

Megiddo Message



The Gratitude Attitude

EDITORIAL

Altering Our Attitudes

WILLIAM James once observed, "The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind." The Bible supports this, only in an imperative tone: Human beings *must* alter their attitudes of mind. "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). Other versions are even more direct: "By the new ideals that mold your minds . . . transform yourselves" (Williams); "let God re-make you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed" (Phillips); "let your minds be re-made and your whole nature thus transformed" (NEB).

Naturally, we have attitudes that seek to domineer, attitudes of haughtiness, spiteful attitudes when we are wronged, attitudes of pride and satisfaction with our own standards of self-righteousness. How unlike Christ are all these. How important that we change them!

Jesus said it in many of His parables. And the apostle Paul wrote it several times. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31). This includes having a right attitude toward people, things, and experiences. How we feel toward the issues of the day, the people we are with, and even toward ourselves, is tremendously important.

Many things in life affect us according to our attitude toward them. Someone has said that ninety-three percent of success is attitude; only seven percent is skill and knowledge.

We should check up on our attitudes frequently, to see that they are in line with the example Christ set, for so easily they can get off course. And *we* cannot possibly be *on* course when our attitudes are off.

Our attitudes show as we act or react to others. How easy it is to react in an ill-disposed manner when someone seems unkind to us. But when we do, we are letting an-

other determine our actions; we are yielding ourselves as bondservants to sin instead of copying Christ. If we keep an attitude of being subject to God at all times, another's ill-seasoned disposition will have no riling effect on our composed and controlled spirit.

In the area of our work we have more attitudes to watch. Are we always motivated by principles of honesty and fairness, doing to others as we would be done by, performing our tasks as to the Lord—who sees and knows all? Do we think of ourselves—first, last and always—as servants of Christ's Kingdom?

Perhaps our attitudes present the greatest problem at home, where others may be cool or indifferent to those things which mean the most to us. How do we react? What is our attitude? Are we always kind and considerate and examples of what we believe? Have we learned how to keep the fires of the spirit burning brightly even when the atmosphere is damp? It may require extra diligence; but our efforts are sure to be rewarded, and we may even see someday a reflection of our spirit in the lives of others.

Whenever we are with others, there are attitudes to watch—and alter. When our idea happens to be accepted, there is danger of feeling superior. Again, we may feel defeated when what we have recommended and supported is turned down. Both attitudes are off-center and are deadening to spiritual life. If our whole concentration is to please God, we will learn to keep *our* feelings out of the matter and think only of the long-term good of the cause. And then, we will scarcely notice whether or not the idea that carries is our own. Our attitude will be, "Thy will be done." We will trust all into the hands of God.

Mastering our attitudes is a long-term project, but it is sure to save us many hours of misery that result from hurt feelings, sour dispositions and sharp reactions.

Thank God that attitudes can be altered! ●●

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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).

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Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version

Other versions are abbreviated as: *New International Version* (NIV); *New English Bible* (NEB); *Revised Standard Version* (RSV); *The New Testament in Modern English* (Phillips); *The Living Bible* (TLB); *New American Standard* (NAS); *The Jerusalem Bible* (JB).

Get The Gratitude Attitude

GRATITUDE is a common thing. We say "thank you" almost without thinking, or we nod, or smile in appreciation for a minor courtesy we receive. Or we offer a prayer of gratitude to Him who is the Giver of all.

This appreciation is right; it is proper; it is the expression of Christian kindness. But this is not all there is to gratitude. Genuine gratitude is an attitude more than an expression. It is something you mean, something you feel, something you live.

A man once had this illustrated to him in an experience with his father. When he was about sixteen, the two of them were out fishing late in the afternoon. As they reached the shore, the lad looked up to see the western sky a blaze of crimson, one of the most spectacular sunsets he had ever seen. The river was a slow-coiling flood of molten gold. "Look at that!" he exclaimed to his father as they beached the boat. "Makes you thankful just to be alive." The father stood there, anchor in his hands, silhouetted against all that splendor. He gave an enigmatic little smile. "Anyone can be thankful for a sunset," he said coldly. The man recalled the chagrin he had felt. What a curious reception of an innocent remark. Only years later did he grasp his father's wisdom: that anyone can express outward thanks. "Look again," the father was saying. "Look deeper; true gratitude is something you *feel*."

Gratitude is not a word; gratitude is closely aligned with attitude. The mode of expression matters little, be it a word, a glance, a flower, a letter. Nor does the expression of gratitude have to be commensurate with the benefit. It is the attitude that makes it count. We need the gratitude attitude.

The Psalmist, in Psalm 100, defines one important part of this attitude. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. *Serve* the Lord with gladness: *come* before his presence with singing. *Know* ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" (vs. 1-3). "Serve, . . . come, . . . know." It is an attitude of humble submission. It recognizes that the Lord is

God. He has made us. He is the source of our life. We are His creation, feeding on what He provides. He exercises power over us as a shepherd over his sheep.

How can we do otherwise than submit gratefully to the hand that sustains us and gives us life?

A salty preacher once accused his congregation of missing this basic lesson. "Why, any dumb ox or donkey would recognize the one who feeds him as his master!" he told them. "But *you* don't."

Not every preacher would use such hard-hitting language on his listeners. But this one did; his name was Isaiah (the lesson is recorded in Isaiah 1:3, Living Bible). God had sent him to tell Judah why that nation would fall.

In fact, the Word of God reveals that the sin of unthankfulness is a basic sin of the human race. It is written in the book of Romans that "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful" (Rom. 1:21-25). Hence, their severe condemnation.

Recognizing our dependence upon Him in whom we live and move and have our being is the first step toward real gratitude. Words cannot adequately express the depth of such recognition; it is most of all *felt*. It is an attitude of life.

The person who believes he is totally his own and goes about as though *he* were the giver and sustainer of his whole existence cannot be truly thankful. Gratitude is always humble. Grateful submission to God is the foundation for the gratitude attitude.

But it can't stop there.

Our attitude is affected still further by that basic element that makes thanksgiving possible: contentment.

Can we say honestly that we are overwhelmed by God's goodness to us? Are we able to experience genuine thankfulness to the very depth of our being? We can, if we are content.

And the first requirement of contentment is a modest appraisal of our physical needs. Paul expressed it in his letter to Timothy: "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content" (I Tim.

6:8). Not that we cannot have more than these basic essentials, but our contentment must begin at this point and grow.

Our age is inflamed with a passionate desire for *things*. It is a soft, luxurious age, and many grown-up people are spoiled children so far as their needs are concerned. They are never satisfied. It is a cry of "More! More!" They seem to think they need more of everything: more money, more cars, more things, things, things! As has been aptly said, Things are in the saddle and are riding mankind.

No one denies that there are basic necessities of life. But "More! More!" is not the cry of Christian contentment. It does not reflect the gratitude attitude. If we look closely, we can probably discover that we don't need nearly all the things we think we do. "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content."

Paul's words say something more to us: If we should lose a part of that which we have had over and above these basic necessities, we have no reason to be discontented. And for all that we have over and above these necessities, we should be overflowing grateful.

Our contentment will grow as we realize that material things are in themselves relatively unimportant. They are lawful and should be appreciated so long as they serve a cause greater than themselves. When they become an end, the goal of life, rather than serving as the means to the goal, they become wrong; they rob us of the gratitude attitude.

If we would always see material things as God-given, temporary helps, how different would be our attitude toward them.

When we find ourselves distracted by the pursuit of *things*, we should read Psalm 49. "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: . . . wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless, man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. . . . Like sheep they are laid in the grave" (Ps. 49:6-14).

The thought is sobering, and should stir in us a deep attitude of gratitude, rather than a selfish pride. One day it will all be over. In the natural course of events we all like sheep will be laid in the grave. Material things can give nothing better. And what will it matter then, how big our house was, or our car, or our bank account?

Material things are only loaned to us. If we set our hearts upon them, that is all we shall have.

On the other hand, if we use them with an attitude of gratitude to the great Giver of all, we shall find that when these things pass away and this age is done, we shall have something infinitely

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We Give Thee Thanks . . .

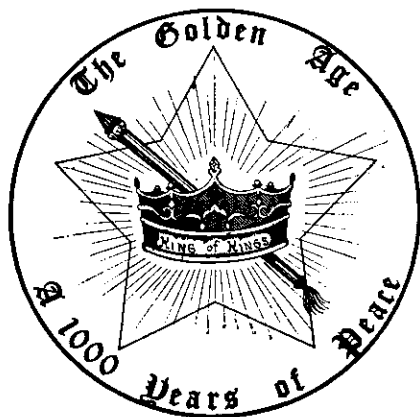
O Lord our God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we would render unto Thee thanksgiving, by all means, at all times, and in all places, for that Thou hast sheltered, assisted, supported, and led us on, through the time past of our life, and brought us to this hour. For Thy lovingkindness guiding us on life's way, for the gifts Thou hast bestowed; for the joys Thou hast made to abound to us, and the sorrows and trials Thou hast overruled for good: we give Thee thanks, O God.

For the protection of our homes, and the preservation of our friends; for the measure of success Thou hast granted to our labors, and the sure leading Thou hast given us in every path of duty: we give Thee thanks, O God.

For good hopes and precious memories, for strength and courage given us through Thy great and precious promises, and for the grace and saving health we have received through Christ our Saviour, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, inasmuch as He was tempted in all points like as we are, and knows our every weakness; we give Thee thanks, O God.

For all the needed faculties provided us to make the change from waywardness to virtue possible: a sound mind, the powers of reason, reflection and retention; the ability to properly assess values so we can sense the difference between the rewards Thou dost offer and what the flesh can give; for memories by which we can learn and retain Thy holy commandments, and for willpower whereby we can decide to take the right course, and make that decision stick, making ourselves worthy of perpetuation in the world to come: we give Thee thanks, O God.

