

Megiddo Message



Shall THIS My Offering Be?

EDITORIAL

Can You Take PLAIN Living?

PERHAPS there is more truth in this bit of children's verse than we are ready to admit.

Oh, when you're up, you're up,
And when you're down, you're down,
And when you're only half way up,
You're neither up nor down.

We have all experienced the exhilaration of the mountaintop. And we have all known at other times the despair of the valley. Both experiences are part of our Christian journey. We receive impressions so strong and so exhilarating that we feel as though nothing could ever knock us down. And perhaps, only a short while later, the whole outlook has changed, someone has said or done what we least expected, and we are struggling once again to stand upon our feet.

So we have three levels of living—the mountaintop, the valley, and the plain. And if we would be good travelers, we need to learn to identify each type of terrain and learn to deal with it as a normal part of our experience.

We might compare our mountaintop moments to spiritual tune-ups. We need them occasionally to check up on our attitudes toward life, to keep our lives in efficient working order, and to give us a fresher glimpse of the Promised Land that lies ahead. We need all this if we are to be ready for the problems that will meet us in the valleys beyond.

But if we were to plot on a graph the trail of our lives, we would find that the greater portion of the journey would be neither on the mountaintop nor in the valley but across great long stretches of the land of "neither-up-nor-down." For this reason, we should be seriously concerned about the problems of *plain* living. Can we take it? Are we prepared for long stretches without the unusual or spectacular? Might we be that type of person who thrives in the rarified air of the mountaintop, and who is always

ready for the challenging tests of calamity, but who has a hard time keeping in motion across the level plains of ordinary days?

But herein lies part of the transforming power of our faith. True religion, applied, is a leveler. It smooths out the unevenness of life. When one's goal is set on eternal life in God's kingdom, his vision becomes constant and fixed. Nothing of this world, however spectacular or humanly appealing, excites him beyond the point of Christian wisdom, and nothing, however personally disastrous and apparently defeating, plunges him to the depths of despair. Whatever happens, he maintains a level of confident trust in God and the future.

This is not to suggest that life for the Christian is boredom and constant repetition. Far from it! But the Christian operates his spiritual powers in a gear which keeps him steadily moving forward, whatever the terrain. There is much of monotony and repetition in *any* life, but never does the Christian allow himself to settle down in inactivity, even when there is no immediate mountain to climb. For he realizes that if he cannot keep moving across the level plains of life, he will never get very far.

Plain living, a steady succession of uneventful days, is a source of frustration to those who tend to live for the spectacular and the exciting, who forget to look beyond the immediate present to the future God has planned. But the meaningfulness of life is not always measured by its intensity level. Courage and love and faith can be just as much a part of plain living as of mountain-scaling or valley-struggling. In fact, it is the virtue developed during the ordinary days of life—of *plain* living—that will see us through the spectacular and the difficult that is bound to come.

So let us make living on the plateau a high spiritual adventure, showing maximum progress—it is the only way to get beyond this world into the greater life which lies ahead.

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Megiddo Means

"a place of troops"

—Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon

"a place of God"

—Young's Analytical Concordance

Geographically, Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, located at a strategic point, demanding heavy fortification; for Palestine is the age-old gateway between East and West, and the avenue connecting North and South. Supremacy there has long been the envy of aggressive nations, and the prevailing power has guarded it with jealous eye. The famous pass at Megiddo through a solid mountain range is the one means by which this avenue between continents may be traversed.

In the spiritual parallel, it is a place of troops, where soldiers are equipped for spiritual warfare against the forces of evil without and within. "The weapons we wield are not merely human but divinely potent to demolish strongholds; we demolish sophistries and all that rears its proud head against the knowledge of God; we compel every human thought to surrender in obedience to Christ" (II Cor. 10:4-5, NEB).

Megiddo Message

Vol. 63, No. 11

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EDITORIAL

2 Can You Take PLAIN Living?

Some days are "up," and some are "down." But what about the others?

ARTICLES

4 Shall THIS My Offering Be?

God demands the best.

6 Let's Just Praise the Lord!

God wants our whole life to be a melody of praise.

7 A Psalm of Praise

"To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments."

10 God, Not Politics

by Kenneth E. Flowerday

There are activities proper for most people which are improper for Christians.

21 In Everything Give Thanks

Not just in *some* things, or *good* things, but "in everything."

25 Obituaries

BOOK FEATURE

17 The Great Apostasy (Part Five)

The apostasy had an end.

REGULAR FEATURES

9 Kathy Kandor's Korner : *Exercise Pays!*

Especially exercising to godliness.

13 Understanding the Bible : *The Second Advent of Christ*

More signs prophesied and fulfilled; the meaning for *us*.

22 One Lord, One Faith : *People God Used, Part 4*

24 From Parent to Parent : *Growing In "Grace."*

26 Meditations on the Word : *The Imperfect Record*

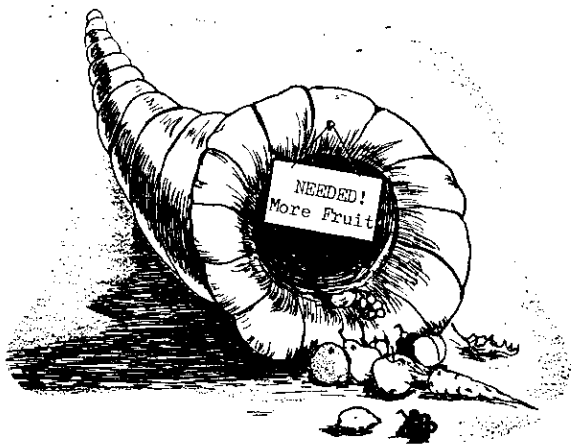
On Rev. 2:25-26. They were good, but not good enough.

28 Cover Feature : *Eternal God*

Bible Quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version

Other versions are quoted, as noted in the text.



Shall THIS My Offering Be?

Now since these special offerings were entirely voluntary and of free will, might we not assume that just anything a man might offer would be acceptable? Since the offering was what we might call a "bonus" gift to God, might not anything at all look like gracious generosity?

No. Anything offered to God, whether by law or voluntarily, had to be *perfect*. Just anything at all was *not* better than nothing. Poor animals were no more acceptable as thank offerings than as any other offering. God demanded the best—first, last and always. The law was plain: "When any one of the house of Israel or of the sojourners in Israel presents his offering, whether in payment of a vow or as a freewill offering which is offered to the Lord as a burnt offering, to be accepted you shall offer a male without blemish, of the bulls or the sheep, or the goats. You shall not offer anything that has a blemish, for it will not be acceptable for you. And when any one offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the Lord, to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering, from the herd or from the flock, to be accepted it must be perfect; there shall be no blemish in it. . . . And when you sacrifice a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Lord, you shall sacrifice it so that you may be accepted" (Lev. 22: 17-21, 29, RSV).

Always God demanded the best. And would it not seem that to give less than we should or could in *quantity* is but another way of offering a blemished sacrifice, dishonoring to God and unacceptable to him? Did not Paul express the principle when he exhorted: "Let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (I Cor. 16:2)?

Many times the Psalmist, and other Scripture writers, used the thank offering and the peace offering as examples of the true, heart-felt sacrifice God requires from every one who would inhabit His eternal Kingdom. "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High." "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." "I will offer to thee

SMALL fruit, generally inferior in quality. Mostly diseased or damaged. Some late blooms. Insufficient quantities for practical use. First come, first served. No charge."

What fruit grower desiring a reputation for top quality fruit and satisfied customers would ever publish such an advertisement! The price might be attractive, when the value of the produce is considered. But who wants nothing for nothing?

Is this typical of God's offers to us? Is this the way He deals with us? The answer is No. A thousand times *No!*

But—what kind of offering are *we*—you and I—returning to *Him*? Our offering may be willing and freely given, and it may be fruit of average-to-good quality. But is it the best? And is it enough? Is it our all, both in quantity and quality?

The harvest season in ancient Israel was a season of many offerings to the Lord. The Feast of Tabernacles, or Harvest Festival, was an eight-day feast during the seventh month of the year, when happy folk gave themselves over to holiday-making and rejoicing before the Lord. It was a time when everyone stopped to reflect on the bounty of nature's yield and to praise the great Almighty Giver.

But it was more than this. Thanksgiving meant more than rejoicing over fruit gathered and stored. Thanksgiving meant giving and sharing—and sacrificing.

The loyal and devoted Israelite did more than voice his gratitude to God in celebration and song. He showed it in sacrifice and freewill offering. The law required many sacrifices. But above and beyond the requirements of the law were thank offerings and peace offerings which could be offered to God in grateful appreciation. These were voluntary expressions on the part of the offerer, in return for blessings bestowed.

the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord." "I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed" (Ps. 50:14, 23; 116:17; Jonah 2:9).

The whole of Psalm 67 is an offering of praise. It was a psalm commonly used as a hymn among the Hebrew congregations. It is a harvest song, and its inspiration is the harvest just gathered.

The psalm reads in the Septuagint Bible:

"God be merciful to us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us. Pause. That men may know thy way on the earth, thy salvation among all nations. Let the nations, O God, give thanks to thee; let all the nations give thanks to thee. Let the nations rejoice and exult, for thou shalt judge the peoples in equity, and shalt guide the nations on the earth. Pause. Let the peoples, O God, give thanks to thee; let all the peoples give thanks to thee. The earth has yielded her fruit; let God, our God, bless us. Let God bless us; and let all the ends of the earth fear him."

Nothing less than a total picture of total prosperity is the climax of the song—"Let all the ends of the earth fear him." It speaks of the time when God's kingdom shall extend worldwide.

But notice the buildup within the song. See how quickly the author moves from the present into the future, expressing in poetry his deep prophetic insight. Notice also that the song does not inspire him to begin singing about how good and proper it is for God to lavish His favor on them because they are so deserving. Rather, he begins with a prayer for needed mercy—that God shall be good to them in spite of their undeserving. Is not this the way we should feel?

Are we ready to sing a psalm like this? Are we ready to let our thanks be so wholehearted? Are we ready to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, which is "the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name" (Heb. 13:15)? Are we ready to give and give and give—the firstfruit of our lives, the best of our strength, the whole devotion of our mind and the deepest affection of our heart?

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17).

When on the day of Judgment we are called to present the fruit of our lives before the Lord, what shall we bring? Shall we come laden with basket upon basket overflowing with perfect, fully ripened, delicious fruit? or will our offering be a mere handful—dried, withered and worthless—the leftovers from a life spent serving ourselves?

What shall *our* offering be—yours, and mine? •

Let Us Pray . . .

