by point, just as the Lord had told him to do, how God had acted in the his-

give. He still had mercy and forgiveness, if...if...if they would only repent and turn.

The final result depends on the individual, on what *we do*. As long as the Israelites loved their sin, they would have to face its consequences. But if they would turn and forsake it, God was ready to forgive. There was

just one condition to be met: the next step would have to be theirs. For, said God, "*I will not be inquired of by you any more.*"

He would not be inquired of any more—yet He kept on talking—about repentance, reformation, and obedience. Oh, who is like the God of Israel! How merciful! How just!

How forgiving!

But there is a limit. Can we not take the warning to ourselves today? What does God expect of me? Am I doing what He requires?

What can we do so that God will hear when we call, and when we say "He is our God," He will reply, "This is my people"? □

Letters

Good Fortune

Today it was my good fortune to find the *Megiddo Message* in my post office box by mistake. Please verify your address for: (2494/9505 is printed above his name on the mailing label) so he will be able to receive this very enlightening magazine.

During the past 6 months I have been studying the Bible and reading an archeology magazine. One of the magazine articles I read was about Megiddo, so the title of your magazine immediately got my attention. Lucky for me today is Sunday and the post office was closed, so I couldn't "turn in" the magazine. So, I took it home and read it (I will turn it in to a postal clerk tomorrow).

I thoroughly enjoyed your magazine and am enclosing my subscription order.

North Carolina

D. H.

Building, Building

Building contractors are very much in demand these days, for so many people are giving their homes a "new look" by having them remodeled.

Some builders, especially the "do-it-yourselfers," are quite skilful and seem to show more interest in their work. However, it really is amazing how they have transformed puny, dilapidated and even derelict houses to look like veritable miniature palaces. This is exactly what we puny creatures must be doing—fashioning ourselves anew, not putting our confidence in anything external but in God's promises, which carry a just reward. Our minds must be remade, and our whole nature transformed, that we may know the will of God; what is good, and what is acceptable to Him; put into practice what we know is true, noble, just and pure, lovable and gracious, and concentrate on filling our thoughts with excellent and admirable things, that we may be successful in our building of a good character, that we may ultimately be beautiful within and without.

Moses was instructed by God to make everything according to the pattern which was shown him on the mountain, which pattern was to be a copy and shadow of the heavenly. We also have instructions written in the Scriptures, which, if we follow, will encourage us, that we may have faith and fortitude to do God's will and to copy our perfect Example, Jesus. He is the everlasting Rock, a true and firm foundation upon which we are silently, day by day, striving to build a holy and upright character. This task is indeed a strenuous and serious work which no one can do for us. So we just have to be do-it-yourselfers—carry our own cross—cease to do evil and learn to do well. Each of us will have to answer for ourselves, and there is nothing we can hide from Omniscient God. We must then make every effort to build according to our great Architect's design.

What wonderful joy and peace for us then, if our work is accomplished before the Inspector arrives, to be at home with the faithful for ever!

British Columbia, Canada

E. S.

How Strong Am I?

As I was reflecting on Lot's wife, I could not help but wonder what I would have done had I been in her place. Of course, I'd be afraid to disobey the angel's command, but on the other hand, leaving all behind and not taking even one final look? Her weakness for something in the past was her end. I wonder, did she take seriously the angel's command? Apparently her faith was not strong enough.

This really set me thinking. Am I as strong as I think I am? It's easy to see what others have for weaknesses, but can I see my own enough to grow as I should? I wonder in how many areas I am not growing as I should and don't realize it? This thought really frightens me. Well, I'll keep trying and pray that God in His never ending ways (in ways I least expect) will point out to me what I need to do when I most need it.

Maine

R. D.

Unload

There is so much to learn and time is short. How blessed we are to have the Word of God so that we can study and get that wisdom and knowledge we need. "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding" (Prov. 4:7). We need complete faith in God and His Word. Time is fast running out. We have to watch the thoughts and intents of our heart.

