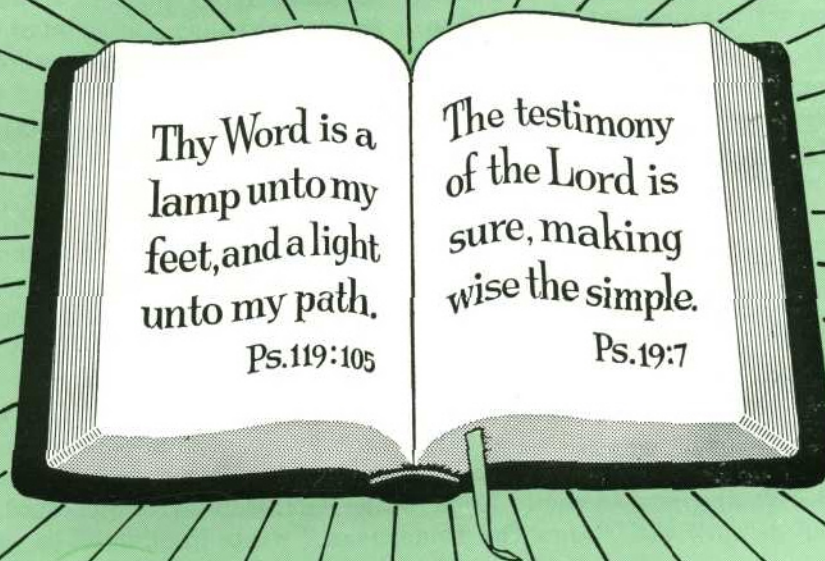


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



Called To Be Saints

Who Are the Elect?

Biblical Interpretation

Index for 1975

Megiddo Message

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A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone.

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INDEX

Called To Be Saints	3
Make Your Election Sure!	5
Who Are the Elect?	6
Poor Little Me!	10
Junk or Genuine?	11
Words to WALK By	12
Understanding the Bible	13
Biblical Interpretation	17
Our Ordered Lives	19
One Lord, One Faith	20
Kathy Kandor's Korner	22
Letters	24
Questions and Answers	24
Meditations on the Word	26
Resignation	Cover

Editorially Speaking . . .

"Your Love Isn't What It Was"

A SHARP rebuke is crested in these words of Jesus. "Your love isn't what it was." These words are part of a letter to the Church at Ephesus (Rev. 2:3-4, Beck). Outwardly all seemed to be well and thriving, but—?

The church was well established. They had a good record. They had labored hard for the cause of the gospel. They were a staunch church, ready to defend the faith against any.

But deep in the heart of the church were signs of spiritual decay. There was no longer that fine rapture of devotion, that keen spiritual vision, that zealous courage that was ready to launch out against any stronghold of sin. It was a dangerous situation. "You no longer love me as you did at first."

If we are to succeed in our Christian enterprise, our love and devotion must not be fading but steadily *increasing*. Even retaining our present love is not enough; love that is alive must *grow*!

Disaster threatens as soon as we allow our love to become static. We may worship and serve as we always have. But if our mind is less and less on the things of God and more and more on other interests, our love is waning. We may appear to be doing all we can to promote the work of the Lord; but if our first thought is to get ahead on our job and our mind is there, our love for God is not what it should be. Our outer life may be acceptable; but if there is not a growing emotional response within us as we sound the depths of real Christian dedication and understanding—beware! "Your love isn't what it was" may be Christ's message to *us*!

We may staunchly affirm all the fundamentals of our faith. But if our heart does not respond, if our affections are not moved by the power of the gospel, it is not enough.

Even sound, well-settled minds need continual renewing. The "inner man," wrote Paul, must be renewed—not monthly, or weekly, but "day by day" (II Cor. 4:16).

When first we heard the promises of God, we were captured by them. So much for so little! was our immediate response. But as we hear them again and again they tend to become ordinary; their freshness is gone, and other things—gods of this world, of pleasure, profit, power, position, success or just plain busyness—become more and more real to us. The promises of God do not thrill us as they did at first—have they changed? No! The *promises* have not changed—we have changed; we have lost our first love.

What can we do? "Repent," says Jesus. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else—" (Rev. 2:5).