Father in heaven, once again we draw nigh Thee, thanking Thee for the many mercies and blessings that continually flow into our lives. Hear the voice of our supplication when we cry unto Thee, as we lift our hands toward Thy holy oracle. May we always look to Thee as our strength and our shield.

Look down upon us, O Lord, as we strive to give to Thee the glory due to Thy name, and as we strive to worship Thee in the beauty of holiness. Thou art of too pure eyes to look upon evil with any degree of tolerance. Thou seest not as man seest; while vain man looks on the outward appearance, Thou lookest on the heart. Help us then to build into our lives the beauty of holiness, the beauty of a pure and spotless character, adorning ourselves with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in Thy sight is of great price.

Give us the insight to see our own errors. We have thought too much of ourselves; we have been self-centered; we have been indifferent to the interests of others. We have thought we were right when our fruits have shown we were in the wrong. Give us the honesty to see ourselves as we are, and to turn from everything that is against Thy high and holy way.

We know Thou art a God at hand and not a God afar off. Thou art very near to all who call upon Thee in spirit and in truth. Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men to give every one according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings. Thou art our strength, our shield, our exceeding great reward, a very present help in trouble. May we lean upon Thy great and precious promises, apply Thy righteous Law to our daily living, that it may be a directing force to direct us in the way of holiness.

Give us a stronger faith, more willingness of mind, and a greater determination to make a full surrender. May we have such implicit confidence in Thy leading that whatever happens we may say, "Thy will be done."

We pray for each other, for all who need Thee to buoy them over the rough places of life. We pray for strength in every hour of trial, and may we continue steadfast to the end. Thou hast promised to give strength to Thy people and bless Thy servants with peace. May our lives be such as to merit that special favor. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's Just Praise the Lord!



*O praise the Lord, all ye nations:
Praise Him, all ye people.
For His merciful kindness is great toward us:
And the truth of the Lord endureth for ever.
Praise ye the Lord!*

THREE times in this shortest psalm is the note of praise sounded. It is the same sublime note echoed and re-echoed through the Psalms. The Hebrews were a singing people, and their songs often began and concluded with the same resounding theme: "Praise the Lord, ye his servants! Praise ye the Lord!"

A note of praise to God runs all through the Old Testament Scriptures and finds its climax in the New Testament. A typical sample of the whole is the song of the angels at the birth of Christ: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Words like "praise" and "joy" and "gladness" and "joyfulness" occur some five hundred times in the Old Testament alone, the majority of them in the book of Psalms. It seems that the Hebrew people had a custom of singing certain hymns responsively, every other phrase being spoken or sung by the congregation in unison: "Praise ye the Lord"; or "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good." We should like to have heard David's

choir of a thousand voices performing such a psalm of praise to God.

No doubt much of this praise was, for many of the performers, mere outward expression, worshipping the holiness of beauty rather than the beauty of holiness. But genuine, heartfelt praise to God can be—and must be—a rich, continual and spiritual experience for every serious Christian. Who could have *more* for which to offer praise? To be recognized by Him "who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy"; to know such a Being, to be able to communicate with Him who orders the universes and gives life to every living creature, to know Him who blesses us with every good and invites us to become part of His eternal family—how can we *fail* to praise Him!

Praise that comes from a sincere heart reaching out to the great Creator who is "high above all nations and his glory above the heavens!"—such praise is accepted at the throne of God. Such praise is the whole being in the service of God. Such praise is the whole life in tune with God.

How can we produce the praise His holiness deserves?

Our first thought is of simple hymn-singing. We do it regularly. We picture ourselves in church, hymnbook in hand, organ playing, choir standing, all voicing words to music together. We call it singing. To us, this is praising God.

But is it?

Not unless our singing is more than an empty, thoughtless, mechanical ritual. Real singing to God involves the whole heart and soul and mind and strength. Singing a hymn is an exercise involving our whole being and personality. We use our vocal cords to the best of our ability, together with our muscles and our breath. Then we employ our rational faculties as we read words and music and interpret them meaningfully together. We add will and affection when we consciously assent to what we sing and put ourselves behind it. Our total life is united in the effort; only *then* do we sing a hymn of praise to God.

Praising God is not some ecstatic shout of "Praise the Lord!" It is not some mechanical operation separate from heart and life. Praising God is giving to Him the glory due His name, extolling Him for His great mercy and kindness toward us and worshipping Him for the perfect beauty of His truth. When we sing, we give Him praise. Every hymn to God is a new commitment of loyalty. Every hymn is an acknowledgment that we belong to God and are responsible to Him. Every hymn is an honest expression of our true life motives and desires.

If it is not, God has not heard our praise.

But singing is only one part of our praise to God. Our whole life is meant to be a paean of praise. The Jewish people even today hold this as their highest ideal: that one's life be lived as a psalm of praise to God. The strains may differ from movement to movement, but the song belongs to God. Thus every thought, every deed, every feeling, every expression should be fitted into the whole psalm of life for God.

We should remember this: Praise is not an isolated act. Praise is life itself! We must praise God *in* everything we do, and *by* everything we do. No aspect of life can be set aside. Our total life is our offering of praise to God. Whatever the situation we confront, whatever decision we must make, whatever cross we must carry, we should be ready to say, "Let's just praise the Lord!" and then make *our life in action* praise Him.

"Praise the Lord" is not merely something to sing, or something to say. It is something to live every day, every hour. Our life is our psalm of praise to God, whatever the activity we engage in. If all we do and say is done and said to glorify God, we are living our offering of praise to God, a living sacrifice which should be "holy, acceptable unto God."

It may be hard sometimes to see how our humdrum tasks can be divine offerings of praise. We

wish to be free from the monotonous details of daily life to do something more heroic. We see little connection between cooking meals, or scrubbing floors, or operating machines, or planting corn, etc., etc., and the service of God. But in allowing all aspects of our personality to be united to one supreme concern, the service of the most High, our life becomes a triumphant shout of "Praise ye the Lord!"

This brings us to the vital question: Is *my* life a worthy song of praise to God? Can I invite Him to listen to everything I say, to read everything I think, to watch everything I look at, and know that He will be glorified by all I do?

It is easy to sing, whatever happens, "Let's just praise the Lord"; but to keep our lives a ringing shout of praise to God in every word we speak, in every attitude we take, in every thought we harbor, in every decision we make is a challenge to the best that is in us. Yet the command is written: "Rejoice in the Lord *always*."

So what shall we do when adversity strikes, when pain, sickness, loss or depression would threaten to overpower us? Just praise the Lord! Make everything we do and say a psalm of praise to God. Praise Him for the life we still have, and we can rest assured that He will be with us as long as we abide in Him.

(Continued on Page 8)

A Psalm of Praise

To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.
A Psalm. A Song.

*May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,
That thy way may be known upon earth,
thy saving power among all nations.
Let the peoples praise thee, O God;
let all the peoples praise thee!
Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for thou dost judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth.
Let the peoples praise thee, O God;
let all the peoples praise thee!
The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.
God has blessed us;
Let all the ends of the earth fear him!*

—Psalm 67, Revised Standard Version

WHAT an unusual heading to this psalm—"To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments." When we see the words "stringed instruments," our minds picture a symphony orchestra, with its violin, cello, viola, and double bass sections skilfully translating intricate passages and expressions into beautiful blendings of harmony and tone. Such a sound would quite probably displease the ancient choirmaster, were he to hear such accompaniment to his simple melody. For this was not what he thought of as "stringed instruments."

This may be taken as an illustration of the theme set forth so beautifully in this poem. Its unity, its form, its spirit appeal to us, but most of all its message. It is the song of a people seeking God's approval—desiring His face to shine upon them, His radiance, His blessing. In this song is evidence of a growing insight into the hope of

Israel and of all God's people in all ages. It speaks of the great Day when men everywhere will know the power of God, when God shall judge and guide all nations and all who live will be His people.

This is not a new or strange theme. Israel's forefather had heard it when he was ninety and nine, when the Lord had appeared unto him and said,

*I am the Almighty God;
Walk before me, and be thou perfect.
And I will make my covenant between me and thee,
and will multiply thee exceedingly...
and thou shalt be a father of many nations...
And I will make thee exceeding fruitful,
and I will make nations of thee,
and kings shall come out of thee"*

—(Gen. 17:1-6).

The same melody was heard in antiphony at different times down through Israel's history. At different times it was sung in different tempos and different keys by various singers, but its melody was still vibrating in a few hearts at Jesus' first advent.

But what the melody means to us today is similar to the relation of the simple tune to the intricacies of modern harmony. It is no less important for us to sing it than it was for them. But while the melody today is the same strain, it produces overtones, harmonies and even discords in our ears. The simple melody was all those ancient people had. We today have in our possession a wealth of history and prophecy and fulfillment unheard of by them. The centuries of prophecy and revelation, recorded in the Word of God, complete with the record of the living example of the Son of God Himself, have tremendously enriched the harmony for us!

How the music awakens our thinking as it projects us into the not-so-distant future.

So near is the theme to its universal climax at this moment that its strains seem almost to blend with the melodies of the age just ahead.

Only when we hear the symphony in its fulness after the Messiah has come shall we be able to understand fully all the intricacies of this theme with variations and be able to discern the meaning of its overtones and harmonies and seeming discords. Only then shall we be able to cry with fullest comprehension:

*The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.
God has blessed us;
Let all the ends of the earth fear him!*

Let's Just Praise the Lord!

(Continued from page 7)

And what shall we do when prosperity is ours and a multitude of blessings come our way? Just praise the Lord! Use everything we have and are to glorify Him, to promote holiness, goodness, righteousness and truth. What have we anyway that we did not receive? All come of God. Nothing we have could be ours apart from His providence and care.

So let's sing. Let's praise the Lord! and let's live this praise through all the days to come, until our whole life becomes a glorious melody of praise to God—a song that will live throughout eternity. ●●

From A Reader—

Drop The Bad Ones

I was sitting on my porch watching a gray squirrel, as he gathered nuts from my neighbor's yard. I watched as he would pick up a nut, and drop it. Then he picked up another and took it.

I became inquisitive and went to see why he dropped some nuts and took others. It seemed that after dropping a nut he never picked up that nut again.

I found, upon investigating, that the nut he dropped was empty, no good; but the ones he kept were full of meat.

Then I thought, why couldn't we be like the squirrel in our spiritual lives? We could drop the bad nuts, our evil ways, and not pick them up again, not one of them; but instead keep busy picking up more and more of the good nuts of love, joy, patience, peace and all the rest of the good nuts spoken of in Galatians 5:22-23.

The squirrel was storing up the good nuts to carry him through the winter, until the bad weather is over and spring is here again. We can be like the squirrel and store up the good thoughts and good deeds that will carry us clear through to eternal life.