We would never think of ourselves as "pagans," but that is what God counts us when we do wrong. So let us ask, Am I always patient and kind to all, to friend or someone I do not particularly care for? Do I always treat such a one with all due respect? Jesus was not a respecter of persons and neither can we be. We have to banish all our own ways or we will be found with those "outside" the city gate.

In Eph. 5:1, Paul tells us to be God's followers and walk in love. We disobey at our own peril. Jesus left us that perfect example and if He could do so much for us, can we not copy Him daily? I need to check every day to see if I am getting rid of any sin, and watching every thought and motive. The tongue itself is in need of careful restraint.

Today there is so much uncertainty in the world, but we, knowing the plan of God, must expect it and not become disheartened. The world in general seem to have lost all faith. So let us unload our own ways and put all our trust in God and His plan for this earth.

British Columbia, Canada

L. S.

Divine Strengthening

When David returned to his citadel at Ziklag, after the diplomatic refusal of his services by the Philistine king, he found himself in a very serious plight. David had accepted the Philistine's hospitality, and when war broke out between Achish and Saul, honor demanded that David stand by his friend who had shown him kindness in his own evil hour, even though it meant ranging himself in battle against his own kin and drawing the sword against the Lord's anointed. Of course, it was a wrong step for David to have taken in the first place. He never should have sought refuge with the Philistines. However, God interposed to deliver him out of his unfortunate dilemma.

David and his men turned homeward. What rejoicing there should have been over their safe and speedy return from the venture to which they had gone forth with so much reluctance! But what a crushing blow awaited them. During their absence, a band of marauding Amalekites had swept down upon the defenseless city, looted it, set it on fire, and had gone off, taking prisoner all the women and children.

The anger of the people turned against David, and the cry was raised: "To the death of him! Stone him!" David was in a desperate situation. In one quick turn of events he had lost everything—home, family, property, friends. Suddenly life was stark and bare. "But," says the ancient chronicler (1 Sam. 30:6), "David strengthened himself in the Lord his God."

Read that line again. "David

strengthened himself in the Lord his God." He was a man that had lost all that men hold dear. Even his friends had forsaken him. What plight could be worse? Yet he had something remaining which none could take from him: The Lord his God. And having God, he had more than all. Deprived of the material, he still held fast to the spiritual.

Note that it was "the Lord his God." God was not just a name to David. David knew in whom he believed. To David, God was not just the God of Israel, or the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was the God whose

companionship David had enjoyed, whose power he had proved, and in whose love he had long since placed his trust. Generalities of faith might seem all right when one's feet are planted firmly upon the highway of life and the sun is bright. But when the storm is bursting upon us, and the floods rise around us, then we need a strong sense of undergirding, and the upholding power of everlasting arms. We need to be able to say, and be sure, "I am on God's side, and He is on mine."

Finally, observe the nature of David's prayer. He was saying in effect, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" It was a prayer of resignation. David put himself wholly into God's hands. It was also a prayer for guidance in a desperate emergency. David was bowed under affliction, but he was not broken. And from the depths of his heart rose the cry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" God answered in a meaningful way. We read that, "Under God's leading, the Amalekites were defeated.... David recovered all."

God does not promise to restore all we have lost, but He promises more: a complete victory over heart, soul, mind and strength, which He will reward with life and immortality in the glorious world to come—if we just let Him be our refuge and strength, our guide, our master, our all. □



"David strengthened himself in the Lord his God."

—2 Sam. 30:6 (RSV)

How Mercy?

"I cannot understand the meaning of Romans 9:16, 'So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy' (KJV). It reads in the New International Version, 'It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.' This is confusing for me. We surely need God's mercy, but don't we have to desire and work for this?"

You are right that we have to desire and work for God's mercy. The Psalmist wrote that the mercy of the Lord is upon those who "keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Ps. 103:17-18). This formula definitely spells desire and work.

