

Megiddo Message

I can never count the blessings
I receive from day to day
Nor begin to name the mercies
that surround me all the way.



We Thank You, Father

LORD of all our days and years, God of seedtime and harvest, whose power is unbounded, yet whose eye is upon all Your own: we come to share Your love, we come with burdens and care, to this fellowship of prayer.

Lord, make us mindful of Your ceaseless goodness to us. You have not dealt with us according to our sins, or we would have perished long ago. But You in Your mercy have preserved us; You have brought us safely through water and through fire. Surely You have proven Your love to us, full measure, pressed down, and running over.

Great Creator of all, we praise You for the bounty of forest and field; for the beauty of sky and sea; for the majesty of the mountain and the fruitfulness of the plain. May all our uses of these bounties be touched with thanksgiving. May we always remember that nothing we have is our very own; it is all Yours, which You in mercy are sharing with us. In all we see Your creative Hand; by all we are drawn closer to You.

We thank You, our Father, for those everywhere whom Your love has claimed; we thank You for uniting us with them, and all with You. Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; and blest be the hearts that warm and stir one another in the glorious hope You have given us: that someday the whole earth will be filled with Your glory and all people everywhere will glorify You. Blest be the hands that support us where we are weak and lift us up when we fall; blest be all who are making an earnest effort to be someday among Your eternal sons and daughters.

Save us, we pray, from the pettiness that plagues us, and give us broader visions of Your plan. May we see our lives and our trials from Your point of view: a brief period of training for a life that will grow more and more wonderful as long as the ages of eternity roll; and may our hearts thrill at the joy we will feel if it is our delightful privilege to hear those most gracious of all words, "Well done."

Help us to replace envy and strife with mercy and goodwill; uncleanness and impurity with holiness and restraint; malice with forgiveness, and faithlessness with faith.

And may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord our Rock and our Redeemer. In the name of Him who is our Saviour and our glorious coming King we pray. Amen.

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 life, all men, and all things.

We believe

—in the Bible as our only source of knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for the salvation of humankind.

We believe

—in Jesus Christ the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was born of a Virgin, ministered among men, was crucified, resurrected, taken to heaven, and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be king of the whole earth.

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 humankind 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 applying the precepts and principles of the Word of God in our own lives, in this way 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

NASB—New American Standard Bible

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

AAT—The Bible: An American Translation

Megiddo Message

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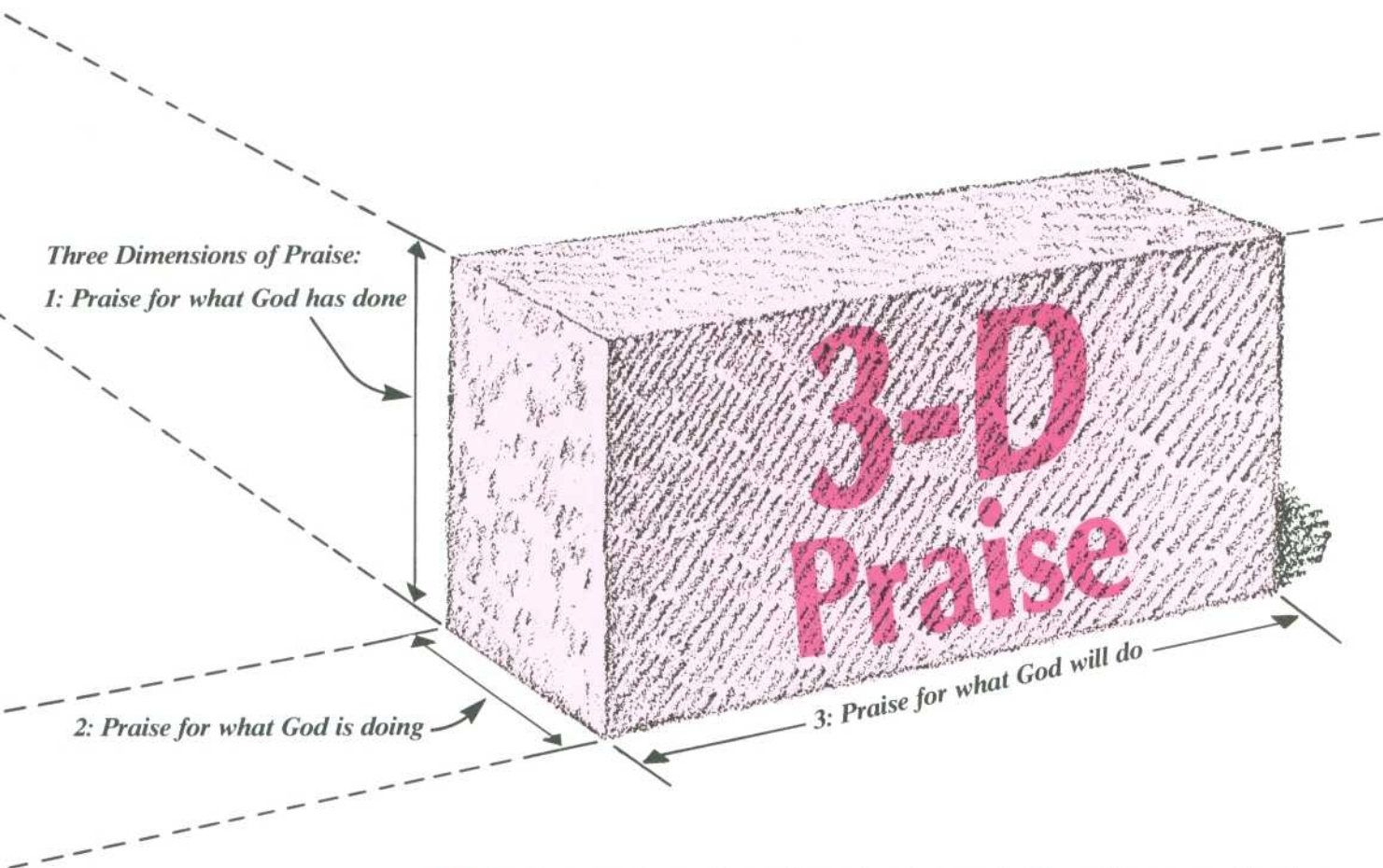
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The MEGIDDO MESSAGE is a religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ, and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Church. L. T. Nichols, Founder; Newton H. Payne, President and Editor; Ruth E. Sisson,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

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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.



WE live in a 3-D—three dimensional—world. Everything around us has three dimensions: height, width, and length, sometimes called depth. With our modern graphics capabilities, whatever we do to replicate the real world—pictures, drawings, photographs—must appear to have these same three dimensions or it seems flat, uninteresting, and unreal.

Have we ever thought about giving three dimensions to our praise?

In writing to the Ephesian brethren, the apostle Paul expressed his overflowing gratitude to God, “who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). In these words he described one very broad dimension of praise, *praise for what God has done*.

The Psalmist, inspired by God, caught a second dimension of praise. “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation” (Ps. 68:19). Praise for daily benefits: here is *praise for what God is doing*.

The apostle Peter, moved by the same Spirit of God and experiencing the same divine blessings, added yet a third dimension to gratitude: *praise for what God will do*. He praised God for “an inheritance” not yet in his possession but which had been solidly guaranteed “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” It was an inheritance worth having. Hear him describe it: “an

inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Pet. 1:3-5).

So we have our 3-D praise: praise for what God has done, praise for what God is doing, and praise for what God will do.

1: Praise for What God Has Done

Let's look closer at the first dimension, *praise for what God has done*.

What shall we mention of what God has done? When we start to think about it we are dazed, almost overwhelmed. Can we even faintly realize all that God has done *in our behalf*, to say nothing of *all* He has done through an eternity past? Immediately we find ourselves in things too vast for our small minds. What do we, little human creatures on one tiny planet in one corner of His vast creation—what do *we* know about the works of our great God? What can we know about His works, except He tells us?

But let us come back to what we *can* understand, to what God has done *in our behalf*. The Israelites were often reminded to include this dimension in their praise. Regular rehearsing of God's works was even written into their law. They were to repeat it from generation to generation, teaching it to their sons, and their sons' sons.

It was part of the laws governing the Passover: "And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us

out from Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Ex. 12:26; 13:8, 14). Never, never were they to forget what God had done for them.

Did you ever notice how many of the Psalms reflect this dimension of praise, as the Psalmist recalled the miraculous deliverance of his people from Egypt, the ten plagues, the overthrow of the Egyptians, and the power of God demonstrated in a thousand ways? He was looking back, not to glory in the past but to glory in the God who was working in behalf of His people, guiding, teaching, overseeing, making a way for His will and His work. And what was his conclusion? "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad" (Ps. 126:3).

What shall be *our* first dimension of praise? Where shall *we* begin in rehearsing what God has done in our behalf, we who have been so richly blessed?

We think of blessings physical; there are also blessings spiritual, besides those gems which come directly from His heavenly storehouse.

Among the physical we should mention the earth on which we live, and the plan, design, and purpose behind it. Nothing do we know of how all these came about, or when.

Then we should think about the blessing of our free country, its government, and our right to worship and live according to our convictions. Who in the world enjoys anything to compare with it! These tremendous privileges did not just "happen"; they were on God's planning board long, long before anyone on earth thought of them, and have come to us only through His goodness.

