



# Megiddo Message

*Who is a God like Thee, . . .  
Casting all our sins into the depths  
of the sea...? —Micah 7:19*

***Mercy,  
Pardon &  
Forgiveness***

Vol. 75, No. 10

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## Keep Your Heart Burning!

**T**wo men were walking down the road to Emmaus. They were talking about the great event that had happened recently, the crucifixion of Christ; and now the story that the women had told—of the stone rolled away, the empty tomb, the *living* Master. Could they believe it?

As they walked, a stranger joined them and asked, "What are you talking about? Why are you sad?" After they explained, the stranger reproved them, saying, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe." And he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Jesus. Impressed, the two men invited him to their home, and he went. As they sat down to eat, the stranger took bread; and as he blessed it and broke it, the men's eyes were opened and they realized the stranger had been Jesus.

But He was gone.

"And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32).

We should have known who He was, they said to themselves, because "Did not our heart burn within us?" Didn't we feel impressed and invigorated and renewed in mind and spirit?

The story of the walk to Emmaus is a familiar one. But there is another lesson in the men's words to one another: "Did not our heart burn within us?"

You and I can identify with that feeling. We have experienced it many times. Our hearts burn within us as we thrill to the stimulating words of a sermon from the Book of God. Our hearts burn when we open our Bibles and bask in the promises of God. And how our hearts burn as we have a spiritually uplifting conversation with a friend.

But what happens when we retire to the ordinary tasks of home or shop, when we lay aside our Bibles and go to our job, or when we part from our friend and are once again with the members of our own family, whom we know so well. Is the fire still hot in our hearts?

To keep our hearts burning during the ordinary hours of everyday living, during the common hours of working and traveling, cooking and shopping, housework and gardening, is the real test of our character. Can we do it? Can we keep our hearts burning during the weekday valleys?

It is up to *you*, it is up to *me*. My heart *can* burn at whiteheat intensity if I just take the time to stoke up the fire of my zeal.

It is *I* who must pray, and pray without ceasing.

It is *I* who must build up my faith by pondering the solid foundations of evidence upon which it stands.

It is *I* who must sit down and read my Bible, *I* who must memorize a verse, *I* who must meditate upon its message, *I* who must apply it to myself.

It is *I* who must make a point to fellowship with Christian friends.

It is *I* who must worship and sing to God's glory.

It is *I* who can and must make the effort every day to think right. If my thoughts are trained in the right direction, *my heart will burn*.

If our hearts are burning to be right, we will be patient when our toddler spills his milk for the fourth time; we will be kind to the one we have heard say something unkind about us; we will be forgiving when our neighbor apologizes for an embarrassment caused us the day before. If our hearts are burning within us, we will be understanding and helpful to the brother or sister struggling with a problem. We will criticize ourselves, not others, and return only good for evil. In short, if our hearts burn within us we will be well on our way to perfection of character.

Our hearts will burn within us all the time when we get a sharp vision of the future—eternal life in God's Kingdom on earth!—and keep it before us. The more real the future is to us, the more zealously we will work to be a part of it.

In that great Day so soon to come, when we stand before the throne of God, will the angels be able to say of us, "*How their hearts burned within them*"?

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## 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 and Sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life; in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."

### We believe

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

### We believe

—in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and born of a Virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and 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 the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to convince of His supreme power and authority.

### 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 raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

### We believe

—in ourselves as capable of applying in our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

### We believe

—in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth shall 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

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

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

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

## About Our Cover

Our cover photo was taken by Margaret Tremblay, near Ogunquit, Maine.

# Megiddo Message

Vol. 76, No. 10

November, 1989

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—even during the ordinary hours of every day

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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.

# Praise,

## Habakkuk's Style

*Although the fig tree shall not blossom,  
neither shall fruit be in the vines;  
The labor of the olive shall fail,  
and the fields shall yield no meat;  
The flock shall be cut off from the fold,  
and there shall be no herd in the stalls:  
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,  
I will joy in the God of my salvation!*  
—Habakkuk 3:17-18

## Our Style

*Though my vineyards and orchards should cease,  
And my fields fail to yield an increase,  
Yet I'll trust in God's will,  
Let His rod guide me still,  
And His Law now fulfill,  
—Yes!*

*Though disease and drought ruin my fold,  
Naught but pain and distress I behold,  
Yet I still will obey,  
Let God's Word be my stay,  
And His will be my way,  
For He knows what is best for me  
—Always!*

*Though the banks should all close in my town,  
And the stock market all should be down,  
Yet I'll trust in God's will,  
Let His rod guide me still,  
And His Law now fulfill,  
—Yes!*

*Though the keenest of doubts should assail,  
And my projects in this world all fail,  
Yet I still will obey,  
Let God's Word be my stay,  
And His will be my way,  
For He knows what is best for me  
—Always!*

*Though misfortune should visit me here  
And deprive me of all I hold dear,  
Yet I'll trust in God's will,  
Let His rod guide me still  
And His Law now fulfill,  
—Yes!*

*Though my health and wealth pass in the night,  
Friends and loved ones all vanish from sight;  
Yet I still will obey,  
Let God's Word be my stay,  
And His will be my way,  
For He knows what is best for me  
—Always!*

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# Our Living Sacrifice of Praise

*True gratitude is sacrifice—there is something to give up;  
there is something greater to gain!*

A present-day author describes vividly the experience of a Protestant chaplain coming into New York harbor on board a hospital ship at the close of World War II.

"The men who could move about were crowding the rails to get their first glimpse of the Statue of Liberty.... Everywhere he could hear the men talking about what they would be able to do at last, now that the fighting was over.

"Turning to one lad wrapped in a blanket, the chaplain said, 'We have a lot to be thankful for, haven't we?'

"The young lad's enthusiasm almost overcame him as he choked, 'I'll say we have!'

"And now that you're home soldier what do you intend to do?'

"Well, you see,' the boy said slowly, 'I had always planned to be a concert pianist.' He dropped his head a bit and added, 'But that door is closed now.' And from under the blanket he pulled two stubby, handless arms."

Handless, but grateful. Grateful for the gift of life, grateful to be coming home. If such a one could be grateful, what of us, with the thousand blessings *we* enjoy! He was grateful because

he was looking at what he *had*, not at what he lacked.

This is the same type of gratitude the Psalmist felt as he wrote the 116th Psalm. As we read the Psalm, we seem to sense that he had just emerged from a tragic illness that had brought him near to death. These are his words:

"I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.

"The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord: 'O Lord, save me!'

"The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The Lord protects the simplehearted; when I was in great need, he saved me.

"Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you. For you, O Lord, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living" (Ps. 116:1-9, NIV).

His was gratitude for deliverance, gratitude for continued life and opportunity. And so is ours:

gratitude for all the thousand blessings of life, and health, and home, and friends, and continued heavenly guidance; gratitude to Him who has delivered our soul from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling, so that we too may continue to walk before God in the land of the living. Shouldn't *we* be grateful?

David's gratitude was the greater because his sufferings had been greater; so intense had they been that he had almost fallen into the pit of paralyzing depression. But in that dark hour he besought God—he drew near to God in personal prayer, placing Himself directly in God's care. And in the renewed confidence that God was guiding, hope revived. God sent deliverance, and he recovered.

Now hear him expressing his heartfelt gratitude. "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 unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people." It was gratitude from the heart; gratitude that finds its fullest expression in obedience.

Then, in deepest humility, he renewed his relationship with God. It is a singular relation-

ship: servanthood. "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people" (vs. 12-18).

"Oh, Lord, I am thy servant," he prayed. His acknowledgment wasn't just a title as one might express in polite address. Often we think of the servant as a slave who belongs to another as a chattel, a piece of property that is owned. But a servant may be one who is in the royal service of a king as a result of mutual agreement. The king chooses and calls one as his servant, and the servant accepts the responsibilities of royal servanthood. It is a very special relationship, with obligations on both sides. The servant agrees to give what he has—all he has—in service. The King agrees to recompense that gift. The agreement is made, and from that moment on, the servant is not his own. His relationship to the king overrides all other obligations of his life.

When we designate ourselves as God's committed servants, it isn't that our King is forcing us to be unwilling slaves. And it isn't a decision that we make on our own. There are two parties in the decision, God and us. We pledge to subject ourselves to

God's authority, to do faithfully whatever He commands, and He pledges to accept us, help us, and finally compensate us for our service.

Isn't it a truly wonderful relationship, to be in deed and in truth the servants of our great King?

On our part, it is a humble submitting in response to His divine claim upon our lives. "I am thy servant," we say, as did the Psalmist, and this decision, once made, brings us into His presence, into a position of continual obligation.

In expressing his servanthood, the Psalmist is following the example of his forefathers before him. Behind him is a rich family tradition of those who were faithful servants of God—such men as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Ruth the Moabitess—all were directly in his lineage. And he himself longed to be part of it by his own dedication.

A rich family heritage is a great foundation for the service of God, but it doesn't change one automatically into a true Christian servant. Even a sense of gratitude to God for His generous goodness does not certify that we are ready to serve faithfully. Instead of saying, "Oh, Lord, I am thy servant," both our inward and outward response may appear to say, "Lord, thank you for helping me through, but now I'm on my own. Now I'm free to do as I please."

God forbid that with all that has been done for us, such should ever be our response.

So close had David come to death that he felt himself a prisoner. Now, because of his deliverance, he rededicates himself as the servant of God. "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds."

This humble confession of a grateful heart brings us to the sacrifice of thanksgiving which we, too, must offer to God. It is a prayer of commitment. It is a promise and a positive outlook. "I am your servant, Lord, because I want to be; because I find the highest pleasure in sacrifice; because it is my delight to give up...for You, because of the immeasurable benefits You have set before me." With all this, how can I do otherwise? "I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call upon the name of the Lord."

