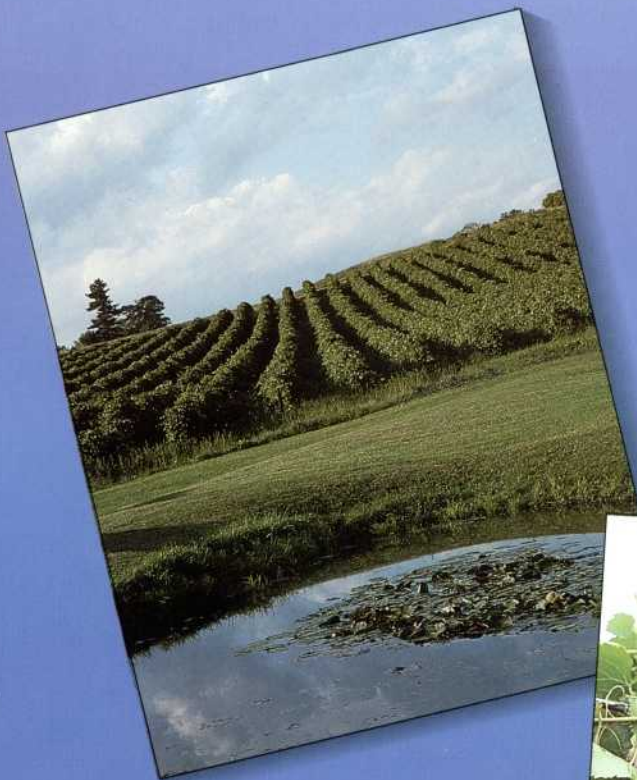


Megiddo Message

*As we have
gathered in rich
harvest from
our fields...*

*So gather Thou
thanksgiving
from our hearts.*



A Future Full of HOPE

We like to think about the progress of the human race, the steady advance of recent centuries which has made possible the many comforts and advantages we enjoy. We like to think it will continue. At the same time, we witness a moral deterioration that threatens the very life of anything we dare to call civilization. If only a concerted effort by the human family could attack the foes of sensuality, lust, and lawlessness of every sort; if only the human race could unite in the abolition of war, and poverty, and disease!

But the Bible tells us that this will never happen. Unaided man will never save himself from the program of ruin he has designed.

At the same time, the Bible tells of hope. There is hope—glorious hope—in the plan of God!

A bit of history from the Fourth Century B.C. points up this fact. It was during the exile of the Jews in Babylon. Their national life had been shattered. How could it be? Were they not the people of God? Yet their beloved city Jerusalem lay in ruins, their temple destroyed and their leadership deported to a foreign land. How could it have happened?

About this time an elderly prophet named Jeremiah was living among the ruins in Jerusalem. But he had not been ruined. His hope was in God, and he wrote a remarkable letter to his fellow countrymen exiled in Babylon. By God's providence this letter has been preserved, and is now part of the book of Jeremiah (chapter 29).

The spirit of the letter is buoyant, confident, expectant. It is the Word of the Lord. "I know the plans I have in mind for you—it is Yahweh who speaks—plans for peace, not disaster, reserving a future full of hope for you" (Jer. 29:11, JB). A future full of hope! Why? Because God has plans for you, plans for your welfare, plans full of hope.

Come back, Jeremiah, to our troubled world. Say it again. In God there is hope!

But Jeremiah has more to say. A future full of hope is not a natural sequence of events that will come about of itself. Jeremiah's depth of insight into God's ways of

working sees an open obligation on the human side. It is as if God said, You do this, then I'll do that. "You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you, says the Lord." Here is the real basis of hope: a people seeking God.

Jeremiah's expectant hope was not the result of day-dreaming or wishful thinking. Don't look for easy answers to hard problems, he says. False prophets may tell you that within a few years you will be back in your beloved Zion. Don't believe it. The Lord is punishing you for your transgressions, and there is no escape until He sees fit to provide it.

Second, Jeremiah was telling them to *use* their exile as an opportunity. Were they captives in a heathen land? They should make the most of it. They should not waste their years regretting, or wishing they could be elsewhere. They should live for God right where they were.

This is a lesson for all of us. Delayed action does not improve circumstances. Waiting for a more propitious time to do what needs to be done is always futile. The time for action is *now*.

And above all, remember to seek God. "You will seek me and you will find me when you seek me with all your heart" (v. 13). That message comes close to us. How much do we really want to resolve our problems? How diligently are we seeking God? Do we seek Him *with all our heart*?

For us too, the future is full of hope! Soon "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ...when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (II Thess. 1:7-10).

That day is coming. In the meantime, there is no need to look for easy answers. Don't suspend present responsibility while you wait for better times. Do the work that God has laid out for you right here and now. This is the only way to be sure of a share in that "future full of hope" which God has laid up for all who diligently seek Him.

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."
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- 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 His soon-coming Kingdom.
- 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.
- 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 God's will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

Soon-coming events ...

THE HERALD AND THE KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: ...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

The Bible pictures all events, all men and all nations moving together toward this one God-ordained climax, when "the kingdoms of this world" will become "the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15), a kingdom in which all will enjoy the blessings of peace, equity and prosperity. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants, bringing to reality the promise of our Lord in His prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

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Our cover photo was taken south of Rochester, New York, near Naples.

Megiddo Message

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Can I ^{Still} Give THANKS?

You may wonder why anyone who has *my* faith, or enjoys *my* blessings, or shares *my* opportunities should ask such a question. Can *I*, in my situation, *still* give thanks?

But I am a person (and I believe I am not alone) who associates thankfulness with the great and the spectacular. If I very narrowly escaped what looked like sure disaster; or if I were suddenly delivered from excruciating pain; or if I inherited some very special treasure I never dreamed could be mine—*then* I would be thankful.

Or I connect thankfulness with *other* people and *other* places. We send emergency relief to stricken inhabitants of the South, or the West or the Far East. *They* should be thankful. Our country sends food provisions to starving Africans. *They* should be appreciative. But *I* who have so much, can *I* be thankful?

The question bothers me. It plagues me. It devastates me, simply because I know how irresponsible I have been when it comes to showing a lively gratitude to God for all that He has done for *me*, both temporally and spiritually.

Did you ever stop to think that an abundance of blessings can actually be a hindrance to real gratitude? that it is possible to be so busy using and enjoying our blessings that we neglect to give thanks to the Giver?

Another difficulty in my thankfulness is the fact that there are *so many* blessings that I do not know where to begin. If I had only a few, I think it would be different. As a child I longed for certain things. If only I could have a new dress like Sally's. Or all the strawberries I wanted. Or something special that I could call my very own. But now, God has met all my needs and so much more—and can I *still* give thanks? I used to think, Why not take a pencil and paper and make a list? But alas!—today I would need a computer. The multitude of my blessings is so great that I could not possibly list them all. And the question: Can I still give thanks, even when I do not know where to begin?

Another difficulty is in remembering the ordinary blessings of my life. I awoke this morning; an alarm clock told me the hour, a common little mechanism; yet how many people have never seen such a device? And before I had been awake a single hour, I had already used dozens of seemingly ordinary blessings. Electric light at the flick of a switch; water at the turn of a faucet, hot or cold to suit my whim; a soft, dry towel which I had neither to spin thread for, nor weave. A comb, a toothbrush, a bar of soap; snaps, buttons, comfortable, colorful clothing, a pair of shoes—I could go on and on. I prepared the morning meal for my family and used a dozen *more* "ordinary" blessings—dishes, spoons, a paring knife, a dishcloth, a smooth clean tabletop, a pantry stocked with good wholesome foods to meet my needs—all such very *common* blessings in my life, yet any one of which I would miss, were it suddenly removed. Am I thankful?

I pursued my regular work through the day, enjoying so many more common blessings—sunlight, and window glass to let it into my home; a stove to heat; a refrigerator to cool; a broom, a mop, a cloth, a vacuum cleaner; a pencil, a pad of paper, a printed book—and—God help me in my counting! And when the day is done, a soft-pillowed, clean-sheeted bed where I can rest. Can it be—all this for *me*, while millions crave only a place to lay their heads to sleep or forget their misery, or...to die?

I can walk, and talk, and move. I can think, and work, and pray. I am blessed with health, home, happiness and Christian fellowship; plus hope, promise and understanding—and a God whom I can approach anytime in prayer—*what more could I ask?*

And then, the thought struck me: If all I call my own were suddenly taken away and I were left alone in the world, alone with only my faith in God to sustain me; alone, with all my creature-comforts gone; alone, with *survival* my only blessing—could I *still* give thanks?

I think of those who suffer from crippling disease and incurable pain. Were such a life to be mine, could I *still* give thanks?

I think of those who have lost their homes in floods or fires; whose families have been taken by accident or sickness; people who cannot enjoy a normal life. And those words haunted me all the more: Could I face it, and *still* give thanks?

I think of how many days I have lived as though I were the source of all my blessings. How often I have given thanks to God for a new day, and then turned around and *lived* as though the day were mine alone. I didn't *feel* thankful; but did God ever say we should thank Him only when we *feel* like it?

Today is Thanksgiving Day. The day has nationally-proclaimed significance. I worship. I pray. I sing. I do all the things a good Christian is expected to do. But all this will be only giving God a polite nod unless I am able to scrape away all the pulp of outward expression and get at the core, the real meaning of Thanksgiving in *my* life.

My mind runs to a bit of history, and I see a group of men and women, suffering, sick and dying. I see this courageous band enduring three and one-half months of agony on the Atlantic in a leaky boat. I see them clearing land and making homes in a place where wilderness and winter and disease all seem united against them. I see them, or barely half of them, observing a time of thanksgiving less than a year later, with a band of Indians as their guests. They were giving thanks—for what? their abundance? their affluence? No, their gratitude was for survival—for life itself, and for the opportunity to pursue life in this new land.

I picture myself in their situation. Could I have been there and given thanks? Could I still give thanks, if all I

had to be thankful for were *survival itself*?