What did Paul mean in Romans 9? In this chapter he is talking to his Jewish brethren who have turned disloyal and apostate to their high calling and privilege. At the beginning of the chapter he addresses them as a nation, reminding them of all the special privileges they have enjoyed (vs. 4-5, NIV): "Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ...."

His next conclusion is that most—though not all—have proved unfaithful. But this does not make void the long-range promises of God, because those promises were not guaranteed to the natural seed of Israel. "Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel" (v. 6). Simply being a descendant of Abraham did not make one "belong" to the true Israel. The true Israel are comprised of God's loyal family of believers from any nation (Rom. 2:28-29; see also Acts 10:34-35).

The Apostle continues his thesis in Romans 9:8, "In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring"—the "children of the promise" are those chosen by a higher law than natural heredity.

In verses 9-13, he gives a specific example of God's diverging from the natural pattern of selection. Contrary to normal tradition, in the case of Jacob and Esau, the younger was chosen above the elder.

What are we to conclude from the discussion? (v. 14). Is God unjust to select one and not another? Not at all! In other words, God has the right to choose good material where He finds it, and to select it by any criteria He establishes. That criteria may or may not be according to nat-

ural human thinking, but it will always be right; it will always be according to His mercy and goodness. Verse 15 states this point, though in many of the translations it is not too clear. The original and Wilson's *Emphatic Diaglott* are helpful. The Diaglott reads, "I will pity whom I should pity, I will compassionate whom I should compassionate." His mercy and His compassion are always conditional and according to His own terms. Human wishing, human striving, human criteria matter not at all.

This is the point of verse 16, the text in question: "It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy" (NIV). In other words, God's favor cannot be obtained by any carnal striving, or self-imposed standard of righteousness (such as the Jews were fond of imposing). Nor will the strongest desire count. God will always bestow according to His own terms.

Such is God's right as supreme Ruler and Creator. He is supreme. He has the right to dictate just how His world operates, and who is eligible for what privilege. He raises up and puts down according to His will. "The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up....for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them" (1 Sam 2:6-8). At the same time, He has established that men and women are free moral agents, free to select their own destiny by their behavior. But always they must comply with His rules. If they do not, He has the right to overrule anything they do that does not suit His own purposes. This is Bible teaching, and the underlying principle is very logical when we think about it. God is supreme—He has to be, as the controller of the mighty universes. But in our little realms, we prove ourselves fit (or unfit) for His eternal blessings by our own choice of conduct and thinking. If God did not follow this plan, we would be mere robots.

Accordingly God has determined to reward "every man according as his work shall be," as is stated in Scripture so many times (Rev. 22:12; see also Job 34:11; Jer. 4:18; Jer. 17:10; Rom. 2:6; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Of one fact we can be sure, that God will always be fair, that He will always be just. In fact, His mercy reaches much further than ours might in a similar situation. (Think about forgiving David for his transgression, or letting Manasseh go on reigning after his flagrant abuses and misconduct.)

How deeply all of us need the mercy of God, when we consider His high standard of holiness and perfection. But for it we would have been cut off long ago.

◆ David Sinned and Israel Suffered?

"Why did 70,000 Israelites have to die for David's sin in numbering Israel? Was that fair?"

When we think about fairness, we think of impartiality, freedom from self-interest, prejudice, or favoritism.

When we think about a punishment being fair or unfair, the most likely criteria would be the issue of whether or not it was due. God has always maintained a policy of punishing the guilty for their own sins—not the sins of their children, parents, or neighbors. *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die"* (Ezek. 18:20) is a timeless principle of the Almighty. When Moses offered to suffer for the sins of the people, the Lord reiterated His plan: *"Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book"* (Exod. 32:33).

Did God digress from this policy in the instance of David's numbering Israel? Was God just in punishing the people of the nation for David's sin? Why did more than the king have to suffer, when it was clearly the king's own sin? David even acknowledged: *"Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly"* (2 Sam. 24:17).