Grant, we beseech Thee, that each new beginning of days Thou art giving us may deepen our gratitude for the innumerable benefits vouchsafed to us, and confirm our trust in Thee for all needed help and blessing in the days to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



*This is the eighth in a series
of articles on the coming
MILLENNIUM.*

*"Therefore the redeemed
of the Lord
shall return, and come
with singing unto Zion;
and everlasting joy shall be
upon their head:*

*"They shall obtain gladness
and joy;
and sorrow and mourning shall
flee away"
—Isaiah 51:11*

*"The Lord shall comfort Zion:
he will comfort
all her waste places;
... joy and gladness shall be
found therein, thanksgiving,
and the voice of melody"
—Isaiah 51:3*

Let the Praises Ring!

Does anyone think the thousand years will be dull and silent? Think it not! There will be music, music such as mortal ears have never before heard. Music and singing will be a vital part of the religious life of the inhabitants of that New Age.

How can we know?

Millennial Music

We are not told much about the singing and music in the Millennium, but we are told enough so that we can know there will be an abundance of it. When men have won a great victory in time past, or been honored, or rejoiced in any happy experience, there has always been singing. When the greatest victory is won, when the highest honors are bestowed, when the greatest blessings mankind have ever known are bestowed on all people upon the face of the earth, will not men and women sing and shout for joy!

If the ancient Temple in Israel during the reign of King David could have four thousand Levite musicians chosen to "play loudly on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise sounds of joy" (1 Chron. 15:16, RSV; 23:5), will not the walls of the eternal Temple vibrate and echo with the music of the Millenarians?

Centuries ago David called upon all men to

*"Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him
in the firmament of his power.
Praise him with the sound of the trumpet:
praise him with the psaltery and harp.
Praise him with the timbrel and dance:
praise him with stringed instruments and organs.
Praise him upon the loud cymbals:
praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.
Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord.
Praise ye the Lord"
—Psalm 150.*

Can we imagine the praise and thanksgiving that will pour from a nation of people so abundantly blessed as the people of the Millennium will be? Shall not the music extend as far as the dominion of the new King, "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8)?

And with the music will be singing in that glorious Golden

Age, singing such as mortal ears have never heard. We find a few clues to the glory and beauty of these heavenly strains in the books of the Prophets. Most are associated with the victory of the new immortals of the age, as they sing in victory and triumph. But who can think that mortal ears will be excluded? Who can think that mortal voices will keep silent!

Here are a few clues from the Prophets:

Isaiah, with the voice of prophecy ringing in his ears, could hear voices rising in grand crescendo. It is the redeemed of the Lord, as they come "with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away" (Isa. 51:11).

Those who had no power of voice are now exultant with joy, for "then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing" (Isa. 35:6). It is a joy which all the people of God shall know. "Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart" (Isa. 65:14). "And the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying" (Isa. 65:19).

The ancient prophecies ring with music. "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands" (Isa. 55:12)—the language is figurative, but the music is joyous!

In Isaiah 52, the Prophet calls for everything to come alive. He is speaking of the time when the Lord will be reigning in Zion: "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem. . . . And all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isa. 52:9-10).

Strain will touch strain; music and praise will be answered with more music and praise. For "the Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (Zeph. 3:17).

"Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem" (Zeph. 3:14).

Jeremiah foresaw the time when the redeemed would come and "sing in the height of Zion" (Jer. 31:12).

Isaiah had a vision of the Lord sitting upon His throne of glory, and the seraphim were attending. ("Seraphim" is a term applied to the "highest order of angels.") Isaiah heard them singing responsively, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6:1-3).

In Revelation 5 is a thrilling description of a great song. It is the song of the redeemed, who are represented by the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures. Each of them has a harp, and a golden vial for incense (the incense may represent the prayers of the saints which ascend to God as a pleasing fragrance). Accompanied by their harps, these victorious saints sing a new song of redemption which runs like this:

"Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood [life, or Word], out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10). They are celebrating victory, these the victors of the first six thousand years of the day of salvation.

*"Then shall the lame man leap
as an hart,
and the tongue of the
dumb sing"*
—Isaiah 35:6

*"Break forth into joy,
sing together, ye waste places of
Jerusalem.*

*". . . And all the ends
of the earth
shall see the salvation
of our God"*
—Isaiah 52:9-10

*"Sing, O heavens; and be joyful,
O earth;
and break forth into singing,
O mountains:
for the Lord hath comforted
his people"*
—Isaiah 49:13

*"O let the nations be glad
and sing for joy"*
—Psalm 67:4

*"They shall abundantly utter the
memory of thy great goodness,
and shall sing
of thy righteousness"*
—Psalm 145:7

*"Therefore they shall come and
sing in the height of Zion
. . . and they shall not sorrow
any more at all"*
—Jeremiah 31:12

No sooner is the song finished than a host of angels round about the throne lift their voices in reply. What a performance it is!—John seems to estimate the number of angelic singers at “ten thousand times ten thousand”; and then, as if this number seemed too small, he adds, “and thousands of thousands.” And what are they singing? It is a chorus of sevenfold praise: “Worthy is the Lamb . . . to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

The ceremony becomes even more exultant as the host of living mortals, together with the newly crowned immortals and the attending angels all join the next movement of the song in a mighty outburst of praise, singing, “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”

And the four beasts, the four living creatures, the newly-crowned mortals, conclude the performance with a ringing “Amen.”

Will there be music in the Millennium? Indeed there will be! In fact, there will not be any real music, in the fullest sense of the word, *until* the Millennium!

Millennial Worship

Worship is the heartfelt expression of prayer and praise to our Creator and Redeemer.

Worship is the sacred privilege of those who enjoy a working-relationship with the Great Creator, and it is a privilege which will continue through the Millennium and forever.

Now only a few worship God in sincerity and in truth. During the Millennium it will be the happy privilege and delight of everyone who lives. Such was the vision of the Prophet who spoke for God: “Unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear [allegiance to my name]” (Isa. 45:23). Some eight centuries later the promise was repeated: “As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God” (Rom. 14:11). Paul had before his mind the picture of a world civilization all bowing in homage

“All this world cannot equal the glories of the thousand years. It should cause us to so work that we can actually see progress each day.

“I said to myself the other day, ‘What a grand reward. It seems that if we could just enjoy the thousand years it would be enough!’ But no, God has promised us an eternity of joy and happiness—if we will only be obedient for this little while.”—L. T. Nichols.

to the great and glorious King. What a sight!

The center of worship will be the Metropolis of the world, the city of the great King, Jerusalem. But worship will be everywhere. It will be the sacred duty and privilege of everyone who lives to come to Jerusalem once during each year to worship. In fact, there will even be a penalty for those who neglect to come. We read, “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles [a feast of thanksgiving]. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain” (Zech. 14:16-17). We cannot know exactly what this penalty means or how the pilgrimage plan will be carried out, but blessings will be withheld from those who do not cooperate. It will be an age of law and discipline, which all will have to respect.

The prophet Isaiah makes a similar prediction: “And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord” (Isa. 66:23). We need not think that all will be celebrating the new moon or the seventh day of our calendar. Isaiah was using the language and customs of the people of that day to picture the regularity and constancy with which the Millenarians will worship God. It will be the popular way; it will be the right way; it will be the universal way.

The eagerness of the inhabitants to worship the Lord is also pictured by the Prophets: The inhabitants of one city will say to those of another, “Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts.” They will be eager to worship! Then what did the Prophet say? “I will go also”—an abrupt parenthesis; Zechariah wanted to be among them! (And so do we!) “Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord” (Zech. 8:21-22).

As the New Era is ushered in, the mandate will ring to the farthest ends of the earth; “Fear God, and give glory to him; . . . and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Rev. 14:7). That will be the beginning, and the worship will continue and increase as men learn more and more of the ways and workings of God and grow to love and honor Him for His manifold goodness.

Both mortals and immortals will worship God during the Millennium. It will be the blessed privilege of both, and can we not feel the vibrancy of

their pleasure as they join hearts and hands in praise and adoration to the great God who has made all this Millennial glory a reality?

Angels will be there, "an innumerable company" of angels (Heb. 12:22), thousands upon thousands of angels, who will also join in the worship of God. The book of Revelation gives us a glorious picture—a picture beyond the power of words to convey—of the grand ceremony of worship which will take place when the Millennial days are past and the great multitude who have clothed themselves in spotless robes of purity and righteousness during the Millennium will gather to celebrate their victory. We read of this august occasion in

Revelation 7, verses 9-15. When the "great number" of victorious mortals, then receiving immortality, surround the throne of Christ and shout "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb," then a great company of angels who are standing around the throne, together with the thousand-year old immortals, will all fall on their faces together and worship the Almighty, saying, "Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. 7:9-12).

What worship! Who does not want to be there to take part!

Millennial Questionnaire

Wouldn't it be enrapturing to be able to sit down with our future King and ask Him all about the New Age? How many questions we have! How many things we would like to know!

Whenever Jesus spoke among men, He taught them. Sometimes His words fell on deaf ears. Sometimes they awakened a definite response. "Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us by the way?" said two of His pupils one day after Jesus had opened to them the Scriptures.

It is a principle long standing: "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

What are some of the questions we would like to ask about immortal life? What would we like to know? Let's imagine that Jesus is within asking distance, and let us speculate what He might answer, on the basis of what is revealed in the written Word of God.

QUESTION: What will our bodies be like when changed? What will we look like? Will we be completely different?

Answer: Everything that can hurt, be harmed, suffer, or perish will be gone. So you yourself will be changed. You will become a material substance that is incorruptible, for "flesh and blood" as you know it will not be permitted in My kingdom (I Cor. 15:50-51). You will be changed into a substance superior to flesh and blood; your body will be fashioned like My body now is (Phil. 3:20-21). You will still be you, but you will be a much better "you," a heavenly "you."

QUESTION: Will we be recognizable to our friends?

Answer: Yes, you will see and know each other as you are known (1 Cor. 13:12). You have read the account of the Transfiguration as Matthew recorded it, how that Peter instantly recognized Me, even though there was a supernatural glow, a heavenly radiance emanating from My transfigured Being. All overcomers when glorified will be like this; that is the promise: You will be like Me (1 John 3:2).

