



# Megiddo Message

*"Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness"*



## What Is Gratitude?

Sometimes gratitude is giving thanks  
for benefits beyond measure . . .  
the brimming cup,  
the laden vine,  
the full-sheaved harvest richly blessed by heaven.

Sometimes gratitude is giving thanks  
for less than I had hoped . . .  
the blighted cup,  
the silent tear,  
the thwarting of my fondest expectations.

So be it . . . if it suit His mercy to withhold  
the good that I had sought . . .  
if only I can take  
the pain,  
the loss,  
the struggle fiercely fought,  
and dedicate it all  
in trust to Him  
Who worketh all for my eternal good!

— Contributed.

## Megiddo means . . .

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

### We believe

—in God the Creator of all things, all men, and all life.

### We believe

—in the Bible as containing the genuine revelation of God and His purposes for men, and as being our only source of divine knowledge today.

### We believe

—in Christ the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was born of a Virgin, ministered among men, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven, and who shall shortly return to be king of the whole earth.

### We believe

—in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.

### We believe

—in all mankind as providing the nucleus from which a superior, God-honoring people shall be chosen to receive the blessings of immortal life.

### We believe

—in ourselves as capable of fulfilling the precepts and principles given us in the Word of God, thus perfecting that high quality of character which God has promised to reward with life everlasting in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

### We believe

—in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth will be filled with His glory, His people, and His will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

## Bible Quotations

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version. Other versions are identified as follows:

**NEB**—*New English Bible*

**NIV**—*New International Version*

**NAS**—*New American Standard*

**RSV**—*Revised Standard Version*

**TLB**—*The Living Bible*

**TEV**—*Today's English Version*

**JB**—*The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition*

**Phillips**—*The New Testament in Modern English*

**Berkeley**—*The Modern Language New Testament*

**Weymouth**—*The New Testament in Modern Speech*

**Goodspeed**—*The New Testament translated by Edgar J. Goodspeed*

**Moffatt**—*The Bible, A New Translation*

**RV**—*Revised Version*

## About Our Cover

Our cover photo was taken near Rochester, New York, by Mr. and Mrs. David Sutton.

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Vol. 73, No. 10

November, 1986

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The **MEGIDDO MESSAGE** is a religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ, and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Church. L. T. Nichols, Founder; Newton H. Payne, President and Editor; Ruth E. Sisson, Executive Editor.

The **MEGIDDO MESSAGE** is available in microfilm from Xerox University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI, 48106.

The **MEGIDDO MESSAGE** (USPS 338-120) is published monthly (except July) by the Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619. Second Class postage paid at Rochester, New York. SUBSCRIPTION RATE: One year, eleven issues, \$2.00. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619-1697.

**MEGIDDO** is a way of believing and living, grounded solidly in the Bible as the reliable Word of our Creator. A total view of life, the world and the universe, it sees all events, men and nations moving together toward one God-ordained climax: the Kingdom of God on earth. This has been the plan of God since the beginning. Christ will return visibly, bodily, as King, and the governments of this world will be joined to form a totally new worldwide government. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants. This is the purpose and goal of all creation.

# **“Lord, What Shall Be the Sign of Thy Coming?”**

## **Part I**

*Scripture Reading: Luke 21:25-28*

**I**F EVER there was a time when we needed to trust in God and believe the promise that Christ will come to right the world's wrongs, it is now.

God's plan is to fill the earth with His glory; that was His purpose in arranging its creation. It is not His purpose that the earth should ultimately be destroyed, or forever be under the heel of tyranny, or mismanaged by irresponsible men and ruling groups. It is His purpose that our planet should be inhabited by worthy mortals, with whom He can share His munificence, and upon whom He can bestow limitless blessings. "For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth and made it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:18).

God is a mighty Creator. Expansion is His everlasting purpose. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of creation" (Acts 15:18). He formed the earth to be inhabited. But He did not plan that it should be perpetually inhabited by gangsters, racketeers, disturbers of the peace, teen-age vandals, immoral, wicked people of all shades and grades. He designed it for a righteous, holy people. The Psalmist declares: "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever" (Ps. 37:29). The prophet Daniel projects the happy culmination of God's plan for the earth with these words: "And the kingdom and dominion, and the

greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him" (Dan. 7:27).

It is God's purpose that irresponsible government shall cease: "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment." "I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders" (Isa. 32:1; 60:17-18).

Christ's coming is the event that will initiate all these wonderful changes, and that is a major part of God's plan for the earth and mankind. Jesus said He was going away, and promised His anxious disciples that He would come back. During those forty days between His resurrection and ascension, He met with His loyal followers a number of times, as is witnessed by Luke's account in the Acts of the Apostles: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen; to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:1-3).

On one occasion Jesus was in the temple, and as someone spake of the temple, "how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts," He took occasion to reveal to His disciples the vicissitudes that lay in the

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Note: "Lord, What Shall Be the Sign of Thy Coming?" is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

near future, and before He finished He gave a preview of what should befall earth's inhabitants away down at the time of His second coming. When alone with His disciples on the mount of Olives, His disciples asked Him, "When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of Thy coming?" His answer, recorded in both Matthew 24 and Luke 21, is of special interest to us who are living in the last days, near the time when the final phase of His prophecy will be fulfilled.

### ***Short-Range Prophecies***

In the nature of short-range prophecies, in Luke 21 (cf. Matthew 24), He told them of the destruction of their temple. Not one stone should be left upon another that should not be thrown down. Deceivers should arise saying they were Christ; they should not go after them.

Then He mentions some events that have happened over and over in earth's story—there should be wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes; "see that ye be not troubled," He said. Don't be terrified, don't be panic-stricken, for these things will happen, but "*the end is not by and by*" or "the end is not yet."

His followers should be forced to suffer persecution at the hands of their enemies for His name's sake, and be hated of all men. Their city Jerusalem should be compassed with armies and destroyed. There should be great distress in the land and wrath upon that people. "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

### ***The Longer-Range Prophecies***

Then spanning many centuries He predicts some of the very things that have taken place in the world during recent years, and are taking place at the moment. "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars"—the greater powers of earth and their luminaries—"and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." This last prediction is literally meeting fulfillment in greater proportions than we could ever have imagined. What could strike greater terror into the hearts of men than the development and build-up of nuclear armaments which we have seen in recent years, power that could totally annihilate life on earth. This, added to the other fears of germ warfare, racial tensions, crime, uncontrolled terrorism, vandalism, and lowered morals—are not the hearts of thinking men and women "failing them for fear"?

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***"As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man."***

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Then Jesus followed with the prediction of His personal return: "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

Let us consider some of the signs of His coming.

In Luke 17:26-27, Jesus foreshows the state mankind would be in at His coming, and current conditions fit His prediction with astounding accuracy. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all . . . Even thus shall it be . . . when the Son of man is revealed." Individuals and nations go about their daily lives, with no thought of divine intervention. In the days of Noah, the antediluvian world were warned through the preaching of Noah, yet were unbelieving. For 120 years Noah forewarned them of the approach of the flood, but they refused to be alerted or to change their course of life. Just so have the people of today been forewarned, some during their entire lifetime, by the recorded teachings and admonitions of the prophets, Jesus and the apostles, of God's judgments to ultimately come upon the world of the ungodly, yet they are unbelieving; hence that day will come upon them unawares.

Isaiah foretold the coming judgments with the following words: "Behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain" (26:21). Daniel foretold a "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time" (12:1). The prophet Malachi pictures the judgments upon the wicked as follows: "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (4:1). And Jesus Himself said: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always,

that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36). Yes, indeed, the world has been warned, yet they are unbelieving.

Then Jesus continues in Luke 17, "As it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be . . . when the Son of man is revealed" (vs. 28-30). The people of Sodom were unaware of approaching doom. They were unsuspecting. The warning that Lot was able to give was received with disdain. He seemed to his sons-in-law as one that mocked. Sodom to be destroyed at the rising of the morning sun? Nonsense! The sun never set more beautiful; the evening sky was peaceful and serene. God would not overthrow such a beautiful city of homes and landscapes and gardens. The old gentleman probably means all right, but he must be unduly frightened.

And is not this the attitude of the world today? Only the smallest minority are aware of approaching divine intervention into the affairs of men, with its inevitable

destruction of life, and are making an effort to escape. And that is a sign of Christ's coming, for "even thus shall it be when the Son of man is revealed." Nor can we overlook the open sodomy of today which so alarmingly parallels that of ancient Sodom. This is a definite sign of the last days.

### **Perilous Times**

We find ourselves living today in the midst of a world fraught with perils of every kind. We are living in the most dangerous and explosive times in which men have ever lived, a time especially difficult for those professing to live above it. We are a part of a society to which we do not belong, and we face the continual problem of remaining true to God in the midst of an unbelieving world.

There are questions on every hand. What shall we do? Which way is best? In what way can our strength, our time, and our means be best used for the glory of God? Numerous voices clamor for our attention. Many present worthy causes and projects. We are asked to join with them in a crusade against this or that evil, or to campaign for this or that cause. But can we as true

## *Let Us Pray . . .*

Eternal Creator, Thou before whom the night is as day and the darkness shineth as the light, in whose hand is the breath of every living thing, we worship Thee. Thanks be to Thee for taking notice of us and calling us into the sphere of Thine influence. Thanks to Thee for all the good with which Thou art surrounding us, for the beautiful world in which we live, and for the lives which Thou in Thy goodness hast made to touch our lives with the blessedness of hope.

