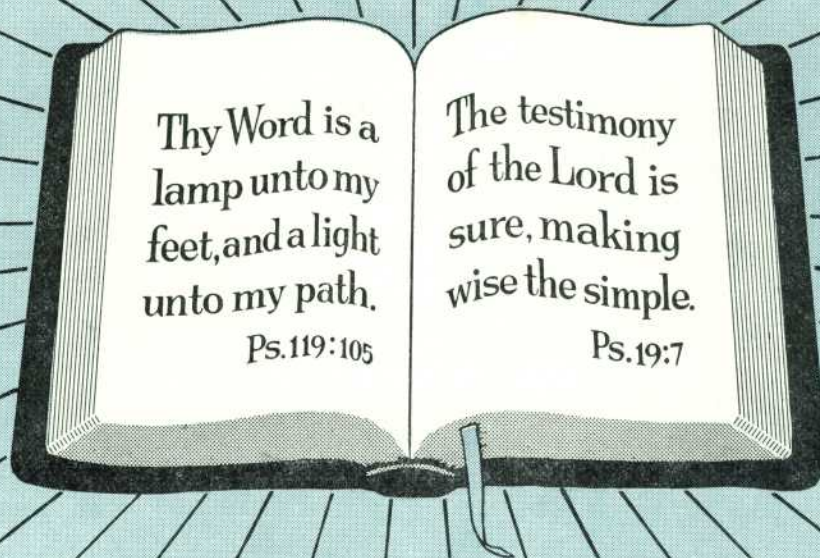


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



Signs of Life
Faith and Courage
Eliab
The Man Clothed in Linen

Megiddo Message

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- Strengthen your faith in the Bible
- Answer perplexing religious questions
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INDEX

Signs of Life	3
Timely Topics	7
Faith and Courage	8
Words to WALK By	9
Eliab	10
Weighing Results	11
Christ Not Born December 25	12
Understanding the Bible	13
The Man Clothed in Linen	17
Christian Youth in These Times	19
Bible A B C's	21
Letters	24
Questions and Answers	25
Meditations on the Word	26
Make me UNcomfortable, O God	Cover

Editorially Speaking . . .

"Let Every Man Prove His Own Work"

TO what faith do you and I belong? To whom do we owe our allegiance? If our faith is that of a Christian, the allegiance is to God. And this means we have a solemn responsibility, for of this faith and of this allegiance we are admonished, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (II Cor. 13:5).

Such an incisive imperative demands our immediate response. We must act. We must examine ourselves carefully, honestly. Cautioned the apostle James, "Do not err, my beloved brethren." See how he describes the man viewing his own face in a mirror. The man goes away, and immediately forgets what he looked like. This is not a careful, honest observation of self.

"Examine yourselves." The command is as much *when* to examine yourselves as *how*. The honest examination of self is a minute-by-minute examination. After every action, after every word is the time for self-evaluation. We must evaluate our doings, for God Himself will "render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:6).

The Psalmist examined himself. He says, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments" (Ps. 119:59-60). Is that what you and I do when we examine ourselves? Do we find ourselves wanting? And do we take immediate measures to correct ourselves, as did the Psalmist?

Jeremiah exhorts us to "search and try" our ways (Lam. 3:40). Our ways are not God's ways; therefore we must keep our actions and thoughts and words under constant and close scrutiny. By this action, and this alone can we prove faithful to God. "Be strictly careful then about the life you lead," is Moffatt's translation of Paul's words in Ephesians 5:15. "Act like sensible men, not like thoughtless."

It is true that self-examination is not the sole factor which will save a man; but only action based on this important personal duty can ever place us in a position acceptable to God. Having examined ourselves, we should be able to turn to our Master and say with confidence, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart," for we can know the result will prove our allegiance is to God. ●●

Signs of Life

PRAYER

Holy Father, we thank Thee for the chance to meet once more in Thy name, and have our minds refreshed on the things that will bring to us life and glory. May we always appreciate these seasons of worship, and may our hearts be enlarged so that each time we meet we may go away with a stronger determination to do right in every affair of life.

We thank Thee for divine law, which—though it restricts our freedom to do as we please—schools us to do as we ought, directs our energies into channels that are useful and spiritually constructive. Help us never to be satisfied with ourselves as we were in our natural unregenerated state. But may we, like the great Apostle, have but one chief aim, and that to forget the things that are behind, and reach forth unto the things that are before.

Grant, Father, that we may show signs of life in our growth into holiness, that we may spend the moments, hours, days and weeks purifying ourselves as Thy dear Son purified Himself.

Help us to show signs of abundant spiritual life, that our spirituality may flow out upon all fitting occasions, to speak the word that will promote harmony, discourage divisions and dissensions; the word to calm the troubled waters, always letting patience have her perfect work.

Father, help us always to show signs of Christian life and vitality in our association with our brothers in the faith, and a pattern of good works in our intercourse with the worldlings who know not Thee. Help us to show love for the brotherhood, aware that if this Christian virtue is lacking in our lives we are guilty of taking life, thus guilty of spiritual murder. Father, give us the strength to put our love not into words, or into talk, but into deeds, making it a real thing.

Lift the spirits of those everywhere who desire to know Thee, to understand Thy truth and learn to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. May we translate our prayers into attitudes, our best thoughts into actions, and our lives into finished stones for Thy holy temple soon to be erected upon earth. In the name of our coming King we pray. Amen.

DISCOURSE

“HE’S still alive!” shout rescue workers as they detect a feeble pulsebeat in the victim of a disaster. Immediately a thrill grips the onlookers who are standing about, anxiously hoping the unfortunate victim is not dead. There are signs of life in him. Just so the men of the world—as well as the world of believers—should be able to say of the alert Christian, He’s alive; we see signs of life in him. And these signs must be much more vivid than a feeble pulsebeat. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus informed His hearers that the righteous life is always apparent. It is radiant: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16)—unmistakable signs of life.

There are many signs of life and action that we might see as we go through life, and scarcely do we witness any of these signs without a feeling of warm emotion being aroused within us. Signs of spiritual life are no less real or less desirable than signs of physical life. And they are much more vital. The former affect only the saving of what remains of a possible lifespan of seventy to eighty years, beset by the perplexities of mortality; the latter have the possibilities of making safe a life that will last forever, in unspeakable bliss and happiness.

When we meet a friend who has been in poor health for some time, we are quick to register our pleasure at signs of improved health. Should not the sign of improved spiritual health bring even greater joy to the brother or sister who is spiritually alert? The beloved John, writer of the Epistles bearing his name, placed the spiritual health above the temporal, using it as the background from which to compare the physical health. Addressing his beloved friend, Gaius, he said: “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth”

(III John 2-4). Do we exhibit that same rejoicing as we see our brother walking in truth?

As we contemplate these signs of spiritual life we find they can be many and varied, but they are not fancied; they are real, and if we do not possess them, our claim to being spiritually alive is only vain. Let us proceed to test our degree of "aliveness" by our ability to manifest these signs.

How Do We Respond When Duty Demands Sacrifice?

The Christian's life is a life of sacrifice, of perpetually giving up our own way, and doing the things we naturally would not care to do. The apostle Paul speaks very frankly about this in Gal. 5: 17: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." It is natural for us to be self-centered, self-assured. Our own opinions and attitudes nearly always seem right to us. As saith the Scripture: "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes" (Prov. 21:2). It is a sure sign of spiritual life, active life, abundant life, when one can willingly surrender the right to his own opinion.

Romans 12:1 speaks of sacrifice at its highest and best: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Making this sacrifice demands surrender of every waking moment of our lives. It is a "living sacrifice," the sacrifice of a living man. "God's sacrifice is a soul with its evil crushed, a heart broken with penitence" (Ps. 51: 17, Moffatt).

We speak about the virtue of Abraham in showing his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac in obedience to the Lord's command. It would be difficult for us to think of a sacrifice that would be greater or harder to perform. And indeed we can thank God that we are not called upon to make such a sacrifice; but if we render our bodies a living sacrifice we shall have accomplished a monumental work; we shall have done all that God asks us to do.

We must be willing to sacrifice time to help on in the Lord's work, and to help others. God has promised to do for us "exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think." No sacrifice that we are asked to make, no inconvenience that we might be put to, should seem a large sacrifice compared to the great reward in store for us if faithful. We sometimes are called upon to sacrifice money, or we may find it necessary to give up doing the very thing we like to do most in order to help on with the work of the Lord.

We sometimes act much like Naaman the Syrian. We would be willing to do some great thing, some-

thing we feel might bring us praise and recognition or increase our prestige with the brotherhood; but we are not willing to do the small things. In God's scale of values there are no little sins; any broken law will stand against us at Judgment Day. Likewise there are no good deeds too small for Him to notice. "Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free" (Eph. 6:8). God demands perfection; and while perfection is no trifle, it is trifles that add up to perfection.

Can We Take Second Place and Like It?

Self-importance is a weakness that is very deeply entrenched in the human heart. Naturally we want to be first and we resent anyone taking our position from us. It is natural for us to believe strongly in ourselves. We suspect that if we do not believe in ourselves, no one else will believe in us. Hence we must put our best foot forward, must strive to appear important; and if anyone challenges our position we are apt to become extremely disturbed about it. Now that is a sign of death, not a sign of life. Christians who are fully alive in God's work, and who really love life, are so concerned about getting themselves right with God that there is no place in their lives for feeling slighted. "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away," says James 1:9-10.

Furthermore, the apostle Peter, who was with Christ in the holy mount at the time of the transfiguration, and was an eyewitness to His glory, warned in his First Epistle: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (I Pet. 5:2-6). Humility is one of the fairest flowers that bloom in the garden of virtues.

The prophet Samuel was a shining example of this godly virtue. Samuel had spent the best years of his life in the interest of his people. He had judged Israel for many long years. Under his benevolent reign a degree of peace and prosperity had been achieved. It seemed to him that his work was sufficiently outstanding to merit appreciation

by all the people of Israel. But the people grew restive and uneasy. They wanted a king. They wanted to be able to match their neighboring nations in sovereignty. They made their desire known to Samuel. It could have seemed a personal affront to him, an indication of extreme inappreciation on their part, and he easily could have become quite exercised about it, and made it known that he was all through with them. But what did he do? After the Lord informed him that it was a part of His plan for Israel to have a king, he humbly took second place and tried to be helpful in it, saying: "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way."

How Do We React When Opposed?

"Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them," said the Psalmist. To fully meet these requirements is a tremendous undertaking, and its accomplishment is a task only for the men and women who are fully alive to God. No one likes to be disagreed with. It is an affront to a man to be told he doesn't know what he is talking about, yet that may be the truth; and to be able to take it without the slightest sign of animosity is a strong and certain sign of spiritual life. Moses was said to be the meekest man on earth. We read in Num. 12:3, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." He was an outstanding example in this respect. Few men ever undertook a more thankless task, or worked with a less appreciative body of people than the children of Israel in the wilderness. Time and again the people rebelled and brought unjust charges against Moses. And what was his reaction? Did it generate bitterness and resentment in his heart? No, a thousand times no. When the people murmured, he humbled himself; he fell on his face, and patiently rested his case with God.