Yet the words of these great people of our American history were but echoes of the expressions of thanks offered by our forbears of another day and place. The Hebrews sang their songs of thanksgiving and praise even in times of adversity and suffering. Their song strikes a familiar chord in our ears. We have heard it before;

"O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever."

Simple words, simple praise, simple thanks; yet I wonder—were I a captive Daniel in Babylon, could I have sung it? Or were I a Christian missionary in the days of the apostles, despised, forsaken, persecuted, deprived of all that makes life as I know it complete and comfortable—could I still give thanks?

Were I like Jeremiah, hunted for my life, or suffering in a dungeon; or like Joseph, young and energetic, yet compelled to languish in an Egyptian prison for two whole years—and that, unjustly—could I have faced life as it came to them, and still been thankful?

But thank God, these testings are not mine. God has spared me their sufferings. And yet, I have been given my own life, and from it I must learn the same lessons they learned.

God may not always deem it wise or necessary to continue giving me the abundance of things I now have. Perhaps even tonight He may see fit to "help" me by taking away something which seems most essential to me. If He does, can I still call this day *Thanksgiving*? Can I still kneel tonight and say, "Thank you, Lord, for all your goodness to me; your mercy endures forever"?

I must remember that I am not here just to enjoy life; I am not here to revel in blessings. My objective is not pleasure—but perfection. And *however* God may bless me and help me toward that goal, can I *still* give thanks?

*Thou who hast given so much to me,
Give one thing more; a thankful heart;
Not thankful when it pleases me,
As though Thy blessings had spare days,
But such an heart whose pulse may be Thy praise!*

This is my prayer; won't it be yours also?

MM

***Thank you,
Lord, for all
your goodness
to me; your
mercy endures
forever!***

CAPTURED

by Jesus Christ

The apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Phillipian brethren, made this very positive and aspiring statement about his personal relationship to Jesus Christ and the great plan of salvation:

"Not that I have secured it yet, or already reached perfection, but I am pressing on to see if I can capture it, because I have been captured by Jesus Christ. Brothers, I do not consider that I have captured it yet, only, forgetting what is behind me, and straining toward what lies ahead, I am pressing toward the goal, for the prize to which God through Christ Jesus calls us upward" (Phil. 3:12-14, Goodspeed's Translation).

"To see if I can capture it... because I have been captured." Paul was not his own commander in charge of his own life. His goals were not those of Mr. Average Citizen of Rome. He was living in captivity to a nobler purpose. He had been captured by Jesus Christ.

We are privileged to know how this came about. Following the ministry of Christ, God had work to be done. He had people over a wide area of the Roman Empire to be enlightened with His saving gospel. Whom would He select to go and find them?

On the road that led into the city of Damascus in Syria God designated His man, this young Jewish firebrand, this man from Tarsus. Even when Jesus called him this zealous

crusader was bearing papers authorizing him to root out the Christian community in the city of Damascus and drag them to Jerusalem in chains to be tried before the Sanhedrin.

But Saul never carried out his plans. Suddenly there was a blaze of light from heaven "above the brightness of the sun." He fell to the ground. Limp. Speechless. Blind. Then he heard a voice: "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." Jesus Christ Himself had returned from heaven to appoint Saul for this special mission.

From that moment on Saul's planning for himself was over. His whole life career was redirected. He was captured. From that moment on he was *Christ's* man, ready to do *Christ's* work.

We have not seen the light from heaven; ours has not been the dramatic conversion of the apostle Paul. But have we been captured? Has the same glowing hope that captured Paul captured *us*? Have we that sense of belonging totally to another, that we are not our own, that we are not free to think our own thoughts, or speak our own words, or harbor our own feelings? A captive is not his own master; he is not free to come and go at will. Nothing about him can he claim as his very own; all is the property of his master.

Is this our relationship to God and Christ? Is everything about us and within us dominated by the Divine

will? Are we ready to say to anything and everything He allows, "Thy will be done"? Is Paul's depth of conviction ours also? Have we within our consciousness an uninterrupted sense of "Christ in you the hope of glory," pervading all, directing all, motivating all? Are we ready to do or suffer or give or be anything, if only the final outcome be *life with Christ*?

Thanks be to God for our share in this highest of all high callings. If we will only grasp it, ours is the same sublime prospect that captured Paul. We are not left to live and then pass into nonentity like millions and billions of other mortals. The great God has taken notice of us and called us to carry on in our day the same noble work that was done by the apostles and prophets in former generations. We are in the same high service; we are part of the same plan. We are bound for the same destination. Are we so captured by it that the thought of it is with us every waking moment of every day? Do we depend upon it for the directing of every energy, every thought, every satisfaction?

This was the attainment of the apostle Paul, but it was not his point of beginning. As he began, he was every bit a man of the world. From a human standpoint, he had much in which he could glory. His was no ordinary blood—he was a descendant of Israel. And he belonged to a

notable tribe, the tribe of Benjamin. As for the law, he was a Pharisee—and no ordinary one; he prided himself on belonging to the strictest sect of the Pharisees. And he took no liberties with the rituals of adherence, none whatever. Judged by the law of Moses, he was faultless. His zeal was unquenchable; his fervor was boundless. Were they to oppose the followers of the cause of Jesus Christ? He went further and actively persecuted them.

However, after enumerating all this, with one stroke he obliterates these “advantages” as worthless—even less. “For the sake of Christ I have come to count my former gains as loss. Why, I count everything as loss compared with the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (verses 7–8).

...I Have Lost Everything

“I count everything loss” was the dramatic statement. Everything he had worked so hard to achieve—his education, his temporal advantages, his family heritage, his prestige, his social station and religious rank, all that fired a young man of ambition—he gave it all up. For what? What was it, Paul, that caused you to “count everything as loss”? “Why,” he answers, “I count everything as loss compared with the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have let go of everything—I call it all ‘rubbish’—in order to gain Christ and be united to him.”

Paul had a realistic view of life. He knew the Scriptures. He had read the solemn truth written in the Psalms, that the end of the natural man is to go to the generation of his fathers and never, never through all eternity, see light. He knew also that this was the fate of good men, honorable men, educated men, even wise and astute men of this world. For “Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish” (Ps. 49:20). He saw the

facts as they were. All of Paul’s ancestors were dead, and his contemporaries—and he himself—would shortly be as dead, with no assurance of ever escaping that dread condition. But here was Jesus Christ, alive forevermore, eternally victorious over the human race’s most formidable enemy: death. Here was a way out. What a fool he would be not to take it!

His decision had the rare quality of consistency. He aspired to the very *highest* goal; and when he learned that that goal was not in the Pharisaic perfection he had once aimed for, he forsook it immediately to accept the higher call. In so doing he renounced the heritage he once considered noteworthy, the family status and all the family pride, as rubbish! Why? To attach himself to the Son of God and His royal, living family! Hence his radical change of values: “I count all things but loss.”

It was as if a man who had been keeping books on his business suddenly realized one day that he had been putting everything on the wrong side of the ledger—what he supposed were credits were really debits, and the debits, credits!

With this new spiritual perspective came a new view of life. Now he set everything the world had to offer beside what Christ was offering him. And how did they compare? “I am willing to count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ my Lord.”

Paul had a new set of ambitions, a new priority in his life. New long-range goals possessed him. Formerly he had set his heart on the goals

of this world and its selfish, human satisfactions. Now he wanted life, *life*, LIFE! He knew he would die one day, and he wanted the assurance that he would live again—live eternally. And there was only *One* who could give him that life: Jesus Christ. So he discarded as worthless everything that pertained to the old course, everything that served the old ends, and went forward toward Christ and LIFE.

Paul was a man of constancy. He wasn’t *for it* one day and against it the next. From the day of his conversion, Paul committed everything to Christ—his scholarship, his money, his strength, his time, his will, the vigor of his body, the acuteness of his mind, the devotion of his passionate heart. And he made his decision hold, until the day came when he could cry triumphantly, “The last drops of my sacrifice are now falling....I have fought the good fight. I have completed the course; I have kept the faith. As for what remains, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me—and not only to me, but also

If we will only grasp it, ours is the same sublime prospect that captured Paul. We are in the same high service; we are part of the same plan. Are we so captured by it that the thought of it is with us every waking moment of every day?

to all who have loved his appearing” (II Tim. 4:6–8, Moffatt).

Oh, the glory and joy of that realization! In that moment of triumph,

Paul turned from the verdict of men to the verdict of God. Yes, he knew he would stand before the Roman judgment seat, and he knew what his verdict would be. But this man whose life was so dedicated to Christ was indifferent to that. What did it matter if Rome condemned him, so long as he could look forward to hearing his Master's "Well done!"

...I Want to Know Him—His Power

Paul declared, "I long to know Christ and the power which is in His

A captive is the property of his master. Is this our relationship to God and Christ? Are we ready to say to anything and everything He allows, "Thy will be done"?

resurrection, and to share in His sufferings and die even as He died; in the hope that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."

What is it to know Christ? To know, in the fullest sense of the word, is to understand, comprehend, appreciate, esteem. Surely we are ready to say with Paul, "I long to know Christ." How he longed to fully comprehend the breadth and depth of His holiness, His relationship with His Father, His love of truth, His strength of character, His purity of soul!

Oh, how *we* also long to *know Christ*, to understand and esteem Him for all He accomplished, for all that He means to us, and for the perfect example He left us!

And *why* did Paul long to know Christ? There was a very practical reason: to become acquainted with

the power that raised Him from the dead. Here again was the prospect of life beyond death, the prospect that caused this dynamic man, charging full speed away from Christ, to stop short and redirect his path. He had been running full speed, but in the wrong direction. There was nothing to do but stop, make a U-turn, and then start running again. Zealous as he had been before, he was stimulated to even greater energy now because he was running for LIFE!

