



Megiddo Message

Vol. 80, No. 9
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A time to reflect...

Megiddo Message



Leaving Those Nets

One of the most intriguing sections of Scripture is in the Gospels, where Christ is calling His Apostles. Walking one day by the Sea of Galilee, He intercepts the lives of two fishermen brothers, Peter and Andrew. "Come," He says, "follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19).

The incident itself is not amazing. We expect Christ to call us to follow Him. The startling fact is that "They at once left their nets and followed Him" (v. 20). They did not go home to ask their families; they did not ask for a week to think about it; they did not even ask for time to complete the task they were in the middle of. They simply made their decision and followed Him.

None of us would argue against their action in theory, but what do we do in practice? How important to us is the cause Christ represents? Is it worth living for—dying for? Enthusiastically we answer Yes! Yet, why are we so hesitant to follow? The problem lies not in what He represents but in what He requires from us and what He restricts us from: those nets.

The text clearly says that Peter and Andrew had to leave their nets to follow Jesus. They couldn't have both. They couldn't continue their present pursuits and follow Christ. Had they been unwilling to leave their nets, they would have been unable to follow Christ.

For most of us, following means giving up. All of us have nets of one sort or another to leave behind, something that hinders us from doing what He calls us to do or being what He wants us to be. Those nets might include plans, dreams, relationships, money, things, ambitions in this world. They might represent also the lower side of our nature, the bitterness, the anger, the prejudice and pride which naturally bind us, and to which we instinctively cling. So when the call of Christ comes and we are asked to follow, the

issue becomes not the simple act of following but the underlying act of submission, surrender, obedience. What is our response?

What is worth more to us, these nets, or what Christ has to offer?

If someone were to ask me if I like money, I would reply that no one wants to live in poverty. But compared to knowing Christ and the hope He offers, there is no contest. What Christ offers is worth infinitely more than any amount of money this world can give.

And what about my plans? Do I value them? Absolutely. But again the comparison must be made. My plans have real value only as they relate to Christ and the greater goal He has set before me.

What about the nets of our relationships? Do we have any that are dragging us down spiritually and compromising our life of commitment? Whose friendship means most to us, the friendship of the world, or having God and Christ for our friends?

How much do we value the common comforts and petty satisfactions of life? Are we willing to drop our nets of prejudice and sympathy to follow Him?

Leaving our nets is also a matter of results. Think of Peter and Andrew at the end of their lives. Would they have exchanged what they had won by following Christ for any part of those nets they had left behind? Perhaps they could have looked back on a greater career in terms of the number of fish they had caught, or the amount of money they had made. But what would that be worth against an eternal inheritance in Christ's Kingdom?

Compare the outcome of the life of the apostle Paul with what he would have had if he had continued as a Pharisee. Think of the many men and women who owed their hope of eternal life to

(Continued on page 27)

Megiddo means

"a place of troops" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon); "a place of God" (Young's Analytical Concordance). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (II Cor. 10:4-5).

We believe

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

Soon-coming events

The Herald and the KING

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

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

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

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Events Preparing The Way

Part Two

"And when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" —Jesus

Regardless of what may happen in the world, the final outcome will be the establishing of the universal Kingdom of God on earth with Jesus Christ as King.

*I*s the present age filled with difficulties and stress? Is the world in a state of turmoil socially, politically, economically? Every age has its present, peculiar dangers; and in these abnormal times we must guard most carefully our inner selves and keep our spiritual equilibrium. Jesus' words should be to us an assurance and a support: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). If earnestly seeking God's favor, if treading carefully each step of the narrow uphill road to the Kingdom, Jesus' words speak hope to us: "your redemption draws nigh."

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

We have prayed a thousand times: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Knowing from the Word of God that the Kingdom

must be introduced forcibly in the midst of great troubles—troubles not fore-ordained but clearly foreseen—must we not also accept the inevitable preliminary disorders? Since there is but one road to that better Day, and that road lies through storm and stress, let us recognize the storm as part of the Divine plan and rejoice that we know the peace which lies beyond and that we have God's promise of protection.

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

★ **A Lesson from the Apostolic Age**
Most of us do not like suspense and uncertainty. But since it is the lot of this generation, we might do well to see how a group of eminently successful

men and women made the very best of an exceedingly troubled period. Read the book of Acts again, if you have not read it recently. Its author, St. Luke, is a first-rate reporter by his skillful handling, in a very condensed space, of the background, motion, and character study which enter into a good story. A good news-writer with limited space touches only the really important points. Now let us see what Luke considered important.

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

On the other hand, the historian Josephus' account of the same period is a depressing chronicle of anarchy and chaos. Events for several decades had been working up to the fatal rebellion of A. D. 70, which brought the Jewish Age to a violent end, and the secular history of the time would give the impression that life was so miserable as to be well-nigh unbearable. Yet of all this no word appears in the Acts of the Apostles! Why not? because it simply did not matter; it

was not sufficiently important to get into the record.

The Apostles and their followers were men and women strong enough and wise enough to hold a true course in a stormy time; and while the Jewish world was going fast to destruction, they were going on to perfection. This was their great opportunity to make good. To wait for things to settle down would have been fatal. What they did had to be done then, regardless of external conditions. Complete consecration lifted them to a stratosphere where the storms no longer mattered; minor inconveniences, "light afflictions," nothing more!

If these men and women, with all their weaknesses and temptations, could accomplish this work of overcoming self under such trying conditions, and do it uncomplainingly, we can—if we will. With vigilance and watchfulness, vision and faith to look beyond the day's good or bad news, we can keep a straight course toward the city whose gates shall never close, where "violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting or destruction within thy borders."

Let us, when doubts, discouragements, and forebodings threaten, remember the words of Jesus: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Say to yourself, This is the test, the hard pull that I have been training for. What am I going to do about it? Am I going to be the person God expects me to be? This is the beginning of what I have been looking for, praying for, hoping for. Why should my faith fail so near the end?

Believing God's promise, we can face the uncertainties of the immediate future without alarm, knowing that regardless of what may happen in the world, the final out-

come will be the establishment by force of the universal Kingdom of God on earth, with Jesus Christ as King. The present distress is but the darkness before the dawn. And the times and seasons indicated prophetically in the Word of God warn that the Day is very, very near.

Before the Kingdom of God can be fully established there are certain events which must take place. God has not left His people in the dark. As surely as He has foretold that He will have a kingdom on earth, as surely as He has designated the King and the time when His Kingdom will be set up, so surely He has determined that certain events will occur in proper sequence until His plan is consummated.

★ **Coming: Elijah, Herald of the King**

The Bible teaches that Jesus is to be the future King of the earth, King of kings and Lord of lords, riding forth conquering and to conquer. Equally clear, though overlooked by a large segment of the religious world, is the teaching that before Jesus returns in power and glory a messenger will be sent to prepare the way. That messenger is identified as Elijah the prophet.

Concerning Elijah and his mission we read from the prophet Malachi: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple....I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6).

As John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus' first coming,



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those promises.*

so Elijah will herald Jesus' second coming. John the Baptist preached the message of repentance. He was the voice "crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Luke 3:4). Those who listened to John's preaching were better able to receive Jesus when He began His ministry.

So when Elijah begins his mission of restoring all things, bringing in a great moral reformation (Matt. 17:11), the people who listen to his warnings and turn to the Lord at His return will receive a great blessing. Elijah is to come "before the great and dreadful day of the Lord." The grand old Prophet will come to herald the returning King who will strike terror and destruction to all who resist the establishment of His Kingdom.