Jesus our great Example showed His abundant spiritual life in that when "he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." "For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (I Pet. 2:23, Heb. 12:3).

In II Timothy 2:24-25 we find a lesson from the great apostle Paul who himself knew how to take opposition in the spirit of meekness. He said to his son-in-the-faith Timothy: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those

that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." We sing:

"Help me to keep a right spirit, Lord,
As a true child of Thine;
In all my ways and in all I do,
Lord, may Thy glory shine.

"Help me to keep a right spirit, Lord,
Though I may injured be;
Help me to bless in return for wrong
Resting my soul in Thee."

If, like Samuel and like Jesus, we can keep a right spirit even when it seems to us that we have been injured, then we manifest a very vivid sign of life.

Love For Our Brother A Sign Of Life

John in his Epistles singles out love for the brotherhood, a love for our brother, as a sign of life. And hatred, the absence of love, is a sign of death.

As we drive along the city street we come upon a barricade by an open manhole, and a sign, *Men at work*. Have you ever seen a man from whose life you could detect that God is at work in the deep recesses of his soul? Now what *are* the signs of life, and what put them there? The apostle John, writing on the theme of God at work, said, the sign of His life in you is that you love one another. "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth *not* his brother abideth in death" (I John 3:14). The death spoken of here is not the stopping of the pulsebeat, or severing the jugular vein; not the

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collapse of the lungs, or complete cessation of all the life processes. It is a man cutting himself off from the Eternal, the state of being "dead in trespasses and sins."

Death, too, has *its* signs. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (v. 15). Murder means taking life. That is the capital crime. The man who hates his brother is the man who cuts himself off from his brother. The sign of life is that a man is concerned about the welfare of his brother in the faith; the sign of death is that he doesn't care.

When people in general talk about brotherly love, they are inclined to think of it in the wholesale and approve it in the abstract. They will readily agree that the world is suffering from hatreds, nation against nation, race against race, class against class. But the Apostle brings us bolt upright against ourselves. The hatred that is murder originates down deep in the heart of the man who has no concern for the welfare of another. "Shutting up the mechanisms of mercy"—that, John would say, "is death."

John's Epistle brings the matter close home and restricts the area of our thinking, focusing it directly upon ourselves. When John speaks about hating our brother he means our fellow Christian. It may be members of our immediate family, those who live in the same house with us, "especially those of the household of faith." This death—hatred—flourishes in the soil of self-deception, where people tell each other that they are in favor of love, but *do* nothing about it.

We sing:

"We should love and help each other,
Day by day, day by day,
We should raise the fallen brother
On the way, on the way,
For the road is rough at best;
As we count each weary mile,
Let us cheer the fainting breast
With a tender word and smile.

"How the hand of love can lighten,
All our woe, all our woe,
How the gleam of hope can brighten
All below, all below,
Let us do the kindly deed,
Let us speak the loving word;
They will spring like precious seed
In the garden of the Lord."

Do we live up to the words that we sing?

We sometimes are reluctant to give practical help to a brother in need. We say to ourselves, if he would attack his problem in a more practical

way, he might not need help. But such is not always the case, and selfishness may prompt our reasoning. If we knew that Jesus was somewhere in the immediate vicinity and needed help, we would be quick to come to His assistance. But remember, it was Jesus Himself who said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40).

And there is still another definition of love for our brother, and one that is entirely foreign to human thinking. We love him by showing him his sins. Sometime ago a minister preached a sermon built around the theme of love for the brother as the sign of life. Part way along in the sermon he had this to say: "At this point, if this sermon and this word of Scripture is to do us any good, we shall have to practice an art which for most Americans becomes a bit awkward through disuse. In order to understand this business of death with a capital D and life with a capital L, we have to peer deep into our own hearts." If peering deep into one's own heart is an art that has become awkward through disuse, surely the average professing Christian would be totally unfamiliar with the art of showing true Bible love.

A statement by Moses on brotherly love provides a clue to the thinking of the Divine Mind. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him" (Lev. 19:17). The neighbor is the brother, and the brother the neighbor. If we see him in transgression, we must rebuke and warn him; there is no better way to show godly love for him. "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." If we fail to heed this command we are hating our brother, hence we are what John defines as murderers.

If a motorist were aware that half a mile down the highway a bridge was out, and the hazardous breach in the pavement was rendered invisible to approaching traffic by a bend in the road, could that motorist say he had any love for his fellow motorists if he made no effort to warn them of the peril just ahead? If lives were lost through his negligence, could not the verdict of murder rightfully be lodged against him?

Now each of us must be a brother's keeper, it is an unfailing sign of life. None of us "liveth unto himself." We may see our brother in transgression. He may not be aware of it, or may be willfully blinded. The law of God declares that "the wages of sin is death." Our brother has transgressed; the law of God is inexorable; the death penalty will be imposed if he does not repent and reform. If we

(Continued on page 22)

Timely Topics

PEACE is a small word packed with meaning.

The very sound of it suggests its meaning: quietude and tranquility, calmness and order, freedom and contentment. Today it is a very common word, spoken loosely by children unable to fathom its depths, impatiently by disillusioned youth weary of war, hopefully and longingly by nations and peoples torn by strife and the effects of violence. Daily, bold headlines appear in magazines and newspapers advocating, explaining, discussing, or factually telling about the intricacies involved in trying to obtain some form of peace.

"Peace and Safety"

But whether in large exacting letters or scrawled on a dirty brick wall, "peace" is the cry of our times.

The cry for peace rings loud. When has mankind longed for it more fervently? And with the re-election of President Nixon to serve another four-year term comes a confirmation of all efforts toward peace. The coming term promises the most intense peace quest ever made in the history of our nation. Among his first words in his hour of triumph were the following: "We are on the eve of what could be the greatest generation of peace, true peace, mankind has ever known." What does this mean when we consider the fulfillment of the words of the apostle Paul, "When they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them..." (I Thess. 5:3-4)? Is it not the beginning of a fulfillment which will culminate in the return of Christ?

Alongside the fulfillment of this prophecy is the fact that a united world of brotherhood under man's rule remains a dream, as men in ignorant helplessness flounder about as they seek to attain it. Truly they are saying, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14).

True peace will never come by the efforts of men. "Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street. . . . None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. . . . Their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their

thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace" (Isa. 59:14, 4-8).

"There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked" (Isa. 48:22). Peace of any sort can never be attained so long as mankind choose to follow their evil and immoral inclinations. Ours is an age of worldwide trouble and violence, when "men's hearts [are] failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (Luke 21:26). On one hand men are working to promote international peace; on the other, the United States still fears that the Soviets are pressing for a lead in the armaments race. Peace, peace, but . . .

Atomic bomb shelters are to be found in cities, towns, and country, in public buildings and in private homes—just in case . . . ? Recently the world was shocked by Arab terrorism at the Olympic games; hijacking of airplanes has become a worldwide concern; in our country the cost of crime mounts steadily; drug abuse increases to epidemic proportions.

In spite of all this, we can say with surety, Peace is coming! Through the efforts of man? No! "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (II Sam. 23:3). If such rulers were on the earth today, then we would have peace and safety now. But thank God, such rulership is coming! Jesus Christ is going to intervene in human affairs and rid the world of its violence and immorality, of every problem now plaguing mankind. True peace and safety will then be the order of the day, and all will know the Lord, for "the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the . . . house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Micah 4:1-3). How can we be sure this will actually come to pass? "For the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it" (Micah 4:4).

What a time to look forward to! As Paul wrote in First Thessalonians: "For when they shall say,

(Continued on page 27)

FAITH AND COURAGE

Scene II

Introduction

In Scene One, the youthful shepherd, restless, discontented, listens wisely to his father's pleading and reasoning. Taking with him his harp and his faithful sling, the boy sallies forth to find the army in the vale of Elah, where his brothers are experiencing the warfare he longs for.

It is twilight when he reaches the camp. Round the fires are grouped the soldiers, laughing, jesting, or grumbling as soldiers have grumbled since the beginning of armies. David remains in the shadows beyond the firelight, and in a moment he hears the voice of his eldest brother Eliab. There is loud laughter as the scene begins.

ELIAB. I said to Saul the King—

SOLDIER 1. Ye spake to the King, Eliab?

ELIAB. That I did, as boldly as I speak to you here.

SOLDIER 1. Eliab, had I thy confidence I would be a king myself. (laughter)

ELIAB. Ye laugh? Well, my friends, not only did I speak to Saul, but he listened to me.

SOLDIER 2. Before long, Eliab, thou wilt be the commander of this army. (laughter)

ELIAB. Perchance I could command as well as some who are set over me! I'll tell you something, my friends, there's no opportunity for me in this army. If something would but happen—

SOLDIER 3. Something? What? Meet thou the giant, Eliab; fight him to the death. Art thou afraid?

ELIAB. I am a soldier and I fight in war, and not in single combat; let the King accept the challenge; was he not the choice of Samuel, since in stature great he stood?

SOLDIER 5. Eliab, wert thou as great in courage as in size the nation might a saviour find in thee; thou might have been the prophet's choice for king! But come, Eliab. What else didst thou tell the King? (laughter)

ELIAB. If ye mean but to jest with me—

SOLDIER 2. Nay! Nay! Eliab, who are we to jest with a great man?

ELIAB. Some day, my friends, ye shall see! Huh!

Were it not that I had so many enemies who claim to be my friends, I might rise to the rank of commander.

SOLDIER 1. Enemies, Eliab? Surely thou art mistaken.

ELIAB. Thou thinkest so, my friends?

SOLDIER 1. Aye! Thou art too modest to have enemies. Come, Eliab. The last time thou camest before the King, what saidst thou?

ELIAB. Well, I spoke to Saul, and I said— (laughter)

SOLDIER 3. Nay! Nay! My friends. Laugh not. Eliab speaks so seldom. We must treasure his words. Continue, Eliab.

ELIAB. Well, 'twas this morning. Saul called me to his tent. "My Lord," said I, "Why art thou cast down?"

SOLDIER 2. (laughing) 'Twas that he saw thee. Eliab! (hah, hah)

ELIAB. (rising) Fools! (another soldier enters) I said to the King and the King said to me—

SOLDIER 4. (calling) Eliab!

ELIAB. Who calls me?

SOLDIER 4. There is a boy sitting yonder who says he is thy brother. So goodly he appeareth it is strange to think of him as kin to Eliab, but since he claimeth such, I must not doubt.

ELIAB. What brings him here?

SOLDIER 4. I know not; but he would speak with thee. Hither, boy!

(David enters)

ELIAB. Well, David! Why art thou not home, minding thy sheep?

DAVID. Eliab, my father sent me hither.

ELIAB. Ha! Ha! David, art thou come to fight the Philistines with thy sling?

DAVID. No, my brother Eliab. I came to seek news of thee, to bring thee food.

ELIAB. Nay! I know thee, David! Thou art come here to loiter in the camp—to see the battle. Well, there is going to be no battle. So thou may as well go home.

DAVID. Eliab, my brother, I came only to hear of thy deeds of greatness before Saul the King. (laughter)

ELIAB. Well, then get thee hence to thy flock!