The hope of a resurrection from the dead, the grand promise envisioned in the scrolls of the prophets, was now his living hope, for Jesus Christ was a living testimony! No longer was it mere tradition or hearsay. Now Paul himself had seen and heard One who had been as mortal as himself; who had died a publicly-witnessed death—there was no question about that—who had now been gifted with immortality. Christ had experienced the triumph of the resurrection, then the glory of being taken into the very presence of His Father where He had been crowned with immortality. This was what Paul wanted, that immortal crown, that deliverance from death, that guarantee of life.

Is it not our supreme goal also? In the words of this same dynamic Apostle, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. If the dead rise not, then is our preaching vain, and our faith is also vain" (I Cor. 15:19, 14-15). What is there for anyone without the surety of the resurrection? For in due time we shall all die. What are the highest honors, or the greatest wealth, or the most delightful pleasures—without *life*?

But how clearly Paul saw also that this was no *automatic* achievement. It was not something he could simply claim. There was a goal to be reached, a standard to be attained, and at the time of this writing he did not feel he had attained it.

What was he doing about it? Was he just standing still, hoping that someday, somehow, the crown could be his? Far from it! This man of action was *pressing*, fighting, forcing himself on, "if by any means" he might "attain"—if by *any* means, he said, and he meant it!

...I Want to Share His Suffering

Along with knowing Christ, and the power of His resurrection, Paul wanted also to share in Christ's suffering. Is it possible that when he said this he was wanting to compensate, in some small way, for the suffering he had caused his brethren? Whatever his motive, it was a small price to pay for the eternal crown. "*If by any means* I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:11, KJV). What mattered that beatings, peril and dire affliction awaited on the way? What mattered that he should suffer disgrace, ignominy, shame, be ostracized as "the filth of the world,...the off-scouring of all things"? (I Cor. 4:13). What mattered the personal losses, the intense inner struggles as he worked to curb the unholiness of his nature—if only he could *attain*. He was ready to suffer the loss of *all things*, if necessary, "if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

This captured dynamo determined that his would be the unshakable confidence of Job, who exulted: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (19:25-26). Paul read the Psalms, and resolved that he would share in the triumph of the Psalmist, "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me" (49:15). When Paul mused upon the prophecies of Daniel, it was again with the thought of what he himself might share. When he read, "And many of them

that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt," he pictured himself among those awaking to the glory of "everlasting life," and set his heart to lie down at his life's end with the same comfort and assurance that the angel gave to Daniel: "Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days" (Dan. 12:2-3, 13).

The resurrection of Christ was the victorious message of the Apostolic Church. It was first heard in the word of the angel, "He is not here, he is risen!" Never had it happened like this before. Then there was the triumphant message from Christ Himself, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore" (Rev. 1:18).

This was Paul's quenchless hope. The means? By following Christ fully, suffering with Christ, dying with Christ. The Lord Jesus had created the ideal of character. And Paul determined to make it his very own. "I am pressing on," he said, "to see if I can capture it." Here was an honest man convinced by the evidence, pressing to attain, to capture first the perfection and ultimately its crowning reward—a resurrection from the dead to life everlasting.

Captured—Why?

"Because I have been captured by Jesus Christ." Paul had been captured by the convincing truth which his Lord taught and demonstrated. Always up front was this blazing goal of life forevermore that had captured his will, his inspiration, his determination. Paul was not only captive, but felt himself Christ's servant (Rom. 1:1; Philemon 1); not only a servant but a willing slave and a prisoner (Eph. 3:1). He was completely subject to his Lord. This is why he wrote as the bondman of Jesus, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech

you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Eph. 4:1). Every aspiration of his life was dominated by Christ and his new mission. Do we wonder at his strong appeal to us to "walk worthy" of our high vocation, in view of his own unwavering conviction? No other vocation in life offered so much. No other vocation could be worthy of so much sacrifice and effort.

This One Thing I Do!

Paul's mind was not divided in ten different directions. Because He was wholly captured by Jesus Christ, it was impossible to retain all of the world or even *some* of the world and its follies. He deemed *everything* futile that did not serve this hope which had captured him.

True Christians are genuine; they are not Christians plus something else. They are wholehearted followers of Christ, and that says it all. Moreover, they are single-minded, single-eyed. They realize that to capture life eternal they must embrace but *one* objective, have but *one* purpose, *one* desire. "This one thing I do."

Are we as single-minded in our lives? Do we qualify for a place among them?

...I Am Forgetting What is Behind Me

Paul employed yet another force to help him. With an early record so stained, a lesser soul would have been hopelessly shackled by regret. But not Paul. Hear again his firm resolve: "Not that I have...already reached perfection,...only, forgetting what is behind me, and straining toward what lies ahead, I am pressing toward the goal." This captured man not only put his past behind him, but what is of utmost importance—he left it there!

Even as Paul, our duty is to forget the things that are behind, the things we did before we were cap-

tured by this hope. There is always some vagabond of memory seeking to find a more permanent lodging. Paul did not harbor these thoughts that would have impeded his progress. Instead, he set them

Christ Jesus can dictate only to those whom He has captured.

behind him, out of his way. Nothing, absolutely *nothing* would he allow to hinder him.

Together with forgetting the unchrist-like things we did in days of darkness, there is also the need to forget our failures, once we have learned the lesson they can teach us. We all fail, but we must not be shackled by our failures. Rather, we must learn to organize victory out of defeat, make our failure a route to victory.

Paul could have seriously impeded his own spiritual progress by continually regretting his mistakes. The wounds his own hands had inflicted upon those who were now his brothers and sisters in the faith—the very memory of it was torture. Not without due reason did he say of himself, "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (I Cor. 15:9). But often as it would come to mind, he put it away. He could not let his conscious mind dwell upon it. Regrettable as it was, it could not be retrieved and corrected; and no good could be accomplished by re-living it, much less regretting it. There was nothing he could do but to give his best to the work he had been called to do *today*, to use all his power in going straight for the goal, and this he determined to do.

Life, like war, is a series of blunders, and he is not the best Christian nor the best general who makes the fewest false steps. He is the best who wins the most splendid victories by the retrieval of mistakes. The past is irreparable; the present must be redeemed.

...I Am Straining Towards What Lies Ahead

Because this great Apostle was captured by Jesus Christ, he had his eyes fixed forward, on the prize. And so also will all who are Paul-like. Set before the average man some transient reward which really captivates his heart—a fine home, the assurance of financial security, or the prospect of renown—and he will work untiringly to obtain it. However, set before a Christian the hope of eternal life, and how often he becomes mired in a multitude of minor interests. The reason? The man of this world *sees* his reward, while the Christian must look ahead by faith. And though it is a million times more certain than the paltry rewards of the present, still if his eye of faith is weak, his future outlook is certain to be dim.

However, there *are* Christians with eyes of faith so strong as to penetrate the misty veil of time and see clearly the rewards of eternity. Such a one was the apostle Paul. To his sight the invisible future was clearer than the visible present. The beatings, the stonings, the imprisonments, all forms of torture inflicted by his persecutors lost half their effect upon him, so completely captivated was he by his vision of the eternal reward. In triumph he exclaimed, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Cor. 4:17-18).

Notice the striking paradox: The "unseen" future was more vivid to Paul's mental vision than the visible present. Can we wonder that he was straining forward to what lay ahead—in the future? Paul's eye of faith was keen and well focused. His distant vision was marvelous. He could see beyond the mists of mortality to the incomparable prize.

How can we acquire this "heavenly perspective"? By focusing our minds upon God, His Word and all the great things He has promised, along with the mountains of evidence He has provided to confirm that Word. When we become fully convinced that God is indeed working, that He has a plan for this earth, that He is indeed offering a most magnificent and eternal prize for a life of faithful service; when the reality of this conviction strikes us, we—like Paul—will be captured. So captivated will we be by the possibility that future life and glory *can be ours* that we will not be able to forget it for a moment. However trying the present stress, our every thought and action will be motivated, dominated and impelled by this electrifying hope. It will be with us at all times, whether we sit in our homes, or walk by the way, or lie down, or rise up. In the press and stress of the busiest day, in the throes of sorrow or the straits of pain, that bright prospect will support us. We will know that however good or bad the present hour, it is "but for a moment" compared with the "far

more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" that can be ours.

Paul himself left for us the admonition that our weapons are "not carnal, but mighty through God," capable of casting down every imagination and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:4-5). Herein lies the most noble captivity, one that will control not only our words but which will enter into the very fiber of our will and *capture each thought*.

...I Am Pressing Toward the Goal

Paul was a man of pressure. Even before he was chosen by Christ, that was his nature. He says of himself, "As to my zeal, I was a persecutor of the church." Until he became captured by Jesus Christ, it had been zeal without knowledge. Men sometimes are like that. They will spend vast amounts of energy, all they can muster, pushing, pressing, sometimes in circles, often to some unknown destination or to a phantom goal. But because Paul had been captured by the living Son of God and His ideals, His superior award—even eternal life—he now was pressing *ahead*, "straight for the goal" (Phil. 3:13-14, Phillips).

And just as a runner in a race presses into action every ounce of strength in his being to reach his goal, so did Paul. By practice he attained that hardness of muscle that displays no flabbiness, no softness of limb. And so he ran—he strained every nerve—to arrive.

Is not that a suitable simile for us in our quest for eternal life? Captives of Jesus Christ must have hard moral muscles, iron-hard, as hard as nails, that will not yield to an easy threat or even a formidable one. In fact, they cannot be broken by any temptations which may assail them. Such is the character that will set apart everyone who has been captured by Jesus Christ—rock character.

Every summit conquered brings a brighter, clearer view of glory ahead.

God Calls Me Upward—to the Prize

Because he had been captured by the resurrected Christ, Paul relentlessly forced himself above his natural thoughts. He told himself what he would think about, and *that was that!* With the same firmness he put his past behind him and went about the business of forgetting it.

Do we long for the heights of his attainment? Do we yearn for that indomitable will, that unshakable faith, that solid strength, that holy purpose Paul manifested? It cannot be ours without effort. Like him we must give it our full concentration, our utmost effort, our whole mind and might and strength.