Besides his work of warning the nations and turning their hearts to the Lord, there is every reason to believe that Elijah will direct the work of gathering the elect to meet the Lord. This brings us to another event which must precede the establishment of the Kingdom. That is

★ **The Resurrection and Judgment**

What could cause the people to heed Elijah's message more than to see him raise the dead of former ages! The Scriptures abound with promises of a physical resurrection. Those faithful servants of old who looked forward to the time when God's Kingdom should be established on earth looked also to the day of their rising from the dead to inherit those promises. Especially striking are the words of the prophet Job. Knowing that death and the grave would claim him, but confiding in God's promises, he cried out, "This at least I know, that one lives on who will vindicate me, rising up from the dust when the last day comes. Once more my skin shall clothe me, and in my flesh I shall have sight of God. I myself, with my own eyes; it will not be something other than myself that sees him. Deep in my heart is this hope reposed" (Job 19:25-27, Knox).

The Psalmist also expressed his hope of a resurrection: "God will redeem my soul [life] from the power of the grave" (Ps. 49:15). Isaiah and Daniel expressed a belief in the raising of the people of God from the dead. The present fleeting life was not all that God could give. Isaiah wrote, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust:...the earth shall cast out the dead" (26:19). And Daniel, "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people...and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (12:1-2).

The certainty of the resurrection is a subject often discoursed upon by the sacred writers. And this raising of the dead will take place before the Kingdom can be established. Not that there shall be a universal resurrection and all who ever lived shall be brought forth, but all who have covenanted to serve God shall be raised. "The dead in Christ [the believers, those who have professed to be His people] shall rise" (I Thess. 4:16). "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15), the just and unjust among those who have covenanted to serve Him.

The resurrection, the arrival of Jesus Christ the Judge of all the earth, and the meeting of His people with Him is told in dramatic words by Paul: "For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (I Thess.

4:15-17, RSV). Jesus will not return to find most of His Church or bride asleep in death.

Visiting angels will assist in this great undertaking. These are Jesus' words: "He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24:31). Wherever His servants have fallen asleep, from there they will be gathered.

The location of the Judgment scene is not specified, but the evidence strongly suggests that it may be in the air. Zechariah 14:4-5 states that when His feet stand on the Mount of Olives (the point of His return), "all the saints," or bride, shall be with him. Therefore, prior to His appearance on earth, the bride must necessarily be selected. We are told a little of the nature of the event. We read: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on the right hand, but the goats on the left" (Matt. 25:31-33). The sheep, or the faithful servants will be placed on the right hand, while the goats, the unfaithful will be placed on the left.

★ Results of the Judgment

In our modern courts when people stand before a judge they are either guilty or innocent. So it will be with all who stand before Christ's judgment seat. Every individual shall be rewarded "according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). There will be two classes, the faithful and unfaithful, illustrated as

the sheep and the goats, or the wheat and the chaff. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you...Then shall he say also unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed" (Matt. 25:34, 41).

Of that auspicious Day Daniel says (7:9-10), "I beheld till the thrones were cast down [seats were 'placed'], and the Ancient of days did sit,...his throne was like the fiery flame,...A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened."

The number of the faithful is revealed in Rev. 14:1, "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads." They are the elect, the bride of Christ, the first-fruits, the select individuals who have worked out their salvation during their day of probation, from the time Adam was called to the Lord's return.

What is their reward? First, it is life, immortal life! (Rev. 22:12; I John 2:25). Then the promises Jesus made are theirs: "He that

overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations...To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (Rev. 2:26; 3:21). They shall be the co-rulers with Christ. Theirs is the high honor of being kings and priests unto God (Rev. 5:9-10), reigning over the nations who will submit to the reign of Christ.

But what of those who because of unbelief, indifference or indolence, prove unfaithful? "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out" (Luke 13:28). The sorrow which the unfaithful shall experience will be caused by the realization of the great prize they have missed. To see one's companions gain the prize and to become fully aware that the reason for one's rejection is simple carelessness will be the cause of the sorrow.

Those to whom God has entrusted His wisdom with its promises of rich rewards cannot escape being called to give account of their stewardship. If their service has been satisfactory, they shall joyfully await their Lord's coming, for it is then that they shall receive their reward for the things they have done. Jesus taught this truth when He said: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27).

As we pass through our probation we must ever be mindful of all that we do, for once having entered the service of the Lord there is no retreat; and knowing the goodness and judgments of God we have no cloak for our

*"Who shall live when
God doeth this?" Or to
press the question still
closer home: "Where
shall I stand, when
God does this?"*



sin. We cannot hide behind ignorance. Whatever our life, the day will come when, as Paul wrote: "We must all appear before the Judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body" (II Cor. 5:10, RSV).

God is just and His mercy boundless, but in His Kingdom He will not permit sin. All who through life spurn His pleadings and disregard His warn-

ings are treading on dangerous ground. It is for this reason Paul cautioned: "Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off" (Rom. 11:22, RSV).

What are the nations doing about these startling events during the time that the covenant-makers are at Judgment? We are given a little insight into what will occur.

Elijah's message, the resurrection, and the ascension of Christ's servants to meet Him, all will have stirred the thinking world. Undoubt-

(8:11-12): "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it."

Why should such a condition of famine exist? During the time when Christ is judging the covenant-makers, no one will be present to dispense "the word of the Lord." Widespread hunger for knowledge of succeeding events shall be for the time unsatisfied. Hence "they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it."

They will be seeking knowledge of what is coming, of how they can save their lives, and what can be their role in the new order, how they can become servants of the new King.

Then, "when the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water" (Isa. 41:17-18). No one who really hungers and thirsts after righteousness shall be left to perish.

"Who shall live when God doeth this?" We have considered the events that must take place before the establishing of the Kingdom. As individuals our chief concern should be, What must I do to share in that glorious Kingdom? That the Kingdom will come and God's will be done on earth, we need have no doubt, but what of us? In the words of the erstwhile

Surely I Come Quickly

*In the crimson blush of morning,
In the glitter of the noon,
In the midnight's gloomy darkness
Or the gleaming of the noon;
In the stillness of the twilight
As it shimmers in the sky,
We are watching, we are waiting
For the end that draweth nigh.*

*We shall see our Lord in splendor,
And amid a countless throng
On the clouds to earth descending
With a movement swift and strong;
And the angels round about Him,
In their dazzling white array,
While before Him sounds the summons,
For the final Judgment Day.*

*He will welcome all His people;
He will diadem His own;
He will show to them His glory,
And will share with them His throne;
And forever in His presence,
They shall see Him face to face,
While they chant His matchless wisdom
And extol His wondrous grace.*

*He is coming, surely coming,
For His promise cannot fail;
And the scoffers shall behold Him,
And before Him they shall quail!
He is coming, quickly coming!
Oh, His coming we shall greet.
We have waited for His advent
And have listened for His feet!*



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and loved his fellowmen.

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Truth is the gem for which we seek,
Oh, tell us, where can it be found?
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That truth may in our hearts abound.


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We want it, too, to practice by,
Divine in nature, 'tis the best
For truth will ever stand the test.

Seize then the truth where'er 'tis found,
On heathen or on Christian ground,
Among your friends, among your foes,
The plant's divine where'er it grows!

—L. T. Nichols

A time to reflect....

- * *Who am I?*
- * *How well am I doing?*
- * *I have what it takes*



Every successful, satisfying life must have a sustaining motivation, an inner propulsion that moves steadily toward a goal. The performing of our physical duties or the meeting of our temporal goals is not enough. Even the best pleasures and satisfactions of this life are limited—momentary, as it were, for they are soon over and gone. We seek the permanent, the lasting, the enduring.

God has given us the ability to think, to reason, and reflect. We have the ability to develop another dimension in life, a dimension of inner worth, to grow in our personality and character—pure, upright, holy. The supreme Designer

and Giver of life has made us able to live above the level of instinct where we are motivated only by the laws of self-preservation. He has given us minds capable of insight into His plan. He has given us wills that can be fixed, minds that can be nurtured, and a heart that can be dedicated.