"Repent . . . or else . . ." The warning is for us. If what God offers us is worth anything, it is worth our utmost in love and ever-deepening devotion—a love that is greater than it was at first, and ever growing. ●●

Called To Be Saints

SAINTS! the word traces heavenly pictures upon our minds. We at once think of beings sublime, holy, angelic in quality and character, more divine than human. A holy Anna, a beloved John, a fearless Paul, a thoughtful Mary—these are the persons who come to mind. Holiness, perfection, purity, these are the noble qualities we associate with God's sanctified ones. Sainthood seems a dream, a blissful attainment far beyond our reach.

Yet every one of God's aspiring children—even you and I—are called to be saints, called to be part of God's eternal family, called to be crowned in the age to come. God has invited us to the highest moral and spiritual attainment of which we humans are capable. *We can become saints!*

Who Is A Saint?

The Bible writers used the term "saint" in at least two different ways. First, and most generally, it applied to those whom God informs of His plan, the whole body of believers, His church. More specifically the term applied to those among the body who would follow through, who would endure to the end, who in the final analysis prove that they became all to which they aspired—perfect, pure, genuine, godly, worthy of the crown of immortality.

Returning to our first definition and the most common use of the word, we find passages in the Old Testament speaking of the Israelites as "saints" (Ps. 16:3). Whether they were ordinary laymen or consecrated priests, they were all God's saints (Ps. 106:16). Position or talent or natural advantage never weighed in the balance of God's judgment. Always He has been seeking character, loyalty, devotion, love. And when He found the qualities He wanted, whether in common man or consecrated priest, His call went forth.

The same is true in the New Testament writings. The apostle Paul used the term more than eighty times. He addressed his brethren and fellow-Christians as "saints," as believers belonging to God's household. His Second Epistle to the Corinthians is to "all the saints which are in all Achaia" (II

Cor. 1:1). The Epistle to the Philippian Church is "to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi" (Phil. 1:1). In his letter to the Church at Ephesus he addressed his brethren as "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19).

This last passage is especially meaningful when we realize the problem that was being solved. Paul was addressing believers from widely varying backgrounds—from staunch Jewish families on the one hand, to grossly pagan Gentiles on the other. A common faith in Christ, built upon the solid foundation of the "apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone," was the power that drew them together. No longer Jews or Gentiles, they were "fellow citizens with the saints," members together of one family, sharers of one hope, servants of one God. Paul was telling the Gentiles among them that they were not a whit inferior in status to the members of the historic community; and at the same time he was telling the Jews that they had no edge of superiority. By this new citizenship they were both "kinsmen" of God, part of His household. Gentiles were no longer "strangers and foreigners"—in the position of foreign visitors with no rights in the community, or of aliens enjoying temporary and limited rights as residents. They were in deed and in truth "one in Christ."

This special uniting by privilege united them also in responsibility. Both were under the special obligation to realize the full possibility of their commitment—to measure up at last to "the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). To this height God called them.

Paul classified all the Christians as saints because they had all been dedicated to God. Some might be far from holy, in the sense of being entirely sanctified; but this is a process which takes time and diligence. In the meanwhile every Christian believer could belong by his own profession of faith with those who were pledged to the maturing discipline of the long process of spiritual development. All together they were brothers "in Christ." Few might be able to say "I am a saint," fully per-

fect; but every one could say, "I'm on the way, and I'm going to make it."

Separation

However we think of saints, there are always two basic qualities involved. Being a "saint" means a separation, and it means a dedication. The first is a special relationship; the second, a responsibility.

A saint is literally a "separated one"; he is what the Bible calls "holy," or set apart from the world for God and His service. He is no longer part of the general mass of humanity; he has a special relationship to God. He is exclusively *His*. While the world remains uncommitted, he who is committed to Christ becomes distinct and distinguishable.

As a "separated" one he has, or must develop, certain characteristics. God is "holy," and His specially dedicated material must be "holy" also. The apostle Peter described this superquality when he wrote, "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner

of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Pet. 1:14-16).

Under the Levitical system properties of the tabernacle were "holy." They were fashioned from ordinary, earthly materials, but they were set apart from the ordinary and the earthly, separated for God. They had to be perfect, pure, and clean; and only "holy" people, or those specifically appointed and set apart for the task, could handle them.

Holiness is always a distinction, a setting apart, a separation.

Holiness today involves this same separateness. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing," were the appealing words of Paul. And for good reason: "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).

It is a separation from the value system and standards of what the New Testament calls "the world"—that is, those values and standards commonly prevailing in society. "For all

that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (I John 2:15-17).