Then we should praise God for what He has made possible in the fields of science and medicine. Human hands have done the work, but they could use only what was God-given, and could succeed only under His

Nothing He has done can even compare with what He has promised to do through the ages of eternity.

auspices. For centuries men have been learning, but they are only uncovering His secrets; and how directly those discoveries have benefited us. Shouldn't this be part of our praise?

Then what has God done for us in the realm of things spiritual? Look at the rich blessings of hope, and knowledge, and insight, and love that are ours.

Look at the Bible, and the work of writing and preserving it for us. Have we thought about how enormous this project was, and how far it surpasses any human ability to accomplish? What contractor would bid on a job that would require 16 centuries to complete? And who would want to be responsible for assuring that forty different authors during those 16 centuries, writing in three different languages and on three different continents, would all be fully informed and would all communicate the same, harmonious message? On top of all this, the book, once written, would have to be preserved, copied—even copy-protected—for another 19 centuries! What mortal hand would have attempted this!

Shouldn't we say it again, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad!"?

Then we must not forget the great spiritual blessing which has given us hope: the relighting of the lamp of

Can we even faintly realize all that God has done in our behalf, to say nothing of all He has promised to do?

Divine knowledge during this last, late hour; the work of our noble founder. How easily God could have overlooked this little moment of time at the end of the age and left us to perish in ignorance of Him. But no, we were part of His plan, and long before we were born He was taking steps so that we could have this sacred, priceless opportunity.

We should realize, too, how God has worked individually in our lives, to instruct us, to preserve us from harm, and to arrange circumstances so that we could compete for the eternal crown. It is all part of *what God has done in our behalf*. Shouldn't we be grateful?

2: Praise for What God Is Doing

Now let us move into the second dimension of praise, *praise for what God is doing*. As unfathomable as was God's work in the past, His

work in the present is even more overwhelming. Silent and unseen, it is just as real. Indeed, what can mortals know of what God is doing *this very moment*!

But once again, let us limit our view to His work in our behalf. What is God doing this very moment *for us*? We look at our blessings of life, health, strength, food and clothing, and sufficient of this world's goods so that we can escape the burdens of poverty and concentrate on seeking first God and His Kingdom. Add to these the blessings of brothers and sisters in Christ, whose shining examples of faith fire us with determination to go on—who can measure the magnitude of these blessings!

Add to this the freedoms that are ours—freedom to speak the truth, freedom to live according to the dictates of our conscience, without fear of intervention. Let us say with the Psalmist, "Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits"!

Add to all this the work that God is doing *in the world* this very moment to prepare it for the coming of the King, so that the right people are in the right places at the right time to do what He wants done, so that His plan can move forward with precision and speed when the time is right. Add to this the work that He is doing in other parts of this universe, to carry out His plan in behalf of *others*. Then add to this His ongoing work of creation in an eternally expanding universe of universes. We

can only exclaim with the Psalmist, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable" (Ps. 145:3).

Here indeed is our second dimension of praise, praise for what God is doing.

But we must not stop here.

3: Praise For What God Will Do

Our 3-D praise is incomplete without the third dimension, and this third dimension is yet the greatest: *praise for what God will do*.

If we thought the first two dimensions were great, what shall we say of the third!

Yes, who can know or even imagine *what God will do in the future* for every one of His loving sons and daughters! Do we wonder that the apostle Peter exclaimed about an "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Pet. 1:3-5).

Here is praise that exhausts human speech, so great are the blessings promised by our great Creator. Included in this dimension are the wonders which left the apostle Paul speechless as he described them as "exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). So vivid is even our feeble vision of this glory that its dazzling brightness obscures the darkness of today and we become children of a living hope,

Our hearts burn with the joy of future glory,
our lives are sweetened with gratitude for what is coming—it
will be immeasurably beyond anything our
finite minds can imagine.

sons of an unborn tomorrow. Our hearts burn with the joy of future glory, our lives are sweetened with gratitude for what is coming—yes, it *is* coming, and it will be immeasurably greater than the greatest that our finite minds can imagine.

Oh, who can measure this third dimension of praise!

A very large portion of the Bible is devoted to prediction, because so much of God's work is future. Nothing He has done can even compare with what He has promised to do, through the ages of eternity future.

When we think about our "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away," can we not begin to praise God for it even now? Should we not make this our greatest "heritage of joy"!

Yes, who can measure what God can do for us, in terms of endless life, health, happiness, and the noblest associations among His family. Who can imagine what we can enjoy, in delight and pleasure? Who can tell the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of God which surpasses knowledge (Eph. 3:18-19)?

In the words of our hymn, "We now may let our minds expand with all their powers combined, / And yet we cannot comprehend the joys we there will find."

Now what is the effect of 3-D praise upon us? What does it do for us?

Isn't it enough to bring us to say, "Lord, I will do *anything* you ask, yes, *anything*—just let me be part of Your new world!"

What a loving God we serve, who is offering so much to His human children. Is He not drawing us with "bands of love"? Is He not by His very goodness compelling us to obey? Who can refuse Him who has done, and is doing, and has promised to do—so much!

Our Response

What was the response of the Psalmist when he came to this realization? These are his words: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows now in the presence of all His people."

What should be *our* response, in view of all that God has done, is doing, and has promised to do? "I will pay my vows now." Let us do it.

Whatever the price, whatever the cost in humiliation or suffering or human loss, let us pay our vows.

Let us make our praise truly 3-D, three-dimensional, and let it come from our heart, with our new commitment and a fuller sense of all we owe to God.

After all, we don't want to stop with what God *has done*, or even what God *is doing*. We want to see and experience for ourselves that third dimension of praise: *what God can do*. MM

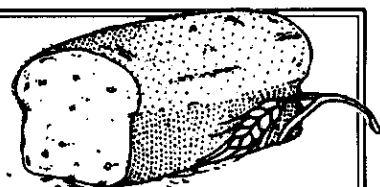
*Lord,
teach me to be grateful
for the crumbs:*

*precious crumbs from Your rich store,
crumbs of wisdom, knowledge, love.*

*For crumbs tell me so much:
they tell me there is more,
much more,
in heavenly reserve;
for if there are these crumbs
there is—somewhere—
a loaf!*

*And if there is a loaf,
there's One, somewhere,
who mixed the dough
and baked that loaf
so good, so rare;
that we might all have
bread enough to share!—
Bread that will give LIFE,
abundant, endless LIFE!
And He who made the loaf,
He can make more!*

*All praise to Him Most Kind,
who gave these crumbs!*



Is JESUS Coming Again?

YES! Jesus Christ is coming again.

The Prophets said that He would come.

The ancient prophets said that He would come, and time has proven that these prophets did not lie or deceive. Hundreds upon hundreds of their predictions have already been fulfilled—can we not trust a prophecy so outstanding as that of the second advent of Christ?

In fact, Christ's coming is the primary theme of seventeen Old Testament books. The coming of Christ was on their minds, and on their lips. It was to be the great climax of history at the end of the ages, a climax certain and sure.

It was the firm belief of the prophet Jeremiah: "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land" (Jer. 23:5, NIV). Also Isaiah: "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall

rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him" (Isa. 40:10). Also the prophet Zechariah: "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one" (Zech. 14:9).

The prophet Daniel foresaw the time when "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).

The Psalmist looked forward to the day when "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth... Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him" (Ps. 72:8, 11).

Angels said that He would come again—and angels would never lie or deceive.

To the anxious disciples who

watched their Saviour disappear into the azure blue, the angels spoke these assuring words: "'This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven'" (Acts 1:11, NIV).

The Apostles said that He would come again—and the apostles would never lie or deceive.

In fact, the apostles were largely responsible for the writing of our New Testament, and the New Testament has so much to say about it that, we are told, one verse out of every 25 speaks about Jesus' return to planet Earth.

And their words are reliable. The apostle Paul received his information direct from Jesus Himself, and these are his words: "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise" (I Thess. 4:16, NIV).

The apostle Peter was not silent

on this great theme. He wrote in his first epistle, "Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed... And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away" (I Pet. 1:13; 5:4, NIV).

In his Second Epistle Peter says even more about the coming of Christ, along with a warning that there would be unbelievers to resist. "First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this "coming" he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.' But the day of the Lord will come like a thief" (II Pet. 3:3-4, 10, NIV).

The apostle John added his testimony: "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure" (I John 3:2-3, NIV).

James spoke the same great message: "Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!" (James 5:7-9, NIV).

In case it could be argued that the angels and the apostles could have been mistaken, we have also the words of Jesus Himself.

Jesus Christ Himself said that He would come again. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again" (John 14:3).

We may close our minds and deny the plainest of facts, but our blind folly will not alter the plan of God one iota. *Jesus Christ is coming again.* And Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). We can count on His word.

Skeptics and scorners notwithstanding, *Jesus is coming again.*

When Is Jesus Coming?

At the time Jesus was preaching, He said that He Himself did not know. Not even the angels, but only the Father (Mark 13:32).

Many years have elapsed since Jesus spoke these words, and it seems likely that by now both Jesus Himself and the angels know. Still, *we do not know.* We know only of the times and seasons of His coming, which we can discern by watching the fulfillment of the prophecies He and His apostles made concerning the time of His return. In Matthew 24 and Luke 21, Jesus pointed out many conditions that would exist just prior to His return, and we see these dramatically fulfilled.