The true sacrifice of thanksgiving is the offering of ourselves to God. The relationship we share with Him is infinitely more important than anything outward we may do. It is a heart relationship, a personal sacrifice. When we appear before God as His servant, there is something to give up, often something that is near and dear to us. "I appeal to you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God," Paul said, "to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable worship" (Rom. 12:1, RSV).

True gratitude reaches far beyond the mental and verbal expression of thanks. True gratitude is *sacrifice*—there is something to give up; there is something greater to gain! It is the experience of giving up, of doing without something we most deeply desire, because God is our Master. It is a sacrifice. But let it be a sacrifice of thanksgiving and a gift of love. Let it touch us deeply, as it did the Psalmist, so that we may gratefully say, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, and I am only too glad to be able to do this."

Oh, walk with the Psalmist in his affliction. Then go with him into the presence of God, in deep-

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**G**ratITUDE finds  
its fullest  
expression in  
obedience.

est gratitude of heart, with praise for deliverance. Then say with him, "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord" (Ps. 116:18-19).

What greater joy can life bring, and what greater prospect for future joy!

A young woman suffering from cerebral palsy wrote how she started counting her blessings. "I have turned my life *completely* over to God," she wrote, "not just half way. In the past, I have had a tendency to become depressed about the few things I cannot do. Now," she said, "I am truly grateful to God for my many blessings."

Let us, too, be truly grateful—so grateful that we will offer to God every act and aspect of our lives as a living sacrifice of praise.

This is true thanks-giving. MM

**T**hough your external circumstances may change, and sickness may take the place of health, and trials may thicken without and within, if your heart is stayed on God, no changes or chances can touch it, and all that may befall you will only draw you closer to Him. And the knowledge that the present moment is His will, and that your whole future is being influenced by it, will make it not only tolerable but welcome to you.

## My Aim

*To believe in God.*

*To build my faith in the Bible, the Word of God.*

*To trust His promises and set my heart upon them.*

*To live peaceably with my family, my friends, and my associates.*

*To be courteous to all.*

*To deal fairly and honorably with all.*

*To make the world better for my being here.*

*To render strict obedience to the laws of God.*

*To show in my daily life the benefits of Bible faith and practice.*

*To have my chief delight in mastering the evils of my nature, in conquering myself.*

*To live each day better than the day before, taking no backward steps.*

*To make no compromise with evil, but to fearlessly denounce it at all times, whether in myself or others.*

*To use my talents as a trust from God.*

*To spend my money wisely, remembering that it is not my own.*

*To approve what God calls good.*

*To despise what God calls evil.*

*To render honor to whom honor is due.*

*To untiringly preach the Word to others, that a people may be prepared for the age to come.*

*To realize that my life, my example, is the most powerful sermon I can deliver, whether for good or ill.*

*To wait patiently for the coming of the Lord from heaven to right earth's wrongs.*

*To realize that the time is short, and that I must redeem every hour that God gives me.*

*To fearlessly uphold my faith before a scoffing world, being proud to represent the cause of God.*

*To let go my self-esteem, selfishness, self-will, and any glory I would take to myself, realizing everything I have—even life itself—is a trust from God.*

*To be kind.*

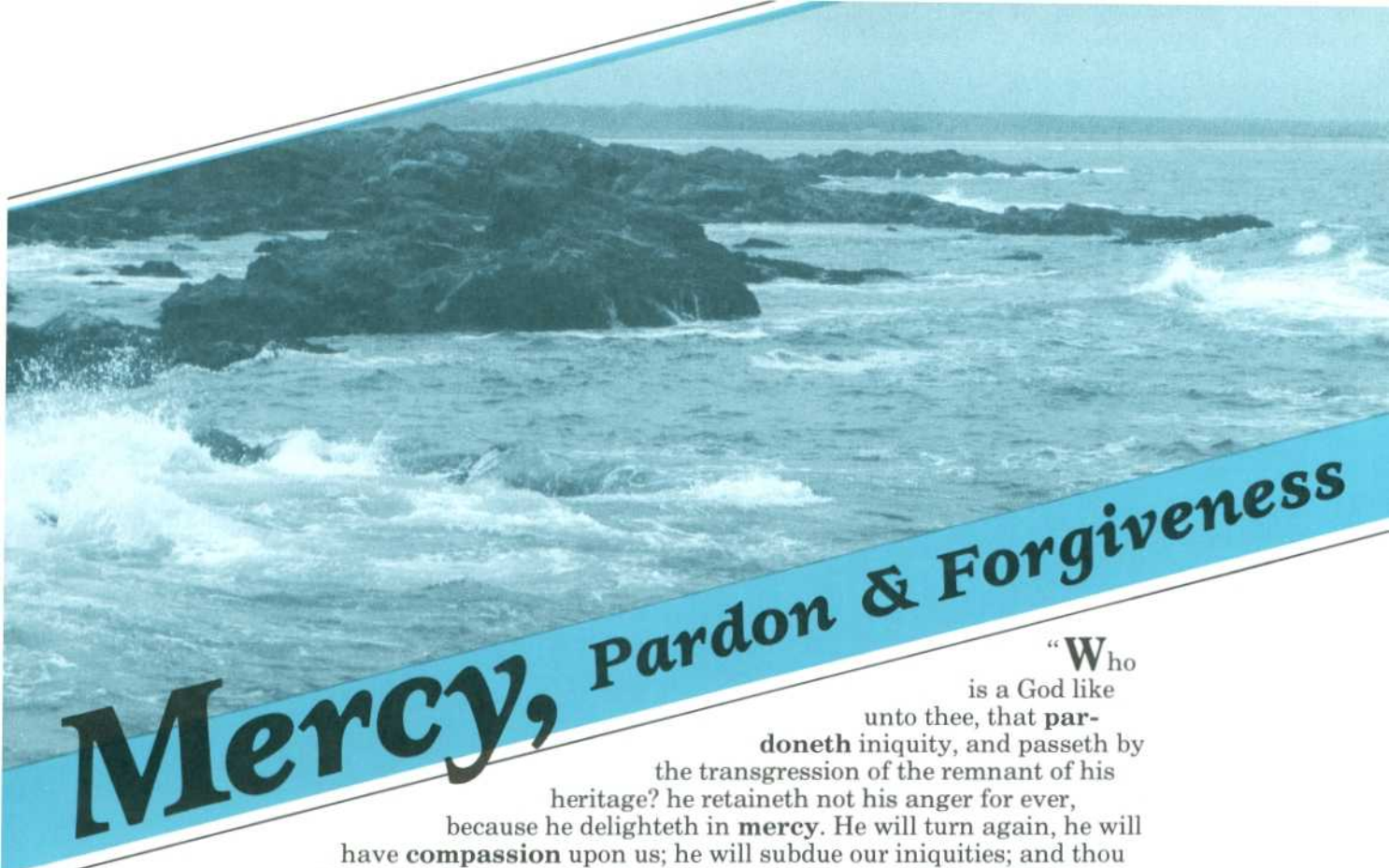
*To be gentle.*

*To forgive.*

*To daily count my blessings.*

*To ever be mindful of Him who is the Giver of them all.*

**TO BE THANKFUL.**



# Mercy, Pardon & Forgiveness

“Who is a God like unto thee, that **pardonesth** iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in **mercy**. He will turn again, he will have **compassion** upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” —Micah 7:18–19

“And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, **merciful** and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.” —Exodus 34:6–7

“The Lord is **merciful** and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.... Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him....

“But the **mercy** of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.” —Psalm 103:8–10, 11, 13, 17–18

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have **mercy**.” —Prov. 28:13

“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have **mercy** upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly **pardon**.” —Isa. 55:6–7

“Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and **mercy** with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.” —Deut. 7:9

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will **forgive** their sin, and will heal their land.” —II Chron. 7:14

# Our God Is Merciful

**T**he Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth"—do we recall when these words were first spoken?

The man who heard them was alone at the time, alone with God upon the mountain. His name was Moses. Actually, we know that the Mighty God, the great Creator who orders the universes did not physically descend to planet Earth to stand with Moses upon Mount Sinai. God sent His personal spokesman, His angel, with a full measure of the glory of His presence (Acts 7:38) and His own living words to deliver to Moses, and that presence was seen and felt as the presence of God.

This was Moses' second mountaintop experience. The first time, upon returning from the mountain, he had found the Israelites in deep and abominable idolatry, and in his outrage had broken the stone tablets upon which were written the laws and commandments God had given him for the people. Now God in His mercy had called Moses a second time up into the mountain.

Picture Moses, a lone mortal in this heavenly auditorium upon the mountain; 40 days and 40 nights in heavenly isolation, bathed in divine splendor; alone with the angel in that sublime presence. An awesome experience, to be sure. Picture him kneeling there upon the ground, his head bowed low in worship. "If now"—he pauses as

if afraid to go on—"if now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance" (Ex. 34:9).

Twelve months out of Egypt, and Moses still felt his inability to lead the rebellious host. The task was too much for him. Once again he needed to be reassured of help—*God's* help. It was as if he said, "God, if we are going to continue this undertaking, You must go with us." How deeply he felt his need for God.

"And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin..." (Ex. 34:5-7).

A few centuries later King David repeated this theme as a testimony to the Lord's mercy.

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Then he tried to create a picture of His mercy that we can understand. "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." Yes, human dust—how we need

His mercy if we would be recognized in the eternal scheme!

Then, speaking by the voice of inspiration, David added a statement that gives us a glimpse into the incomparable vastness of that mercy, far surpassing our most magnificent imagination: "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Ps. 103:8-18).

Mercy that extends "from everlasting to everlasting"—can we comprehend it?

## Mercy Is...

What is mercy? Other translations of the word for mercy are pity, compassion, favor, tenderness, affection, kindness.

In the Hebrew, the word was used for the deep, tender feelings of compassion awakened by another's trouble, weakness, suffering or vulnerability (*International Bible Encyclopedia*).