We can take a good lesson from the squirrel, and store up the things that will count for eternal life.

I am going to try to follow the squirrel's example. Won't you try, too?

—Mr. B., Holley, New York

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

**Kathy
Kandor's
Korner**

Exercise Pays!

I'd like to ask you, Karen, what you are doing for yourself these days. You're looking—and *acting* so much better!" I had been observing my sister-in-law's improvement for the past two or three weeks. "Let me in on the secret, please!"

"Glad to, Sis," she replied in her usual cheery manner. "It's a one-word story—exercise. Some small pamphlets on physical fitness got me started, and it is really helpful. But with exercise," she continued as she was pulling on her coat, "you have to make up your mind to stick with it. Nothing happens overnight."

I agreed. "Isn't that the truth with anything? Without keeping at it, without practice, practice, and more practice, nothing is really accomplished."

"Some good exercise would probably help both of you," she suggested kindly. "I'm sure Neal gets weary on his job, with so much sitting."

Karen was on her way, and I was left reflecting. Her appearance and demeanor had surely improved. And all because of exercise!

Like everything else in a day's events, I mused, this too had its parallel in Christian living. I was thinking of a scripture text—by Paul, about exercising to godliness. That is the secret of Christian growth and development. All of those stalwart men and women of the Bible got that way by exercise, repeatedly practicing holy living.

I thought of Moses. In countless encounters with the Israelites he practiced such patience as earned him the title of the meekest of men.

How I need to imitate Moses, I thought, and be more exercised to patience with the small group of persons in my environment!

O Kathy, keep practicing; it *will* pay off in time. Reading yesterday about Daniel, I was re-impressed. How courageous he was! He must have

exercised diligently for a long time to be the man of strong character he was.

How I need courage too. Though I can never be a Daniel, I have to confront the onslaught of wickedness that surrounds me on every side. I must be brave to denounce the evils of my nature, bold, defiant and dangerous as they are.

Help me, Lord, I prayed, to exercise for stronger courage.

How many of an ordinary day's incidents need the strong exercise of Christian virtue to surmount the difficulties and defy defeat. When blighted plans and severe disappointments collide with intense annoyances, one needs the tenacity of purpose to "hold on when there is nothing in you except the *will* that says to you 'hold on.' "

That exercises endurance. This is the kind of exercise that strengthens our moral muscles and prepares us for the more severe encounters of life.

One of the articles on fitness suggests repetition of certain exercises up to as much as six hundred times a session. That is diligence. Building Christian character, I thought, calls for even *more* than this, to control the thoughts that travel at lightning speed, to direct the rapid motions of the human tongue and subdue the explosive power of anger or injured feelings.

Exercising to godliness requires a strong *desire* for holiness. And, as Karen said, "Make up your mind to stick with it. For nothing happens overnight."

How right you are, Karen.

Yours for more godliness exercise,

Kathy

READ for Your LIFE!

HISTORY OF THE MEGIDDO MISSION
THE COMING OF JESUS AND ELIJAH
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?

GOD'S SPIRITUAL CREATION

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

THE GREAT APOSTASY

AFTER DEATH, WHAT?

THE DEVIL AND HELL

TRINITY OR UNITY?

THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE ATONEMENT

THE SABBATH

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GOD, Not Politics

by Kenneth E. Flowerday

AS another political campaign nears its climax, it seems appropriate that we review our relationship to our country and our politics.

We are citizens of a good land; we are inheritors of a great nation. We are grateful. God has blessed us far above what we have deserved, providing abundantly for our physical and spiritual needs. Our country rates first in many areas—ranging from the number of automobiles produced each year to the number of Bibles printed.

But unfortunately, our country is not all that it might be. It is not even all that it *was*. Our leaders realize it. Our educators, business men, philosophers and political scientists are aware of it. Thoughtful persons everywhere see it. I have observed a shocking change in attitude during my own lifetime. Economically, politically, morally and spiritually we are fast approaching the point of bankruptcy.

What can be done? Are we complacently to stand back and watch the avalanche progress? Is there nothing that we—you and I—can do? What is our duty?

Many people feel in all seriousness that every man should support some political front. Choose better men for candidates to public office, they say, and give them your support. Let your voice be heard. Isn't this the principle upon which our nation was founded? Isn't this what democracy is all about—the voice of the people speaking out for what *they* feel is right? Join with others who also want to see a return to higher principles in government and speak out. After all, they say, isn't it the silent, non-committal, acquiescent majority who are responsible for the present situation?

This may well be the answer on a national scale. But our first concern as Christians must be individual, not national. Should we as serious Christians involve ourselves in trying to improve the politics of our nation?

The answer is no.

This answer may be shocking to some who are sincerely interested in the good of the nation and want to see it continue for the advantages it gives

to the cause of Christ. Refraining from all political involvement and activity may seem to them like a betrayal of the very foundations of the faith upon which we stand. But before you draw too many conclusions either pro or con, I urge you to consider a few pointers found in Scripture.

There are activities that are proper for most people which are improper and inappropriate for Christians. I firmly believe that politics is one such activity.

To be sure, there is no verse of Scripture which says, "Thou shalt not engage in politics." But it does make some very definite statements and gives some examples from which we may learn. Consider just a few of these.

First, there is the example of Jesus. Jesus was not a politician, or even a dabbler in politics. There is nothing in any of the Gospels that suggests that He was involved in any political maneuver, or that He supported any political personage, or debated any political issues of His time.

We can be certain that His non-involvement was not the result of a lack of incentive. The people of His time clamored for a man who could relieve them of the iron yoke of Rome. Jesus understood their feeling, and He knew the circumstances that had caused their oppression. He even had the capability to do something about it. But He refused to play their game. He refused to have any part in it. He did nothing that could be interpreted as politically motivated.

Jesus stated His relationship to the government when He answered His questioners: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21). Pay your legal obligations, live as good citizens under law, respect authority and that is enough. Let the "children of this world" mind the affairs of this world. *Your* calling is to a higher allegiance.

This is what Jesus taught and practiced. His first and whole interest was to please His heavenly Father. "I do always those things that please him," He could honestly say. And He told His disciples

that as the Father had sent Him, "so send I you." Involvement of those early Christians in the politics of the first century would have meant the end of them. Involvement in the politics of the twentieth century is no less threatening to us, and no less destructive.

Secondly, neither Paul nor any of the other apostles had anything to do with politics. Simon the Zealot *had* had—the Zealots were a radical group in Palestine who were working to overthrow the Roman power. But Jesus would have none of this. Jesus did not even approve of the apostles' striving among themselves "which should be greatest" in the kingdom of God! How could He have tolerated the least seeking for greatness in the kingdoms of men?

Paul could easily have been political material. Among the Jews he was highly qualified—"circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil. 3:5-6). He had the makings of whatever the world might need—statesman, lawyer, judge or president—he could have qualified above many. But he said, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:7-8). He had caught a vision of something so much greater, that everything of the present seemed to shrivel into worthlessness. How could he think of working to please *men*, as every politician must do? As he wrote, "Do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

Paul gave one clear guideline for all our dealings with the present cosmos. He wrote: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (II Tim. 2:4). The analogy is obvious. As the soldier cannot get involved in civilian affairs, so the Christian cannot entangle himself in the politics and social affairs of his time. His God-given task must take top priority. Paul could say of himself, "This one thing I do"—and that one thing had nothing to do with politics.

Amos is another man who might have been political material, had that been his interest. He spoke with power against the oppression and evils of his day. But Amos was not a politician—he was a prophet. He called for no demonstrations; he made no promises of what he himself could or would do for the people. He did no campaigning

for himself or his party. He sought no public office. He was already elected—elected of God, and he delivered the message God gave him to deliver. And that was all.

What about all the good that might possibly come from our political support at some crucial point? The apostle Paul has the answer: We must never do evil that good may result (Rom. 3:8, NEB). It is our duty to do right just as far as we know, and trust God with the results. If some good cause is hindered by our lack of support, the results—whatever they may be—are in the hand of God, who doeth all things well. Do we not feel He is fully competent to direct the affairs of this world as He sees fit? Nothing can happen that will hinder His cause. Nothing can happen against His will. It is He, the "most High" who "ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:17). All authority finds its ultimate source in God; He will triumph in the end.

Politicking condemns itself so far as the Christian is concerned in yet another way. The politician must please the people who elect him; the Christian must please God. The best politician must at least occasionally seek popular approval and conform to popular opinion; the Christian must obey the injunction: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). The politician must win popular support; the Christian never enjoyed this. Even in the first century the Christian community was accounted as "the offscouring of all things" (I Cor. 4:13), a "little sect everywhere spoken against," and "the fewest of all people." Any group described as such could hardly expect to be accepted in political circles.

The very basics of politics are contrary to Christian principles. The political campaign is grounded in strife, competition, and rivalry—all of which Paul lists among the "fruits of the flesh," or traits of the lower nature of man. He says: "Now the works of the flesh are plain: . . . enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like." And Paul says, "I warn you, . . . that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21, RSV). How often the political campaign degenerates into a battle of personalities, of wit, of who-can-promise-the most lecturing. And the slander and abuse which accompany the campaigning are a disgrace to the name of the nation. Yet the cycle is repeated again and again. And is not the person who supports such activity guilty along with those who actually commit the misdemeanor?

There is yet another danger: Is the sincere Christian safe in supporting even that which looks innocent? How can he be sure that there is not some carefully concealed intrigue, deceit or double dealing? He may support a candidate in good faith—and the future may disclose another picture. No wonder the Psalmist said long ago: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help" (Ps. 146:3).

If after considering the foregoing you still feel some duty to lend support in political affairs, ask yourself the following questions honestly in the fear of God:

Can I, as a professing Christian, obey the command to "keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27) and voluntarily work among those whose principles and values are those of the world?

Can I "come out from the world and be . . . separate" (II Cor. 6:17) and support political activities which are the very backbone of this present world?

Can I say with Paul that "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour" (Phil. 3:20-21, ASV), and then spend my time and interest toward the governing of an earthly nation?

Can I live "soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Tit. 2:12) if I place myself among people who are neither sober, righteous or godly?

Can I "walk honestly" among those who have no strong scruples against dishonesty—when it is more convenient? Can I say I have "renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully" (II Cor. 4:2) if I join with those who have not made this profession?

Can I say I love God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength—if part is for politics?

Can I say with Paul that "I am crucified with Christ" if I am giving myself to human goals and human interests and human standards?

Paul could say of himself and his co-workers, "We have conducted ourselves in the world in the holiness and sincerity that are from God" (II Cor. 1:12, NIV). Can I say this of myself?