Despite the plain words of Jesus that no man knows, many dates have been set, the most recent being the widely publicized "88 Reasons Why Jesus Christ Is Coming." But once again Jesus' words proved true, that "no man knows"—and the great event is still ahead. Nevertheless, the Bible tells us repeatedly that Jesus is coming again, and we stand firmly on these promises.

The uncertainty of the date need not arouse any doubt, but rather a stronger faith and a summons to constant spiritual vigilance.

The imminent coming of Jesus should spur us to wholehearted preparing. Expecting His return, His people are to live lives of holiness, their whole expectation fixed on Him and the New Age He will inaugurate. They are to live as those who are anxious to have their plans and

activities interrupted by His return. They are to hold the things of this world loosely, knowing that they are at best temporary, their one thought to be ready when He comes.

In the words of the apostle Peter, "Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy'" (I Pet. 1:13-16, NIV).

Why Is Jesus Coming?

He is coming to judge His people: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10, NIV).

He is coming to judge the world. "For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31, NIV).

He is coming to be King of the whole earth—forever. It was the promise of the angels before His birth: "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign... forever, his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:32-33, NIV).

Yes, Jesus Christ *is coming again.* Sin will be banished. Righteousness will be rewarded, and those who have faithfully served God will be "granted an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:11).

For this we work, and watch, and pray.

MM

Opportunities Unlimited

The Glory of God's Second Chance

Part 3: *The Story of Joseph*

*From unpromising and seemingly hopeless beginnings, men have risen and may yet rise to the heights of character and achievement, by the power of faith and the help of the Eternal.
"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof" (Eccl. 7:8).*

Introduction

In the "short and simple annals of the poor" is hidden many a story of rare heroism, many a saga of men who should be judged by what they were rather than by what the circumstances of life permitted them to accomplish.

What we know of Joseph, the husband of Mary, is all too little, yet in this brief and fragmentary account we cannot fail to recognize one of earth's noblest sons.

Because the record is of places far away and events long ago, we are likely to overlook how much we have in common with them. Human nature has changed little, villages have changed little, and gossip not at all. With very little imagination we can picture what was happening to the reputation of Mary and Joseph, following the angel's visit to Mary. Then there was Joseph's own part in the story. Though we are told nothing of his inner struggles, we must not overlook the weight of the responsibility he took upon himself by accepting his role as the earthly guardian of the Messiah.

The portrait which emerges is that of a true man, a man worthy of the great honor which came suddenly upon him.

His opportunities seemed as limited as possible, hemmed in by poverty, obscurity, political slavery to a

foreign power, and a social system that was rotten to the core. What chance had Joseph the carpenter of Nazareth to rise in the world?

We find it difficult to believe that an ordinary and unspectacular life can be fulfilling a genuine purpose in the plan of God. But it has been true before. And it can be true again, and again, and again. The reason lies in God's scale of values. In His sight, only character counts. Only character makes any life worthwhile and well-lived.

The Bible tells us very little about Joseph of Nazareth. The few things we do know are evidence of a life of godly character determined above all else to be right, both before God and before his fellowmen. But such a character is bound to meet with opposition, even in an obscure village, for human nature is everywhere.

Scene 1: *The Man*

Characters:

Joseph young man of Nazareth
Adlai young friend of Joseph
Ananias a publican
Publican's servant

Setting:

Joseph's shop, equipped with bench, a few wooden tools, some shavings and lumber. Joseph, wearing a rough apron over a tunic, is sawing a board. Adlai stands idle.

Joseph: Here, Adlai, give me a hand. If you're going to stand around here....

Adlai: If you're going to stand around here, you've got to be useful. All right. (looks out door) Oh, oh! Don't look now, but here comes Ananias the publican.

Joseph: Now what have I done? (enter Ananias and Servant. He receives an unenthusiastic greeting)

Ananias: Well, Joseph, I'm here for your poll tax.

Joseph: My poll tax! Why, I paid that only ten months ago.

Ananias: Can't help that; we're on a new schedule. Got to have it earlier this year. Twenty shekels.

Joseph: Twenty shekels? You don't mean it!

Ananias: Twenty shekels.

Joseph: Why, man, last year it was only ten.

Ananias: Twenty shekels. You heard me the first time. You know what happens if you don't pay.

Joseph: But I haven't got it. I just don't own that much money. Times are bad, and I'm a poor man.

Ananias: I'm not interested. Get the money—that's all I care about. If you don't, I can seize your whole shop—yes, and your house, and everything you've got. Come on, my time is valuable.

Joseph: Others are not paying that much—I *know* that.

Ananias: None of your business, my friend. I want twenty shekels. Now.

Joseph: (sighs) Well, I'll see how much of it I can scrape up. (exit)

Adlai: Why don't you have a heart, Ananias. He's a good, honest fellow, just trying to make an honest living, and he's got it hard. You're gouging him, and you know it.

Ananias: You'd better stay out of this, son. Don't forget, I haven't collected from *you* yet.

(Joseph returns, lays down coins on bench)

Joseph: There's twelve shekels. It's every penny I have, and nothing more in sight until I get this job finished. You'll have to wait a week for the rest, unless *you* can help me out, Adlai.

Adlai: Sorry, I haven't a penny with me, and nothing at home. I'm out of work, you know.

Ananias: All right, I'll take this on account. But see that you have twelve shekels more one week from today—no later.

Joseph: Twelve! You mean eight.

Ananias: I said twelve. Credit costs money. You can't expect me to carry you along for nothing.

Joseph: I don't see how I can possibly do it. I'm just down to where I can't go any lower.

Ananias: Oh, yes, you can. We could take you for a slave if you can't pay. Wouldn't that be worse?

Joseph: Well, I'll do the best I can.

Ananias: You'd better. In the meantime, I'll take this board along for security. (hands large board to his servant.)

Joseph: Oh, no! Not that one—please don't! I've got to have that to finish this work, to get the money to pay you!

Ananias: Well, maybe that *wouldn't* be good. Instead I'll take a couple of your tools. The sooner you pay up, the sooner you get them back. And don't forget, the price goes higher the longer you wait. *Rome has to have the taxes.*

(Exit with Servant)

Adlai: (furiously angry and shouting) That thieving scoundrel, miserable dog, squeezing the lifeblood out of our people—

Joseph: Now Adlai, calm down. It doesn't do any good to be upset. They've got us, and what can we do? We're all slaves of Rome, and these publicans are just the hired slave drivers.

Adlai: I'd like to do something about it. You wait—some fine day we'll rise up and drive the Romans into the sea, and the first ones to hang, on the highest hill in the country, will be these publicans. It's coming.

Joseph: (sternly) Look here, Adlai, you can't talk like that in my shop. It's dangerous. You don't know who is listening. Besides, it's wrong. You have been taught the law. Don't you know the commandments, "Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge—"

Adlai: —against the children of *thy people*." Is Ananias one of our people? No. He claims to be, but he's only a dog. Must we love dogs?

Joseph: (taking him firmly by the collar) Are you going to stop, or must I put you out?

Adlai: Oh, all right, I'll quit *for you*. But it's bad—it's all bad. It makes me boil!

Joseph: I know it's bad. So much injustice in the world, so much cruelty, so much oppression, so much grinding the faces of the poor. We have no rights, no power of our own. We need a great leader to right the wrongs of this world. When the Messiah comes—

Adlai: The Messiah! I've heard that ever since I can remember. You'll die of old age before you ever see the Messiah. God helps those who help themselves.

Joseph: Help themselves to what—a cross by the roadside?

Adlai: This generation has got pretty flabby. Our fathers took this land from the heathen by the sword.

Joseph: By the sword of the Lord, not their own. Have we a Moses or a Joshua today? What would we do with victory? Would we know how to use it?

Adlai: I'd like to try.

Joseph: Before we are ready for freedom, we need a moral reformation. Now we can't trust even our own people. Men who claim to be brethren cheat and lie to one another, until we are a laughingstock to the Gentiles.

Adlai: You and your moral reformation! You'll wait a long time. If you're content to live and die a peasant, a village carpenter, a nobody, a slave, you can have it. I want something better.

Joseph: I'm not content with our situation, Adlai. I'd like to better myself, but I will do it honestly and lawfully, or not at all. I don't like slavery, but it is better than...

Adlai: (interrupting) Better than what! I suppose it's better to be alive than dead.

Joseph: Yes, you're right. And, what I was going to say, it is better than heathenism, slavery to superstition. We have something the Romans and publicans don't have. We have the God of our fathers.

Adlai: What good does that do us? He has forsaken us—abandoned us to the heathen! Is that justice? Do we deserve it?

Joseph: Perhaps.

Adlai: This can't go on, Joseph. We've got to revolt—revolt—REVOLT!

Joseph: I warned you, Adlai. Now out you go. (Hustles him out the door; then returns to workbench; does a little work, then leans on bench in despair) Twelve shekels... To think that so much should depend on a miserable twelve shekels... which I haven't got... and can't get. I had such hopes for

this year—for a home—for Mary... And now... Joseph, you're a nobody. You're not even a man... just dirt under the feet of the rich... What shall I do? How can a man escape from this dead-end of poverty? (long pause, then speaking with spirit) But what says the Psalm, "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."... O God, help me to believe. Help me to trust You... more, and more—and more!