The Lord Jesus has left us the ideal of character, and has opened up dim and enticing vistas of possibility which leave us, after every conquest, with new dominions yet to be won. Every summit conquered brings a brighter, clearer view of glory ahead. The reward of every attainment is a clearer vision of more glory to come. The thrill of achievement adds reality to hope. Nothing brings glory like victory. This is what keeps us hoping, trusting, praying, longing, pressing: "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect, but I press on...." and on, and on (Phil. 3:12).

God calls us "upward." This "aboveness" distinguishes those who, like Paul, are captured by Christ. "Seek the things that are above"; "set your mind on things above." Christ's captives dwell with Christ "in heavenly places." Sin is earthy, as Sodom and Gomorrah which grew on the ground. Christ and all that pertains to Him is heavenly. He is even now seated at the right hand of God. Here is the ultimate, the highest of heights, the Presence into which we hope one day to be ushered.

Such is our sublime confidence. Have we been captured by it? Is our

ear attuned to the high calling of Christ Jesus? Is "the hope of eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" *our* inspiration (Titus 1:2)? Is the glorious lifting to endless life our shining goal?

Christ Jesus can dictate only to those whom He has captured, and their ears are tuned constantly to hear His voice. All other ears are turned downward to earth sounds. Upturned ears are on upturned heads whose gaze is fixed *forward*, whose whole mind and body are

straining forward toward the goal of eternal life! They shall attain; He will never disappoint them.

Are we one of these? Are we living, as it were, in another world, because we belong to Him, because we have been captured by Jesus Christ? Are we so totally His that we cannot breath or move except within the Divine will? Is our whole goal the attaining of eternal life?

If so, we shall surely arrive, because *WE HAVE BEEN CAPTURED BY JESUS CHRIST*—now and forever! MM

O Lord our God, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth, who hath set Thy glory above the heavens! We come before Thee this morning with hearts and minds eager for more of Thy rich store of knowledge, for more of that which will lift us above the petty concerns of this world and prepare us for that which is eternal.

Father, we are grateful that Thou hast set us on the highway of life and given us a goal toward which to press. We thank Thee, too, for the assurance that that goal can be reached, that its attainment is not beyond us. May we be so captivated by this sublime hope that it will be continually on our minds, an influence and a presence that no affliction of life can obscure; a goal so blazing and bright that to reach it is the one concern of our lives. And may the glorious prospect before us never become common or ordinary to us, but may its ringing call be new to us each hour, each moment, and its glory grow more and more intensely vivid in our mental vision as we travel on and see the Day approaching.

Lord, help us to use every test that comes to us to make real our hope, that our prospect of life in the world to come may grow brighter and brighter.

Make us aware, Lord, of the uncertainty of our days and the seriousness of our work. Each day is one day less in the number of days allotted to us to finish our work. We pray Thee to renew in us the spirit of self-discipline and the need for an all-out commitment to Thee, to be all that we can and ought to be, while we yet have time.

We pray for those in authority, that they may so rule and govern that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. We pray for Thy church, that Thou wilt direct and help us in whatever Thou dost purpose for us to do, that we may always promote Thy cause and do Thy work. We pray for Thy people everywhere who are part of that true Church, and for those of whom it shall soon be said, "They are the people of the living God." And keep us ever growing stronger in our devotion and more determined in our effort to overcome every way of our own that is displeasing to Thee that we may someday share eternal life with all Thy sons and daughters. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Choose Wisely

One of the greatest blessings a wise God has bestowed upon His human family is the blessing of choice. He sets before them His promises and says, "Choose you," life or death, good or evil, this life or an eternity of joy and pleasure. The decision rests with each individual. It is the great choice that brings us face to face with great responsibilities.

Again and again, year after year, day after day, hour after hour we are making these choices: Which way shall we go? Which prospect seems best? Sometimes the choice may seem trivial in nature. Then again, with a sinking sense of dread, we perceive that a long and important series of events followed upon the choice we made.

Someone has said, "Who chooses well lives well, for life is the sum of innumerable choices." We might compare this power of choice to the rudder of a ship, our ship of life. The choices we make contribute not to the speed at which we travel but to the safety of the voyage.

The choices we make every day are a clear indication of the type of life we are building.

*The trifles of our daily lives,
The common things scarce worth recall
Whereof no visible trace remains,
These are the mainspring, after all.*

The secret sin, if not corrected and crushed, becomes in time the besetting sin which will cut us off from the bright career we could have had. We see that same law working in nature. "Let that worm alone, and it will kill your tree" was said to the gardener in the park of a great estate. And true enough, the gardener paid no attention to the tiny borer and next year's yellow leaves showed mute evidence of the certain destruction of the tree.

The days reveal us to ourselves and to others by way of the choices we make. What we choose, in other words, is an accurate index of what we are.

We read in Heb. 11:24 of the good choice made by a noble young man long ago, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Here was a man brought up in the court

of the great Rameses II, and to all outward appearances, was entirely Egyptian. He was instructed in all the learning and discipline, both civil and military, among the Egyptians, and in every other respect treated in a manner becoming the dignity of Pharaoh's household. However, his early training by his godly mother had fixed in his heart another faith, a loyalty to a great and living God, and so when he was come to years, he chose the way of sacrifice and service, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward" (v. 26).

How many a disaster is caused by looking not at the long term but at the immediate. The momentary appetite that we would gratify, the present pleasure that we would gain, these rise up and obscure the things that lie beyond.

In the familiar account, Esau sold his birthright, the privilege of a lifetime, for just a dish of pottage, to satisfy a temporary craving. The facts in our lives make even more familiar this tendency of our natures to choose with reference to the passing moment only. More

than once have we, each of us, been guilty of Esau's unwise choice.

Every temptation of life implies a choice. Shall we yield and be led away by some lower impulse of our nature, and make choice of that wherein God cannot delight? Our carnal nature needs ever to be reminded of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah which lie beyond the range of our vision, but which tomorrow will claim us for their residence—unless we take the higher road today.

What we choose is usually determined by what we like. This is almost always true in minor matters, and frequently it is true in critical decisions. The line of personal liking is, however, the line of least resistance. The highest wisdom, then, lies in improving first of all the moral quality of our tastes. By improving the nature of the things we like we will improve the character of the things we choose.

Pure motives, high desires, noble impulses form the groundwork of all good conduct. But not without our effort. It is a very practical duty resting upon all of us to cultivate our enjoyment of the good, the true, the holy and the pure. Does this appear too rigorous a demand? Let us be reminded that God means this life to be a battle, not a holiday excursion.

Such was the life our Master taught, a way of struggle, not of ease; of sacrifice, not of enjoyment. They who choose the mountain path, who fit themselves for service, these are they who lift the cross of Christ (Luke 9:23). And it is they who find the prize that God has in keeping for the brave and true.

The descendants of Esau are many, those who consider the immediate and momentary, who love the easy path that lies along the valley. But the descendants of

Abraham shall some day be as the multitude of the stars of heaven, and shall shine as brightly. They in the days of their probation learned that a good name before God was a far better choice than silver or gold, and so they strengthened their habit of considering not the immediate but the permanent, that which would bring continuous satisfaction.

We see this same quality of choice in Ruth the Moabitess. Born amid idolatry of the darkest type, she grew pure and affectionate toward the true God. Ruth's faith was the root of her attachment to Naomi. Ruth loved Naomi because Naomi loved God, and so she made her choice to cast her lot with the Lord's inheritance and cheerfully renounced her father's house and kindred and all that could have been hers in the land of Moab. Behind her were kind, affectionate friends, and a life of ease and comfort. Before her was labor and toil among a people who would look upon her with contempt. But the gods of Moab were dumb idols, and the God of Israel was the true God, the fountain of life and happiness. So Ruth made her choice, and

resolved to cleave to Naomi, regardless of the momentary distresses which might be the consequence of it.

Let us remember Ruth's exam-

Pure motives, high desires, noble impulses form the groundwork of all good conduct.

ple. When the world with its honors and delights, its fair prospects and solicitous friends would keep us from the path of holiness, let us remember that we are choosing between death and life. What shall our choice be? Let us say with the resolution of Ruth, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God," and we shall in the end reap honor, immortality, eternal life.

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He who believes in God does not have to worry about tomorrow, but can joyfully look forward to whatever his loving Father holds in store. Such will work and watch, yet never be anxious, but commit all to Him and live in serene tranquility, with a quiet heart, in perfect trust, knowing God is just.

Gratitude

Put your thanksgiving into the present tense. It's a sure cure for grumbling.

A grateful mind is a great mind.

Give thanks part of the time and live thanks the rest of the time.

Our thanks should be as fervent for mercies received, as our petitions for mercies sought.

When you find it hard to pray, begin to give thanks and you'll have an ocean to swim in.

If a man carries his cross beautifully and makes it radiant with the glory of a meek and gentle spirit, the time will come when the things that now disturb will be the events for which he will most of all give gratitude to God.

From David learn to give thanks for everything. Every furrow in the Book of Psalms is sown with the seeds of thanksgiving.

O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. —Ps. 107:1

Some people complain because God put thorns on roses, while others praise Him for putting roses among the thorns.

O Lord, who lends me life, lend me a heart replete with thankfulness.

I don't think the Lord wants any pompous proclamation of thanks on one Thursday in November as much as He wants a consecrated, humble service from us every day in the year.

Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do that day which must be done, whether you like it or not. Being forced to work, and forced to do your best, will breed in you temperance and self control, diligence and strength of will, cheerfulness and content, and a hundred virtues the idle never know.

Be thankful for the least gift, so shalt thou be meet to receive greater.

Gratitude is born in hearts that take time to count up past mercies.

The worship most acceptable to God comes from a thankful and cheerful heart.

If gratitude is due from children to their earthly parent, how much more is the gratitude of the great family of men due to our Father in heaven.

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord. —Ps. 92:1

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise. —Ps. 100:4

Gratitude is not only the memory but the homage of the heart— rendered to God for His goodness.

In every thing give thanks. —I Thess. 5:18

If anyone would tell you the shortest, surest way to happiness and all perfection, he must tell you to make it a rule to yourself to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. For it is certain that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it into a blessing.