DAVID. May I not tarry until morning?

ELIAB. Yea, but get thee to my tent; this is no place for a lad like thee.

SOLDIER 3. Nay, Eliab. He hath a harp. Let him stay and play for us.

SOLDIERS. Aye, lad, play for us, lad. Play!

DAVID. Soldiers of Israel, I—I play a little, but only to while away the hours on yonder hills.

SOLDIER 5. Never mind, lad. Play for us a tune; so shall we all rejoice, save Eliab.

DAVID. If it is your will, soldiers. (he plays)

SOLDIER 5. Lad, our thanks to thee. Thou hast carried us all far from these scenes of war.

CAPTAIN. (distant) Who plays yonder?

SOLDIER. Lad, it is our captain. He hath heard thee!

DAVID. I must be gone. Perchance he will be angry that I am come to the camp.

SOLDIER 1. Nay! Fear not! Thy harp shall make thee welcome.

(Enter Captain)

CAPTAIN. Lad, was it thy music that I heard?

SOLDIER 5. Answer the captain, boy. He questions thee.

DAVID. It was, my lord!

CAPTAIN. Thy name?

DAVID. David, my lord—brother to Eliab.

CAPTAIN. David, thy music hath even now reached the ears of the King. He would have thee come and play for him.

DAVID. I—I play before the King?

CAPTAIN. Aye, lad. At once!

DAVID. Now? my lord—now?

CAPTAIN. Aye! If thou canst cheer him, then the Lord be praised that thou art come at such an hour as this: in moodiness he mopeeth in his tent—When at the close of day the giant bold threw out his challenge with his heathen oaths, Saul shivered in despair—

DAVID. What giant bold? What is this thing that doth affright the King and causeth him to sink in such despair? I fain would know—

ELIAB. Be silent, untried youth! This is no matter for a lad like thee; 'Tis but in pride and haughtiness of heart thou comest; 'tis no place, as yet, for thee.

DAVID. Where have I erred in speaking? Tell me, pray?

ELIAB. (sarcastically) Since thou believest that thou shalt be king, thy nation's shame and sorrow thou shouldst know; we cannot fight the army of the foe, but must to single combat make resort and fight a giant, great Goliath of Gath; in height and size o'erwhelming and in strength. We have no

champion who can equal him; Saul is in stature greater than the rest, and he doth loiter in his tent dismayed.

DAVID. Eliab, the King is surely ill; no heart so bold as that which beateth in his manly breast can shrink in cowardice from any foe. Perhaps with music I can offer cheer, revive his spirits in his saddened heart.

ELIAB. David, thou art presumptuous. Why not ask the King to let thee fight the giant in his stead? Wealth he hath offered to the winner brave, his daughter's hand, and freedom for his house. No risk he runneth; there is none so bold as will accept his offer—

DAVID. None so bold! Why darest none to battle with this foe? Where is the faith that Israel's God still lives? In all their hosts, doth none believe His Word?

ELIAB. Thou fool, David, thou *art* a fool! Talk not to us of faith! When thou dost see Goliath in his might thy childish faith will melt, and thou in fear wilt run like a frightened rabbit. Get thee hence and play thine harp; such business suits thee best.

SOLDIER 3. Peace, Eliab. The lad hath spoken wisely. 'Twere better far to hide thy feelings sore.

CAPTAIN. Come, boy. Let them have their argument. The King awaits thee.

(Continued Next Issue)

Words to WALK By

The greatest of all faults is to imagine you have none.

Half of the things we worry about never happen, and the other half will happen anyway—so why worry?

Wild oats need no fertilizer.

The man who is ashamed of his faith ought to be ashamed of himself.

You've tried your own way—now try God's.

If you hold your religion lightly, you are sure to let it slip.

Wait upon the Lord; don't ask the Lord to wait upon you.

We do not get rid of our own faults by calling attention to the faults of others.

Temptations are sure to rap at your door, but it's your fault if you let them in.

You can't walk with God while you are running after temptation.

ELIAB

(This characterization follows the preceding scene of "Faith and Courage")

A physician wrote a book explaining psychoanalysis for the man of the street. The book contains the case histories of several patients, and in the preface the physician says, "If you expect to meet on these pages the eccentricities and peculiarities of your friends and neighbors, you will be disappointed. The person you are most likely to meet is YOURSELF."

This applies also to the Scriptures and its teachings. The Bible contains the case histories of many weak and wicked characters. In fact, more wicked characters than righteous appear upon its pages; and if we see in their weaknesses and sins only the similarities to our friends and neighbors, we are missing a valuable lesson. It is important, of course, to understand the true doctrine God has revealed to us in the Bible. But until we allow it to show us the spots and blemishes in our character, we have really gained very little; we still have no prospects of a future life in that glorious eternity which belongs to the great God of creation.

It was pleasant and entertaining, yes, even educational to witness the scene which has just been presented; but most important are the lessons we may learn for our spiritual growth and edification.

Eliab loved the sound of his own voice. Speaking bluntly, Eliab was a bore. His companions knew it, but he didn't—and

perhaps he never found out. A bore usually doesn't. He just talks his way through life, blissfully believing that everyone shares his splendid enthusiasm for his views and accomplishments. Any bore worth his salt will discuss at length on almost any subject you care to mention, so long as it isn't on the practical side of God's plan for man.

Bores nearly always confine themselves to worldly subjects, and this is true of Eliab. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof" (Prov. 18:21). Eliab had not learned to "let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips" (Prov. 27:2). He was far from the precept, "my tongue shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long."

Eliab was a bad example, with his critical, complaining ways. He was not helping to build morale in an army which certainly needed it. He was pulling in the wrong direction. Everything he said tended to dissipate whatever courage his companions might have had. He had not learned to practice "be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." And, "to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Eliab was not respectful. Saul's leadership admittedly was not the best, and he had departed from keeping the pre-

cepts of the living God. Still, he was the Lord's anointed and respect was due his position. This was something Israel's greatest king never forgot, even under the most trying and dangerous circumstances. Eliab had not learned to say, "the Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord." When God has a plan and a leader, they are due our respect—always.

Eliab was selfish. There was no good in anything which was not to his personal advantage. He had not learned to practice the commandment, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." His selfishness really amounted to jealousy, aroused, perhaps, by what had happened on Samuel's visit to Bethlehem some years before; just as jealousy gnawed at the hearts of Joseph's brethren, causing them to sin against the righteous. Jealousy is as cruel as the grave because it leads to eternal oblivion.

Eliab was evil-minded. Did you observe how quickly he accused David of false motives for his visit to the camp? All the evils which filled his own evil heart he willingly heaped upon his brother, falsely—laziness, pride, undue curiosity and naughtiness of heart. And he called him a foolish coward. Far older than the Ten Commandments is the principle, "Neither shalt thou bear false witness

against thy neighbor." But it is easy to forget.

Eliab was not spiritually-minded. He was so filled with his own ideas that there was little, if any, room left for God. The cares of this life had crowded out what faith he once had. Not once did he pause to wonder about the power of Israel's God. Yet David's first question on hearing of the heathen giant, Goliath, was, "Where is the faith that Israel's God still lives? In all their hosts doth none believe His word?"

Eliab's lack of faith and attitude of defeat kept him from ever being a fit instrument for delivering God's people. He was passed by, while one younger and seemingly less experienced, moved onward and upward to consort with the king—where Eliab longed to be.

God chose the humble man who was prepared to do His will.

Eliab couldn't see himself. We all know people who can't see themselves, and how strangely stubborn they seem to be when it is brought to their attention. Eliab was of this sort. Otherwise he would have changed and become different. But why should the eldest CHANGE?—especially for the youngest brother, who was scarcely old enough to be allowed an opinion of his own?

As we have seen and examined Eliab's character, there is little to attract but much to repel us. We wouldn't want to be like Eliab—you and I. We are pleased that we are not like Eliab—you and I. But if we think thus, we are deceived. For there is an Eliab in the heart of each one of us. He never fails to pull in the wrong direction. He wants to be heard on every subject. He speaks freely and encourages discontent. This Eliab in our hearts does not hesitate to speak evil of the righteous. He is selfish and evil-minded. He does not dwell on spiritual things—and worse, he will not permit us to see ourselves; thus he prevents the cleansing and growth necessary to make us acceptable to God.

Yes. There is an Eliab in our hearts. He is the worst there is in us; and though we may not see him, our friends see him. Certainly God sees him. And as long as one bit of him remains, we are condemned to eternal ruin—death.

Away with this Eliab who will drag us down to the nonentity of the tomb!

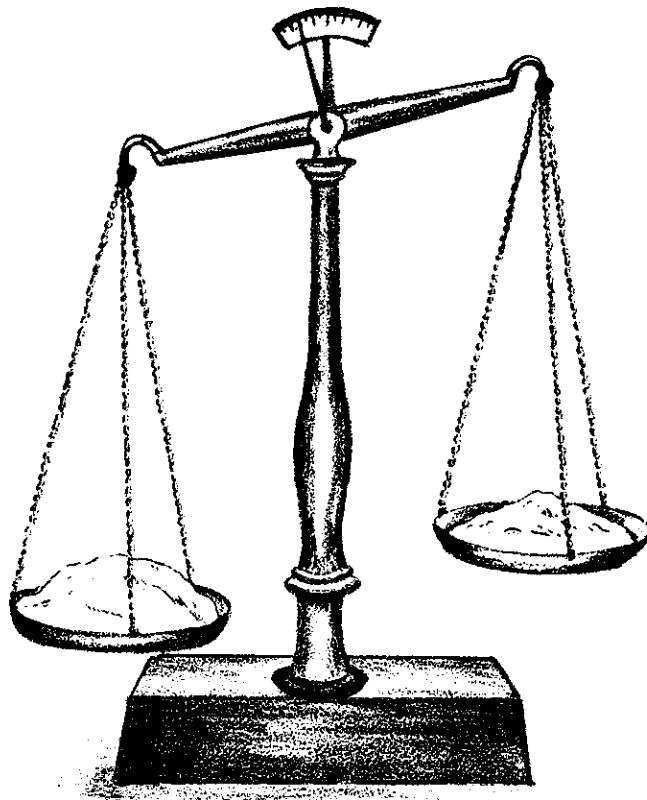
Then let us arise and move onward and upward, even as David did, to consort with kings. Yea, even to *be* a King. ●●

CORRECTION

"Last month's article, "Now Is The Time," should have included: "By Lon Woodrum. Used by permission." We regret this omission.—THE EDITOR.

December, 1972

Weighing Results



WEIGHING is a process as old as civilization. More than five thousand years before the Christian era, the Egyptians devised a simple balance capable of weighing objects, and through succeeding centuries the principle has been expanded and developed until modern weighing machines surpass our comprehension. These devices range all the way from the electric load cell which is capable of weighing up to five million pounds and maintaining an accuracy of about one tenth of one percent, to the ultrasensitive microbalance which can detect a weight variation of less than one hundredth of one microgram, or one twenty-eight millionth part of an ounce!