Scene 2: Faith to Believe

Narrator:

The human mind so often longs for greater fields of opportunity, but shrinks from the effort or thinks the conditions impossible when opportunity knocks.

Because of character of the highest type, the obscure place called Nazareth will be on the tongues of men, as long as men walk this earth.

Characters:

Joseph carpenter in Nazareth

Jesus about 3 years of age

Setting:

The same carpenter shop. Joseph is older, grayer. He is at work; Jesus enters, carrying a small basket. He starts picking up blocks and shavings. Joseph helps him.

Joseph: That's a good boy. Now take it to your mother, so she can cook our dinner. (exit Jesus)

Joseph: (soliloquizing) O God in heaven, what is this that I am called to do? Who is this that is entrusted to my care? It cannot be—is it possible that I, Joseph of Nazareth, the humble village carpenter, am chosen to care for and train the Desire of Israel, the Messiah, the future King of Israel and of all the earth? He seems like any other child, yet he is not. A good boy—he has never caused us any trouble; but there is *something* about him...

I know... I remember as though it were yesterday the words of the angel in my dream: "Fear not, Joseph, ... she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus and he shall save his people from their sins."

To think that I, a carpenter, should be part of the story, and all these strange, strange things that have happened—the shepherds hearing that angel chorus out on those hills near Bethlehem... the visit of the Wise Men from the east... our sudden flight into Egypt. What does it all mean? I know that there is a pattern, a purpose, a plan behind it all, but it is

hard to believe that I, Joseph of Nazareth, have a part in it. It all seems like a dream....

God, give me faith! Faith to believe—in You, in myself, in the future of this Child, even now when the angel is no longer seen and the angel voice no longer heard. Help me to be equal to my task. I ask no credit or honor for myself, if only I may do my work well—if only I do not fail You in this great hour.... To think that we have in our home The Messiah! The hope of Israel! Not long have we to

wait now!... Right in our midst is the beginning of the fulfillment of all that God has promised!... Deliverance is at hand! We shall see the Kingdom of God, and this Child—the miraculous Son of my wife—will be the King... The King!

But how can this be—in a lowly place like Nazareth?... Joseph, son of Jacob, is your faith equal to this? Who are *you* to have this honor? Who are you, I say?

(Continued Next Issue)

OUR READERS WRITE

Constant Blessings

There is no denying, we are constantly surprised at the blessings that come to us from the hand of our kind Heavenly Father as we travel Zionward. He protects our natural life from being cut off before our time. He gives us time and suitable circumstances to redeem our lives from eternal destruction, if used wisely. Doing right keeps us on the right side of the great Eternal, whose care is over His own and it never fails us.

If we delight in the Lord, doing His will, what comes or goes, we will not be distracted. We will number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. More often than not we can expect some things to come into our lives that are hot and bothersome and we wonder why they do come as they do, suddenly, unexpectedly. The Lord knows our weaknesses and allows them to bother us because He knows just where are our sore spots and would have us take them patiently without the least bit of fretting. But if we insist on being bothered, in having our way, we are unwise in the use of valuable time, so needful to perfect self.

If there ever was a time for Elijah to come and set everything right it is upon us now. We can see clearly how the final events are shaping themselves for his return to earth. Limitless opportunities are no longer in the offing as one of our sermons pointed out, we are a Church on the run. We must gird on the whole armor of God and having done all, stand. While standing we must be on the watch, for the evils of our nature can take us off guard.

We do not want to be ashamed before Jesus when He comes. Our actions good or bad will surely speak for us then.

New Jersey

L. K.

A Great Surprise

The return of Christ to earth to reign will be a great surprise to most people that are living at the end of the age. All who are righteous will overflow with joy, but there will be great consternation among those not looking for Him.

We must all stand upon our watch that we be not among those who are surprised at His coming.

Georgia

C. P.

A Lifeline

Thank you for the *Megiddo Messages* and tapes I receive from you. Words cannot tell all the benefits I derive from their messages. The lifeline is being thrown out. It will guide us to safety if we keep following the line.

Alabama

D. M.

Pride, Onion Like

It is a natural tendency for all of us to think more highly of self than we should. We have pride in us that can be likened to an onion—this thought should cause us to hastily dispose of each layer of it before it destroys us.

South Wales

R. B.

Hear His Footsteps

How very much the times today point to the end. It is coming so fast one would have to be blind and mindless not to see the signs all around us and in the world everywhere. God is taking His time, but even so with each passing year one can hear His footsteps on the horizon.

It's always amazing how many don't care, don't believe, don't change and don't want to! They think their lives will go on forever as is and they'll live forever.

I heard a student say the other day that she didn't believe in God. She is 19 years old. I can't even in my wildest imagination entertain such a thought. How can anyone believe there is no God? Where did they, we, and this earth come from? Also, if we were just evolved who gave us our intelligence? How can smart college students be so ignorant? Well, I guess this is another sign of the times.

Maine

R. D.

Building

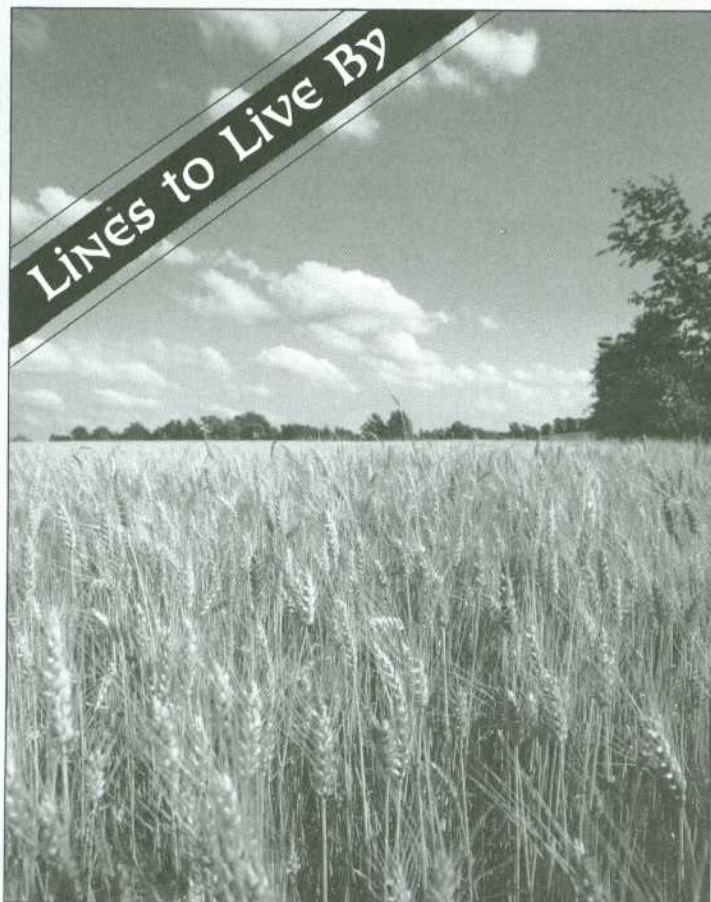
We must strive to build a character fit for the Kingdom of God, in order to be able to meet the Master when He comes.

Think of all those great ones that have gone on before us. They have made their calling and election sure; and it is ours to do the same.

The world is in a bad condition; only Christ can set things right.

Virginia

M. P.



*I've labored in Thy fields today
The harvest fields to reap.
And now in quiet evening's hour,
Give to Thy servant sleep.*

*Dear God, I thank Thee here alone,
As on my bed I pray
That Thou didst walk beside me
Throughout the heat of day.*

*And now I rest in Thee alone,
Nor darkest night would fear,
For in the closing of my eyes,
I know that Thou art near.*

*Rest thou my mind in Thee, Dear Lord;
Give to me sweet repose;
Take weary flesh and troubled mind,
In peace my eyelids close.*

*God give you His peace every day,
A cheerfulness nothing can dim;
The power to walk in His way
In perfect obedience to Him;*

*The strength to His promise to cling
And never give place to a doubt;
God give you a heart that can sing
Whatever the weather without.*

*Get out of Grumble Lane and live
on Thanksgiving Street.*

*To give thanks sincerely one must
give more than thanks.*

*Even though you can't carry a tune
you may have the melodies of heaven
in your heart.*

*Cheerfulness oils the machinery of
life.*

*Father, the giver of gladness,
Hearts of thanksgiving we raise,
Asking for lives filled with goodness,
Gratitude, gladness and praise.*

*Stop crossing bridges before you actually
come to them. Don't worry about
tomorrow before it comes. God has promised
to supply our every need—one day at
a time.*

*If we keep our eyes on the Savior as
we walk the tightrope of trouble, we will
be able to maintain spiritual balance and
avoid the dizziness of fear that is brought
on by the doubting, downward look.*

The next time you are out for a drive, whatever the season, take time to enjoy God's handiwork. Thank Him for the apple blossoms and the green of springtime, the golden grain of summer, the fruit of harvest season, and the winter snow and cold that gives the land rest. Take time to observe the marvels of His creation that we allow to become commonplace because we see them every day; the beauties of sunrise and sunset, a rainbow after the storm, or a dark cloud with a silver lining at its edge.