Where there is mercy, one indi-

**H**uman dust—  
how we need  
the mercy of  
God if we would be  
recognized in His eternal  
scheme!

# **W**ho can expect God's mercy? How can you and I know of a surety that God will be merciful to US?

vidual is powerful and superior, the other is weak and inferior. This is our relationship with God. God is the superior, indeed, the supreme; we are the weak, inferior creatures. God the all-powerful *could* dominate, overpower and crush us in an instant, if He chose to. For if in His imperial vastness whole nations are before Him as "nothing," as "a drop in the bucket," and are "counted to him less than nothing and vanity" (Isa. 40:15, 17), what are individuals!

But God in His mercy chooses not to do this. He created the human family for a purpose, and to that end He extends His mercy.

## **Mercy for Whom?**

The Old Testament affirms repeatedly that God has mercy to bestow, also that mercy is a basic characteristic of God. Many are the recorded testimonies to the mercy of God. "Our God is merciful" (Ps. 116:5) is expressed again and again in one form or another. The Old Testament is rich in words that describe God's mercy and tender concern for His human creation.

The question is: Who can expect God's mercy? Who can depend on it? How can you and I know of a surety that God will not suddenly remove us from the scene of existence?

When thinking about the mercy of God, we are concerned for ourselves. We are every one in need of God's mercy. We need it as much

as any who ever lived. In common with all the human race, we have two problems. First, we are mortal and subject to death. Second, we are sinful, and God who is absolute purity and absolute holiness hates sinners and all forms of sin.

As far as the first problem goes, there is only one way out—and that is through the mercy of God. To obtain anything beyond the bounds of mortality *we must have God working for us*. In the matter of physical life we are powerless to help ourselves.

But the second problem is even more serious, for we know that in our natural condition we cannot expect any special favor from God. Why? Because we sin, and God abhors sin. "He is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps. 7:11); He "hates all workers of iniquity" (Ps. 5:5); His purpose is a new world where "Thou shalt not see evil any more" (Zeph. 3:15). In His finished creation will be nothing that defiles (Rev. 22:15). Sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:1-2). Can we think that *we* will obtain God's mercy in our naturally sinful state? Can we expect God to overlook *our* sins and accept us as we are?

To do such would be contrary to His whole plan.

How shall we resolve these two basic problems?

This is the whole purpose of Scripture, to disclose a plan by which erring mortals can bring themselves into a condition acceptable to God and obtain His mercy both now and eternally.

## **Mercy Undeserved**

Now God being all-powerful is able to bestow mercy according to His own will; He has to ask no one. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Though many people take this as a statement of our helplessness, as though God acts solely by whim or caprice and bestows or withholds mercy totally apart from any action on our part,

that thought need not be implied. It is simply a statement of God's sovereignty. He acts according to "his will"—which is according to a plan carefully designed and consistently executed (Isa. 45:17-18).

Is mercy ever "unmerited" or "undeserved"? A study of Scripture reveals two aspects of God's mercy: one that He bestows wholly apart from any action on the part of the human beings involved, up to that time; and another aspect that is a direct response to our actions. Let us look at both.

From the examples given in Scripture we must conclude that God's mercy is selective. He does not bestow mercy on all indiscriminately, irrespective of their character or conduct. He acts according to a pre-determined plan and purpose. He is just, fair and rewards each according to what he has done (Jer. 17:9-10; Rev. 22:14).

But since there is nothing that we as mere mortal beings could ever do to fully "deserve" or "merit" the recognition of our Creator, all mercy or favor from God is in a sense undeserved. Whatever we might do for Him, we are still unworthy and undeserving; He does not need us to survive or prosper in His infinite realm.

This undeserved aspect of God's mercy is especially apparent where He acts in mercy toward human creatures who have no knowledge of Him or His requirements. God in His mercy gives life and the means to sustain it to all His human family. As Jesus said, He makes His sun to shine on all, evil or good (Matt. 5:45). Beyond this, God makes His knowledge available to all whom He sees will be useful to Him, or will avail themselves of that knowledge, even though at the time they are in the depths of sin and disobedience.

The apostle Paul described this aspect of God's mercy in the warmest of terms. His appreciation was deep, personal and passionate: had it not been for God's rich mercy,

he, Paul, the "chief of sinners," would never have had a chance. He writes in the second chapter of Ephesians:

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others"—note that Paul includes himself in this category. "Among whom also we *all* had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh.... But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love where-with he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph. 2:1-5).

If God is going to choose any from among the human family for His eternal purpose, if He is going to select any to teach and guide, He must start at this level, for, in our natural state, we are all without worth or value, without any record that would recommend us to Him. We are *all* "by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

But even at this point God is not choosing indiscriminately. He is looking beyond what we are to what we have the potential to become. He is looking for raw material that can be worked upon, until it is a finished product for His eternal use.

### **Mercy—God's Second Chance**

A second aspect of God's mercy is the mercy He extends to those who have agreed to live by His law and then fail to live up to their sacred covenant. God knows that achieving the standard He requires takes time, and accordingly He allots a time of mercy.

That time of mercy is, for us as individuals, our lifetime, or all the time He has allotted for the development and perfecting of the material He is seeking. On a broader scale we might say it is the entire day of salvation, or the first six thousand years of His working upon earth, up until the time He has appointed for its judging and cleansing.

According to the terms of the covenant agreement under which all of His servants pledge obedience, He has promised to bless and eternally save us if we are faithful and complete in our obedience, if we serve the Lord with "all our heart," and "all our soul," and "all our mind," and "all our strength."

When we do less than this, we sin and thus nullify our agreement. Now were God to go strictly by the terms of the agreement, He could destroy us at that moment. He in His infinite power has the full right and authority to execute the penalty of the agreement and invoke judgment.

But should He do so, He would have no one for His eternal Kingdom.

This is where His mercy comes into the picture. God in His mercy chooses to be lenient and give us a second chance, and a third, and a fourth—far more than we deserve. Why does He do it? Because "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:10-14).

It is this most important aspect of God's mercy that gives us an opportunity to rise up and go on when we have sinned, knowing that He will blot out our trans-

**I** will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" is a statement of God's sovereignty. He acts according to His will—which is according to a plan carefully designed and consistently executed.

gressions and forgive us as we overcome.

Do we appreciate this as we should? Do we realize that we live every day by God's mercy? In the words of Jeremiah the prophet, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him" (Lam. 3:22-24). Each new day is a new and visible evidence to us of God's mercy, a fresh reminder that we have yet to become what God has seen we can be.

Let each new morning, each sunrise, each waking breath remind us anew of God's mercy and goodness to us in still extending us the blessings of life, in giving us another day in which to improve our spotted record.

All of God's people, without exception, have been grateful for this aspect of God's mercy. God has

**I**f God dealt with us "according to our sins," not one of us would be alive.

told us what He wants us to be. But again and again we fail. It is the mercy of God that allows us another chance to rise up and try again. We have not any of us lived to the best of which we are capable. We have not any of us the record of Jesus, who was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Again and again we fall and must go to the throne of mercy and seek "grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

When we consider that all of our opportunity, every breath we breathe, every day we live is by the mercy of God, are we not humbled? We should not even be alive, but for God's mercy! Should it not move us to a deeper sense of reverence and appreciation for the goodness and mercy of our God? And do we not long to do more and more for Him in return for the gracious opportunity that is ours? Do we wonder that the apostle Paul exclaimed, "I stand amazed at the fathomless wealth of God's wisdom and God's knowledge. How could man ever understand his reasons for action, or explain his methods of working?" (Rom. 11:33, Phillips). Do we wonder that he pleaded with his brethren, "by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). All—even our offering of ourselves in obedience to God—is possible

only by the mercy of God. Oh, how we need His mercy!

If God should recompense us for every sin, if He should reward us according to our iniquities, what hope could we have! Truly, "The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great mercy."

### **Those Who Received and Appreciated God's Mercy**

Perhaps no one ever received or appreciated more of the mercy of God than did David. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life...I trust in the mercy of God for ever....For thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee....The Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting....With the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption" (Ps. 23:6; 52:8; 86:5; 100:5; 130:7).

When David had sinned against the Lord in the matter of Bathsheba, upon coming to his senses his heartfelt utterance was a plea to God for mercy: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions" (Ps. 51:1). For such an offense God could have cut off David in a moment; and David knew it. But God did not cut him off. God could read the heart, and He knew how nobly, how heartily David would repent, hence He showed mercy.

Later, when David had sinned in numbering Israel and the full impact of his transgression struck him, he appealed in penitence to the mercy of God. He had sinned, and he acknowledged it. He knew also that there would be punishment for him. What would it be? The Lord gave David a choice, and it was a choice that would make any heart quake. What did David do? He turned the whole matter over to God, saying, "Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord; for very great are his mercies: but let me not fall into the

hand of man" (I Chron. 21:13). God punished, but he also delivered.

Daniel was another who sought and found the mercy of God. Though we do not know of any great sin against Daniel's record, we know that he, too, sinned, just as we sin; and he, too, needed mercy. When he prayed earnestly to God, confessing the sins of his people, he included himself. Hear his heartfelt petition:

"And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name" (Dan. 9:4-6, 9-10, 18-19).

It was a prayer that brought response from heaven. In the words of Daniel himself, "Whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, ...being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation" (Dan. 9:20-21).

**G**od's mercy is selective. He does not bestow mercy on all indiscriminately, irrespective of their character or conduct.

What an answer to prayer: what a response from the high courts of heaven!

For a full forty years God's mercy shepherded a rebellious, stiff-necked, complaining horde of Israelites through the wilderness. Again and again they sinned. Yet, as Nehemiah recounted, "thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go" (Neh. 9:19). Even when they "hardened their necks, and hearkened not to [his] commandments, and refused to obey, neither were mindful of [his] wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not" (Neh. 9:16-17).