Part of the problem may be that we do not know all the facts. But we do know some of them. First of all, we are told that the Lord was displeased with Israel as a nation even before David sinned in numbering Israel. At the very first of the chapter (2 Samuel 24:1), we read the following: *"Again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel."* We do not know what occasioned this statement, but in the eyes of God the nation was apparently ripe for judgment. We are also told that Joab objected to the command of the King. When told to number the people, Joab replied, *"Now the Lord thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing?"* (2 Sam. 24:3). We are told also that *"The king's word was abominable to Joab"* (1 Chron. 21:6). But we are not told the details of why Joab felt as he did.

Even when facing punishment at the hand of God David felt that God was fair, even merciful. Above all He wanted to stay in God's hand. He said, *"Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord; for very great are his mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man"* (v. 13).

We are not in a position to judge God's actions. But God,

knowing the end from the beginning, can see in advance who will do His will and who will disregard it. He knows who are worthless and who are wise, and can preserve those He chooses. The rest, though they may live useful lives at the moment, serve no eternal purpose; hence, their destruction would not be a serious loss from the Divine point of view.

We see no reason to accuse God of unfairness in His punishment of the nation for David's sin—because we trust that to whatever extent Israel was punished, to that extent they were at fault. God is not whimsical or unjust. We know also that if any were worthy of a place in God's long-term plans, God would have spared them. Where we do not have all the facts, or where we do not understand, we can trust, as the ancient Prophet said, *"The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them"* (Hos. 14:9).

We cannot always understand God's ways, but in this case it seems that we are told enough to know that the people of Israel shared the fault with David their king. It is also possible that they were feeling the pride and glory of being so great a nation, and God wanted to bring them back to reality and show them Who was in control, and to whom the credit was due.

In any event, we can be sure that God spared any for whom He had future work. Outside His plan, the human creation does not receive a very high value. In his scale, whole nations not serving Him are "as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance:...they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity" (Isa. 40:15-17). On the other side are those faithfully committed to Him, of whom He says, "They shall be mine... in that day when I shall make up my jewels, and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Mal. 3:17). □

*I prayed, "Lord, give me patience."
The Lord said, "Be patient."*

*I prayed, "Lord, help me to be kind."
The Lord said, "Be kind."*

*I prayed, "Lord, give me faith."
The Lord said, "Faith comes by hearing."*

*I prayed, "Lord, give me joy."
The Lord said, "Delight thyself in the Lord."*

*I prayed, "Lord, give me love."
The Lord said, "Love the brethren."*

Late in 1940, while on a missionary trip into the state of Alabama, another brother and I visited a town where there was located a large textile manufacturing plant. Most of the town was owned by the textile company, which, like many other textile manufacturers, was taking advantage of the cheap labor and the abundant raw materials in the south.

The plant was large, the buildings located on perhaps a hundred-acre plot of ground. Doubtless the main building contained thousands of machines used in processing the raw cotton fibers into thread, and weaving the thread into finished cloth. To meet the demands of modern production the machines had, of necessity, to be high speed and therefore the operators of these machines were constantly exposed to the hazards of flying shuttles, rapidly turning wheels and speeding belts.

Sensing the human tendency to become careless and indifferent, even where one's own safety is at stake, the company, for their own protection and for the safety of the workers, had erected over the employees' entrance

Being alive in that glorious Tomorrow depends entirely on our alertness today.

door a sign painted in large letters: "Be alert today, be alive tomorrow." These words impressed me as conveying a timely warning applicable to every Christian. The need for alertness in many phases of modern life is too obvious to need comment. Daily we are exposed to the hazards of the highway, the hazards of walking, the hazards of working. Rarely does an accident, a loss of property or health overtake us without our being warned in advance in one way or another; but too often the warnings go unheeded.