And it is all for our own best interest, even now. We need not be pressured, pressed or harried by every experience of life. We can live on a plane of dedication to God where the ups and downs of life do not affect us. And at the same time we will be securing for ourselves an eternal inheritance in the coming Kingdom of Christ.

How well are we doing in this higher quest? How dedicated is my life? How well am I progressing toward the goal God has set before me?

Whatever our age or stage in life, it is time to reflect....

A time to reflect....

Who am I?

What is my life, my worth, my destiny?

The Bible is
our only source
of information
about our
existence, our
reason for being,
or our destiny,
for it alone
reveals the ideas
and thoughts of
our Creator.

Of course I have a name, but it means nothing. A name is almost as quickly forgotten as the person.

I am a man, but there are many men in the world, several billion of them.

Who am I? Is my little existence a mere accident, as some believe, or is it the result of some grand purpose and design?

Some people who believe in God also believe that He is dealing with humankind. Others believe only a part of this. I choose to believe the evidence which shows there is a God, a great Creator, who has a plan for the human race. I am surrounded by countless complexities of creation which point to His designing, creative, responsible Mind.

Astronomers tell us that space is filled with billions of enormous groups of stars called galaxies. A galaxy is a family of stars, often shaped like a spiral. The Milky Way is the galaxy to which our earth and the solar system belong. Our sun is only one of some 500 billion stars in this galaxy. And the Milky Way is only one among billions of galaxies. Light traveling at the speed of 186 miles per second takes 300 thousand years to cross our galaxy. *Think of it!*

More and more powerful telescopes are constantly disclosing more and more surprises in the heavens. At present, telescopic eyes and cameras have reached more than 14 billion light years into the heavens. This means that the light reaching our earth from these heavenly bodies left their surface 14 billion years ago.

In the presence of such magnitude, who am I? What is my life, my worth, my destiny?

The human race rides on a floating speck of dust, as it were, and shares that speck with multitudinous forms of life. Some investigators have estimated that the number of different plants and animals in the world may be as many as 50 million, of which only about 1.5 million have even been catalogued. Insects are thought to comprise a majority of the mysteries. One entomologist estimates that discovering the insects of just the United States would require 50 scientists doing nothing else for 40 years! In addition to the thousands of insects named annually, we are told, biologists identify 5 to 10 new birds and an equal number of mammals each year. Add to all these the bacteria, viruses, bacilli, protozoa, and many unpronounceable names, and we still know only a few of the tiny microscopic creatures that inhabit our world. Imagine the tiny amoeba, too small to see with the naked eye, which feels hunger, pursues food, shrinks from danger, and perhaps knows joy and fear—all within the one cell that comprises its tiny being. Large or small, each form of life operates smoothly and without assistance from the human family.

What does all this say about who I am?

Noted for comparative physical weakness, the human being is nevertheless in a class apart because of one characteristic: its ability to reason and think in the abstract. Visionary, theoretical, imaginative thought belongs to man alone so far as we know now. Observe his capability in speech and writing, his use and development of tools, clothing, agriculture, husbandry, fire and metals. Add to

Who am I?

I am the tiniest
speck of breath-
ing, moving
matter....

I am as the faint
flicker of a
firefly....

I am as a flower
that blossoms for
a day and is
gone. But...

This need not
be all I am,
because God has
offered me some-
thing eternal. He
has invited me to
be part of His
eternal creation.

these his global consciousness of his surroundings, and his ability to observe and learn from his observations—and last but not least, his rapacious greed and voracious exploitation of his fellow beings.

The human being is vastly different from any other creature on this earth. And none of us made ourselves. None of us has designed a brain that can remember, or an eye that can see, or an ear that can hear. None of us has even developed the commonest knowledge we use every day. Only a great Creator has given us our mental and physical abilities.

Furthermore, it is mathematically impossible for all the delicately balanced conditions that permit the human development in existence to have happened by mere trial and error or chance. Consider the very simplest product of our environment, the oxygen we breathe. Where did it come from? We did not make it, yet we could live only moments without it.

All human accomplishments together are really nothing but appropriations of long established laws, conditions and materials. Should we not in all humility thank God for all that we have and are?

How then can we know what we are or why we are—any more than the sailing vessel can explain why the shipwright made it as it is?

The Bible is our only source of information about our existence, our reason for being, or our destiny, for it alone reveals the ideas and thoughts of our Creator. What do we learn there? Speaking of the earth, the prophet Isaiah says, "He created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (45:18). And the Lord tells us in Numbers 14:21, "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." And we learn from Isaiah that His glory is Israel, His people (Isa. 46:13).

From a human vantage point it would seem quite an accomplishment to fill the earth with mortal beings. But

the Divine plan is for more than this, far more. The mortal state is only a temporary condition, mortality being an "enemy" that must ultimately be "destroyed" (1 Cor. 15:26). Mortal beings form no part of God's eternal creation. God has planned that only immortal beings shall inhabit His new earth. Only the Creator Himself can accomplish this; only the God who created life can perpetuate life. And that new life, once given, will never be threatened by any external or internal attacker. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Rev. 21:4).

How will He do it? God will send Jesus Christ, "who shall change our vile body" that it may be "fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21).

God has promised that the overcomer shall "inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev. 21:7). And Jesus says, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

This reward will be bestowed only in recognition of the supreme moral accomplishment, the complete transformation of the earthly creature from the old nature to the new. This is just where the human race has failed to advance. While many people believe that the race has advanced morally, present conditions indicate the opposite. Yet moral improvement to the very highest level attainable is what the eternal God of the Bible requires: purity even as Christ is pure (1 John 3:3); a mouth in which is found no guile (Rev. 14:5); clothing clean and white, representing the total "righteousness of the saints" (Rev. 19:8). God is selective. He could take human creatures as they come, but He has not chosen to do this. God wants the best, and He will have the best. And those who will not qualify will be set aside. Only the pure and upright shall abide.

Only the
Creator Himself
can change the
mortal into the
immortal.

Here is the real opportunity the Creator holds out to me—to become the mental and moral creature He has designed that I must become, pure, upright, free from every stain of sin. For this is the only type of being He will perpetuate. Here, then, is the one thing that really matters. All else in my life is inconsequential, only as it contributes in some measure to God's eternal plan for me.

Who am I? I am the tiniest speck of breathing, moving matter. I am as the faint flicker of a firefly. I am as a flower that blossoms for a day and is gone. I am as all these things if I am living only for myself and the present pleasures of this world. But...

This need not be all I am. A voice calls from above, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore...and have the keys of hell [the grave] and of death....To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God....He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death....To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 1:18; 2:7,11; 3:21).

The voice says, Repent! be zealous! overcome evil with good. Then I will give you power over death, just as I have power over death. Bring yourself to the standard of moral perfection which is in Christ Jesus (Eph. 4:13-14), and I will show you the unfolding of the next phase in the Creator's plan for this earth. Then your wondering eyes can witness the banishing of sickness, pain, sorrow and death forever.

King David asked, "Who am I, O Lord God?" (II Sam. 7:18).

And so I ask, Who am I? Only one out of all the earth's 5.5 billion. But I am one who has been called from the low affairs of mortal existence to seek a high and purposeful level, even an eternal existence. Only I can accept the call for myself. Only I am responsible for my destiny.

To think on these things should inspire us, but that is all it can do. To attain to this higher level of living *we must act on our thoughts.*

Who am I? Just another member of the human race, but I can be a child of the most high God forever, if I will.