Indeed, great was the mercy of God. Who cannot say from the heart, "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever" (Ps. 106:1).

"Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry: And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies" (Ps. 106: 43-45). Yes, great is the mercy of our God!

### We Need Mercy

Perhaps we feel in a different category. We have not gone after other gods as did apostate Israel. We have not rebelled like the Israelites in the wilderness. We have not bowed to images of wood and stones, like apostate Judah. We have not committed the sins of

## Testimonies to the Mercy of God

*Jacob:* "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands."  
—Gen. 32:10

*Ezra:* "And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this."  
—Ezra 9:13

*David:* "But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."  
—Ps. 86:15

"For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him."  
—Ps. 103:11

*Paul:* "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."  
—I Tim. 1:13, 15-16

*Job:* "And that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth."  
—Job 11:6.

David. We do not have any "great sins" on our record. But God does not classify sins as we do. He ranks "evil thoughts,...pride and foolishness" right along with adultery, fornication,...theft."

We should learn to take an honest view of ourselves, see every good and every evil as God sees it, and view every sin as a horrible thing—because it stands between us and God, between us and the Kingdom, between us and the eternal life God has offered us.

Do we think that we are guiltless, we who forget again and

again the great God we serve; we who have repeatedly been unfaithful to our agreement to do all to the glory of God, to bring captive every thought and make it obey Christ, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our mind, and all our strength? We who have not sought God as we should; we who have not kept His law always in mind; we who in the pride of our hearts have put our opinion and our will and our way above His, we who have again and again sought the freedom to do as we pleased, rather

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**L**et each new morning, each sunrise, each waking breath remind us anew of God's mercy, and that we have yet to become what God has seen we can be.

than submitting wholly to His will—who of us can say or feel that *we* do not need God's mercy?

Perhaps our forgetfulness of our need for His mercy is partly a result of the age in which we are living. We have never seen the judgments of God executed. We have never seen fire come down from heaven and destroy. We have never seen a nation, or a city, or even an individual taken by His judgments. We have never even seen the mountain burn with fire, or talked with an angel. We live in a time when God is silent.

But let us not be deceived; His law is just as binding as ever it was. God is just as real, and just as sure to do what He has promised as He ever was. God will not be mocked; whatever *we* sow *we* shall reap. We live in His world, enjoying His sunlight, breathing His air, living on the resources He provides. He has entrusted us with His law, and we have agreed to live by it. Again and again we have failed to live up to the terms of our covenant with Him. At our best we have many an unsightly blot on our record. Can we think for a moment that we do not need His mercy?

We do not realize the seriousness of sin as we should. God hates sin, and He *will not tolerate it*. But we do not see any of His vengeance on sin. We do as we please, and nothing happens. We go along year after year, and no

great calamity comes upon us. But let us remember that the wages of sin *will be paid*. God, who is rich in mercy, who is longsuffering and patient beyond anything we can imagine, will not always wait. The shadows of the evening, so long stretched out, will not stretch out forever. The time of mercy is long, but it is not forever. For any and all of our sins He can—and will—cut us off, unless we repent.

Our founder, L. T. Nichols, was deeply impressed with the long out-stretching of God's mercy and our need for it. "I never realized as I do now," he said one Passover evening, "how much we need the mercy of God, to have Him blot out our iniquities. Have we, brethren and sisters, made up our minds to do better? Are we going to watch every thought, act and energy and bring them into obedience to truth? We must be watchmen and help each other to escape from the cyclone that is already rumbling in the distance. We must watch on the things we are faulty in. If we do not, our besetting sins will cause a black mark on our book and will spoil our record."

Yes, how we need the mercy of God—now and through all eternity.

How shall we obtain it? How can we be sure of it?

Proverbs 28:13 spells out the way to obtain mercy: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

The prophet Isaiah also outlined the precise formula for obtaining God's mercy. Yes, we have sinned, but we need not remain in that broken condition. The first step is to seek the Lord, to desire His favor, and to pray. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Then we must make a right-about-face: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord." No halfway measure here. The wicked must actually "forsake his way," even "his

thoughts" that have gone astray. Then, the Lord will "have mercy upon him,...he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:6-7). God knew that we would not be always obedient, and so He arranged a way whereby we could have His mercy and pardon. But there are conditions. We must seek it in the God-appointed way, by confessing and forsaking our sins. Then "he will have mercy upon us and *abundantly pardon*." What a blissful response to our turning! Abundant pardon—what more could we ask!

How rich is this mercy of God? How complete is this pardon? It is so complete that God does not even remember the sins we committed, they are wiped as completely from our record as if we never committed them. This is the promise of the Lord through His prophet Ezekiel: "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live" (Ezek. 33:15-16). Can we imagine a more merciful God, who will not even remember our sin once we repent and turn from it? When it is erased, when we have confessed and forsaken our sin, the slate is wiped as clean as if it had never been marred.

Thank God for His merciful provisions for our needs!

There is a fable of a nun who claimed that she talked to God and received messages from God. One day she was telling a priest about it. The priest, doubtful of her story and wanting to check her out, made this request: "The next time you talk with God," he said, "ask Him about my life before I was converted." He knew it was a matter known only to himself and God.

The next time he saw the nun, he asked her if she had talked to God recently. "Oh, yes," was the

quick answer. "Did you ask God my question?" "Yes," she replied, "but He said He couldn't remember."

Only a fable, but it illustrates an important truth—that our merciful God does indeed *forget!*

The prophet Micah describes this complete forgiveness, this total blotting out of our sins, in these beautiful words:

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Mic. 7:18-20).

### Everlasting Mercy

We cannot conclude without mention of the supreme in mercy—the bestowing of eternal rewards upon faithful earthborns. Here is mercy at its highest height. Here is what Isaiah called "the sure mercies of David," the benefits of the everlasting covenant (Isa. 55:3). Here is mercy through which God shall show "in the ages to come...the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7).

Here is mercy that reaches "from everlasting to everlasting," but let us not think for a moment that it can be ours by wishing, or even longing. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children, to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Ps. 103:17-18). Imagine mercy *from everlasting*—from eternity past God has had those who feared

*"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).

*To think that in this little "handbreadth" of time we can gain such glory! such honor! such pleasure! such reward! It seems we would rush to obtain it; but we pass along as unconcerned as though there were no glorious future.*



*Why follow the way that will lead to that dark, dismal tomb, never no never to see light? I implore of you, each one, follow God as a dear child, then you can enjoy the pleasures of the world to come.*



*We shall keep progressing for billions and billions of years, if we are worthy to be made immortal.*

*And after all that, we shall have only begun to see the King in His beauty.*



*It would seem that every sane man and woman would choose to sing praises to God.*

*Realize you are in the presence of God and do not be rash to utter anything before Him.*



*"The saints shall take the kingdom and possess it forever and ever." In view of this wonderful promise, it would seem we would take hold and work as never before to be among these "saints."*



*Don't be self-deceived. It is easy to think we are pretty good fellows, when we are living in open rebellion to God.*



*Can you sing, "Tis sweet to follow Jesus" without doing violence to its message? It is sweet to follow Jesus—even through fiery trials, through everything that He requires—because we know it is leading us to the grand scenery of God, to the evergreen shore.*

and obeyed Him, upon whom He could bestow His mercy; and He will have the same *to all eternity future*. Imagine the breadth and depth of such mercy! Here is mercy "unto eternal life" (Jude 21).

When the New Age arrives in all its glorious splendor, there is

nothing we shall want more than God's mercy. Let us now busy ourselves getting our hearts right with God, that all of our sins may be blotted out by forgiveness and we be granted the privilege of joining those to whom God's mercy is everlasting, world without end. MM

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# The Kingdom of God: Is It Here Now?

(Part II)

**I**n this article we will address specific texts in reply to our subscriber's questions about the Kingdom of God.

Our friend writes:

*"In Daniel 2:1-45, God revealed to Daniel the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The dream included these facts: that the kingdom of God (v. 44) would be established in the days of the 4th kingdom. The 1st, Babylon; 2nd, Medes and Persians; 3rd, Alexander the Great; and the 4th was the Roman Empire.*

*"Jesus came in the days of the Roman Empire, and his forerunner, John the Baptist, announced the coming of Christ and His Kingdom (Matt. 3:2); Jesus Himself announced the coming of the Kingdom (Matt. 4:17), and also announced that Peter would open the doors of the church (i.e., kingdom, Matt. 16:13-19)."*

Let us address each point in succession. First,

## **Was the Kingdom Established During the days of the Fourth Kingdom?**

Jesus did indeed come during the days of the Roman Empire, but if His Kingdom had been established during that time, the prophecy would not have been accurately fulfilled.

Let us look more closely at the prophecy. There were other events to happen *after the power of the fourth kingdom was gone*. Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the image extended beyond the legs of iron. There were also "feet and toes...part of iron, and part of clay" (v. 42), indicating, by Daniel's God-given interpretation, that "the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken."

"And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of

men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." After the time of the fourth world kingdom, this prophecy pictures the existence of many small kingdoms, some strong, some weak. And the prophecy says, "In the days of these kings [the multiple small kingdoms typified by the ten toes, part of iron, part of clay] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." Daniel's explanation goes on to say that when the Kingdom of God is established, it will be worldwide, universal—there will be no competitive government anywhere on earth. For it will "break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."

As mentioned earlier, we have not yet seen this condition, either in the political or the ecclesiastical realm.

We should also observe that "stone" which was "cut out without hands," typifying the non-human origin of the Kingdom of God (it will not arise from the kingdoms of men), strikes the image not on the thighs, not on the legs, but "upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces" (v. 34). Had the Kingdom of God been set up during the days of the Roman Empire the "little stone" should have struck the image on the legs of iron. But it does not strike until time has reached all the way to the feet and toes of the image.

This dramatic striking will mark "finis" to all human governments and misgovernments, for at this point "the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold" are all "broken to pieces" and become "like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Dan. 2:35).