However fine the variance, weighing is by nature a science of imperfections. So far as the workmanship of men is concerned, the perfect weighing device never has been and never will be; only in God is *perfect* weighing attainable. And what do His scales reveal? *Spiritual results.*

God's scales never vary. "His work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deut. 32:

3-4). With Him is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). Exact and accurate and well-balanced, His scales weigh perfectly!

What do His exacting standards reveal about our service to God? Do His scales show a neglect of duty? delayed obedience? a scant measure of the fruits of the Spirit and a generous measure of the fruits of the flesh?

What about that weight of our attitude toward evil. Is it too liberal? Let us stop and weigh carefully the evidence. While tolerance is often necessary, it can easily be overdone, especially when we ourselves are concerned. We may talk long about the evil in the world that is the result of an over-permissive attitude toward rebellious young people, but how strictly do we discipline ourselves?

When we come in contact with the world, do we wish them to think that we are not so much different than they are after all? Such thinking is sure to off-balance the scales, for we read: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:17-18).

Seeking the recognition of our fellow-workers, our friends, or our companions, is another all-too-human trait to which God's scales are extremely sensitive; even the slightest thought or desire for it can tip the scales against us. It is only the unpretentious, humble steward who sticks diligently to his task day in and year out that can lay claim to a sufficient quantity of that cardinal virtue, humility, which scores heavily on God's scales.

How well do we weigh when we suffer unjust criticism? Do we take it patiently, in a manner that Peter tells us is "acceptable with God"?

Or do we try to cheat the Lord with false weights of lip-service? Do we say "Lord, Lord," and then avoid the work He requires of us, even adding an occasional white lie or thread of self-justification in a vain attempt to make God's scales balance?

When some egregious sin is found in us, do we have the honesty to admit the error and make amends to balance off the evil?

The natural mind weighs by appearance, by possessions, by ability, by popularity. But all this is what the prophet Amos calls "falsifying the balances by deceit." It is unacceptable to the Lord.

The Psalmist describes the weight of men in their natural state: "Surely men of low degree are vanity and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity" (Ps. 62:9). All the evils of human nature weigh nothing toward God's eternal rewards.

We cannot cheat God, however we may try to

tip the scales in our favor. Only good thoughts, right actions, pure motives and heavenly aspirations will weigh in His just balances.

What will the weighing show? Shall we be found wanting, or shall the Great Day of Weighing reveal the quantity of quality—even to the last hundredth of a microgram—that shall be worthy of life immortal? ●●

Christ NOT Born December 25

One of our Canadian subscribers has sent a newspaper clipping which might be of interest to our readers. In the article, by Kenneth Dorn, a leading astronomer gives added evidence that Christ was not born on the supposed December date. We quote:

"The first Christmas was not on December 25 but in April, and it was six years earlier than most people think, according to a leading astronomer.

" 'Everything points to the spring of 6 B. C., probably around April, as the time when Christ was born,' said astronomer Robert H. Fries, assistant director of the Fels Planetarium in Philadelphia.

" 'It's impossible, with the evidence thus far uncovered, to be more specific than that about the date. But the birth definitely did not occur in December, as generally believed,' he said.

"Fries said a study of a number of sources led him and other researchers to conclude that Christians have for centuries been observing the wrong day as Christmas.

" 'We have taken astronomical calculations, astrological interpretations, and geographic considerations, and combined them with information from the Bible to come up with theory,' Fries said.

"He told The ENQUIRER in a recent interview at Fels Planetarium: 'The Bible stipulates in no uncertain terms that the birth of Christ was a springtime event. In St. Luke, chapter 2, verse 8, the Bible says: "...and there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night..."

" 'The climate in December in that part of the world is cold and rainy. We don't feel shepherds would have been in the fields under those conditions. However, the spring of the year is the lambing season when the young are born and that, we believe, is the only time of the year that the shepherds actually would be in the fields at night. This passage in St. Luke is the only place in the Bible

(Continued on page 20)

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

Baptism

IN our study of the subject of baptism, we have learned that in the days of the apostles, baptism was more than a ceremonial or ritual washing. It was, rather, a public declaration of the convert's intention to change his way of life.

"What are we to say, then? Shall we persist in sin, so that there may be all the more grace? No, No! We died to sin: how can we live in it any longer? Have you forgotten that when we were baptized into union with Christ Jesus we were baptized into his death? By baptism we were buried with him, and lay dead, in order that, as Christ was raised from the dead in the splendour of the Father, so also we might set our feet upon the new path of life" (Rom. 6:3-5, NEB).

These words of Paul to the Roman brethren are self-explanatory. Their baptism, as explained by Paul, was no ceremonial dipping, but it represented a complete death to sin, the crucifixion of the "old man," "the destruction of the sinful self," so they were no longer slaves of sin. They had set their "feet upon the new path of life."

A study of the New Testament reveals that baptism was not done indiscriminately. Certain conditions were to be met. The candidate had first to repent, that is, turn from his sin, set his feet upon the new path of life. He had also to believe before he could be baptized. He had to be instructed in this new way that he might know what to believe. "They that gladly received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41). These words indicate that they had been instructed and professed their belief in what they had learned before they were baptized.

In this issue we will complete our study of the subject, following our outline.

VI. Concepts of Baptism

VII. Other Baptisms

VI. CONCEPTS OF BAPTISM

Like many another Christian belief, baptism has undergone a transition during the nearly twenty

centuries that have passed since John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River.

The baptism of John was a baptism of repentance, a repentance followed by cleansing the heart according to the words of the prophets (Jer. 4:14; Isa. 1:16), symbolized by immersion in water. John claimed no saving virtue for his baptism; it was only the outward sign of an inward penitence, a turning again to the true God whom the Jews had largely forsaken.

It would seem that Jesus accepted John's baptism merely as an act of obedience to a divine ordinance, to "fulfil all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15). His baptism also served to introduce Him to John's followers and to initiate Him into the ministry.

There is nothing in the Scriptures to indicate that Jesus Himself baptized; His disciples administered the rite infrequently until after Pentecost. Jesus' words in Matthew 28:19 have been interpreted by the majority of Christian denominations as a mandate to baptize all believers. However, a few denominations reject baptism entirely, most notable among these being the Quakers who have "nothing to do with outward forms or ceremonies, rituals or creeds."

Throughout the centuries the rite has become more and more complicated. The earliest rite as pictured in Acts was simple immersion in water in the name of the Lord, usually followed by the laying on of hands, and resulting in the convert's receiving the Holy Spirit. But to the rite were added a variety of details such as the use of the trine formula, trine immersion, a confession of faith, recitation of creeds, sponsors, as well as other minor additions at different periods of church history. The net result, according to a well-known church historian, was that the ritual act itself was given more prominence than the spiritual aspect of washing away the "old man" or the old nature. The change effected by baptism came to be attributed to the "name" and to the water, which were regarded as actually effective and not symbolic. Efficacy was placed in the rite itself and faith on the part of the recipient was regarded as non-essential. Baptism, however, was believed to be essential to salvation.

A. Early Church Concepts

In the second century the Catholic Church succeeded in having every other sect declared heretical and non-Christian (the remnant of the true church would have been included). Whatever information that is available concerning the concepts of baptism during this time comes from the Catholic Church fathers.

These church fathers were agreed that baptism was essential, but questions arose as to who should baptize and who should be baptized, and when. It had been generally agreed that faith and instruction should precede baptism, but "it should be noted in this connection that it was never supposed that baptism apart from faith would suffice to secure eternal life. Faith was still essential; but whereas faith had as a rule preceded baptism, it was now held that baptism would be equally effective if it preceded faith."*

1. The baptism of infants. Probably the greatest controversy in this age arose over the baptism of infants. Tertullian, a second century church father, pleaded for delaying baptism until the child reached the age of understanding, but others argued that baptism must take place at the earliest possible time after birth.

Although there is evidence that the custom existed as early as the second century, it was not adopted formally by the church until sometime in the third century, or perhaps later. Available data give conflicting reports. One source attributes its adoption to Augustine, who was not born until the middle of the fourth century A. D.

The false doctrine of "original sin," that all humanity are inherent sinners because of the sin of their greatest grandparents, Adam and Eve, had much to do with the argument concerning infant baptism. Infants who died unbaptized were considered by these church fathers to be condemned to eternal misery, hence the need for baptism for the remission of sins—even in infants.

The encyclopedia states, "it is assumed that it [infant baptism] comes down from Apostolic times." **There is no basis for such an assumption. Nowhere in the Scriptures do we find any evidence of infant baptism, nor is there anything in the Scriptures to indicate that salvation was conditional upon baptism. Salvation was for them even as us, a promise conditional upon obedience to the commands of God.**

2. Baptism and exorcism. About four centuries after the Apostolic Age, exorcism (casting out devils) had been added to the baptismal rite. It

appears that this concept flourished for some time. Baptism was believed to "loosen Satan's hold over the soul." "Just as the Red Sea drowned the hosts of Pharaoh, so baptism drowns the devil out of a man," were the words of a bishop of the Catholic Church in this period. According to Hastings' **Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics**, "the insistence on the objective efficacy of the sacrament is largely the result of pagan presuppositions. . . . The close connection of baptism with exorcism and with the renunciation of the devil is derived not from the New Testament, but from the demon environment in which the church was actually living."

3. Trine baptism. During this same period, a trine baptism was being practiced in order to cause those who received it "to reflect on the doctrine of the Trinity." The invocation was pronounced three times and the candidate immersed three times, one each for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Obviously the True Church conducted no such practice, since the doctrine of the Trinity was not developed until many years after the death of the last apostle. The general necessity of water baptism to salvation was still maintained.

B. Baptism in the Middle Ages

According to the historian, the Medieval Church added little to the doctrine of baptism. The Lateran Council of 1216 restated the orthodox view that "baptism does produce a real effect which makes for salvation, even in infants."

1. Baptism by sprinkling. It was during this period that sprinkling was substituted for immersion in the Western church. While the Eastern division of the church continued trine immersion, baptism by sprinkling became more and more common from the 13th century on. During the same time, trine immersion disappeared, being replaced by one invocation and one immersion. In England sprinkling did not become common until after the Reformation.

The Council of Trent, held about 1550, defined the subject of baptism, affirming among other things that baptism is necessary to salvation, that the baptized must keep the law of Christ; that the baptized must conform to the teaching of the church and that infants must not be denied baptism because they cannot exercise conscious faith.

C. Baptism and the Reformation

The reformers' concepts of baptism differed but little from those of earlier centuries. The Reform Churches held widely separated views concerning the sacrament of baptism, ranging from high esteem by the Lutheran Church and the Church of England to complete rejection by the Quakers.

* Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, p. 394.

To Luther, baptism was desirable, but not absolutely necessary to salvation. Calvin maintained that it was necessary to adults but not to infants and young children. The Church of England sided with Luther, affirming that baptism was not absolutely necessary. The majority of Protestants agreed more with the English by rejecting the decree of the Council of Trent. The Baptists, an outgrowth of the Reformation, held that only mature believers should be baptized, emphasizing the necessity of a profession of faith. Most other Protestant churches continued the baptism of infants. By this time exorcism had been removed from the baptismal rite and the procedure greatly simplified. According to the historian, baptism had by this time become "a mere symbol or a confession of faith."