Yes, I can if I will. □

*What if I went to sleep tonight and never waked again?
How would I look before my God and to my fellowmen?
How could I answer for my life to those I called my friends?
If death should overtake me with no time to make amends?
These are the questions serious I all too seldom ask
As carelessly from day to day I go about my tasks.*

*If I only think of life in terms of income and expense,
Without regard to any sin and its great consequence,
How deep my need!—Great God, I say this prayer to you tonight,
Forgive me for my failures all, and help me to do right!
Help me to change my ways before it ever is too late,
And I am left alone outside—outside of Zion's gate!*

A time to reflect....

Am I
actually making
the change I have
contracted to
make, or merely
living to please
myself?

Am I able to
forego some
momentary
satisfaction in
order to be one of
Christ's humble,
obedient
servants?

How well am I doing?

As the one responsible for my life, I must guide its development so that I am making daily progress, for the process cannot be completed in a moment, a day, a week or a year.

*W*hen a company undertakes a construction project, those in charge of the project track its progress closely, to ascertain whether they are "on schedule" with what they agreed to do.

As a responsible contractor, I want to ascertain my progress in accomplishing what I have contracted to do in the service of my King. Having only one lifetime to complete my assignment, I want to see where I am in relation to a point of completion. How well am I attaining my moral and spiritual goals? Can I say that my project is 20% complete, 40% complete, 85% complete? Am I "on schedule" in what is expected of me, or am I falling behind? How well am I doing?

We have set out on the greatest project ever undertaken, the complete remaking of our lives to the standard of Christ (II Cor. 5:17). How well are we doing? If I had to rate myself on a scale, how would I feel about my progress in relation to my opportunity?

Our project is in process as long as we live. God has provided the raw materials, and guidelines to follow so that we may fashion a product of real worth.

Life is a process, a course of development. The process includes some crises and many ordinary days, but all must move inevitably, steadily, toward a God-ordained destination, goal, climax. For those who have committed themselves to becoming like Christ, that climax will be the point when we have attained His mental and moral likeness

and are ready for the physical change to immortality, so that when He comes He may give "our mortal body...a form like that of his own resplendent body" (Phil. 3:20-21, NEB).

Between that point and now, we must become all that He has outlined we can be. Right now we are in the first steps of that becoming. How well are we doing?

As the one responsible for my life, I must guide its development so that I am making daily progress, for the process cannot be completed in a moment, a day, a week or a year. Whether I receive the final change into Christ's physical likeness when He returns will depend on what I am accomplishing right now. If I let valuable time slip by unused, I shall eventually reach a point where I cannot make up for what I have lost.

The process of complete inner transformation affects all the outer and inner aspects of my life. This is the price I must pay for what God has offered me, a high price in self-esteem, self-importance, and worldly satisfaction. For I cannot have everything. I cannot have all of this world *and* the world to come. I must give up in order to gain. "He that findeth his life shall lose it," said Jesus. But He said also, "he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10:39).

How well am I doing on a day-to-day basis? For between what I am and what I must become are many little

Am I still
the old creature
that wants what
he wants when
he wants it, or
have I learned to
live and let live?

Am I
grateful for any
large or small
blessing that
comes my way?

duties of everyday which must be attended to, and here are my opportunities for developing and perfecting all the shining virtues of Christ, in all these little events of each day. There are daily tests for patience, kindness, purity, holiness and humility of heart. I must be thinking each day:

- Did I say anything I should not have said?
- Did I feel as I should not have felt?
- What did I do today to honor my Creator?

These are the attainments God calls great. These are the things that are determining our eternal future. And, if practiced unfailingly day after day, they will transform us into that new creature God wants us to be, new through and through (II Cor. 5:17). As has been truly said, "trifles make perfection, but perfection is no trifle."

How well am I doing? Have I learned to follow Jesus through all the ups and downs of life? Am I actually making the change I have contracted to make, or merely living to please myself?

Am I able to take a loss without feeling unjustly treated, or can I see my best efforts defeated, yet entertain no thoughts of self-pity?

Am I able to forego some momentary satisfaction in order to be one of Christ's humble, obedient servants? Am I always ready to learn, willing to listen, eager to follow whithersoever He leads?

Have I learned to wait for my honor, when Christ shall come to dispense the rewards, rather than seek it now?

How well am I doing? Am I still the old creature that wants what he wants *when* he wants it, or have I learned to live and let live? Am I grateful for any large or small blessing that comes my way?

How well am I doing? Can those nearest me see more and more of the likeness of Christ in my life? Am I able to take criticism without feeling hurt, sour or upset? Can I keep my mind calmly focussed on the future, when all around me are tense and worried?

Am I eager for anything which will reveal any weakness in my character, any deficiency in my dedication, so that I can correct it before too late?

Can I take an apparent slight and dismiss it without assuming that someone intended to give me the worst?

How well am I doing in my example to others? For I must remember that "no man liveth to himself alone." Others are depending on me for a pattern, even in the small everyday details of life. Others are being either helped and encouraged—or disheartened—by what they see in me.

Have I learned to support another's idea, even when I feel *my* way is better and more logical?

Am I able to share another's joy, even when it is something I was denied, and feel no touch of envy?

Am I big enough to overlook trifles and stifle the imagination that would seem to make an offense in another's character?

How well am I doing? Am I growing more stable, more balanced, more sure-footed in my faith? Can I keep a level, Christlike spirit at all times, not feeling too anxious amidst opposition, or too downcast in failure, or too exalted by success?

Am I becoming such a one as Christ can honor and love—and save eternally as one of His own? Can Christ look upon me and call me a disciple, a friend, a follower, a child of God?

How well am I doing? It is time to review, whatever our stage of life, whatever our degree of commitment. It is time to reflect, to consider our ways, and make the very most of the opportunities that remain. For our time, however seemingly abundant, is limited. Our working days are numbered. The Day of the Lord draws steadily nearer, the Day when Christ will come and "turn on the light," revealing the inner aims and objects of our hearts, and reward each of us for what we have done (I Cor. 4:4-5, TLB).

Let not a day go by that we do not ask ourselves, *How well am I doing?* □

A time to reflect....

The God we serve is the "Lord God of hosts"! Think of the billion galaxies in His creation, and the hosts of angels who inhabit them.

Are they not every one an encouragement to us? Can't we hear them saying, "We did it—so can you!"

I have what it takes

What will it take to see our life through to a successful completion, to the full attainment of the stature of Christ and a life in the coming Kingdom of Christ?

■ *A deep, solid, unshakable conviction...*

First of all, it takes a deep, solid, unshakable conviction, a faith founded on evidence. "Without faith it is impossible to please [God]," and to have an intelligent faith we must have knowledge. "All things that pertain unto life and godliness, [come] through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Pet. 1:3). We need a strong, working knowledge of God and all that He has revealed for our learning—His laws, His promises, and His plan of salvation. Without this knowledge it is impossible to have faith.

■ *A firm "I know..."*

We need to know beyond all shadow of uncertainty whose we are and whom we serve; that God does indeed have a plan that is moving steadily forward, whether we choose to participate in it or not. The new world *will be*, whether we are part of it or not. It is the promise and purpose of God Almighty, and all creation speaks His power to do what He has promised.

■ *A reverent love of life and of the God who imparts it...*

We need a reverent love of life and of the God who imparts it. God has been good to us, far better than we deserve. In Him is our only hope of salvation. An impelling love of life and an intense

devotion to God is a large part of what it will take to see us through.

■ *A strong forward view...*

We need a strong forward view and a lively anticipation of the reward God has promised the overcomers. Everything we want is ahead—why do we focus so much of our attention on the things around us?

■ *An inspired imagination...*

In addition to looking ahead, we need an inspired imagination, an ability to picture ourselves among the overcomers, winners in the race, enjoying the laurels of full salvation. What can be more encouraging than this!

■ *And willpower...*

Then we need a firm and unwavering determination, the power to command ourselves with a definite "I will" and "I will not." It is so easy to postpone the real work of crucifying our nature, thinking it will be easier a little later. But delay only makes decision—and action—the more difficult.