With nations, as with individuals, today's alertness has much to do with tomorrow's existence; especially is this true with nations at war. Many losses are sustained which could have been avoided had the persons in charge been more alert.

When applied to the spiritual walk of a Christian, the rule works the same as in temporal affairs. Being alive tomorrow depends entirely upon being alert today. And the need for this alertness is much greater, for there is much more at stake. If wisdom dictates that to safeguard life and limb we should exercise caution while at our daily tasks, our travel or vacations, just to avoid having this temporal life impaired or cut short, how much

**Be Alert Today,
Be Alive Tomorrow!**

greater the need for alertness when endless life in glory is at stake!

Any comparison our finite minds might make between the value of the present and the value of eternal life would be futile, for "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). We cannot comprehend limitless space or endless life, although both would be easy problems for an immortal mind to solve. Likewise any attempt on our part to appraise what living in that future age will be by comparing it with the best of today falls far short of the mark, for God has promised to do for us "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

Being alive in that glorious Tomorrow depends entirely on our alertness today. The boon to be bestowed is at the absolute disposal of the Giver, and He certainly will not give it to one who does not value it enough to work for it. The terms are clearly stated: Obey and live, disobey and die. Of the Mosaic law it was said, "The man that doeth them shall live by them" (Gal. 3:12). That referred mainly to the preserving of the natural life by keeping out of the toils of the law, thus escaping its penalty. But in Romans 8:6, the apostle Paul speaks of another law to be obeyed, and with prospect of rewards far greater: "For to be carnally minded is death [eternal death]; but to be spiritually minded is life [eternal life] and peace."

While the terms "alert" or "alertness" do not appear in

This article, by Rev. Kenneth E. Flowerday, was published in the MEGIDDO MESSAGE in 1942.

Brother Flowerday was pastor of the Megiddo Church and editor of the MEGIDDO MESSAGE from 1958 until his death in 1985.



Kenneth E. Flowerday

He Lived for God

In memory of the late Rev. Kenneth E. Flowerday,
who fell asleep September 16, 1985.

*He lived for God, nor thought of selfish ease,
This noble one who lived his God to please;
A firm commitment in his youth he'd made,
And kept it true and strong, nor let it fade.*

*Of steady purpose till his work was done,
He urged us haste, the race for life to run.
"It will be worth it all," he often said,
And followed in the way the Savior led.*

*And when stern duty bade him louder cry
Against some erring one about to die,
He faltered not but like a soldier brave
He warned of evils leading to the grave.*

*He drew great courage from the saints of old,
And honored those who for their God were bold;
Yet thought his labors naught, all praise disclaimed—
Some day among the highest to be named.*

*What richer life could one desire to live,
Than having found the best to freely give?
Of silver, talent, time, of love unfeigned
He gave and gave until no more remained.*

*Oh, Father, Friend! We know not how to pay
You for your gift of faith, except today
To live for God as you showed how to do,
And in so doing prove that we are true.*

*We cannot hope to reach your high estate,
But we can learn to labor and to wait;
Enough to know God judges righteously,
And we some blissful day your face may see.*

*This will be pay enough for you, we know,
If you can see the lives you nourished grown
From tender youth to full maturity
In Jesus Christ—oh, joy! what will it be.*

*Let naught of this world turn us from the right;
In God we trust, the path ahead is bright!
Our eye is fixed on Canaan's shining shore
Where we can meet and greet, and part no more.*

— Contributed

our Common Version of the Word of God, yet their equivalent "watch" occurs frequently. The prophet Habakkuk applies it in a matter that deeply concerns every one of us. *"I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved"* (Hab. 2:1). To successfully pass this test requires our utmost alertness.