QUESTION: Will we be recognized by odd marks or features peculiar to us, or will all immortals look generally alike?

Answer: In the process of the change from mortality to immortality, all physical flaws will be erased. I will have only perfect beings in My Kingdom. No need to worry about marks from aging or physical imperfections or birth defects, or scars from injury or sickness. These are only temporary.

When glorified, you will be re-created into the image of God physically—that means you will be perfected into a new state that will endure forever.

Each of you will be a perfect and unique individual in the family of God. You will not all look alike. Variety in all God's creation is beyond human fathoming. Every snowflake is different, every fingerprint, every person, even in the mortal realm. God has no duplicates, no redundancies, and He will have none in His perfected work. If you are there, there will be but one *you*.

NOTE: It won't be long before the time for this change arrives. So hurry now, and prepare for it. Only beautiful characters, perfect in every moral detail, can be formed into the design God has planned. God never designed an immortal image for any character that is less than the best. He wants you morally perfect—He wants you to do all the changing you can do, and then He will change what you cannot. He will make you physically perfect and perpetual, with no fear of mental, moral or physical decline.

Have no fear; when God's work with you is finished, you will be perfect. God never makes "seconds." Each immortal saint will be a strikingly beautiful and perfect creation.

QUESTION: What kind of clothes will we be wearing during the Millennium?

Answer: The saints will be easily distinguishable from the non-glorified Millennial people, by their clothing as well as by their bodies. The shining white of the saints will be their distinctive privilege. "White" is representative of purity, and the "shining" is the immortal glow. Immortals will be clean and spotless in character.

But do not imagine a world all white and without color. Immortal eyes can see a much broader spectrum of color than can be seen by mortals. There will be color—a whole world full of it.

QUESTION: Will we be able to see the angels?

Answer: Yes, you will see the angels. Angels will be on the scene directing, teaching, attending, helping wherever they can. Angels will come with Me when I return, a whole grand company of them. Many are already invited and are eagerly looking forward to the event. Many angels are already on your planet, around you even now, but in your present state your eyes are holden and you cannot see them. But your vision when glorified will be changed and you will be able to see far more than you can now imagine.

There have been times in the past when mortals were allowed to see angels. I myself saw angels several times when I was yet mortal. You live in a different age. But mortals living during the Millennium will delight in seeing their angel-teachers, helpers and guardians. If you are immortal then, you will be one with the angels—you will have been changed to the incorruptible state and will be equal unto them (Luke 20:35-36).

QUESTION: This may seem like a small question, but this world today seems so noisy. I wonder what sounds will be like in the Millennium.

Answer: This world now is filled with many distressing, grating noises, and they are harsh. Screams, arguments and lying are sounds that will

never be heard in My Kingdom. But other sounds, like noisy motorcycles, blaring horns, screeching tires, and screaming jets will also be things of the past. All raucous sounds will disappear. When you hear sound in the Millennium, it will be pleasing harmony and melody that will transcend the finest melody you have ever heard. All around will be joy and tranquillity (Isa. 32:17-18). There will be nothing to offend, nothing to hurt, nothing to destroy, nothing to disturb (Isa. 11:9; Mic. 4:4).

QUESTION: Will everyone be the same age in the Millennium?

Answer: No. Among the mortal citizens will be great differences in age. Some will be living who were born before the New Age began, before I returned; they will be people who submitted to the New Order and gave it their active support, and so were permitted to live through into the Millennium. And there will be people, billions of people, born during the Millennium, especially during the early years of it when the population of the world will be multiplying so rapidly. These mortals will be very much like mortals today, only they will all enjoy good health and a much longer life span. In the absence of sickness and degeneracy, old age will not affect people then as it does now. The old and the young will be able to enjoy life together. Life in the Millennium will depend much more on one's moral character than on one's physical advantages, for all will enjoy physical well-being; those who sin openly will not be permitted to live at all.

This new state of mortal life should not seem too strange to you if you recall what the Almighty did many years ago. During the forty-year trek of the Israelites in the wilderness, He caused their clothing and even their shoes never to wear out. This is just an example of God's capacity to keep something from deteriorating. Surely He can do for living bodies what He did for inanimate shoes!

The built-in capacity of the human body to replace itself is utterly fascinating. This automatic cellular replacement which operates even now in your bodies to keep them self-repaired will be perfected in the mortal bodies of the Millenarians. This is how a nine-hundred-year-old will still be able to enjoy life and glowing health.

But among My glorified family, time or age will make no difference; there will be perpetual youth and strength, with no fear of aging or death. They will enjoy eternal vitality (Isa. 40:31). And they will be able to use it all, for in the ages beyond the Millennium there will be billions of worlds to visit, and a limitless "forever" to explore and enjoy!

QUESTION: Do immortals enjoy warm and loving friendships?

Answer: Can you imagine a God of love having His own children not loving each other? Glorified beings are never cold or unloving. Where there is no jealousy, or hatred, or ill feelings, every grace of goodness abounds. Among them is love and affection such as mortals have never known. Among the glorified, all emotions are pure, holy and heavenly. The association between one person and another, whether man or woman, will be as pure and wholesome and happy as only the angels can describe to you. Those who have been Christian companions during your present lives will be especially close to each other in the New Age. It will be a happy and friendly time for all. Be assured, there will be "fulness of joy" and "pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11).

QUESTION: Will glorified beings living right along with the mortal populace present any problem?

Answer: There will be no problem. Glorified saints will already have gained complete control over their thoughts and emotions and will be like their heavenly Father, who cannot be tempted with evil (Jas. 1:13). Self-restraint will be a thing of the past for them; they will be incorruptible in every way. Living among mortals who are subject to sin will present no problem to them.

QUESTION: I understand there will be differences in rewards among those who will be made immortal when You return. I suppose the highest rewards will go to the great Bible heroes of the past. What will be given to "ordinary" Christians?

Answer: There will be differences in the rewards dispensed, but no man or woman who attains to perfection of character can be called "ordinary." All will be extraordinary, worthy of special blessing and honor, and all will receive eternal life—which is no ordinary reward. Some will receive more honor than others; some will have larger cups to fill than others. But all cups will be filled and overflowing with blessing and happiness. There will be fullness of joy for all.

The reward of each will depend on each person's spiritual performance in this present life. And there may be some surprises. Some whom you might judge barely noticeable may be found near the front in the reward line. One may serve quietly and faithfully for years even when stricken with pain and forced into inactivity.

Others may be singled out for heavenly acclaim who have allowed the Word of God to work within

them and develop in them a fragrant spiritual character during an earthly life beset with all kinds of adversities. Some may have labored with faith aglow through many years, though linked to an unbelieving and abusive mate. Others may have had to labor alone. It has happened before.

Heroes will be revealed from all walks of life. And many faithful followers who never knew acclaim will be highly honored because they proved faithful in small things.

CROWNING DAY will be a joyous day for *all* the winners, and its echoes will ring throughout Eternity! ●●

*Hail to the Lord's Anointed,
Great David's greater Son!
Hail in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free;
To take away transgression
And rule in equity.*

*He comes with succor speedy
To those who suffer wrong,
To help the poor and needy
And bid the weak be strong;
To give them songs for sighing,
Their darkness turn to light,
Who languishing and sighing
Are perishing from sight.*

*He shall come down like showers
Upon the fruitful earth,
And love, joy, hope like flowers
Spring in His path to birth;
Before Him on the mountains
Shall peace, the herald, go;
And righteousness in fountains
From hill to valley flow.*

*Kings shall bow down before Him,
And gold and incense bring;
All nations shall adore Him,
His praise all people sing;
O'er every foe victorious,
He on His throne shall rest;
From age to age more glorious,
All-blessing and all-blest!*

—Selected.

"As the Days of A Tree . . ."

NEAR Sanford, Florida, stands a giant cypress tree, tossing its lofty branches some three hundred feet into the azure blue. It is over sixteen feet in diameter at its base, and is more than fifty feet in circumference. How long has it been living? Someone has estimated that this giant was a sapling at the time the angel Gabriel spoke those immortal words to Daniel, "O man greatly beloved."

The prophet Isaiah, giving us a glimpse of what this earth will be like when our Lord shall have come and His righteous laws will be in force, tells us of the joy, peace, and tranquillity that will be the rule of the day. The righteous inhabitants of the earth at that time will have a life span that may be compared to that of a tree: "As the days of a tree, are the days of my people" (Isa. 65:22).

Long-lived trees are not uncommon. Our northern sugar maple frequently lives to be over five hundred years old, while some oaks live to be fifteen hundred years. The giant sequoias live more than four thousand years. Is Isaiah's statement incorrect? The Millennium is only one thousand years.

During the Millennium, the life span will be greatly increased, but those who are truly God's people, His "elect" (v. 22) will not die at the end of the millennium. The thousand years will be but the preliminary to real life, *unending* life. All who prove faithful at the Judgment at the end of the Millennium will live on for thousands and millions of years—they shall never die.

By comparing the human life span with the life of a tree, the Prophet of God was lifting men out of their normal range of thinking; he was saying that three score and ten years is very little—even compared with the lifetime of a tree. And for the faithful, even that will be only the beginning.

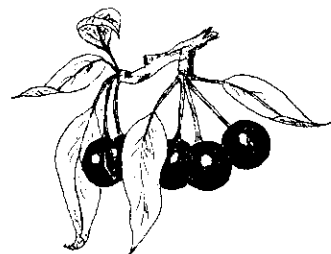
How we should number our days, though they be few now; count them, value them; for tomorrow we may never see. We should fill each day full, heaped up and running over with good deeds, "laying up in store . . . a good foundation against the time to come." That time is surely coming, and now is the time to be laying up for it.

The prophet Isaiah likens the overcomers to trees "of righteousness, the planting of the Lord" (Isa. 61:3). To think that you and I can be called a planting of the Almighty, a product of God's

own hand! What high esteem! The life span of the faithful will be much, much longer than the days of a tree.