*Life is a mixture of sunshine and rain
Laughter and teardrops, pleasure and pain
Low tides and high tides, mountains and plains
Triumphs, defeats, losses and gains—
But always in all ways God's guiding and leading
And He alone knows the things we're most needing—
And when He sends sorrow or some sore affliction
Be assured it comes with God's kind benediction;
And if we accept it as a gift of His love
We'll be showered with blessings from our Father above.*

—Selected

Recover the Day!

IT is said that when Napoleon came to the field of Marengo, it was already late afternoon. The situation was hopeless, the battle lost. But Napoleon was not ready to admit defeat. Looking at the western sun, he shouted to his troops, "There is just time to recover the day!" His word was what the emergency needed. Giving orders quickly and with rapid energy, he turned a defeat into a victory.

Are you regretting the opportunities you have lost? In the present moment there is still opportunity. Avail yourself of it. "Recover the day." Make the very most of every hour, every minute, every second that remains. Set aside all secondary interests and secondary concerns, and seek first the kingdom of God and righteousness. Do not leave it to a future hour. Do it *now*. As you grow older, become more and more earnest in the service of your God. Do not worry what lies behind you; "Recover the day!" Make haste, because you have no time to lose.

An ancient law said kindly of the sale of an estate, "According to the number of the years thou shalt diminish the price." Even so as we advance in years, the things of earth should become less and less to us, and we should hold them more loosely, prizing the heavenly things as our supreme treasure.

Our day is drawing to a close, but there is yet time to "Recover the day," to finish what we have begun if we but seize each moment as it comes. We can do more in the last hour than we ever thought possible if we apply ourselves to it. MM

Prisoners of OURSELVES

Scripture Lesson: Colossians 3.

*God's plan for us is freedom, not bondage.
He has called us to freedom, freedom from ourselves. Jesus said,
"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

IN the following words an eyewitness relates his reaction at seeing a human being deprived of his freedom.

"Recently I was riding in a bus from Rochester to Utica. Two young lads sat a few seats in front of me. Viewed from the rear they seemed to be looking at the scenery and conversing like other passengers. Presently it came time for them to leave the bus. Then I noticed that they were handcuffed to each other. It is hard to describe the expression of their faces as they walked down the aisle. There was a look of humiliation, touched with bitterness. I tried to think how I should feel if I were led through a staring crowd shackled like a wild animal that could not be trusted with its freedom. Bitter is the shame of being a prisoner of the law."

Another kind of prisoner has been made familiar to us by recent wars. Brave men have been captured by enemy troops and held as prisoners of war. Captive peoples have been confined in prison camps. They have suffered privation, even torture, but they have been under no shadow of shame. Even in times of general "peace," unfortunate hostages have been held captive, as in Iran.

Shackled by Ourselves

There is still another class of prisoners. They are not shackled or subjected to public disgrace like prisoners of the law. They are not starved or brainwashed like prisoners of war. They may walk the streets or sit in their homes without any external restraint. Yet they are imprisoned by bars of their own making. They are prisoners of themselves.

The shocking fact is that we ourselves may be among these!

Psalms 142 is headed with this inscription: "A prayer of David when he was in a cave." If, as some think, this psalm voices the mood of David when he was in the cave of Adullam where he was rallying his followers around him, then it is not written from a "physical" prison. Yet this psalm contains the petition: "Bring me out of prison, that I may give thanks to thy name!" David's "spirit" was in prison although his body was unfettered. So is it with many a person.

Prisoners of Our Bodies...

For one thing, some of us may be prisoners of our bodies. Our minds dwell in bodies, and whenever the body gets the upper hand, our spirits are imprisoned.

Note: *Prisoners of Ourselves* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

Watch an active young girl at play out in the open air. How carefree of her body she seems to be. It is just a wonderful instrument to be used in pursuing her play. Then think of that person fifty years later, and consider how much the concern of her body may have come to dominate her thought and consume her time. The care of the body's health, the coddling of its comforts, the beautifying of its appearance—all this becomes almost a major concern of some people. When this happens it is evident that the body has gotten the better of the spirit.

There are professional invalids in the world who spend their time and money going from doctor to doctor seeking health, yet are so completely shackled by self-pity and negative thinking that the cleverest doctor can do them no good.

This same inconsistency exists among professed life-seekers. They tell themselves they want to be healed; they go to the Great Physician who is able to heal every malady. But they approach

Him with a negative mental attitude, saying, "There is no hope, I cannot be cured. Evil habits have such a stranglehold on me that my disease is incurable. I cannot free myself from this prison of my own making."

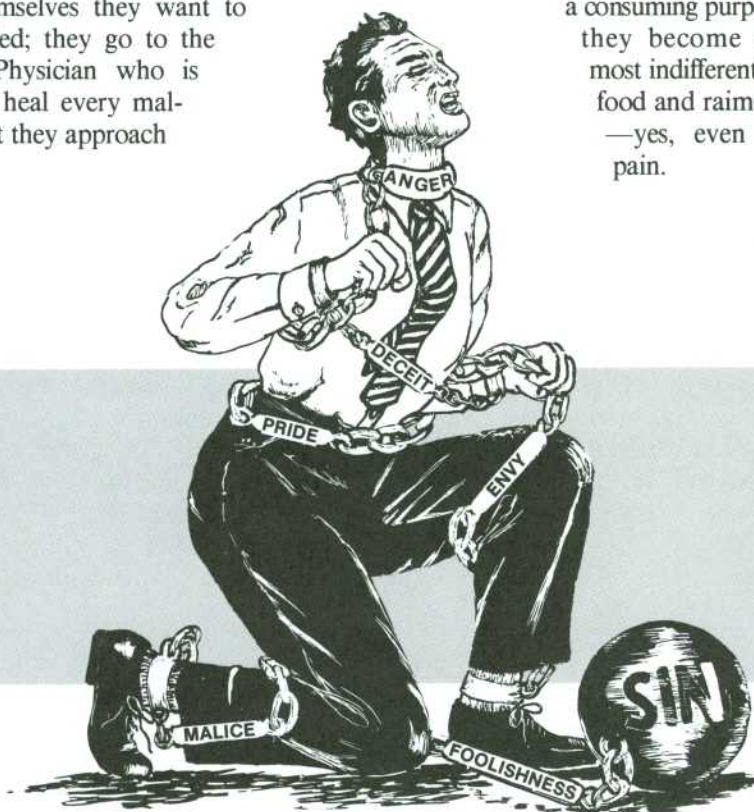
A little girl, once hearing a sermon on I Corinthians 9:27, where Paul said "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection," reported at home that the minister said, "I keep my soul on top." Both Paul and the little girl had caught the spirit of Christ. Jesus merited the title of the Great Physician not primarily because of specific illnesses which He had cured, but because He put the body in its proper place in the wholeness of life. He did heal men's bodies, but He told them that if they would "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," their bodily needs would fall into their proper and secondary place. He knew that when

persons are fired with a consuming purpose they become almost indifferent to food and raiment—yes, even to pain.

Much as we deplore war and its diabolical devastation, we cannot deny that during war people give less time to coddling their bodies and worrying about their peace of mind. We can see the point and the rebuke in the ex-soldier's remark: "During the war we died *for* things; now we die *of* things." Big purposes free us from petty fretfulness and little ailments. And there can be no bigger purpose for us to pursue than the purpose of fitting ourselves to merit eternal salvation.

Prisoners of Our Possessions...

God can also keep us from being imprisoned by our earthly possessions. We like to surround ourselves with our belongings. This is natural and right, for God has given us "richly all things to enjoy." Our personalities are in part revealed by the furnishings of our homes. These surroundings show our taste, develop our artistic interests, enlarge our lives. But a house is made to be lived *in*, not to be lived *for*. Some women are better housekeepers than homemakers. Our material possessions are meant to be the scaffolding by which we build more stately mansions for our souls. But they can become our



**No freedom in life
equals the bliss
of becoming free
from ourselves.**

prisons. In the descriptive words of the poet:

*Lift up the curtain; for an hour lift up,
The veil that holds you prisoners in this
world
Of coins and wires and motor-horns, this
world
Of figures, and of men who trust in facts,
This pitiable, hypocritic world
Where men with blinkered eyes and
hobbled feet
Grope down a narrow gorge and call it
life.*

Jesus sensed the danger of our being enthralled by earthly things, and that is why He uttered the following words of caution: "Take no [anxious] thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? ...But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:25, 33). He would have us keep the right proportion between what we live *on* and what we live *for*.

As Jesus looked out upon the life of His time He saw men interpreting life in terms of the physical and immediate. They were prisoners of themselves. People regarded money, power and pleasure as the important things. The degeneracy in religion was such that ritual, ceremonies, robes and ornaments had replaced the truer values of faith, mercy and righteousness. While the body of mankind was vitally alive and its interest in the things which could be seen and sensed was keen, its soul

*Big purposes free
us from petty
fretfulness and
little ailments.*

was slowly but surely dying. The arena and the circus were the centers of attractions, while the spiritual values were in eclipse.

But Jesus' position was the very opposite. He had said that material values were not the most important, that the life of the true Christian must not be interpreted in terms of "What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" (v. 31). Man could not live by bread alone but by eating every word of God. The significant things were not money, food, clothes, power and pleasure; but faith, hope, prayer, patience and obedience. These were the superior values, these were the things to be sought for with unabating vigor.