We rejoice anew this morning in the assurance that soon, very soon, Thou wilt arise to put down evil and bring in everlasting righteousness; that Day is near; grant that we may be more and more concerned about preparing for it.

Most merciful Father, we confess with shame our slowness in rising to Thy exalted standard. Times without number we have clung to the dust of our own ways and refused Thy way; we have revelled in small thoughts, little jealousies, petty grievances, minute satisfactions. Forbid it, Father, that we should con-

tinue in anything which we will be ashamed to be found doing when Thy Son cometh. May we allow nothing in His absence that we would not do if He were visibly among us.

O Thou to whom a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past, teach us faith, patience and trust through all the experiences of life. Refresh us daily with new hope. Lift our vision above the immediate and transitory and fix our eye on that which is eternal. Say to us this morning that that Day is coming, and oh what joy and happiness if we are only found doing right.

On this we have set our hearts—not on the transitory but the eternal. If we are truly sincere in this, nothing here shall be able to disarm or discourage us; nothing here, however fearsome, shall overwhelm us—because Thou art in control, and canst surely bring each to a triumphant end.

We pray this morning for Thy people, wherever they may be, who are seeking Thee in sincerity and in truth. Comfort and sustain all who are in the throes of suffering, and uphold them with the power of hope. And keep us all pressing mightily to complete the task we have begun that the coming Day may find us ready to receive our share in the Kingdom of the Messiah. In His Name we pray. Amen.

believers permit any further fragmentation of our already badly fragmented lives? What attitudes should we take toward the dangers and difficulties that surround us? Are there any Bible messages that speak to us in *our* situations?

If the Bible had no positive messages for these last days, then our faith in the Bible as divine revelation from God could easily be undermined. Could He possibly have failed to anticipate the dire need of the specific guidance for those believers living in the most difficult and dangerous time in all of man's history?

Thanks to God the answer is, No! God *has* spoken! He has spoken in regard to the time in which we live. The question which now faces us is whether we as believers are willing to give the time and effort required to comprehending His message; and once comprehended, will we face the further task of taking God at His word and responding accordingly?

Among the passages of Scripture pertaining to these last days, so accurate that it fairly screams its message, is the forecast of Paul recorded in II Timothy 3: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (vs. 1-4).

Careful study of this passage will reveal it to be a source of guidance, instruction and encouragement for the time in which we live. Let us examine it statement by statement.

**THIS KNOW ALSO.** Introductory words such as these emphasize the importance of the message that follows. We lose some of the affirmativeness when translating from the Greek into the English language. Our language is more casual, less demanding. "Wake up! Know this! In addition to what I have just told you, absorb this also into your minds and keep it there!" The Greek word *ginosko* (ghin-oc'e'-ko) here indicates that this is knowledge that affects a believer in a personal manner. It also indicates that this knowledge emanates from God.

**THAT IN THE LAST DAYS.** The key word here is *eschatos* (es-khat'oc'e), which generally means the last of a series of events. In particular it means the closing of the times preceeding the glorious return of Christ. The Greek Lexicon gives I Corinthians 15:52 as an example, with the following explanation, "the trumpet after which no other will sound."

With the dawn of the new age, that is, at Christ's first advent, a revelation was given through Paul regarding

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***We are living in the most dangerous  
and explosive times in which men have  
ever lived.***

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the character of times and the character of men in the last days. If this revelation is a description of today, then we are living right at the end of some nineteen hundred years of God's silence. If this be true, then earth's long dark night is almost over. The day is ready to break through. We have every reason to expect God to break into human history at any moment and reverse its godless flow.

The period of time described in II Timothy is the time just before God breaks His long silence and ushers in His new Kingdom. This present dispensation is most assuredly to have its culmination. These are the concluding days of which Paul speaks in II Tim. 3:1 . . .

**PERILOUS TIMES SHALL COME.** Perilous comes from the Greek word *chalepos* (khal-ep-os') which means harsh, severe, savage, as used in II Tim. 3:1. "Times" is the word used to translate *chronos* (khron'os), a plural form which denotes a particular period. Hence a better rendering might be, "Harsh, severe and savage periods shall come." We today live in just such a time. Our existence is threatened with challenge and peril. We are destined to this way of life until Christ returns.

What we call crises, the Bible more accurately calls periods of peril (harsh, severe and savage), one period of peril following another with no resting or breathing space in between. It is also quite evident that the perils of these last days are related to the character of men.

Another preferred definition for "perilous times" is "outrageous times" or "outrageously evil times." Paul depicts with pinpoint accuracy the conditions of the last days in II Tim. 3:1-5. As we will see, they are indeed outrageously evil times.

**FOR MEN SHALL BE.** This phrase does not deal with men of past centuries, nor does it describe all men without exception. Neither is it limited to a few men. Rather, it is an affirmation of a widely prevailing attitude or condition during the last days. A modern-day appraisal of the present situation could not be more accurate than that portrayed by Paul's words in this passage nearly 2,000 years ago. Should it not increase our faith?

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***God has spoken! He has spoken in regard to the time in which we live.***

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**LOVERS OF THEIR OWN SELVES.** *Philautos* (fil'-ow-tos) in the Greek means self-lovers. It designates selfishness; a satisfying of one's own comforts, pleasures and advantages while disregarding others, even at their expense. The very popular religions of egoism are a manifestation of this self-love, those who drift through life and end up still trying to "find themselves."

Many marriages are under excessive stress because one or both of the partners is selfish. As a popular expression goes, "do your own thing." Consideration of others is ignored. Nor do parents care for their children as they should, so wrapped up are they in their own selfish desires.

According to the most current statistics available (1985), of every 1,000 marriages in the United States, an average of 490 will end in divorce, almost 50%. The condition is alarming. What they are saying is that people are not committed. Marriage vows—like many other commitments—are no longer considered sacred and binding. Multitudes are determined to seek their own pleasure and satisfy their own wants, even if this means pain or suffering for someone else. They make little or no effort to consider the other person's well being.

**COVETOUS.** *Philarguros* (fil-ar'-goo-ros) is the Greek word meaning money lovers or lovers of money. It speaks of those who have avid desires for money. Some call it drive, ambition, zeal; but it is just a cover-up for what it really is—greedy, selfish, rapacious. The present day mafia might be an example of rapacious persons. They will kill and maim for the dollar, even if the lives of many innocent victims are caught in the crossfire.

**BOASTERS.** The Greek word here is *alazones* (al-ad-zone') which means empty pretenders, boasters, showy. It is the spirit of "keeping up with the Joneses" which is so strong today that advertisers use it as a key selling point in marketing their products.

**PROUD.** *Huperphanoi* (hoop-er-ay'-fan-oi) means appearing above others, haughty. This is defined as having "an overweening estimate of one's means or merits," even to despising others or even treating them with contempt. Compare the attitude of many of our

leaders today with that of our country's founding fathers, such as George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Can we not see a difference?

**BLASPHEMERS.** The equivalent in the Greek is *blasphemoi* which means speaking evil, slanderous, reproachful, railing, abusive. In politics it is sometimes called "mud slinging," a very common practice among political rivals seeking the same office. They defame and slander opponents for the purpose of injuring their reputation. This attitude, however, is no longer limited to office-seekers. It is also prevalent among business men in small corporations seeking promotions. It is visible, too, in the competitive efforts of company against company. So often principle is laid aside, if harm can be done to a competitor.

Blasphemy also applies to the use—or misuse—of language among common people. Only a few decades ago bad language was confined primarily to the lower element of society. Using blasphemous language in mixed company or before children was simply not tolerated by so-called "decent" persons. Today it is accepted by a society that is no longer shocked. And the tendency toward blasphemy is not limited to speech. We see it also in music, literature, art, education and even religion.

**DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS.** *Apeithes* (ap-i-thace') is the Greek word for "disobedient." It means unpersuadable, contumacious. This includes those who have no regard for the advice or teaching of parents. There are few families in America today in which parents do not receive some type of verbal abuse. Not only do children have disrespect for parents, but a growing number of parents are being beaten by their children and live in constant fear.

**UNTHANKFUL.** The word is *acharistoi* (ach-ar'-is-toi) which means ungrateful. It speaks of those who have no proper sense of feeling for favors received and no willingness to acknowledge or repay a benefit. Among this group we find what we commonly term "leeches on society" which include income tax evaders, those that receive unmerited benefits meant for the indigent and those who by means of deceit defraud others. In other words, those who are without any sense of what is right.

**UNHOLY.** This word *anosios* (an-os'-ee-os) means unkind, malicious, or malignant; disposed to do harm, inflict suffering, or cause distress. The drug dealers, and peddlers of pornographic literature are prime examples of this malignant character. Pornographic literature has even infiltrated our public school systems.

**WITHOUT NATURAL AFFECTION.** These three words are included in one Greek word, *astrogos* (as'-



tor-gos). This word means calloused; that is, hard; hardened in sensibility and feeling.

A woman is attacked on a busy street in broad open daylight. People watch as she is stabbed several times. No one comes to her aid—they fear to “get involved.” Neither can we ignore the great increase in abortions, child abuse, child abandonment, and giving up children for adoption. Truly, it is an age “without natural affection.”

**TRUCEBREAKERS.** It is possible that the translators chose the word “trucebreaker” for the Greek word here because at the time of the translation, it seemed to best fit what was thought to be the intended meaning since people of today are so much more difficult to appease or pacify. However, the Greek word *aspondos* (as'-pon-dos) means implacable—i.e., not able to be appeased or pacified; relentless, without mercy or compassion, cruel. It is said more people, even in so-called civilized society, are being beaten to death today than at any other time in the past two thousand years.