Gratitude is the sign of noble souls.

Pride slays thanksgiving, but an humble mind is the soil out of which thankfulness naturally grows. A proud man is seldom a grateful man, for he never thinks he gets as much as he deserves.

Whence Salvation?

A Written Debate

THESIS:

Resolved, That the Bible conditions our salvation and eternal rewards upon our individual obedience and virtue, and not upon any merits deriving from the literal death or blood of Jesus Christ.

*Megiddo Church, Affirmed.
Christadelphian Tidings, Denied.*

Affirmed

The teaching of the Mosaic law regarding sacrifice

We agree that the Mosaic law was built upon the principle of sacrifice, but the common idea that “the animal sacrifices under the law pointed forward to the sacrifice of Jesus” is built upon a serious misreading of the Mosaic law.

To understand the pattern of sacrifice under the Mosaic law, a few basic facts should be noted:

1) The majority of sacrifices under the Mosaic system had nothing to do with sin or atonement. The peace offerings, thank offerings, burnt offerings, whole burnt offerings, free will offerings, meal offerings, meat offerings, drink offerings, offerings for the first-born—all these were occasions of rejoicing and even feasting. The sin offering and the trespass offering were offerings for the removal of sin.

2) Sin offerings and trespass offerings were only allowed in certain cases, i.e., when a transgression was not punishable by death (see Lev., chapters 2, 3). When the law said that a transgression was punishable by death (murder, sabbath-breaking, adultery, etc.), no sacrifice was accepted.

3) Under Moses’ law neither credit for right conduct nor guilt for transgression was transferable. There was no provision for imputed iniquity or imputed righteousness. Each individual was accountable for his own conduct, good or bad. This was a long-standing policy with God: “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin” (Deut. 24:16). When Israel strayed

Denied

What God Requires

In His Word, God reveals only two ways to gain eternal life: the first is to be completely obedient (only Christ did this), the second is to be saved by grace through true faith in the sacrifice of Christ. Megiddo acknowledges the first, denies the second and asserts another way to salvation which is based on reaching the “moral stature of Christ” at some point in our lives.

The problem is that the moral stature of Christ is unattainable once we have sinned, which we all have done. Christ did no sin. We see the “glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6), God’s glory referring to his moral attributes, the virtue of His character (Ex. 33:18; 34:5-7). Of everyone else it is said, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Once we sin, thus failing to reach the standard of moral perfection exhibited in Christ, our only hope is to be “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus [not our own works]: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood [the blood which Megiddo claim to be irrelevant to our salvation], to declare His [God’s] righteousness for the remission of sins that are past...that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:23–26).

The idea of being saved because we reach a stage in our lives where we act, think and speak perfectly is foreign to scripture.

Acceptable believers still sin

John describes some who received his first epistle in favorable terms. “Your sins are forgiven you...ye

from this clear thinking, God's prophets brought them back with the reprimand, "What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel....The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:2-4).

4) The sacrifices for sin under the Mosaic law are not parallel with the theory that Jesus provided the sacrifice for our sins, because under the Mosaic arrangement any sacrifice for sin or transgression had to be provided by the transgressor himself. Whether he was a priest, a ruler, or a commoner, the rule was the same (See Lev. 4:3, 13, 27; 5:6-13, 14-17.) (The idea that we can sin and someone in better standing may make an offering for us is not Biblical and not parallel with any God-designed arrangement.) Under the law, the offender himself had to bring the animal, present it to the priest, lay his hand upon the animal's head, and kill it. And he could not bring the poorest, weakest animal in his flock. The sacrifice was intended to be felt. The offender had to bring an animal "without blemish...for a sin offering unto the Lord." Here was the whole purpose of the law as a teaching mechanism. If our law today required a payment of penalty from someone other than the offender, where would there be any restraint of evil?

5) The Mosaic system was a type, a foreshadowing of "good things" to come (Heb. 10:1). It was a "pattern," a "figure," teaching deeper spiritual truths. But one rule must be consistently followed: literal in the type, spiritual in the antitype. Literal sacrifices were offered under the law of Moses; spiritual sacrifices are their counterpart in the antitype. Literal blood was shed under the Mosaic system (the blood of a literal animal); spiritual blood must be shed in the antitype (the life of the our flesh nature—Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:2-4).

If we say Christ's literal death is the appropriate antitype of the sacrifices under the law, we have an immediate incongruity, because His literal death cannot be the antitype of the literal sacrifices offered under the law. To have a fulfillment of the literal sacrifices under the Mosaic system (a type) we must have a spiritual sacrifice in the antitype, and this is what Paul called the offering of our bodies "a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1), a complete commitment of our total life to God. This is the shedding of blood (spiritual blood) required for forgiveness, without which "is no remission" (Heb. 9:22).

The Christadelphians state also: "The New Testament says that Jesus was typified by the altar, the High Priest, the mercy seat and the blood on it; all the

are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (I John 2:12, 14). If Megiddo is correct, such Christians would no longer sin. They would have reached a stage where they had become pure even as Christ is pure. Yet John writes, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (I John 1:8-10). These people still sinned and needed forgiveness.

Elsewhere we read, "There is not a just man upon earth, that...sinneth not...there is no man that sinneth not" (Eccl. 7:20; Prov. 20:9; I Kgs 8:46). Megiddo would say there are some people on earth who have reached the stage where they do not sin. In contrast, the Bible reveals that those justified in God's sight (justified by their faith in His imputed righteousness, Hab. 2:4), still sin. This is exactly as taught in I John 1.

Furthermore, if by the end of our days we have achieved moral perfection, then why do we receive "mercy" at the judgment (see 2 Tim. 1:18; Jude 21). Why are the faithful portrayed as being unaware of the good works which they did in their lives? (Matt. 25:37). As Paul said, he desired to "be found in [Christ], not having mine own righteousness...but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). We must not trust in our own works of obedience but in God's gracious gift of righteousness. No man has ever or will ever be perfect as Christ and we will never reach a point where we commit no sins.

What God means by "perfect"

Biblically, the words translated "perfect" do not necessarily imply moral perfection, i.e., sinlessness. Rather do they carry the idea of completeness and fullness: "Perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (Jam. 1:4). Mary and Joseph "fulfilled (same word translated "perfect") the days" of the Passover (Lk. 2:43); "the scripture was fulfilled" (John 19:28). Christ is "a more perfect tabernacle" (Heb. 9:11). "More perfect" indicates a relative sense of completion, for one cannot be "more" perfect in the absolute sense. The Hebrew translated "perfect" is also rendered "sincere" (Jud. 9:16; Josh. 24:14). Again, there is no implication of sinlessness.

The scriptures teach that both individuals and the church as a whole must develop toward some point of "perfection" (Lk. 8:14; Heb. 6:1). However, this is a point of completion of spiritual development in certain aspects, not moral sinlessness. David, Asa and

elements of the Mosaic law pointed forward to Him—Hebrews 9.” We ask, where?

Where does the New Testament say even once in a comparison of type and antitype that Jesus was typified by anything other than the High Priest? Always He is the priest officiating, not the animal being slain upon the altar (see Heb. 2:17–18; 3:1–2; 4:14–16; 5:5–10; 7:14–28; 9:11–14; 10:19–22). The High Priest was never the sacrifice.

Passover and the sacrifice of Christ

The Christadelphians infer that the Passover lamb was sacrificed, as though it were an offering for sin and in this way a type of Christ’s sacrifice. Read carefully the account of the first Passover, recorded in Exodus, chapters 12 and 13, and you will see not one reference to any atonement for sin, or offering for sin, or even any seeking of forgiveness. The Paschal lamb was not a sacrifice for sin; it was killed to be eaten as part of a memorial feast.

Was the fact that Jesus was as “a lamb without blemish and spot” a suggestion that the Passover feast pointed forward to the sacrifice of Christ?

This conclusion is also based upon a misinterpretation of the Mosaic system. Every lamb brought to the priest under the law had to be a lamb “without blemish and without spot.” Whether it was for a peace offering, a thank offering, a free will offering, a burnt offering, or a sin offering, every offering had to be perfect. And such is a perfect parallel with the offering God requires of every believer. This is why Paul said that we must offer our bodies “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is [our] reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1). For this reason Paul preached, “warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom,” that he might “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:28). Jesus wanted His Church without “spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Eph. 5:26–27). Paul prayed that his brethren might be “sincere and without offence till the day of Christ” (Phil. 1:10). He also charged his son-in-the-faith Timothy: “That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Tim. 6:14). The obligation was incumbent upon Timothy, not Christ.

What about the Passover observance pointing forward to the death of Christ? Certainly not the lamb that was killed, because the lamb was not offered to God; it was killed and eaten, as part of a ceremony memorializing the Israelites’ departure from Egypt. Even the blood sprinkled upon the door posts had no connection with a sacrifice for sin. It was a visual demonstration of one’s obedience or compliance, and every obedient one was “passed over”. There was no

others are said to be perfect of heart all their days yet they still sinned in their hearts (I Kgs. 15:3; II Chron. 15:17; 16:10, 12). Therefore, “perfection” is not total sinlessness; it is a condition of true faith in God and of trying to obey Him.

There is a way that we can be considered “perfect” before God but it is a way that Megiddo rejects. It is the blood of Christ which perfects: “By one offering [Christ] hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:1, 14).

A way of life of obedience

Malicious people will not be saved. Merciful people will be. But malicious people do some righteous acts; they may be merciful to their families and loyal to their employer. Scripture says, “every one that doeth righteousness is born of him” (I John 2:29). That obviously does not mean that every malicious person who does a few good things is considered a child of God. Therefore, “doeth righteousness” cannot refer to isolated right acts but to a way of life.

On the other hand, merciful people will occasionally be inconsiderate or unkind. A few verses later, scripture says, “Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God” (I John 3:10). Does this mean that every merciful person is excluded from eternal life because he commits an occasional unkind act? In no way, scripture is speaking about a pattern of obedience or of sin just as it does in regard to David, Asa and others.

