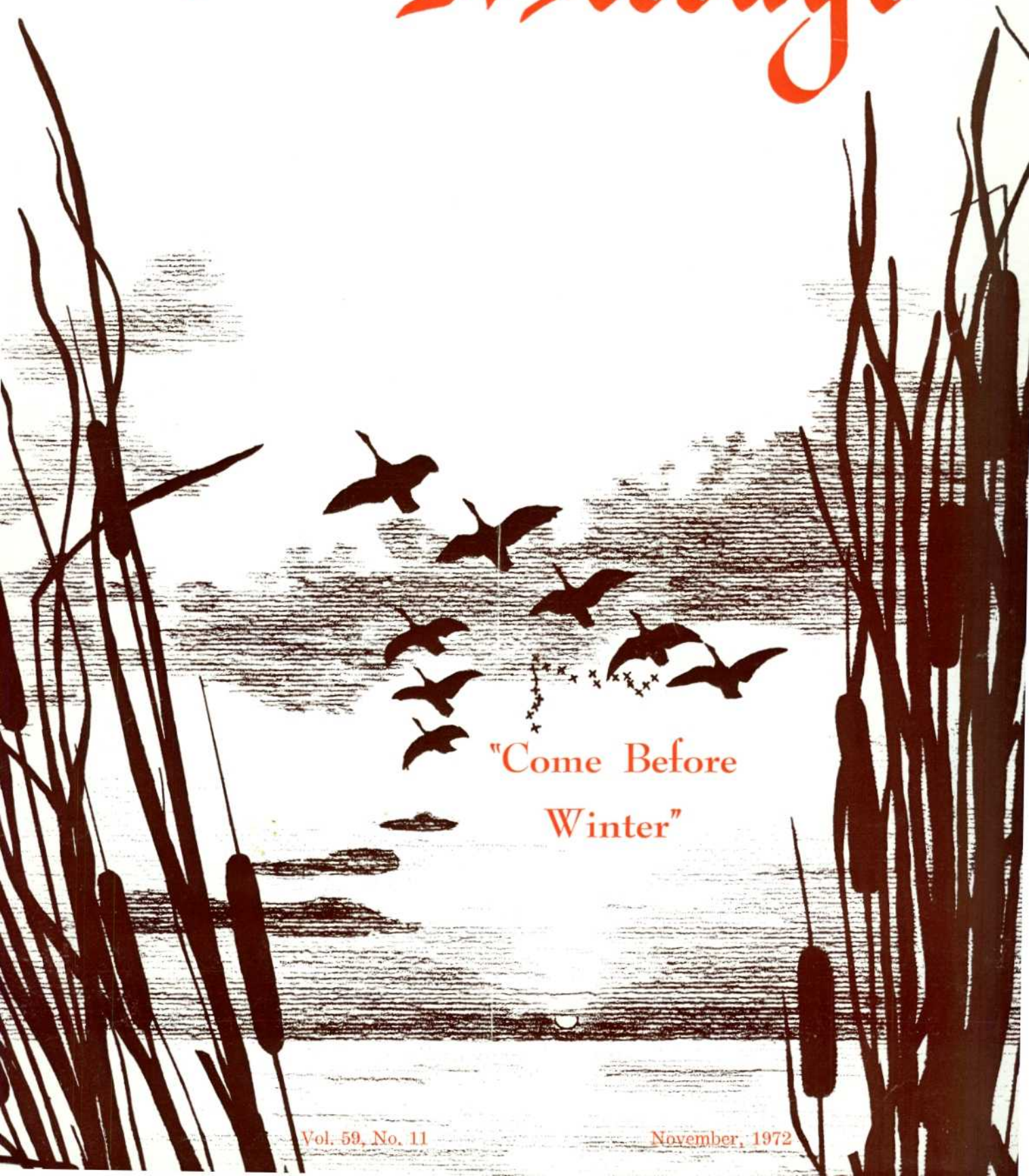


Megiddo Message



"Come Before
Winter"

Megiddo Message

Vol. 59, No. 11

November, 1972

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF
THE MEGIDDO MISSION CHURCH
L. T. NICHOLS, *Founder*
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A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone.

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Published monthly by the
MEGIDDO MISSION CHURCH
481 Thurston Road
Rochester, N. Y. 14619

● SUBSCRIPTION RATES: One year, \$2.00; six months, \$1.00. Make checks or money orders for all literature payable to the Megiddo Mission Church. Please notify promptly of any change of address. Foreign subscribers, please make all payments by international money order, available at most banks and post offices.

Second Class Postage paid at Rochester, New York.

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Editorially Speaking...

Criticize—Yourself

"A man must serve his time to every trade

Save censure—critics are all ready made."

SO wrote Lord Byron in the early days of the nineteenth century. And it is still true. We are all natural-born critics—of others, that is.

How much valuable time we spend in judging, criticizing and discussing the faults of our fellowmen! So engrossed are we in the shortcomings of our brother that we are entirely oblivious to the fact that we might have a fault—or two—of our own. So overcome are we by the failures of others around us that we are tempted to exclaim in words of the Pharisee, "Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men!"

What is the value of our much criticism? It builds up feelings, stimulates unkind thoughts and wastes precious moments which could be spent in examining—and improving—ourselves.

How much progress we could make if we could learn to be rigorous in judgment of ourselves and gentle in judgment of our neighbor! If we would try to remedy a fault, kindness works best with others, sternness with ourselves. It is so easy to make allowances for our own faults, and so difficult to make allowances for others. We have a high opinion of ourselves; the dust for others, the sky for self.

Let us heed what Paul has to say concerning this matter. He seems to have the real answer for the subject. "If we must be critical, let us be critical of our own conduct" (Rom. 14:13, Phillips). And Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount exclaims, "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

We can judge others only by what we hear and see, but in criticizing ourselves we have the whole mind before us, our thoughts, motives, feelings, purposes and ideals in life, the real facts which cannot be seen by our associates but which are an open book to the Almighty by whom we shall be judged.

The sphere of personal criticism is infinitely larger and infinitely more vital, for it is only through self-criticism and self-improvement which must follow that we shall ever be permitted to have an inheritance in the Kingdom of God and see the Elysian fields of bliss. ●●

"Do Thy Diligence to . . .

Come Before Winter"

-- II Timothy 4:21

PRAYER

Loving Father, we come to Thee with words of thanksgiving on our lips. We thank Thee for Thy gifts; they are as varied as our needs, as unfailing as the seasons. Among these gifts none are more appreciated than the gift of Thy Word of truth.

Our minds crave light and knowledge, and Thy Word has kindled a light within us. Through law and sacrifice and prophecy Thou hast sought to keep alive within the minds of men the knowledge of Thyself. And in the fulness of time Thou didst send Thy Son that through Him Thou mightest show us a pattern of the perfect life, and reveal the more fully to mankind the quality of the perfection Thou dost demand of us.

Bathe us in Thy re-creating life, that we may cast off all meanness, all despair, all sin and shame, becoming new creatures in thought, word and deed.

Grant us brave hearts and true. Inspire us with firmness to carry out every holy purpose. Forbid that we should waste the time that is left in vain regrets for the past, or vague dreams of the future, but let us be up and doing, making every move count in our journey toward the Kingdom.

Remind us of the importance of time. Lifetime is working time, and if we pine away in our transgressions, making no effort to eradicate them, a moment shall arrive when our sins shall have become so fixed that we cannot overcome them, and they will bear us down to eternal oblivion.

May we become accustomed to doing good until constant self-criticism and the fear of doing wrong shall have become second nature.

Be with Thy work in all its forms, with those everywhere who are longing and working for that better Day. May Thine angel encamp about them and us as Thou hast promised, and may all things work together for our good, for the purification of our lives. And may Thy Kingdom come and Thy will be done in earth as in heaven. Amen.

DISCOURSE

THERE is sadness and poignancy in these words. Through the little window of this sentence from Paul's last letter to Timothy we can see a truth vividly portrayed. It is a warning against procrastination, that deadly enemy of all accomplishment. It is a warning that time is not an endlessly gushing torrent of energy. Time is limited. Circumstances change constantly. Opportunities may come only once, and they must be grasped promptly, or slip into the irretrievable past.

Paul is writing this letter from his prison cell in Rome. The letter is filled with expressions of personal regard and affection for Timothy. Listen to its opening words: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve . . . with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy."

Tenderness and affection then changes to a kindly reminding of the obligation of duty. "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. . . . Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." Timothy must hold firmly "that good thing which was committed unto [him]" whatever hindrance he might encounter. "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Paul implores him to face the stern conflicts manfully. The letter is one of counsel and encouragement until—

Suddenly it changes. An autumn tang sweeps

through the remaining passages. In the midst of his writing, news comes which quenches the apostles' last lingering hope of release. His condemnation is certain and his doom inevitable. He can never return to Ephesus. So he charges Timothy to leave Ephesus and come to Rome. "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me" (II Tim. 4:9).

He continues to write bravely: "The last drops of my own sacrifice are falling; my time to go has come. I have fought in the good fight; I have run my course; I have kept the faith" (II Tim. 4: 6-7, Moffatt).

"I was ever a fighter, Timothy dear lad, so one fight more—the last and the best." As Paul approaches what he knows will be the end, his feeling is not fear and frustration but the joy of triumph. A fight well fought, a race course finished, a battle won—he has only a few more moments of consciousness before the next thing he will know—the day of coronation! "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (v. 8).

But a certain disquietude intrudes. He desires Timothy's company all the more because he has been deserted by his friends (of all who set out with him from Asia, only Luke remains). The sense of his impending death brings him not fear but a feeling of business incomplete. He must leave his work in worthy hands.

Paul instructs Timothy to bring with him his belongings: his mantle, of which he was feeling a need as the days grew shorter and chillier; and his manuscripts, and—"especially the parchments," the Old Testament Scriptures.

When should Timothy come? It was already autumn, and two or three weeks would elapse ere his summons reached Ephesus and Timothy. Since navigation was dangerous after the autumn solstice, and was entirely suspended after the first week in November, there was no time to lose. So Paul amends his injunction: "Do your best to join me soon." He says now, "Do your best to come before winter." It is an autumn warning. "Timothy, you must come very soon—before winter—or it may be too late."

Because Timothy responded and started for Rome immediately, he was able to share in Paul's last hours. But suppose he had waited? What if he had missed that last boat to Rome and had arrived the following spring, after Paul had been executed? Would he ever have been able to forgive himself for disregarding Paul's urgent plea to "do thy diligence to come before winter"?

These words have current significance. There

comes a time in every life when the icy weather of winter—whether it be the winter of passing years, the winter of changing attitudes, or the winter of unbreakable habit—freezes the golden doors of opportunity shut. By the time the springtime comes again—if it ever does—it is too late.