■ *And time...*

Another factor in seeing us through is time. Again, God has provided for our need. We all have it, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is time we can put to the very best use of which humans are capable, or time we can let go quietly by while our minds flit here and there and our hands are busy with this and that until the day is gone.

Is it not our challenge, we who live so near the end, to show how much a few moments can produce in real spiritual achievement?

(Continued on page 25)

On the Other Bank of the River



Rev. L. T. Nichols
(1844-1912)

"Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river." —Daniel 12:5

*Longing for Truth though in error born,
Knowing Jehovah was faithful;
Fearing not men with their jeers of scorn,
But shunning all manner of evil;
Seeking to know ev'ry whit of the law,
Ceasing his vigilance never;
Such was the man that the Prophet saw
On the other bank of the river.*

*Praying for light that would rend the veil,
Ceaselessly digging for treasure;
Hours of toil that would weary one's soul
Only afforded him pleasure;
Quick to detect what would seem a flaw,
With error he'd compromise never at all:
Such was the man that the Prophet saw
On the other bank of the river.*

*As he emerged from the darkness great
He strove to enlighten others,
Lest all should share an untimely fate,
Thinking all mankind were brothers.
Pointing the way as he read the law,
Urging, "Give earnest endeavor":
Such was the man that the Prophet saw
On the other bank of the river.*

*Having great love for his fellowmen,
Yet not forgetting his duty;
Crying aloud at the Lord's command,
To penitent ones showing pity;
Bearing his trials and griefs alone,
Sharing his joys with another:
Such was the man that the Prophet saw
On the other bank of the river.*

*Boldly attacking the forts of sin,
Clad in the glorious armor;
Facing the foe, he was sure to win,
Trusting in God as his Saviour.
Pausing the water of life to draw,
Sheathing his sword, no, never.
Such was the man that the Prophet saw
On the other bank of the river.*

*Thankful each day for the out-stretched arm,
From ev'ry danger protecting.
Knowing the angels will shield from harm
Those on His precepts reflecting;
Precious to him was each hour of life,
Grateful was he to the Giver:
Such was the man that the Prophet saw
On the other bank of the river.*

*Bright was his hope of eternal life;
Sure of a radiant tomorrow
Where there will enter no pain nor strife,
Free from all sickness and sorrow.
Fearing not death, with its icy claw,
Certain his God would deliver:
Such was the man that the Prophet saw
On the other bank of the river.*

*Soon he will answer the summons clear,
When the grave opens to free him.
Joined will he be to those once held dear—
Prophets, Apostles and Jesus.
Who is this man that I speak of in awe?
None other than our dear leader.
He is the man that the Prophet saw
On the other bank of the river.*

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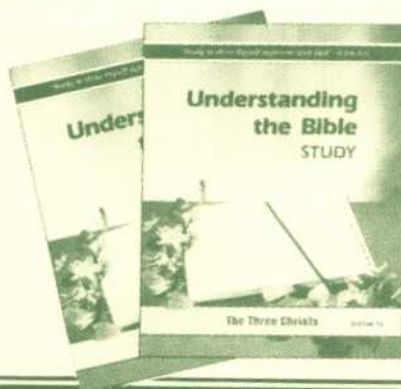
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God is smiling down upon us,
His blessings are poured out lavishly.
—Psalm 85:9-13, A Paraphrase*

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Light of the World

Separating Spurious from Divine

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is considered great literature even by its enemies. No other book in the whole world has so profoundly influenced human thought and history. But to those who really know the Book, and have learned to love it, and to read it understandingly, the Bible is more than immortal literature: it is a rule of life, it is the way to salvation. It is the revealed mind of God.

Among the volumes of the library the Bible is without parallel. Where else in all human history did 40 different authors, living over a period of 1600 years, on different continents, from every station of life—from the king to the shepherd—and writing in three different languages produce a Book which is in all its parts pervaded by one spirit, one doctrine, one design, one gospel, and projects one God and one plan of salvation? We can only say, it is a miracle; it is Divine.

Equally remarkable is its stormy history, through which it has passed unscathed and uncorrupted. And how ironic that its bitterest enemies should for over a 1000 years be its self-proclaimed protectors! And through all it stands, pure and undefiled, proclaiming thoughts as high above human reasoning as the heavens are above the earth.

Also underscoring its inspiration is the fact that the Bible does not convey human reasoning or human philosophy. Read the works of the great philosophers, poets and sages of whatever land, compare any product of the great religions of the world with its teachings, and the ideas are opposite. Human writers exalt the human race and its achievements; the Bible exalts God. Surely the Bible is *not* the product of any human mind.

No other book in the world has had so long or dramatic a history. The writing of the Old Testament, as far as we know, was begun with Moses. But Moses could not write down accurately what happened more than 3000 years before his birth—except as God, by one miraculous means or another, revealed it to him.

Every book of the Old Testament shows evidence of Divine inspiration. How many times do we read, "The word of the Lord came..." Whether the author was writing law, or prophecy, or poetry, all received knowledge from God. By one means or another—through angels, vision or dream—God revealed Himself so that "men inspired by the Holy Spirit spoke for God."

At length the time arrived when God purposed that the different books of the Old Testament should be gathered together, and some seventy zealous rabbis—we do not even know their names—were assigned the task. They did it—and more: they translated the sacred Scriptures from Hebrew into Greek. This was sometime during the third century B.C. and was, we are told, the most stupendous translation work, up to that time. Imagine translating page after page of text, without pencil or paper as we know them today! But they did it, and the result was the Septuagint Bible, which became "the Scriptures" for Jesus, His Apostles, and the members of the early Church. It is basically the same book

which has come down to us today in the form of the Old Testament.

The translation contained some errors, but the Jewish rabbis believed passionately that a curse rested upon anyone who should dare to add to or take from the sacred words, thus they worked carefully, and the accuracy of the texts they produced is astonishing—especially when we realize that the average Jew at this time believed in a vast amount of pagan fable and tradition, including the immortal soul, hell fire, demons and spirits. The Divine Hand was working, keeping the sacred text pure and uncontaminated. It is a major miracle.

Unlike the Old Testament, which compassed fifteen centuries, the 22 books of the New Testament were written within a relatively short space of time, about 30 years, between A. D. 40 and A. D. 70. We feel strongly that the Bible was complete by A. D. 70, because of the prophecy of Daniel, that at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem the vision and prophecy would be “sealed up”—how could it be “sealed” if not fully written?

But as with every project undertaken by human hands, there were produced at the same time many spurious books, forgeries, and false accounts of the teachings of Christ and His Apostles. How could the new believer know what to listen to, and what to shun?

It was a serious problem, and one which was addressed very early, we can be sure, by those who knew how to identify authentic writings. For the believers in every congregation needed a confirmed canon, from which any church could read publicly, and which could be treasured and taught as *the source* of Divine and veritable truth. Imagine the confusion which could result if teachers in the various churches presented spurious texts and forgeries as gospel truth!

The following one-act play is an attempt to convey a small amount of insight into the adventuresome career of the Divine Volume, “the light,” through some of the darkest periods of its history. And how we thank God that through it all God’s angel was superintending, so that we today might have the Word of God, pure and reliable.

The opening scene takes us back to the year 85 A.D., where we look in upon an informal gathering of Christian brethren, who have come together from distant points, each bringing the precious docu-

ments of their ecclesia. The purpose of the meeting is to gather the documents to be considered at a forthcoming official meeting of the Church Council, which will make the final decision as to which books should be *included* in the sacred canon of Scripture and which *excluded*. We have no direct history upon which to base this meeting, but we have every reason to believe that such a meeting actually took place, for those who gathered the books of the canon would naturally have been those most interested in preserving it in its purity.