**FALSE ACCUSERS.** *Diabolos* in the Greek: a very familiar word to those who even have no knowledge of Greek. It means slanderer, false accusers and is often translated as devil. It includes those prone to slandering others, or who habitually slander others. This trait is seen between political rivals, between business rivals, sports rivals, even between family members and children. It is seen as an ongoing ritual between heads of state of different nations. It is a part of the cold war between the United States and Russia. World powers have broadcast false accusations so consistently that acquiring accurate records for history is impossible.

Can we wonder that the Lord is “coming out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity”?

Can we for a moment doubt the divine inspiration behind prophecy that so accurately describes our day? Can we think for a moment that we are not in the last days of this age?

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***Whether we believe or not, the day of the Lord will come.***

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These things have been written for our learning, to warn us that we have no time to waste in despondency or indecision, no time even to lose sight of our high calling or the great and precious things God has set before us. Not for a single moment can we live as we might without this sacred information. God has entrusted to us tremendous insights into His plans, and shall we be so ungrateful as to disregard them?

Whether we believe or not, whether we prepare for it or not, the *day of the Lord will come*. When the time is right, God will *act*. And, in the words of the Apostle, “what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God”?

Oh, how the warning should move us, move us to a more serious effort toward God and holiness. How can we let a single hour go by without being consciously aware of our high calling? How can we risk giving in to our pettiness and pride, how can we indulge in the petty satisfactions of our lower nature, the impatience, the jealousies, the selfishness so instinctive to us? How can we allow ourselves to do or say anything or show any attitude that we will not want to own when Jesus comes?

Every hour is sacred; every moment is precious, the loving gift of our loving God who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Every test that comes is His provision to help us, the means by which we can prepare our escape from the time of trouble that is coming upon the earth. Let us make the very most of each opportunity as it comes, lest the day of the Lord arrive and find us unprepared.

*(Continued Next Issue)*

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**There is nothing noble in being superior to someone else;  
true nobility is in being superior to yourself.**

## Tempted to Conform?

The things of this world press in relentlessly on us every day trying to make us conform. But the victor's crown will only be worn by those who refuse to be molded by the short-term pressures of here and now, or threat to body.

Foxes' *Book of Martyrs* tells us many horrible ends for those who would not conform in bygone days. It also tells of some who renounced Christ for a few minutes of relief from pain, only to drop dead a few moments later.

Oh! what a tragedy for that poor soul! Let us pray we have the courage to go that last mile, whatever it may be, for it is only the finishers who will win the race.

It brings to mind what President Lincoln said about one of his windy election opponents, "He reminds me of a little steamboat that used to run down the river when I was a boy. It had a 4-foot boiler and a 7-foot whistle. Every time it whistled it stopped running."

Let us not make this mistake.

Manitoba

E. H.

## Space Travelers

We want to go up with the freedom of the wind. In the meanwhile we must equip ourselves with the right kind of space suit, with the garments of righteousness, holiness, purity and the keeping of all His commandments, with no deviation one way or the other. Only a few will do it, but what a people they will be, real genuine heroes.

Let us strive harder to please God only.

New Jersey

L. K.

## Live Unto God

The time is short for us. It must be spent in searching self and comparing self with the plain demands of God. We must have the Word at our command so it will flash upon our mind at every temptation. We should be constantly meditating upon the law of the Lord until it will be ever present with us; be like our Master pure and holy.

One thought comes to my mind a lot: "Live unto God not unto men." By study and meditation we can see what God has written and what He wants us to do. The things we naturally love are gone so soon. But if thinking and doing what God wants us to do, we can live and see the wonders of the universe.

Now is the time to get ready. God has given us this tremendous opportunity to obtain that great prize. We must think: Am I really trusting in the Lord and getting ready?

Iowa

W. P.

## Preparation

We must try harder than ever before because we have less time to prepare ourselves. Let us stop and think: Are we gaining strength or are we drifting?

We dare not let ourselves drift along because it gives evil a chance to crowd in. If we let evil crowd in, it will bring us to eternal death.

Georgia

S. J.

## Much to Do

In this spiritual Vineyard there is much work to be done by our own selves, and we cannot rely on someone else to do the work for us. Since the time God instituted the 6000 years of probation for the human race, He has been calling and is still calling for laborers to work in His Vineyard.

But sad as it may be, laborers in the true Vineyard have always been few through the ages. That is why Jesus says: "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few" (Matt. 9:37).

Yes, we are living so very near to the coming of the Lord, and the end of probation day is fast closing in on us. So, we must make haste and get our spiritual work done. For in Matt. 16:27, we are informed: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

Ontario

A. B.

*The human mind is like the body. Get a splinter in your hand and without removing it, infection will usually occur. The wise person will remove the splinter immediately to avoid serious results.*

*The same happens in the mind. Let in an evil thought, and soon mental infection begins to spread to the area of behavior. The wise person will keep out the evil thought, or if one creeps in, banish it immediately, thereby removing the possibility of more serious consequences.*

# God's Evolution

by Rev. L. T. Nichols

Part Two

*Our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, often discoursed upon the plan of God and how we as individuals can become a part of it. In fact, he saw this as the primary purpose of all Scripture: to reveal how we, as persons of God's creating, can become part of His eternal plan.*

*The following is part two of an edited distillation of these discourses which Mr. Nichols chose to call "God's Evolution." In this part he digresses from the plan into the wealth of evidence supporting it. Can we lack faith, when we have such evidence of the truthfulness of the Bible and the dependability of its Author, confirmed by the indisputable word of history?*

*And again, as we follow his reasoning, let us not fail to notice his own personal enthusiasm as a candidate for membership in the plan of God, and his earnest appeal for us to follow.—Editor*

## The Evidence

THE RECORD declares (Daniel 2) that there was a great king who lived away back there, and he was thinking about his wondrous kingdom. He had such a wonderful city. It was fortified with wonderful walls, and in those walls there was brick enough to build a wall and dike the entire length of the Mississippi River on both sides, from St. Paul to the Gulf of Mexico; and you could make the walls thick enough to have a double-track railroad on top of the wall on both sides of the river, and then have lots of brick left over, so great and wondrous was that city in which this king exercised his authority.

While he was thinking of his extensive empire one night, and wondering what would become of that mighty kingdom of his, he fell into a deep sleep. So great in dimension was his mighty kingdom that all nations feared and trembled before him, and he began to think that he was god of all the universe.

In the night, in his dream, this king saw a great and wondrous vision; but when morning came he could not remember anything about it, it had gone from him. But it had made such an impression on his

mind that he sent for all the wise men, magicians and astrologers and asked them what was the vision he had seen. They said, "O King! you demand something that has never been heard of throughout all the land. If you will tell us the vision, then we will tell you the interpretation thereof."

Any half-fool, it would seem, could have fixed up something to tell the old king. But they apparently knew they could not satisfy him, so they said, "O king, you demand something that has never been demanded or heard of, in all the land before!"

"Never mind," said the king. "You tell me." But they could not have told it if they had wanted to. He said, "I will know when you tell me the dream, for it made such an impression on my mind, and if you tell me the dream I shall know that you are right."

But they failed to tell him the dream, and he was about to bring the law down upon them that all the wise men should be slain. But there was one, a prophet, who had been taken captive, and had passed through the Babylonish captivity; and he said to the king's captain, "Send unto the king, for why is the king's matter so hasty? Give me a

little time and I will tell the dream and the interpretation thereof." Then he went to God; ah! he went to authority, high authority, to have the vision made known.

NOW WE have a record of that vision made known to us; and, do you know, we have a record of the interpretation, too! We are standing away down at the end of the vision, and we have the testimony and the evidence that it has been fulfilled just as it was delivered by the God of heaven. We have a sure foundation on which to build.

Daniel appeared in the presence of the king and said, "The secret which the king hath demanded, cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians or the soothsayers show unto the king; but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets."

And did not Nebuchadnezzar look at Daniel in astonishment and wonderment as he proceeded to tell the dream, and the interpretation of the God of heaven?

"As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter; and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. But as for me, this secret is not

revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.

"Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold; his breast and his arms of silver; his belly and his thighs of brass; his legs of iron, his feet, part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces." It came with such mighty force and smote the image, that the iron and clay, the brass, the silver and the gold were broken in pieces together, and became as the chaff of the summer threshing-floor, "and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

"This is the dream," Daniel told him, and Nebuchadnezzar considered it of such intrinsic value that he saw there really is a God in heaven, or Daniel never could have told the king his dream.

"**N**OW WE will tell the interpretation thereof before the king," said Daniel. "Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold."

The great Nebuchadnezzar was greatly impressed with the image portrayed before him. "Thou, O

king, art this head of gold." Then Daniel said, "After thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee"—the two arms and breast of silver, all one consolidated mass, represented the Medes and Persians. And after this, when Babylon was forced to give up her dominion, history tells us that it was done by Cyrus the Persian, who laid siege to the city of Babylon and marched his hosts upon it; then, during the night, when all were engaged in revelry and were being entertained at a great feast by King Belshazzar, he took the city.

Belshazzar the king thought it could not be done. He had accumulated in the city of Babylon the wealth of the nations, and had provisions laid up for twenty years; so the Babylonians laughed at Cyrus' maneuvers and said, "You will never take this city," while they made themselves feel very secure and content. But the Lord had said, "Cyrus is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure. The one that saith, Babylon shall fall; even saying to Jerusalem. Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundations shall be laid."