No, politics is not for Christians. The apostle set the standard for all time when he wrote to the Thessalonian brethren: "Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, . . . that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing" (I Thess. 4:11-12). Or as translated in the New International Version, "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own busi-

ness and to work with your hands, . . . so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders."

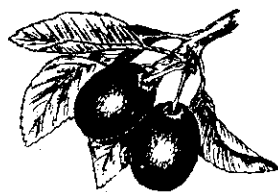
All present government—however good or bad—is only temporary. We have committed ourselves to a cause and a government which, once established, will be worldwide and eternal, with justice, equity and prosperity for all. Our whole interest is there—in the "world to come, whereof we speak." It is coming. Our whole effort now is to prepare ourselves for a place in it when it arrives. For this reason we say with Paul:

"We . . . are citizens of heaven, and from heaven we expect our deliverer to come, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transfigure the body belonging to our humble state, and give it a form like that of his own resplendent body, by the very power which enables him to make all things subject to himself" (Phil. 3:20-21, NEB).

This is why I have chosen to concern myself with God, not politics. I hope that you will do the same. The benefits are beyond comparing. ●●

Fruitful

Fragments



Diamonds are pieces of coal that stuck to their jobs.

The way to keep your faith is to keep it busy.

The Bible promises no loaves to the loafer.

The door of opportunity is opened by pushing.

You cannot straighten out a snake—or an evil habit—without killing it.

A man is also known by the company he keeps out of.

Don't let yourself be tied to the post of postponement.

If you would get God's best, see that He gets your best.

None get less pleasure from life than those who live for pleasure.

God gives the biggest job to the biggest man.

The greater the difficulty, the greater the victory in surmounting it.

The unpardonable sin is the sin unforsaken.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Second Advent of Christ

THANK God for the promise of the Second Advent! We need it; the whole world needs it (whether or not they realize it). Without it, we Christians would be as many in the world, fearful of the things we see coming on the earth. Without it, the world might succeed in destroying the human race with the weapons of its own creation.

That Christ will soon return is not the cry of a few fanatics. It is the cry of the Word of God. Patriarchs, prophets, priests, poets, seers, kings, angels, apostles and Christ Himself all predicted this great event. It was the point in history upon which the eyes of the prophets were focused. The Bible writers from Moses to John the Revelator seem to vie with one another in picturing the Second Advent, its purpose, its results and its glory.

It is to be the most momentous event of all history and with every passing day it draws nearer. Jesus Christ, heir to the throne that would be no more until He comes whose right it is, may come at any time. It is the consummation of God's plan for the earth; the climax of the ages. Without it, the plan would be in vain.

When Jeremiah the prophet was called to prophesy, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What seest thou?" And Jeremiah answered, "I see a seething pot," or as rendered by Moffatt, a "boiling cauldron." The seething pot, or boiling cauldron of Jeremiah's day, was the nation of Israel. But today the whole world is a "seething pot," seething with political unrest, immorality, crime and racial strife. Politically, spiritually and morally the whole world seems headed for chaos. Instability is the order of the day. Riots, demonstrations and upheavals occur with increasing frequency. To protest, demonstrate or strike for what they want has become commonplace.

What is the answer? The Second Advent of Christ. Men try in vain to solve their problems without God. World leaders seek reform, but admit that reform is a fading dream. Many of the world's

statesmen realize that they have worked in vain for their ideals; yet they do not turn to God.

V. CHRIST'S RETURN—THE SIGNS

"There shall be signs...", said Jesus, and we have found that these signs are legion. Many, even most, of the great prophecies of the Second Advent focus on our day. Many of these prophecies have been fulfilled; others are fulfilling. Those yet unfulfilled are strengthened by fulfillment of earlier prophecies.

"Fulfilled prophecy is a proof of inspiration because the Scripture predictions of future events were uttered so long before the events took place that no mere human sagacity or foresight could have anticipated them, and these predictions are so detailed, minute, and specific as to exclude the possibility that they were simply fortunate guesses. Hundreds of predictions... have been fulfilled by the elements and by men who were ignorant of them, or who utterly disbelieved them, or who struggled with frantic desperation to avoid their fulfillment."***

Jesus said, "I will come again." We are certain that He will come when all things have come to pass that were foretold. We cannot know the day or the hour, but we can know the "times and seasons," and, said Jesus, "Whenever you see all this happen, you may be sure that [I am] at hand, at the very door" (Matt. 24:33, Moffatt).

In previous lessons we have discussed many of these signs and their fulfillment, but there are yet others. Because these signs are so important to us "upon whom the ends of the [ages] are come" (I Cor. 10:11, Scofield), we will study them further.

C. Signs—Political

The United Nations was an outgrowth of World War II. Everyone seemingly had seen enough of war to last a long time, so a world organization was formed to insure the peace. The preamble to the United Nations Charter gives as one of the pur-

*** The New Scofield Reference Bible, p. 1339, footnote.

poses of the organization "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

But what has been the result? There have been more than fifty wars in the three decades since its establishment. Men claim to seek for peace, but—

4. The peace cry. The needless slaughter of human beings causes the peace cry to become louder. The past year has seen thousands of Lebanese killed in a so-called "holy" war. Great numbers of the citizens of Northern Ireland have been killed by terrorist bombs. Many Angolans died in a civil war between two opposing factions. But at the same time, all claim to be seeking peace. The prophet Jeremiah foresaw this situation centuries ago, when men would be saying, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. 8:11). Man alone cannot bring about a true and lasting peace.

Another peace cry is foretold by the apostle Paul. This forecast has not yet met its fulfillment, for when it is fulfilled the time of the end will be here. "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, . . . and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5:3). We hear much about peace, but even world leaders do not yet dare to add the "safety." Much is done with the expressed aim of making the world a safe place to live, but it has not yet been declared so.

5. Covenants are broken; treaties flouted. The prophet Isaiah looked ahead to a time when nations would break treaties with impunity. He saw a time "when warriors wail in the open, and the envoys of peace weep sore, at treaties broken by the ruthless foe, reckless of any pledge." He also saw our earth "drooping, withering, . . . polluted by the dwellers on its face, loose to laws and scorning statutes, breaking the eternal Compact" (Isa. 33:7-8; 24:4-5, Moffatt).

These prophecies have been fulfilled within the memory of the present generation. Many treaties have been written, duly signed and witnessed, only to prove to be worth no more than the paper on which they were written.

Individuals in growing numbers feel little remorse for breaking laws with which they do not agree. Moral standards have been lowered to coincide with the desires of the present generation and there seems to be little distinction between liberty and license. Surely this is the time foreseen by the Prophet.

D. Other Signs

The exact timing of the Second Advent is God's secret, but the signs are for us, serving notice that these are indeed the "times and seasons." We live at that point in history where all the signs con-

verge; we are a part of that generation to which Jesus referred when He said, "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matt. 24:34). Let us therefore, take heed to the signs and be ready!

1. Knowledge shall increase. Following the Industrial Revolution when the steam engine had been adapted for use in factories as well as ships, man thought he had learned about all there was to know. It was even suggested the U. S. Patent Office would not be needed—there was nothing more to invent! Were those who lived in that era to step upon today's scene, they would scarcely be able to believe their eyes! Little did they know of the sudden surge in knowledge that was to come, that by 1950 scientific knowledge would have doubled and that it would again double in the next ten years—and again the next ten! "Knowledge shall be increased," was part of God's last message to Daniel. He was to "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end" (Dan. 12:4). We are now in "the time of the end," as we see the prophecy being fulfilled.

2. Justice is bound. The prophet Isaiah was given insight to forecast the future and his forecast has proven accurate. "Justice is rebuffed and flouted while righteousness stands aloof; truth stumbles in the market-place and honesty is kept out of court, so truth is lost to sight, and whoever shuns evil is thought a madman" (Isa. 59:14-15, NEB).

This quotation pictures accurately the situation in the United States. According to a report in the **U. S. News and World Report**, May 10, 1976, "many arrested as criminals are never brought to trial," and "when tried, relatively few are convicted," and "even when convicted, few are sent to prison. . . . It seems that criminals move in and out of the criminal-justice system as though it had a revolving door. In our nation's capitol, of the one third who are convicted, only a little more than half spend any time in jail or prison. . . . On any given day countless numbers of criminals will be walking the streets, free to commit fresh crimes." Small wonder that the law-abiding citizen feels that the criminal-justice system often appears to favor the criminal over society.

Technicalities of the law, clever lawyers and overcrowded prisons all contribute to the situation, accurately fulfilling Isaiah's prediction for the last days, the "perilous times" as seen by the apostle Paul.

3. Doing evil with both hands earnestly. The prophet Micah forewarned of a time when the good man would be perished out of the earth, and

there would be none upright among men; when they would do evil with both hands earnestly (Mic. 7:2-3). With today's soaring crime statistics this prophecy is being fulfilled daily. It fits in perfectly with the crime situation in the major U. S. cities, but no matter how hopeless the situation looks, the true Christian should not despair, knowing that it is darkest just before dawn—the dawning of a new and better day.

E. Summary

We have reviewed many signs concerning the last days, the time immediately preceding the Second Advent. In our view, the majority are either fulfilled or being fulfilled, but let us be careful not to be too positive. Our thoughts are not God's thoughts, hence the world situation, racial strife, crime and troubles between capital and labor could be worse before God breaks His long silence and sends Christ to this earth.

The older generation, comparing today's scene with that of their youth, believe that our world is like unto the days of Noah and of Lot, when divine retribution removed the wicked element from the earth. But human comparisons are limited to a lifetime and may be inaccurate. Christ could come today, or tomorrow, but even if He did not come for a hundred years, our obligation would not be lessened. Our life-span limits our opportunity to perfect a character worthy of perpetuation.

VI. THE SECOND ADVENT— ITS MEANING FOR US

When John the Baptist came preaching a new and revolutionary doctrine in Galilee, the people rose up asking, "Then what are we to do?" Tax collectors among them asked, "Master, what are we to do?" Soldiers in the service also came to him asking, "And what of us?" (Luke 3:10-14, NEB).

John's message had touched their hearts and they responded. There had been a spiritual awakening among them. He had caused a stir among the people with his message of repentance and hope, and they lived in a state of expectancy. His words shook them out of their spiritual lethargy as he fearlessly went about his task of preparing "the way of the Lord."

And what of us? Have our hearts been stirred? Is there a spirit of expectancy among us? Christ's Second Advent is every bit as certain as was His first; it will come. And whenever it comes, it must find us ready. There will be no second chance.

What must we do? Our part is well stated by the Rev. Billy Graham: "First, we are to wait for the November, 1976

coming of Christ with patience. Second, we are to watch with anticipation. Third, we are to work with zeal. Fourth, we are to prepare with urgency." In other words, our part is in watching, working and waiting—ready to meet Christ at His coming.