Dedication

The second quality of saints is that of dedication to divine use. The vessels in the tabernacle were "holy" because they were set aside for *one* purpose—God's service. It was their *use* that made them holy. God's prophets were called "holy" men because they had but one purpose in life—to deliver God's message. As human vessels, they were consecrated to be used exclusively by God. It was their *use* that made them holy.

He who aspires to be God's saint is not his own. He is dedicated to be used of God; he is literally God's property. He must learn what God would have him learn, do what God would have him do, think what God would have him think. His whole being—physical, spiritual, emotional—belongs exclusively to God.

Called To—?

Do we as covenant-makers feel the impact of the high calling to which we have been called, the call which has redeemed us from the bondage of sin and death and set us on the highway to life? And do we realize the responsibility that is ours, to "walk worthy" of that call?

As Christians we are called to have part in the fulfilling of God's vast design for the universe, that great glorified creation to which Earth will one day be annexed. We are called to be part of the ultimate unity and perfection of His finished handiwork. And that perfection, that

"How well are we fulfilling the purpose for which we have been called?"

"We have been called to glory and virtue. We have been called to be part of a holy nation, a peculiar people. We have been called to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, called to be crowned, called to dispense peace and plenty until all nations shall call us blessed."

"We have been called to have wonderful power given us so we can move with the freedom of the wind. We have been called to have every joy and pleasure conceivable to the human mind, yes, far beyond all that we can now even ask or think."

"In view of all this, I do not wonder that the exhortation comes to us: 'I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called' (Eph. 4:1)."

—Rev. L. T. Nichols, Founder of the Megiddo Mission Church

finishing, that ultimate unity must begin its first phase in us *right now*. God will not work with unfit material. We must prove ourselves worthy of His efforts in our behalf; we must respond wholeheartedly, or we shall never be "called, and chosen, and faithful." *Right now* we must begin to live and serve in relation to God's final purposes—for if truly called, we are no part of this present arrangement. We are "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

We are not our own. In the words of the familiar hymn:

**My life I have given to Thee, dear Lord,
'Tis all I have to give;
A living sacrifice for Thee,
The while I have to live.**

**My heart I have given to Thee, dear Lord,
It must be pure and true,
I'll not withhold Thine own from Thee,
Teach me to make it new.**

**My life I have given to Thee, dear Lord,
I long to live only for Thee,
Yes, all that I have is Thine, dear Lord,
It never belonged to me.**

Do we realize all this calling means to us and can mean to us, now and through the ages to come? Do we realize that God has called us to be part of the permanent, part of eternity itself, "heirs together of the grace of life" (I Pet. 3:7), "heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14), "heirs of the kingdom" (Jas. 2:5), "heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7)? We are called to be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12). What greater incentive to holiness, to saintliness could God possibly hold out to us?

What lies ahead is far more significant than our most profound imaginings or our most rapturous experiences in this world. "The best is yet to be." For "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9). The finest anticipations of earth are hardly comparable to the least of the glories of the inheritance that awaits the faithful. Try as we may, we cannot visualize the joy, the bliss, the never-ending splendor of that world; or the full dimension of His holiness; or the vision of Him in whose presence a thousand years are but a day—our comprehension fails us. We stand in awe and wonderment.

We can only wait. The heavenly land may send its warm currents to touch the cold and barren

wastes of our chill mortal shores; but the heavenly is still ahead; the earthly is yet with us. Salvation in all its fullness is guaranteed the faithful servant, but it is *future*.

Called to be saints! What indescribable privilege! What glorious responsibility! Let us seize the thought and use it to buoy us safely over each of life's hard places. For life within God's call has purpose, direction and destiny. We are called *from* something, called *to* something, and called *to be* something—something worthwhile, expanding, and everlasting!

God is calling. He is calling saints-to-be. He is calling.

Will you answer? Are you ready to be His *saint*? •

Make Your Election Sure!

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (II Pet. 1:10, KJV)

"Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election. . . ." (II Pet. 1:10, RSV)

"Set your minds, then, on endorsing by your conduct the fact that God has called and chosen you. If you go along these lines there is no reason why you should stumble" (II Pet. 1:10, Phillips)

"All the more then, my friends, exert yourselves to clinch God's choice and calling of you. If you behave so, you will never come to grief" (II Pet. 1:10, NEB)

Calling is effective and election opens the way, but Peter is appealing to the urgency of the issues involved. Neither is final. All that God has begun must be finished and confirmed—by effective self-exertion.