This informal meeting takes place in the home of the apostle John, in Ephesus. John at this time is very elderly, and the brethren of the Church feel urgently the need to establish the canon of Scripture while he is still able to assist them, for at this time he is the last surviving Apostle and the only living person who had close association with Jesus. The room in which this important meeting takes place is without a window and unadorned—it is an underground storageroom in John’s home—an unlikely setting for such important business. But God does not respect place. The times were tense, for these were days of persecution, and should a meeting such as this be discovered, the New Testament as we know it today might never have been.

Bear in mind that this is some 15 years after the Holy Spirit was withdrawn, and these brethren are “on their own,” so to speak, just as we are today. Yet they were not alone—and neither are we today—if we are serving God. For God was overseeing the work.

As the scene opens, a serious discussion is already in progress.

SCENE ONE:

Separating Spurious from Divine

Characters:

Apostle John (*in Ephesus*)
Timothy (*in Ephesus*)
Claudia (*from Corinth*)
Damaris (*from Philippi*)
Anna (*from Thessalonica*)
Onesimus (*from Colosse*)

Year: 85 A.D.

All present except Claudia. Delegates are seated around large table. Timothy is prepared with pen and papyrus, taking notes on the discussions. Angel appears and reappears, unseen by the participants, to illustrate the unseen but ever constant guidance of God over His people during this time.

DAMARIS: (*holding up a manuscript*) I think this Epistle to the Ephesians is the very best Paul ever

wrote. Do you realize what he is saying when he writes about a plan that takes in *all of heaven and all of earth*?

ANNA: I can scarcely imagine what life would be like without God—or hope!

JOHN: The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians must be included in the Scriptures.

DAMARIS: (*holding up two manuscripts*) These are two manuscripts that our beloved Lydia sent from Philippi. She regrets very much that she is not strong enough to make the trip, but at 95 years of age—I am sure everyone will understand.

ONESIMUS: Here are the manuscripts from Colosse, including the original of Brother Paul's letter to them. I wrote this letter with my own hand, at Paul's dictation, when he was in prison in Rome, and Tychicus and I delivered it to the church. That was a good many years ago.

DAMARIS: That *surely* will go into the Scriptures.

TIMOTHY: (*looking through box*) We have materials from Antioch,... and Crete... Here are the manuscripts which Brother John has preserved—and several he has *written*—these will be a choice part of the New Scriptures.

JOHN: Those short letters of mine should go near the end of the book—they are not as significant as the writings of Brother Paul.

ANNA: We still have not heard from several of the churches, have we?

TIMOTHY: No,... we have nothing from Jerusalem, and their collection is among the best. Nor do we have anything from Alexandria.

ANNA: Perhaps by the time the Council meets, these manuscripts will have arrived.

ONESIMUS: The manuscripts from Pergamos should be arriving shortly, but they may not have many. I heard recently that some who were opposed to the faith had destroyed some of the best manuscripts.

ANNA: We can be quite sure they did not destroy them all—because many brethren have made their own copies.

DAMARIS: It is God's way of preserving His Word.

TIMOTHY: (*looking through manuscripts*) Here are the manuscripts from Iconium—Lystra—Derbe. And look at this!—"The Philosophy of the Mind"... by somebody named Samaris! They want us to include the vain philosophies of men? (*sets it aside, shaking head sadly*)

JOHN: It shall not be done.

ANNA: I have heard that in some churches the works of the Greek philosophers—and even the pagan Plato!—are being read right along with the letters of Paul!

TIMOTHY: That is why the work of the Council is *urgent*, even *critical*. The brethren everywhere must know what is true, and what is false.

JOHN: (*rising, with effort, as though ill*) I regret that I am not able to stay with you for the rest of this meeting tonight. Brother Timothy, will you please act in my behalf.

TIMOTHY: (*surprised, hesitating*) Why,...certainly, Brother John.

JOHN: May God be with you.

ONESIMUS: Brother, may I help you to your room?

JOHN: Thank you, Onesimus. (*exit John and Onesimus*)

SEVERAL: God be with you, Brother John.

TIMOTHY: I think you all understand that the purpose of our meeting tonight is to sort out the materials to be considered by the Council, which will meet about one month from now. We pray that our elder apostle John may be feeling strong enough to be present at that meeting. It is very important that this work be completed while he is still with us.

ANNA: His judgment in these matters is vital.

DAMARIS: I like Brother John's idea, of combining all the inspired books into *one* book, and perhaps call it something new, like a New Testament, and let our present Scriptures be called the *Old Testament*. Then the brethren will *know* they have something they can know is *all true and right*.

TIMOTHY: Until now there have been no new Scriptures since the time of the prophet Malachi, more than four hundred years ago. Brother John feels that this new part ought to begin with a thorough coverage of the life of our Lord. Future believers will want above all to learn about *His* life and teaching.

DAMARIS: An excellent idea!

ANNA: Excellent!

TIMOTHY: We can be grateful to God that He has allowed Brother John to live to such a great age. Perhaps it is for this purpose, for of all the believers today only *he* knew Jesus. I personally feel that any book included in the sacred Scriptures *must have his personal endorsement*. If the authorship or integrity of any writing is questionable, I suggest

Light of the World

that we put a note on the manuscript so that its weakness will not be overlooked by the Council.

ANNA: I agree, Brother Timothy.

DAMARIS: Yes indeed.

ANNA: The Council should have *originals* wherever possible.

TIMOTHY: Yes. But it has been quite a few years now since these documents were written—*(slowly)* 20, 30, even 40 years—and they are becoming very old and brittle.

DAMARIS: Here is a very large manuscript—it is a copy of Paul's letter to the church in Rome.

TIMOTHY: I'm sure we all agree, *that* Epistle belongs in the sacred Scriptures.

ANNA: We are privileged to have a copy at *our* church. I personally find much of it difficult to understand, but there are many *very clear* passages in it that show Brother Paul's great zeal and determination. Can't you just feel his enthusiasm when he says, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come..."!

(Door opens, enter Claudia and Onesimus. Claudia is carrying a bundle.)

ONESIMUS: Our Sister Claudia has just arrived from Corinth.

CLAUDIA: Peace to all of you! Thank God, I made the journey safely! *(all exchange greetings)* It was awfully dark in that alley tonight. I prayed that these manuscripts would be safe. *(lays bundle on table)*

DAMARIS: Did you come alone, Sister Claudia?

CLAUDIA: Yes, Marcus is home, very sick. He did not want me to come alone, but we knew you needed these manuscripts from our Ecclesia.

ANNA: You must stay with us for a few days.

CLAUDIA: Thank you, dear Sister Anna. *(takes seat at the table)* The brethren at home are really interested in this work of gathering the sacred Scriptures to preserve them. Already there are false doctrines creeping in, and no one can stop them! Some are so bold, they will stand right up during a service and start talking their false ideas—just as though they were truth! And the worst of it is—

the majority of our people *like* it!

TIMOTHY: Remember the words of Brother Paul, he told us this would happen.

ONESIMUS: Surely the inspired writings must be assembled—right now while we have brethren who *know* the false from the true. We cannot expect the Spirit to tell us one from the other.

TIMOTHY: Not any more. *(to Claudia)* Did you bring the epistles that Brother Paul wrote to the church in Corinth?

CLAUDIA: Yes, Brother Timothy, the very Epistles themselves *(carefully removes scrolls from bag and protective coverings)*. Original documents! See, here is Paul's own signature.... Now I would like to offer a suggestion. These letters, as we all know, contain some very severe rebukes for certain grave sins into which our church had fallen. These abuses have long since been corrected, and it seems unfair to have them stand on the record against our reputation for future generations to read about and, perhaps, misjudge us. I recommend that the letters be edited before they are presented to the Council.