Do you know, Cyrus devised a stratagem. There was a great branch of the Euphrates River that ran through the city, and a great lake had been dug to take care of excess water during periods of great rain, so that the land would not be inundated. Cyrus resolved to run the water of the river into this lake, and he also dug sluices around the city; and in the dead of night—he chose the proper time, when they were engaged in revelry and drunkenness—he opened up the sluices, and the Euphrates began to go dry. As soon as his soldiers could ford it, they all entered and marched in and up through the brazen gates, and the city was in the hands of Cyrus before they knew it; and it was taken without the loss of a man.

Never had such a thing been known in the history of the world.

**T**HUS it came to pass that "After thee shall arise another kingdom," the Medo-Persian kingdom; Cyrus was on one hand, and the Medes on the other, represented in the great metallic image by the two arms and breast of silver. Was not this a fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy, to the very letter?

And who would have expected that Greece would rise to that high position and overcome the Medo-Persian kingdom? It seemed preposterous!

When the king of Persia, with his mighty host of 5,000,000 men, was making plans to march against Greece, he had one faithful wise man in his midst who said to him, "King Xerxes, you make a mistake to try to take Greece!" But he was exasperated; he was almost ready to burst in upon Greece, and he said, "You do not think that anyone can withstand an army of 5,000,000!"

But they did.

The Persians met the Greeks at Thermopylae, and Leonidas, with 300 Spartans, prevented their advancing into Greece. And they went on until they had a sea fight and a land fight at the same time, and the Grecians were victorious in both. From that time on, Greece rose and rose, until it fulfilled the prediction made by the God of heaven.

It was Alexander the Great who spread the kingdom of Greece with such rapidity, conquering the Persian world in the short space of twelve years; and he wept because he had no more worlds to conquer. Thus the Grecian kingdom arose. Oh, how it fulfilled the Word of the Lord! Can we not have faith in such a God?

Then after the Grecian kingdom, another arose, a fourth kingdom great and terrible, which was to



bear rule over all the earth. The Prophet introduced a fourth, great and terrible kingdom. And how many have we had? Just four. Babylon existed in the time when Nebuchadnezzar had the vision, and since Nebuchadnezzar had the vision, there have been only four world kingdoms, no more.

It has been recorded by Josephus, and Herodotus, and many other historians. But who could have told you in advance that there would be just four world kingdoms manipulated by the affairs of men? Who but the God of heaven could have told you this? As Daniel said, "The God of heaven revealeth this secret to me."

**L**ET US now direct our attention to the Roman kingdom. Now it was to be of iron. Three hundred years afterward, when Josephus wrote, it still had not then been divided into Eastern and Western Rome. Can it be disputed that God was in the matter, foretelling the wondrous story?

The prophecy said further that this last kingdom of Rome should be divided into many smaller kingdoms, represented by the toes of the great image. And then what? When these last remnants of the Roman power are in existence, then, as the

Prophet declared, "Moreover thou sawest a stone cut of the mountain, without hands, which smote the image on the feet, and brake it in pieces, and it became as the chaff of the summer threshing-floor, and the wind carried it away, . . . and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."

Now the question is, inasmuch as the four world empires have had their rise and fall, have we not sufficient evidence to believe that the stone will smite the image on the feet and break it in pieces, just as foretold? Have we not the evidence that the last of the prophecy will be fulfilled as absolutely certain as the former part of it? And as certainly as the head of gold represented the real, tangible kingdom of Babylon—"Thou art this head of gold"—just so certainly the stone represents the real, tangible kingdom of God. It is represented as striking the feet of the great metallic image, and breaking in pieces all the kingdoms of men.

As certain as there is a God in heaven, just so certain this stone will be developed, and all that has been spoken will be fulfilled.

Who is this stone? We read of a stone which the builders rejected; and again, it says, "Ye are built up

as lively stones, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood." This is one stone made up out of many. As we read in Genesis, "Let us make man in our image, and after our likeness, and let them have dominion." Who is it that is to have this dominion? It is "them"! Multitudes compose one man, and the stone represents this one man made out of many; one stone composed of all the stones of the temple of God.

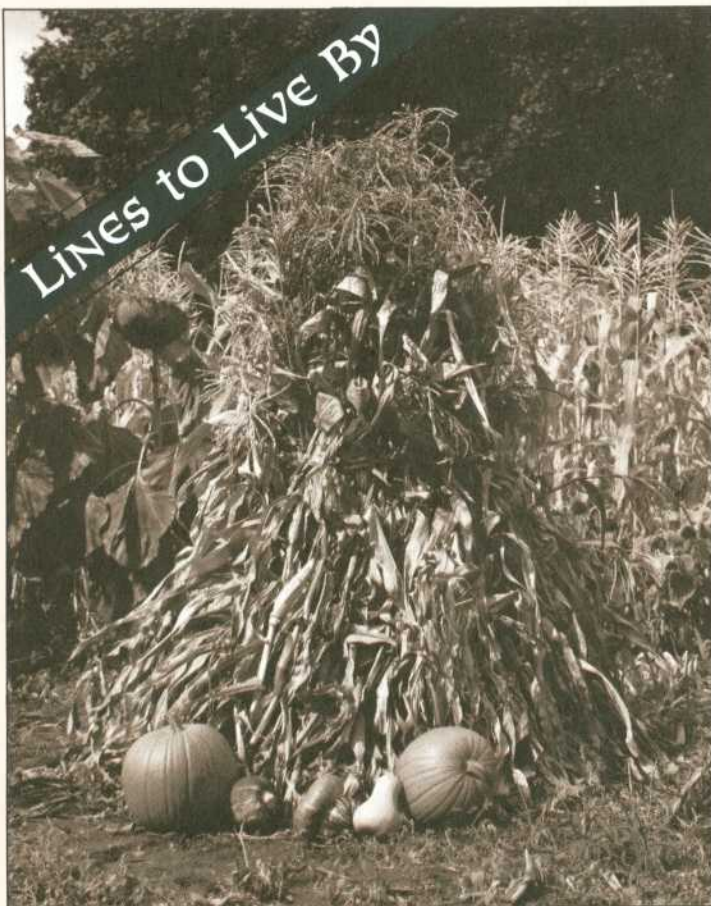
**N**OW, inasmuch as Abraham was one of the stones, and inasmuch as all the apostles and prophets of old were stones in the wondrous temple of God, do you not see need for the next great step in God's Evolution, for the power of God to work upon these persons, to bring them into existence again, so they can go on in the wondrous progression of God in the never-ending world to come?

Though we have never seen a man raised to life, yet we have seen by the eye of history the rise of the head of gold. We have seen that the Babylonian kingdom was overcome by the Medes and Persians, and they were conquered by the Grecians. Then was ushered in the Roman kingdom. We have seen the evolution of them all, they reach their

*(Continued on page 26)*

**The same God who predicted  
the rise and fall of four world kingdoms  
will give us immortal life, if we are worthy.**





*Work is a trait of godliness, for it is following the example of Jesus Himself. He said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). We are called upon to be diligent workers, not slothful shirkers. Even the most menial task can be performed with faithfulness and industry to the glory of God.*

*Thank the Lord that you can work; do your best at your particular job. Remember, an idle mind is the devil's workshop; and idle hands are the devil's tools.*

We ask these blessings:

*Enough good fortune that our spirit is not crushed,  
 Enough friends to provide solace,  
 Enough sorrow to realize that all things are transitory,  
 Enough trials to know life is only a passage,  
 Enough wealth to share with others,  
 Enough hope to sustain us,  
 Enough failures to impel us onward,  
 Enough faith to prevent our faltering,  
 Enough determination to find the right road,  
 Enough strength to uphold our duties,  
 Enough patience to overcome our shortcomings.  
 Enough heart to have compassion,  
 Enough courage to maintain a firm character,  
 Enough vigor to combat evil,  
 Enough greatness to be humble,  
 Enough foresight to avoid disappointments,  
 Enough kindness to take the friction out of life  
 And enough gratitude to thank God for everything.*

## Pessimism or Optimism?

It's always possible to see the worst—if you look for it.

*When you are discouraged, feeling all is lost;  
And it seems the prize ahead isn't worth the cost;  
Think about your troubles, count them o'er and o'er;  
Every time you count them, there will be one more.*

*If there be clear sunshine, think how soon 'twill rain;  
Should it be midsummer, winter comes again;  
Every glorious sunset ends in dark, dark night;  
Youth gives way to cheerless age; there is nothing right.*

*Count your many problems, name them one by one;  
Think that vict'ry never, never will be won;  
Cite your many troubles, count them o'er and o'er,  
Every time you count them, there will be one more.*

Satisfied? How about trying to count your *blessings* instead of your *troubles*?

*Count your many blessings, name them one by one;  
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done!*

Someone has said, "Instead of always sighing for some joy you don't possess, just think of all your blessings, and you'll find happiness."

It is better to spend time counting blessings than to waste it airing complaints.

*Meekness is not weakness but concentrated strength.*

## Points for the Month

- Week 1:** It is easier to say what you think than to think what you say.
- Week 2:** We must *think* in the new realm before we can *live* in it.
- Week 3:** When we choose a course of action, we choose its consequences also.
- Week 4:** We can alter our lives by altering our attitudes.

## Grow Your Faith!

**H**OW shall we overcome a faltering faith? How shall we get ourselves spiritually energized to full faith and full action? How shall we keep ourselves continually conscious of our sacred obligation and alert to every opportunity to fulfill it?

The answer is this: make your faith *grow*. How?

Before we can grow a one-hundred-percent productive faith, we need to look at what underlies faith.