The time is so close for the fulfillment of this prophecy. Let us grow now, so that when the Judge arrives, He may say of us, "This is my own product, a tree of my own planting; you may abide forever." ●●

Fruitful Fragments



The best preparation for tomorrow is to do today's work superbly well.

When love is thin, faults are thick.

"I count him braver who overcomes his desires than him who conquers his enemies; for the hardest victory is the victory over self."
—Aristotle

Never let a difficulty stop you. It may only be sand on your track to keep you from skidding.

They are never alone who are accompanied by noble thoughts.

No one can be mean and happy, any more than an orange can be sour and sweet.

One reason why so many people are restless and dissatisfied is that they have no bright and glowing objective before them, no star to which they can hitch their wagon.

Make the most of your time, for it is life itself.

Happiness is not something to be found; it is something that must be created.

As a field, however fertile, cannot be fruitful without cultivation, so a mind cannot be fruitful without discipline.

It is always better to improve what you have than to wish for what you have not.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Pre-Existence of Christ

ALL LIFE as we know it has a beginning; it has been so for all people who ever walked this earth. To think of life in any other way is, in the vernacular of the day, "mindboggling."

Certain schools of philosophy imagine life as a continuous cycle, with the span of mortal existence but an arc that moves into view for a short time and then is gone. But such an idea of life is only an idea of man; it has no Scriptural basis.

Many a serious believer in nominal Christianity would scoff at the idea that life is a continuous cycle, yet they assign to Christ a prior existence dating back to the time of Creation and beyond.

What reason have we to attempt to imagine a pre-existent life for Christ in the aeons of the past? Was not Jesus human? Was He not born of a human mother? Have we any reason to believe that His life began at a time previous to His birth?

The topic is one that was much debated by the early Church "fathers." Such men as Augustine, Origen, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and others wrote at length on the subject. It sparked heated discussions at many a church council during the early centuries, including those of Nicea, Ephesus, and Constantinople. But the men at these councils were discussing what were largely **their** ideas, not those of God. And the results of the councils were statements of many a doctrine foreign to Scripture; among them, the pre-existent Christ.

Supporters of the doctrine today readily admit that there is no passage of Scripture which makes a direct statement concerning Jesus' pre-existence, but they see many allusions to it—so many, they believe, that the idea cannot be ignored.

The first requirement of a secure structure is a solid foundation; likewise, the first requirement of a sound doctrine is Bible-supported fact. The pre-existence of Christ rests upon two basic points: 1) the divine nature of Christ (which assumes that Christ was born with the nature of God and places Him on a par with God) and 2) the incarnation (that Christ was God in the form of a man). In previous lessons we have examined both of these doctrines and found them to be teachings of men,

not of God. So how can we accept the doctrine of Christ's pre-existence?

Let us study further into the Scriptures to see whether any of God's writers substantiate the doctrine. We need Bible evidence, not church history, creeds and catechisms, before we can accept the doctrine.

II. JESUS CHRIST—IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

There are statements in the Old Testament that refer to Jesus Christ. But is that to say that He existed at that time? Jesus Himself recognized that the Old Testament scriptures spoke of Him, as He reminded His unbelieving disciples after His resurrection: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: . . . And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:25, 27). These words show that the Old Testament references to Christ were **prophetic**.

Jesus existed in Old Testament times only by **prophecy**. Moses spoke of Him as a Prophet which was to be "raised up" (Deut. 18:18). Moses gave no indication that He was then existing. The patriarch Jacob prophesied even earlier that a **great one** should be descended from the tribe of Judah, one of Jacob's twelve sons. But Jacob spoke in terms of someone who "would be," not of a life that was already existing.

Isaiah later added his testimony: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (Isa. 9:6-7). But because he wrote in the present tense, need we believe that the Son was in existence at that time?

No, this manner of speaking is common in prophetic utterances. Since what God promises is as sure of fulfillment as if it were an accomplished fact, the Lord's prophets often spoke in present terms. They spoke for Him who "callesth those things that be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17).

To say that Christ was part of Old Testament **prophecy** is not to suggest that He existed in the time of the patriarchs and prophets. Nevertheless, there are statements in the Old Testament which lead some people to believe Christ was there at

the time the words were spoken. Let us examine some of these texts more closely.

D. Jesus in the Psalms?

It is notable that supporters of the pre-existence lean heavily upon the writings of the church "fathers." But there is no evidence there. The "fathers" were influenced by Greek philosophy, and their writings are a mixture of philosophy and Bible. We can accept as proof of God's thoughts only what we can read in the Bible.

What is there in the Psalms that suggests Christ's pre-existence?

1. Psalm 2:7 reads, "The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." Because the Psalmist spoke in the present tense, "this day," need we believe Jesus was already begotten? No, God was revealing His plan through King David and Jesus was an important part of that plan. His birth centuries in the future was so certain that it could be spoken with certainty. God could foresee the future with the same certainty that we can see the past. The remainder of Psalm 2 looks even further into the future, when Christ shall be established as King and shall subdue the forces of evil, an event yet future. If we take one part of the chapter as current fact at the time because of the tense, we should also have to believe that the heathen were raging at that time (v. 1) and that Christ was already sitting upon his "holy hill of Zion" (v. 6). But such was not the meaning the author intended, nor would such an idea harmonize with other prophecies and statements of Scripture.

2. Psalm 40:7-8 reads, "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Some people see this as Christ's words spoken in the time of David, but is this what was intended?

The passage definitely refers to Christ, for the author of Hebrews quoted it as such (see Heb. 10:7). But must the person referred to as "I" in the text be the speaker at the time? Do not secular authors use the first personal pronoun to refer to persons other than themselves? Could not God empower a man to speak prophetically of Christ and what His attitude would be?

If we claim that Jesus was present in David's time to speak these words to David, then we should also say that John the Baptist was present when Isaiah spoke the words which the New Testament records were his; for we read in Isaiah 40:3, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert

a highway for our God"; and in Matthew 3:3, John is clearly the voice uttering those words.

But no one claims John the Baptist pre-existed.

Jesus was to be God's representative; it was "written . . . in the volume of the book." He was to speak only the words given to Him by His heavenly Father. Moses, speaking for God, said: "I [God] will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my [God's] words which he shall speak in my [God's] name, I will require it of him" (Deut. 18:18-19). If Moses could speak for God, could not David as well?

No, we have no reason to believe Jesus was existing in David's time.

3. Psalm 102:25-27 is used by believers in Christ's pre-existence to show that Christ was present at the time of Creation, helping His Father in the act of creating. They project this idea because these verses are quoted in Hebrews 1: "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest."

The text in Psalm 102 is a clear reference to God, not to His Son Jesus. David said in verse 24: "I said, O my God, . . ." addressing God as the Creator. God is the supreme Creator. David understood this truth, for he wrote in another Psalm: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth" (Ps. 33:6). According to the prophet Isaiah it was "God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it" (45:17-18).

Did the author of Hebrews have a different idea? Let us examine his words closely and see.

Hebrews 1 begins with "God, who at sundry times" spoke to the fathers by the prophets, and who in recent times had spoken to that generation "by his Son." Verses 3-6 picture Christ's greatness. His exaltation by the Father, His sonship by birth, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit. (Note that in all this review of Christ, nothing is said about His pre-existence.)

Verse 8 reveals the enduring quality of His throne when it is established upon earth, and the impeccability of His righteous administration. Verse 9 pictures His own flawless character, His superior accomplishment in holy living, and reveals His reward: "Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." And there the succession of thoughts about Christ ends.

Then, referring again to God, the author of Hebrews quotes from Psalm 102, vs. 25-27: "Of old

hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands." Some of the newer versions place Hebrews 1:10-12 in quotation marks, as "And elsewhere: 'Lord, thou hast laid the foundations of the earth'" (Knox translation). And in a footnote in the Knox translation we read, "It is not clear why these words should be understood as addressed to the Messiah, unless this was suggested by the use of the word 'Lord.'"

But we should note that verse 7 concerns the role of the angels, verses 8 and 9 concern the role of the Son, and verses 10-12 concern God. There is no confusion of terms when we see what the author is saying. And Christ will surely be "Lord" in His eternal Kingdom.

There is no reason to believe Hebrews 1:10 applies to Christ.

E. Jesus and the Prophets

Believers in the pre-existence also see references to it in the prophets.

1. **Micah 5:2.** Here, they say, is sure proof that Jesus was with the Father long before He was born. The verse prophesies of Christ's birthplace as being Bethlehem, after which the Prophet adds, "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Can it be that Micah, while prophesying of the place from which Christ should come, thinks he is already living in heaven? How strange indeed!

The passage is not clear in our Common Version, but newer translations clarify its meaning. The New English Bible renders it, "But you, Bethlehem in Ephrathah, small as you are to be among Judah's clans, out of you shall come forth a governor for Israel, one whose roots are far back in the past, in days gone by." The Jerusalem Bible reads, "his origin goes back to the distant past, to the days of old." The Moffatt Bible reads, "one whose origin is of old, of long descent," and the American Translation is similar: "Whose origins are from of old, from ancient days." The Prophet was not telling us that Jesus had a prior existence, but that He would be descended from an ancient family, "of long descent," "one whose roots are far back in the past."

2. **Isaiah and the Pre-Existence.** Isaiah's prophecy in chapter 9 is often used to support the theory that Jesus is God come to earth in the form of a man. Verse 7 reads: "And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Notice the tense of the verse: "His name shall be. . . ." Again this is common prophetic language, speaking of

things that "be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17).

Why, then, is He called "The mighty God, the everlasting Father"? Christ was to be the Son of God, and as such would bear His Father's name, but He is clearly said to be "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23). Just as Moses was to be "God" to his people, in that his word would be authority among them (Ex. 4:16), so Christ will be "God with us" when He returns and establishes His new government of righteousness and justice. And this is just the event which the prophecy in Isaiah 9:7 focusses upon: "And the government shall be upon his shoulder . . . and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end."