A. Readiness

"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:44). These words of the Master Himself point up the need of being ready. The time is short. We have no time to waste. The words of the ancient prophet come echoing across the ages to us of the latter days: "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (Amos 4:12). Are we preparing?

We have studied the signs of His coming and have concluded that we live at a critical point in history. It is the time described by Paul in his letter to the Romans: "As I think you have realised, the present time is of the highest importance—it is time to wake up to reality. Every day brings God's salvation nearer. The night is nearly over, the Day has almost dawned" (Rom. 13:11-12, Phillips), or as rendered in the New English Bible: "Remember how critical the moment is. It is time . . . to wake out of sleep, for deliverance is nearer to us now than it was when first we believed. It is far on in the night; day is near."

And because that day is near, Paul warns, there is something for us to do. Just knowing about the signs and recognizing them is not enough. "Let us therefore throw off the deeds of darkness and put on our armour as soldiers of the light. Let us behave with decency as befits the day" (vs. 12-13, NEB).

Other New Testament writers are equally explicit concerning "doing." "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure," said Peter, "for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (II Pet. 1:10). "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. . . . Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works," was the admonition of James (2:17-18). "And every man that hath this hope in him [the hope of Christ's coming] purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure," said the beloved apostle John (I John 3:3).

"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching," was the warning from the writer to the Hebrews (Heb. 10:24-25).

Paul, writing to his sons in the faith, Timothy

and Titus, emphasized the necessity of godly living, reminding Titus of "the grace [or gospel] of God" that "teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age," while "we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of... Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2:12-13, TEV), and to Timothy (among many things) he wrote, "be... an example of the believers, in word, in [conduct], in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity... Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine... Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (I Tim. 4:12-16).

Getting ready to meet the Lord is no part-time job, as can be seen from the above quotations. Rather, it is the work of a lifetime, hence we have put readiness at the top of the list. Preparing to meet the Lord is of the utmost importance, and until we have finished our work and made ourselves ready we cannot be said to be waiting for Him.

B. Watching and Waiting

"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:35-37). "Do not lose your courage, then, because it brings with it a great reward. You need to be patient, in order to do the will of God and receive what he promises. For, as the scripture says, 'Just a little while longer, and he who is coming will come; he will not delay'" (Heb. 10:35-37, TEV).

To keep watching and waiting will require endurance. There is danger in allowing the evil we see all around us to become commonplace and wear down our patience. Jesus saw the possibility of this when He said, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:12-13). We cannot allow our love to cool even to the point of being lukewarm, for all such will be cast off (Rev. 3:16). Only those who endure shall stand with Him.

Watching demands that we be alert to danger. "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. ... For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it [seem to] tarry, wait for it; because it will surely

come, it will not tarry" (Hab. 2:1, 3). It may seem to us that the Lord tarries too long, but the trouble is with us, not with the Lord. If everything were ready for His coming, He would be here.

To continue in the faith beyond the point of our expectation requires much patience and endurance, hence the timeliness of the words of the writer to the Hebrews that we have need of patience to continue doing the will of God until Christ comes. Paul likewise prayed that the Thessalonian brethren's hearts be directed "into the patient waiting for Christ." James' Epistle also appeals for patience in waiting, comparing it with the patience exercised by the farmer as he waits for his land to produce a crop. "You also must be patient. Keep your hopes high, for the day of the Lord's coming is near" (Jas. 5:8, TEV). These words are for us as much as for them. Their waiting required centuries of sleep in the grave; for us, the time is short!

C. In Conclusion

Christ is coming again! We say it with the same certainty that we say the sun will rise tomorrow morning. It is the subject of the whole Bible, the golden thread that runs from book to book, from the first of Genesis to the end of Revelation. A subject of such import commands our attention.

Knowing that He is coming again, the work of preparing to meet Him should be first in our lives. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," was Christ's admonition in His first sermon and it is as good today. We should ask ourselves daily: Am I ready should the King come today?

No one who is truly looking for the King will be found for one moment living on a low level, satisfying the desires of his lower nature. Being aware that the King may come at any time, he will be watching his every thought, word and action. The things of the world will have no appeal for him. He will be planning and living for another world. Like Christ, He will be **in** the world, but not **of** the world.

Are we ready? We cannot say that we are waiting for the Lord until we can say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

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"For a time is coming when men will not tolerate wholesome instruction, but, wanting to have their ears tickled, they will find a multitude of teachers to satisfy their own fancies, and will close their ears to the truth and will turn away to fables"
—II Timothy 4:3-4, *Weymouth*

The Great APOSTASY

(Book Feature: Part Five)

The Apostasy Terminated

GOD would not create a world and let darkness and evil rule forever. As surely as day follows night, as surely as spring follows winter, so surely should the resurrection of truth follow the long night of the apostasy.

As the historian wrote: "Truth, that it might pass safely through the period when Rome would have crushed it with her iron sceptre, had acted like the insect that weaves with its threads the chrysalis in which it envelops itself during the winter. . . . But the spring might come, when the hidden truth might lift its head, and throw off all the threads which covered it. Having acquired fresh vigor in its seeming tomb, the world might behold it in the days of its resurrection, obtain the victory over Rome and all her errors."

That spring came. It came just as the divine writers had foreseen it would come. After the time allotted had expired, the time came for the renaissance of light and knowledge.

Among the prophecies foretelling this important time are the following:

Jesus assured Martha that there would be living believers upon earth at the time of His second advent. He said to her at the time of her brother's death, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:24-26), indicating that men and women would be embracing the same holy faith at the time of His return.

In Matthew 25, in the parable of the Ten Virgins, Jesus foretold an awakening. While the bridegroom tarried, they "all slumbered and slept." But "at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (Matt. 25:5-6). Someone woke up.

Jesus also assured His listeners that the days

of "great tribulation" should "be shortened," else "there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24:21-22).

Daniel in his last vision beheld the extinction of the true Church—and also the day when it would revive (Dan. 12:5-6).

Joel's illustration of the fig tree that would lie waste also came to life again, budded and bore fruit (Joel 2:21-22): "... the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength."

To an observer in medieval times, in an age when superstition held men's minds enslaved, such prophecies would have seemed incredible, absurd, mere wishful dreaming of an ill-informed idealist. The entire fabric of civilization had disintegrated into a state of ignorance, brutality and misery. And the Roman power seemed invincible.

Yet despite the dismal outlook from a human viewpoint, the Lord had spoken; and the word of the Lord is mightier than the mightiest chains of bondage, ignorance and superstition. Looking backward and forward, yesterday, today and forever, Jehovah stands supreme in the scheme of history. Men and nations, though ignorant of His plans, all unite to perform His will when He decrees it.

When threescore and ten persons, the progenitors of the chosen people, entered Egypt as famine refugees, it was more than coincidence that they found a friendly dynasty in control. God Himself raised up Moses to deliver them. And when they came into possession of Canaan, He frequently allowed heathen invaders to punish them for their apostasy and evil. When their lesson had been learned, He found someone to rescue them. Nothing was left to chance.

When they scorned His repeated warnings, the Lord permitted His people to be taken into captivity.

ity and their land to be overrun by foreigners; but when the days of their chastisement were complete, God used Cyrus to allow them to return to their native land and rebuild their sacred city.

So likewise the movements of history which brought an end to the night of darkness were ordered of God. The apostasy did not end in one dazzling burst of heavenly light. Just as the dawn breaks gradually over the earth, so the night of the apostasy ended slowly—so slowly, yet so surely.

For over ten centuries the power of Rome had held absolute sway over the destinies of courts and nations. So severely had the medieval Church limited free thought that the art of thinking was all but extinct.

All but—for when the slightest break appeared in the dominant power, men's minds were already active.

Countless successive steps combined to make possible the resurrection of divine truth. The rise of independent thought, the Magna Carta, the Renaissance, the so-called Reformation, the discovery of the Western world, the Declaration of Independence, the establishing of a nation where freedom of religion was guaranteed—all were steps in the plan of God as He prepared a place and a time for the spiritual awakening His prophets had foreshown.

Probably the greatest single step was the translation of the Bible from the Latin Vulgate into the common tongues of the people, thus releasing it from the clutches of the ruling clergy. And the invention of the printing press guaranteed that never again would the Bible be restricted to the few.

The Awakening

In all ages the plan of the Almighty has operated through human instrumentality. Human instruments in the power of Rome silenced the believers of the early centuries and piled error upon error in the apostate Church. Even so God provided that another human instrument should extricate true religion from the falsity which had smothered it.

In the nineteenth century of our era, the wheel of time had turned to a point where prophecy could be fulfilled. Daniel in his last vision had beheld the extinction of the true Church, the 1260 years of darkness, and—joyful sight!—the day of its resurrection.

"Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. And one said to the man clothed in linen,

which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" (Dan. 12:5-6).

Daniel saw two men whom he called "wonders"—and are they not? One on the further bank of the river who held to the truth in the face of savage persecution; one on this bank of the river who, unaided by visible divine power, laboriously cleared away the debris which centuries of darkness had deposited and painstakingly reconstructed the truth according to the original plan; truly they were "wonders."

Daniel reveals that the same interval of time we observed in other prophecies—"a time, times, and an half"—would separate one wonder from the other. And the second "wonder" would be the first man to embrace the resurrected truth and bring the night of apostasy to its end; the man who should, unaided by visible divine power, clear away the debris which centuries of darkness had deposited and uphold true religion in its purity.

At the time of mankind's first effort at reformation it became safer to possess and use an intellect. Men had been dissatisfied with the superstructure which the Roman Church had placed upon a rotten foundation of pagan thought, and had reconstructed it to *their* liking. But it yet remained for a man to arise with sufficient courage to repudiate the foundation as well as the building. The great cornerstone of the Fall of Man and its counterpart, the redemptive, sacrificial death of Christ, had yet to be challenged and overthrown. The basic principle of human sacrifice which was a vital part of every pagan cult from Memphis to Stone Henge, from Baal to Brahma, had stood for so long that mankind knew no other foundation, and to strike against it was to incur the wrath of the whole religious world.

Modernism and Fundamentalism, as we know them today, were not existent. None but the infidels denied the absurd notion of a six-day creation six thousand years ago, and unreasoning literalism hampered most religious thought and investigation.

Still, it was safe to think, and more people were thinking. The time was ripe for something to happen, and that something was the True Reformation.

The Second "Wonder"

In the middle of the nineteenth century, God began to move upon the instrument He would use to bring about this religious revolution. The second "wonder" rose up in the darkness with a determination to know the whole truth of God as God in-

tended it to be known from His written Word, and to live a life pleasing to God. He read in the Word of God, "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God" (Prov. 2:3-5). Taking the Word of God at face value, he was convinced that the knowledge of God *could* be found, but that it would require seeking and searching. This he did, and his efforts were rewarded.