Putting Off

There may be little out-and-out refusal among us, but there is much temptation to procrastination. In every circle where we move and live, putting-it-off is the popular method of avoidance. In the words of the grade-school poem is a lesson for all of us:

*My friend, have you heard of the land of Yawn
On the banks of the river Slow,
Where blooms the Wait-a-while flower fair,
And the Sometime-or-Other scents the air,
And the Soft-go-easy's grow?*

*It lies in the Valley of Wait-a-while,
In the land of Let'er-slide.
The Tired-feeling is native there,
It's the home of the listless I-don't-care,
Where the Put-it-offs abide.*

In the practical details of everyday living, the "Put-it-offs" abide. We do not decide *not* to write a letter to a friend. We simply postpone answering it. We take it up, dally with it, lay it down, but never seem to get around to finishing it. We never decide not to make a friendly visit we know we should make. We just don't find the most convenient moment.

And even in weightier matters of Christian duty and discipline, we pursue our habit of putting-it-off. We never decide not to confine our reading to that which is constructive, edifying and purposeful. We just relax a moment, pick up the nearest magazine or newspaper and read with interest whatever our eye catches. "Only a few moments," we tell ourselves. But moments grow into minutes, and the habit unchecked wastes many precious hours. "Sometime," we say, "we will do better." But when?

We never decide not to give serious attention to the training of our children. We refer it to a nebulous tomorrow. But is it such a trivial thing? With each passing day they are growing older—and are they learning the things we want them to know? By observing our lives are they learning respect for their elders and reverence for God? Are they learning those virtues and cultivating those habits that will make them law-abiding citizens and loving children of God? Someday, we

say, we will teach them—when they get a little older. But then—it may be too late.

We never decide not to spend our time to the best advantage. We comfort ourselves by saying, "Someday I am going to do better." But when? If Timothy could not see the seriousness of Paul's situation, he would be tortured throughout his life with the thought that he had failed his beloved chief.

The strongest chain in the world is weakened by a single broken link. That broken link is the habit of putting off what we should do today.

We look forward to something future—to the time when we can own our own home, or be free from the responsibilities of our children; or retire in a small country or city dwelling where we can have everything just the way we have always wanted it. But what are we doing with the present? All of us need something to live by in this perplexing, inescapable present. "Do your best to come before winter." Of course you intend to come, but come before the ice and snow make it difficult, dangerous, impossible.

Work—Before Winter

Do your best to come before winter, and strengthen noble friendships. I intend doing that one of these days—but other concerns make it expedient to wait. However, friendship will not be any richer—when winter comes.

Someone is more talented than you. He has so many more advantages, and seems not to recognize or appreciate your meager—but wholehearted—effort. You feel forgotten, neglected—and jealous. Do your best to come before winter and conquer that jealousy.

You gave a suggestion, and no one accepted it. You felt your judgment as good as anyone else's? Do your diligence, and avert that feeling of hurt—winter is coming.

You made a mistake. And you knew it. It was simply an error in human judgment—no wrong there. But when questioned about it, you tried to justify it; you were unwilling to acknowledge that you had made a mistake. Be watchful and alert—winter is coming, and before honor is humility.

Then someone else made a mistake. An outright careless mistake. You were ruffled and impatient—couldn't they have watched what they were doing? Do your best and conquer that emotion of impatience—before winter comes.

You give your best effort to a piece of work. A masterpiece, it seems to you, and someone criticizes it. You are reluctant to acknowledge that someone else might have done the job much better

than you did it. You are proud—beware, for winter is coming, and pride will give no warmth.

You went out of your way to do someone a favor, and he did not appreciate it. Did you feel injured?

Do your best to come before winter with forgiveness to that person who has wronged you. Be reconciled with those you have wronged. I *intend* to, you say, but I am not quite prepared yet to walk that road of humiliation and embarrassment. Some day? but it will not be easier to enter into that liberating experience when winter descends.

Do your best to come before winter and follow Christ. Live at His height; look out upon life with His outlook, and into it with His insight. It will not be easier later.

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short" (I Cor. 7:29). However our day of probation may end, we should feel the urgency of this moment. The time is short.

Are you letting miserable misunderstandings run on from year to year, meaning to clear them up some day? Are you keeping wretched quarrels alive because you cannot quite make up your mind that now is the day to sacrifice your pride and kill them? Are you letting your friend's heart ache for a word of appreciation or sympathy or encouragement which you mean to give him—someday? If you could only know and see and feel, all of a sudden, that "the time is short," how it would break the spell! How you would go instantly and do the thing that you might never have another chance to do.

Time Is Limited

The thought of "come before winter" reminds us starkly that time is limited. The Christian's term of opportunity is not an endless succession of days. Time is circumscribed.

There is an element of mystery about time, and the more we think about it, the more mysterious it appears to be. Time has an elusive quality. How easily it slips away from us, and we hardly notice it is gone. With each tick of the clock another second passes into eternity. The action is irreversible; that moment is *gone forever*; it can never be recalled. Seconds pass into minutes, minutes into hours, hours into days, days into months, and years, and lifetimes.

But with each of us, time has a personal touch. Time in relation to our lives is circumscribed. We have only so much of it. Summer is speeding away; winter is coming.

Aware of this fact in the life of every God-fearing man and woman, the prophet Jeremiah wrote stern words of warning recorded in the thirteenth chapter of the book bearing his name. "Hear ye,

and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness."

Why is the warning so urgent? Darkness is coming; dark mountains of tribulation and death are ahead; your feet will stumble; you will seek in vain for the light of life in which you may continue to walk—unless—unless you hearken *now*, kill your pride and "give glory to the Lord your God."

The form of winter may vary in each of our lives. The fall of darkness suggests the termination of opportunity, the end of the day of life, the closing hours of one's probation time. It may be the end of natural life—and we should remember that none of us are exempt from the possibility of disease or accident. God's only promise is to guarantee sufficient time and opportunity to the man who is making the very most of what he has.

The end of our day of probation may come with the arrival of the prophet Elijah, provided we have had sufficient time to complete our work. But here again is the justice of God: He does not ask what we cannot give, but we are accountable for all that we have. Hence, the urgency of the prophet Jeremiah's words: "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness."

There is yet another sense in which winter may overtake us. Using another simile, we may compare God to the great sculptor who is working to polish and perfect a stone for His eternal temple. When extracted from the quarry, we are rough and unhewn. We must be chipped and chiseled and ground and polished from many and numerous angles. But if we as the stone under His chipping chisel refuse to let Him work upon one side of our stone, one besetting fault of our nature, He may move on to work on another surface of our stone and leave unfinished the side that refused to cooperate. This may mean the termination of opportunity to perfect that which was lacking on that part, and at Judgment our stone will be rejected as unfinished—and all because we refused the opportunity.

Remember Lot's Wife

Jesus was saying "come before winter" when He spoke the shortest but most pointed sermon ever uttered: "Remember Lot's wife." Two angels had come to Lot and his family to deliver them from the doomed city. The hour of escape arrived,

but Lot's wife was not prepared to accept it. For the Sodomites the end was at hand. To Lot, his wife and two daughters, the angels offered deliverance. They all left the city together, but so attached was Lot's wife in affection that she could not keep her face steadfastly set toward the hill country. Even with the angel of God holding her hand, she looked back, and lost her life. For her there was no second chance, no time to reconsider and turn, no extended opportunity. The end came. And so will it come to every covenant-maker who refuses to heed the angel's message: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee." Destruction is behind; darkness is behind; soon opportunity will also be behind—life is *ahead*. Escape for thy life!

No Winter Ahead?

How contrasting to the urgency of Jesus' words is the attitude of much of the religious world, that "while the lamp holds out to burn the vilest sinner may return."

Such teaching stifles initiative and weakens morality. It implies a never-ending summer of opportunity without bounds or obligation. "Do thy diligence to come before winter" is meaningless if God is willing to accept us in any way, any time. We quote the following from a lecture delivered by the once popular evangelist Dwight L. Moody:

"What a terrible hour I thought it would be, when my sins from childhood, every secret thought, every evil desire, everything done in the dark, shall be brought to the light, and spread before an assembled universe! Thank God, these thoughts are gone. The gospel tells me my sins are all put away in Christ. Out of love to me he has taken all my sins and cast them behind his back. That is a safe place for them. God never turns back; he always marches on. . . .

"You may pile up your sins till they rise like a dark mountain, and then multiply them by ten thousand for those you cannot think of; and after you have tried to enumerate all the sins you have ever committed, . . . you are invited to make an exchange; to get rid of all your sins, to take Christ and his righteousness in the place of them. . . . The blood covers them. . . .

"Men make out pardons for good character or good behavior. But God makes out pardons for men who have not got any character, who have been very, very bad. He offers a pardon to every sinner on earth if he will take it. I do not care who he is or what he is like. He may be the greatest libertine that ever walked the streets, or the greatest blackguard who ever lived, or the greatest drunkard, or thief, or vagabond. . . ."

How would this ring in Paul's ears, the pressing

Apostle who was running with all his might and main to *win*? Does this spark with the urgency of Paul's message: "Do your diligence to come before winter?" No, a thousand times NO! Such is definitely NOT the teaching of the God of heaven. Every word of Sacred Writ places a time limit on probation and opportunity. It was not, is not and never will be unlimited and unconditioned. It *is* possible to *delay* too long; it *is* possible to wait until it is *too late*; it *is* possible to miss the crown of life through negligence and continual postponement. This was Ezekiel's message when he wrote of the urgent need to repent: "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye" (Ezek. 18:30-32). Turn—and do it NOW! Come—*come before winter!*

Our Winter

The wheels of time are moving us on relentlessly. How many days before winter?—we know not. We have no assurance that our allotted time shall be sixty, seventy, seventy-five, or eighty years—or even forty. Great strides in the medical profession during recent years have lengthened the lifespan, but they have not removed the certainty of ultimate death. Death still stalks the land, and it is just as real at seventy-five years as it was at fifty-five. Also there are more causes for accidental death now than in former years. As the tempo of life and the speed of transportation have been increased, the hazards of existence have increased. And besides, living as we are so near to the close of the day of salvation, our working time may be terminated at any moment by the appearing of the great Judge.

"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-16). How urgent that we heed these words of the apostle Paul, for—winter *is* coming!

Seize the Day

"*Carpe diem*," cried the old Latins. "Seize the day." For our proposition is just this: neutrality is impossible. Neutrality is a figment of the imagination on any basic issue of life. Right is right, and wrong is never right. And if you hesitate to take positive action in behalf of the right, winter will come and all your regrets and protests will be

unavailing. Life's processes do not call a halt because we have not made up our minds. To put off decisions is to make, actually, an irretrievable decision.