DAMARIS: Do you think you are the only people ever to face such problems?

CLAUDIA: *(thoughtfully)* No...

ANNA: Will not future generations profit by your failures—and the rebukes Paul gave?

TIMOTHY: We have all read in the Scriptures of the sins of our father David, how he was rebuked, and how he repented, and God forgave him. This is strengthening to us. I personally know that Brother Paul rested heavily upon God's mercy. Who is there among us who has not needed rebuke—and profited by it. *(All nod in assent.)*

ONESIMUS: I think, too, that there is another danger here, if we try to improve upon the inspired message. Brother Paul wrote these letters as he was moved by the Holy Spirit. So they are really *God's* words. Who are we to edit God's message?

DAMARIS: I agree.

TIMOTHY: That's right.

ANNA: I wonder if this might be the very thing Jesus warned us against. Do you remember what He said in that last special message to our Brother John: "Whosoever shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy..."

CLAUDIA: *(picking up text)* God shall take away his part out of the book of life, from the holy city,

and from the things which are written in this book." You are right, all of you. God was behind the writing of these letters, let us submit them to the Council just as they are, so that future generations may avoid the sins into which we fell.

ONESIMUS: Here is a short letter, signed by Paul...to the church in Philadelphia.

TIMOTHY: Is it an original? (*looking*) The handwriting is not that of Brother Paul...

ANNA: Nor is the message his. I have seen that letter before. There are some false brethren up north who are writing these letters, and signing Paul's name to them.

DAMARIS: How dreadful! Let us have nothing to do with such!

ONESIMUS: Brethren, I have a rather unusual request. I have here a short personal letter written by Paul to my master Philemon, from whom I had run away before my conversion. Paul wrote this letter in my behalf, to gain for me a favorable reception, which it did. It is true that it reveals some of my

sins, but I am more than willing to have them stand if the letter may help others. Brother Philemon on his death bed gave me this letter, I'll treasure it always. It contains no doctrinal teaching or prophecies, but it certainly shows the warm heart and overflowing love of Brother Paul. Would it be possible to have this little letter included in the Scriptures?...it wouldn't take up much space.

CLAUDIA: I fail to see why a personal note should be preserved. Sentiment is all right in its place, but it can be carried too far. We have to draw the line somewhere, or soon we will have a book a man can't carry around.

DAMARIS: (*to Claudia*) Have you heard the letter? (*Claudia indicates that she has not.*) Let us not answer a matter before we hear it.

ANNA: Perhaps the letter could be read publicly at the next assembly of the church.

TIMOTHY: An excellent suggestion! Now let me see, here is a letter from...

(To be continued next issue)

What the Early Writers Understood

We must apply both time and diligence to get to the point that godly thinking crowds worldliness, anger, foolishness, pride, and bitterness from our thoughts, but it can be and must be done. Let us stay alert and diligent until we have accomplished the work.

Not long ago I was reading a book written by F.F. Bruce, a scholar and theologian. The book is a short history of how the Canon of the New Testament was established. He devotes one chapter to the writings of the Apostolic Fathers (these were men who wrote during the period immediately after the death of the Apostles, that is, from about 70 A.D. to 150 A.D. They should not be confused with the so-called "church fathers" of the third century and later).

Mr. Bruce is mainly concerned with quotations from New Testament writings which are found in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers and their bearing on the

establishment of certain books as inspired Scripture. However, toward the end of the chapter he makes some remarks on the writings of the Apostolic Fathers themselves. He notes that in all these writings the authors go into great detail about good works being the key to salvation. He remarks that scholars have long been amazed that these writers, being so close to the Apostles in time, did not understand the New Testament doctrine that salvation is by grace through faith without works. When I read this, suddenly it dawned on me that these early writers had a much better understanding of New Testament doctrine than any of the false theologians that have lived since their day!

I have read most of the Apostolic Fathers, and while I would not say that all of them are 100 percent accurate concerning the truth, it is noteworthy that the modern doctrines of the blood

atonement and salvation without works are conspicuously absent from them. One of them, called the *Didache*, or Teaching of the Apostles, teaches moral perfection in language too plain to be misunderstood or denied. This is an indication that the truth concerning God's way of salvation was still being adhered to by at least some Christians in the second century. In fact the necessity of good works was still being taught by some writers during the third and fourth centuries, even though almost all of the writers of those centuries had departed from true religion on most subjects.

We are indeed fortunate here in these last days that God raised up a teacher to lead us out of the darkness. It is very humbling to realize that of all earth's billions only a small handful know the true teaching of the Word of God. The majority have no hope, or a false hope. —Contributed (SK)



If you are thinking about life insurance, forget everything you have ever heard before and consider seriously this plan. There is no other policy ever written which is so old, nor is any so secure that it will survive it. And there is *nothing*, absolutely NOTHING which can interfere with the fulfillment of this contract once the signer has made his payments in full.

What life insurance company is this? If it is so long established, why have I not heard of it before? you ask.

This insurance is the Eternal Life Plan. God Himself is the underwriter, and "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Num. 23:19).

Fortunately for us, policies are still obtainable. During only a limited time can our policy be written, but there are no restrictions as to nationality or race. God urges all to grasp this opportunity while it still lasts.

God's policy is truly a *life* insurance policy. Life is exactly what it offers, not just this present life, but *eternal* life with *unending* benefits! There is no loss whatsoever—whether houses or land or time or health or personal advantage or friend or life itself—which this insurance policy will not amply reimburse. Plus extended coverage—coverage that repays throughout *the ages of eternity*, with riches and honor and immortality: these are the benefits available to all who will pay the price.

What is the price?

The price is not measurable in dollars and cents, but in character and holiness. "*All that a man bath*" is the total sum (Matt. 13:45-46).

A high price? Indeed. But consider the coverage, the protection, and the duration of the policy. And once the price is paid, you are covered *forever*, time without end!

Worthwhile?

Invest now. *It is for your life!*



I have what it takes

(Continued from page 17)

Altogether...

We have more in our favor than any other people who ever lived. We have the written Word of God to teach us, brethren who have gone before us, and to whom we want to prove that we did indeed have what it takes. Then, too, we have the bonus benefit today of living this side of the dark night of the apostasy, when we can know that the Great Day of the Lord is right upon us. We may even live to see it! In addition to all this, we are living in an age of religious tolerance, when we do not have to fear open persecution. And witness the fulfilled and fulfilling prophecy all around us. How

much more do we need to certify our success?

Then, too, let us remember that we are not attempting something new and untried. The God we serve is the "Lord God of hosts"! Think of the billion galaxies in His creation, each with billions of shining stars; and think of the hosts of angels who inhabit them, millions and billions and countless quadrillions of them! Are they not every one an encouragement to us? Can't we hear them saying, "We did it—so can you!"

What then do we need? A constant forward vision; a reverent love for life and the God who gives it; an inspired imagination to picture ourselves as overcomers, and time to do the work. All this—plus God on our side—and *we have what it takes!* □

Arboreal Hardihood

Continued from page 10

The second group of trees, which includes most of the hardwoods of the northern United States, presented the greatest challenge to researchers. These trees—thanks to the genius of their Creator—possess a unique survival mechanism which has only recently been understood.

First it was discovered that the freezing temperature of water varies according to its purity. Very pure water (water in which there are no dust particles) will not turn to ice until it is supercooled (i.e., chilled to about 40 degrees below zero). Michael Burke discovered that the tiny droplets of water inside the living wood cells of hardwood trees are of this very pure type and do not freeze until supercooled to about -40° F. Some trees also have sugars in their sap which act as an antifreeze, lowering the death point even further.

The supercooling feature also explains why no trees grow above the timberline (about 11,000 feet above sea level). The timberline in most areas coincides with the minus-40-degree temperature line, or the same supercooling point, beyond which the trees are killed.