As a rule mankind is attracted by the things which are seen, yet the material values we are so prone to delight in have their limitations. Earthly possessions may seem so real, but taken together they cannot provide us with peace of mind; they cannot bestow upon us genuine happiness *or* assure us of a life that will never end. In our highest moments we realize that the invisibles are the realities, and the intangibles are the permanencies. "The things which are

seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal," said the Great Apostle (II Cor. 4:18).

A sage of the Nineteenth Century spoke words that describe so perfectly today's attitude as to make them seem currently spoken: "Things are in the saddle, and are riding mankind." If those words were true in Emerson's day, they are ten times truer today. Luxuries have become necessities, and mere "things"—what shall we eat, and drink, wear and use—are riding mankind more than at any time in the past, making our lives cluttered and complicated. The average wage earner, in an effort to keep abreast of the times, spends his money months—sometimes years—before he earns it, making him a virtual slave to his creditors.

More Prison Walls...

Furthermore, our bodies can imprison us by their passions. We know what strong fetters are forged by sinful habit. All about us among the worldlings there are slaves of drink, lust, and greed. But among us also are those who can testify with the apostle Paul, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). They have found that through the power of the gospel God can so fill men and women with hope and the higher hungers, that they can deliver themselves from the bondage of degrading appetite.

In our journey through life we fetter ourselves with chains of anger, jealousy, impatience, envy, sensitiveness. They are chains of our own forging; fashioned with our own hands, securely attached to our lives

*In our highest moments we realize that the invisibles
are the realities, and the intangibles are the permanencies.*

by our own fingers; and by our own actions we add to their growing weight, link by link until, like the Prophet of old, we are—you are—I am—"a burden to myself" (Job 7: 20). So wearying and depressing is the effect of these prison walls as to rob life of its present joys and destroy its future hope.

Perhaps we have chained ourselves with the desire to receive honor from men and have become so concerned with what they say and think about us that the desire for God's honor is secondary in our thoughts. There are people who live on praise and approbation. Give such a man his shot of praise in the morning and he will be buoyant and happy all day. Deprive him of his morning shot and he will be disagreeable and morose the whole day long—or at least until he gets his dram of approbation. But Jesus stands ready to break his fetters with His advice *not* to seek honor one of another. "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" (John 5:44).

If we have surrounded ourselves with the confining walls of selfishness, covetousness, pride, hurt feelings, we face a tedious task when we attempt to break out of our prison. If, on the other hand, we succeed in banishing these evils, we become God's freemen. Herein lies the great secret of freedom from sin's binding chains: Rout the evil before it becomes linked to you. Do not give one evil desire the chance to become established in your thoughts. It is easier to *keep* free than to secure freedom after once we have been shackled. We may not be able to prevent the birds from flying over our heads, but we can keep them from making nests in our hair.

When we wittingly put off doing the things we know we ought to do, we strengthen the prison walls that enslave us. If we would call our trials

The Real Prisoners

*Not all are prisoners of steel
Nor locked behind the bars,
Our self-made prisons oft conceal
The glory of the stars.
We bind ourselves with ball and chain,
We drag old hurts around—
In many a prison of the brain
A prisoner is found.*

*Come out of the jail! Life lies before;
Forget the things behind.
Your memories are wall and door.
Your prison is your mind.
This very moment turn the key
And lift the bolt, and go—
This very moment you are free,
If you will have it so.*

*Drive out the thoughts of things unkind
That make your mind a cell,
And better thoughts will come and find
A place therein to dwell.
A self-made prisoner no more,
Go forth to sun and star.
Let in the light—throw wide the door—
For what we think, we are.* —Selected.

"experiences" and remember that every experience develops some latent force within us, we would grow in grace and knowledge and would be happy and contented however adverse our circumstances.

Too often we forget that temptation is a proving ground to break our will. If easily slighted or offended it shows we are still in a prison of our own making. If easily provoked to anger, the trying tasks we dislike the most are the best experience we could possibly have. Every step in our development into a perfect character is the removal of a fetter of our own ways.

We need God's grace to keep our hearts free from resentment against those who wrong us. A reporter once sought an interview with Roland Hayes, the great Negro singer. He found him in a dingy room where he was eating his meal because the hotel denied him a better place of dining. The reporter exploded in anger, but Hayes said: "My earliest teacher in voice, himself a Negro, told me that as an artist, a black artist, I would suffer terribly if I allowed the barbs to penetrate my soul; but if my heart was right, and my spirit divinely disciplined, then nobody in all the world would be able to hurt me. I

**Jesus would have us keep the
right proportion between what we live
on and what we live for.**

now know that this is true. I try every moment of every day to live in such awareness of the divine that no bitterness can creep into my heart. Thus I have learned how to be happy, and I have discovered that nobody in all the world can hurt me except myself."

When a person can attain such an attitude, he has escaped from the imprisoning bitterness of mind and heart. In the words of Henry van Dyke:

*"Self is the only prison that can ever bind
the soul;*

*Love is the only angel who can bid the
gates unroll;*

*And when he comes to call thee, arise
and follow fast;*

*His way may lie through darkness, but it
leads to light at last."*

Today many people delight in saying, I am a liberal. Well, if we are truly liberal, our hearts as well as our minds and our bodies must be liberated. When doors are shut against us, we are prone to draw into ourselves and lock our hearts against others. When others give us the cold shoulder, we turn to them a cold back. When we know that another dislikes or suspects us, we are likely to do the things which tend to arouse more dislikes or suspicions. Thus distrust begets distrust. Thus hearts freeze up into prisons of our own making, and we forget the divine injunction: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another,

tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31-32).

We Are Made To Grow

The creative God made us for creative growth. Growth is the law of our being. Violate that law, and you violate yourself.

It is true that the body ceases to grow after a certain time, and the process of slowing down and eventual decay sets in. This process of slowing down and decay may be minimized and postponed by inner states of mind, but in the end the body is destined to the dust. The mind and soul however are not necessarily linked with this inevitable bodily decay. Yet they may be.

Many people are so closely linked with their bodies that the decay of their body means the decay of the person. They have lived to make the body comfortable—to ward off sickness and death from it, to satisfy the cravings and appetites—so that their very persons are bound up with the fortunes of the body. When it decays, they decay. Life's supreme tragedy is to watch the triple decay of body, mind, and spirit in yourself or in another. No tragedy can compare with this.

This decay of the person causes more unhappiness than all other causes combined. All other causes are marginal, this is central. For to know that the central purpose of our being—the thing for which we were made—is unfulfilled, or worse, is being violated, causes fundamental

unhappiness to settle at the very center of our being.

To the spiritually alert, no amount of marginal happiness can atone for this central dissatisfaction. Jesus said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." If we are not a creative and growing person, we are an unhappy person. This central frustration spreads its dissatisfaction through all marginal satisfactions and makes them curdled and sour. On the other hand, when we are fulfilling the purpose for which the Creator designed us by being a growing personality, then this central satisfaction spreads through all the marginal happenings of life. Whether these happenings are happy or not, we are centrally happy, "sorrowful yet always rejoicing." Human happiness is a by-product of being a creative, growing personality. God has set eternity in our hearts, but to secure it we must achieve the perfection of character He requires.

The trials and struggles of today are but the price we must pay for the accomplishments and victories of tomorrow. Most certainly the apostle Peter was acquainted with the walls of confinement that imprison human nature and no doubt he had been shut in by them more than once before he wrote the words: "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (I Pet. 2:19-20).

Doubtless Peter was aware that this was setting a very high standard for erring mortals, many of whom live for praise and die of censure, but he had received this information from the lips of Jesus Himself. No one naturally likes to be told of his faults, much less endure criticism when he has done well; hence this is

one of the most sturdy chains from which we must unshackle ourselves. The task is as difficult today as it was in Peter's day.

We should bear in mind that God knows our hearts and in His "Book of Remembrance" every good deed is recorded. Temporary honor may be forfeited, because our virtues are not recognized. Perhaps even humiliation will have to be endured because of unjust blame. But the great, good soul, is affected by neither. These things are not worthy of mention compared with the honor of having our virtues recognized and acclaimed by God in the eternal future. When we get the larger, liberating outlook, we distinguish between the transient and the lasting.

Soon dawns the Day of Account when we shall stand before the just Judge, our supreme desire then will be to possess the ticket of admission to the new world, with privileges to "ride upon the high places of the earth," and mount aloft with the freedom of the wind. But all this hinges upon our ceasing to be prisoners to ourselves.

God's Freedom Plan

God's plan for us is freedom, not bondage. He has called us to freedom, freedom from ourselves. Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." To know the truth, is to know the truth of God's Word, to accept of that which can be proved, and reject that which conflicts with the general teaching of the Bible. Then it is even more important to know the truth about ourselves. Naturally we are prisoners of ourselves. We have been brainwashed, to use a modern term, in favor of ourselves. Our eyesight is defective, so that we cannot see ourselves in our true light. The transgression that appears like a plank in the eye of our brother, appears as only a small splinter if it is in our own eye.

Therefore we need to be freed from ourselves, before we can know the truth about ourselves.