From this point forward there will be no question as to which kingdom will prevail, how far its authority will extend, or how long it will endure. It will grow until it fills the whole earth, and "it shall stand for ever" (v. 44).

## ■ "The Kingdom of Heaven Is At Hand"?

With this in mind, how do we understand Jesus' announcing the Kingdom in Matthew 4:17, or the words of His forerunner John the Baptist, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2)?

When we realize that four thousand years of prophecy had preceded the first advent of Jesus and His forerunner John the Baptist, it does not seem strange that the first advent of the King should be heralded as the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Kingdom. Not that the Kingdom was set up then, but in the advent of Christ the prophecies of God had their first visible fulfillment, confirming the faith of those who had believed the prophecies. With the arrival of the King, the first "component" of the Kingdom, we might say, became visible, even though He was not then the King.

It is also possible that those believing the prophecies did not know to what extent the prophecies would be fulfilled in their day. Many of the prophecies of Christ and His kingdom telescope the time between His first and second advents, so that one reading the prophecies does not immediately see the whole plan. Even though the facts were stated, we can readily understand

that those reading the prophecies were confused, thinking that Christ at His first coming would set up His Kingdom. But this was not the divine plan, as later they learned that there was yet "a long time" until the full and final fulfillment would come (see Luke 19:11, 18; Matt. 25:14; Acts 1:6-11).

## ■ Opening the Doors of the Kingdom

If we say that Jesus announced that "Peter would open the doors of the church (i.e., kingdom)," and base this upon His words in Matt. 16:13-19, we overlook the intent and meaning of the passage in its context. The passage does not even mention the "kingdom" but is about the true church, i.e., believers.

Reread the passage and you will see that Peter first affirms that Jesus is indeed "the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Then Jesus goes on to say, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). In this passage is a significant play upon words. The two words translated "rock" in our Common Version are not the same original word in the Greek. Jesus said to Peter, "Thou art Peter [Greek, *petros*, meaning "a stone, a splinter of a rock"], and upon this rock [Greek, *petra*, meaning "huge mass of

rock"] I will build my church."

Each individual who will be part of the kingdom of God becomes a *petros*, a stone or splinter of the great rock of divine truth. But the foundation of the Kingdom is the great mass of rock, i.e., divine knowledge. Jesus is describing the triumph of righteousness. God's plan cannot be defeated. He is making a statement about the people who will comprise the Kingdom, not about the Kingdom itself.

Jesus continues by giving Peter a solemn charge concerning the standard which must be allowed in the true church—the same standard which must be maintained among all who truly comprise Christ's church: "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." In other words, the same high standard must prevail within the true church that will prevail when the Kingdom is established. There is nothing here about Peter opening the doors of a church which is literally God's eternal kingdom.

## ■ The Kingdom Established in the Days of Jesus?

Quoting again from our friend's letter, we read:

***"In Mark 9:1, Jesus stated that the kingdom***

**W**ith all our heart we look forward to that day when the Kingdom shall come, and pray earnestly that we may be ready to have a part in all the great events that will accompany it.

**N**o human government or church can fulfill the promises of the Kingdom of God.

*of God would come with power before some of the people listening to His voice died."*

The verses following Mark 9:1 show what Jesus meant by this statement. "After six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them" (v. 2). Peter, James and John did see "the kingdom of God come with power" in that they saw Jesus transfigured before them, glorified, as He will be when the Kingdom comes. It was a visible experience, they "saw," but it was a vision and not the actual Kingdom itself.

If the actual Kingdom had been established before these people died, it would still be in existence today, and we would see the conditions of that Kingdom in our world today—which we cannot see. Matthew's account of the same transfiguration (17:1-9) says clearly that it was a vision, not an actual occurrence. An awesome experience to be sure, it was an experience that these disciples remembered the rest of their lives. Peter, writing years later to his brethren, refers to the Transfiguration, saying that they were "eye witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father

honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (II Pet. 1:16-18).

### **The Kingdom at Pentecost?**

*"In Acts 1:6-8, the disciples were asking about an earthly kingdom of Israel, but Jesus instead told them to return to Jerusalem until power from the Holy Spirit came upon them. This happened 10 days later on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2:1-47, and Peter opened the doors of the kingdom to the Jews. We find God adding the saved to His church (v. 47)."*

Again, we feel that our friend is confusing what is said about the church with the Kingdom.

Jesus' reply to the disciples' question, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel," gives no suggestion that the power they would receive would be "instead of" the literal kingdom but only a power that would reveal to them more details of information about the future, the Kingdom and the time of its arrival, as well as to support their ministry as His "witnesses ... in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (v. 8). Jesus, on the night of the Last Supper, told His disciples that the power He would be sending would be to them a source of knowledge and even a heavenly power to recall. This power He would send would "teach you all things" (John 14:26), it would "show you things to come," it

would "guide you into all truth" (John 16:13), it would "bring all things to your remembrance" (John 14:26), it would be a fountain of "living water," symbolic of divine truth (John 7: 37-39).

The power was truly a multi-purpose gift from Jesus. Luke, narrating the same commission, says that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47-48). Matthew's Gospel records that they were to teach their hearers "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). Mark's Gospel reveals the reason for the Holy Spirit power, that it was to confirm the word. "They went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20).

The apostle Paul recorded that this was indeed being done, also saying that the gospel being preached was a *hope*, not a fulfilled event. In Colossians 1, Paul says that the gospel which they preached was a gospel of "Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom" (Col. 1:23, 27-28). Nowhere are we told that they were preaching a kingdom which had already arrived and was then set up, with Christ as the King.

The apostle Paul wrote also that Jesus Christ "was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy" (Rom. 15:8-9). Here again was the reason for the Holy Spirit power, to confirm the Word, through "mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God...to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed" (Rom. 15:18-19). Visible

Divine power brought conviction as nothing else could, and this was the work of the early church. It was God working, it was God's power, and it was successful—thousands were added to the church—but it was not the fulfillment of the Kingdom prophesied.

### A Kingdom "Not of This World"—A Kingdom "Within"?

Our friend writes further:

*"Jesus had previously told Pilate during His trial that Jesus' kingdom would not be of this world, i.e., an earthly kingdom like the Roman Empire, China, etc.,*

*John 18:33-38. This explains Jesus' statement to the Pharisees in Luke 17:20-21 that 'the kingdom of God is within you,' that is within a person, i.e., a person's spiritual allegiance (Gal. 2:20)."*

When Jesus answered Pilate that His kingdom was "not of this world," He was not in any way suggesting that His kingdom would be a spiritual or non-physical entity. The word translated "world" in this text is not the word for the earth or the physical planet but is *cosmos*, which means, "the present order of things, the secular world." When Jesus said to Pilate, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this

end was I born and for this cause came I into the world," He was solidly affirming that He was indeed born to be a king, but His kingdom was not to be of that present arrangement, not of that *cosmos*. It would be a physical kingdom, but in no way belonging to that political arrangement.

Jesus' statement to the Pharisees, that "the kingdom is within you," might be more correctly translated, His royal majesty is in your midst. It was as though He said, The future King of the earth is right here with you, and you do not recognize Him. There is nothing indicating one's "spiritual allegiance," as being the "kingdom of God."

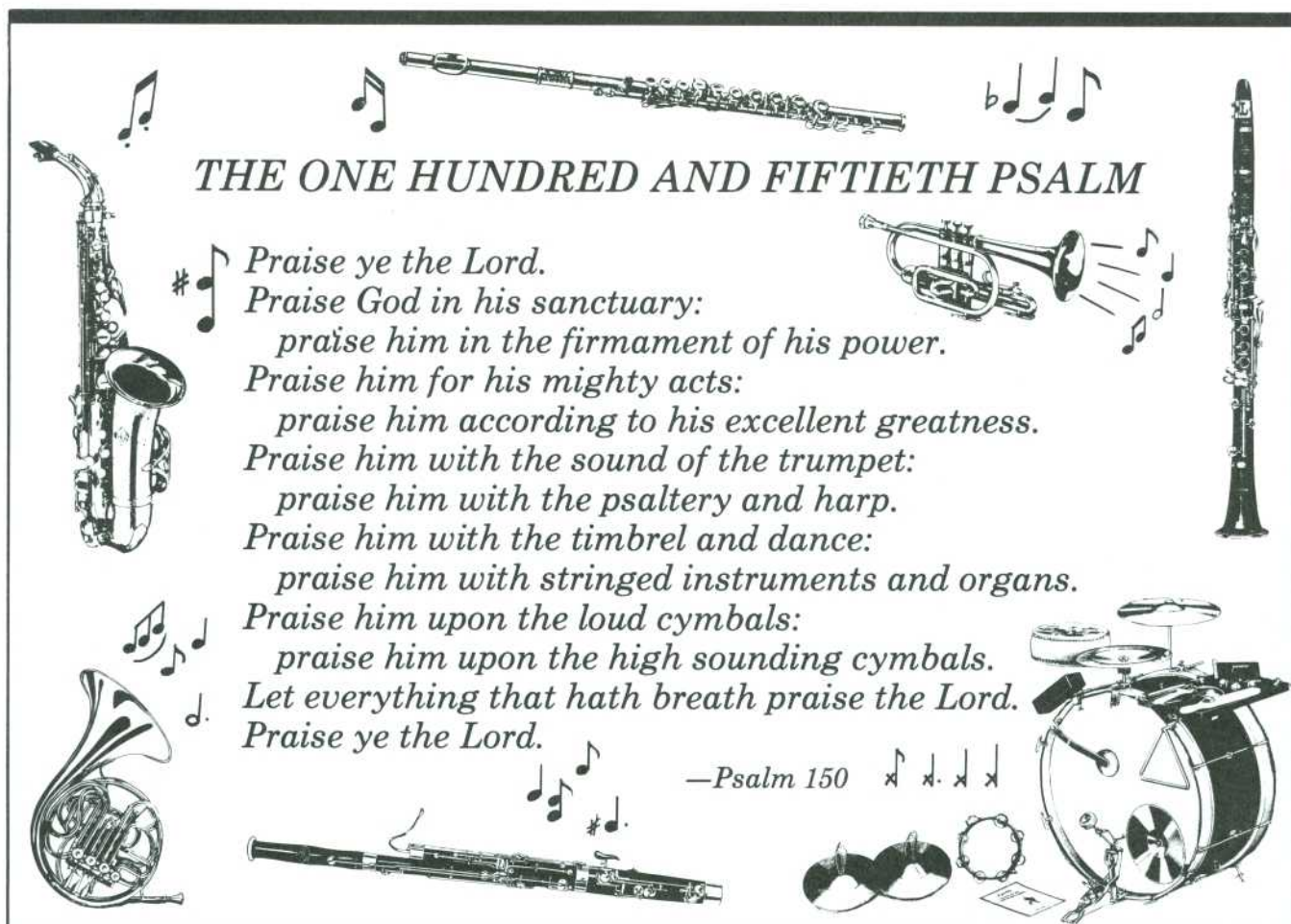
MM

(Concluded next issue)