Our foremost concern is the forming of a righteous, self-controlled Christian life, a life that God will perpetuate through winter and spring and on into eternity. But such a life is not the result of idleness or delayed action. To make flowers grow (not weed) you must have *action*. Likewise, you cannot become a Christian in your sleep.

If we think that deferring the action necessary to make ourselves over into a new creature will make the process less painful and less demanding, we will be disappointed; there is no easy way.

"Do your best to come before winter." For the conclusion of the matter is here: it *is* possible to be too late. A tree in April which insisted that it would not put out leaves until May, and then June, and thus on and on postponing it, would find October quite too late. This runs all through life. Doors *do* shut. Winter does follow autumn. Habit accentuates this fact.

If you should think it possible to remain neutral and open-minded on this subject, you are deceiving only yourself. While you rest in neutral, you are coasting downhill. Your life is passing through its springtime; summer, autumn, and winter will come, slowly or suddenly, but inevitably. And when winter comes, with what will you warm your hands? How great will be the store of good deeds you have laid up in heaven?

If you have any gracious words to utter, say them *now*. If you have any wounds to heal, any wrongs to right, any injuries to forgive, attend to them *now*. If you have children to raise in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, be at it *now!*

If you have any desire for the riches of eternity, answer positively now. Start *now* to mold your life according to the Pattern God has provided until your every motive and imagination is fitted into His sublime purpose. *Act now.*

As for me, "Now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2). So "do your best to come *before winter*." You *will*—won't you? ●●

God delights in truthful lips. Right words are fruit from the tree of life. If our words are unclean and untrue, our souls are assuredly sickly and diseased. A perverse tongue is never allied with a sanctified heart. It is only the lips that have been purified with the flame from the holy altar of God that can offer words that are pleasing unto the Lord.

*Time moves onward
relentlessly,
and there is only
one way
we can ever hope
to outwit it*

NOW Is the Time

TIME blows no trumpet. It beats no drum. But its line of march never wavers. Often the years are ghost-silent legions moving through a clamorous, noisy world.

We celebrate many seasons, but time never notices. It has no holidays. It regards neither the beginning nor the end of a century.

Time is unmeasured and measureless. We make timepieces to mark our place in timelessness.

We are forever involved with time, but never time with us. It flows on—steady, impersonal, eternal. It never started and will never cease—else what was there before it began or what will be after it ends? More time?

Time is God's. He has no clock, no calendar. "A thousand years in his sight are as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."

"Life is time's fool," the poet said. All time has to do is pass, and everything in life is changed. Things rot, rust, break, disintegrate. Time is outwitted only when we escape into eternal life—where time becomes our ally.

"You can ask me for anything you like, except time," Napoleon said to one of his aides. Time is the one thing we can never afford to lose, yet we speak of killing it. "As if you could kill time," shouted Thoreau, "without injuring eternity!"

"*Veritatem dies aperit*," said Seneca. "Time discovers the truth." And one of the truths it discovers—often not soon enough!—is that time, as an old Greek used to say, is the most valuable thing a man can spend.

Our trouble is we squander time in our youth and try to hoard it in age—when it's too late.

Do you remember Horace Mann's aphorism? "Lost, yesterday, somewhere between sunrise and sunset, two golden hours, each set with sixty diamond minutes. No reward is offered, for they are gone forever."

Perhaps two of the most important things ever said about time were said in seven words by the

apostle Paul. The first is, "The time is short." To be sure, Paul was referring to the brief duration remaining before the Church should be rocked by persecution (or to the brief interval which would be experienced by those Christians who should live just before the Second Advent of Christ); but his remark is apropos for any age or hour. Time is timeless, but for us in this life it goes on express wings. Dante well said, "Consider that this day shall ne'er dawn again."

The other thing Paul said is an order: "Redeem the time!" A man asked a philosopher, "Do you have the time?" The philosopher said, "Not as much as I need. Do you?"

Benjamin Franklin wrote, "Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of."

Spend time we must, on one thing or another. But we had better spend it for God and His Kingdom, for He alone has the power to give it back to us.

Time redeemed is time surrendered to Christ and His church for the redemption of the world. Time redeemed is time spent in preparing our own lives to be acceptable material for God to choose and use throughout eternity.

And that time is *now*! ••

Waste a little time in order to get more time. It does no good to run from the back of an airplane to the front in order to get to our destination more quickly. Every day is filled with empty moments which can be filled with inner recollection. We live in two kinds of time: objective time which is the clock and the subjective time which is our inner control of outside pressures.

FAITH AND COURAGE

Characters:

David	Saul, the King
Jesse, his father	Captain
Eliab, his brother	Soldiers

Setting:

A hillside near David's home. Twilight.

Scene I

It is centuries ago. On a rolling hillside in the land of Israel, sits a disconsolate boy, looking toward the distant and alluring horizon with eager eyes and wondering if he will ever venture into the far-away lands that seem to beckon him. Around him cluster a small flock of sheep that have sought the protection of their shepherd at the fall of night, for night is almost here.

The shadows deepen; from the hills comes the savage cry of marauding wolves, and the boy's fingers close tighter round the sling that he holds in his hand. The wind grows colder and he draws his cloak closer about him. To the east the first star of evening rises, serene and white. From the little village nestled at the foot of the hill come the lights one by one. Music softened by the distance floats into the twilight. The call of a night bird sounds from afar. Then silence.

Suddenly a voice, calling; it calls again. The boy rises to his feet, straining to see through the dim light.

DAVID. Who comes hither?

JESSE. (afar) David!

DAVID. It is my father's voice. What brings him here, searching for me upon this lonely hillside?

JESSE. (nearer) David!

DAVID. Father! What hath brought thee here?

(Enter Jesse)

JESSE. My son! 'Tis time the sheep were in the fold—not here upon the lonely mountainside.

DAVID. I did forget how late the hour.

JESSE. Forget? Ah! Thou art dreaming here again?

DAVID. Aye! Hast thou not dreamed, my father?

JESSE. Come! We must not tarry. Thy mother awaits thee. She thought thee lost!

DAVID. I? Lost among these hills—

JESSE. I told her that no danger could befall thee; But since she worried, I did come to seek thee.

DAVID. I know these hills, my father, too well perhaps! 'Tis all I know; perchance all I *shall* know.

JESSE. David! Art thou discontented in thy home?

DAVID. I would say "no"; and yet my heart says "yes."

JESSE. My son! I know thy thoughts; nay, let me speak. It is thy brothers' going to the wars that hath so hotly raised thy discontent.

DAVID. O Father! If thou wert young, wouldst thou stay willingly beside these sheep, and never see what lies beyond these hills; never have a chance to show thyself a man, but only be a shepherd to thy death? And wouldst thou see thy brothers marching off, where fame awaits, and not feel discontent?

JESSE. Abide in patience, my son. Thine hour will come.

DAVID. O Father! Thou sayest this to comfort me.

JESSE. Nay! Nay! My son!

DAVID. What hour will come, here, in these lonely hills, where every day is even as the last? And every morrow like as yesterday?

JESSE. My son! Dost thou remember Samuel, the prophet?

DAVID. Dimly, as in a dream. But what—

JESSE. He came one day, into our village yonder, and all the people wondered what had brought him to such an humble place. And as we wondered, fearing to ask him, lest he take offense, he called me to his side. "Jesse," he said, "How many sons hast thou?" I answered him, and he did bid me bring my sons to him. Still wondering, I did call my boys together. The holy prophet looked upon them all, and shook his head, "Hast thou no other sons?" he asked. No, David, thou wert but a strippling so tall. I told him thou wert with the sheep. He bade me bring thee to him; when he saw thee he lifted up his eyes unto the heavens, and spake:

"O Jesse, this thy youngest son shall be the anointed one of Israel!" Thus speaking, he did lay his holy hands upon thy head and blessed thee, and departed.

DAVID. What may this mean, my father?

JESSE. David, my son, I only know that great tasks do await thee.

DAVID. But how? As prophet, priest or captain? Surely he meant not that I should be King!

JESSE. Who knoweth? Stranger things have happened. Thy family is as noble as was Saul's; to whom He will, Jehovah gives the crown. He looks not on appearance, but on the heart. 'Tis certain, Samuel did not say this for naught.

DAVID. Then why, for all these years, hath Samuel kept his silence, saying naught to me of this? From that day even unto this, to him I am a stranger, and he sees me not; and day by day I sit and watch the sheep, and soon, ere many years, I shall be old!

JESSE. My son! My son! Thou talkest like a child! I say, and I repeat it. God hath set His eyes upon thee: great tasks for thee await.

DAVID. Here? Midst the sheep?

JESSE. David, I know not where; but this I know, that when the hour is come, God will make it known. Thy heart will tell thee.

DAVID. My father, great tasks come to them who seek them.

JESSE. Oft times to them who *wait* in patience, my son!

DAVID. In patience, my father! How *long* shall I have patience, Father?

JESSE. Do that which is appointed. All the rest is in the hands of God.

DAVID. Men must *prepare* for deeds of greatness. Is *this* my preparation, watching sheep? Is *this* the training of a chief or King?

JESSE. It may be so. Our human sight is weak. Do that which is thy lot, and do it well; and it may serve thee.

DAVID. 'Tis true I have some skill upon the harp, and thou hast often seen me cast a stone, and strike a mark no larger than thy hand. But these are things that any man may do.

JESSE. My son! Thou hast played before the King, an honor great.

DAVID. (bitterly) Yea, but to what end? One day I am his favorite and his armor bearer, the next, he has forgotten that I live. A week, perhaps, I spend at court, until the sickness in his mind is eased, and then back to the sheep. And when I come again, I am a stranger. Is this opportunity? More like a jester or a slave, am I.

JESSE. My son! What man can wake such melodies as thou canst waken from thy harp? What

man dares face the wolf that preys upon his flock, and, with a single stone within his sling, defy him? Thou darest do this, my son!

DAVID. How shall this serve me?

JESSE. *Master thy discontent!* All things work to God's will. Thy chance will come.

DAVID. Oh! Would, my father, that I had thy faith, that this my life, is not a wasted thing!

JESSE. Have faith! My son. Perchance this is thy test; to live through what to thee seem fruitless days, to conquer thy despair, to be the master of thine own soul! To do thy daily task, and wait in patience.

DAVID. That shall I do, though the fight be hard, and the days long. If this be my task, I'll try to do it well, as thou hast said.

JESSE. The waiting may seem long, but think of this: men have in patience waited, and their patience been rewarded.