The idea that Christ is the "everlasting Father" is not carried in all versions of the Bible. The Douay Version words it, "Father of the world to come," while the New English calls Him the "Father for all time." The term "everlasting" does not denote all time past; again, reference is to the time when the new government is set up, and it will be everlasting—as will be its Head and Ruler. Christ will be the Head, or Father, of the world to come, His Kingdom.

Christ Himself never claimed to be God; rather He identified Himself as the "Son of God" (John 10:36). He subordinated Himself to His Father with the words, "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28).

F. Jesus—the Wisdom of God?

"More Scriptures showing the pre-existence of Christ before his birth in Bethlehem of Judea are found in the eighth chapter of Proverbs," says a writer in defense of the doctrine. He then quotes Proverbs 8:22-30 and concludes, "What beautiful Scriptures showing Christ's pre-existence! Christ existed before the creation of the world!"

Is this statement true? Is the Wise Man telling us that "Christ existed before the creation of the world"? Let us read the verses in question.

"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth: when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea

his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him."

Proverbs 8 is clearly the voice of "Wisdom" speaking, but there is nothing to indicate that

that "wisdom" is Christ. Verse one of the chapter reads: "Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?" Wisdom is personified, but there is no reference to Christ.

Personification was common in Hebrew literature. From the *Interpreter's Bible* we learn that "the Hebrew was fond of personifying the things he saw about him. For instance, the prophet says that 'the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing' (Isa. 55:12). This tendency to personify led the Hebrew to personalize abstract ideas and principles. The process in this particular instance of wisdom is quite clear. The unifying, directing principle . . . called wisdom came . . . from God. It was an easy matter for the Hebrew to personify this principle. . . . The next step was to regard wisdom as a distinct or separate personality."

The entire chapter speaks of wisdom as though it were a person, but there is no reference to Christ. It connects the work of creation with the wisdom of God, a connection similar to other statements in Scripture, but that is not to say that Christ had any connection with the Creation.

God's wisdom was an agent in creation: "The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up" (Prov. 3: 19-20). God does everything according to His wisdom.

In I Corinthians 1:24 the apostle Paul identified Christ as "the wisdom of God" in recognition of His being the embodiment of that wisdom, but he said nothing to indicate that Christ was the wisdom of the Old Testament Scriptures. Christ possessed and lived by the wisdom of God so completely that He could be called "the wisdom of God" in that He spoke only the words He received from God. This was not something He possessed prior to His birth, but something He had to acquire. It was necessary for Him to learn "obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9).

No, Proverbs 8 does not teach the pre-existence of Christ. To draw the conclusion that Christ is the "wisdom" of Proverbs 8 because Paul identified Him as the "wisdom of God" is to read into the Scriptures something that is not there. God performed all His mighty works by His eternal wisdom, not by His Son, Jesus Christ.

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We CAN Overcome

THE BIBLE says we can be "More than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37). Does this mean there is real prospect of our living a victorious Christian life—we who fall in temptation time after time after time?

Why are our lives so often a series of failures? We are sincere, are we not? We really want to be among the overcomers; then why do we fall repeatedly before the same temptation? Is it because we think failure? Or are we so confident of ourselves that we do not give much thought to the temptation until it strikes? Or perhaps we have fallen so many times that we expect failure and so do not really try. Or maybe we do not tell ourselves we *can* and then compel ourselves to put all our effort into making our resolution a reality.

Paul gives some specific instruction on how *not* to fall. First he warns of the danger of overconfidence. Then he points to the confidence we can have by strengthening ourselves in the promises of God and relying on His strength. He says, "If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (I Cor. 10:12-13, NIV).

His first warning is to those who think they are standing firm: "be careful that you don't fall!" The history of God's people, especially that of the children of Israel, shows that people who enjoyed the greatest privileges of God were far from being safe from temptation. Special privilege, Paul reminds the Corinthians, is no guarantee whatever of security in temptation. Each one must be prepared to stand on his own.

But the Israelites lived in an altogether different age, we tell ourselves; their temptations would differ from ours.

Is this right? Let us see.

It was a common temptation among the Israelites to worship idols. And we today? Our god is anything to which we give our time, our energy, our thought—*ahead of God*. Can we truthfully say we have no interests that come *before God*?

Only a passionate love of purity can draw our

thoughts away from the lesser interests of this world, the gods of humankind today, and set them on the high plane of holiness.

Is there not among us the Israelite's temptation to murmur and complain? Too many times we have greeted the new day with a whine instead of a smile.

So Paul insists on the need of vigilance: "Let him who thinks he is safe take heed lest he fall." It is a warning against the insidious danger of overconfidence.

The ancient city of Sardis was built on a jutting spur of rock that was held to be impregnable. When Cyrus was besieging it, we are told, he offered a special reward to any who could find a way in. A certain soldier, watching the stronghold one day, saw a soldier in the Sardinian garrison drop his helmet accidentally over the battlements. He watched closely as the man climbed down after it, and he marked his path. That night this soldier of Cyrus led a band up the cliffs by that very path; and when they reached the top, they found it unguarded. So they entered and captured the citadel. Feeling themselves so secure, the Sardians had been careless.

Thus it is in our Christian warfare; we must never feel too confident, but must ever be on the alert against the temptations which are sure to find our weakest point.

That is why Paul makes three special statements about temptation.

First, we may be sure that *temptation will come*. This is part of life. The word translated temptation means more: a test. Temptation is something which is designed not to make us fall but to test us so that we may emerge from it stronger than ever.

With the temptation is always *a way of escape*. The word here is vivid. It means a way out, as a mountain pass. The idea is of an army apparently surrounded and then suddenly seeing an escape route to safety. No man need fall in temptation, for with the temptation always comes a way out. And that way out is not the way of surrender, not the way of retreat, but the way of conquest in the power of God.

Then follows the assurance that *we can stand*

in God's strength. It is by God's grace that we are given the opportunity to fight in His strength and overcome our lower natures.

But we must never be too sure of ourselves. It is by avoiding temptation that we learn to rule and govern self.

Jesus taught this in His prayer, "Leave us not in temptation but deliver us from evil." We need to take that seriously.

There is a story told of horse-and-buggy days. A young western farmer who had frequented the village barroom was converted to temperance principles. But on his visits to the village he continued to tie his team to the hotelman's hitching-post. The trained and watchful eye of a kindly old deacon noticed this, and after congratulating the youth on his conversion, he said, "George, I am a good deal older than you and will be pardoned, I know, if I make a suggestion. No matter how strong you think you are, take my advice and change your hitchingpost."

That advice is just as timely today. To avoid temptation shows not cowardice but strength of character.

Avoiding temptation means, don't flirt with it. Don't underestimate the power of evil. Don't overestimate your own strength. Stay away from anything that would tend to pull you back into the old rut. Steer a wide course around it. Stay away from the situation where you would be more likely to fall, and the people who would pressure you into the old way of living. Do not stop to parley with the tempter, for many are they who have been ruined in this way.

It is impossible, though, to have too much confidence in God. If we see how close we can get to God and how deep we can get in His Word, we will find ourselves strong enough to resist.

We should remember that we are never alone in temptation, if our confidence is in God. Jesus understands. "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18). He has experienced our problems, and is able to sympathize with our struggles, for He was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

Should not this give us great hope and encouragement? He understands, and there will always be a way of escape if we are sincerely trying to serve Him.

When something tempts us, it is because there is within us something that responds to it, and something else that encourages the response. If we do not check this response, if we entertain our weakness and allow our minds to dwell upon it, the power of the temptation will grow. If, on the

other hand, we turn our minds to God and His promises, the temptation will lose its power. There is the secret. James says that "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:14-15). When we entertain what tempts us and dwell upon it, we are sure to be enticed and led astray. If we give our mind and attention to God and what He has commanded and promised, we will find we can resist easily.

Whatever gets and holds our attention gets and holds us. If God can get our sustained attention, He can give us victory. But only *we* can give God our mind and our attention. We hold the key. The battle is within our own mind; whether we lose or win is up to us.

There is no need for us to fret and fume about our temptations. When God allows them to come to us, He provides also the strength to endure, and His Word is filled with promises to fortify us. He has given us "the guarantee of something very great and wonderful to come: through them you will be able to share the divine nature and to escape corruption in a world that is sunk in vice" (II Pet. 1:4, JB). By laying hold upon these great promises, we can escape now from the corruption of "a world that is sunk in vice," and we can prepare ourselves to someday partake of the divine nature and live forevermore. With God's help, we *can*!

We should constantly be filling our minds and lives with positive good. Whatever our conscious mind dwells on will be projected in our attitudes, our habits, our lives. There is no way to avoid this. We cannot live a Christian life while our thinking is not godly; if we try, we will find ourselves in great tension, and will eventually collapse morally.

There is only one way to genuine victory and freedom, and that is the way of disciplined Christian thinking.

This is what Paul encouraged: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. . . . Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Then the Apostle goes on to the inner resource of such goodness: "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of

praise, think about these things" (Phil. 4:4-8, RSV).

What will be the results of positive Christian thinking? Our fears will decrease and our faith will increase. Our attachments to unworthy things will lessen and our devotion to what is worthy will grow. Our discouragement will diminish and our courage will increase. Our whole mind and heart will be filled with God's great and precious promises.

If we do on our part, God will provide the way of escape; we will not be overwhelmed; He is faithful. But what is our part? It is to believe His promises, adopt the positive attitude that we can conquer, and marshal all our willpower toward that end. If we stand with God, we do not stand alone; He will stand with us.

Can we overcome? Yes, by God's help, we CAN! ●●



Out
of
the
Archives

The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians

Clement lived during the latter part of the first century, and was probably a Gentile and a Roman. It is possible that he is the "Clement" mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Philippians (4:1-2), although this cannot be proven.

But Clement's own writings show that he was personally acquainted with Paul and some of the other apostles, and that he learned the Gospel among the Philippians.