In the preceding verses Peter has just described in detail the type of self-exertion required. "To attain this you will have to do your utmost yourselves, adding goodness to the faith that you have, understanding to your goodness, self-control to your understanding, patience to your self-control, true devotion to your patience, kindness toward your fellow men to your devotion, and, to this kindness, love. If you have a generous supply of these, they will not leave you ineffectual or unproductive: they will bring you to a real knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:5-8, Jerusalem Bible).

No short course to final election is this! Election is a privilege, but making it sure is a great responsibility!

WHO ARE THE ELECT?

“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

“And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”

—Exodus 19:5-6

AMONG the most confused and confusing doctrines of the religious world is the doctrine of election. God by some unfathomable motive chooses some people—and by consequence does not choose others—to accomplish His purposes. It is as if all of life were one great drama. God is the director, and He chooses one actor for a role here, another for a role there. And a multitude stand in the wings, apparently not chosen at all. Why? What does it all mean? What is the significance of “election”? What purpose? What destiny? Exactly who are the elect?

Great thinkers within the so-called Christian circle have tortured themselves for centuries trying to penetrate the mystery. They have come up with all sorts of conclusions. Some have held that the elect were sealed of God from the beginning, and that they “cannot fall from grace or forfeit the divine favor” whatever they do—“the wicked actions they commit are not really sinful, nor to be considered as instances of their violation of the divine law, and that consequently, they have no occasion either to confess their sins or to break them off by repentance” (M’Clintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia*, art. “Antinomians.”) Even the vilest of sins “is not a sin in the sight of God” if committed by one of the elect “because it is one of the essential and distinctive characteristics of the elect, that they cannot do anything that is either displeasing to God or prohibited by the law.” (But who knows *who* are elect?) Augustine, Luther and Calvin all held this doctrine of unconditional election.

Others have held that election is directly responsible for a person’s having faith, but believing at the same time that a man is

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

free to choose. The conflict has led to much confusion and dispute, as men have tried to figure out just how God could be the supreme director of all and yet leave men free to order their own destinies. They say, "It may be beyond our understanding how both can operate simultaneously. But God is outside time: we cannot imagine anything beyond our limited range of understanding. So we can only take God's Word for it, and hold on to both God's sovereignty and man's freedom to choose—not try to find a compromise between them" (*Eerdman's Handbook to the Bible*, p. 586). Arminius and Wesley held to this view.

The belief that divine decree unalterably fixes the character of men has led many thinking people to a total rejection of God. For if such be true, they reason, why should a man make any effort toward good behavior? If a man's fate is sealed before he is born, either for good or for ill, what point or purpose has life?

A friend has written us, questioning the popular beliefs in election. She writes:

I have been perplexed by the subject of "election" both by reading of it in the Bible and also having heard a series of sermons on "election" over a local gospel radio station.

So far what I have read and heard leaves me very upset and uneasy about my salvation. Like many others, perhaps, I have been laboring under the delusion that baptism into church membership and the belief in Christ Jesus as my personal Saviour was all, once and for all. I was baptized into the Baptist church about 40 years ago.

Yesterday I picked up a copy of your magazine. I like the fact that you check what is printed with the Bible before it goes out. That is why I am writing to you for aid and assistance with the perplexing question I have come up with, of the subject of "election" in the Bible.

Will you please help me locate some references to it?

I want to know what election means with reference to me.

We can appreciate our friend's confusion as we see so many professing believers today thinking that the vital part of Christianity is accepting Jesus as one's personal Saviour, and that that is all there is to being "saved."

But if this be true, why so many admonitions to careful consistent Christian conduct in the Sacred Volume? Why the continual stress upon character and the development of Christian virtue?

Or if, by accepting Christ we become part of an eternal election that guarantees our final salvation, why such phrases as "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"; and "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall"; or the words of Paul about himself: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend

that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended" (Matt. 24:13; I Cor. 10:12; Phil. 3:12-13). Why did Paul say he was "running" for the prize, "lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9:27)?

No, salvation is not guaranteed us by accepting Jesus' death for our sins. We are God's "elect" in one sense when God calls us and informs us of His plan, but it is our responsibility to make that "calling and election sure" (II Pet. 1:10). This, in simplest terms, is the Bible teaching on election.