When God has work for man, His hand cannot be hurried or delayed; His time be ours.

DAVID. 'Tis true, my father, and I know it well. I should remember Joseph; all his days and nights in prison must have hopeless been, and dull—far worse than I have ever known; yet came a day, God found for him his place, ruler of Egypt; though he sought it not, in one brief hour the slave became a prince. Forgive me, Father, that I did complain.

JESSE. Think, too, of Moses, my son, our lawgiver great, who, like thee, kept the sheep day after day, night after night, in the desert and on the hills, when one day, suddenly and without warning, came the voice of God, and all his earthly life was changed. Eighty long years he waited for his call—and thou dost talk to me of growing old—yet in those years he had so mastered self that he was ready. . . . Are you thus prepared?

DAVID. I see, Father! I see! . . . I have been talking like a babe.

JESSE. My son! Today at noon the word was brought to me that in the vale of Elah the armies lie. Tomorrow you shall go at break of day to seek the welfare of thy brothers three—Eliab, Shammah and Abinadab. They may be wanting food, so I shall send their rations, as required of every head of household. Then thou shalt bring me word again. I know that this will be a change for thee; and who can tell what opportunity may come to thee? This may well be thy day.

(Exit both)

(To be continued next issue)

NOTE: The article on page 11, "Ordinary Days," follows this scene as a narration.

Ordinary Days

IT has been truly said that it is not so much that *men* change as times and *circumstances*. Human nature and human problems remain very much the same. From generation to generation and from century to century, the problems of David's day and of his personal life may well be, in some measure, our own. Does our life seem a daily monotonous routine of commonplace duties? Do we feel that we are confined by circumstances within narrow limits and that this is all there will ever be for us? Are our days dull and uninteresting? Are we discontent, wishing we could be doing something noteworthy?

Like the youthful David, do we dream of greater tasks and feel the desire for action and fame rather than to remain in our humble occupation tending sheep, as it were? Let us remember, this is our period of training. This is our preparation for great things, our probation for the kingly office that we are promised in the kingdom of Christ. Our present need is not of the ability to direct the armies of the Lord in conquering the nations nor of statesmanship to govern them in that glorious new regime. It is rather to form such characters as will be worthy of this noble gift, characters that will be ready to receive and carry out the instructions of the King of kings, our own will and judgment subordinated in all things to Him. Our day for great

accomplishments will surely come.

However, to be ready for that day we must now recognize and grasp every opportunity and use it for our preparation. *Now* is our opportunity.

The real materials out of which characters are formed are the hourly occurrences of everyday life. Each claim of duty, the employment of every moment of time, the trials we are called upon to bear, the momentary decisions that must be made, the casual word with friend or neighbor, and many others, small as they may seem, are the real character-forming occasions. If we embrace them, we are developing the character which will merit the approval of our King. He who is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and slighted talents and neglected opportunities will bring us bitter disappointment and regret in that great day when the Lord reckons with His stewards.

We have heard the unsuccessful offer the excuse that they might have done great things *if* only they had had the chance that others have had. Naturally they never admit that they were too shallow or too irritable or too lazy to bring themselves down to give *their best* to such prosaic tasks as keeping books, selling goods, laying bricks, plowing furrows or other worthwhile occupations. The story is always: I was not born for it, I never had an education, I never

had influential friends, I never had the advantages of others.

Success in this world is not so much a matter of fortunate circumstances as of purpose and persistence. Opportunities mean little or nothing to the feeble, sleepy, sluggish, dilatory class; but to the energetic and wide-awake they are important occasions to be used toward gaining ultimate success.

Many opportunities present themselves daily to those who are seeking to be kings with Christ. Never should we select only the most agreeable task. Never should we wait for an opportunity to make the greatest public display of our abilities or our virtues. Before honor is humility and lowliness of mind and in our daily walk, we should show by our fruits our sincerity, our entire consecration, our earnest desire to serve *wherever* and *whenever* there is need.

The thing which sets us apart from the world is that we have a desire and have been called to something higher than the commonplace. Advancement of any kind requires pressure, but when days go by in seeming endless succession, with nothing of the tragic, heroic or unusual; when weeks and months lengthen into years, each bringing its familiar routine of work, eat, sleep, worship, with perhaps a little recreation, repeated again and again, *these are dangerous days*. Our living faith so easily becomes a lifeless, mechanical, ha-

bitual faith. Our lips repeat memorized phrases while our thoughts may be miles away. The spirit droops for lack of sustenance while the cares of this life crowd in with force. We may call these ordinary days, but they call for *extraordinary* vigilance to maintain our level above the world.

We are not apt to forget God in times of stress or persecution, peril or crises, but we are not built to stand continual strain. We should give thanks for the placid, uneventful days. None of them is without meaning. Each of them—however commonplace—offers us 24 golden hours, each set with sixty diamond minutes. The rich have no more; the poor have no less. They never come again and the supply is limited.

Are we using them to the best of our ability? We are expecting great and wonderful things to take place on this earth in our own age. It may be that we have tried to hurry the hand of God. The story may have grown old. The days may seem dull and tame and common. But they are not. They are laden with significance and evidence of the working of the plan of God if we but open our eyes. And someday, on such a day as this, the change will come. So suddenly, so simply, so naturally will it come that we will wonder that we ever doubted. But it will also be so final when faith changes to sight. That very moment it will be: "I did," or "I *wish* I had."

We cannot underestimate the value of our present opportunities. The noble character which we are striving to attain is a growth, but not the growth of a day or even a year. It is the sum of many ordinary days well used. The strength which will enable us to do this great work will be the product of many ordinary, unromantic, unheroic days of discipline, of meditation on the promises of our Father, a painstaking crucifying of the flesh in its smallest manifestation.

We cannot put off until a more favorable or eventful day the many small duties, the little opportunities for service, the study, the prayer, the meditation, the mental improvement. We must realize fully that each hour is a precious stone for character building, that each day, however dull and filled with drudgery, is an indispensable part of a drama of high adventure, the greatest and most thrilling adventure to which mortal man has ever been called—because of the prize at stake.

The time past should suffice us for tongue-talk and good intentions. Let us not permit the dead-weight of the commonplace daily routine to act as a drag on our feet in this narrow way, especially at this time when speed is so very important. Let us use the events of these todays in a new light, as a challenge, a test of our spirituality and prog-

ress, and by this new perception, we will live so fully, so abundantly that there will be in our lives no such thing as dull, uninteresting days. ●●

From A Reader—

Disciplined Living

The apostle Paul in his many Epistles to the believers stressed strongly the disciplined life. He experienced great heart-rending opposition and difficulties not known to us in this age. Although we have not the same persecutions, we possess the same human natures, subject to inertia, frustration and small faith. Here is a penetrating analysis well worth our thoughtful consideration: "No nation or individual ever had or will have the power of suddenly developing under the pressure of necessity those faculties it had neglected when it was at ease; nor teaching itself in difficulties the skill to produce what it never in opulence had the sense to admire."

Paul practiced what he preached every day. Whether rested or tired, full or hungry, strong or weak, he developed within him the Christian resources to carry him through every hour of trouble. No carnally-minded person will suddenly display the necessary facets of Christian character unless he is in active training every day of his life.

While the Lord is tarrying, we are given all the opportunity to discipline ourselves according to the commandments left us in His Word. To do as we please even for a day is to cause ourselves a serious setback in our Christian effort to gain the supremacy over the lower nature. We must realize the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. To get at the evils in self requires everything we have and are. An angry, impatient man will never lay aside his impatience with just one stroke of practice; he must strive long and mightily within himself before he can fully learn to master himself.

What we go through is mostly with ourselves, the struggle of the new man against the old. As it is impossible to love God and self at the same time, to halt between two opinions, we must choose this day and every day whom we will serve. It takes much courage and self-resistance to do that and not falter in doing it. But that is where discipline comes in. We must not be weaklings in putting down our passions but war mightily unto the very end.

Mrs. L. M. K., South Amboy, N. J.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

Baptism

THE Great Apostle defined baptism in his letter to the Galatians as "to put on Christ," saying, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (3:27). Obviously the meaning could not be literal, since being immersed in literal water would not add Christ to anyone's life.

This verse holds what we believe to be the true meaning of baptism for today—spiritual and not literal baptism. To be "baptized into Christ" implies something more than water baptism; something more than the baptism of the Apostolic Church "in the name of Christ." Those who have been baptized into Christ have "put on Christ."

To "put on Christ" suggests adding a new dimension to one's life, and according to a 19th century commentary the use of this metaphor was meant to suggest just that. The writer states that the thought may have been taken from the putting on of special baptismal robes, but it is commonly used in the Septuagint where it means "to adopt" or "take to oneself." The Christian, at baptism, thus "took to himself" Christ, and sought to grow into full union with Christ, to become one with Him.

Such a meaning can be drawn from the Greek word from which "baptism" is derived. As used by the Greeks, the verb **baptizo**, is not a mere impulse or influence by which one is seized momentarily and then instantly released. The primary meaning of the word is to submerge and is expressive of continuance. As used in the Greek, the word expresses a control which not only seizes but holds its object. Thus baptism, according to the Greeks, brings the convert into a new state of life or experience, a life controlled by the question: "What would Jesus do?"

To be "baptized into Christ" is to acknowledge a commitment to Christ just as the Israelites acknowledged their commitment to Moses. Paul described this as being "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (I Cor. 10:2). The same 19th century writer mentioned above expresses the thought that the Israelites' baptism was in the

miraculous Red Sea crossing. They were not immersed in the water, but passed over dry shod according to the Biblical account. Their baptism was in emerging from the Red Sea, from "their wondrous march through that long and fearful night with the wall of water rolled up on each side and the column of fiery cloud above and behind them, —it was in this that they were baptized into their allegiance to their great lawgiver and leader."

Emerging from the Red Sea, the Israelites had made their break with Egypt. They had undergone what Paul termed "baptism" in the Red Sea crossing. The Red Sea formed a natural boundary of Egypt and when the waters had again closed behind them they had "burned their bridges," cutting off all means of return to the old life. God had "saved" them from their enemies, but their "baptism" did not save them eternally for we read that "with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness" (I Cor. 10:5). Of that great mass of people that crossed the Red Sea we learn that but two, Caleb and Joshua, "wholly followed the Lord."

We have learned that baptism in the days of John the Baptist, Jesus and the apostles was not the means of salvation, but only a beginning. Unless the baptized emerged to "walk in newness of life," he would not be saved in the end.