This letter by Clement was written after a period of severe persecution, which cannot be dated with certainty. But there is evidence that it was circulated widely among the various congregations of the Early Church, as the Historian Eusebius

wrote in the third century: "There is one acknowledged Epistle of this Clement (whom he identified as the friend of Paul), great and admirable, which he wrote in the name of the Church of Rome to the Church at Corinth, sedition having then arisen in the latter Church. We are aware that this Epistle has been publicly read in very many churches both in old times, and also in our own day."

There are definite differences between this writing and the inspired writings, but its simple and earnest appeals to loyalty and Christ-likeness can inspire us today as they inspired those Christians of the early centuries. We will quote a few select portions. It appears from the text that the Corinthians still had in their midst the same problem they had when Paul first wrote to them.

THE Church of God which sojourns at Rome, to the Church of God sojourning at Corinth, to them that are called and sanctified by the will of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from Almighty God through Jesus Christ, be multiplied.

Owing, dear brethren, to the sudden and successive calamitous events which have happened to ourselves, we feel that we have been somewhat tardy in turning our attention to the points respecting which you consulted us; and especially to that shameful and detestable sedition, utterly abhorrent to the elect of God, which a few rash and self-confident persons have kindled to such a pitch of frenzy, that your venerable and illustrious name, worthy to be universally loved, has suffered grievous injury. For who ever dwelt even for a short time among you, and did not find your faith to be as fruitful of virtue as it was firmly established? Who did not admire the sobriety and moderation of your godliness in Christ? . . .

Moreover, ye were all distinguished by humility, and were in no respect puffed up with pride, but yielded obedience rather than extorted it, and were more willing to give than to receive. Content with the provision which God had made for you, and carefully attending to His words, ye were inwardly filled with His doctrine. . . . Thus a profound and abundant peace was given to you all. . . . Day and night ye were anxious for the whole brotherhood, that the number of God's elect might be saved with mercy and a good conscience. Ye were sincere and uncorrupted, and forgetful of injuries between one another. Every kind of faction and schism was abominable in your sight. . . .

Every kind of honour and happiness was bestowed upon you, and then was fulfilled that which is written, "My beloved did eat and drink, and

was enlarged and become fat, and kicked." Hence flowed emulation and envy, strife and sedition, persecution and disorder.

Many evils have already flowed from this source in ancient times. For thus it is written: "And it came to pass after certain days, that Cain brought of the fruits of the earth a sacrifice unto God; and Abel also brought of the firstlings of his sheep, and of the fat thereof. And God had respect to Abel and to his offerings, but Cain and his sacrifices He did not regard. . . . And Cain said to Abel his brother, Let us go into the field. And it came to pass, while they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." Ye see, brethren, how envy and jealousy led to the murder of a brother.

Through envy, also, our father Jacob fled from the face of Esau his brother. Envy made Joseph be persecuted unto death, and to come into bondage. Envy compelled Moses to flee from the face of Pharaoh king of Egypt, when he heard these words from his fellow-countryman, "Who made thee a judge or a ruler over us?"

On account of envy, Aaron and Miriam had to make their abode without the camp. Envy brought down Dathan and Abiram alive to the grave, through the sedition which they excited against God's servant Moses. Through envy, David underwent the hatred not only of foreigners, but was also persecuted by Saul king of Israel.

No less evils have arisen from the same source in the most recent times. . . . Let us take the noble examples furnished in our own generation. Through envy and jealousy the greatest and most righteous pillars [of the Church] have been persecuted and put to death. Let us set before our eyes the illustrious apostles. Peter, through unrighteous envy, endured not one or two, but numerous labours. . . . Owing to envy, Paul also obtained the reward of patient endurance, . . . proving himself a striking example of patience.

These things, beloved, we write unto you, not merely to admonish you of your duty, but also to remind ourselves. For we are struggling on the same arena, and the same conflict is assigned to both of us. Wherefore let us give up vain and fruitless cares, and approach to the glorious and venerable rule of our holy calling. Let us attend to what is good, pleasing, and acceptable in the sight of Him who formed us.

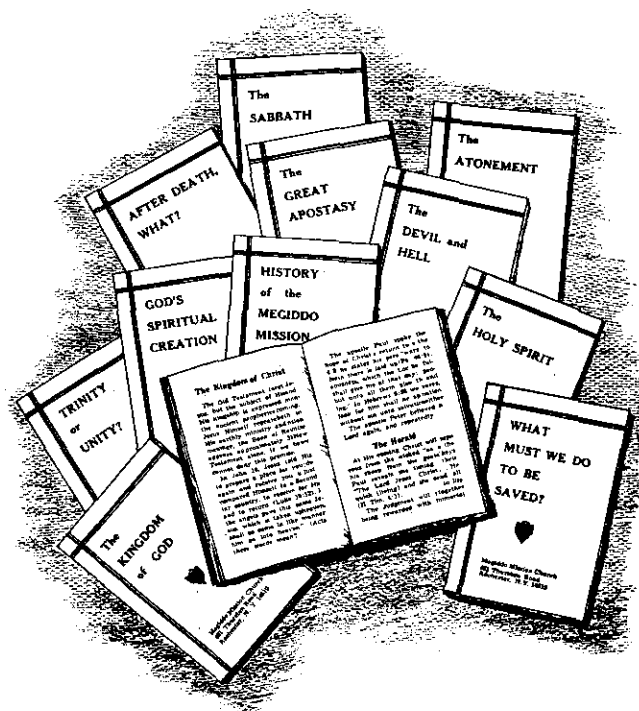
Wherefore, let us yield obedience to His excellent and glorious will; and imploring His mercy and loving-kindness, while we forsake all fruitless labours, and strife, and envy, which leads to death, let us turn and have recourse to His compassions. Let us steadfastly contemplate those who

have perfectly ministered to His excellent glory. Let us take (for instance) Enoch, who, being found righteous in obedience, was translated, and death was never known to happen to him. Noah, being found faithful, preached regeneration to the world through his ministry.

Abraham, styled "the friend," was found faithful, inasmuch as he rendered obedience to the words of God. He, in the exercise of obedience, went out from his own country, and from his kindred, and from his father's house, in order that, by forsaking a small territory, and a weak family, and an insignificant house, he might inherit the promises of God. ●●

(To Be Continued)

GOOD READING



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MEGIDDO MESSAGE

Get the Gratitude Attitude

(Continued from page 5)

better and more lasting—even eternal.

As we are able to change our attitude toward the things of this world, and free ourselves from earthly entanglements, we will find our attitude of gratitude growing. We will appreciate material things, but we will not love them. Rather, we will accept them gratefully as from God and employ them in His service.

We of all people who ever lived have the greatest cause for gratitude. Do we ever feel burdened with our obligations, and tempted to complain about our harried, wearisome living? Do the endless trivialities of mere existence sometimes dampen our attitude of gratitude until we give way to inner murmurings? At such times we would do better to start counting our blessings, the numberless ways in which our lives are made more pleasant and the drudgery of physical tasks is lessened in our modern world, leaving us with more time for spiritual renewal and the work of the Lord.

What will the gratitude attitude do for us?

It will recognize with humility that we are part of God's creation, His people, and are therefore responsible to Him.

It will realize that we are totally dependent on Him for everything that makes our lives possible and worthwhile.

It will make us content with what He has seen fit to allot us of life, health and happiness.

But is this all? There is another aspect of the gratitude attitude. True gratitude cannot stop short of enthusiastic, determined action. Gratitude is no passive sentiment. It shows itself in transforming life.

The twelfth chapter of Hebrews opens with words that describe this attitude for us. After watching the heroes and martyrs of the past marching in review, in his vivid and exalted imagination the writer issues his call to gratitude. He challenges them in the name of the spiritual titans of the pioneer days to carry on! "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

Here is the right response, the true attitude of gratitude. It is that by which we rededicate ourselves to that sublime faith which made saints of other men and women in other ages. We cannot be grateful followers of the great crusaders for God if our faith is like the spinning wheels in our museums—a relic to be admired more than a

means of active service. We ourselves must be living symbols of the faith of Christ as that faith lives in us and transforms us. Our religion is more than something to admire; it is a power by which we can recreate in our lives the moral and spiritual greatness which marked the lives of God's people in other days.

It is the faith which produces that humble, content, heart-transforming attitude of gratitude. ●●

Repeat, Repeat

Repetition is part of the learning process, and learning is part of the doing process, and doing is part of the growing process, and growing is part of the perfecting process, and becoming perfect is the final step in the process of preparing for eternal salvation. We should be humble, and wise enough to use the smallest step in the ladder. It will help get us to the top.

I am thankful for the opportunity to learn, and to seek that which is good. I want to be mindful always to make good use of this opportunity. I must never forget that I have heard the gospel, and that it is a gospel I have decided to obey.

—From a reader in Canada

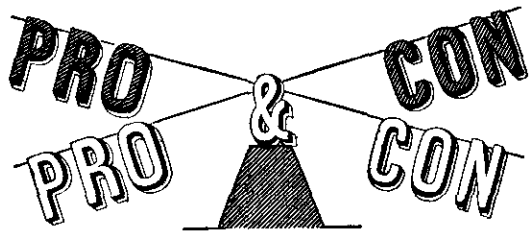
Hearers or Doers?

In the world in which we live, one wonders what the future holds for many. We think of the man who built his house on the sand. The rains and wind beat upon the house, and it fell down. We must be like the man who built his house on rock, and when the storm came his house stood secure. No doubt the two houses resembled each other, but it took a crisis to reveal the difference. Jesus told the story to stress the difference between hearers and doers of the Word.

There is a difference between those who hear the message and do nothing about it, and those who hear and then put it into practice. In the life of a believer, this is no once-and-for-all matter. At every stage of the Christian journey we must be prepared to act upon what we hear, to put into practice whatever we learn from the Word of God. If our consecration keeps pace with our understanding of God's Word, then and only then are we building on solid rock.

Outwardly it is difficult to tell the difference between a hearer and a doer; it takes a crisis to reveal the difference. And when the crisis comes, which will it prove us to be—a hearer, or a doer?