This instrument, this second "wonder" of Daniel's vision, we believe to have been our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols (1844-1912). This is a broad and sweeping statement which every earnest truth-seeker should investigate fully by comparing his findings with the Word of God. In the words of the apostle Paul, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." This was his lifelong motto, and it still stands today.

Born of frontier parents and endowed with a strong and independent mind, he easily rose above the handicap of limited schooling. In his pioneer home he was acquainted with earnest toil, yet never allowed toil to blunt his finer sensibilities. He learned to know God through the works of nature, and from earliest childhood deeply revered the great Creator.

Like all children of religious parents in his day, he was educated at his mother's knee in the ideas that passed for religion. In other words, his building was started for him on the same old foundation, patched up with the same untempered mortar. But it did not remain there. At an early age he began turning the searchlight of boyish inquisitiveness against the religious systems of the day. Before each "I believe" he placed a pertinent "Why?" The word of a noted divine or a paragraph from a church creed was not sufficient evidence when the ideas expressed conflicted with reason and with what he could read in his Bible.

Nothing could be taken for granted; either the Bible must prove itself true or be classed as human literature.

Then came the decision which was to alter the course of centuries and spell hope to all earnest truth-seekers.

After a search for truth in many churches, he was forced to the conclusion that all were in darkness and that since the seventh century not a man had known the joyful sound of the true and living gospel. And so, with one splendidly daring sweep, he threw away all the dead weight of tradition, creeds, church "fathers," councils, dogmas and

The closing of the long, dark night was not the work of a moment; it took time.

opinions of men and started anew, his one source of information the Word of God. The apostasy was terminating.

Not in a dazzling burst of light did this stupendous change take place; not by the dictation of an angelic visitant, not in the thunders of Sinai or the still small voice that spoke to Elijah in Horeb did the hidden truth again project itself; but by the travail of a mind wrestling with problems which seemed overwhelming, by sleepless nights and days of study, analysis, research, piecing together the shattered fragments with the patience and skill of an archeologist in the ruins of a forgotten city.

He saw that if he was to succeed in his task, he must understand the tongues in which God spoke to His people. So he unhesitatingly plunged into the study of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, mastering them sufficiently for his purpose. This was absolutely necessary because, while the great bulk of the truth can be plainly found in the King James Version of the Bible, yet in many places the translation is colored by the darkness which enveloped the minds of those who translated it.

Only a man he was, unknown to the great of this world and a stranger to worldly wisdom. How could a mortal man in so humble a position hope to succeed in an undertaking so great and sublime? It was only because the work was part of God's plan and as such it could not fail; guiding every step was the hand of the great Jehovah.

To understand the magnitude of the undertaking one must realize the immensity of the great gulf that separated light from darkness, truth from error. It was not the birth of a new religion; it was the resurrection of an old one. Only the religion of Jesus, the prophets and apostles saved and will save. Consequently, any religion that failed to embody every principle of their teaching was only a false dawn.

Thus we see the close of the long dark night and the dawn of a new day. But this too was not the work of a moment; it took time.

Why did God allow His truth to become so buried in superstition and gross misunderstandings and mixed with paganism and philosophy? Perhaps it was His means of preserving it while it should rest in the hands of those who would have been its enemies had they understood its meaning.

Doctrines Buried

The beautiful allegorical story of Creation as presented in the first three chapters of Genesis had been literalized, and for centuries the masses under the fear of death had been forced to believe that all creation was only six thousand years old, that prior to that time there had existed an unlimited void, uninhabitable and uninhabited. But reading the word of the Psalmist (Ps. 103:17), that the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, Mr. Nichols visualized a supreme Creator, perfect in power, in goodness, in mercy, from aeons in the past dispensing justice—upon whom? Clearly he saw that the infinite universe which stretched for many millions of miles away from our planet, with its grandeur of sun, moon and stars, had rolled for untold ages in the past and was simply used as an example by Jehovah that we might the more easily grasp the meaning of the spiritual creation. This spiritual creation is the grandest pageant ever enacted on this earth. During the six days (or six thousand years, one day for a thousand years—II Pet. 3:8), the rulers for the Kingdom will be perfected, and during the seventh day of rest from sin, or the Millennium, (Rev. 20:4, 6), the subjects will be prepared, followed by the eighth day of eternal felicity for all the faithful among earthborns.

Thus we see the foundation stone of the renaissance truth sweeping bare forever the pagan theory of six-day literal creation, the impossibility of literal grass growing before the literal sun, and of the natural man being made in the image of God.

Although the Bible never once mentioned it, humanity for centuries were taught to believe that man was the possessor of an immortal soul, incapable of death; and that though the body perished, yet the soul, released from this house of clay, found eternal repose in Paradise, or eternal torture in the burning fires of hell. This theory persisted as common belief when Mr. Nichols was studying, though the Bible clearly shows man to be mortal, a being to be given immortality at Judgment Day if worthy, or if unworthy to be destroyed by eternal death (Rom. 6:23).

Two of the most glaring and obvious fables that the Roman hierarchy imposed on mankind were hellfire and a literal devil. Both of these doctrines are so foreign to the spirit of true Christianity that it seems strange that even in this enlightened 20th century they still persist; yet they do. Narrow-minded theologians still endeavor to frighten the simple into religion by vividly picturing to their imagination the abode of the damned where

their "worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched," superintended by a cloven-hoofed monster with a tail of such magnitude that it encircled a third part of the stars of heaven.

Luther sanctioned this belief, and in his writings relates many imaginary encounters with the devil. But the Bible teaches that the only devil that defiles comes from within (Mark 7:21-23; James 1:13). Furthermore, the words translated "hell" (*sheol* and *hades*) refer to the grave, annihilation, and never once mean an abode of eternal torment.

The pagan conception of a triune God, the mystery of the ages, went into the scrap heap as it lacked Scriptural authority. Thus perished a fable held dear by all the so-called "reformers," a dogma for which Calvin sent Servetus to the stake. In its place we have the Bible conception of an All-powerful Father; His obedient Son, who had no existence until born into the world; and their power exercised through the Holy Spirit, all agreeing as one, yet not the same person.

One by one the doctrines that had been born during the centuries immediately following Christ and during the Medieval Age were proven to be not the true teachings of the Word of God. In this category went inherent immortality, death-bed repentance, instant salvation, the vicarious atonement, the deity of Christ, the Holy Spirit as a person—in fact, the entire stronghold of papal tradition that had been handed down from generation to generation for more than a thousand years.

Finally separated from Rome in every point of doctrine, the "wonder" on this side of the river of time gradually realized that the ancient religion of Jesus in its ultimate fullness involved a proposition and an ideal above the highest dream of the nominal church—perfection of character. So convinced, this man undertook the greatest work of which mortals are capable, as stated by Jesus: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

And so, holding in one hand the true religion in doctrine and in the other practical Christianity, the religion of the heart, the keeping of every command of God, he led his people forth from Egypt, out of the wilderness of Romish bondage into the full blaze of the perfect truth. The following are his own words:

"As I stand upon the shore in the full blessed light of its freedom, and see for me the ending of the weary centuries of darkness, I lift my heart in thankfulness to God that I have been made free from superstition, free to walk in the wonderful light of truth." ●●

In Everything Give Thanks

HERE is a solemn admonition from the great apostle Paul to all would-be followers of Christ: "In everything give thanks." Have we scaled the heights of Christian achievement to which this calls us? Have we sensed the commanding tone of authority behind it?

Paul believed in giving thanks, and he sincerely exhorted others to do the same. He was convinced that it was possible to make every day a Thanksgiving Day. And he proved it in his own life—which to many would have seemed to provide little opportunity for thankfulness. Frequently he found himself in the most trying situations—he was no stranger to hunger, or cold, nakedness, weariness, prison and solitude. But hear his ringing words of triumph: "Wherefore thank we God without ceasing"! Could *we* have said it?

"In everything give thanks." Paul's utmost confidence and belief that God was with him in all his trials and circumstances made his heart throb with thanksgiving and good cheer.

Gratitude is not something we can take or leave as we desire. We are either grateful or we are not. And if we would be Christians, we must learn to be grateful. When Paul commanded thankfulness, it was with the sanction of divine authority behind him. When we refuse to heed so binding a command we are disobedient. And a disobedient man cannot be a truly thankful man or a genuine follower of Jesus.

"In everything give thanks." Have we comprehended the scope of those words, "in everything"? Naturally we are inclined to a feeling of thanks when the skies are blue and all our wishes are realized. But let our world be clouded by some disturbance or grief; let some disease weaken our strength—and are we still thankful?

Actually, circumstances have nothing to do with our being thankful. There are those who are blessed with abundant health, good homes and the best of everything this world can offer—but who have little gratitude in their hearts. They are never truly happy nor content.

But take the life of the apostle Paul, who lacked the blessing of temporal goods and was, very possibly, deficient in health. Read over his Epistles—and can you sense any tone of dejection or despair? Are his letters filled with his tales of woe?

Then read the Psalms of David, which abound with praise and thanksgiving to God—and consider that during part of the time he was writing these psalms, he was living in constant fear of losing his life to his pursuer, King Saul.

Our Lord "endured the cross, despising the shame." And why? "For the joy that was set before him." With that joy in view, He could sing and give thanks in the darkest hour of His life, in the very shadow of death itself.

How can we learn this virtue of constant gratitude? It comes with faith in God and implicit confidence in His Word. When we believe that no temptation will overtake us that will be beyond our strength to endure, we will be able to thank God.

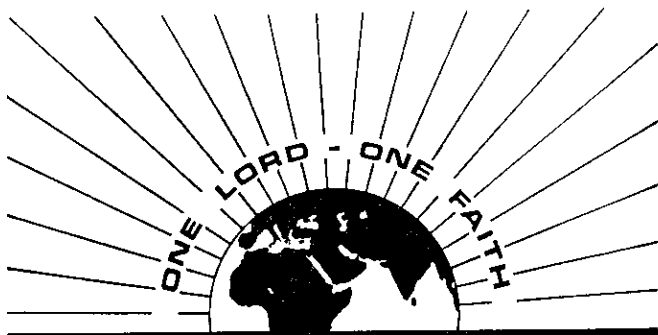
Gratitude does not come of itself. Like all other virtues, it must be cultivated today and tomorrow, nourished daily, or it will soon die.

An unthankful Christian is a misnomer—for Christianity is synonymous with thanks or thankfulness. To be an unthankful professing Christian is to be a moral dwarf. The character of such a one lacks the development which accompanies heartfelt gratitude. He has not yet reached the full stature of Christ.