Now for the third question: How do some trees

survive to as low as 100 degrees below zero? (And if such a feat came about by natural means, how did any trees survive while this survival mechanism was being perfected!?)

The answer is freeze-drying. If the tree cells were full of water, the freezing would cause them to explode, and the tree would die. But during the cooling days of autumn, the water in the trees' cells is siphoned out into the areas between the cells, where, as the temperature lowers, it freezes into huge crystalline masses. The tree's cells, being "dry," are free from danger. It has been found that in this freeze-dried state, the tissues of birch trees and dogwoods can actually withstand temperatures as low as 321 degrees below zero (the temperature of liquid nitrogen)! In the spring, when the ice melts, the water is sucked back into the cells, and metabolism and growth resume. At this point, the tree is no longer cold-hardened, and even a minor spring freeze can damage it. For such trees, April is probably the cruelest month.

Should we not bow our heads to our great Creator who has built such wonders of survival into our world? □

Obituary Alice Biddle

On July 28, Sister Alice Biddle fell asleep in death, after many months of severe illness.

For the past 35 years, she and her sister Jean have headed the Australian ecclesia of the Megiddo Church. Together they have held regular services in their home, have talked with numerous inquirers into the faith, carried on extensive missionary activities from their home, giving strong support to the teachings and principles of the Church.

The two sisters have taken their faith and hope very seriously, making an earnest application of it to their daily lives. In 1970 they were visited by three representatives of the Church, who found their home a model of Christian joy, a light in the darkness.

Sister Alice Biddle is survived by her Sister Jean, with whom she lived and who shared her faith; one brother James, who lived nearby and looked after the needs of his sisters; a brother Robert, of Ipswich; one sister Jessie Anderson, of Maryborough; and several nieces and nephews.

We have received the following letter from Sister Jean Biddle:

My Sister, Alice Biddle, passed away on the 28th July, after much suffering. However, Alice never shed a tear or complained of her great trial that she was enduring.

Alice was laid to rest in the Warwick Council Lawn Cemetery on the 2nd August. Dr. Pat Brady of Toowoomba officiated at the graveside. His wife Kathryn and daughter accompanied him. He spoke about the brevity of life, the hope that Alice embraced according to the Scripture, the return of Christ, and the Resurrection. He quoted from many parts of the Bible, also a poem and a prayer from a Megiddo Message. Dr. Brady also spoke of Alice's connection with the Megiddo Church and the extensive work she did by correspondence to enlighten others in the hope she held.

I think it could have been early in the 1950's that our father read an advertisement in a New Zealand paper he had sent to him; it was offering literature from the Megiddo Church. So

Father sent for information and received some books. He found somewhat of things he believed and also a different and clearer explanation of the sacrifice of Christ and the Spiritual Creation from Genesis. He corresponded with members of the Church for many years till the time of his death in 1966. Father advertised the Megiddo books in many papers across the cities and towns of Queensland and Australia.

Alice started corresponding with Sisters of the Church shortly after Father's contact with the Church, which she continued. Both Alice and I also did quite a lot of advertising, and many books and pamphlets were sent out. Alice also carried on quite a large correspondence not only to Church members but to others in the cause of Christ and His truth.

I thank the Church members most sincerely for your sympathy, kind thoughts and prayers. Now it is a case of pressing on and devoting my time to gaining more spiritual ground to reach the high standard, even the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Jean Biddle
Warwick, Q., Australia

Excerpts From Various Letters by Alice Biddle

We have not the slightest doubt that God is the Creator of the mighty universe. How exceedingly wonderful is it? We cannot even begin to comprehend its magnitude! God has, in a sense, given us a glimpse of it all. But if we wholeheartedly seek to walk with Him, one day we shall know the most wonderful and grandest of all knowledge!

The smallest insect speaks of His creative genius. Some are very minute. There are some, the merest speck, and yet they scurry across a piece of paper like a flash! It is almost incredible to think they are another living species!

How wonderful the works of God all around us! No matter where we go, we are confronted with His mighty works. The grandeur of the mountain ranges, from which the beginnings of great rivers come; the vast plains through which the rivers flow, and the mass of jungles teeming with life of all kinds, all tell us of the work of an all-powerful hand. And then there are the wonders of the great and mighty oceans and seas, teeming with such a variety of life that we are just left speechless. It is all so vast, so grand! No wonder the Psalmist exclaimed, "All thy works shall praise thee O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee" (Ps. 145:10).

The wonder and glory of the heavens by night, so many sparkling orbs beautifying the sky, declare the everlasting work of an almighty hand. And how great the blessings God

has bestowed upon us in our high calling in Christ Jesus, in that we can prepare ourselves to be a part of His eternal creation, and one day enjoy His eternal inheritance. Then everlasting joy can be ours—and all because we redeemed the precious time given us, making ourselves over into new creatures of righteousness and holiness according to His will. How we should exclaim with the Psalmist, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" (Ps. 139:17).

How we need to work in these closing days of our probation, to make sure every good fruit of the spirit is being perfected in our characters. Jesus said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8).

We need to keep our minds aglow with the heavenly things, and be able to concentrate on our perfect example in the Lord Jesus. Let us strive with all our might to attain that perfection which is in Him: for His life portrays to us all the beauty of God's righteousness and holiness. Thus He could say, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Paul was a wonderful example of living in the heavenly environs. His joys were full even in the midst of his great adversities. So may we also strive to reach that high standard of righteousness, that fullness of joy. □

The HEART of the MATTER

For the past several years our family has spent each vacation among the giant Sequoia trees of California. The forest rangers explained that the Sequoia secretes a substance which kills insects that attempt to destroy the tree. We had seen piles of sawdust which had lain on the ground for many years. Nevertheless, it was as fresh as though it had been sawed recently. It would not decay. The tree seemed indestructible.

Imagine our amazement when the 'spring tree' fell during a storm. We discovered the heart of this giant tree had rotted away. Evidently the spring which had flowed for so long from its base had done the 'impossible' by rotting out the heart of the tree.

When I read of some highly respected person collapsing morally, I remember the "spring tree." The important thing for each of us to have, no matter what the outward appearances may be, is a pure heart. The house that we live in, the job that we have, the honors that we attain, the size of the bank account, all are secondary. Reverence is the way of a pure heart. Let us "cleanse ourselves of everything that can defile body or spirit, and by reverence for God, make our consecration complete" (1 Cor. 7:1, Goodspeed)—*Contributed*



Do we feel enslaved, trapped, hindered by what we are? Remember; it is possible to change. If we are slaves to ourselves, we ourselves are at fault.

An earnest purpose finds time—or else makes it.

Any affliction can be a blessing to him who does not give way to it.

He who can take advice is sometimes superior to him who can give it.

As with every aspect of our Christian obligation, obedience makes us better even now, while preparing us to live eternally. We simply cannot lose!

Not our promises but our performances make our reputation.



Leaving Those Nets

(Continued from page 2)

him, a hope they would never have heard had he not echoed Christ's call to them. And think of the joy that awaits him, the reward laid up for all who truly love and follow Christ, a reward he could never have imagined had he not left all and followed.

And then compare the outcome of the life that refuses to follow. As a prominent missionary of this world once said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Following Christ means dropping the nets of resistance, the nets of selfish ambition, the nets of security in this world. But think of the joy unspeakable and full of glory which that sacrifice is purchasing, the reward laid up in heaven which Christ will bring to each faithful follower.

Does it not make us anxious to say with Peter, "Lord, we have left all and followed Thee..."? Yes, we have left all—because we want something greater, something lasting, something eternal. There is nothing to lose; there is everything to gain. □



He Giveth More

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater;
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;
To added affliction He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done;
When we reach the end of our mortal resources,
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

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

- Selected