**Faith in God is founded on evidence.** But evidence, to be meaningful in building faith, must be properly understood and applied. We might compare the evidence God provides to the seed in Jesus' parable of the Sower. Its quality does not vary, whatever the type of soil into which it falls. It is the Word of the Lord, pure and eternal, wherever it is planted. But the seed does not grow equally well everywhere because of differences in the types of soil in which it is planted. Only the seed which falls into the soil of a good and honest heart produces fruit unto holiness.

If the seed of divine truth is to grow and produce sturdy plants of faith in us, our hearts must provide the right kind of soil. The quality of the soil is *our* responsibility.

### What makes good soil?

To have good soil for growing faith, we need first of all an *unflinching mental honesty*. Most of us have a stronger instinct to save face and justify ourselves than to acknowledge what is true. Being strictly honest, even with ourselves in our own minds, can be difficult. Instinctively we cling to our own doubts and objections even after they are proven groundless. Or we accept the evidence, but in our minds we "slant" it, so to speak, so that it does the least possible damage to *our* ideas. Such mishandling of evidence is deadly to tender faith.

Then, to have good soil we need to be equipped with strong powers of concentration. Naturally our minds flit here and there with every passing interest and distraction, but we cannot let them do this and develop strong faith. Faith does not just happen to come upon us; we

must discipline our minds. We must think about where our thoughts are, and this requires concentration, focus and strong incentive. We must be conscious all the time of what our minds are dwelling on, to be sure that they are an environment in which faith can grow. A wandering mind is the enemy of true faith.

Then, if we would have good soil in which to grow strong faith we need a *keen sense of the issues at stake*: eternal life and eternal death. Doubt is nothing to be fondled or played with. To play with doubt is to play with death. Doubt may be counted among the most deadly of sins in that it can cancel all our efforts toward holiness. We do not naturally take the matter seriously enough. By nature we are numb, spiritually speaking; we lack a feeling for the vital issues before us. Let us shake ourselves awake before doom overtakes us. Let us attack our doubts head-on, before they ruin us. Death and life hang in the balance; we will be either unconscious and asleep through all eternity, or we will be alive and active and enjoying the greatest happiness and bliss. The more we think about this, the stronger will be our desire to build faith.

Before we can go far toward developing good soil, we need also an *overpowering love of life*. We must love life and desire so much of it that we will gladly sacrifice anything of the fleeting present to obtain it. Nothing less than this overpowering desire for life will provide the environment in which faith can grow strong enough to carry us into the world to come.

With an ever-growing mental honesty, a willingness to give desperate concentration to the thoughts that will produce faith, a moving sense of the issues before us and an overpowering love of life, we have the soil in which to grow faith.

### Then, when the soil is ready, what is the next step?

Paul wrote that "faith cometh by hearing . . . the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Faith is a direct result of exposing ourselves to that which is divine.

Our faith is first of all a direct result of *what we think*



*about.* Perhaps the most effective means to building faith is to submerge ourselves in the Word of God. As has been aptly said, we must *read* faith, *think* faith, *talk* faith. This will require strict mental discipline. To successfully build faith needs all the thought-power we have; we have none to waste.

What we allow ourselves to think about has a tremendous effect on our whole attitude and manner of life. If we spend ten hours a day thinking about the things of the present and one hour a day thinking about the future, we should not be surprised if the present seems ten times more real to us than the future.

We become what we think about.

Our minds have unmeasured potential to help us. That is why God places us under obligation to use every ounce of our thought power in the right direction. That is why Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Mark 12:30). Anything less than *all our mind* is too little.

**To develop faith we need also to exercise our minds daily in certain areas.** We need to go over and over again God's plan of salvation for mankind, His purpose in creating this planet and placing mankind upon it, and our place in relation to it. It is exceedingly important that we think about the time that has already passed, and realize the urgency of this hour.

Then we need to review the history of God's dealings with other people in other ages, and think about the many evidences of His faithfulness to them, His mercy, and His justice. Thinking on what God has done in the past will help us to build faith in what He is doing now and will yet do in the future.

*What we read* is closely tied to what we think about. It is part of our duty to God to restrict our reading to

that which is spiritually upbuilding, edifying and instructive, and to avoid anything that could prove detrimental to faith. Light, humorous reading can do as little to feed a mind that is bent on serving God as sawdust can do to nourish the physical body. Even instructive secular reading should be controlled so that it does not interfere with the vital faith-building thought which is oxygen to the spiritual life. We must learn to evaluate everything in terms of spiritual benefit: What is *best*? God has given us minds to fill with the constructive and helpful; we injure ourselves when we clutter them with things of little service or value.

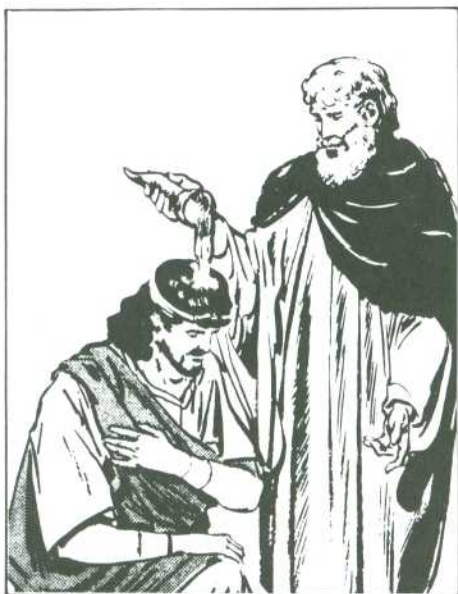
One area in which we may profitably spend our mental power is in reviewing fulfilled prophecies. Time and again the words of God's prophets met their exact fulfillment, while the words of men without God were soon forgotten. God's promises, whether of blessings or of doom, always have come to pass in His time. Sometimes the fulfillment was swift. When Peter prophesied the death of the wicked Sapphira, it followed within a matter of seconds (Acts 5:9-10). Elisha, in a time of hopeless famine, issued a prophecy of sudden plenty, which met dramatic fulfillment within 24 hours, exactly as he had foretold (II Kings 7).

Again, the interval was longer. Noah warned the antediluvian world through a full 120 years. But they rejected the warning, and in due time, the Deluge came and took them all away.

Enough has been prophesied and fulfilled to assure us of the reliability of the God behind the plan. God never guesses; when He makes a prediction, there is in it no element of chance or uncertainty. He speaks with absolute knowledge; to Him the future is as clear as the past. This should help us to build faith.

Think faith. Read faith. Talk faith. There is no surer way to grow a strong, living, working faith in God. MM

**If we offer God any less than all our mind  
we offer Him too little.**



# King Saul



## The Man Who Played the Fool

*Then said Saul, "Behold, I have played the fool and have  
erred exceedingly."*

*I Sam. 26:21, R.V.*

Saul, the first king of Israel, is one of the most striking and tragic figures in the Old Testament. If we are at all sensitive to the supreme values and vital issues of human life, the story of this man is bound to challenge us. We might profitably pick out this or that aspect of his character for separate consideration, but it is more important to see such a man in his totality to get the full impact of his significance. In some ways he is very big, and in others very little. In some ways he is commandingly handsome, and in others decidedly ugly. All in one he is a giant and a dwarf, a hero and a renegade, a king and a slave, a prophet and a reprobate, a man God-anointed, and a man passion-obsessed. He began so promisingly, yet deteriorated so dismally, and ended so tragically as to make the downgrade process which ruined him monumental for ever afterward to all who will read, mark, and learn.

### His Early Promise

**N**EVER did a young man show fairer promise or kindlier possibilities; and never did such a young man find more illustrious opportunities greeting him at the outset of his adult years. All this we find in I Samuel 9 to 12.

To begin with, he was distinguished by a *striking physical superiority*. Chapter 9:2 describes him as "a choice young man, and a goodly; and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people."

Second; young Saul revealed certain *highly commendable qualities of disposition*. The stateliness of his outward frame did not belie his inward stature. We note his *modesty*. When Samuel told him of the honour coming to him, he replied that he came of the least family in the smallest of the tribes, and counted himself unworthy of such honour (9:21). On the day of his public presentation he "hid himself among the stuff" (10:22).

Still further, we note in young Saul a *very generous spirit*. In the flush of the young king's speedy victory against Israel's foes, the people as a whole clamour for the death of those who have spoken against their hero. Mark the magnanimity of Saul's reply—"There shall not a man be put to death this day; for to day the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel" (11:13). And there were other fine qualities in him too—his considerateness of others (9:5), his dash and courage (9:6, 11), his capacity for strong love, as shown towards both David and Jonathan (16:21), and his quite evident moral purity in social relationships.

From *Mark These Men*, copyright 1960 by J. Sidlow Baxter. Used by permission.

Third; we note *the special equipment which God gave to him*, when calling him to become Israel's king. We well realize, of course, that young Saul's first equipment was himself. Whenever God calls a man to some high vocation, he not only gives special equipments, he calls the one who by his very nature is the man for the work. This was true of Saul. He was kingly in himself. He had the right natural capacities and capabilities to begin with. But now to these were superadded certain remarkable equipments of a supernatural kind. First, he was given the inspired word of Samuel, "God is with thee" (10:7). Then we read that "God gave him another heart" (10:6, 9). Then again, we are told that "the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied" (10:10). These expressions cannot mean less than that Saul was under the special guidance of God.

These, then, were some of the favourable factors which gilded young Saul's debut with such fair promise. The possibilities were immense. And the gifted young champion began wonderfully well.