This thralldom comes to us naturally; it is our heritage from birth. "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world," said the Great Apostle. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son,...that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:3-5). We have been made free, but freedom has its price. The fact that we have been made free is no sign that we shall continue to be free if we do nothing to enhance our freedom. In vs. 8 and 9 Paul rebukes the Galatian church for their infidelity in wanting to turn back to their former bondage: "In those days, when you were ignorant of God, you were in servitude to gods who are really no gods at all; but now that you have known God—or rather are known by God—how is it you are turning back again to the weakness and poverty of the Elemental spirits? Why do you want to be enslaved all over again by them?" (Moffatt).

The Apostle issues another warning in Galatians 5:13: "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." We have been called to liberty, but we must not use our liberty as an occasion to the flesh, else we are immediately recaptured by ourselves. This bondage to self is real, and it comes natural to us. The moral corruption of our nature asserts itself again and again, and can bring us into bondage which is just as real—and even more hazardous—than bondage imposed by the law of the land. Peter spoke understandingly of this bondage when he said, "For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" (II Pet. 2:19). It was for this reason that Paul warned the Roman church:

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." The shackles of the flesh, our lower nature, keep coming back on, unless we maintain an eternal vigilance against them.

Paul spoke again of the hazards of this bondage, and how to get free from it, in Rom. 8:13-15: "For if ye live after the flesh,"—in bondage to the desires of the natural mind—"ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." To cease being prisoners of ourselves we must submit to the guidance of God through His word, must be led by His spirit.

We read of the source of our freedom from ourselves in Gal. 4:26: "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." In the Scriptures, the authority of the Eternal and the system of laws which directs the lives of His people, are figuratively referred to as "Jerusalem." In this chapter Paul speaks of

*The trials and
struggles of
today are but
the price
we must
pay for the
accomplishments
and victories
of tomorrow.*

**Our material possessions are meant
to be the scaffolding by which we build
more stately mansions for our souls.
But they can become our prisons.**

the two covenants, the one taking its authority from the Mosaic or Ten Commandment Law given on Mt. Sinai (then obsolete), and the law of Faith which alone could bring eternal life and freedom from the bondage of mortality. The two sons of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael, one by a bondwoman, and the other by a free woman, by promise, are used allegorically to typify these two covenants. Jerusalem, once the seat of God's temporal kingdom on earth, was now, with her children, in bondage both literally and spiritually. But Jerusalem from above, typifying the Authority of God's future arrangement of things on this earth, is free, and the Mother of us all.

Primarily, divine authority is said to come from heaven. "He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up." "Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven" (Ps. 57:3; 76:8).

At best, human life upon earth has been one long period of bondage to fear, hate, turmoil, revenge, to merciless individuals, to tyrannical overlords, to say nothing of the bondage to the evil propensities of human nature. By accepting divine Authority, allowing the Word of God to act as a ruling force in our lives, we no longer are in bondage to our inherent moral defects. Wrath, malice, pride, jealousy, deceit, stubbornness are among these traits under which we

were held in bondage until we were freed by accepting the surveillance of the Word of God and amending our lives.

No freedom in life equals the bliss of becoming free from ourselves. Compare the worth of the moral strength that makes it possible for us to sit down and calmly talk over our differences with one who strongly opposes us or has done us a wrong, with the natural tendency to let our tempers go, talk back and make wild and groundless statements to our opponent which we will regret afterward.

Is it not a release to be able to conquer our pride so that the possession of wealth, temporal power and authority over others will not puff us up or lead us to think too highly of ourselves?

If enjoying the moral freedom of the sons of God we can even be told of our faults and shortcomings and take it with good grace, and profit by it.

In Isaiah 42:6-7, the Prophet alludes to this bondage to self as being in prison, and predicts its ultimate end: "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."

The Ultimate Freedom

But desirable as is the possession of these freedoms we have enumerated, they are not the only freedoms the "Jerusalem from above" has to bestow. The freedom from pain, disease, old age and otherwise inescapable death, is what we long for. And we are not left to doubt that the "Jerusalem from above" can and will bring us these things. We have the assurance from the Revelator that "God shall wipe away all tears from [our] eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

In II Corinthians 5:2 Paul speaks of the change from mortality to immortality as being "clothed upon with our house...from heaven." We read: "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." We do not want to be unclothed: we want the moral change, the release from sin, from the smallness and pettiness of our carnal natures—and if sincere we will be working daily to get that change—but we want more. Above all we desire the physical change. We "groan" or yearn earnestly to be clothed upon with our house from heaven, with immortality, "that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

Let us not delay in smashing the confining walls that have held us so long in abject slavery to ourselves, that becoming God's freemen and free-women, we can at last be freed from the bondage of mortality, and with all His faithful servants join in the triumphal acclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

MM

The Ark in Heaven?

"I have been reading Revelation 11, and wonder why the 'ark of his testament' is said to be in heaven in the last verse. Wasn't the ark lost many years before Revelation was written?"

You are correct in stating that the ark was lost "many years before Revelation was written"—in fact more than a thousand years.

To understand the last verse of Revelation 11, we need to look briefly at the entire chapter. Like the majority of the book, the chapter is highly symbolic and at the same time prophetic. If we can understand the meaning of the symbols used, we can know something about the prophesies they portray.

Revelation 11 is a prophetic picture of the authority of the law of God and His people from the time just preceding the Apostasy, through the Apostasy, to their full triumph in the Kingdom of Christ.

The chapter opens with the command of the angel to "Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein" (11:1). The "temple of God," "the altar," and "them that worship therein" may be three descriptions of the same entity, i.e., God's people, God's loyal worshipers. Note that the angel is directed to omit a portion of the area, because "the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months" (v. 2). The portion to be omitted is a forecast of a period of total apostasy from true religion, which was to last "forty and two months," which in prophetic time becomes 1260 days, or 1260 years ("each day for a year"—Ezek. 4:6). This same period of apostasy was foretold by the prophet Daniel many years earlier (cf. Daniel 7:25, 8:12; see also Rev. 12:6, 14).

Another prophetic statement of the same period occurs in Rev. 11:3, where the "two witnesses," a symbol representing the Old and New Testaments or the complete law of God, are said to "prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth." In other words, they would be existing during a period when their effectiveness would be nil: they would be "clothed in sackcloth." The "sackcloth" indicates a period

of distress, lament, anguish, an appropriate figure of the apostasy. Verse 11 pictures the same time in still another way: These two witnesses are said to be "killed" by the "beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit." Following this, "their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified...three days and an half." (This verse confirms the fact that the passage is figurative—Jesus was not crucified in a literal city called "Sodom" or "Egypt"). Following this time when they are apparently "dead," the two witnesses revive: "After three days and an half, the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet" (v. 11).

This brings us to the time when Christ arrives to take the reins of power. "They heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither" (v. 12). At this point in the symbolic account, the two witnesses ascend "up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them" (v. 12). After a long period of degradation, the two witnesses are placed in an exalted position, i.e., "heaven," denoting the full authority they are given. In other words, the Word of God becomes the ruling edict for all peoples.

The effects are earth-shaking and devastating to those who would oppose the new authority. "And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven" (v. 13). Those who survive the quaking and judgments, the remnant, the one third (Zech. 13:8), are submissive, giving "glory to the God of heaven."

The battle against the forces of evil won, Christ and His associates now take over the government of the earth, and the cry of victory and triumph is heard: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (v. 15). Christ is now installed in power, where He shall reign "for ever and ever." In the words of the prophet Zechariah, He has become "king over all the

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"Lord, you have been our dwelling
place throughout all generations.
Before the mountains were born or
you brought forth the earth and the
world, from everlasting to everlasting
you are God. . . . A thousand years
in your sight are like a day that
has just gone by, or like a watch in
the night. . . . The length of our days
is seventy years—or eighty, if we
have the strength; . . . they quickly
pass . . . Teach us to number our
days aright, that we may gain a
heart of wisdom"

—Psalm 90

A Perspective of the ETERNAL

History is moving not in a circle but in a straight line forward

WHAT we need most of all is to develop an eternal perspective. We need a sense of seriousness and responsibility in light of the eternal consequences of our lives. We need to look at our lives as God sees them, and consider the implications our small allotments of time have toward eternity. Most people foolishly act as though they will never die. Moses knew better. During the 38 years the children of Israel wandered aimlessly in the wilderness, an average of almost 90 people died each day.

The Ninetieth Psalm, often credited to Moses, reflects this serious impression of life's frailty, in contrast with the eternity of God. "Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God" (vs. 1-2, NIV). God is everlasting, while we are like the grass which sprouts and then fades away.

Because most people do not have an eternal perspective, their values are reversed. Refusing to face questions about eternity, they are hurrying quickly toward oblivion, stopping

briefly on their way to build monuments that crumble and are soon forgotten. Preoccupied with the false god of success, they have not learned the wisdom of laying up for themselves "treasures in heaven, where moths and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."

The Ninetieth Psalm pictures the whole time since creation as only a moment in God's eyes. "For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night." This verse is interesting because it equates a period of time in God's sight with a specific period of our time—"a day that has just gone by," and also with "a watch in the night"—a watch was three hours.

From a naturalistic point of view, time seems to be running in endless cycles. This is the perspective that Solomon gave us, though he himself neglected to take heed. "Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises.... All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, or

the ear its fill of hearing. What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, 'Look! This is something new'? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time" (Eccl. 1:4-10, NIV).

Our Lord has revealed that history is moving not in a circle but in a straight line forward. We may believe or disbelieve as we choose, but the facts remain. God is working, and He will have His way, human ambition or negligence notwithstanding. His plan of salvation is connected to a continuous time process that is heading toward a definite climax in history when Christ returns.