In a number of Jesus' parables spoken to the multitudes, as well as in His more intimate talks with His disciples, Jesus impressed upon their minds the need for watchfulness. For example, *"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"* (Mark 13:35–37). Luke 21:36 is also specific on the need for alertness: *"Watch ye therefore and pray always that ye may escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."*

Paul in 1 Cor. 16:13 stresses the need for alertness: *"Watch, stand firm in the faith, play the man, be strong!"* (Moffatt translation).

In First Peter 4:7, the apostle ties the thought of watchfulness to survival, in these words: *"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."* Perhaps no statement in the Bible brings the question of living on the morrow closer home than the query of Balaam recorded in the 24th chapter of Numbers. Israel was spread out on the plains as a great panorama below him, as he viewed them from the top of the rock whence he had journeyed at the request of Balak king of Moab. After sketching in broad outline God's plan for the earth, that a Star should come out of Jacob and a Sceptre arise out of Israel, that He should have dominion and that by His hand all wicked doers should meet destruction, Balaam adds the bold challenge: *"Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!"*

As aspiring servants of God, we have an opportunity unequalled by any before us. We know beyond a shadow of uncertainty that the Word of God is true; fulfilled prophecy has proved it abundantly. We have a working knowledge of the Bible and the plan of God. We have known men and women who by precept and example have shown us that this great work can be accomplished. We have been given much time. Let us be more alert, more watchful of what we are doing, saying and thinking, and of the example we are showing to one another, that we may live in that coming Morrow when the Lord arises *"to shake terribly the earth."* □

Lead Me On

*Traveling to the better land,
O'er the desert's scorching sand,
Father! let me grasp Thy hand;
Lead me on, lead me on!*

*When at Marah, parched with heat,
I the sparkling fountain greet,
Make the bitter water sweet;
Lead me on!*

*When the wilderness is drear,
Show me Elim's palm-grove near,
And her wells, as crystal clear;
Lead me on!*

*Through the water, through the fire,
Never let me fall or tire,
Every step brings Canaan nigher:
Lead me on!*

*Bid me stand on Nebo's height,
Gaze upon the land of light,
Then, transported with the sight,
Lead me on!*

*When I stand on Jordan's brink,
Never let me fear or shrink;
Hold me, Father, lest I sink:
Lead me on!*

*When the victory is won,
And eternal life begun,
Through to glory lead me on!
Lead me on, lead me on!*

Lord, I Will Follow Thee, But...

(Continued from page 2)

fighting on one side or the other. We must be deeply involved, for great responsibilities rest upon us. Great issues are at stake.

God, even our Heavenly Father, makes His appeal to us children whom He earnestly longs to have accept His great offer. How can we possibly be neutral? How can we be unaffected? How can *our* little interests come between us and a firm decision for His cause?

Let us answer every call of Jesus without looking back, without looking to one side or the other, and go straight for the goal. The Kingdom of God is just ahead.

And it will be worth it. □



If you want to remain where you are in life, never do more than you have to.



Forbidden fruit may taste sweeter, but it gets rotten a whole lot sooner.



Overcome one temptation and another will disappear. The soaring eagle does not have to worry about how to cross a river.



The further ahead we can see, the faster we can travel.



*You may own countless acres—a lordly estate;
You may dwell in a palace, costly and great;
But the mansions in glory will only be given
To those whose treasures are laid up in heaven.*

*Shamgar had an oxgoad, David had a sling;
Dorcas had a needle, Rahab had a string.
Samson had a jawbone, Aaron had a rod;
Mary had some ointment, but all were used for God.*

You may not have much to offer, but you must do your part. What do you have in your hand—a pen? a needle? a shovel? Use it for God.



*T*he loss of time is one of the most absolute losses we can sustain. Fortune may return after having taken flight. A severed friendship may be restored. But our wasted hours can never be returned to us.... There is but one point at which time is entirely in our power: in the moment that is "now"....

*T*ime was is past;
thou canst not it recall.

*T*ime is thou hast;
employ the portion small.

*T*ime future is not,
and may never be:

*T*ime present is the
only time for thee.