Saul's first grave defection occurred early. It was an act of *irreverent presumption*. God intended that Saul should free Israel from the Philistines (9:16). Saul gathered a small but picked army, and purposely offended the Philistines by smiting one of their garrisons in Israel. This brought the might of Philistia against him, compared with which his own quickly scared and dwindling handful looked contemptible. Saul was expressly bidden to wait seven days in Gilgal, for Samuel. It was a necessary test. Saul failed badly. The seventh day wore on, and Samuel did not seem to be coming. Saul, in willful impatience, violated the priest's prerogative, and foolishly presumed to offer up with his own hand the pre-

arranged sacrifices to the Lord.

We can allow for Saul's predicament. The Philistines, presumably, might attack at any moment, and Saul's position in the plain was one of acute risk. Yet he knew that obedience to the voice of God through the Prophet was a basic condition of his theocratic kingship. His impatience really amounted to distrust of God. His presumptuous offering was not really because of concern to satisfy God, but to impress the people (13:8). He would be a prudent general rather than an obedient servant of God. He ignored the fact that although he was the earthly king of Israel he was in turn the servant of Israel's heavenly King, whom it was his duty to obey.

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***"Wherefore then didst  
thou not obey? . . .  
Thou hast rejected the  
word of the Lord."***

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"Saul, thou hast done foolishly," says Samuel. "Thou has not kept the commandment of the Lord." Saul knew it: yet he made no confession either of wrong or regret.

Saul's *second* default follows quickly on the first. It is an act of *rash willfulness*. By a supernatural intervention God spares Israel a debacle at the hands of the Philistines. Jonathan, Saul's son, is His instrument. Confusion spreads among the enemy. They mistakenly slay each other. Israel's watchmen report what they see. Saul calls Ahijah the priest to ask of the Lord concerning this, but with stupid impatience cuts short the enquiry and rushes off with his forces without guidance (14:18-20). "Saul, thou hast done foolishly!"

But now comes still worse default, a blend of *disobedience and deceit*. Saul is told to destroy utterly the vile Amalekites; but he spares the king and the best livestock. Then he equivocates to Samuel. He slips the blame for the booty on to the people. He even pretends the booty is for sacrifice to Jehovah. The episode marks a distinct breakdown in his character. Samuel's rebuke begins, "When thou wast little in thine own sight . . ." Humility had now been ousted by arrogance. Samuel sees right through the sham to the real. He calls the default "rebellion" and "stubbornness." "Wherefore then didst thou not obey?" "Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord."

From this point Saul's decline is steep. "The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul" (16:14). Nor is that all: an "evil spirit" troubled him (14, etc.). He goes rapidly from bad to worse. He gives way to a petty jealousy of young David until it becomes a fiendish malice. Thrice he tries to kill him. Then he hunts him like "a partridge on the mountains," for months on end. He is now giving way to the basest in himself. Twice David spares Saul's life. Twice Saul promises to desist. He knew that in hunting David's blood he was actually fighting God; for he admitted, "I know well that thou shalt surely be king" (24:20); yet even after that, he resumed his dastardly pursuit.

Mark this man. This big-souled giant is shriveling into a shrimp. This kingly hero is becoming a toad beneath the heel of his own sadistic moods and passions. When he was little in his own eyes he was really big; but the bigger he has grown in his own eyes, the less he has become. When he was simple and godly he was truly great; but when he opened the door to disobedience and presumption and pride and pretence and jealousy and hatred, he sold

himself to the devil and disaster. Every now and then his better self broke through and spoke again, but its protests became weaker and weaker as sin more and more got the mastery. He has engraved his own pathetic epitaph for us in the words of our text—"I have played the fool."

What was it that lay *behind* this man's fearful self-frustration? We may answer in a word: it was *self-will*. Saul's two besetting sins were presumption and disobedience to God; and behind both of these was impulsive, unsubdued self-will. We may trace the four progressive stages of this ruinous self-ism in Saul: first

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***Saul engraved his own  
pathetic epitaph for us:  
"I have played  
the fool."***

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self-sensitiveness, then self-assertiveness, then self-centeredness, and finally self-destructiveness.

#### **His Final Failure**

The last tragic act in the mournful drama of this man Saul is depicted in chapters 28 to 31. His downgrade course at length brings him to the witch of Endor, as an embittered, desolate-hearted fugitive from doom. This giant wreck of a man who once enjoyed direct counsel from heaven now traffics with the underworld! To choose "self" in preference to God is, in its ultimate meaning and outcome, to choose the devil. We need not dilate on Saul's midnight consultation with the witch, nor in his battlefield suicide the next day. There is no need to pick on details. It is enough simply to know the stark fact, the

final plunge—witchcraft and suicide. Saul is no more. He lies a corpse, with lovely Jonathan. How are the mighty fallen! How is this son of the morning brought to shame! Yes, Saul!—Saul of early promise but of rapid decline and final ruin, you have "played the fool."

And now, with the final failure of this man before us, we do well to ask what are the main lessons which his story utters to us. Some of these lessons are so obvious that they scarcely need pointing out; but they are so urgent and vital that they call for earnest reemphasis. Two, at least, of the lessons which come to us through this man's life are fundamental; the others are incidental.

First, then, king Saul preaches to us that *the one vital condition for the true fulfillment of life is obedience to the will of God*; and by "obedience" here we mean loyalty to the word and will of God both in inward motive and in outward action. The hidden root from which those evil shoots grew which eventually strangled the best in Saul was self-will. The fundamental fault was that he had never really surrendered his will to God. We ought to mark well the fact that Saul was called to a *theocratic* kingship—because we too are called to the same. Saul was never meant to have kingship in the sense of absolute power. It was never intended that the last word should be with *him*. He was not merely "appointed" by *men* to exert his own will over his fellows; he was "anointed" of *God* to be the executor of a will higher than his own. He was the human and visible vice-regent of Israel's divine and invisible King. He could only rightly rule the subjects under him insofar as he obeyed the will of the supreme King above him.

So it is with ourselves. Every human personality, we repeat, is meant to be a theocracy. You and I



are not the independent proprietors of our own being and existence. We are God's property. All that we have, God gave us. All that we are, that is good, God made us. We are strips of territory which lie within His proper domain. God has made us kings. He has made us kings over our own personalities, with their gifts and powers and capacities and possibilities; but our kingship is meant to be theocratic, not an independent, self-determined monarch. We are meant to reign and rule for God, so that our lives and personalities may fulfill His will. When we obstinately reign—or think we are reigning—independently of God, our real kingship breaks down, we miss the real meaning and purpose of life, and, whether we realize it soon or late, we “play the fool.”

Now with most, if not all of us, this is the very centre-point of our controversy with God. We are prepared to do almost anything rather than hand over our will to God. Look at Saul again: he was willing to be quite religious, willing for service, willing even for “sacrifice”—the costliest and most religious of all acts, but he stopped short at the one vital point. It was this which drew from Samuel's lips those memorable words, “TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN (EVEN) SACRIFICE.” God help us to learn this fundamental lesson!

But further, and closely akin to what we have just said, Saul illustrates to us that *to let “self” get the upper hand in our life is to miss the best and court the worst*. It is to end by saying, “I have played the fool.” Oh, this subtle, insidious “self.” How it pretends! How it equivocates! How it deceives! And how it ruins us when it gets the upper hand! The Philistines were not Saul's most dangerous enemies. His worst foe was himself.

So it is indeed with ourselves.

Our biggest enemies are not our “circumstances”—as we usually try to persuade ourselves and others. Our deadliest peril is this “fifth-columnist” inside our own skin. All of us who are living for self in preference to the will of God are playing the fool.

But let us not forget this, either: if we choose the way of self-will in preference to the will of God, there is no knowing to what depths of sin and shame and suffering and sorrow it may reduce us, even in this present brief life. The simply awful fact is that *we are not safe* until we have learned to say with utter earnestness,

**Take my will, and make it Thine,  
It shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart, it is Thine own,  
It shall be Thy royal throne.**

And now, by way of sharp relief and contrast, look for a moment at that *other* Saul—the Saul of the New Testament. Here, too, is a man of uncommon personal powers and advantages, with a call from God to a vital ministry—though a ministry involving many hazards, and having none of those outward conductions which king Saul's elevation had. What a contrast these two Sauls make! With the Saul of the Old Testament there is progressive downgrade. With the Saul of the New Testament there is progressive upgrade: he presses on for the “prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus.” With the Saul of the Old Testament “self” more and more gets the upper hand. With the Saul of the New Testament there is a progressive displacement of self-consciousness by Christ-consciousness. With the self-centred Saul of the Old Testament the personality becomes more and more emaciated. With the Saul of the New Testament the personality becomes more and more sublimated.

Oh, the contrast! Both men drew near to death with the words “I have . . .” upon their lips; but how different is Saul's “I have” from Paul's! Saul's heart-rending requiem is, “I have played the fool.” Paul's martyrdom song is, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown . . . !” The Saul of the Old Testament, who lived for self, threw his crown away. The Saul of the New Testament, who lived for Christ, gained a crown which will never lose its lustre through all the ages!

God help us to read, mark, and learn!

**Live for self, you live in vain;  
Live for Christ, you live again;  
Live for Him, with Him you reign—  
“Henceforth, the crown”!**

## Kindness

**THERE** is a key to every heart in the universe, and every human being carries that key. It is kindness. Kindness will melt the hardest heart. Kindness turns tears to smiles. Kindness makes enemies your friends. Kindness is the oil that takes the friction out of life.