Now let us consider the subject in a few of its details.

Election—or Choice?

We first need to clarify our relationship with God. Our Creator, God, is supreme in that He orders the events of men and nations according to His eternal purpose. Nothing happens outside His purpose or will or knowledge. But at the same time, His supremacy allots to man a wide breadth of freedom—freedom which allows man to order his own life as he wishes, to choose or reject God's law, His will, His promises. If a man shows no interest whatever in God or His purposes, God may use such a one for His own superior purposes; but God never interferes with a man's prior right to choose.*

It is important that we distinguish between election and foreknowledge. God does have the power to foreknow. His omniscience knows the "end from the beginning" (Isa. 46:10), hence God may know in advance what a person will choose or do; but God in no way determines that choice beyond the person's power to choose. His call to men is and always has been a call for decision: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Josh. 24:15).

Hence, no man is "elect" or predestined by God's caprice. No man is condemned, except by his own wrongdoing. No man is just before God except by his own *right* doing. (See Ezekiel 18:20-21; 33:14-16; Prov. 5:22; Deut. 24:16). Our relationship to God, favorable or unfavorable, depends wholly on our own conduct.

Election Defined

The term "election" or some form of it occurs 51 times in the New Testament, in addition to almost countless references to it in the Old Testament, or

* For further discussion of God's Supremacy versus Man's Responsibility, see the *Megiddo Message*, January, 1974 and February, 1974.

its equivalent (as applied to God's chosen people, His special people, His holy people, etc.).

"Election" is used with various meanings and applications. Among its uses are the following:

- 1) Israel was God's "elect" nation
- 2) Jesus was God's "elect" Son
- 3) All believers are "elect"
- 4) Faithful believers are "the elect"

We will discuss each separately.

"Israel, Mine Elect"

The entire plan of God on earth has centered around one purpose: to select a people upon whom to bestow His eternal blessings. Naturally, He wants the best; and through mankind's long history of development God's methods of selecting have been varied. In all ages, however, He has been operating some pattern of "election unto obedience," that is, selecting from the mass of humanity the best raw material to be worked upon for His eternal purposes on a basis of the response of that material.

In the early centuries God concentrated His attention largely upon one group of people, the descendants of Abraham, as the best human material available at that time for training and discipline. Thus the descendants of Abraham, called Israel, became His elect, His chosen people, a nation in whose affairs God would be active politically and socially as well as ordering their religious life.

God's choosing of Israel did not rule out worthwhile material from other nations—always there were "strangers" who sojourned with them, or who abode in their dwellings, and these were accepted on equal terms with the ethnic race, provided they were willing subjects of Israel's laws. God's first interest was always in character (I Sam. 2:3), not nationality. God has always been ready to accept good material wherever He could find it (Acts 10:34-35).

But Israel was God's elect—to them He gave special recognition as His people, His nation, His family. And this was a definite privilege not to be discounted. As Paul wrote years later, "Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:1-2, NAS). "They were made God's sons; theirs is the splendour of the divine presence, theirs the covenants, the law, the temple worship, and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them, in natural descent, sprang the Messiah. May God, supreme above all, be blessed for ever!" (Rom. 9:4-5). The law-abiding Israelite stood in good

stead to become a recipient of God's higher law unto life eternal.

But Israel's election was no guarantee of eternal salvation. In fact, it had nothing to do with salvation. It was a temporal government for temporal and civil good. Being "of Israel" did not even guarantee that one would be an inheritor of the promises to Abraham, "for they are not all Israel, which are of Israel, neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children" (Rom. 9:6-7). God's eternal purposes reached farther than the bounds of physical blood-relationship. God was not interested in the people for what they were born as, but for what they might *become*.

The election was the result of God's love and goodness, but it stood upon a firm legal basis: Israel was bound to God by covenant. It was an *election unto obedience*. All of God's blessings upon Israel depended upon Israel's cooperation and obedience as a nation. If Israel obeyed God's laws and kept their part of the covenant, God would remember the election promises to them. God was offering them a special privilege. But if they defaulted and disregarded His laws and proved unfaithful, they would be no longer His "elect." Election—obedience to the covenant—blessing—all were bound together. Apart from God's loving election, there would have been no covenant. But apart from Israel's obedience to that covenant, there would be no lasting blessings. Israel's election was to privilege, but that privilege carried with it a tremendous responsibility of obedience.