D. Present-Day Concepts of Baptism

The majority of present-day churches consider baptism as an ordinance instituted by Christ Himself, but this is hardly provable since we have no record that Christ baptized anyone. Christ's institution of the ordinance rests solely on the words of Matthew 28:19, and as stated previously in the lesson, these words were given as instruction to the eleven disciples and were fulfilled during their lifetime. Today's views on baptism are not unlike those of the reformation period, varying from those like the Quakers who reject it entirely, to the Roman Catholics, who attach much efficacy to the rite.

"The Roman Catholic and the Greek Orthodox Churches, most Lutheran bodies, and many in the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church, hold that baptism is the direct instrument of regeneration. Roman Catholics subscribe so strongly to this view that, accordingly, they also hold that all persons, adults or infants, who die unbaptized are excluded from heaven. Many evangelical churches believe that baptism is not only the rite of initiation into the church of Christ, but a sign and seal of divine grace symbolizing spiritual cleansing or purification."**

1. The Catholic viewpoint. From "The Catechism of Modern Man," 1968 edition, we learn that baptism is a sacrament, and "a sacrament is the symbol of a sacred reality and the visible form of an invisible grace." Of "the sacrament of baptism," we read that "in the presence of Christ, man is illumined with a new light and consequently recognizes the holiness of God and the gravity of sin. Through the word of Christ, a message is transmitted to him which invites him to conversion and

grants forgiveness of sins. These gifts he fully attains in Baptism. This sacrament, in fact, configures him to the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord, and places the whole future of the life of the baptized under the seal of this mystery.... Having died with Christ, been buried with Him and risen together with Him, they receive the Spirit who makes them adopted sons.... Whenever baptism is duly administered as Our Lord instituted it, and is received with the right dispositions, a person is truly incorporated into the crucified and glorified Christ, and reborn to a sharing of the divine life.... Through baptism we are all one in Christ Jesus."

"By her preaching she [the Church] brings forth to a new and immortal life the sons who are born to her in Baptism, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God.... All Christians... are bound to show forth, by the example of their lives and by the witness of the word, that new man put on at Baptism."

The Roman Catholic Church today still holds to the premise that baptism is absolutely essential to salvation and baptizes infants at a tender age.

2. The Radio Church of God viewpoint. This church, headed by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, also considers baptism to be absolutely necessary, but its concept varies considerably from the Catholic concept. Mr. Armstrong's ideas are more in keeping with the "One Baptism," the baptism into Christ's death and it is limited to the truly repentant believer, hence infants and young children are excluded.

Mr. Armstrong, writing in the April, 1964 issue of *The Plain Truth*, says, "Remember, 'The wages of sin is death' (Rom. 6:23). Since ALL have sinned (Rom. 3:23) and come short of the glory of God, and since the wages of sin, which is the breaking of God's law (I John 3:4) is DEATH—therefore baptism symbolizes that death!" This, supposedly, is "Plain Truth," on baptism. But truth mixed with error is not truth. Death that is the wages of sin is **penal death**, while death symbolized by the "one baptism" is **death to sin**, the death of the "old man." We must not confuse the various uses of "death" in the Scriptures.

VII. OTHER BAPTISMS

We also find in the Scriptures the word "baptism" used where it has no reference to water baptism. We will discuss two such baptisms.

A. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

The first time this phrase is used in the Scriptures is found in Matthew 3:11. Jesus had not yet

** *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p. 123

appeared on the scene. These words were spoken by John the Baptist: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire."

John himself possessed supernatural power and thus would have known of the promise of the Holy Spirit power that was to be given at Pentecost. This power was given in a limited form and for a limited time, but the baptism of which John spoke has a yet future meaning.

Note that John couples this baptism of the Holy Spirit with "fire," a term used in the Scriptures to denote destruction, most often referring to the judgments of God. When the servants of God have been judged, the faithful will be rewarded with immortality, the baptism of the Holy Spirit; while the unfaithful will be destroyed forever by the "fire" of God's judgments, eternal death, penal death (Rom. 6:23). Such a baptism will be continuing in accordance with the meaning of the Greek word *baptizo*.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit as used by Jesus in Acts 1:5 which the disciples were to receive "not many days hence" could refer only to Pentecost. This was truly a baptism in the true sense of the word, bringing the recipients "into a new state of life or experience," placing them under the control of God so completely that they would be told what they should speak and what they should do by a miraculous means.

B. Baptism for the Dead?

Paul's words in I Corinthians 15:29 have had many and varied explanations. The verse reads: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?"

This verse has been used in support of paganized beliefs that the living can do something to help those who have died to gain eternal life. Although Paul's words here may be among those "hard to be understood," we are confident he did not intend to convey any meaning that would contradict other plain Bible teachings.

The Scriptures plainly teach that nothing can be done after death or for the dead, "for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave" (Eccl. 9:10); Moses and Samuel might plead our cause, but to no avail (Jer. 15:1); Noah, Daniel and Job might be our advocates, but they could deliver but their own souls by their righteousness (Ezek. 14:14). When we die, our record is closed; by it we stand or fall.

In the **New Scofield Reference Bible** is a com-

ment on "baptism for the dead" which makes no contradiction with other portions of Scripture. It reads: "Paul is not speaking of baptizing living believers in place of either believers or unbelievers who are now dead. There is no assignment of saving efficacy to baptism. The argument is: Of what value is it for one to trust Christ and be baptized in the ranks left vacant by the believing dead, if there is no resurrection for believers? Why place life in jeopardy and forfeit the benefits of this life, if there is no life after death?"

Paul's argument here is that if there is no resurrection of the dead, the event upon which all future life depends, then our hope is vain and to be "baptized into His death" is futile. Taken in context with the chapter, which is a dissertation on the resurrection, this explanation seems reasonable.

Unger's Bible Dictionary suggests that "the dead" referred to "might be other believers who, by firmness and cheerful hope of resurrection, have given in death a worthy example, by which others were animated to receive baptism. . . . Christ might also be considered among them, by virtue of whose resurrection all His followers expect to be likewise raised."

In Summary

"Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" was Peter's command to the assembled throng at Pentecost. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," was the command of Jesus to the eleven after His resurrection.

Do these commands bind us to water baptism today? No, we do not baptize. Not that there would be anything wrong with baptism, but we do not believe that the command applies today. It is our conviction that water baptism was a part of the present truth for the Apostolic Age, and that it ceased with the end of that age. Before their death, the apostles had evangelized the then-known world and had fulfilled the command of the Master to "Go . . . and teach all nations."

But the fulfillment of this command in no way nullified the baptism into Christ's death, the complete death to sin, which we have covered in detail under the heading, "The One Baptism." This is the baptism alluded to in the words: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism."

*Reprints of these studies are available
upon request.*

The Man Clothed in Linen

GOD Almighty has a plan for this earth. He will not permit it to be overrun eternally by men and women who flaunt themselves against His law and disobey His mandates with impunity. A Day of Recompense is coming, a Day of Judgment, when Right shall be exalted forever and wrong shall be dethroned.

According to the plan, God will send His Son, Jesus Christ, a second time to earth (Acts 1:11). Among His first tasks will be the judging and rewarding of God's servants—all who during the previous six thousand years have covenanted to serve God. All these will be judged and rewarded according to their works (Rev. 22:12). The faithful will receive life eternal; the unfaithful, condemnation and death (Matt. 25; Dan. 12:1-3; John 5:28-29).

This accomplished, Christ's next work will be the Judgment upon the nations of earth. He will call upon all men everywhere to "fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come" (Rev. 14:7). Those who respond and submit to the new government and respect and obey its laws shall be spared to form the nucleus of the new inhabitants of that Kingdom. All who refuse to submit will be destroyed when the Lord goes forth "to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity" (Isa. 26:21). The Lord's instrument for administering this punishment will be an army composed of unfaithful servants (who were subjects of the previous judgment); they are called his "battle axe"; his "sword"; his "mighty ones" (Deut. 28:47-48; Ps. 17:13; Isa. 13:1-5; Jer. 51:20). Because of the stubborn persistence and rebellion of earth's inhabitants, the Lord will find it necessary to destroy two thirds in order to create an environment fit for the development of the remainder (Zech. 13:8).

Briefly, this is the plan as outlined in Scripture. (For further discussion of this divine plan, with supporting Bible evidence, see our booklet *The Kingdom of God*.)

With these thoughts in mind, let us consider the narrative in Ezekiel 9.

To illustrate forcefully God's principle and forthrightness in dealing with the children of men, the Lord gave to the prophet Ezekiel a vision. We read:

"He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city

to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.

"And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar" (Ezek. 9:1-2).

What is the picture? The Prophet sees six men, each having a destroying weapon in his hand; he sees also another man clothed in linen, bearing a writer's inkhorn by his side. All stood before the brazen altar to learn what they should do.

The Prophet saw six men equipped for battle and an additional man who was no part of the armed group. Other translations of the Bible make this fact clearer. For example, "...there came from the direction of the upper gate, ... six men armed each with his weapon for slaughter, and in the midst of them another man clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn at his side" (American Trans.; also Moffatt, NEB, and New Catholic).

Six men armed for war, and a seventh man equipped as a writer. To extract from this picture a meaning harmonious with Scripture teaching and meaningful to us as striving Christians, we may compare these men to those who covenant to serve God. Among these servants are two groups, separated by their acquired qualifications: faithful and unfaithful. The six men armed for war might represent those servants who prove disloyal to their God and His calling; the one clothed in linen would represent those who are faithful to write every law of God upon their minds and obey it.

What, then, is the significance of the linen in which this faithful man is clothed? Revelation 19:8 describes the Bride, the Lamb's wife, as clothed in "fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

Several passages of Scripture allude to these unfaithful servants who will carry a slaughter weapon; their mission: to clean up the earth and rid it of all sin and evil. Isaiah 13 describes this class: "I have commanded my sanctified ones [those who are sanctified or purified by the indwelling of the law of God, John 17:17], I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness." At one time, these servants of

God—now unfaithful—rejoiced in God's highness. But now they are being called to administer God's "anger" or judgments upon the nations of earth, to execute the wrath of His law. The succeeding verses describe their work: "The Lord of hosts mustereth the host of the battle. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the Lord, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land. . . . Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it" (Isa. 13:3-5,9).

This passage helps to identify God's unfaithful servants and the role they will fill in preparing the earth for its new inhabitants. They will fight, but this war will be vastly different from any other war this planet has known, for its directors shall be Christ and His saints. As the Revelator describes it, "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war" (Rev. 19:11).

Thus Ezekiel saw two classes standing before the brazen altar. This fact reveals a background of what has just taken place. Some time prior to this, Christ has returned and the dead in Christ have been resurrected and judged. Christ could not proceed with His work of subduing the nations and establishing His kingdom until first His co-rulers have been selected and the remainder of His servants pronounced unfaithful.

Now let us return to the thought of the man with the writer's inkhorn by his side. He represents the rulers of the new arrangement, those who shall write the laws to govern the new world. "For the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Mic. 4:2).