Kindness uplifts, inspires, leads. Kindness sweeps away misunderstanding like sand before a surging tide. Kindness is positive. It never offers excuses. It looks you in the face. It takes you by the hand and doesn't care what you have been. It only wants to know what you are. Kindness is sunshine after the storm; kindness is the song that floods everything with light.

## How Generous in Giving?

**"I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O Lord; for it is good" (Psalm 54:6).**

**I**F THERE is anything certain in this universe, if there is anything that can be demonstrated to be positive, one thing stands out paramount: In our dealings with the Eternal we must bring to Him the best, the whole best, and nothing but the best. The tendency has ever been present to substitute the lesser for the best, whether the offering be of material or service.

According to the law of sacrifices given by Moses, when an offering was brought to the temple, what mattered was not its material value but its completeness, its entirety (Lev. 1:3; Deut. 17:1). The slightest spot, blemish, or injury was sufficient to disqualify it. The people were to offer according to their means, but the offering was to be in sincerity. The offering was made to acknowledge the power of God, to own their entire dependence upon Him or to conciliate His favor.

Let us consider an episode in the lives of the Children of Israel in the days of Malachi. This was some 450 years before Christ. The dominant power in the world at that time was the Persian despotism, which stretched from India to Egypt. Politically the Jews in the hill country of Judea had long since lost their independence to become subjects of Persia. Religiously they were still self-confident and convinced of their superiority. A visit to Jerusalem at this period of their history would reveal in their temple evidence of their religion, and in the palace of the Persian governor the evidence of their subjugation.

To this people, thus situated, Malachi was sent. His message was simple and direct. He said in effect: Your life, of necessity, has two sides; yet why should it also have the two standards it so clearly has? Today you go to the governor to beg some privilege or to secure his support for some private end, and how careful you are

in your choice of a present. Nothing but the best is good enough for him. Tomorrow you go to the temple to sacrifice, and what a difference! You drag thither some blind sheep out of your flock, or you choose out some beast of burden which has served your purpose about the farm, and is at the point of death. Anything will do for God! Make an experiment, Take your foreign governor what you are ready to offer to God, and see how he smiles!—but no, you would be ashamed to do such a thing (Mal. 1:8)!

Is there not something in common between the spirit of our day and that which existed in Malachi's day? For example, think of the vast difference that exists between what a man will do for his country, and what he can be persuaded to do for God. Let a crisis arise, and men are ready in an instant to set health, wealth and life itself at hazard and answer the call of duty. If only a portion of this devotion were enlisted for the cause of God, how much of today's evils would be gone.

In Malachi's day—and equally in our own—many would not be satisfied with anything less than the highest standard in business or public life; but when the offering was for God, anything was "good enough." Why?

The Eternal's choice fruits of all the earth will be those who form characters without spot or blemish in His sight. The sad part is that many who first begin this undertaking so often are content with a lower attainment. It seems a difficult thing to give our utmost, our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God (Rom. 12:1).

We talk or we sing of giving our best to the Master. To determine whether our giving is really our best will

require careful judgment. For instance, we learn the way of God and we begin to direct our lives according to His will and no longer are led by circumstances or actions of others. We learn to discern between the evil and good and practice to choose the good. But there is something higher and nobler than this. A fine Christian character does not consist only in abstaining from the things which no gentleman would think of doing, but in doing those lofty and exalting things which are unlikely to be done by any except those who have an intense desire for eternal things.

This is what Jesus had in mind when He told His disciples that their righteousness must be far superior to that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20, Good-speed). They must out-distance the best that the contemporary religious world could produce. One will find out that the real sacrifice comes in leaving behind the "good" and seeking, whatever the cost, the *best*. Someone has well stated a resolution: "All my bad into good, and all my good into better, all my better into best, all my best into *His* best."

By this standard there is no stopping. As long as life lasts and strength permits we are to reach out—higher. One cannot rest on a good conscience, content with having achieved something well worthwhile. A good conscience can be our ruin once we cease to listen to the voice crying, "Excelsior! There is something better yet."

When we consider fully what God requires of us,

how can we dispute that it is but our reasonable service (Rom. 12:1) to comply with His demands? To Him who gives us all things richly to enjoy and promises eternity, certainly our best is little enough. Jesus' key note in temptation was, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10). He instructed His followers to love the Lord with all their heart, mind, might and strength—nothing reserved for secondary interests.

The apostle Paul's greatest ambition was to get the churches which he founded ready for the Master's approval. Note his earnestness as he writes: "According as he hath chosen us . . . that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4). Later he wrote that the Church should be sanctified and cleansed, "that he [Christ] might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:26-27).

And this is the real sacrifice today, it is the ordinance for this age, to live a blameless life before God. When this is done freely and wholeheartedly then truly there is cause to praise the name of the Lord. But greater far will be the praises and rejoicing when the Church is completed and prepared as a bride, spotless, pure, undefiled, and Christ, the Bridegroom, returns to claim her and utters those prophetic words: (Cant. 4:7), "Thou art all fair . . . there is no spot in thee." MM

## Courtesy

**C**COURTESY can be defined as politeness in doing and saying the kindest thing in the kindest way. Politeness and courtesy are absolutely necessary. The scholar without courteousness is a boor; the philosopher, a cynic; the soldier, a brute; and ordinary man, disagreeable.

Courtesy has been defined by one of the poets as "the flag of kindness flown at top mast."

Courtesy is just as much a requisite in today's society as when grandmother and grandfather were growing up. Few people ever achieve to the highest possible degree their desire to be courteous. Courtesy often simply is a matter of slowing today's hectic-paced way of life for just a moment.

Courtesy is based on respect for the rights and feelings of others. It is a kindly, personal consideration for the other fellow. Courtesy is the Golden Rule, and the daily practice of genuine Christians.

Courtesy is a Bible command: "Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous" (I Pet. 3:8).

## ● Bear One Another's Burdens

*"Why did Paul write, 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ,' in Galatians 6:2 and then again say, 'For every man shall bear his own burden' (verse 5)? Doesn't this seem contradictory?"*

Your question is logical; a casual reading of these verses could easily give one the impression that Paul was contradicting himself, first saying that the brethren should bear one another's burdens, then saying that each is responsible for himself and his own burdens.

But there is no contradiction, for in a certain sense both statements are true. They are simply looking at the Christian's responsibility from two different vantage points. In the first statement, "Bear ye one another's burdens," Paul is thinking of the duty of one Christian to another, to be helpful, encouraging, supportive—and one who does not fulfill this duty to his brother is not truly a Christian. Then, in the second statement, he is thinking of each one's personal accountability for what he has done: "For every man shall bear his own burden." In other words, no one can be righteous for us. Each sows for himself, and will reap just according to what he has sown, as the Apostle goes on to say (vs. 7-9).

It is an ancient truth, that we can help one another, but when we come to judgment, we shall be judged for what we ourselves have done or failed to do. No one can "be good" for us. We shall stand or fall solely on the basis of our own record, "for every man shall bear his own burden."

Again, Paul wrote to Timothy to "first save thyself." Knowing that Paul received his knowledge direct from the Lord Jesus, we can be sure that his letter to the Galatians was not a contradiction of Jesus' teaching, for Jesus Himself said that He did "nothing" of Himself: "but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:28). And again, "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 12:49).

In what way are we to "bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2)?

The "law of Christ" came direct to Paul in a vision, and speaking of that law Jesus said to His disciples: "A new commandment . . . That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35). One distinguishing trait of those who claimed to be His disciples was their Christlike love, their care and brotherly concern for one another.

The "law of Christ" superseded the old Law. Jesus said "Love one another"; "Do unto others"; "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." To the one in the parable who helped the helpless, He said, "Go and do thou likewise." According to Jesus, loving our neighbor or our brother in the faith is one way of showing our love for God. One could not claim to love his brother and not lend a helping hand when needed. One could not claim to love his brother and not speak to him for his spiritual good; in the words of Paul, to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Tim. 4:1-2).

To "bear ye one another's burdens" might include speaking a word of encouragement when it was needed, offering a sympathetic ear when he has a problem, or lending a willing hand to lift part of his burden of care or responsibility.

The church is a body of believers, and as with the human body, "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you" (I Cor. 12:21). We need each other. If one member suffers, all suffer; likewise, if one member rejoices, all rejoice. The body is closely knit together, or it will not long be able to function as a body.

But in spite of all the responsibility we have to each other, in the final analysis, "Every man shall bear his own burden" (vs. 5). We are individually accountable for how well or how poorly we bear our own burden (cross, responsibility). There is no contradiction between the two statements.

In the matter of salvation, it is each one for himself. Others may pray for us, they may speak words of encouragement, they may influence us, but they cannot



work out our salvation for us. When we are summoned before the Judgment seat of Christ, we will be either justified or condemned according to our own conduct. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). Nor will the testimony of another be able to influence the decision of the Judge; it will be as the prophet Ezekiel wrote, "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 14:14).

### • How is Christ the "Lamb that was slain"?

*"You say we state on page 68 of the History Book that Christ's literal death was at the hands of a mob, not of His Father. Revelation 13:8 speaks of 'the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world.' Was it not all pre-ordained of God?"*

In a certain sense, Christ's literal death was "of the Father"—God *allowed* it, and God knew in advance that it would happen. But the Father did not crucify Jesus; the wicked mob did that. Stephen said it was a "murder" (Acts 7:52). Peter said Jesus was slain by "wicked hands" (Acts 2:23)—not the holy hands of His heavenly Father.