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people. . . . And they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Ex. 19:5-6; 24:7). This sealed their covenant.

We need to remember this basis of Israel's election when we consider our own position by God's election, for like many other phases of Israel's experience, it was a shadow of the more perfect, spiritual arrangement to come.

History tells us how Israel defaulted. They did not live up to their high calling and privilege; hence, the election promises to them were never entirely fulfilled.

Jesus Was God's Elect Son

The term "elect" is also applied to Jesus, for He was in a very special sense God's chosen. His relationship to God, His Father, was certified to Him at the time He was baptized, when a voice from heaven said, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22).

WE THANK Thee again, our Father, for permitting us to meet in Thy name. We thank Thee for the privilege of expressing our belief in Thee without molestation, that we can worship Thee as our conscience dictates with no interference from the powers that be. And while we appreciate this freedom, help us also to be aware of the danger of complacency, the danger that a creeping paralysis in the divine life may come over us, of the danger of our interest cooling in the absence of opposition from outside.

Help us, Father, to have a strong faith. May we know beyond the shadow of a waver that Thou art, and that Thou wilt amply reward all who serve Thee faithfully to the end. Help us to count the cost that we may sense ever more keenly the great advantage of serving Thee. Thou takest away much of questionable value, but Thou givest much more of true value. Help us gladly to bear our cross of

Prayer

self-denial, to wear joyfully the yoke of Christ, that this yoke may the more firmly attach us to our Christian endeavor and harness our efforts to a cause that is destined to succeed.

Father, Thou hast called us to great things, to life immortal in Thy glorious new world. Lead us on through this vale of shadows. And may we always clasp Thy hand tightly, holding fast to our supreme hope of future life.

Father, we do not pray for ease or worldly pleasure, nor for the fair speeches of men; we ask only for the assurance that Thou wilt be with us and be close to us. Gladly will we toil and suffer if we walk by Thy side.

Forgive our sins as we turn from them, and as Thou hast led us in the past continue to lead us until we shall reach that haven of everlasting rest. Amen.

But even *His* election was conditioned upon His obedience: "Although he was a Son, he learned to obey through suffering; but having been made perfect, he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:8-9, Jerusalem Bible). As was prophesied before His birth, He had to eat the "butter and honey" to learn to "refuse the evil and choose the good" (Isa. 7:14).

God foreknew what good material He was choosing when He selected Christ to be His Son and a perfect example to all who should follow Him; but Jesus had to prove Himself by a life of superior service, self-sacrifice and commitment. He did, and God's election stood firm. The "living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen [elect] of God, and precious" (I Pet. 2:4) did indeed become the "chief corner stone, elect, precious" (v. 6). The assurance of His qualifications was certified a second time during the transfiguration, when a "voice out of the cloud" said, "This is my beloved [chosen, elect] Son: hear him" (Luke 9:35).

All Believers Are "Elect"

God is said to "elect" or "call" a person when He makes His knowledge available to that person. In this sense, all who are informed are the elect. We ourselves may be part of this "elect."

Paul used the term in this respect several times. Being a possessor of God's knowledge was a privilege and an election, but not to salvation. It was to responsibility. He wrote to the church in Colosse, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and

beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col. 3:12-13). They were not yet inheritors of the promises; they had not yet qualified as recipients of God's eternal blessings; but **they had been accepted into His family**, and they could remain in that privileged position if they proved worthy of their election (Eph. 4:1).

Peter addressed his First Epistle to the "elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion" (I Pet. 1:1). But we should notice that they were "elect . . . unto obedience" (v. 2)—here again is stated the condition binding the election.

"Election" or "calling" was not a guarantee of final salvation, any more than Israel's election was a guarantee of blessing. Paul spelled this out carefully in II Tim. 2:10, as he spoke of the "elect" as not yet qualified for eternal salvation: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

Paul himself enjoyed the privilege of being one of God's "elect," even a "chosen vessel unto [Christ]" (Acts 9:15). All of the original twelve apostles were "chosen" (John 6:70), even Judas; but he failed to follow through with the required obedience that would have made his election sure, and so his election proved fruitless.

God dispenses His knowledge to those who can
(Continued on page 12)

A DISMAL thing is self-pity, and a mortal danger to every one of us. Who has not known its octopus-like grip around his heart, as he tells himself that no one ever had it so rough, or suffered so much, or was denied so severely, or had to live so contrary to his wishes as *he* must.