Megiddo says that to be saved we must become exactly like Christ. God does not say that. Because of our human nature, combined with the fact we are not begotten of God as was Jesus, we can improve to a high level of obedience but we will never be free from sinful actions. We can walk in a pattern of obedience and that is what God sets as our goal. We will be considered “perfect,” however, if we sincerely believe in the word of God, for He will count our faith as righteousness.

The Problem of Human Nature

Megiddo’s view of salvation implies a misconception of man’s nature. The analogy about the repentant bank robber implies that it is only our personal sins, of which we can repent, which separate us from God. This overlooks the fact that our very nature is condemned: “Therefore as by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation...” (Rom. 5:18). Being freed from the guilt of our own sins is not the only factor in our salvation.

The point is further reinforced by the statement “The wages of sin is death.” This is why we all die. If obedience alone is all that is required to obtain

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offering for sin, or plea for forgiveness in the whole ceremony. Passover memorialized Israel's miraculous deliverance from Egypt, and at the same time re-dedicated them to God—because God had delivered them they belonged to God and were obligated to conduct themselves as people of God.

Jesus, as a loyal Jew, observed the Passover according to the law, but added to it a new significance—His own; for at this moment He was facing the final and supreme test of His life, the completing of His own lifelong self-sacrifice to God, for He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). Concerning the Lord's Supper observance the apostle Paul explained that “the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.” And of the cup He said, “This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come” (I Cor. 11:23–26).

By commemorating the Passover we are memorializing not Jesus' physical death on the cross but His complete submission to His Father, the complete sacrifice of Himself to God, which is the death that we must “show” until He returns. We would have no way to show forth His physical death; God does not require that we be physically crucified. But we must make the same complete consecration Jesus made by partaking of the same cup of which He drank, that cup which is “the new testament”—or new covenant, an agreement between the one partaking and God. Loyalty to this covenant is the means to all forgiveness and all remission of sins. This is why Jesus said, “This [cup] is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:28)—not that it imparts Christ's righteousness to us but it removes sins that we confess and forsake, according to the terms of the covenant. It was an agreement Christ ratified by His physical death, (which was also His last act of obedience), and which we ratify by our complete sacrifice of ourselves to God.

A death to share

The Apostle spoke frequently of the death of Jesus as a death in which every believer must share, and how can we think they refer to His literal death? Would God ask what we cannot do? Try inserting the words “on Calvary” after each mention of Christ's death in these passages, to see if Christ's literal death on Calvary conveys the intended meaning. For exam-

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redemption, and we can reach a state of total obedience at some point in our lives, then why do we still die? We are not condemned for our past sins, they are forgiven. The answer must be that we are born dying creatures as a result of the judgment passed on Adam's sin. Megiddoes do not deal with this problem at all. The sacrifice of Christ does.

Since our human nature, in addition to our personal sins, separates us from God, it follows that we need access to something more than our own effort if we are to be given immortality (II Pet. 1:4). In our condemned condition, we need a God-provided savior. The proof is as follows:

1. Under the law of Moses, a mother was defiled by childbirth and was to bring an offering to the priest “who shall offer it before the Lord, and make an atonement for her” (Lev. 12:7). No personal sins were involved but an atonement was still required. Why? Because the woman was defiled by the child who had come from within her. She had not brought forth sin, but she had brought forth a human being bent toward sin.

2. There are clear references to “the body of sin,” “sinful flesh,” etc. Our very beings, not just some of our actions, are unclean by nature. While we must separate our thinking from our natural tendencies and develop a new mind based on that of Christ, our physical, mortal condition cannot be changed in this life. For this reason, mortal man cannot approach God's personal presence (Ex. 33:20; II Tim. 6:16). Thus our separation from God is not due solely to our specific sins.

3. Romans 7 describes how Paul's human nature featured “sin that dwelleth in me,” “in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing” which stopped him from performing the righteousness he wished to. He finally exalts in the solution: “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ.” Christ is, therefore, the means of deliverance from this sin-prone nature we have. Just being our example is not a deliverance from this. God provided a way for us to break our captivity to that which Paul described by “sending his son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin” so that Jesus destroyed the power of sin through sharing our very nature (cp. Heb. 2:14–18).

Without Christ's destruction of the sin-principle, we would be doomed to continual sin and, therefore, condemnation. We must become “in Christ” so that God will treat us as if we, too, have overcome. If Christ is just our example, why is there the language of being in Christ? Biblically, the point of entry into

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ple, "We are buried with him by baptism into death [on Calvary]" (Rom. 6:4).

Or, "If we be dead [on Calvary] with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (Rom. 6:8). Or II Tim. 2:11, "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead [on Calvary] with him, we shall also live with him." Or take this personal statement by Paul himself: "I am crucified with Christ [on Calvary]: nevertheless I live" (Gal. 2:20). Or Paul's statement, that "being made conformable unto his death [on Calvary]" (Phil. 3:10). Or Paul's statement in II Cor. 4:10, "Always bearing about in the body the dying [on Calvary] of the Lord Jesus"—how do any of these texts have any meaning when they are applied to the literal death of Jesus?

But when we apply them to the death of which Paul spoke in Romans 6, Jesus' death of His own will, His "death to sin" (Rom. 6:10), each one is meaningful. Christ died not to spare us the trouble of dying (self-sacrifice). He died to His own will to show us how we must die—to our own will—and so make a complete surrender of ourselves to God, as He did. This is how Peter could challenge his brethren to rejoice in being "partakers of Christ's sufferings" (I Pet. 4:13)—not His physical sufferings on Calvary but His life of complete self-surrender, of which His physical death was the completion and crowning act.

Peter described it precisely when he said that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21), and he immediately continued to show the moral qualities of that death, showing that it was not His physical crucifixion but His supreme nobility of character. "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not" (vs. 22-23).

No imputed righteousness

Picture a court scene. A man is on trial for abusing and killing his child. Everyone in the court knows the man is guilty. They have all seen him abuse the child numerous times, and the man himself admits that he is guilty. But when the judge gives the verdict, he pronounces the man "not guilty" because his next door neighbor is extremely kind to his children, and he wishes to credit the guilty man with the good conduct of his neighbor.

Or take the reverse situation. The good neighbor is on trial for abusing his child. Everyone knows he is not guilty, and everyone knows also who the guilty man is. But the judge pronounces the good neighbor "guilty" and subject to punishment because of the misconduct of the first man.

Now this is imputed righteousness, and imputed iniquity. And where is the justice? Is this the way God

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Christ is water immersion into him; remaining in him is dependent upon our subsequent obedience and conformity to the commands of Christ.

4. The fact that our sin-prone nature must be purified explains how Jesus benefited from his own blood. "When Christ came as high priest...he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:11-12 NIV). The point is clear: Christ required purification. From what? Not from sins, but from his condemned nature. And this purification came by means of his own sacrifice.

Jesus was redeemed and purified by participation in his own sacrifice; he was also saved from death through it. "[God] through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus" (Heb. 13:20 NIV). His blood was not needed with respect to his sins but it was needed with respect to the nature with which he was born. Thus, as our representative, the sacrifice of Christ was required for his own salvation. If it was necessary for his salvation, how much more is it necessary for our own?

5. We are all under the Adamic curse of death. By Adam, sin entered into the world, and death by sin (Rom. 5:12). The way of escape from this curse is not by obedience alone. Genesis 3:15 promised that Christ as "the seed of the woman" would overcome the power of sin. We must, therefore, associate ourselves with his death, through which he destroyed the power of sin (Heb. 2:14-16).

Steps To Salvation

In setting forth their ideas, Megiddo totally omits immersion as being necessary to salvation. This is in sharp contrast to the emphasis of Christ and the apostles. When asked what one should do to be saved, Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). This parallels Jesus' instruction: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:15-16).

The Megiddo emphasis on obedience fails to appreciate that we enter a blessed relationship through Christ at baptism. We who were dead in our sins are made alive with Christ, for he "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus...for by grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:5-10).

This blessed condition is conditional upon our con-

operates? Is this the way He treats His human family? It is, if the Christadelphians' theory of "imputed righteousness" is true. If God can impute righteousness, what is to keep Him from imputing iniquity?

But praise God! No such unfairness blots the record of the Almighty. His principle is clear: "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins" (Prov. 5:22). Also, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20)—it, not some other.

The prophets even went so far as to state precisely that all the righteousness of the most righteous man would not be able to save the evildoer. "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, where in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 14:14). If they could deliver "but their own souls by their righteousness," how can God make an exception of Christ's righteousness and be true to His own principles?

The word "impute" is used 15 times in Scripture, and of these, 7 refer to imputing sin or iniquity, 2 are irrelevant, 4 speak of imputing righteousness to the righteous individual himself, and 2 others refer to imputing righteousness to those who believe. There is no passage in the Bible which says that Christ's righteousness can be imputed to us so that God will count us as righteous when we are not. "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness" (James 2:23). And righteousness will likewise be imputed "for us also, ... if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Rom. 4:22-24).

"Impute" simply means to "put down to one's account," to make a record of what is due to one on the basis of his actions. This is exactly God's method: to reward every man according to his works. The record is being kept, and according to that record each servant of God will be judged and rewarded (Mal. 3:16-17; Rev. 20:12).

Neither righteousness nor sin is transferable from one individual to another, no matter who the individual may be. We ourselves must become pure as Christ is pure (I John 3:3). We ourselves must become holy as God is holy (I Pet. 1:15-16). Abraham was counted righteous because he believed God and acted upon his belief. "Because thou hast obeyed my voice," said God, he received the blessing (Gen. 22:16-18). We will be counted righteous by the same process, just as we believe and act upon our belief.

Our righteousness, not Christ's

The Christadelphians say that for Christ to present us "faultless before the presence of His glory" (Jude 24), or "without blame before him," He must cleanse

tinuing in a faith that works by love. If we do not, we can fall from grace: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4). But unless we fall from the Truth, we stand in grace and thereby rejoice in the forgiveness of sins. We must continue believing in the work of Christ which we show by our "patient continuance in well-doing."