Reading further in the vision of Ezekiel, we learn that this man bearing the writer's inkhorn has a specific assignment: "And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" (9:4). There is a destruction coming, and who is to be spared? Those who are marked by the man clothed in linen. And why are they marked for preservation? Because they are distressed with the iniquity of the land. They "sigh and cry" for "all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." They are grieved over iniquity—the sin of the land, the sin of their fellowmen, the sin in themselves—all the abominations that be done. God does not want those who are complacent and tolerant in the face of evil. He wants those who are aroused, awakened, and stirred to fight against it.

Who are these individuals who are marked for preservation? They are the one-third of which we read in Zech. 13:8, "And it shall come to pass that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein." One out of every three will bear the mark that they are willing to recognize the evil about them and separate themselves from it. These individuals become the nucleus of that people which shall multiply and fill the earth during the Millennial reign of Christ and the saints, many of whom will qualify as eternal inhabitants of His kingdom.

What are the six men instructed to do? "And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark" (9:5-6). God will not smite any who have submitted themselves to the laws of God and the new government which shall have been established on earth. All who have been marked will be marked for preservation.

Here is a practical lesson which we may apply to ourselves today. God wants us to be grieved and alarmed at the wickedness which we see about us. He does not wish us to condone the conduct of those who "knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom. 1:32). He wants us to be aroused and stirred to rid our own lives of every evil thought and act.

What is our attitude toward evil in the world—and more especially, in ourselves? Is it one of complacency and easy tolerance? Or are we becoming so sensitive to sin that we perceive its first defiling touch and banish even the thought of it from our minds? ●●

Alibis

An alibi—what is it worth? Alibis are something to be left behind. An alibi is an anesthetic which a coward administers to himself in the presence of a difficult situation.

Alibis work somewhat like drugs; they will ultimately destroy both body and mind. Alibi addicts suffer from cancer of the soul. We can find a hundred excuses for not doing our duty, but making excuses is not our business; our business is to make good.

Christian Youth in These Times

To Be Trusted

"COME on, come on," bellowed twelve-year-old Ronald to his twin brother Arnold. "I can hardly wait to see Grandpa's new horse. I hope I'll have a chance to ride him." Ronald swung his suitcase onto the back of the pickup truck, then ran and jumped into the seat beside Grandpa.

"Now you be good, boys, and obey your grandparents," instructed Mrs. Morris as she followed her sons around the truck. "And don't forget to study your Sunday School lesson," she added as Grandpa started the truck for the ten-mile drive to his farm.

At the farm Grandma was looking for them. She gave each of them a tremendous hug, and showed them to the refreshments she had set out. The boys gulped down the milk and devoured the cookies. "Nothing better than Grandma's cookies." Arnold smiled as he cleaned the last crumb off the cookie plate.

"I'll race you to the barn," shouted Ronald. He turned and stumbled over a chair, giving Arnold a head start.

"Now be careful," cautioned Grandpa. "We don't want you boys to get hurt here." He hastened out the door behind them.

"Oh, isn't he a beauty!" exclaimed Ronald as he smoothed Old Bess's forehead with his fingers. "I hope Dad will get us one next year for our birthday."

"Well—" Grandpa spoke with an emphasis that meant decision—"you boys may stay here long as you like, but don't go inside the barn."

"I was hoping—" ventured Ronald, a bit timid, "I was hoping we could ride Bullet a little."

"Afraid not," said Grandpa. "But maybe some evening when I'm home you can ride old Snow."

"That takes care of the horse riding," Arnold choked as he climbed down from the rail fence. "Unless we want to ride old Snow."

"Maybe—and maybe not. It doesn't have to." Ronald spoke with the confidence of an elder brother. He kicked a stone out of his path and started down the lane toward the house. Arnold followed.

His chance came a week later when Grandpa

went to town. He tiptoed to his room, looking for Arnold. "Are you here, Arnold?" he whispered.

"I'm getting my shoes," he said slamming the closet door behind him.

"Shshshsh—" he whispered. "Isn't Grandma taking her nap? Don't wake her up—I have an idea. This is our chance to ride Bullet."

"You mean we are going without permission?" Arnold questioned, giving his brother a sideways glance. "You know Mom told us to obey our grandparents. And Grandpa said we *couldn't*."

"Don't you want to have some fun?" Ronald stammered. "We're here for half the summer, we might as well enjoy it. Now come on. And remember—no noise!"

Outside the door both boys stood wondering for a moment. Then with a backward glance they took off in a trot.

"What are you boys up to?" called Grandma from the kitchen window.

Ronald whirled around, his face burning with dismay. "Just on a run out to the orchard," he said with forced casualness.

"Don't go anywhere else unless you tell me." She spoke firmly, then lowered the kitchen window.

A little shiver ran through Ronald. He hesitated a second, then urged Arnold to come along. "I think I'll just run the curry comb over Bullet. That will give Grandma time to get settled again." Bullet stood with one hip sunken, his body swaying as Ronald started to work. He touched the shoulder cautiously, and slowly the tension left him as he trailed the curry comb across his body. Bullet turned his head to watch.

"There's something funny about him, if you ask me," said Arnold. "Think he's been hurt sometime?"

"Get the bridle on old Snow and let's go," urged Ronald, ignoring his brother's remarks.

"But we can't. We—" Arnold started to explain.

"We can, too," snapped Ronald. "It isn't going to hurt anything if we ride around a little." His mother's advice to obey their grandparents crossed his mind, but he pushed it aside.

"Come on, Arnold, unless you're chicken." There was anger in his voice. He found his timid twin brother hard to get along with sometimes.

Arnold stood back a little, his lips tight. "Well, all right," he said. "But we should come straight back."

"If you say so, scaredy-cat," Ronald laughed. "We'll pretend we're in a circle," he suggested.

Bullet did well at first, walking in a circle around a low bushy pile of branches. Ronald rode with his hand propped on his thigh. Bullet stretched his neck and looked toward the house.

"Want to go back to the barn, do you?" Ronald slapped him with the end of the reins. "Let's see how you trot." He clucked and kicked, and Bullet broke into a trot.

"Ueee!" whooped Ronald. "Just a little training, and anybody could ride him."

"May I ride him around just once?" Arnold asked quietly. "Then we better go in. I keep thinking about what Mom told us."

"I remember," Ronald stiffened his face. "You don't have to keep reminding me." A shadow of guilt passed over him. "I hope they won't find out, though," he said to himself.

"Let's go down to the creek now," he ordered as he jumped on old Snow. "Think you can follow?" he asked Arnold.

Arnold smiled and urged Bullet into a slow trot as he had seen his brother do.

The road to the creek was narrow. The branches overhead made it dark and frightening. He could hear the rushing of the water. Bullet stopped and flung his head wildly.

"Bullet, get up," Arnold spoke in a fierce whisper. He started him again, but this time he swung sideways, snorted and threw his weight back on his haunches. All at once he lowered his head and took off toward the house.

"Bullet!" Arnold screamed in alarm. He gritted his teeth and held on with all his might.

The horse ran down the slope. His front feet hit the yielding mud and slipped; Arnold sailed out over Bullet's head and hit the ground with a thump.

"Arnold," shouted his brother. "Please, God, don't let him be hurt," he whispered. "I know I'm to blame." His eyes were large and staring.

"Are you hurt?" Ronald was trembling.

"My leg, my leg, I—I" Arnold groaned.

"I'll run and get help." Ronald's dark eyes bulged with fear as he ran into the back yard.

Grandpa was just driving up. "What is wrong, Ronald? What has happened?"

"It's Arnold—he's—he's hurt!" he shouted. "He's on the road to the creek."

"I'll call your mother," volunteered Grandma, rushing into the house.

By the time Ronald and Grandpa found him, Arnold was almost unconscious. All the way to the

hospital Ronald kept wondering what he would tell his parents. "They trusted me," he said to himself. "Will they ever again?" he wondered. He felt sick. His head ached. He even looked different.

After Arnold's leg had been put in a cast, the family left for home. A quick panic raced through Ronald. He bit his bottom lip unconsciously. He knew what he should do.

"I have to confess," he said. "I am ashamed. I disobeyed you and Mom, Dad. Arnold could have been killed, and I would have been to blame. He didn't want to go. I kept on urging him."

"I'm sure you learned first hand the importance of doing what you're told," his father said. "I think you have suffered enough; there's no need for more punishment. You will remember this lesson."

Grandpa stood up and stretched. "I must be going," he said. "Are you coming, Ronald?"

"You mean—you mean I have a chance to go back?" he asked, looking from Mom to Dad. Both nodded in approval and smiled.

"Don't worry, you can trust me this time," he assured them.

"We'll be coming into town every other day to see Arnold," said Grandpa as they went out the door. "Good-bye." ●●

Christ Not Born December 25

(Continued from page 12)

that comes even close to mentioning the actual date of Christ's birth.' . . .

"He related, 'No one tried to pinpoint the date of Christ's birth until some 500 years after it had actually taken place. At that time, the records show, Dionysius Exiguus, the Abbot of Rome, decided it might be a good idea to start a new calendar calculated from the time of Christ's birth.

" 'According to our calculations, he made numerous mistakes and was several years off—six to be precise.'

"Historical evidence establishes the year of Christ's birth. The taxation order by Rome, which brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, was issued in the year 6 or 7 B. C., according to records. . . .

" 'I think the reason that the December 25 date was made popular was because the church fathers in early times wanted to have something to compete with the pagan New Year festival. They didn't know when Christ's birth took place so they selected a date.

" 'So, based on present evidence, we would seem to be celebrating Christmas about four months early.' " ●● *J. G., Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada*

Bible A B C's



I is for Isaiah.

Isaiah lived in Jerusalem many, many years ago. He was one of God's great prophets and told us many things that would happen in the future that did not happen in his lifetime. In fact, some of the things he foretold have not happened yet.

Only a person whom God was guiding and directing could reveal things before they came to pass. God does not do this now because we have our Bibles to guide us. God was surely with Isaiah, for many of his prophecies have come to pass just as he said they would. And we can be sure the rest of the things he prophesied will be fulfilled, too.

Isaiah warned the people over and over again against wrongdoing. He tried to get them to turn from evil and be good. He said, "Oh, wash yourselves! Be clean! Let me no longer see you doing all these wicked things; quit your evil ways."

Isaiah foretold that Jesus would be born. He said that Jesus would learn to refuse evil and choose good (just like other children have to). Isaiah told us that Jesus would die a cruel death, would rise again, would

I is for
Isaiah

be taken to heaven, then after a long time would come back to earth and set up His kingdom. This is one of Isaiah's prophecies. "He will swallow up death forever. The Lord God will wipe away all tears and take away forever all insults and mockery against his land and people. The Lord has spoken—he will surely do it! In that day the people will proclaim, 'This is our God, . . . for whom we have waited. Now at last he is here.'"

Isaiah was a person who could paint beautiful "word" pictures. He told us many of the nice things that will happen when God's kingdom is set up here on earth. Let us read about it.