As far as the text in Revelation 13:8 is concerned, the translation is very poor. The KJV reads, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." We could get the impression that all inhabitants of the world would worship Christ except for those whose names are written in the book of life. That is obviously wrong. It is those whose names are written in the book that worship Him, and these are they of Malachi 3:16-17, who are faithful to God. The New English Bible makes this verse much more understandable. Verses 5, 6, and 7 refer to the "beast" who ruled over the nations forty and two months (here again is a reference to the 1260 years mentioned above—30 days to a month, 42 months is equal to 1260 days, and with the prophetic simile of "each day for a year," we have 1260 years).

Then verse 8 reads, "All on earth will worship it [the beast] except those whose names the Lamb that was slain keeps in his role of the living, written there since the world was made." It was not the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world—this really does not make sense. Those who are true to God have had their names in the book of life "since the world was

made." God knows in advance who will be His, who will be a good and faithful servant, and who will not. He doesn't *predetermine* goodness, He does not *make* anybody good or bad, it is all their own freewill. But God does *know* "the end from the beginning" (Isa. 46:10, 13).

The Lamb was "slain" in two senses: one, He was literally slain by wicked men and died a physical death; He also died a spiritual death to sin. He commands us to take up our cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24); we must be "likewise . . . dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:11-13).

MM

## Pray A Little While

*When you're weary in the journey,  
And the way is long and hard,  
And it seems you cannot go another mile;  
Draw still closer to the Saviour,  
He will fill your heart with song,  
If you draw apart and pray a little while.*

*Life's a battle and a conflict,  
And the foe is fierce and strong,  
And he lies in ambush in the dark defile;  
There he ever seeks to hinder;  
But by faith we overcome  
If we draw apart and pray a little while.*

*We must help the fallen brother,  
In the onward march of life,  
Ere the shades of evening fall across the dial;  
But we need divine direction,  
And His guidance in the strife;  
So we draw apart and pray a little while.*

*Let us then take heart and courage,  
Buckle on the armor bright;  
Never falter in the midst of heavy trial;  
Ever pressing onward, upward,  
Through the darkness or the light;  
Ever taking time to pray a little while.*

*Oh, the burdens will grow lighter!  
And the cross will slip away,  
And your face will wear again a happy smile;  
Then new strength and inspiration  
Will be given for the day,  
If you draw apart and pray a little while.*

## God's Evolution

(Continued from page 13)

zenith and decay; and we find, beloved brethren, we have been sailing down the Roman shore for over 1800 years, and there has never been another world kingdom established.

Do you remember that great Frenchman, Napoleon Bonaparte? He declared he was going to conquer the world, and said he would make his son Louis the Emperor. But oh, how he failed! The British were too much for him. He failed, and instead of making his son Louis the Emperor of the world, he failed in his exploits, and his own kingdom was taken from him.

And today we see the fragments of Rome in a relatively weak and broken condition, ready to pass away. But they will never pass away until the stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, strikes them and breaks them in pieces, and they become as the chaff which the wind driveth away. And this stone will become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth.

**N**O wonder Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). He knew of the prophecy of Daniel, of the rise and fall of the four world kingdoms; and He knew of the declaration that a stone should be cut out of the mountain, without hands, that it would grow until it became a great mountain, and it would be hurled, with mighty force, at the great metallic image, and strike it—not at the center, no, no! The Kingdom of God was not hurled at the great image on the day of Pentecost, for only the hips were developed then. The Roman kingdom was just at its zenith of power; it was not even divided into Eastern and Western Rome, and there were no feet to the great image, so it could not have been then. It can be no other time than the one just before us, and it is almost here. And in order to be accepted then, you must believe; the Bible declares, "I do not want you to be ignorant."

The meek are going to inherit the earth; they are the little stone cut out of the mountains without hands. They are the ones who will become a great mountain, or kingdom, and fill the whole earth. This is the man to whom He will give dominion, the one composite man making the one stone that will build the spiritual house: "As spiritual stones, built up a spiritual house." And Paul says Christ is the head of the house, and the church is His body. This is the stone taken out of the great mountain of nations, without the hand of man, evolved by the wondrous workings of God. All the members of this stone have to purify themselves, "even

as he is pure." As we read, "And every man that hath this hope in him,"—this hope of being made like Christ and living with Him forever—do we have this for our hope? "Every man that hath this hope in him, purified himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

This is why we know we can depend on God's evolution. It is a wondrous plan, and through it we have hope. We know that there is something better, and that we can depend in it. We do not have to depend on the vain theories of men, and trust in an immortal soul that leaves the body at death. No, no! The same God who could predict the rise and fall of kingdoms has promised to raise every believer from the sleep of death and He will give us immortal life, if we are worthy. This is God's evolution. MM

## Putting Away Pretence

**A** PEASANT once admonished a church saint: "Take heed that thou be as good as men believe thee." This is good advice for us too. We must be honest, sincere and humble, for if we fall it may cause others to stumble as well.

We are the only ones who know our secret thoughts, besides God, and when one who professes falls, it is not easily discerned whether a good man has gone wrong or a bad man has been found out. Let us strive to put away all falsehood, and be exactly what we profess to be, and eager for the coming of the Lord.

"The last day lies hid; therefore watch every day."

*Our Father, well we know that it depends upon ourselves whether the coming of our King shall bring joy or terror to us. If our life were ended tomorrow, would we be willing to have it judged as to its sincerity of motive, and earnestness of endeavor, and its faithfulness and loyalty to our Lord? Or would we beg for a few more days in which to prepare to meet the Judge? Help us, O our Father, so to live each day that we may be among the number whom Jesus pronounced blessed, whom "the Lord when He cometh shall find watching."*

—Contributed

## How Much Tolerance?

Take a sheet of paper and a pen. Now draw a straight line about an inch from the right edge of the paper, from the top of the sheet to the bottom. Now draw another straight line about an inch from the left edge of the paper, top to bottom. To the left of the left line, write the word "WRONG," and to the right of the right line put "RIGHT."

Now look at what you have drawn. Everything to the left of the left line is "wrong," and everything to the right of the right line is "right." But the two lines are widely separated from each other. What about all the area in between the two lines—where things are *neither* right nor wrong? If you allow this drawing to represent the way you make decisions, you will find that you consider some things either "very right" or "very wrong," but a great many situations fall in the very large area between, where things are neither right nor wrong.

Now turn your sheet of paper over and this time draw a thin straight line down the center of the page from top to bottom. To the right of the line put "RIGHT," and to the left of the line mark "WRONG." Now how large is that area between, where things are neither right nor wrong? It is not an area at all but only a point on a line, and everything falls either on one side of the line or the other.

Each of us has to make numerous daily decisions between what we allow in ourselves, and what we will not allow. The issues may seem small—as small as the thoughts we harbor, or the words we speak, or the attitudes we take, or the feelings we allow. Consciously or unconsciously we pass judgment on each according to the standard we have set up in our minds. Each is rated either "right" or "wrong" or—too frequently—somewhere in between.

Oh, that broad, comfortable area between! The sin is just a little thing, we tell ourselves, and not that bad. And so we let it go by, as though it really didn't matter and God would not notice.

To illustrate, let us ask Brother Brown a simple question: "Do you always tell the truth?"

"Of course," is his ready answer.

"You always tell everything *exactly* like it is?"

"I . . . I would say so. . . ."

"You mean you never change, or color or fix up the facts to make a story a little bigger—or better—or to help you out of a corner?"

"Why—" he hesitates— "everybody does that!"

"But when it's fixed up, is it really the truth?"

We may continue our inquiry by asking another person about his honesty, and discover that he tolerates a little stealing. Yes, a few times he has taken a tool home from work in his lunch box—he isn't being paid what he's worth, and besides, it's just a small thing.

Another person uses harsh words, or slang words—or worse—on occasion, especially when he is upset or tired. Another admits that he is a little bit immoral by what he allows his eyes to look upon. Another carries feelings for days when he is offended or misjudged. And so on and on.

So easily do we keep that large area between, where we justify what is really wrong. In this we show our lack of conviction. And here is where the wedge of temptation has a chance to enter, and persuade us to make this zone of tolerance yet wider, to excuse yet more of our little fleshly indulgences. *When* will we change? *When* will we draw the line straight down the middle of the page and let everything fall either to the right or to the left!

We may be very stern in our judgments of others, but God judges us by what we allow in *ourselves*. And the little tolerances, if allowed to continue, will eventually bring us to the shocking reality that we have gross sins on our record when we stand before the Judge, when it is too late to erase them.

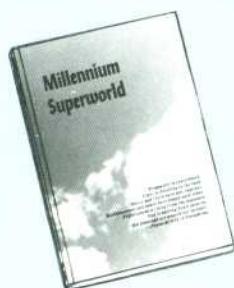
The width of our zone of tolerance is the measure of our weakness. It is true in the world of manufacturing. A new motor, for instance, is safest when in its manufacture the allowance for error in making the parts is very small. This area of tolerance is what the quality control department watches very closely. The wider the area of tolerance, the poorer the quality of the goods produced. And so it is with us. Our quality in the sight of God depends directly on our *intolerance* of error.

Let us make the area of tolerance between right and wrong in our lives as narrow as possible. Let us watch carefully not to excuse *any* evil in ourselves, however slight. Let us maintain an active, constant, prayerful discipline in our hearts.

If, in the day of final account, the Judge must say to us, "I have a few things against thee," it will not matter whether they were large or small. *Any* wrong we tolerated will be too much.

MM

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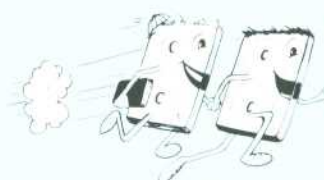
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