God takes the initiative

Megiddo's idea is that if we do something then God will respond. But God has taken the initiative. Rather than our obedience leading to His response, "He first loved us...[by sending] His son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10, 19). It is this which motivates our love of God.

What is Megiddo's motivation for belief in the doctrine of perfect obedience? Do they want salvation as part of a legalistic arrangement which is linked solely to their own actions? This leads to human-centered thinking, an approach which is wholly overthrown by the right balance of reliance on God's grace in the sacrifice of Christ and our works springing from our response to that grace.

The Problem of Pride

"That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (I Cor. 1:29-31). "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). The spirit of God's plan of salvation is perfectly clear—the glory is not to man but to Him because of His gift to us in Christ Jesus.

In Contrast, Megiddo speaks of how we must "merit eternal rewards." They say "God provides the knowledge of what we must do, along with the mental and physical powers we need. But it is our responsibility to use all these to develop the character He requires." Their only mention of depending upon God is that we depend on Him to change us from mortal to immortal.

Under the Megiddo scheme of salvation, those who think they are righteous cannot help but have an inner sense of self-satisfaction. It is not Christ who is made to them righteousness but their own effort and self-discipline. Salvation is not a gift but something that they merit.

The frame of mind that would inevitably be developed is very similar to the person who prayed with

us, that only so can He present to Himself "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:26-27). "All these statements," they say, "become meaningful within the context of righteousness being imputed."

But what about Paul's own words in II Cor. 7:1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"? Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit—this does not sound as though Christ does it for us. And the very passage they cite from (Eph. 5:26-27) shows what is the cleansing medium: "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." The washing is accomplished "by the word," by the application of His message, His gospel. This is the cleansing medium, just as Jesus said, "Now ye are clean"—because I am going to shed my blood on the cross for you? No, "now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).

The place of forgiveness

The Christadelphians say, "Megiddo must have a strange concept of forgiveness, if salvation is by human effort, with no reference to the sacrifice of Jesus." We do indeed want and need forgiveness, but we want it on God's terms, not our own. And we do not find any evidence in the Bible that "forgiveness and the imputation of righteousness is made possible only by the death of Christ." What does the Bible say about God's terms of forgiveness? "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. 55:7). What more could one need?

The purpose of Christ's life

What was the purpose of Christ's life? The Christadelphians say, "The fact is that Christ was born and he died, 'for us'. This was his very reason of being." No Scripture is given to support this point—because none exists. But Jesus stated clearly the purpose of His life. When questioned by Pilate, "Art thou a king then?" He answered, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth" (John 18:37). This fact is reinforced by a statement made prophetically of Christ in Psalm 40, that He came to do His Father's will, a statement directly applied to Christ (see Heb. 10:7). This same statement in Hebrews 10 says also that God does not value literal sacrifice, that "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither

himself before God, saying, "I thank thee that I am not as other men are..." He stood in contrast to the man who "smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." The man who confessed he was a sinner and relied upon the grace of God "went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Lk. 18:9-14).

The right approach to salvation does not result in personal exaltation but humble thankfulness before God. With a right conviction, we rejoice that He cleanses us through the blood of His only begotten Son and counts our faith in this for righteousness. With a wrong approach, we are in danger of being grouped with those who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous."

Megiddo 4,000 Years Wrong

If the primary purpose of Christ was to be an example and not the God-provided savior, there is no reason for God to delay his birth for 4,000 years. Everyone, right from Adam, needed to know how to live an upright life. If Megiddo is correct, for 4,000 years people were deprived of a right example and right teaching.

Realizing Christ is our savior, however, fits perfectly with the delay in his begetting. As each generation lived, they would see that there was no perfect person. "There is none righteous, no not one...all have sinned..." (Rom. 3:10, 23). Even though God called out one nation, the Jews, and worked with them, openly showing His power and sending them His word through special prophets, there was no one who could reconcile man to God: "And he [God] saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him" (Isa. 59:16).

All men, every single one of them, were alienated from God by their wicked works (Col. 1:21). "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me...and I found none" (Ezk. 22:30). Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Daniel were all alive when these words were written but they had all sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Each person thus has every reason to be convinced he cannot save himself. We need God to save us. This He has done in providing His Son that through him salvation might be offered to all who believe: "But after that the kindness and love of God our saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he

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hadst pleasure therein" (v.8) —why, then, would He demand the sacrifice of His own Son? But on the contrary, He wanted a life of obedience, of delighting to do the Father's will. "Lo, I come,...to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7).

About breaking of bread and associating with Christ's saving work

The Christadelphians say that "because forgiveness and the hope of salvation is only available through Christ's own death"—a statement for which they offer no evidence—we "need to associate ourselves with him." The inference is that we do this by regularly breaking bread, i.e., every week. The early Church, they say, "broke bread very often," and cite Acts 20:7 and 2:42, 46.

There is a basic problem with this stance. How can we know that "breaking of bread" always referred to the Passover memorial? We read in Matthew 14 that when Jesus had commanded the multitude to "sit down upon the grass," He took bread and "brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples." Were all of these thousands of people keeping the sacred memorial? The same is said when He fed the multitude the second time (Matt. 15:33–38). Was He instituting the sacred memorial supper with all these multitudes? The apostle Paul also took bread and brake it when the ship was on the verge of being wrecked. We read that "He took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat" (Acts 27:35). Was this the time to observe the Passover? The term "breaking of bread" was simply a way of stating that the people had a meal together. It may or may not have been a Passover ceremony.

Do we have any instructions to partake of the emblems each week? During five full weeks after His resurrection (Acts 1:3), Jesus did not partake of the Passover with His brethren. How do we know? We have His own statement, made at the time He observed the sacred ceremony with His disciples on the evening of Abib 13, that He would no more eat thereof "until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16; see also Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25).

In observing the Passover, Jesus was observing the ancient Passover, an annual remembrance of the night of the Israelites' miraculous deliverance from Egypt. It was an anniversary, which is always a yearly occasion. In keeping it, Jesus re-memorialized it by associating it with Himself on the night before He suffered. But how could He change an anniversary (annual observance) into a weekly observance?

*Ruth Sisson, September, 1992
(To Be Continued)*

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saved us...through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:4–7).

True, it is humbling to be saved by the righteousness of another and not by our own perfect walk. Looking at the history of mankind, however, we are convinced we cannot save ourselves and should respond with grateful hearts to the fact we can be reconciled "in the body of his [Christ's] flesh" if we truly believe in him and are baptized into the Lord Jesus.

Summary

The Bible sets forth the necessity for a sanctified life and the need for sharing in the merits of the sacrificial death of Christ. Megiddo sees this as an unresolvable conflict of ideas. In fact, the two themes complement each other as is evidenced by their appearing side by side through the Bible.

Furthermore, when applied to God's requirements for us, the words for "perfect" are seen to refer to a pattern of obedience and not to absolute perfection. Even though we strive to do God's will, we all sin and always will commit some sins.

We need deliverance not only from our specific transgressions but also from our human nature. We need a savior and God has provided one in our Lord Jesus.

The forgiveness of sins is based upon repentance and upon our faith in the sacrifice of Christ. Obedience to the commands of the Old Covenant brought about rewards on account of the blood which ratified that covenant. This pointed forward to the blood of Christ under the New Covenant for it was "shed for...the remission of sins." Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." This is how important association with the blood of Christ is.

Symptomatic of Megiddo's mistake is their leaving baptism out of the steps to salvation. They do so in contrast to Christ and the apostles.

The importance of the issue is highlighted at the very beginning of scripture in the incident of Cain and Abel. Cain was rejected because he brought God the works of his hands rather than accepting the importance of shedding literal blood. Doubtless he reasoned, like Megiddo, that what he was doing symbolized the pouring out of blood as a life of service. But he failed to appreciate that the symbolic must have a basis in the literal.

*Duncan Heaster, September, 1992
(To Be Continued)*



Christ and the Angels

“What is the position of Christ in relation to the angels? I have seen drawings where Christ was pictured as being above the angels. What do you believe?”

On some topics the Bible does not tell us all we would like to know. One such topic is the angels. However, we are told enough to be able to discover God’s plan for His creation, and to know how Christ and how we ourselves can fit into that plan.

First, what do we know about the nature of the angels?

The Bible tells us that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (I Cor. 15:50). And since those who are permitted to live in the Kingdom cannot “die any more” because “they are equal unto the angels, for they are the children of God being the children of the resurrection” (Luke 20:35–36), we may safely draw several conclusions: 1) that the angels are not flesh and blood as we know it; 2) that the angels are immortal, i.e. not subject to death; 3) that they are accounted children of God.

We are told also that there is first an earthy nature, then a heavenly; first that which is corruptible, second that which is incorruptible. We are told also that the corruptible will be changed into that which is incorruptible (I Cor. 15:40, 48, 51–55). We learn also about the inhabitants of the Kingdom, that they will not know sickness, sorrow, pain or death (Rev. 21:3–4), which tells us that the angels are not subject to these limitations of mortality.

All this information combined shows us that the angels enjoy a much higher level of life than we now understand. Other revealings in Scripture tell us that the angels are not bound by the laws of gravity as we are but are free to come and go at will. At least some of them stand in the very presence of God (Luke 1:19).

They are sent on many types of missions, including the bearing of Divine messages from God to men. They can fly swiftly (Dan. 9:21). They can reveal or conceal their identity at will (Judges 13). They can have the appearance of men (Gen. 18:1–2). They are the children of God, part of His eternal family, and are sent by God to the aid of earnest, God-seeking mortals (Heb. 1:14).