—From a reader in Canada



A Column for Open Discussion

All our readers do not agree with us. If you are among those who differ on some point, write us your views and we will consider them in the light of Scripture teaching. Our policy is the Apostle's injunction: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

• Concerning the divinity of Christ

"It seems to me that Mr. Nichols rejected the Bible doctrine of the divinity of Christ. John's Gospel plainly says 'the Logos was divine' (Moffatt's translation of John 1:1). The Logos, or the Word, can only refer to Christ" *T. B. C., Blackstock, S. C.*

Yes, Mr. Nichols, founder of the Megiddo Church, did reject the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and for just one reason: he could not find Scriptural support for it.

The human nature of Jesus is evidenced by the following facts:

- He was "made of a woman" (Gal. 4:4).
- He was "born" (Luke 2:10-11).
- He "grew" (Luke 2:52).
- He "learned obedience" (Heb. 5:8).
- He "slept" (Matt. 8:24).
- He was "weary" (John 4:6).
- He "hungered" (Matt. 21:18).
- He "thirsted" (John 19:28).
- He "suffered" (Luke 22:44).
- He "wept" (John 11:35).
- He "died" (John 19:30-33).
- He "was tempted" (Matt. 4:1-10).

The title "Son of God" was applied to Him more than 50 times in the New Testament—and how could He be both the Father and the Son?

The term "Son of man" is used eighty times to designate Him.

Jesus is also spoken of as the Son of David, confirming His relationship to the family of David. Moses prophesied He would be raised up "from among his brethren" (Deut. 18:15, 18).

No one has ever been able to explain satisfactorily how a God could come down from heaven and be born of a woman. Re-incarnation or pre-existence is nowhere taught in the Bible.

To understand the "problem of Christ" we need only to forget the ideas that developed about Him during the early centuries of the apostatizing Church, and learn what the Bible says about Him.

We need also to recognize that there are three different meanings for the term "Christ" as used in the Bible.

First, there is the man Christ, who was born of the Virgin Mary.

Second, the body of Christ or the Church is called Christ (Col. 1:18).

Third, the Word of God, the system of divine truth which Christ personified in His life is also termed Christ (Col. 1:27). This is the "Logos" in John 1, the divine reasoning or teaching which Christ taught and lived so completely.

For further information on this topic, see our booklet, **Trinity or Unity?**

• Concerning the blood atonement

"You say in the Megiddo Message, 'All our readers do not agree with us.' I am one of those readers. Of course, I realize that the views you publish are those of the late L. T. Nichols. Mr. Nichols seems to have adopted most of the views of the Christadelphians, a small sect founded by a Dr. John Thomas. I have their literature, as well as the booklets by Mr. Nichols.

"I shall not mention all of Mr. Nichols' errors, but those I consider the most serious. First, he rejected the Bible doctrine of blood atonement. This doctrine has its roots in the ceremonial laws which God gave to Moses about thirteen centuries before Christ."

T. B. C., Blackstock, S. C.

This church is committed to the true teachings of the Bible, wherever they may be found. If anyone can prove to us from the Bible where we are wrong, we will certainly change. However, that proof must come from the bulk of the writings of the prophets, apostles and Jesus and harmonize with the general teaching of the Bible, and not be drawn from an isolated text taken out of context, a mistranslation, or from changing the meaning of a word to suit a pre-conceived idea.

It seems to us that much Bible study is like the story of the blind man examining an elephant. To the man who examined the tail, he was like a rope. To the man who examined the trunk, he was like a serpent. Another feeling the legs thought he re-

sembled the trunk of a tree, etc. They all came away with a distorted opinion of what an elephant was like—because none could see the overall shape of what they were examining.

In reading the Bible there is the gravest danger of becoming blind to all the passages which refute a theory and magnifying the texts which seem to support it.

The Bible, being of divine origin, must agree within itself. But it is necessary to search within it as for hidden treasure (Prov. 2:5) if we would find the true knowledge of God. Often the real meaning does not lie on the surface.

To the person steeped in the tradition of the Atonement, the “ceremonial laws which God gave to Moses” (assuming “ceremonial laws” are the Mosaic system of sacrifices) seems to form a striking parallel to Christ’s death on Calvary, which is thought to atone for our sins.

Let us carefully examine the whole design of the sacrifices.

It seems impossible to discover the origin of the sacrifice principle. Almost all primitive peoples offered sacrifices of some kind to their gods. In times of disaster these offerings consisted of human beings. In times of lesser stress, they offered animals or food to placate the wrath of their deity.

It is important to note that the purpose of the sacrifice among primitive peoples was to pacify the god or to obtain his favor. The gift itself was the rationale for the sacrifice. The motive behind the gift was immaterial. It could be purely selfish, vain or reluctant.

When we consider the sacrifices under the Mosaic law, we find an entirely different concept. These sacrifices were performed as an object lesson to the people. They were a perpetual reminder of the sacrifice which each individual must make in his daily life in order to please God. The ritual was very precisely specified by God, and the penalty for disregarding the least provision of the law was severe—even to death.

However, we cannot find a single instance where a member of the children of Israel, having committed a sin worthy of death, was pardoned or forgiven by offering an animal sacrifice of any kind. Nor can we find where God requires or is ever pleased with the object sacrificed.

The prophet Micah is specific: “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O

man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” All the burnt offerings or gifts he might offer could not take care of the sin of his soul; it was not the objects that God wanted, but “to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” (See also Isaiah 1:11, 16 and Amos 5:22-24.)

Minor infractions of the law could be forgiven or atoned for with an offering of some kind, but in nearly all cases the offender was required to make amends for his offense. And the offering could be either a lamb, two turtledoves, or fine flour. It was a sacrifice made by the sinner himself. He was giving an animal without blemish, two birds from his flock, or flour from his fields. The fact that the birds could be substituted for the lamb or the flour for the birds proves that it was not the object God wanted. It was the obedience which the object symbolized.

There is not a shred of evidence to prove that the sacrifice of atonement relieved the individual from the necessity of obeying implicitly every command God gave to Moses. On the contrary, the evidence points to the fact that if they committed a sin the penalty for which was death, they died. The death of Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, proves that it was the obedience rather than the object of sacrifice which was required. They offered the sacrifice, but not as the Lord had specified. For their disobedience they died. (See also I Sam. 15:22-23.)

King David perceived the deeper meaning of God’s sacrifice when he said, “Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. . . . Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness” (Ps. 51:16-17, 19). God wants a “broken spirit,” a “contrite heart,” and “righteousness.”

“The atonement at Calvary is foretold in Isaiah 53.”

To the believer in the atonement, Isaiah 53 is the *sine qua non* of their belief.

Before “jumping at conclusions,” one way or another, let us consider some other statements made by Isaiah. Read carefully from the first chapter: “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations;

incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. . . . And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well. . . . If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isa. 1:11-20).

Also consider Isaiah 9:14-16, "Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed." Also, "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit that they may add sin to sin" (30:1). Also, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins" (58:1). Again, ". . . to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (66:2).

These statements are very definite. Isaiah pictures a condition which all who obtain God's favor must attain. Who can read Isaiah and not come to the conclusion that the Lord requires righteousness as a condition for deliverance? Many times the writer uses the words "Hearken" or "Listen" or "Awake" or "Arise"—all action words requiring effort on the part of the sinner. (This is not to deny that Christ must save us by bestowing immortality, but He will bestow it only on those worthy, on those who have met the qualifications: there is something for the individual to **do**.)

Now let us return to Isaiah 53.

If we are to understand the Prophet as promoting the doctrine of the atonement in Isaiah 53, and at the same time requiring individual sinners to "Wash you, make you clean" as in chapter 1, we have a contradiction. Either Jesus does the "washing" by His death, or we do the "washing" by living a righteous life. It is one way or the other. It cannot be both ways. Isaiah was inspired by God, so his writings must correspond with the general teaching of the Scripture. And that teaching is overwhelmingly in favor of individual effort as prerequisite for salvation.

If you are a confirmed believer in the atone-

ment, it is easy to find in this chapter texts that seem to support your belief. But we hold that Isaiah 53 is misunderstood. The entire chapter is talking about "he," which is "my servant." Is there any way to know **who** that servant is?

In Isaiah 49, we read, "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified" (v. 3). In Isaiah 52:13-15, we read about this same servant, "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider."

We believe Isaiah is referring to Israel, God's true chosen people, the whole body of faithful believers. Christ is the "head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18), but all the members of the body are included. It is the same group referred to in Revelation 20, those who were "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God."

The world of unbelievers see no beauty in this group, and they are despised and rejected. In the future, they will be raised up to immortality and a place of honor among all people.

The word translated "bear" in Isaiah 53:11 ("for he shall bear their iniquities") is **nasa** and has for one of its definitions, "to pardon sin." **Nasa** is also rendered "forgive" in Psalm 25:18 and 32:5. Christ and His faithful servants will be the instruments God will use to teach and enlighten all peoples during the new age, until all will know the Lord "from the least even unto the greatest" (Jer. 31:34). Just as Jesus and His apostles could forgive sin, so will they have power to forgive—a necessary part of their duties as administrators of the new order.

Indeed, the eleventh verse of Isaiah 53 is the key to the chapter: "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." Not by his blood or by his death or by his sacrifice but "**by his knowledge,**" the words which will give life eternal. This is what Jesus Himself said, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). Nothing will justify anyone in the sight of God but moral cleanness, and that cleanness comes through knowledge. Such knowledge will bring forgiveness: "For he shall bear [*nasa*, "forgive"] their iniquities." Sin to be forgiven must be repented of and forsaken; then forgiveness will surely be granted.

It is impossible to cover all aspects of Isaiah 53 here, but if any would like to pursue the atonement further, we urge you to send for our booklet **The Atonement**. ●●

Be Thankful In Deed

This year as we observe our season of Thanksgiving, let us be grateful not only in word but also in deed. Our gratitude should find expression in a resolve to live a life more unselfish and more consecrated to Jesus Christ.

In the Lord's Prayer, as recorded in the sixth chapter of Matthew, we read, "Give us this day our daily bread." Scripture teaches that the good things of this life are the gift of God. James declares that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." Isaiah says that wisdom is the gift of God.