## THE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH PSALM

*Praise ye the Lord.  
Praise God in his sanctuary:  
praise him in the firmament of his power.  
Praise him for his mighty acts:  
praise him according to his excellent greatness.  
Praise him with the sound of the trumpet:  
praise him with the psaltery and harp.  
Praise him with the timbrel and dance:  
praise him with stringed instruments and organs.  
Praise him upon the loud cymbals:  
praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.  
Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.  
Praise ye the Lord.*

—Psalm 150



## Learning to Obey

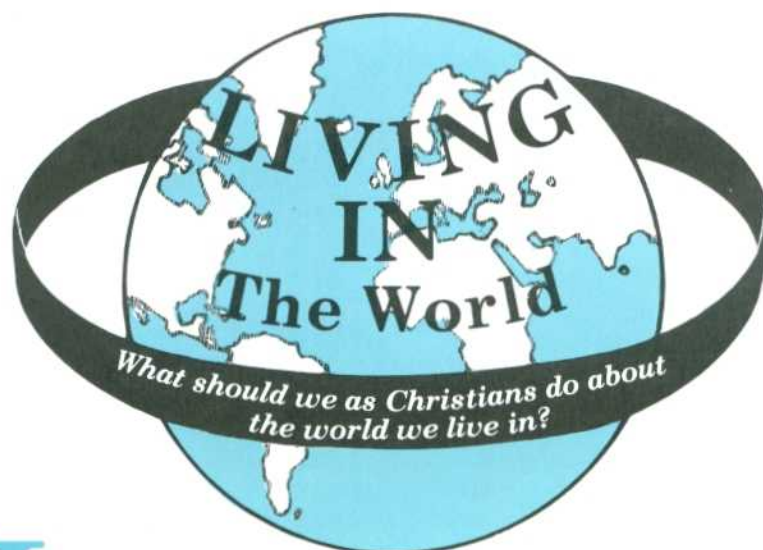
If we want the life God has offered us, we must learn to obey. And how can we better learn than by following the advice of the great Apostle Paul, who wrote: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (II Cor. 13:5). Without these self-examinations, we cannot possibly correct ourselves.

But we have many questions to ask ourselves. For example, How is our conduct? Can it meet the test? Do we serve God with our full capacity, or do we limit it to some of God and some of self?

Matthew 5:8 says that only the pure in heart will ever see God. Are we bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ? This is the test we must pass. We must test ourselves every day by asking, Would Christ do this or say that, or feel the way I do in a given circumstance?

Learning to obey is the most important thing in life. Discipline is absolutely essential. Its purpose: to condition God's soldiers for eternal life. The way of salvation calls for a strict training course. Submitting to this course means to exclude from our heart every particle of bitterness, prejudice, malice, impatience, every fleshly desire, evil thought and selfish intent, every quality not to the upbuilding this quarter. Though they do not cost anything, yet they accomplish much. In addition to all this, they make other people goodnatured, too. They produce their own image on others' souls, and a beautiful image it is.

—Contributed



If the world were a patient and a doctor were asked to examine him, the doctor's verdict would most certainly be that his condition is poor. There are times when his fever is excessively high, and there are other times when his blood pressure is frightfully low.

Our question is: Granted that the world is sick, what should we do about it? What should we as Christians do about the world we live in?

There are many answers to this question. At one extreme are those who say, "Nothing! There is nothing whatever that we can do about the world. The world is evil, it has always been evil, it will be evil, whatever anyone does. Withdraw from it, and close your eyes. Make a clean break with it. Let it go. You can't save the world, so why even think about it."

Then there are those of a different turn of mind who are the reformers. They can see a way to make things right, or so they think. And they are ready to campaign until their dreams come true.

However, neither of these answers is the answer Jesus gave. When we turn to Jesus, we do not see one who withdrew completely from the world and lived as a recluse. We see none of this in the gospel narrative. Rather, we see one who lived in the world—or, rather, above it. We see one who knew human nature better than any of us, how people can be outwardly pious and at the same time inwardly heartless. He knew that anyone who lived in the world would be tempted constantly by it, its power, its fashion, its pride. How did He know all this? Because He was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin."

Jesus withdrew from the world for His own spiritual refreshment and upbuilding. Sometimes to the desert, sometimes to the mountains, sometimes to the sea, He knew how to find solitude and time to commune with His Father. But He did not stay there as a recluse. He always went back to those He loved, to minister to them, and to preach His message of hope and salvation to all

who would listen, to show how one could be *in* the world yet not *of* the world.

Then there are the reformers, those who have one objective: to change the world. They see the world as basically good, and wish to right whatever is ill. And what a colossal undertaking it is.

We thank God for those who have made our world better.

Yet, when we turn to Jesus, we see that while He did not reject the world, neither did He try to reform it. He set up no program for world improvement. He did not appoint a committee to investigate highway robbery on the Jerusalem-Jericho Road. He did not organize a sit-down strike against the Roman Government. He did not try to get the Jews to integrate with the Samaritans, nor did He ever challenge the authority of the Sanhedrin. From the information given in the Gospels, you cannot find one example of Jesus as a social reformer.

Yet He was the greatest reformer who ever lived. How is this? He came showing a pattern of how human nature can be totally reformed—rather, transformed. Then He inspired others to reform themselves. In fact, it would be hard to mention any virtue which He did not support and promote, both by precept and example. Jesus did not want any life to remain as it was. He wanted all to change for the better, and He showed them how to make that change effective.

God has given people like you and me, ordinary people, both the will and the power to change the things that can be changed. He gives us the courage to tackle apparently hopeless situations in our own lives and turn them around so that they can become something worthy of God's recognition. He wants us to make every moral change that is possible to make. He wants us to be

the very best that we can be. He wants us to be not a social reformer, but a *self-reformer*. And there is a great difference between the two.

Jesus taught us to look at ourselves, to see what we have, and to make the very best of it. He taught us to say, Here is my life, my own unique life—what can I make of it, a bane or a blessing? He taught us to look closely at this life, to say to ourselves, What does God like? What does He dislike? What should I keep, and what should I dispense with? What should I change, and what should I accept about my life? I will live with it, and live with it gladly; not grimly, but gladly, graciously, gratefully. Furthermore, I know that I *can* live with it because I know that in a sense I am outside of it; I am not completely wrapped up in it; I am the one who does the wrapping. I can look at it, I can stand aside from it and examine it, I can think about it, I can make judgments about it. I am greater in the world I live in because of the God who gives me life. I am greater even in the life that I am now living; therefore, I can handle it. And when I say I accept it, I do not mean to say that I accept it passively. I mean that I accept it understandingly, transcendently, knowing that the very fact of accepting it will do something to me and it.

A secular French writer said this of humankind: "Man's greatness lies...in his decision to be stronger than his condition. And if his condition is unjust, he has only one way of overcoming it, which is to be just himself."

There is more than one way of dealing with any situation. Suppose that I look at myself and see that my disposition is not what it should be. I can say, "I am what I am—you can take me or leave me just as you like. But

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**J**esus wants us to make every moral change that is possible to make. He wants us to be the very best that we can be.

this is the way God made me." Or I can say, "I am a bundle of raw material the Lord has given me, to fashion into something special. I am going to do it. I don't have to stay the way I am. Just because this is natural to me, does not mean that I must remain as I am. God has given me a mind, and willpower, and the potential to become something better." This is the process of accepting what we are *creatively*.

Suppose you have a situation which seems to be more than you can cope with. Perhaps it is a sacrifice you must make, or a decision. Perhaps you feel you are being mistreated, unjustly criticized, or deprived.

Has anyone among us faced a more serious situation than Jesus? When He was facing death, what was His attitude? What did He say? Hear His pleading prayer to His Father: "Take this cup from me." Then His thoughts changed, as He  
(Continued on page 23)

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**J**esus was not a social reformer, but a self-reformer.

## How Long for the Earth?

*“How do you harmonize Gen. 8:22, ‘While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease’ (implying that the earth is eternal) with II Pet. 3:10, ‘The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up’?”*

The physical earth is without question eternal. We have the plainest statement of this fact in Ecclesiastes 1:4, that “the earth abideth for ever” (see also Ps. 148:4–6).

In Revelation 21:1, John tells us of his glorious vision, “I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.” John was not speaking of a new physical heaven and physical earth, but of the glorious future inhabitants of the earth. This is the same new heavens and earth that we are looking for. “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (II Peter 3:13). “Wherein dwelleth righteousness” shows clearly that more than physical masses of matter are being described; the “new heavens” and “new earth” are righteous people.

In II Peter 3:6 and 2:5, Peter speaks of God not sparing the old, ungodly world (the wicked inhabitants) but bringing in the flood upon them, “Whereby the world that then was, ... perished.”