That climax carries tremendous meaning for each of us. How feebly can our minds comprehend either the sorrow or the joy that Day will bring.

It is yet within our power to determine what will be the consequences of that Day for us. Let us so improve the time allotted us that when our day of opportunity ends we may have laid up in heaven a record of favorable credits that will open to us the portals of eternity. MM

The Ark in Heaven?

(Continued from page 23)

earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one" (Zech. 14:9).

Revelation 11:16-18 describe the acclaim given to the new government by saints and angels. It is a glorious song of exaltation. "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned" (v. 17). They also acclaim the great work that has been accomplished in judging the perverse and rebellious, also in rewarding "thy servants the prophets" and "the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great." At the same time they are grateful that the new authority has removed those who would "corrupt the earth."

Verse 19 pictures another aspect of life under the new government which is central in any system honored by God: worship. God has wanted His people in every age to worship Him, and the new age will be no exception. When the new government is established, the temple will be there, high and exalted. We read: "The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament." The "temple of God" being opened in heaven signifies its high authority in the lives of men. The worship of God, downtrodden for centuries, will be exalted to the highest possible position and will be held in greatest esteem.

We now come to the statement in question, the place of the "ark of the testament" in the last of Revelation 11. Along with the exalted place of worship will come law, symbolized by the "ark of his testament." In ancient Israel, the ark contained the laws and commandments for the people to observe. In the new world, too, there will be laws, which it will be the delight of all people to obey. The law will be supreme, and its beneficent effects will be felt worldwide. Like the temple, the ark will not be located literally "in heaven" but will be held in highest regard.

What a glorious picture of the triumph of right over wrong, of God's authority over the misguided governments of humankind. And remember, all of Revelation was written to "show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass." They *shall* come to pass. What a wonderful promise!

• "Peace and Safety"

"Is the peace cry before or after the coming of Elijah?"

We assume that by the "peace cry" you refer to the prophecy of Paul in I Thessalonians 5. The passage reads,

"For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them" (I Thess. 5:3). The passage pictures a time when the promoters of peace will be satisfied that they are achieving a measure of success: "they shall say, Peace and safety," which will be followed immediately by the descent of Divine judgment, "sudden destruction." This "sudden destruction" indicates clearly that the prophecy is for the end time, the very end.

Matching Bible prophecies with specific events, developments or trends in the world picture is one of the most fascinating of projects, particularly when they are prophecies of the second advent and the end of our age. But we must be cautious in our "matching." Very often we cannot know the extent or the degree to which a prophecy will be fulfilled.

Of one fact we may be sure: all Bible prophecies will have a definite and distinct fulfillment. Precisely *when* each fulfillment will occur or to what extent or degree we are not able to say. Our view, both of the Bible and of history, is too limited.

Nevertheless, the fulfillments of many Bible prophecies are striking and vivid. Take, for example, the prophecy of fear among the peoples of the earth as prophesied by Jesus for the time just preceding His second advent: "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (Luke 21:26). We see a striking fulfillment of this today in the development of nuclear power, a world-threat unimagined only a few generations ago.

Or take the prophecy in question, of efforts toward peace, along with prophecies for this same time of extravagant preparations for war (Joel 3:9-11). We see this unusual condition clearly fulfilled in our world today, brought about by a situation unprecedented in world history: the existence of two world powers, violently opposed to each other yet afraid to engage conflict and talking "peace" because of the frightful strength of their own weapons. Who but the Divine Eye could have foreseen this singular condition!

Will the prophecy of I Thessalonians 5:3 meet its fulfillment before or after the arrival of Christ's herald Elijah?

We do not know. However, it seems likely that the fulfillment of this prophecy would precede the coming of Elijah rather than follow it, since Elijah's coming will be the beginning of divine intervention and the herald of all the great events to follow, and the prophecy is associated with believers being able to recognize the "times and seasons" of approaching divine intervention.

There is every indication that the events in the divine plan, once begun, will follow one another rapidly: "He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness,

because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth" (Rom. 9:28). Short and swift, but righteous.

The verse preceding the text you question also links this prophecy to the Day of the Lord, with another mention of its suddenness. "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (I Thess. 5:2).

The arrival of Elijah being so closely associated with the coming of Christ, the two events may be thought of as one, hence together may be spoken of as "the coming of the Lord" or "the day of the Lord."

Once God's long silence is broken, nothing will halt or hinder His work until His plan is fully consummated on earth. Our concern now is to heed the warning of Paul, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.... Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 5:6, 8-9).

We want that salvation, but to obtain it we must be ready when the Day arrives. MM

In times of war, an act of disloyalty isn't limited to taking up arms and actually fighting against one's own government. To encourage the foe in any way constitutes a breach of allegiance. The same is true of our Christian devotion. Any amount of compromise with the world, whether in dress or deportment, marks us as an "enemy of God."

We must be on guard against all the enticements of the world. A true Christian will never become a "friend of the world," for "friendship with the world is hatred toward God" (Jas. 4:4, NIV).

"By his faith he is speaking to us still"—Heb. 11:4, Moffatt.

Words for the Living

*Excerpts from the sermons, talks and writings
of Rev. L. T. Nichols (1844-1912).*

It is with a heart filled with love and goodwill that I am spending my time in the hope that some few will become deeply interested and all absorbed in the Word of the Lord as the only source from which we can obtain information about the future of man or the goodness of God.



I heard someone say, "That is Mr. Nichols' farm." No, it is not. I do not own anything. It all belongs to the Lord. Our tongue is not our own, or our time, or money, or talent, or life. All belongs to God.



If I were after worldly honor, notoriety or gain, I would not be pursuing the course I have in the past and ever intend to pursue. No, I am pursuing this course because I have become fully satisfied that a knowledge of this Word and a willing obedience to it are absolutely necessary in order for us to partake of the great goodness of God in the eternal future.



We cannot eat of two tables at the same time. We cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of devils at the same time.

We cannot slip a nut-cake off the devil's table into our pocket, and eat it at the Lord's table.

Begin at home and clean your own house, then when you are all cleaned up, you can help others.



A minister said to me one day, "Do you know what your way makes me think of?"

"I might guess," I said.

"Well," he said, "it makes me think of a narrow lane with great high walls on each side, and only a few can get into it."

I replied, "I am glad you say this, for Jesus said it is a narrow way that leads to life, and few will find it."

The minister said, "I want a wide highway, so we can go along arm in arm."

But where does the wide highway lead? It leads to death (Matt. 7:13-14).



I have made the Bible my study for many years, not to uphold any theory but solely for the purpose of arriving at the exact knowledge of the real teachings of Scripture, and I have been driven by the evidence to conclude that the Bible is true.



To be made like unto the angels is something worth living for. The man Gabriel who came to Daniel was a real tangible being, not a mere flutter.

What Will

Immortality

Be Like?

WHAT would it be like to be a shining immortal being? How would it change our lives?

First of all it would remove our instinctive dread of death. Try as we may to forget it, we cannot escape the knowledge that we are mortal, and that in the course of time we all must die. Immortal beings are beyond this. To them, the future is all life, life and more life!

Then too, it would remove all fear of sickness, debilitating disease, pain, and suffering. As the years go by, we would no longer be constantly reminded of our mortality as our eyesight, our hearing, our teeth, and on and on, begin failing with no possibility of full restoration. As a matter of fact, immortal beings no longer "grow older." The millenniums just pass on one after the other while they go from "glory to glory." This is a whole new avenue of thought: to no longer "grow older." But it is very real—because immortal bodies have absolutely nothing to wear out. They are always new, fit and strong. As time passes, their minds grow wiser, stronger and more attuned—just the opposite of mortality!

Then, being immortal would put us on the "other side" of the Judgment—we are accepted! No longer need we have any fear of sin, or of displeasing God. Having received His stamp of approval, we are His *forever*. No chance of failing or falling short.

Then, too, as immortals we would no longer have to fear for the temporal side of our world—for the depleting of the natural resources on which we are so dependent. We would no longer have to spend the greater portion of

our conscious moments working to preserve life—acquiring food, clothing, shelter and medical care. We no longer would have to be concerned that we get enough exercise, that we eat the right kinds of foods and not overindulge. No longer would we have to be concerned for our homes, keeping them in repair and protecting them from flood, fire and storm.

There are many things that cause discomfort in this life that are necessary for survival—such things as hunger, thirst and fatigue. Putting on immortality will eliminate any need for such.

Then add to all this another of God's promises, that of "everlasting joy" (Isa. 35:10). "They shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Joy is a little word with great meaning. According to Webster, joy is a "very glad feeling, happiness, great pleasure, delight." Couple "joy" with immortality and what do you have? "Everlasting joy"!

What will immortality be like? Picture the happiest moment you ever experienced going on...and on... and on...and on...from joy to joy, with never a pain or sorrow or worry to mar that pure, rapturous joy.

The delights of immortality will surpass even that, for in the words of the inspired Prophet, mortal eye has never seen, mortal ear has never heard, and mortal mind has never imagined what God has prepared for those who truly love him (I Cor. 2:9).

Isn't it enough to stimulate us to give God our very best—so that He may share these wonders of delight with us, world without end?

—Contributed