A pastor was visiting a mental hospital one day when a patient put a question to him. "Sir, have you thanked God for your reason?" The preacher admitted that he had never done so, but said he would be unthankful no more.

Whatever material things we enjoy were given to us by God for spiritual ends. Some have asked, "Why should those who have plenty pray, 'Give us our daily bread'?" The Bible teaches that even those favored with plenty should pray thus in order to have a blessing upon their provisions and to teach them their continued dependence upon God. Christ said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

We are enjoying the bounty that God has bestowed upon us, but often we are biting the hand that feeds us. God feeds millions and they fight against Him. He gives them bread, and they give Him rebellion. The Lord said, to Jeremiah, "When I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery." They were striking the hands that had relieved them.

However, the Bible warns that a day is coming when those who sin against their Giver and abuse God's royal favors will face a terrifying Judgment. They will not escape the wrath of God.

Mrs. E. S., Wisconsin

If today has brought you trials
And perhaps a bit of sorrow,
Aren't you glad in just a while
There'll be a new tomorrow?
And aren't you glad for grace that makes
Your troubles all seem lighter,
And for faith that future days
Will be happier and brighter?

Christian contentment comes from what we are becoming. If our contentment comes from attention, praise, health, favorable circumstances we are poor indeed and any day may find ourselves a pauper. But if it comes from becoming what God wants us to be, daily more like the divine pattern, we have inner strength and serenity that nothing can disturb.

It is a glorious privilege to live, to know, to act, to listen, to behold, to love. To look up at the blue summer sky; to see the sun sink slowly beyond the line of the horizon; to watch the worlds come twinkling into view, first one by one, and the myriads that no man can count, and lo! the universe is white with them; and you and I are here.

Should we not thank God?

—Selected

Have You Counted Your Blessings?

Here is a clipping from what is called "Granny Beebee's Diary." It lists, step-by-step, the procedure for doing the family's weekly laundry:

1. Build a fire in back yard to heat kettle of rain water.
2. Set tubs so smoke won't blow in your eyes, if wind is pert.
3. Shave one whole cake lye soap in boiling water.
4. Sort things, make 3 piles, 1 pile white, 1 pile colored, 1 pile work clothes and rags.
5. Stir flour in cold water till smooth, then thin down with boiling water.
6. Rub dirty spots on board, scrub hard, then boil.
7. Rub colored clothes, but don't boil, just rinse and starch.
8. Take white things out of kettle with broom stick handle, then rinse, blue and starch.
9. Spread the towels on grass.
10. Hang old rags and work clothes on fence.
11. Pour rinse water on flower bed.
12. Scrub porch with hot soapy water.
13. Turn tubs upside down.
14. Go put on clean dress, brew a cup of tea, sit and rest and rock a spell, and count your blessings." ••

Our Readers Write...

Thankful

I have been thinking this morning of the many things I have to be thankful for. I thought what a wonderful God we serve; and then I said, No, it is more like *He* serves *us*. We can do nothing of ourselves except to walk obediently before Him. He gives us our lives, our health, our comfortable homes with many more conveniences than would be necessary, our food, our raiment, and on and on—and yet He has promised us more just for living as we should want to live anyway! The only true happiness one can get in this life is by living as He wants us to live.

Peru, Iowa

F. B.

The Lord Is Coming

We as Christians should be preparing for the time when Elijah and Christ shall come. To James the arrival of that Day of the revelation of Christ was of first concern. He was confident; he was steadfast. The hope of the early Church was all bound up in this great event. After 1900 years we are 1900 years nearer that great event. We stand on the threshold of the New Era. The hope of the personal return of Christ to earth, the hope of the final triumph of righteousness over evil, of justice over injustice of truth over error, is the silver lining to the world's dark cloud today. And this hope nerves us on in the fight against sin and evil in ourselves. But James says, "Be patient, therefore brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. . . . Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

Davenport, Iowa

W. P.

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Honor to Whom Honor Is Due

The date of our founder's birth has come and gone. We are commanded to give honor, as I Timothy 5:17 says, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."

Brother Nichols is certainly due honor for the gigantic work he accomplished. But had he not done this work, as he himself said, someone else would have. It was God's work.

The nineteenth century was pregnant with religious turmoil. Following is a list of some of these labor pains of this era and the starting of many new religions: Disciples of Christ, 1809; Christian Brethren, 1804; these joined and became one in 1832. Then there were the Millerites and the Adventists, the Christian Scientists in 1866, Plymouth Brethren in 1830, Christadelphians in 1848. Then in 1880 Brother Nichols came out with "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

Thanks be to God, we now have the true Word of God again and know without reservation that if we diligently apply this reborn truth to our daily lives we too can be the sons of God—and have all eternity as our future!

Minnedosa, Manitoba

E. H.

It May Be Difficult

There is no denying that the fruits of the Spirit require tender care and careful vigilance. They do not make their way into our spiritual baskets of their own free accord. Difficult though they may be to grow, they have been successfully cultivated by those who have a strong desire to be abiding gardeners in the Lord's field.

There is no magic by which we may learn to do well. When all kinds of irritations and bothersome annoyances, big or small, invade our working grounds, the Lord can and does give victory over them, if we stand fast and refuse to be beaten into submission.

It all depends on ourselves. We can do or not do; count our blessings and be thankful for the chance given us to make ourselves creatures worthy of perpetuation; or we can forget to do, disdain our blessings and go in the way of the unfaithful, who shall mourn and sorrow with doleful lamentation when they present their harvest.

Let us work and never grow weary in well doing, while we still have opportunity.

South Amboy, New Jersey

L. M. K.

Scriptural Spotlight

(Continued from page 27)

others are thinking evil of us? We must not. The command comes again, "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" (I Thess. 5:15).

No leeway is allowed for bitter words or even bitter thoughts. Arguing, or giving back as good as we get only brings us down to the level of those with whom we argue. The soul grows when it learns to return love for hate and gives kindness for bitterness. We grow to the dimensions of what we give in return.

There is one course always open, and that is the joyful, happy, peaceful upper road to another village. And we shall find, to our delight, that each such village is located on higher ground. Why not start for it immediately? ●●



SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

"...And they went to another village"

—Luke 9:54.

THINGS written "aforetime were written for our learning," and this small incident recorded in the Gospel of Luke is among them.

Jesus' last days upon earth were drawing toward their dramatic close as He with His disciples resolved to go once more to Jerusalem. Together they trudged on foot the hot, dusty miles through Galilee, their faces set toward the holy city. As the day drew to a close, they began to think about needful lodging. Where would they seek? Before them lay a Samaritan village.

Jesus halted. Here they could rest, while messengers went ahead into the town to make arrangements for the night and to pick up a few provisions. In the morning they could continue their journey refreshed. It is likely they halted by a cooling well where they could quench their thirst, as they waited for the return of the advance scouts.

But why was this? The messengers were returning so soon! Fortunate indeed to find lodging so quickly for the tired and hungry company. The villagers must have been anxiously waiting for just such an opportunity and must have welcomed them with open arms! So much their Master could give in return for the kindness shown Him. Everywhere were sick He could heal, and people He could comfort with the glad news of the coming Kingdom. Their hearts thrilled at the thought.

But—what meant the downcast faces of the returning messengers?

"Lord, Lord!" they burst out, "those villagers down there refuse to welcome us! They despise us because we are traveling on to Jerusalem. They deserve to be punished!"

"Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them," cried James and John, "even as Elias of old did!"

Such a plea—"Lord, let the judgments of Jehovah consume them." The sons of thunder were wanting to flash lightning!

What did Jesus do? Did He say, "Yes, that is

just what we will do, such people do not deserve to live"? No. He turned to His disciples and reprimanded them for their rashness. And the rest of the story is told simply, quietly: "And they went to another village."

Another lesson of Jesus' moral stature was forced home upon their minds. Humbled and ashamed they must have been as they walked along, silently reflecting on His words. How great was the soul of their Master, too great to be annoyed by slights, injuries or disappointments and rebuffs; too busy in the service of His heavenly Father to waste time brooding and haranguing over a bit of ill-treatment from a foreign people. A smaller soul would fret and fume with resentment, his whole day spoiled because of what he considered a gross insult. But not Jesus.

The example is written for us: "And they went to another village." No bitterness, no arguing; He had risen above such childish behavior. True, He needed the rest which those villagers could have given Him. No doubt He was saddened that they did not want to receive what He had to offer; but His mind was at peace; they could not take that from Him. And if they did not wish to give Jesus and His company lodging, that was their privilege.

So Jesus and His disciples traveled on "to another village."

How do we react in the petty annoyances and grievances that so often cross our pathway? Do we grumble and smolder away at what we consider slights and thoughtless actions of others? Perhaps if we closely examine ourselves we may find we are guilty of such thoughts more often than we would like to admit. Can we dismiss a careless word and remark as too insignificant to take notice of? Or are we prone to imagine someone is talking about us and allow our feelings to be hurt over it?

The command is to return good for evil—so what right have we to return evil when we *imagine* that

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This I Pray

O God, all through today, keep me
From sulking when I do not get my own way;
From being envious of others who have what I have not;
From doing things with a grumble and a grudge;
From being the least bit obstinate or disobliging.

And Lord, keep me
From being conceited when I do well;
From being discouraged when I fail.

I fear that resentment that rises within me
when something is withheld from me;
That bitterness that possesses me
when I think I have been wronged.

I know, Lord, quite well, that I bring most of my troubles on myself.
I don't spend the time I ought to spend in prayer and study.
I am far too easily upset.
I do things without thinking first,
and then I am sorry I did them.
I say things without thinking first,
and then I am sorry I said them.

It is not that I do not know better, Lord; I do know.
Help me, Lord. I need You.

Help me to always take the long view of things.

Keep me looking beyond this moment, even beyond this world,
To remember the Great Day that is coming;

I want someday to hear You say to me, "Well done."

So help me now to "do well." Amen.