In Gen. 8:22, when God said, “While the earth remaineth...” He could well have been speaking of the inhabitants, this race of mortal men, rather than of the physical earth. This use of “earth” is found elsewhere in Scripture. In the previous verse He says, “for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth...” And earlier, in chapter 6:11, referring to the people, it reads, “The earth also was corrupt before God.” In chapter 11:1, earth is again used in reference to the people: “And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.”

*An Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* by James Strong substantiates this, giving “nations,” as one definition of the Hebrew word *erets*, translated “earth” in Gen. 8:22. While “nations” remain

there shall be seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, and night and day. Ezekiel 37:21–22 uses “one nation” to describe the state of earth’s government when Christ becomes earth’s king. Then at the end of the millennium, the thousand-year reign of Christ and His saints, when the earth is filled with His glory, mortality will be forever banished and the former ‘earth’ will be no more.

The corrupt earth (inhabitants) of Noah’s time perished by the flood. And just as certain, by “the same word,” Peter says, the present heavens and earth which “are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment...of ungodly men” (II Peter 3:7, 10) will perish. But the new heavens and earth that we are looking for will be forever; those glorious immortals will need neither artificial light or sunlight, for the Lord God will give them light (Rev. 21:23). The physical heavens and earth, being destined to abide forever as stated earlier, shall survive the judgments of God, but the political heavens and earth shall pass away, be “burned up” (II Peter 3:10).

The apostle John distinguished between that which will pass away and that which will abide forever in I John 2:16–17, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, ... but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

The physical earth will remain, but the corrupt earth and all that pertains to it will pass away, with the result that in the glorious future age we will not have to contend with the tedious labors of planting and harvesting, or the discomforts of hot summers or cold winters or dark nights.

### Meat for the Israelites

*“If the Israelites had flocks and herds and much cattle when they came out of Egypt, why did the Lord have to provide manna for them? And why did they ask for meat?”*

The record states that the children of Israel did

have "flocks and herds and very much cattle" when they left Egypt.

In fact, the children of Reuben and Gad requested an inheritance that would include the broad and rich grazing lands east of the Jordan because they had "a very great multitude of cattle" (Num. 32:1). Their request was granted.

Moses had also stated a couple of times prior to this that one of their reasons for leaving Egypt was to be able to sacrifice to the Lord their God (Ex. 10:24-26).

As for the use of the animals in sacrificing to the Lord, it seems that this use was limited during the days of the wilderness wanderings. We are told only of the keeping of one Passover celebration, in the second year after they left Egypt. Most of the sacrifices commanded by the law given to Moses were not to be in effect until they should come into the land which the Lord their God had promised them (Lev. 23:10; 25:2). Even the Passover was instituted to be kept after they should arrive in the Land of Promise (Ex. 12:25).

Why might the Israelites not have used their animals for food? We are not told, but there may have been several reasons:

1) They were wandering in a wilderness where grazing land was very scarce. Sustaining a quantity of animals sufficient to support a large number of people may not have been possible.

2) They may have been saving their animals to use when they arrived in the Promised Land.

3) If they started slaughtering the animals for food they may not have had enough supply to support the great number of people. Numbers 11:18-22 indicates this. We read that after the people had murmured against the Lord and cried out for flesh, Moses said to the Lord, "The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month....Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?"

When the Israelites complained about the steady diet of manna, the Lord sent quail on two different occasions, the first being in the wilderness of Zin only a few days after they had crossed the Red Sea; the second time was when they were encamped at Kibroth-hattaavah.

On another occasion they were instructed to purchase meat, when they should "pass through the land of Esau." The Lord's command was, "Ye shall buy meat of them for money" (Deut. 2:6).

It is also possible that the Lord wanted the Israelites to be directly dependent upon Him. This was part of their training, "to humble" and "to prove" them, to encourage them to live by His laws (Deut. 8:2).

MM

## Living In the World

(Continued from page 21)

said, "Yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt."

This was His decision: to will God's will. He would accept what could not be changed, if such was the will of His Father. He could be greater than the situation, because He placed Himself in God's care.

What, then, can we do about living in the world? We can withdraw from it, or we can set ourselves against it and try to change it. But we will do much better if we look to ourselves, and try to perfect what God has given us, and use it as He directs. In this way, we can redeem ourselves and prepare one part of the world for the great change that is coming, the worldwide renovation that is shortly to begin.

When we have perfected *our* part of the world, we can look forward to the time when God will take care of the rest.

MM

## Not Just "Supposing"

*Don't start your day by "supposing"*

*That trouble is just ahead.*

*It's better to stop "supposing"*

*And start with a prayer instead;*

*A wonderful prayer of thanksgiving*

*For the wonders God has wrought,*

*Like the beautiful sunrise and sunset*

*God's gifts that are free, not bought.*

*For what is the use of "supposing"*

*The worst that could happen to you*

*And worry about some misfortune*

*That seldom if ever comes true!*

*But instead of just idly "supposing,"*

*Step forward to meet each new day*

*Secure in the knowledge He's near you,*

*To lead you each step of the way.*

*For "supposing" the worst things will happen*

*Only helps you to make them come true,*

*And you darken the bright happy moments*

*That the dear Lord has given to you.*

*So if you desire to be happy*

*And be rid of your misery and dread,*

*Just give up "supposing" the worst things*

*And look for the best things instead!*

# Can I Be Long-Suffering?

## Characters:

Ned Forrington ..... youth about 10 years old  
Mrs. Forrington ..... Mom  
Mr. Forrington ..... Dad

## Setting:

Mother is baking in the kitchen. Ned is repairing a wheel on the kitchen floor. Father comes through with hat and coat, obviously leaving.

DAD: Well, see you in about an hour.

MOM: Good-by, Dear.

NED: Where are you going, Dad? (*disappointed*) I thought you were going to take us to the lake today.

DAD: (*Putting his hand on Ned's shoulder.*) Well, Son, my plans have had to change a little, but we will still try to go. I am needed at the shop for a little while. There are a few things you can do while I am gone... You can rake Mrs. Schuster's lawn,...and take care of the trash cans, and...

NED: That's enough, Dad.

DAD: Hope to be back soon.

NED: (*Sits down rather dejectedly*) Dad can't even take off one whole day.

MOM: This will give you and I a chance to get ready to go. Why don't you go take care of Mrs. Schuster's leaves right away.

NED: (*In a matter-of-fact way*) I don't want to rake Mrs. Schuster's lawn.

MOM: (*Shocked*) Why, Ned! what's the matter?

NED: She's just the most ungrateful and critical old lady. It's (*mimicking her*) "Sonny, be careful of the flowers," or "Aren't you going

to sweep the sidewalk today?", or "Watch your feet! You stepped on my..."

MOM: (*interrupting*) Now, Ned....

NED: (*indignant*) Mother, I was doing her a favor. She could at least have said "Thank you"—just once!

MOM: That is why you and I have to learn thankfulness and appreciation when we are young, while we can still change.

NED: Well, I'm sure old Mrs. Schuster isn't going to change. So I'm *through* with her!

MOM: Yes, I'm afraid Mrs. Schuster *isn't* going to change, but you and I can. Come to think of it, I know a *young* man who is not always very thankful, sometimes he's really critical. Even complains when something *nice* is done for him.

NED: You aren't talking about ME, Mom!

MOM: I'm afraid I am.

NED: Oh, Mom, I'm not *that* bad, am I?

MOM: Well, let's just keep watch and see. Maybe I'm mistaken.

NED: Well, anyway, I'm *not* going to rake Mrs. Schuster's leaves. She can do it herself, or find someone else to do it. (*Ned exits*).

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NED: (*enters cheerfully*) What are you baking, Mom?

MOM: Your favorite cookies.

NED: Gooood! You'll put *lots* of nuts in them, won't you?

MOM: I just discovered the nuts are nearly gone, so I'm using in raisins instead.

NED: (*whining*) Aw, Mom, you know I don't like raisins in cookies. Can't you go buy some nuts?

MOM: Not now, Son.

NED: (*complaining*) Mom, I can't find the tools I was using to fix my bike.

MOM: Whose tools are they?

NED: They're Dad's.

MOM: Did you put them away?

NED: No, Dad must have.

MOM: Maybe he put them where they belong.

NED: I'll go and look. (*exits*)

(*Telephone rings, Mother answers*)

MOM: (*on telephone*) Good morning....Oh, Jim. ...That's too bad. What time do you think you will be home then?...Ned says he's not going to rake Mrs. Schuster's lawn any more because she is ungrateful and fussy....I think Ned needs a lesson. Maybe you can help when you get home....Come as soon as you can. Good-bye.

(*Mother takes cookies out of the oven and puts them out to cool. Ned enters.*)

NED: Mother, isn't it about time Dad got home?

MOM: He just called. He won't be home until about one o'clock. By then maybe the sun will be out again.

NED: Then we will still go to the lake?

MOM: We're still planning it, Ned. Have you taken care of the trash cans?

NED: No. I wish the garbage men would wash out the cans and put them back *themselves*. I have to fix my *bike* yet.

MOM: You know you won't be going anywhere until your chores are done.

NED: I'll take care of the garbage cans *right now*. I'm as hungry as a bear. Something hot would sure taste good. (*exits*)

(*Mother puts cookies away and sits down to read her Bible.*)

NED: (*enters*) It's clearing, Mom. The sky is so blue. (*Stops abruptly when he sees his mother reading her Bible*) When are we going to eat lunch?

MOM: You can fix something for yourself, dear. I've already had my lunch.

NED: (*looks wonderingly at his mother, then goes to the refrigerator; opens refrigerator and looks in*) There isn't much here....*cold* squash, *cold* beans, *cold* gravy. Guess I'll have to settle for a peanut butter sandwich (*begins to fix sandwich*).