"Even the wilderness and desert will rejoice in those days; the desert will blossom with flowers. Yes, there will be an

abundance of flowers and singing and joy! . . . Encourage those who are afraid. Tell them, 'Be strong, fear not, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you!' And when he comes, he will open the eyes of the blind, and unstop the ears of the deaf. The lame man will leap up like a deer, and those who could not speak will shout and sing! . . . A main road will go through that once-deserted land; it will be named 'The Holy Highway.' No evil-hearted men may walk upon it. God will walk there with you; . . . no lion will lurk along its course, nor will there be any other dangers; only the redeemed will travel there. These, the ransomed of the Lord, will go home along that road to Zion, singing the songs of everlasting joy. For them all sorrow and sighing will be gone forever; only joy and gladness will be there."

These words of prophecy from the prophet Isaiah paint a word picture of Christ's kingdom on earth which we should always keep before us. It will help us to keep pressing on to obtain it by remembering to "cease from evil and learn to do well." ●●

Signs of Life

(Continued from page 6)

shirk our responsibility and do not warn him and he dies in his iniquity, his blood will be required at our hand. We are guilty of a hatred that abetted death. In order to determine whether we as individuals are alive to God or dead to Him, we shall have to scrutinize with the utmost honesty our own hearts. Self-deception is one of the commonest of faults.

Do We Show A Maximum Of Spirituality?

The founder of our church once said: "I like to see the sign of spirituality flowing out on these fitting occasions." Can we say that we always do this? When someone exhibits the spiritual strength to try to direct the conversation away from something of a worldly nature, such as business, sports, recreation, or a thousand and one other things which may not in themselves be sinful, but which provide no impetus to spiritual growth, do we get squarely behind that brother with moral support and use our influence in a way that is helpful? The command is: "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6). Such moral strength is a glowing sign of spiritual life.

If a brother or sister has done well in the Lord's work and is being commended for his or her good deeds, do we join in wholeheartedly to give that person the credit due, or do we act as though we felt that we ourselves should be getting the praise? The way we react on these fitting occasions is a sign of the condition of our spiritual life.

What Do You Like?—As A Sign Of Life

In the appraisal of so complex a thing as human character, it is difficult to find a simple test which covers everything. We know, of course, that a great character is never the result of the accident which we call social position, nor of the possession of wealth. The question is not, "What can you do?" for a man might be able to sing or play or write or paint like an angel, and yet be a blackguard at heart. It is not, "What are your relations with other men?"; for there have been rogues whose personality was so winning or so compelling that they were accepted, obeyed and even beloved by their fellow men. A man might sway millions, even for good, by his oratory; he might lead a nation or a group of nations in a just cause, yet in his private life be a villain. It *has* happened.

Perhaps the question which would determine the fineness of a character more closely than any

other is that of, What do you like? It can be a true index of spiritual life or death. It has been truthfully said that a man's true nature is best known by what he does in his leisure time. In other words, what does he like? It might be profitable for us to ask ourselves, If I could do just as I like for the rest of my life, what would I do? An honest answer to the question might be a bit difficult, so accustomed have we become to the dictatorship of circumstances and conventions; but we really should appraise our tastes from time to time as a yardstick of our growth in the spiritual life.

It is a long way from the bottom to the top of the scale of human tastes. Both these extremes are noted in the Word of God. At one end we have those who "sleep not except they have done mischief, and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall." At the other end we find, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." Between these two extremes lie every shade and grade of human liking. Let it be said in justice to our race that it is only a relatively small number of exceptionally vicious persons who find pleasure in the debauchery of others. The great bulk of humanity are found at a somewhat higher level, meaning well but averse to change or strenuous effort, their dreams being of such things as food and drink and sleep, of recreation and bodily ease and the acquisition of money to provide more of these gratifications. From this broad and teeming level many roads of ambition lead upward, none of them crowded; but all, with one exception, prove to be "blind alleys." Success in the gratification of these higher tastes in art, science, statesmanship or benevolence, must be its own reward; for at the end of each short road, Death throws over all human projects the mantle of futility.

The exception noted above, the one and only path with an ending worthy of the name, is the narrow, difficult way leading to everlasting life. If we have no love of life, that road is certainly not for us. God will never save a man against his will; and for the man or woman of low tastes, eternal life in His kingdom would be eternal torment. The law of God is only for those who would "love life and see good days." The others are permitted to live their own lives, to follow their own likes and dislikes, low or high, to make their social order in their own image, and then, as they prefer, to perish forever like the beasts of the field.

Fortunately it has been so arranged by the Creator that most normal beings have a strong attachment to life, and even a survival of their own personality, worthy or unworthy. It is to this in-born urge for personal immortality that we owe our escape from the miry level of the commonplace. But we do not attain immortality simply by wish-

ing for it; the thing is not so simple as that. At the entrance to this narrow way, once we have found it, we pause to read the signs and to count the cost, and we see between us and the goal of our desires many things that we do not naturally like.

Occasionally we read or hear of or even meet an individual whose natural bent seems to be entirely for good, who thinks noble thoughts and does noble actions by nature. Wrestling with our own pettiness and carnality we may envy these superior personalities, not realizing that their nobility comes not by accident of birth but by the superior job they have done in controlling and educating their tastes, which basically are much like our own. For therein lies our only hope—the fact that low or mediocre tastes need not remain so. They can be elevated by one who is spiritually alive. Granted that there is a wide variation in the heredity and natural endowments of individuals, we may safely assert that Nature's nobleman does not exist. The true nobility is made, not born. Man is a being with animal nature and instincts but spiritual possibilities, and only as these possibilities are developed does he become something more than a biped mammal with reasoning powers.

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." Very well, then; since the divine thoughts are contrary to nature in every way, we may fully expect, as we have said before, that we shall not like them. God's demands invade every conscious moment of our life; human nature cries, "Let me alone!" Truth says at every crossroads, "This way"; nature says, "The other way—my own way." The warfare is intense for a time—sometimes for a long time. Saint Paul experienced this mental conflict; his experiences and complete change-over are recorded in the 7th chapter of Romans; and every Christian may expect to have to fight it out on the same line. The desire for life and immortality and faith in the promise thereof compel us to keep up the battle and conform to the law, perhaps reluctantly or grudgingly. But this is not enough. This is not "glorying in the cross," nor delighting to do His will.

How, then, shall we ever learn to like the things which at this stage of development seem a burden? Just as we learn to like anything else which is unpleasant—by keeping at it until we do. It is an unfailing sign of life. "If there be first a willing mind," the battle is half won. And through all the dust and din, the sweat and blood of the conflict, the thing which keeps us in line until our tastes are changed from flesh to spirit is the hope of the reward.

"No man having drunk old wine," said Jesus,

"straitway desireth new; for, saith he, The old is better" (Luke 5:39). But when our eyes are opened to what the poisonous old wine is doing for us, it should convince us that the new wine is far better, and our taste for the old should rapidly diminish and disappear. Certain cures for alcoholism are said to be so effective that the former drunkard is now nauseated by the very thought of intoxicants. This is the goal which we must reach in our fight against the old habits of thought and action. When our tastes are fully changed, we will no longer find anything attractive in the things God has forbidden. The reluctance and rebellion and sense of compulsion will be gone. We will loathe ourselves in our own sight for all the iniquities and abominations of the past, and will turn with relief and eagerness to the table of the Lord, to the broader fields and greener pastures, the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

It is never wise to assume that we have safely reached this exalted plane. We cannot slough off our physical inheritance; and, as we have often been warned, so long as we are in the flesh we shall be subject to its temptations, which should never be trifled with nor underestimated. We shall never, in this mortal state, outgrow the need for watchfulness. The only safe course in regard to evil is following the Wise Man's advice in Prov. 4:15: "Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." And when we think we have done all this, when we think we have arrived and can almost see the City ahead, let the Apostle's warning be ever before our eyes, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." There could be no surer sign of spiritual life.

Warmth, A Sign Of Life; Coldness, A Sign Of Death

We see many signs of life as we journey along our national highways. Smoke curling from the chimney of a mountain cabin, or, after nightfall, a brightly lighted country home—these signs evidence life and activity. No pleasurable memory associates itself with an evening call at a friend's home, if when we get there the place is dark, and the doors all locked. Our anticipations flourished around the prospect of meeting life, someone with whom we could pleasantly converse and exchange thoughts. Hence we were disappointed.

Our thought pattern in this respect is similar to the Almighty's. He is the Source of life, therefore will choose as His company only those alive to Him. He is "not a God of the dead, but of the living," said the Great Teacher. And in this case the "living" expressly implied were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, men who, though they had been sleeping for centuries, still lived in His memory—and whose

mortal bodies will be re-created at Resurrection Day. The signs of life that thrill the Eternal Father's heart are an aggressive interest in the things He is interested in—purity of character, righteousness, and His plan for the world to come. If when He knocks at the door of our hearts He gets no response, if no signs of life, light and warmth are present in our dwelling, His call will be short.

Another familiar highway sign is, "*Construction ahead. Men working.*" When our eye meets such a sign we know at once that life is there, dead men cannot work! And work is the synonym for accomplishment. Professedly religious people often are adamant in their belief that good works are not necessary to salvation, some even going so far as to say there is no need to work, that Christ has done all the work for them. But the author of the Epistle of James, in his usual practical manner, informs us that "faith without works is dead," and the possessor of such a faith also is dead from God's point of view; he shows no signs of life.

Perhaps no better definition of the abundant spiritual life is given anywhere in the Scriptures than the closing words of I Corinthians 15: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." ●●

We are living, we are dwelling,
In a grand and awful time,
In an age on ages telling;
To be living is sublime.
Hark! the waking up of nations,
Gog and Magog to the fray.
Hark! what soundeth is creation
Groaning for its latter day.

Will ye play, then, will ye dally
With your music and your wine?
Up! it is Jehovah's rally!
God's own arm hath need of thine.
Hark! the onset! will ye fold your
Faith-clad arms in lazy lock?
Up, oh up, thou drowsy soldier!
Worlds are charging to the shock.

Worlds are charging—heaven beholding;
Thou hast but an hour to fight;
Now the blazoned truth unfolding,
On—right onward for the right!
On! let all the soul within you
For the truth's sake go abroad!
Strike! let every nerve and sinew
Tell on ages—tell for God.

LETTERS

Another Calendar Year

As we near the end of the calendar year, it is indeed a fitting time to review our spiritual progress—and spiritual progress should be our greatest concern, for it involves the blessings of eternity. Jesus says, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you." What things would be added? All that we need for our sustenance, both temporal and eternal. Not that everything can be ours without any effort on our part, but that God will provide the opportunities and the means. King David expressed it in Psalm 37:25, "I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

As we near the end of 1972, we must not regard the passing of time with indifference. Actually, the first of January is no different than any other day. Days, weeks, months and years are simply man's way of measuring time. Time itself is eternal. It is an endless stream. Man stands on the bank of this eternal stream for a short while, watching it go by and is affected by it for good or evil.

There is something within man that makes him dissatisfied with what he is and gives him an urge to do better. Time is our opportunity, and it flies by so fast. It seems but a short time ago when I planted my garden and enjoyed the springing beauty of flowers and nature. Now the ground is covered with snow and nature seems asleep. What a solemn warning to *use* our time!