In this issue we will continue our study of baptism, following our outline:

- V. The **One** Baptism
 - A. The Meaning of "One Baptism"
 - B. The "One Baptism" According to the Prophets
 - C. The "One Baptism" According to Paul
 - D. The "One Baptism" in Hebrews
 - E. The "One Baptism" According to Peter

Baptism, as defined by one writer is "a rite wherein by immersion in water the participant symbolizes and signalizes his transition from an impure to a pure life, his death to a past he abandons, and his new birth to a future he desires." This is a fitting definition of baptism—the one baptism which is necessary today.

V. THE ONE BAPTISM

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, both of whom were numbered among the twelve apostles, came to Jesus with the request that they be granted favored positions in His Kingdom when it is established. Jesus' answer to their ambitious request reveals the depth of meaning to baptism: "Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Mark 10:38).

Obviously Jesus meant more than water baptism; anyone could easily undergo literal baptism. "Jesus was saying to James and John, 'Can you bear to go through the experience which I must go through? Can you face being submerged in hatred and pain and death as I must be?' Jesus was telling these two disciples that without a cross there can never be a crown, that baptism is an ordeal, not a simple experience" (Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark*.)

Another statement of Jesus' in Luke 12:50 gives the same impression concerning baptism: "But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened [or pained] till it be accomplished!" Jesus uses baptism as above, as of someone passing through a terrible experience. Many newer translations give the thought that Jesus is here referring to the ordeal He faced on the cross—and it is termed a "baptism."

That Jesus did refer to an experience other than water baptism is evident also from what He said further to James and John: "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized" (Mark 10:39). Jesus had been baptized only with the baptism of John and at this time John was already beheaded, hence it would have been impossible for them to undergo the baptism of John.

Just as Jesus had foreknowledge of the painful experience that faced Him, He also knew that His apostles would have to undergo severe persecution after they were left to themselves. History reveals the extent of the horrible treatment the early church received at the hands of the Romans.

A. The Meaning of "One Baptism"

From Jesus' own words we learned that it was not a simple dipping in water that He instituted, but an immersion. His was not a command to put people into the water and take them out again, but to completely submerge them, symbolically, in the water of life until their every thought, word and act is governed by that water described by Jesus as "living water," the wonderful words of life. This is the "one baptism" to which Paul referred when he said: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5).

The "one baptism" is not water baptism, but a baptism of much deeper significance. It entails a full surrender, a complete death to sin. A few verses from Paul to the Romans give us an excellent definition of this all-important baptism: "Know ye not that, so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:3-4, 6).

There is no efficacy in water baptism; it does not remove sin. But to be "baptized into his [Christ's] death", then to arise to "walk in newness of life" will bring salvation. The "old man" must be crucified, killed, so that sin is no longer our master, "that henceforth we should not serve sin." This constitutes the "one baptism," the only baptism that will bring salvation.

In the words of a 19th century clergyman, "Christian baptism is no mere literal and senseless dipping assuring the frightened candidate a safe exit from the water, but it is a symbolical immersion, in which the believer goes, in a sublime and solemn trust, into a figurative burial dying to sin for a life with Christ."

B. The "One Baptism" According to the Prophets

Although baptism as known since New Testament times is not to be found in the Old Testament, the principle is nevertheless there. The idea of a thorough cleansing, both of person and of character did not originate with John the Baptist.

Moses' law contained many and various rules for purification which included putting away sin as well as ceremonial washings. **Hezekiah**, one of the good kings of Judah, called for a thorough cleansing of the house of the Lord, but before they could partake of the passover they were to sanctify themselves. Sanctification, under the old law, included a cleansing of the heart as well as of the person.

Isaiah, speaking for God, commanded: "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil" (Isa. 1:16, Scofield Bible). **Jeremiah** called on Israel to wash from their wickedness that they might be saved (Jer. 4:14). **Ezekiel**, prophet of the captivity, declared, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you" (36:25). The only water that will cleanse the evil from the heart is the water of life, the Word of God.

These, as well as other Old Testament texts that might be quoted, all point to the cleansing necessary to salvation. It was not a simple washing in water that was required, but a thorough cleansing of the heart, a purging as in Psalm 51:7: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." To purge suggests something more than a dipping, or a mild cleansing, something much more drastic. Although it was not referred to as a baptism, the process was the same as required by the one baptism instituted by Jesus.

C. The "One Baptism" According to Paul

We have quoted some words from Paul to define "one baptism," but these few verses are not all he had to say on the subject. We will review some of his words in other Epistles.

1. From his letter to the Romans. We will study further in the sixth chapter of Romans. Paul in this chapter is emphasizing the difference between a mere outward relationship to Christ and the Church and the "one baptism," the baptism into Christ's death to sin. To be "baptized into Jesus Christ" meant something more to Paul than water baptism "in the name of Jesus." It is to be "baptized into his death," that is, His death to sin, for Paul says in verse 10, "in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."

If we have died to sin as Christ died to sin, been baptized into His death to sin, that baptism will cause us to have the same hatred of sin as Christ had. We will so loathe sin that we can no longer live in it. We will be dead to sin in the same way Christ was dead to sin if we are really "baptized into his death."

It is evident from the language of the verse that Paul did not refer to immersion in water, nor could he have referred to any ritual form of baptism. Likewise the burial in verse 4 could not refer to literal burial. Paul says "We are buried," but it is not we in the entirety of our persons, but our "old man" (v. 6), that is symbolically buried. In the words of the clergyman mentioned previously, "The metaphor is to signify the utter death and destruction of the 'old man,' its obliteration out of our lives, so that we cannot live any longer in sin nor serve, sin; the apostle represents it as buried hidden away in a resurrectionless grave. The old man buried, so that the new man may walk unimpeded in 'newness of life.' In these words of the apostle we have baptism as expressed by the Greek *baptizo*, 'the coming into a new state of life or experience.'"

At a later point in his letter to the Romans, Paul earnestly entreated the brethren with these

words: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (12:1). They may have been previously baptized, but that would not save them. It was for them to make a "living sacrifice," by separating themselves from the world and its evils, becoming servants of God and not servants of sin.

2. From his letter to Timothy. Writing to his son in the faith, Paul said, "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: . . . and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (II Tim. 2:10-12; 19b). **Paul had been baptized, but he was willing to suffer, even to the point of death, for the sake of the reward which he knew lay ahead. To be "dead with him [Christ]" is to die to sin as He died to sin, to be "baptized into his death" as Paul wrote in Romans 6:3-6.**

3. From his letter to the Philippians. Paul here exhorted the church to be sure their conduct was such that it would be above reproach and to be not afraid of those who opposed them "for unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me" (1: 29-30). **Having been baptized into Christ's death, they could expect suffering and conflict just as Jesus Himself had forewarned the Twelve before His death. This was part of the cup they must drink, the baptism they must be baptized with.**

4. From his letter to the Colossians. It was not unusual for Paul to warn the brethren through his letters concerning false beliefs and practices. Here his warning suggests there may have been false teachers in their midst and he exhorts them to stand fast in the faith, saying, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. . . . And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power; . . . buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:6-7, 10, 12).

It is evident they had been baptized, but there was a work to do. They must walk in Him, in His commandments, as they had been taught.

The New English translation of verse 12 is a little clearer: "For in baptism you were buried with him, in baptism also you were raised to life with him through your faith in the active power of God

who raised him from the dead." They were symbolically "buried with him" when they were baptized, baptized into His death, and symbolically raised to "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4), believing that God who raised Jesus from the dead could likewise raise them from the dead. This constitutes the ONE baptism.

D. The "One Baptism" in Hebrews

In the sixth chapter of Hebrews, the writer is exhorting the Jews who had become Christians to progress toward spiritual maturity. "Let us then stop discussing the rudiments of Christianity. We ought not to be laying over again the foundations of faith in God and of repentance from the deadness of our former ways, by instruction about cleansing rites [baptisms, KJV] and the laying-on-of-hands, about the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. Instead, let us advance towards maturity; and so we shall, if God permits" (Heb. 6:2-3, NEB).

They had undergone water baptism and now it was time for them to "advance towards maturity," towards "perfection" as it is translated in the King James Version. Baptism in the Apostolic Church was only the beginning, only a foundation stone; they had to work to gain salvation. They had not yet undergone the "one baptism," the baptism into His death to sin, and the writer was exhorting them to get started.

The writer gives further instruction concerning salvation: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)" (Heb. 10:22-23). **Their hearts were to be "sprinkled clean from an evil conscience," according to the Berkeley Bible. Sprinkling with the water of baptism does not cleanse from evil; only the water of life, the Word of God, cleanses from sin. Jesus said, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). Hearing the word only is not sufficient. To "go on to perfection" requires acting on the word, keeping the commandments.**

The writer to the Hebrews gives testimony to Jesus' accomplishment of the "one baptism," in submitting to the cross, advising Christians to look "unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). **This was the completion of His "baptism," His last act of obedience to His heavenly**

Father. He was "obedient unto death," praying to His Father, "if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). "Not my will, but thine," in all things is the Christian's baptism.

E. The "One Baptism" in Peter

Peter gives us a comprehensive definition of baptism in his First Epistle. Translations other than King James make it clearer. "Baptism is not the washing away of bodily pollution, but the appeal made to God by a good conscience; and it brings salvation through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21, NEB). The Berkeley translation is likewise comprehensive: "Baptism saves you, not by removal of physical filth, but by the earnest seeking of a conscience that is clear in God's presence, which is due to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at God's right hand." **Water baptism might remove filth from the body, but that did nothing to cleanse the heart. Baptism was only a symbol, it did not make pure. The heart or mind of man, here spoken of as the "conscience" can be cleansed only by "earnest seeking," by learning what God requires and doing it. In this way the "one baptism," the death to sin is accomplished.**

To be a messenger you must know the message.

TEST YOURSELF

1. What is the meaning of the phrase: "baptized into Christ," as Paul understood it?
2. Define baptism.
3. What was Jesus suggesting when He asked James and John concerning baptism, "Are ye able . . . ?"
4. What does it mean to be "baptized into his [Christ's] death"?
5. According to the prophets, what is the principal medium of cleansing?
6. What is the meaning and implication of the Greek word from which baptism is derived?
7. What did the apostle Peter say about baptism?

Reprints of these studies are available upon request.

Thanksgivings



Old and New

"IN everything give thanks." These words reveal the secret essence of all Christlikeness. Written deep in the heart of every Christian, they form the framework for all his thought and action.

"And by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." A thankful spirit animates the soul of every man and woman who in sincerity and truth makes request of God. And this is as it should be. For if we are unthankful for temporal favors, how can we ask God to give us the eternal? If we ignore or blandly accept our present blessings, how can we expect a share in the greater blessings of the age to come?