MOM: I was just looking up Bible verses on thankfulness, contentment and praise. Let's see, there's one here..."In everything give thanks." And then I like this one, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits." These are good verses to keep in our minds. They will help us to be thankful.

(*a few moments of silence*)

NED: Mom, are you too tired to fix lunch today?

MOM: No, I'm fine.

NED: Then what's the matter?

MOM: Well, I understand that when someone isn't grateful for what you do, you just stop *doing* anything for them.

NED: (*looks at Mom*) I don't understand.

MOM: Well, someone wasn't grateful for breakfast this morning. Said the eggs were too hard, so...he can cook for himself.

(*Ned sits down at the table, and bows his head for a short blessing. Father walks in just then.*)

MOM: Why, Dad, you're early.

DAD: (*sitting down with a sigh of relief*) We solved the problem, so...I came home. Well, how's everything?

NED: (*glumly*) I just fixed myself a sandwich.

MOM: (*cheerfully*) And I was just looking up some Bible verses on thankfulness and praise.

DAD: They're always good...Ready to go, Son? Mrs. Schuster's lawn raked?

NED: (*hesitatingly*) Uh,...uh....I don't want to work for Mrs. Schuster any more, because she isn't grateful.

DAD: Is that the way we treat people who aren't grateful?

MOM: Well, Ned thinks so. And I've been thinking we ought to try that plan here at home. Ned complained about the eggs being too hard this morning, so I've decided to let Ned prepare his own meals. And Ned was unhappy

because I put raisins instead of nuts in his cookies, so Ned can make his own cookies—that will save me some time. Ned also complained about the way the garbage collectors left the trash cans.

**DAD:** Let's tell the trash collection company they don't need to stop here any more. Ned can bury the garbage. That's what I used to do.

**MOM:** (to Dad) Then Ned complained because you had put away the tools he'd been using on his bike—

**DAD:** Well, Ned can buy his *own* tools for his projects.

**NED:** Dad! Mom!—you...you don't mean it!

**DAD:** Well, I always thought that the Christian way was to be long-suffering with others. If God stopped doing things for us every time *we* were ungrateful.

**NED:** I guess I've been treating you and Mom the same way Mrs. Schuster treats me. I *don't want to be like Mrs. Schuster.*

**DAD:** Well, Son, the time to start changing is *right now*. None of us are naturally grateful. We have to *learn* to be grateful, and the place to learn is right here at home.

**MOM:** If we're grateful, we won't be complaining. A complaining, fussy spirit pushes out a thankful spirit. The two cannot live together.

**NED:** (enthusiastic) I am going to rake Mrs. Schuster's lawn *right now*. All right? I'll be back soon. MM

## Few

Just as Jesus foretold, there are only a few in the narrow way. Multitudes followed Jesus, but only one hundred twenty tarried in Jerusalem to receive power from on high. There were only eight saved in Noah's day. Let us not be discouraged but press steadily on.

Mississippi

R. S.

## Bearing Fruit Unto Holiness

I was thinking about the graciousness of our heavenly Father in providing us such a wonderful world in which to live. It is filled with beauty, opportunity, and His marvels.

This evening I was reading what Christ said in Matthew, commonly called the Sermon on the Mount, in the Phillips Bible. What He was telling the people (or His disciples) was the manner of person they would have to become to achieve immortality. If I were to be closely associated with anyone for any length of time, I certainly wouldn't want anyone who cannot tell the truth, who has a terrible temper, who doesn't respect my property, who might kill someone. I would want to be in association with such as Jesus describes: those of a humble, forgiving, tenderhearted, compassionate nature, honest and truthful all the time. I would want to be close to those who shared the same love for the Father in Heaven and did His bidding.

It takes a lifetime of overcoming and growing into a mature Christian who sees the greatest of all prizes awaiting him; enduring sound doctrine, and bearing fruit to demonstrate his convictions.

Louisiana

D. K.

## God Will Reward

There is no greater work a person could be engaged in than to kill the "old man" of the flesh. If we can overcome the flesh and our carnal thoughts, God surely will reward us for our victory, for He is faithful.

While in this life, the most important thing is to obey what we know. It is never too late to learn. If we can incorporate into our life the death to sin, we will surely have an entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of God.

Haiti

E. D.

## Obituary

Howard Sisson

As this issue goes to press (October 18), we have just received word of the death of a long time friend and brother, Howard Sisson.

Brother Sisson first learned of the faith when Gospel Car missionaries were traveling near his home in Central New York, about 1930. Impressed by its reasonable and forthright presenting of the Bible, he decided immediately to investigate—thoroughly. The Rev. Maud Hembree, who was then pastor, said of him that she never knew anyone to ask so many questions. But true religion does not fear the stiffest investigation, and in time he was convinced that it was indeed true.

Brother Sisson took seriously the command found in the book of Deuteronomy, "Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children." The earliest memories of both of his daughters are of memorizing and reciting Scripture verses—not occasionally, or weekly, but daily. Not only did he encourage them to memorize key Bible passages, but he made them feel it was a really important thing to do, something they would always value.

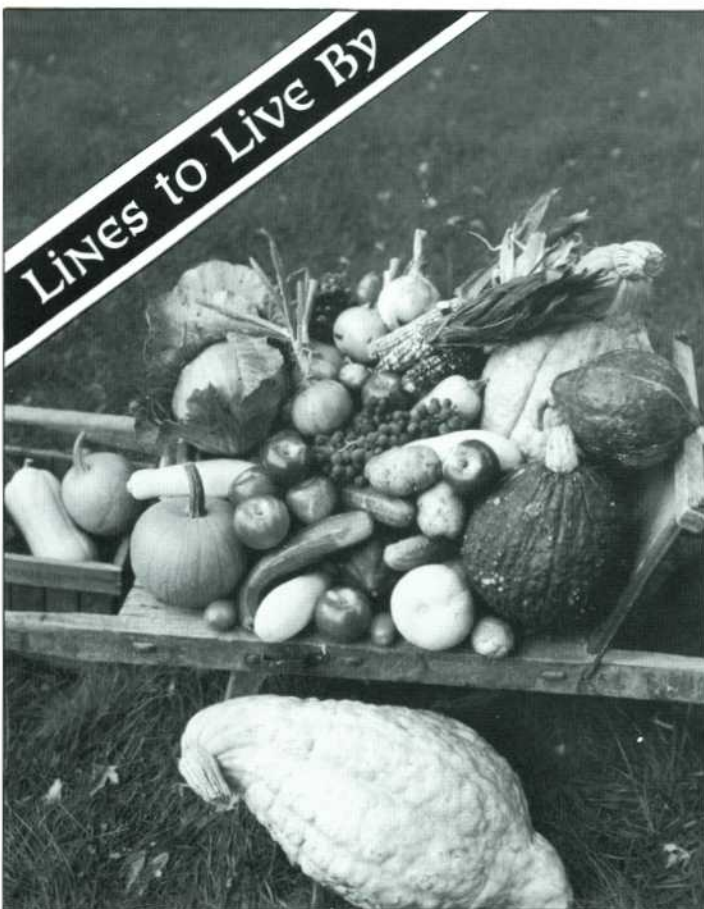
And memorizing alone was not enough. He was of the opinion that nothing was properly memorized if not properly reviewed. For this purpose, a "verse book" was maintained, in which the reference of each verse memorized was noted, along with the first few words, so that "you can always get it started" (though he added that the "starter" was for him, not the children). However pressing the work on the farm, he always set aside time to review Bible verses.

In 1965 he relocated with his family to the environs of Rochester, to be near the church.

Brother Sisson was an able defender and communicator of what he believed, and was never afraid to speak of it to any who inquired.

Brother Sisson taught the boys' Bible School Class for a number of years, and took an active part in all Church Bible classes and studies as long as he was able.

He is survived by his wife Lucy, and two daughters, Mrs. Beverly Evans, and Ruth Sisson.



*We thank You, Lord, for godly men,  
Who show by word and deed  
Commitment to Your will and plan,  
And Your commandments heed.*

*Sow an act and reap a habit. Sow  
a habit and reap a character. Sow  
a character and reap a destiny.*

*Happiness adds and multiplies as  
we divide it with others.*

*No home runs smoothly unless  
kindness oils the machinery.*

*'Tis wise to flee when tempted—  
A fool is one who'd stay;  
For those who toy with evil  
Soon learn it doesn't pay.*

*If we think no more of ourselves than we ought to think, if we seek not our own but others' welfare, if we are prepared to take all things as God's dealings with us, then we may have a chance of catching from time to time what God has to tell us. In the Mussulman devotions one constant gesture is to put the hands to the ears, as if to listen for the messages from another world. This is the attitude which our minds should assume, if we have a standing place above and beyond the stir and confusion and dissipation of this world.*

*We want to hear what God will say.*

*My life shall touch a dozen lives before this day is done,  
Leave countless marks for good or ill 'ere sets the evening sun;  
This is the wish I always wish, the prayer I always pray:  
"Lord, may my life help other lives it touches by the way."*

*We must adjust ourselves to the Bible—never the Bible to ourselves.*

# 'Twas God Who Hurled

*"But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure His indignation. It is He who made the earth by His power, who established the world by His wisdom; and by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens....I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself; nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps. Correct me, O Lord, but with justice; not with Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing."*

—Jer. 10:10, 12, 23-24 (NASB)

**'Twas God who hurled the rolling spheres  
And stretched the boundless skies;  
Who form'd the plan of endless years  
And bade the ages rise.**

**From everlasting is His might,  
Immense and unconfined;  
He pierces through the realms of light,  
And rides upon the wind.**

**He darts along the burning skies;  
Loud thunders round Him roar;  
All heav'n attends Him as He flies;  
All earth proclaims His pow'r.**

**Ye worlds, with ev'ry living thing,  
Fulfill His high command;  
Mortals, pay homage to your King,  
And own His ruling hand.**