Let us begin to practice gratitude in the little everyday things of life. God's mercies extend to us each day, and should we not be thankful—for rain and sun, for springtime and autumn, for food and rest and health and strength, for home and family and friends and all that combines to make our lives pleasant and agreeable? Commonplace blessings these, but what would life be without them? We must learn to appreciate these before we can thank Him for the prospect of a better, eternal life.

Ten lepers were cleansed, and only one returned to give thanks to Him who wrought the miracle. The nine thought, "He knows we are grateful," and went their way without being thankful at all. Only one was sufficiently grateful to go out of his way to thank the Master.

We are living in the most highly favored of all ages. Soon the Master of the house will be among us. And what of us? When the Lord begins to assemble His own, will He be able to say of us, "In everything they gave thanks"? ●●



People God Used

Part 4

The period of history during which God had judges governing His nation lasted several hundred years. Although it was not among the most productive periods of history, as far as the people it produced for God's eternal Kingdom, it is significant for the sake of a few. Never has the Lord had many who would look beyond the moment and see the greater things He was offering.

But we are glad He has had a few. And we should feel thankful that we have opportunity to be among His few now. As you read about their experiences and their struggles, see how closely they parallel your own.

AFTER the conquest of Canaan was complete, the people of Israel settled down to enjoy their new land and fruitful heritage. All promised to be peace and plenty for years to come, but—

Israel's early years were not to be easy. Peace and prosperity meant also a relaxing of their faith in God and an abandonment of the laws and principles which made them strong. Moses was gone. Now Joshua also was gone. Many of the people of the land were friendly, and their religious rites looked exciting. Being like everybody else was so much stronger an attraction than being obedient and loyal to the Lord God of their fathers, and so Israel fell into one temptation after another.

The divine Record does not tell us about a whole congregation of good people during this time, but there must have been a few. These people were tested in a different way than people of earlier times had been. These people had to stand by their convictions against unbelievers all around them, just as we must often do today. Sometimes they even had to stand against their own countrymen, or their own families, who had gone astray from the true God and were doing whatever they thought was right.

The first several hundred years after the Israelites entered Canaan (about 450 years) were turbulent and unsettled years. The people fell into a pattern. They would prosper, forget God, and fall to doing whatever they wanted to do, often worshipping other gods. Then the Lord would allow their enemies to overrun them, or oppress them, or oppose them. Then, in their dire distress, Israel would once again remember God and call upon Him for deliverance, whereupon He would send a deliverer. These deliverers were called judges.

A few of the judges were outstanding for their high quality of character. We will mention two:

Deborah

The tribes located in the northern part of Israel were being oppressed by the armies of the King of Canaan. The people of Israel felt powerless against the oppressor's might—their general, Sisera, had 900 iron battle-chariots. What did Israel have that could match this?

Israel's general, Barak, consulted with Israel's political and spiritual leader at this time, Deborah. The decision was to fight. With the Lord on their side, Israel could be sure of victory. The Lord *did* act in their behalf, and at last the Israelites were able to sing a song of victorious praise to God (see Judges 4, 5).

A long period of peace—and retrogression—followed this victory. Israel again forgot God.

What need had they for Him anyway?

This is a danger which still threatens us today. When all goes well, when our plans work out, our needs are satisfied, and all our efforts prosper, there is danger, great danger, that we too may forget God. We forget our dependence upon Him. We forget our obligation to Him. We forget what lies ahead, in the near future, close at hand, and become preoccupied with the interests of the moment. This was what happened to Israel.

Where were the ark and the law, and all that they had brought with them into Canaan? The immediate need for God seemed to have passed. They were safe now, and in their own land; so Israel settled down, content. Could they remember the miracles they had witnessed in the wilderness, and the manna, and all the times they had pitched camp and broken camp when the angel had tarried or moved? It all seemed such a long time ago.

But not everyone forgot. In the tribe of Manasseh was a family who still recounted all the Lord had done for them, and who revered the God of Israel. His name was Joash, and he had a son named

Gideon

Gideon may have had little to say about all his father told, but he did a lot of thinking. Why should all the miracles have happened *in the past*? Why no more *now*? They surely needed a miracle *now* if they ever did. Where was the God who had delivered them from Egypt?

Are we ever inclined to feel this way? If we are, let us reassure ourselves that God *will* speak and act when the time is right. It is not ours to tell Him what to do or when. It is ours to be ready when He does finally act.

But things grew worse in Israel, and the people became even more forgetful of God as vicious desert tribesmen swooped down upon them and destroyed their crops. This happened year after year, and many Israelites were reduced to poverty. Hosts of people—including Joash and his family—fled their homes to seek safer quarters in mountain caves, abandoning their barren wasted lands that they might save their lives. Where was the God who could deliver them? Even Joash's family forgot God and fell to worshiping other gods, like the rest of Israel. Until—

One day an angel appeared to Gideon and told him what he should do. Gideon was slow to believe it was the Lord's messenger; but God did not condemn him for this. He just gave Gideon more and more evidence until Gideon was sure God was speaking and that God would be with him in the bold campaign he was to undertake to deliver Israel.

There were many steps to the plan God had designed for Israel's deliverance, and it involved great cooperation between Gideon and the Lord. But Gideon followed through, and he won. You should read the entire story in your Bible; it is found in Judges, chapter 7. The story begins in disgraceful waywardness and apostasy, but it ends in triumph for Israel and Israel's God. For with just three hundred chosen men Gideon, with the help of God, defeated all the hosts of the Midianites. Following the Lord's instructions, they broke the earthen vessels they each were carrying in this unusual combat, thus exposing torches which had been concealed in them. At the same time they blew their trumpets and shouted, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," and the host of the Midianites fled.

It was a striking lesson for Israel, that God can and does deliver when men are willing to cooperate with Him. And the same God lives and works today. What He will do for us depends on how much we are willing to cooperate with Him

and follow His instructions. If Gideon and his men had gone their own way and entered battle in their own strength, they would surely have been defeated. But with God on their side, they were sure of success.

Gideon then became the ruling judge in Israel.

Another great Bible personage fits into history about this time. Her name was

Ruth

During the time of the Judges, while the men of war were off to battle for their country, the land was filled with people who lived in their own houses, cultivated their own land, and cared and shared with one another, seeking happiness. But this "land of milk and honey" was subject to periods of severe drought; and at such times, many of the people sought help from beyond the borders of Israel.

Drought struck, and one man, Elimelech, and his wife Naomi, with their two sons, decided to do just this. They left everything and removed to Moab—where there was food aplenty, but where there was also foreign religion and strange gods and gross idolatry.

All went well until Elimelech died. Then the two sons both married Moabite maidens, which was contrary to Israelite law. But these Moabite women grew more and more to love Naomi, who taught them about her faith in the God of Israel.

Soon the two sons died, leaving their wives, Ruth and Orpah, and Naomi, alone in Moab.

Naomi began to feel homesick. Her family were gone; she had nothing. How she longed for the fellowship of other believers, and her own native land. She decided to return.

Would her daughters-in-law go with her? or would they prefer to stay with their own people in Moab? She put the proposition to them, and kissed them both goodbye. But the girls did not want to see her go. Once again Naomi told them, "Go back to your own people and find peace in a house of your own. And may the Lord deal kindly with you."

At this Orpah turned and went away; but Ruth clung to Naomi. So attached had she become to Naomi and her God, so impressed had she been with Naomi's godly example, that she could not leave her mother-in-law.

The lesson is for us. Is the influence of our faith upon our lives so marked that those who observe us can indeed see that we are committed to higher principles than the world around us? And do we have Ruth's steadfastness of purpose and

(*Continued on page 24*)

Growing In "Grace"

DO you say grace before you eat?" asked an acquaintance of mine after her little boy had spent a day at our home. She told how that that evening when they had sat down to supper her son said, "We have to say a prayer before we eat." "So," she said, "we did."

How wonderful, I thought, if more families would make a practice of saying grace before meals!

We didn't always. Having grown up in homes where grace was never said, my husband and I found it a bit difficult to know just how to begin in our own home. But we decided the important thing was to *begin*—so we did. Over the years we have found the practice to be a great blessing to us. It has strengthened both our family relationship and our relationship to God.

Saying grace was a principle practiced by Jesus when He was living among men. Wherever He went, it was His habit to bless the food and give thanks for it.

What better way to show thankfulness to God for His many, many blessings than to offer a prayer of gratitude at mealtime? For a brief time the day's busy activities have been set aside, and the family is together. It is a time to thank God not only for our food but also for each other, our friends, Christian fellowship, and the opportunity to work for eternal life—we have so much to thank God for!

It is so important to develop in our children the habit of saying grace and being thankful. The younger they begin, the deeper will be the impression. When very young, children are usually agreeable to the lifestyle their parents set. Little ones love to imitate Mommy and Daddy. As they grow, the established pattern of saying grace will help them to realize their dependency on God.

We are trying not to let saying grace become mere routine in our home. One way we do this is by variety. Sometimes Dad says grace, sometimes Mother, sometimes one of the children. Sometimes we all quote something together, such as the Lord's Prayer. Or we sing a song of prayer. Once in a while, for a change, we let each one take a turn around the table telling something for which he or

she is particularly thankful. A little thinking and a lot of sincerity are all that are needed to make saying grace a rich and fruitful moment with God.

Do you say grace before you eat? If not, won't you begin today? And if so, won't you join us in working to keep it a time of special family unity and fresh inspiration as you thank and serve God? ●●

One Lord-One Faith

(Continued from page 23)

determination to make any sacrifice and perform any service that will strengthen our attachment to our God?

The story of Ruth, of her strong, upright character, is an inspiration to read, and an allegory of the ideal relationship of the members of Christ's true Church to Christ the head. And it assures us that God fulfills what He promises, and blesses abundantly every effort we make toward Him.

The story of Ruth ends with the marriage of Ruth to a great Israelite named Boaz, and Ruth the Moabitess falls into the line of Christ's ancestry. This is evidence that God does not respect nationality. He honors character, and character alone. In all ages He is with those people who are with Him and He blesses according as they serve. ●

Meditations On the Word

(Continued from page 27)

the end—till He comes—will be co-rulers, joint-heirs with Christ. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21).