We are mistaken in assuming that Thanksgiving had its origin with either the Pilgrims or the Puritans. Truly the Pilgrims had abundant cause for thanksgiving at the sight of Cape Cod; the rocky shores were a welcome relief after sixty-seven days of sailing. Weak, weary, poorly armed, scantily provisioned, without shelter were they when they landed at last on the ice-clad rocks of Plymouth. Why all this suffering and privation? Says one historian: "To break from off their necks the shackles of their homeland; to enjoy religious freedom."

Through ancient history, special thanksgiving days were numerous among God's people. Notable was the Feast of Tabernacles, an annual thanksgiving each fall, not simply in memory of ancestral favors but in gratitude for the ingathered harvest. Beautiful was the manner of its observance. The Israelites gathered and erected booths in the open

air using palm and willow branches. In these the families gathered to sit together before the Lord. So the occasion was sacred to the reunion of friends, the interchange of kindnesses, the expression of generous reward for the stranger, the widow, the fatherless. Gratitude was foremost: No Israelite could so much as taste of an ear of parched corn or bread of the new harvest till the nation had borne a sheaf of barley or wheat and waved it before the Lord.

But when did the sun ever look down upon Christians more blest? living in homes of health and comfort in the cool of the day of salvation and at a time which the prophets and sages longed to see. May God incline us more and more to that unselfish, contented, cheerful, thankful temperament.

To millions of people, Thanksgiving is merely an occasion for the overflow of the animal spirit. Our thanksgiving feast should be to the glory of God, and we should rejoice to be able to feast at a table filled with spiritual dainties and covered with numberless sweets which we can enjoy even before we reach the Promised Land. It was the Psalmist who said, "I will sing unto the Lord because he hath dealt bountifully with me. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation."

We may stretch our minds to find some great thing for which to be thankful and forget many blessings we seldom consider. We hardly pause to count the blessing of having all of our five senses. Can we picture the expression which must have spread over the face of blind Bartimaeus at the

moment he received his sight? We have never known what it is to be blind. Nor do we pause often enough to consider how great a benefit is healthful sleep when after an exceptionally hard day we retire almost too tired to pray. In the morning the waste is supplied; that which was weary has been restored and we rise as a strong man to run a race. We arise from our beds with scarcely a thought of gratitude for the use of our limbs and senses.

We should contemplate the joy of the man healed at the Gate Beautiful by the Apostle. He ran and leaped and praised God; his ankles received strength and he sprang up, jumping and running in the use of his new-found liberty. And yet we have the use of our limbs for our whole life. Are we thankful for the water which we drink, the water in which we bathe? We waste it, despise it, count it among the cheapest things; yet it is one of our greatest blessings. I do not wonder Jacob cried out, "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies and of all thy truth."

The Harvest Home of God is rapidly approaching with plenty and joy to every Christian, but let us ever remember that to gather even a literal harvest a great work must be done. The ground must be broken up, ripped open so the sunshine and rain may enter. Old roots that sap the life of the ground must be torn up; it must be tilled and cultivated again and again before the harvest.

So in our spiritual lives; the ground must be prepared with great care. If ever we reap in mercy, we cannot plow in wickedness. Every inch of fallow ground must be broken up that the rain of righteousness may be absorbed. The instrument God uses for cultivation must pass over us many times, even though it sometimes seems cruel. If the harvest is to be plenteous, it must be sown in tears. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Tears are the seed of a joyful harvest if they flow from a contrite heart. If the sowing is to the "flesh," the harvest will be "corruption." If we refuse God's cultivation and reject the instruments He uses, our crop may appear to flourish for a time, but when the Great Reaper arrives, the harvest will be a heap in the day of grief and desperate sorrow.

Blessings surround us, but we need not delude ourselves into thinking God will give us a smooth and easy passage to the eternal City. Ofttimes it has been with us as with the children of Israel. They expected a quick and short journey into the land of promise. So have we. They were impatient over obstacles and murmured aloud because of delays. So have we. They were stubborn and unyielding, and rebelled against the leading of God. So have we. They were forged and hammered into shape and strength. So must we be. As the Egyp-

tians followed them to return them again to bondage, so we have enemies many and strong striving to draw us back and hinder our progress. Too often have we set a watch for these enemies and then ran when we saw them advancing.

We know the day is not far distant when the murmuring, stubborn, unyielding and disobedient will be punished. Those who have turned to their idols will be made to drink the ashes of the calf they worshiped. Nevertheless, some will survive the wilderness journeying to cross the Jordan on dry ground and share in the glorious thanksgivings of the age to come.

Every day bears us nearer to our land of promise. Every blessing encourages us to strive the harder for the greater blessings in store. Every difficulty challenges us to enlarge our thankful spirit until we can say with Paul, "In everything give thanks."●

From A Reader—

The Devil Bad?

"Strictly Personal" by Sidney Harris is a column in our daily newspaper. Here is an excerpt from a recent one that I thought you might find interesting.

His 9-year-old daughter said to him, "Daddy, there's something peculiar about that whole story of God and the Devil and Hell—it just doesn't hold together. God is supposed to love good people, and the Devil is supposed to favor bad people, right? The good people go to God, but the bad people go to Hell, where the Devil punishes them forever. It doesn't make much sense—in that case, the Devil couldn't be the enemy of God. I mean, if the Devil really was on the side of the bad people, he wouldn't punish them in Hell, would he? He'd treat them nicely and be kind to them for coming over to his side. He'd give them candy and presents and not burn them up.

"It seems to me that if the whole story is true, then the Devil is secretly on the side of God, and is just pretending to be wicked. He works for God as a kind of secret agent, testing people to find out who's good or bad, but not really fighting against God.

"Well, here's another thing. If God is really all-powerful, no Devil would have a chance against Him. So if a Devil really exists, it must be because he's secretly in cahoots with God."

It takes a child to think it through—no adult could have come up with such a simple logic!

Mrs. A. D., Warren, Ohio

Searching,

Searching...

L AURIE searched the morning paper, column after column. There it was among the long list: Grandma's obituary. Laurie picked up the scissors to cut it out for her scrapbook. As she cut, tears came to her eyes. What would Grandpa do now? He would be all alone. Why did Grandma have to die? Why did anybody have to die? Life to Laurie seemed so mysterious. "Why are we here?" she wondered. "And what's going to happen to us? Are we all just going to die and that's it? Why can't we live on forever?"

Laurie didn't like to think about it. Such thoughts were so disheartening. They made life seem so useless and a waste of time. There just didn't seem to be any answers for all her questions. Didn't other people care what was going to happen to them? If so, why didn't they show it?

Laurie had asked her mother all these questions one time, and her mother had told her to believe in God. But what good would that do? Just to believe there is a God doesn't answer all your questions.

"O Lord! You must have made a terrible mistake! Mother says I'm selfish for wanting a life that lasts forever, but I don't think so.... You should have had a plan in mind when you created this earth. Now You've made a mess of things. It would have been so much better if You had put only good people here and let them live on forever.... Lord, if nothing is impossible with You, why don't You change things now? Just to put us here for a few years seems so unjust and unfair. It is like waving a lollypop in front of a child, then telling him he can't have it.... O Lord! Please help me to understand. There must be some answers somewhere. I feel so alone and scared."

Laurie knew nothing about the Bible. She had never been taken to church. She had always wanted

to go. Something inside her always made her want to go. Perhaps it was just curiosity, but somehow she felt that that was the right place to be.

Many young people in our sad world are like Laurie, mixed up and confused. Yet, Laurie is different from many; she has a higher longing for something better, something more lasting than the uncertainties that she sees all about her. What she doesn't know is that she is searching for something that can be found. There are answers to her questions. Though she does not realize it, God is the answer to her searching. He has all the answers to her longings. Someday, after God has answered her prayers, she will be able to look back and see how the same kind, loving, heavenly Father had seen her afar off, and was drawing her to Him and His life-giving knowledge; how He was leading her to the way of a glorious eternal life. Such a person, groping in darkness, longing for a way to escape the grasping hands of death will be shown to the true light. God assures us that He answers the prayers of every earnest, honest seeker. He will show a way to all who will walk in it. He will reveal His will to all who will do it. Whether he or she will follow it after being shown is up to each one.

What about us? We were once eager to know the way. Now that we have it, do we become weary of treading it because of a few rough spots? Are we as excited now as we were when we first began, or is the novelty wearing off? Are we approaching each day as a fresh new day, a fresh new start, forgetting about yesterday and concentrating on making today better, or has our religion become an everyday routine? We have no time to sit on the fence, no time to stand still. We must keep moving, and that moving must be forward.

We should do well to remember the advice of the Psalmist: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Ps. 90:12). "Now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2). We don't know what tomorrow may bring, therefore we should make sure each day goes into our book as a profitable day with some definite good accomplished. For some day will be our last.

Laurie is headed in the right direction. Are we?

Let us be sure we do not make a wrong turn, but keep pressing straight ahead for the eternal weight of glory in store for every faithful doer. One thing we must remember: we cannot leave today's work until tomorrow, for tomorrow may never come. We can live forever only as we make the most of every day's God-given opportunities for a rich reward. ●●

Bible A B C's



H IS for Hannah.

Hannah was the mother of one of our greatest Bible characters, Samuel. Hannah prayed earnestly to God for a son because she, the wife of Elkanah, had no children. She promised the Lord that if he would give her a son she would lend him to the Lord for his entire lifetime. The Lord answered Hannah's prayer and gave her a son. She called him "Samuel," which means, "asked of God."

Hannah was very happy to have a son, but she was also very careful to teach him the difference between right and wrong. Hannah kept her son with her for only a few years, but during those years she taught him obedience and willingness and helpfulness.

When Samuel was old enough, she took him to God's temple in Shiloh and brought him to Eli the priest. Hannah told Eli, "I am the woman who stood here by you praying. I prayed for this child and God answered my prayer. Now I am giving him to the Lord for as long as he lives."

Hannah then prayed again to the Lord and praised Him. Her

H is for
Hannah

prayer came from her heart which was filled with thanksgiving to God. These are some of the things she said when she prayed.

"There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no rock like our God. . . . Talk no more so very proudly; for the Lord is a God of knowledge and by Him actions are weighed. He will guard the feet of His godly ones, and the wicked shall be silent and perish; for strength shall no man prevail."

After Hannah and Elkanah had sacrificed to the Lord, they returned to their home in Ramah, but Samuel stayed in the temple and helped Eli, the priest. There Samuel served the Lord and grew in favor with both God and man.

His parents visited him each year when they came to the temple to sacrifice, and Hannah made a little coat and brought it to him every year. She was very happy with Samuel and the way he was serving God. ••

If I Knew

If I knew the box where the smiles are kept, . . . No matter how large the key . . . Or strong the bolt, I would try so hard . . . 'Twould open, I know, for me; . . . Then over the land and the sea broadcast, . . . I'd scatter the smiles to play, . . . That the children's faces might hold them fast . . . For many and many a day.