Wausau, Wisconsin

J. T.

Thankful and Confident

We should indeed be thankful for this present life; without this life we would have no opportunity of progressing to another, even eternal life. Therefore our first duty is to be thankful.

I am thankful for the little knowledge I have, and trust it will give me wisdom to guide and direct me on the right road to the Kingdom of God. So confident am I that Elijah and Christ are coming that nothing whatsoever will move me, nor anything be dear unto me that will keep me from finishing with joy my course to gain eternal life.

Swansea, South Wales

W. S.

A Struggle

As striving Christians, we must struggle against wrongdoing if we hope to be partakers of His wonderful promises.

As society has accepted many forms of evil and as permissiveness has become an accepted way, it may be hard for many to decide whom they will serve (Joshua 24:15). In Joshua's day, all at that time agreed to serve the Lord, but their sincerity was for a short season.

We trust that many of us have profited from the work of others and we will strive to continue in faith and good works.

Saint Johns, New Brunswick, Canada

A. L.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"If Christ was murdered, how could He say, 'I lay down my life for the sheep'? As we have seen, Christ did not offer His physical life—what life did He offer?

The sacrifice of Christ began with His first act of obedience and continued throughout His career until He could say triumphantly, "It is finished." It was the complete sacrifice of Himself, the consecration of His life to do the will of His Father. So complete was His offering that He could say, "I do always those things that please him." "I seek not mine own glory." "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 8: 29, 50; 5:30). According to prophecy, He came with but one purpose: "to do thy will, O my God" (Ps. 40:8).

Here was the life He laid down; He submitted Himself wholly to the will of the Father. And in what way did He lay down this life "for the sheep?" The apostle Peter tells us how His suffering benefits us: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21). Were this suffering Christ's death on Calvary, then each of us would have to be crucified if we would "follow his steps." This is not required of us, but each of us must die to sin, put to death our own evil natures, as did Christ. "For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6: 10-11). "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (v. 12).

John 10:18 shows clearly that the life Jesus laid down was not His physical life, for He said, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Jesus did not have power to raise Himself from the clutches of death. Numerous passages reveal that God raised Him from the dead (see Acts 2:24, 32; 4:10; 5:30; I Cor. 15:15; I Thess. 1:10; II Tim. 2:8). Nowhere does the Bible say that He raised Himself.

Furthermore, Jesus laid down His life according to the "commandment" He had received of His Father (John 10:18). Where are we told that Jesus was commanded to sacrifice His physical life

as a sin-offering for the world? There is only one answer: nowhere.

"The Church of Christ doesn't believe in the holy spirit, or in healing through prayer. They say that miracles ceased with the passing of the apostles. I think that God is still with us. Jesus said, 'I will send you another comforter,' and He did. But the Church of Christ says that comforter is no more, that it is 'done away with.' What do you think?"

There are many angles to the subject of the Holy Spirit. For a more complete discussion of the subject, send for our booklet, *A Treatise on the Holy Spirit*.

Briefly, I would say that we agree with the position taken by the Church of Christ as you state it, because that is the position taken by the Word of God. We read in I Corinthians 13: "... whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge [by divine inspiration], it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which was in part shall be done away" (vs. 8-10). After the written Word of God was complete, when the time for the duration of the Holy Spirit ended, the Holy Spirit power was withdrawn.

There seem to be cures made today by so-called faith healers which cannot be fully explained. Certain people have psychic power over others and at times effect what appears to be a healing. These people attribute their powers to the Holy Spirit, but there is absolutely no connection. Ask anyone claiming to heal by Holy Spirit power to do a miracle you can see, such as to restore a severed ear (as Jesus did), cause a blind man to see (as Jesus did), and they will invariably have a reason why it should not (or more properly, *cannot*) be done. The fact is that they cannot do it. They are only deceiving people.

No, Holy Spirit power was given only for a limited time, and ceased with the end of the age for which it was intended. The prophet Joel compared it to a rain, a former rain (which came at Pentecost) and a latter rain (to come just before the final harvest, with the return of Christ). We are now in the dry season between these two rains (see Joel 2).

God's Road is all uphill,
But do not tire;
Rejoice that we may still
Keep climbing higher.



Meditations

On the Word

TALK is cheap. This is an expression we have all heard. There are many kinds of talk that are not included in the meaning of conversation, which carries the idea of two persons talking together about something. This something is a point where their minds have met in common interest, and it is this point Paul is making in our meditation verse—the conversation, the things we are interested in, our lives. Dr. Moffatt gives this as, “Only do lead a life that is worthy of the gospel of Christ.” Over and over again Paul refers in his writings to the need of being worthy of the gospel. This shows his constant consciousness of the wonderful opportunity the gospel places before man. How aware he must have been every day that this message is fully worthy of being called “Good News.” Twice in this verse he calls it the gospel. The first time it is the gospel of Christ. Never does he allow his converts to forget whence and how he came by this gospel. Repeatedly he reminds them, directly and indirectly, as in this instance, that it is the Gospel of Christ. He did not get it from man, or think it up himself, but received it by revelation. This makes a difference to the Apostle, and it should to us, too (Gal. 1:11).

In his absence, Paul wished to hear about the good works of this little group. It is a high standard to expect of anyone that his achievements should be as great when temporarily alone as when in the company of a strong, experienced leader. Yet this requirement has been placed before every follower of the Eternal. In men such as Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, and Jesus we have the good examples of those who performed nobly under this requirement. While it is true these men were strong characters,

“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel” —Philippians 1:27

there were times of trial when they were alone and could depend upon none save the integrity and high resolve of their own character. Such strength can only be stored up in advance as a spiritual reserve to be called upon in time of need. Such a reserve is not only useful in itself, but pays

an extra dividend in that peace the world knows not. We have, too, the poor examples of failure in those who were not able to bridge their hour of trial with the strong structure of faith when tested alone. The failures of Achan, Saul and Solomon are recorded for us. These thoughts should endear to us the comforting and strengthening contacts we enjoy with those of like precious faith.

Our conversation is not the only influence produced by our character, but it is a very important influence, being the most direct channel between our mind and the minds of others. A private opinion unexpressed has no more effect on others than the rock resting on the ledge above the quiet pool. But the thought that gets into our conversation may travel in an ever widening circle, as the ripple from the rock which falls into the pool. The Psalmist cried, “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips” (141:3). The world says, “Look before you leap,” which is good; but the warning to the Christian, “Think before you speak,” is better advice, and still better when practiced. Thoughtful persons feel an obligation in their conversation, but the true Christian feels it intimately and purposefully, because that watchfulness and obligation is a real part of his life, and is looking toward that life to come. It is not only the effect of our conversation on others that we must watch, but also its effects upon ourselves. It signals to us

when our attention is wandering into unfruitful fields where our time cannot be redeemed. But we must be exercised unto godliness to catch the signal.

Our conversation has also another value. It can help develop and exercise our knowledge of godly things. Not a few of us have admired in others their knowledge of Bible truths or their readiness to speak of spiritual things. But no person is born with these abilities, and few develop an inclination to such things. David said, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies." Just as "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17), so control and development of our conversation along spiritual lines can come only by reading the Word, meditation and practice. This pathway is open to everyone who cares to follow it.

While we may be sure Paul was concerned about the general welfare of the Philippian brethren, the things he was particularly anxious to hear about were the things he specifically lists. They are more than mere inquiries, more than good advice. From the Apostle to the Gentiles they are instruction, even requirements for the true Christian of the latter day. First, he wanted to hear that they were standing fast in one spirit. To the Galatians (5:1) he expressed it a little differently: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." This liberty is really the teaching or doctrine of Christ; Paul wanted them to stand fast in these teachings, for this would avail to their salvation. Next he wanted them to strive together with one mind, just as he told the Corinthians (First Epistle, 1:10), there should be no divisions among them, but they should be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

In any group little can be accomplished without a common working agreement. Teamwork is something nearly everyone has heard about. In the workings of a large business, nearly the worst that can be said of a man is that he will not co-operate. It has withheld the reward of success from many a career, otherwise very promising. In God's system of dealing with man and instructing him, this is called unity, and is a part of the principle of obedience to leadership. Ephesians 4:11-15 explains how God's system is set up, how it works and for whose benefit. His teachers and pastors are not sent out to teach themselves alone, but others also; to perfect the saints, to edify the body of Christ (the true Church), to help others grow to maturity in the truth as Jesus did, that we should no longer be deceived by the doctrines of the world that lie in wait for the uninstructed. As the teacher's part is to teach, the disciple's part is to follow, learn

and grow. It is easy for us to get these responsibilities confused.

Finally, Paul wanted all this effort and unity focused on faith in the gospel. If we stand fast in one spirit and strive with one mind for the faith of the gospel, we shall certainly have more faith in the gospel concerning the Kingdom of Christ soon to come upon earth. And the more faith we develop in this coming great event, the better and more effectively we shall be able to stand fast in the spirit of truth, striving together in unity and always living in peace with all men of good will.●●

Timely Topics

(Continued from page 7)

Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them. . . . But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (vs. 3-6). God forbid that we should grow indifferent when the evil condition and violent events in the world, along with the cry of peace, glare as brilliant signposts to show the verity of God's Word—for is it not fulfilled before our very eyes?

"When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them." What events in the world or circumstances will bring about the complete fulfillment of this prophecy, we know not. But one thing is certain: we are near, very near the end of the era. Now, more than ever, we need faith. And our only hope for something better, something lasting, something eternal, is coming from God through Christ, earth's rightful king. Christ is coming with sudden and swift destruction for all who refuse to recognize Him as their king, and with glorious salvation and deliverance for all who love His appearing.

As we see God's Word fulfilled, can we not believe beyond a doubt that all His promises will likewise come to pass? And should we not be stimulated, while a perplexed world churns in trouble, to look beyond and work and prepare our individual lives? While they cry and talk for peace, we must perfect in our lives that flawless peace which only a perfect character can bring. Then when the cry of "peace and safety" and the subsequent destruction at the coming of Christ are in the past, we may enjoy eternal and beautiful peace and safety in the world to come. ●●

Make Me UNcomfortable, O God

*Make me uncomfortable about what I'm doing with the mind
You have given me . . . about studying too little and
thinking too sloppily . . . about giving too much of
my thoughts to the lesser things of life rather than
to the seeking of Your truth and knowledge.*

*Make me uncomfortable about my future hopes . . . of using
this world as an end rather than as a means to the
greater end which You have planned. Make me uncom-
fortable when I think too much of wanting a better
paying job, or more security, or social prestige;
these are not the things that You would have me seek.*

Disturb me, O God,

Until I sense that my true calling as a Christian is:
*To grow in that deepest, most vital knowledge of all—
the knowledge of myself;*
*To find joy in reading and understanding that wisdom
that comes from Thee;*
*To seize now my awesome opportunities for attaining
true learning;*
*To live richly and responsibly in prospect of the
better Day that is coming;*
*To find my highest pleasure in grappling effectively
with my own worst self;*
*To be constantly grateful for the capacity, the crea-
tivity and courage that You have entrusted to me;*
*To do my best to better my own life and conduct that
I may see the fulfillment of the highest purposes
You have planned for this planet on which I live. Amen.*