Of all things this world can give, nothing is more alluring than power. The inherent desire for importance drives man to seek power over his fellows by fair means and foul. Almost invariably the desire for power runs wild; but rightly understood and controlled it is a legitimate urge. Do we aspire to power? Would we be a part of that Divine super-government which will right all earth's ancient wrongs? The dazzling promise is held before our eyes—power that is certain and satisfying and eternal; but only the overcomers, those who have learned to rule themselves, are to be trusted with it. ●●

Obituaries

Lilian A. Ploughwright

Death is rightly termed an enemy, the "king of terrors": yet even our enemy seems indispensable in the present scheme of nature, and there are times when he comes almost as a friend. Such was the death to which our sister, Lilian A. Ploughwright, succumbed on October 9.

Sister Ploughwright was born in London, England, in 1894. Her parents became acquainted with the teachings of the Megiddo Church when our founder visited England in the 1890's. In 1911, Sister Ploughwright moved to America with her brother and widowed mother, and together they made their home in the vicinity of Rochester. After the mother's decease, Sister Ploughwright and her brother continued to make their home together until it was broken by the brother's death. Sister Ploughwright, with the help of a friend, Brother Delbert Hauenstein, cared tenderly for her brother during his terminal illness. And during her recent illness, Sister Ploughwright received the same tender care.

Funeral services were conducted on October 13, Newton H. Payne, assistant pastor, officiating. Interment was in Mount Hope Cemetery, where rest others of our beloved dead until "He that shall come will come."

In the meanwhile, let us the living re-echo the words of the Psalmist: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." ●●

Cecil A. Sutton

Again we were reminded that life, however long, is not a continuing thing. On October 12, death claimed another aged member of our local church community, Sister Cecil A. Sutton.

Sister Sutton spent the first portion of her ninety-three years in Iowa. Her first acquaintance with the Megiddo Church was in 1930, through literature she had seen advertised. The more she read and studied, the more she was convinced; and when circumstances permitted, she removed to Rochester, desiring to be with those who shared her religious convictions. For the next 28 years Sister Sutton and another sister of mature age, Sister Maud Miller, also a former resident of a midwestern state, made their home together. They demonstrated the good effects of their religion, living 28 years together without a ripple of disagreement. Sister Miller, now in her 96th year, survives her.

When the two aging sisters needed more care, Sister Sutton's son, David, and his wife took her into their home and cared lovingly for her every need. Her daughter, Mrs. Viola Taylor, who recently removed to Rochester to be able to fellowship more closely with those of like faith, cared for her during her last few weeks.

Sister Sutton is survived by one daughter, Mrs. Viola Taylor, now of Rochester; and four sons; Lewis, of Lockridge, Iowa; Kenneth, of Ainsworth, Iowa; David, of Rochester, New York; and John, of Lakeland, Florida; also four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were conducted on October 14, assistant pastor Newton H. Payne officiating. Interment was in Mount Hope Cemetery, where others of our beloved dead await the glorious Day when the dead in Christ shall rise and receive the fruit of their labors. ●●

*Be still, my soul: the Lord is on Thy side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to Thy God to order and provide;
In every change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul: Thy best, Thy heavenly Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.*

November, 1976

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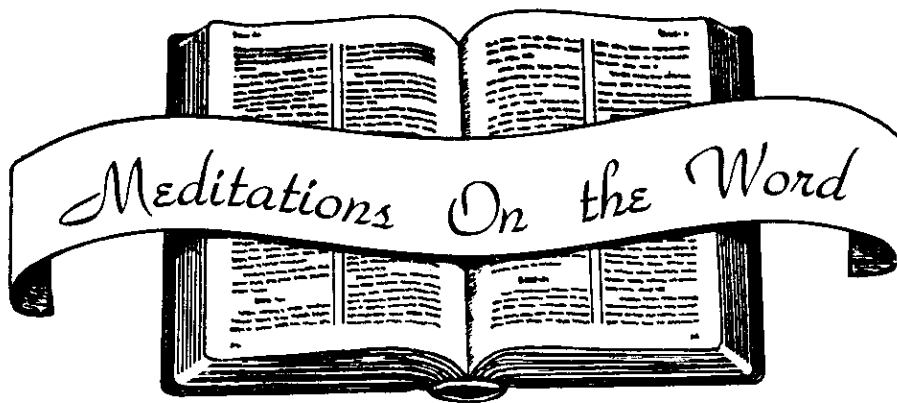
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"But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations"
 —(Rev. 2:25-26).

THIS admonition and promise was addressed to the church at Thyatira, an ecclesia whose record was good—but not good enough. After recounting in verse 19 an imposing list of virtues, seemingly enough to assure salvation to anyone, the Voice solemnly warns, "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee. . . ." Let no one be misled by that phrase, "a few things." In modern translations of this 20th verse the idea of "few" is absent: "I have this against you"; and the Concordant Version renders it, "But I have much against you." Their transgression was not trivial but a serious matter. In fact, no transgression is trivial; one unrepented and unforsaken sin will nullify any number of virtues; as has been said in connection with James 3:11-12, "One little sin makes the fresh water all salt." This is what perfection of character means, and the only way to have our sins covered is to cease from them (Prov. 28:13). The Bible, from beginning to end, tells but one story concerning the way of salvation, and this is the story.

There is evidence that in ancient Thyatira there was a great amalgamation of races, with a resulting amalgamation of religions. Naturally it placed this church in a position of great danger, for the tendency is strong to go with the crowd; and it seems that "that woman Jezebel"—Babylon the great, or confusion (Rev. 17:1-5)—had secured a foothold in its organization. The present world, with its laxity and easy tolerance, is constantly inviting us to compromise and collaborate, to forget that we are called to be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).

After describing the punishments awaiting both the deceiver and the deceived, the Voice continues,

"But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come." But does the fulfillment of this injunction promise salvation? Not at all. Your works, and charity, and service, and faith, and patience—these are all good things as far as they go, and hold them fast, never let them slip for an instant. Hold fast, and add daily, hourly, to what you have. Avoid, at all costs, a backward step, for lost ground is hard to reclaim at this late hour. All these enumerated virtues, even held fast to the end, will not cover the outstanding offense; commendable as they are, they do not represent perfection, but only steps in the right direction. "You are doing more than you did at first," Moffatt renders the last sentence of verse 19. Still it was not enough.

The Eternal is hard to satisfy, some may complain. Frankly, He is. He has every right to be particular, for "the house which is to be built for the Eternal must be incomparably magnificent, far-famed, and glorious throughout all lands" (I Chron. 22:5, Moffatt). With such a great work in hand, with infinite time and infinite reserves of human material at His disposal, He very justly insists on having the best. The others, those who choose not to serve Him, are given the blessings of this life, followed by an eternity of peaceful, painless slumber. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face" (Ps. 89:14).

There is a vast amount of historical matter in the Bible, some of which seems to have little meaning for us whose problems are so very different. Yet when approached in the light of the Apostle's dictum in Romans 15:4, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and

comfort of the scriptures might have hope," we find little from which we may not draw valuable lessons. The same is true of many prophetic oracles and pastoral epistles which may appear to have only a local significance. All these things, while applicable to a degree to the people of their time, "are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (I Cor. 10:11).

The very wording of Rev. 2:25 shows plainly that it was spoken for us more than for them—"hold fast till I come." This projects it nearly 1,900 years into the future, down to the time just before the Lord's second advent. The church of Thyatira would never see that day; ahead of it loomed the blackness of the Apostasy.

The lessons are for us, because we need them more. In their day the Word was confirmed by miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit; there was an unbroken connection from the first dealings of God with men on this planet. In our time we are far removed in point of time from the headwaters of Truth, walking by faith in the naked Word alone which for 1260 years lay crushed to earth, the precious link with the past broken. For nearly 1,900 years there has been neither vision nor revelation nor miracle nor visible angelic form. We have only the Word and the evidence of fulfilled prophecy—and we need it all.

When we have held "fast," and added courage to faith, and knowledge to courage, and temperance to knowledge (II Pet. 1:5-7), and so on to perfection, what then? Ah! "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations." The nations need a strong power over them. They have gone on in their own lawless way until the world stands face to face with utter ruin. Now the time comes for this to end, for human rule to pack up and vacate. The edict will be resented, and the majority will resist to the death (Zech. 13:8), but puny man cannot stay the march of divine progress. Science has already made it one world by annihilating distances; but now there is to be one Government. "The Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one" (Zech. 14:9). The "international situation" with its train of miseries will thus be abolished at a stroke, and, for the first time since Creation, peace will come to earth and goodwill to men.

This great King is not an individual but a multitudinous Ruler. "The body is not one member, but many"—Christ the Head, and the Church His body. There will be a Head, of course, but all who overcome and keep His works, every one of them, unto

(Continued on page 24)

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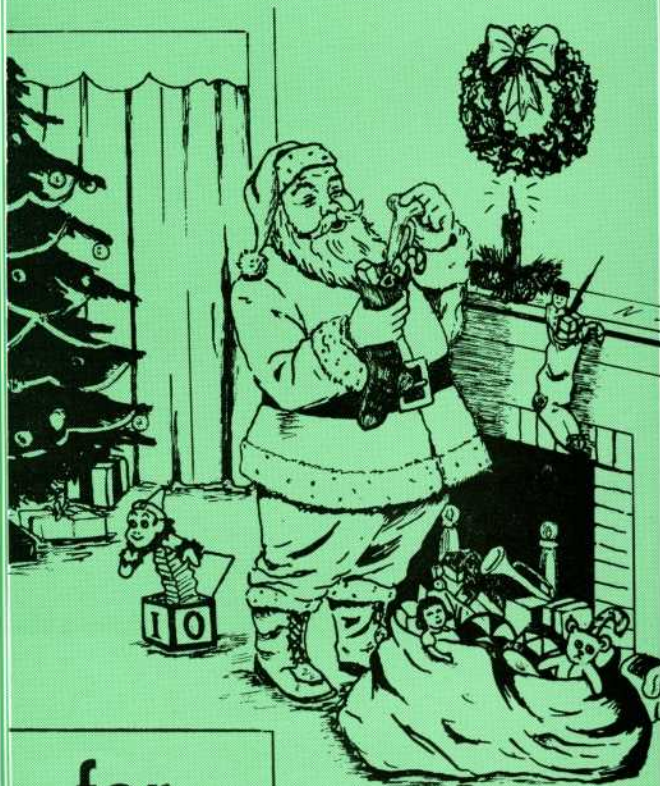
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*Truth from the earth, like to a flower,
Shall bud and blossom then;
And justice, from her heav'nly bower,
Look down on mortal men.*

*Rise, God, judge Thou the earth in might,
This wicked earth redress;
For Thou art He who shalt by right
The nations all possess.*

*The nations all whom Thou hast made
Shall come and all shall frame
To bow them low before Thee, Lord,
And glorify Thy Name.*

*For great Thou art, and wonders great
By Thy strong hand are done:
Thou in Thy everlasting seat
Remainest God alone.*

-Selected