If I knew a box that was large enough . . . To hold all the frowns I meet, . . . I would like to gather them every one, . . . From nursery, school, and street; . . . Then folding and holding, I'd pack them in, . . . And turning the monster key, . . . I'd hire a giant to drop the box . . . To the depth of the deep, deep sea.

Timely Topics

IN this present day and age when so many things are available in abundance, and the average person of our country can have his choice of supermarkets with such varied and different foods from which to choose, most of us could hardly conceive of what it would be like to starve. Our casual use of the word belies its actual meaning: "to die or perish from lack of food, to suffer from extreme hunger." Yet, even today millions of the world's people are very literally suffering the meaning of this word. It has been estimated that there could be a world famine within thirty years. The trend of food production compared to population growth is not favorable. There are too many

Starvation people and too little food. And of course, food is not evenly distributed among all peoples. It is a sad fact that in too many places the rich eat and the poor starve.

In view of the facts, how thankful we should be that we still enjoy a bountiful garden harvest and the convenience of the grocery store. The only watch we have in fulfilling our physical need for food is that of overeating. For every striving Christian, there is a much greater watch, that of fulfilling our spiritual need for the bread from heaven.

Is our faith suffering and even dying because of spiritual malnutrition? Is our diet lacking in the vital spiritual nutrients provided by daily eating of God's food, His Word? We may be hungry, but eat just enough to keep ourselves spiritually interested. Only by partaking of everything God has to feed us from day to day can we enjoy a healthful thriving Christian experience.

The horrible thing is, we can be suffering from slow spiritual starvation and not be aware of it. Let us look at our lives and make sure this is not our ailment. If it is, thank God there is a quick and sure remedy for this dreadful disease. It is as near as our Bible. God has provided all the proper spiritual food, and we have only to eat of it, and in abundance, to get well. By so doing, the starvation process will quickly be reversed. The more of the Lord's food we take in and digest, the happier and

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healthier we will feel spiritually. A daily, steady diet of the bread from heaven will insure us a rapid character growth.

The wonderful thing about the food which the Lord provides is that no one can withhold it from us. Whether we are rich or poor, strong or weak, whatever our temporal status we can buy the bread of life without cost. God's food is free to all, so we need never go hungry. If we do, it is our own fault.

So many of earth's millions perish because of their improper religious diet. They have been fed nothing but false doctrines—husks as it were—and so suffer a slow spiritual malnutrition which can end only in death. No one can grow on such food. Let us be more thankful each day that it is within our power to keep ourselves in a healthful spiritual condition which will gain for us a perfect character and so enable our lives to be worthy of perpetuation in God's eternal Kingdom.

Soon Christ will return to remedy the world's ills, and to redirect the management of the earth's resources. The temporal needs of all will be met, and starvation will be eliminated. And, most wonderful of all, no one will have to suffer from spiritual hunger because only one religious diet will be fed, providing all the essential nutrients to gain for anyone that everlasting life in the Kingdom of God. ••

Words to WALK By

The measure of a man's real character is what he would do if he knew he never would be found out.

No one can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.

No one but we ourselves can make our lives beautiful; no one can be pure, honorable and loving for us.

Some people give the Lord a tenth, but it happens to be the tenth they do not want for themselves.

Pliant to God's purposes, but unbending toward evil, that is the Christian ideal.

Character is what we are in the dark.

Pray as though everything depended upon God; work as though everything depended on you.

God has no use for the man who does not translate his words into deeds.

Self-control is more important than self-expression.

What is in the well of your heart is bound to come up in the bucket of your speech.

THINK!

To those who have time
To study this rhyme,
Each name you will say
Begins with an A

1. For heeding the tempter, which led to his fall
This man lost his home, his life, and his all.
2. This saint of the Lord was cut off in his youth—
But he was a witness for God and His truth.
3. Faithful, obedient, righteous was he;
The father of nations he was to be.
4. He brought his brother to Jesus, we read.
Can we not follow his loving, kind deed?
5. In sinful revolt he lost his life;
Thus ended the tragic civil strife.
6. An infamous king, he turned from God,
Forsaking the path the prophets trod.
7. An Eastern king, he made a decree
Of great import to you and to me.
8. He coveted, stole, deceived one day,
And brought to his friends death and dismay.
9. This King was almost persuaded by Paul.
In customs of Jews, he was expert in all.
10. A fellow prisoner of Paul was he,
A co-worker, and loyal as he could be.

Answers

1. Adam
2. Abel
3. Abraham
4. Andrew
5. Absalom
6. Ahaz
7. Ahasuerus
8. Achan
9. Agrippa (Acts 26:8)
10. Aristarchus (Acts 19:29; Philémon 24)

LETTERS

That Will Be Glory

I just played the old hymn, "Oh That Will Be Glory." It is such a happy song to think about, that after all our labors and trials are over, we can be safe on that beautiful shore. And what glory that will be!

We can't help being cheerful when we think of good thoughts like these. Cheerfulness is the best medicine we can have.

Davenport, Iowa

W. P.

Thankful

We are privileged to be called to be God's children, and we must be always thankful for His many blessings, physical as well as spiritual. He created the beautiful earth and everything that is upon the earth for our healthy and happy living. He gave us His commandments, that if we observe them will make us wise, good and righteous. And then, at the appointed time, "...God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, ... that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4-5). And this was the greatest and most blessed visitation to this earth. Through Christ, the truth, the light and eternal life have been manifested among perishing people. And after Christ's death and resurrection and ascension, He sent the Holy Spirit to His apostles and followers, as He had promised them.

There are still greater blessings in store for His people at the Second Advent of Christ to establish His Kingdom upon earth. He will replace the present misrule of men with a government of peace, unity, brotherhood, with life of abundance for every human being.

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

J. K.

Grateful

I have received a great deal of good from the literature of your Church. I don't want to miss anything that will help me to gain more light on the Scripture. Thank you for all the great benefit I have received.

Rome, Georgia

S. J.

A Good Work

I have enjoyed this little book, *The Coming of Elijah and Jesus*: and although there are things which I don't see eye to eye with, I have learned a complete new way of Bible study from it. Christ said, "Knock and the door will open." "Seek and ye shall find." I think He opens doors to us by way of the reading and studying we do.

My prayers go with this group because I truly feel this is a good work. It is wonderful to find people who don't look on God's Word as myths or fables but interpret it as real, solid truth.

White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia

M. P.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"We hear so much about modern pornography, and I am against it. But there are stories in the Bible with tremendous pornographic flavor, including all kinds of incest and adultery. Why is this?"

You are correct in suggesting that the Bible contains a number of accounts of immorality. The Bible being an honest book, it does not shelter or cover up the sins of its heroes and heroines. And human inclinations and temptations were the same at that time as they are today. David coveted Uriah's wife and committed adultery with her, and the Bible tells the story candidly. But the difference between the Bible and modern literature is this: the Bible points out the effects of sin, and never condones immorality. David is sternly reproved, acknowledges his guilt, and repents.

Pornography is quite different. Pornographic writers intend to inflame lustful passions and at the same time make immoral living seem attractive, desirable and permissible. This the Bible does *not* do.

The Bible and pornography manifest two vastly different motivations. Through the Bible God is attempting to show the disastrous results of sin. When the Bible tells about the fornication of Samson, it goes on to show how his life was ruined by sexual indulgence, how it devastated his character, and eventually led to his death. No one reading the story of Samson through to its conclusion would be inspired to follow his pattern of life.

Pornography, on the other hand, intends to make the forbidden fruit seem attractive and more desirable than that which is prudent and wholesome. The Bible is exalting a way of life and thought that is as far above all this "as the heavens are above the earth."

"I find your literature very enlightening, and I can understand and agree with all of it except one point. I have some Scripture verses that seem to contradict this statement: 'Those who have never known God or His law will never be raised to stand in Judgment.' Please clarify the relationship between them and your statement. And if I am wrong, please correct me."

"Revelation 20:13 tells us that all will be judged. Acts 24:15 tells of a resurrection of both the just and unjust. I Corinthians 15:51 says, 'We shall not all

sleep, but we shall all be changed.' Acts 17:30-31 tells us that God overlooked the times of ignorance [those who never had a chance to know God]."

The point that you question, the existence of a class of people who will not be accountable to Judgment, is little understood and seldom discussed. In fact, most believers in a resurrection and Judgment think it will be universal. However, we firmly believe the Bible teaches that one class of individuals sleeping in death will never experience a resurrection. We agree with Paul, that those who sin "without law shall also perish without law," and that only those who "have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law" (Rom. 2:12).

Now I will answer your specific texts which you feel contradict our position that "those who have never known God or His law will never be raised to stand at Judgment."

You say that Revelation 20:13 "tells us that all will be judged." You are right, but who constitutes the "all"? Revelation 20 is discussing the thousand-year period which is to follow the setting up of God's Kingdom upon earth. All who have lived during that time will have been under covenant to serve God, hence will be eligible for resurrection and amenable to Judgment. Jeremiah 31:34 pictures this time: "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." This text is quoted in Heb. 8:11, and in the same context. Read the entire chapter of Revelation 20, and you cannot fail to see the context in which verse 13 is used.

First Corinthians 15:51 states, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." I assume you refer to the words: "but we shall *all* be changed." Again we must consider the context. The entire chapter is referring to the subjects of the resurrection—covenant-makers. It discusses those who have agreed to serve God, those who are informed of His purpose and plan. Note verse one: Paul is addressing those to whom he has already preached the gospel, "which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." These persons were without question *believers*, covenant-makers.

You say Acts 17:30-31 tells us that God overlooked the times of ignorance (those who never had a chance to know God). I cannot accept your conclusion that Paul's words picture a class of people who never had a chance to know God. The sponsors of the "fair chance" theory make the claim that many people have lived and died with-

out ever having known the true God or His Son Jesus Christ, and that to be fair God has to raise them and give them a chance at some future time. John 7:17, as it reads in the King James Version, shows that anyone who will do God's will, will be enlightened: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."

Paul's words at Mars' hill, recorded in Acts 17, relate to God's future purpose for the earth and mankind. Verses 29 and 30 in the Moffatt Bible read: "Well, as the race of God, we ought not to imagine that the divine nature resembles gold or silver or stone, the product of human art and invention. Such ages of ignorance God overlooked, but He now charges men that they are all everywhere to repent." In that future day of which Paul spoke, all who are permitted to live will have to repent and turn to God.