Jesus’ statement that “those who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead...are equal unto the angels, neither can they die any more” indicates that worthy earthborns will be made like the angels. And since God does all according to an eternal plan, we may safely conclude that the angels were once mortal like ourselves, that this is the regular progression, from a state of mortality to immortality. This is confirmed by the words of Paul, that first there is that which is earthy, afterward that which is heavenly (I Cor. 15:48). And “as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (v. 49), once we have received the physical change from mortality to immortality, once “this corruptible” has “put on incorruption, and this mortal” has “put on immortality” (I Cor. 15:53). Paul’s summary statement of this change also confirms our conclusion: The result of the change to incorruptibility will be the triumph over death, bringing to pass “the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (vs. 54–55).

Now what do we know about the nature of Christ?

Hebrews tells us that He was made “a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death” (Heb. 2:9). For “a little lower than the angels” the margin in our Common Version reads: “A little while inferior to.” During His mortal career, Jesus was inferior to the angels. Made “like his brethren,” He was “tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin” (Deut. 18:15,

18; Heb. 4:15). We read also that "He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham" (Heb. 2:16). Jesus was made like us, so that He could be to us a perfect example and guide. "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18).

But Jesus was not destined to remain on this human, mortal level. The Son of God, He was born with a great destiny, to be King of the whole earth (Luke 1:32-33). When He receives this kingship, His position among earthborns will be supreme. The book of Revelation calls Him the "King of kings, and Lord of lords." There will be other kings and other lords, but He will still remain the supreme King and the supreme Lord. His accomplishment was supreme, in that He was without sin. Consequently, His position will be supreme, above the inhabitants of the earth, even above those who have been made equal to the angels.

But Jesus being above the angels on the earth as King, as supreme authority, does not suggest that He will have jurisdiction over all the angels in all of God's creation. The Bible is written from the standpoint of the earth and its destiny and development, and for this reason certain passages may sound as though Christ were the center of the universe, the "universe" of the Bible being God's plan for this earth and its unfolding. But we also learn from the Bible that God's plan for the earth is only one fold of a manifold plan (Ps. 104:24), only one aspect of an eternal plan which has been enacted countless times in the past (Eph. 3:10-15), only one phase of His eternal mercy which stretches "from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him" (Ps. 103:17-18). In relation to these many and far-reaching aspects of God's activities, Christ is small indeed, though in relation to the plan of God on earth He is supreme.

We cannot begin to comprehend the scope of the vast creative order of our God. This is why the prophet Isaiah could exclaim, "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth" (Isa. 40:25-26). God has created the earth and placed man upon it; He has also "stretched out the heavens" and commanded all their hosts (Isa. 45:11-12). As Nehemiah exulted, "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee" (Neh. 9:6).

We are told very little about God's plan for the universes, or how His hierarchy is arranged in other parts of His creation. But we can know from what we read in the Scriptures that it is orderly, and that it is according to a far-reaching plan and purpose, far beyond anything we can think or imagine.

In Philippians 2, Paul is discussing the position of Jesus, and he says, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (vs. 8-10). This passage indicates for Christ a position above the angels. But again we must remember that this was written with reference to our earth and not to other parts of God's creation. The time will come when every knee shall bow to Jesus, because He will be King of the whole earth. And "things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth"—all the political structures of man's devising will likewise submit to His exalted rule, not that every angel throughout God's creation will be under the jurisdiction of Jesus Christ.

*I am so glad! It is such rest to know
That Thou hast ordered and appointed all,
And wilt yet order and appoint my lot.
For though so much I cannot understand,
And would not choose, has been, and yet may be,
Thou choosest, Thou performest, Thou, my Lord,
This is enough for me.*

We must not be in a hurry to fix and choose our lot, but wait to be guided. We are led on, like little children, by a way that we know not. It is vain to flee from the work that God appoints us for the sake of finding a greater blessing on our own; as if we could choose for ourselves where we should find the fullness of the Divine, instead of seeking it where alone it is to be found: in loving obedience.

Pro & Con Reaction to the Debate

Pro...

I read with a great deal of interest the debate in the *September Message* concerning the death and blood of Jesus. This is a subject I've given a lot of study to over the years.

When I hear people talk about how Christ died for them on the cross, I wonder if they are thinking at all. The Baptists, the Catholics and others say that Jesus' death paid the penalty for sin, yet they believe that the penalty for sin is eternal torment in a burning hell. The only way Jesus could pay that penalty would be to suffer torment forever. If, on the other hand, the penalty for sin is eternal death (which is true) then Jesus would have to remain dead forever to pay the penalty. Of course Jesus is not suffering torment and He is not dead. He is with the Father in heaven.

The only death that Jesus suffered, other than the death to sin, was physical death. Then on the third day He rose from the dead to live forevermore. He did not die on the cross as anyone's substitute or representative. If He died on the cross to pay the penalty for us, then something is wrong, because since that time millions who claim to believe in Him have died. Even His closest followers have died.

The book of Acts records the martyrdom of James and Stephen, and history records that Peter and Paul and many other Christians were killed and even those who were not killed have died just like others. So, it should be obvious that Jesus' physical death did not remove the consequences of sin, no matter what you believe the penalty to be.

It should also be obvious that the only death and blood of Jesus which will benefit us is spiritual, not physical. The words death and blood are frequently used in a figurative sense in the Bible. Several years ago, I went through the Bible and noted several verses in which death or the giving up of life is used figuratively. Two good examples are I John 3:16, which reads, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." John is here pointing out the exemplary life of Jesus. He devoted His whole earthly life to the service of His people. He taught them and

showed them how to do good. His only concern was to prepare Himself and His followers for eternal life. And as John points out, Jesus did this and so should we.

The other passage which shows how a life may be given up is Acts 15:26 where it says of Barnabas and Paul that they had hazarded their lives for the name of Jesus. According to the Emphatic Diaglott this passage should be translated as men who have given up their lives for Jesus. Paul and Barnabas were still physically alive, but at the same time they had given up their lives. They were dead to the world and alive unto God.

There is much more that I could say about this, but I know that you are well versed in the Bible. How thankful we should be that we have the Scriptures of truth, and—much more—how we should daily be diligent to make our calling and election sure.

I will close with Romans 6:1-2, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Let us continue to work to become dead to sin.

S.K.

Tennessee

Con...

Remove my name from your mailing list.

After reading the September 1992 edition of *Megiddo Message*, which denies Christ's sacrificial work on the cross and claims we can gain right standing with God by our own merits alone, I want no part of your unsound doctrine.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Also your disbelief in Satan is not scriptural. He exists and distorts the truth of the Bible which is evidenced in your magazine.

How can you honestly study the Bible and not believe what it clearly says about these vital truths? I pray that you start praying to God for truth, His Truth, instead of creating your own. "Let God be true, and every man a liar."

(No name)

North Carolina

Hebrews 1 makes a statement which reveals the relation of Christ to the angels. "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (Heb. 1:4). Jesus being the Son of God receives His position *by inheritance*, whereas the angels do not. Jesus being the Son of God, He is "heir" to God's creation—not that God will die, but when the time is right, Jesus will inherit the earth. The angels, on the other hand, not being directly sons of God, cannot receive their position by inheritance. In this sense Jesus is superior to the angels.

Jesus and all the angels, wherever they originate, wherever they are crowned, all become eligible for God's blessings through the same avenue of obedience. We know this because we read in the Scriptures that "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). His mercy is not for everyone but only for those who "remember his commandments to do them."

We might picture the family of God as having a number of levels. God, of course, is supreme. Beneath Him are the angels; doubtless all are not equal. We are not told much about this level of life, as it does not pertain to us now. But those who are "counted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection of the dead," who are "equal unto the angels," will certainly be introduced to that level of life. The plan for the earth is that Christ will reign as King with His associate kings and priests through all eternity. MM

There is no God-like doing that is not patient doing.

Those who most need advice usually like it least.

There is a difference between making a good living and living a good life.

No reproof is so potent as the silent influence of a good example.

*Memo to me:
OTHERS LIVE HERE, TOO.*

Opportunity

*A day of opportunity
Has been presented to me,
Not for the good that I have done,
But that the race I yet may run.
And though unworthy I have been
To walk the earth with braver men,
His hand to me is outstretched still,
Imploring me to do His will.*

*And though the day brings trials new,
And of temptations not a few,
Oh, may I use them as it were,
As tools to hew a character
Of which I shall be proud to say,
"This is the work I did today!"
For if I thus meet every test
I know I shall by God be blest!*

*Oh, may I use each circumstance
This day my progress to advance;
And may each passing hour be found
A stepping stone to higher ground.
Then when the shades of night are hung
Although my praise may not be sung
By men, I know my God will see
I grasped each opportunity.*



Signs Of Spiritual Cancer

1. An unusual preoccupation with self, overemphasis upon "I, me, we, us, mine, ours" in conversation.
2. A swelling of interest in one's own thoughts, ideas, projects, without regard to the interests of others.
3. A sore feeling of anger and resentment that persists and does not heal.
4. A change in prayer life and attendance to study and worship from regular to irregular.
5. A feeling of hoarseness and uneasiness when matters relating to God, Christ, the church, or personal responsibility are mentioned.
6. Indigestion, or difficulty in swallowing Christian thoughts or references to "commitment," "discipline," or "self-denial."
7. A change in size, color, or complexion when asked: "Are you one of His?"

All These Things

"All things work together for good to them that love God."—Rom. 8:28.

In a factory building there are wheels and gearings,

There are cranks and pulleys, beltings tight or slack—

Some are whirling swiftly, some are turning slowly,

Some are thrusting forward, some are pulling back;

Some are smooth and silent, some are rough and noisy,

Pounding, rattling, clanking, moving with a jerk—

In a wild confusion, in a seeming chaos,

Lifting, pushing, driving—but they do their work.

From the mightiest lever to the tiniest pinion;

All things move together for the purpose planned;

And behind the working is a controlling mind,

And a directing force, and a guiding hand.

So all things are working for the Lord's beloved,

Some things might be hurtful if alone they stood;

Some might seem to hinder; some might draw us backward;

But they work together, and they work for good;

All the thwarted longings, all the stern denials,

All the disappointments, hard to understand,

And the force that holds them, speeds them and retards them,

Stops and starts and guides them, is our Father's hand.