"There are many passages in the Bible that tell of God judging everyone according to what he has done (this would include those who have never known God). Some passages are: Rev. 2:23; I Tim. 1:13; Eph. 6:8, and others. I agree that for those who know God, salvation comes by faith, which is manifest in works. However, it seems to me that those who did not have God to believe in would be judged by how well they lived."

Your first statement, that "there are many passages in the Bible that tell of God judging everyone according to what he has done" is true, but these passages must refer to those who were enlightened. Your deduction, that "this would include those who have never known God," is contrary to Paul's words in Rom. 2:12, "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." If God speaks only once through His Word on a given point, that should be sufficient to remove all controversy from our minds.

You then speak of Rev. 2:23; I Tim. 1:13; Eph. 6:8, as buttressing your belief that others than those who have known God during their lifetime will be resurrected. Let us see: Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, are a message from Christ to the seven churches; in other words, they were believers. It was to the Church at Thyatira that the Spirit said, "I will give unto *every one of you* according to your works," not to the world who knew not God.

Paul's words in I Tim. 1:13 do not say that because he did certain things in unbelief, and obtained mercy when he turned, that God's mercy must flow out to the extent of resurrecting all unbelievers who died in unbelief. Paul turned while

he was still living. That plan has always been operative (see Ezek. 33:15-16).

Ephesians 6:8 does not actually say that all mankind are accountable for all that they do. When Paul said, "Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free," he was not necessarily including all mankind. Paul was writing for members of the Church of Ephesus, not for the world of unbelievers. The context in which these words occur would not permit us to believe he meant all mankind.

You state also, "I agree that for those who know God, salvation comes by faith which is manifest in works." You are right! That is exactly what the Bible teaches. You then add, "However, it seems to me that those who did not have God to believe in would be judged by how well they lived." This statement lacks Biblical support, and I trust that you will change your position after considering candidly the evidence given in Scripture. ●●

Imaginary Evils

*Let tomorrow take care of tomorrow;
Leave things of the future to fate;
What's the use to anticipate sorrow?
Life's troubles come never too late!
If to hope overmuch be an error,
'Tis an error the wise have preferred;
And how often have hearts been in terror
Of evils that never occurred.*

*Have faith, and thy faith shall sustain thee;
Permit not suspicions and care
With invisible bands to enslave thee,
But bear what God gives thee to bear.
By His spirit supported and gladdened,
Be ne'er by forbodings deterred;
But think how oft hearts have been saddened
By fear of what never occurred.*

*Let tomorrow take care of tomorrow;
Short and dark as our life may appear,
We may make it still darker by sorrow,
Still shorter by folly and fear!
Half our troubles are half our invention,
And often from blessings conferred
Have we shrunk, in the wild apprehension
Of evils that never occurred!*

Against the Non-Doers

IN these days of direct challenge to the Christian faith and its way of life, it might be well for us to consider the record of the men of Meroz. Meroz was once a flourishing city of the Middle East, but like so many other cities in that part of the world, it no longer exists; the sands of the desert have covered it, and we can only guess where it may have stood. It was located somewhere in Palestine.

All who have traveled from Egypt into Palestine by road or rail have followed one of the oldest roads in the Western civilized world. Every empire that has existed has had to fight for this vital line of communication: Egypt's ancient Pharaohs, Sennacherib of Assyria, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Alexander the Great of Greece, Antony of Rome, the Crusaders and on through the generals of World War II. When, therefore, the Turks were routed at the Megiddo Pass in 1918, history was being repeated. For about the year 1200 B. C. the Israelites won there a mighty victory which freed them from a foreign yoke. The account of this victory has been handed down to us by a woman. Her name was Deborah.

Women have always sung the praises of victorious generals and have spurned their misdeeds and cowardice. So it was that a woman of Israel sang of the various tribes who came to the help of Israel to defeat their enemies—the governors from one city; the craftsmen from another; and those who handle the pen of the writer from yet another. But when it was all over, when victory was secure, when all that could be seen of the enemy was the prancings of their horses in retreat, out came the men of Meroz, cool and unwounded, to share in the spoils they had done nothing to win. And so Meroz stands for indifference, for cowardice, the city of those who shirk their responsibility. From the lips of Deborah, its type of men stand condemned, ridiculed, and in God's sight accursed: "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty" (Judges 5:23).

Meroz is gone, but its name and the things for which it stood, live on. "Men of Meroz" are found in every age, even among those who have vowed

unflinching allegiance to the cause of the God of heaven. They are the non-doers, those who stand idly by and watch while others carry on the intense and bitter struggle for the right; those who are apparently interested, but who do nothing to help, who say to themselves, "That's not my job; I'll wait and see how the others come out; if any good comes of it, that will be time enough to join the conflict." They would agree with the words of the poet:

The Laws of God, the laws of man,
He may keep them who will and can;
Not I: let God and man decree
Laws for themselves, but not for me;
And if my ways are not as theirs,
Then let them mind their own affairs.

What did Christ think of men like that? He told it one day in parable. A servant was given some money to invest for his master. The servant was not dishonest; he did not misappropriate the cash or run away with it, or waste it in foolish spending. He simply wrapped it in a rag. He did nothing with it. And just for "not doing" he was condemned—he was a non-doer, a man of Meroz. Jesus was saying that we cannot escape our duty by indolence or negligence; that not doing what is right is every bit as bad as doing what is wrong; that he who is not positively good for something is good for nothing.

As Christians, we have a cause to champion, a standard of conduct and behavior to uphold in these dark days. There is work to be done; there is character to be formed; and to stand idly on the side and let someone else shoulder the responsibility is to let someone else take the crown we could have had. We can entertain no hope of sharing the rewards unless we get into the heat of the conflict and fight!

What are we doing? Are we men of Meroz, standing neutral on the sideline, or are we in the ranks of the governors, the craftsmen and the clerks who came to the help of the Lord and shared in the joys of victory? We should invest all that God has given us—our talents, our honorable intentions, our high ideals, our days and hours; put them to work for interest for ourselves and others. We should act in the living present. For if we rest content to do nothing, the curse of Meroz will rightly fall upon us.

Remember, to give no answer to the call of God is to answer "no." Let it be our resolve to answer "Yes"—then we are on the Lord's side, and when righteousness and goodness prevail, we shall have a rightful share in the spoils of victory. ••



Meditations

On the Word

WE note that the first part of our text gives proof that the salvation of the Bible is a thing future, substantial and everlasting; not a feeling or state of mind attained in a moment of excitement. God's salvation, the salvation for which we strive, is one worth having. Once we attain it we have nothing more to fear; we shall be safely inside the Kingdom of God, "equal unto the angels," never to experience pain, disease, sorrow, or death "world without end." This also refutes two false theories: the theological error that the physical world will be burned up at the Last Judgment, and the pseudo-scientific fallacy that in time it will grow old and cold and uninhabitable. "World without end" means just that. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever" (Eccl. 1:4).

The second part takes us into a more controversial field, although there is really no need for controversy. It is the fashion in various patterns of modern thought to doubt or deny that there is any purpose in creation as we see it. To them the universe is a haphazard affair, the product of blind chance, largely incapable of supporting life as we know it. Man is an accident which has become a problem. Life itself is "a brief and discreditable episode upon one of the minor planets." Fortunately for those who love life and righteousness, the facts in the case do not support this dark view.

The exquisite order in the physical universe, celestial and terrestrial, would be utterly impossible to explain if we deny Purpose in creation. There are but two conceivable positions: either it

"But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it, he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else" —Isaiah 45: 17-18.

came about by chance, or by design. The theory of chance, dear as it is to the materialists, is ruled out. So complicated and so delicate is the balance of nature which makes life as we know it possible, that this is not chance nor caprice; this is the finger of a purposeful God. It is infinitely more difficult to deny it than to accept it. Consideration of the wonders of nature demonstrates

beyond all question that there are design and purpose in it all. A program is being carried out in all its infinite detail by the Eternal. But this program is not revealed in the book of animate nature, nor in the record of the rocks, nor yet in the thoughts of the wise of this world. To learn God's plan we must go to His revealed Word—the Bible.

Our text states His purpose in simple words. "He created it not in vain; he formed it to be inhabited."

But this is by no means the ultimate goal. All that we see, all that the earth has experienced to the present moment, is but the introduction to the grand symphony of Creative Design. The earth was formed for a far grander and nobler purpose—to be the home of the righteous "world without end." "Blessed are the meek," said Jesus, "for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). Read that noble chapter, the 37th Psalm, and count the number of times this truth is stated and restated. In every case the promise is restricted to "the righteous," "the upright," "the meek," proving that it has no reference to the present social order, in which the meek survive only by grace of divine protection in a world dominated by the wicked. Throughout the Scriptures the golden thread of

promise runs, comforting and sustaining, as in Isa. 51:11, "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away," becoming very definite in the last Letter, where the redeemed sing, "Thou ... hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign *on the earth*" (Rev. 5:9-10).

This is the Purpose—or part of it. The primary phase, which includes our time, is the development of the "kings and priests" who will rule with Christ in the future Kingdom on earth. The Millennial phase of the plan will produce the subjects of the Kingdom, "a great multitude, which no man could number" (Rev. 7:9).

Together these two classes of immortals will fill the earth, fulfilling the oath of the Eternal in Numbers 14:21, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." His glory is Israel, spiritual Israel, His true soldiers (Isa. 46:13).

This is His purpose, and what matter if we know little or nothing of the steps leading up to the development of a being with a mind capable of apprehending spiritual truth? What matter if the Creator took uncounted millions of years to set the stage for only 7,000 years of action? Those dim æons of the past are of no consequence to us in our quest for that "everlasting salvation"; our

interest is in the present and its bearing upon the eternal future.

To suppose that this little earth, wonderful as it is, is the best work or the only concern of the Almighty; to think that the billions of stars and planets in infinite space are uninhabited and uninhabitable, is as absurd as it is unscriptural. What is done here is not an isolated expression of creative power, but is according to the eternal purpose of the Creator, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. 3:11, 15). Life *as we know it* and our highly specialized balance of nature might not be possible in any other spot; yet there exists a vast reservoir of life as we know it *not*—immortal life. Worlds shining in the vault of heaven are filled with immortal beings, God's finished work, and they shine by His spirit (Dan. 12:3).

Nature is plastic in the hands of its Master and Maker, and His creatures can live wherever and under whatever conditions He decrees. Life has existed from eternity past on heavenly bodies. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalm 103:17). God in His mercy has given probation and "everlasting salvation" to their now-glorified inhabitants, just as He has given and will give it to our race. There is so little that we know, and so much that we do not know. Therefore we need not venture into deeper waters until we have mastered those which lie near at hand. ●●

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