Self-pity is no respecter of persons. It strikes young and old, rich and poor, the unknown and the renowned. Even a king, Saul by name, found himself among its victims when he cried to his subjects, "All of you have conspired against me, and there is none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, *and there is none of you that is sorry for me*" (I Sam. 22:8).

Actually, Saul's predicament was the painful result of his own self-will. As a young man he was of a retiring disposition. When Samuel went to anoint him after he was chosen of the Lord to be king, Saul played hide-and-seek so well that only the Lord could find him. After a thorough search for him proved futile, the people inquired of the Lord as to his whereabouts and learned that "he hath hid himself among the stuff" (I Sam. 10:22). He had to be "fetched" for his crowning.

Almost overnight Saul was rocketed from his

cry, "There is none of you that is sorry for me."

Who of us will ever find ourselves in Saul's position—elevated to the kingship and then toppled by our own disobedience? Perhaps none. But we have all pitied ourselves with far less reason than Saul had.

Nevertheless, we protest: *our* periods of self-pity are *justified*. No one understands the hardships, the trials, the persecutions, the financial difficulties, the physical infirmities, and the endless troubles and disappointments *we* have had.

But wait. Listen to the apostle Paul, as he recounts his own experiences: "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Be-

Poor Little Me!

life of obscurity to one of fame. He was called a "choice young man, . . . from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people."

For a time he was popular and in favor with God, and Israel rejoiced in their first king. But he sinned by intruding into the priest's office and lost his office, his good name and his throne.

Then came David, a little nobody—plus God—who slew the giant that had dissipated the courage of all Israel with his challenges. David's victory almost immediately raised him to space-orbital prestige and punctured Saul's ego.

"And Saul was very wroth . . . and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward" (I Sam. 18:8-9). Jonathan's deep love for David only added fuel to the fire of Saul's jealousy.

Saul needed no amplifier to hear the creaking of his crumbling castle, but he fought furiously to evade the inevitable. He saw himself as a "has-been" and retaliated by forcing David to flee from cave to cave to escape his jealous wrath. Many of the king's subjects followed David, causing Saul to

side those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (II Cor. 11:23-28).

What abundant reasons for self-pity—perhaps even more than *we* ever had! But listen to his reaction to it all: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. . . . Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (II Cor. 4:8-10; Phil. 4:4).

Poor little me! Born in the land of the free; surrounded with innumerable tangible and intangible blessings; endowed with the privilege to worship, pray and read God's Word; endued with physical strength to work for food, shelter and clothing; a sharer in the faith once delivered to the saints; given the best of heavenly friendships and family; called to become a son of God and someday to be made equal to the angels; anticipating the return of Christ and the glory and honor He will bring, even life for evermore!

Is there no one who feels sorry for me? ●●

J^UN^K OR GENUINE?

Six-year-old Sandy was excited. She could hardly wait. Her father had promised her something, something she really wanted, he had told her. But Sandy could think of so *many* things she really wanted that she couldn't guess which her father had chosen to give her.

"But this gift," he told her, "may not be as easy as you think. It isn't something you *get*. It is something you *give*."

Sandy couldn't quite put that together as she played on the floor in the living room that night. Was her father going to give her something and then ask her to give it away? Her little nose wrinkled in wonderment as she looked up at her father.

"It is something that means a lot of work, Sandy. And it means discipline," he said with a firmness Sandy could feel.

"But what's that, Daddy?" asked Sandy in an air of hopeful expectation.

"Discipline is doing something you don't really like to do because you know it is good for you."

Sandy was more puzzled than ever. That sounded like going to bed when you wanted to stay up, or leaving your play and coming to dinner right when Mother called, or getting into the bathtub when you had so many important things left to do. What did all *that* have to do with a gift?

"One thing more, Sandy. It means sacrifice, too."

"What's that?" Sandy sounded a bit cautious this time.

"Sacrifice is giving up something you want very much for something you want still more."

Sandy just couldn't put it all together. So she skipped happily up to her room, content to wait and see.

Her birthday arrived, and Sandy just had it figured out that *this* would be the day for the long-awaited gift. And sure enough! There it was on her breakfast plate that morning, a small, curious-looking package. Sandy was still wondering what would be inside.

Carefully, layer by layer she removed the wrappings and opened the box. And there it was!—the cutest little thing she could imagine—a miniature violin. It looked so real, and so tiny—it was

only about seven inches long. But it had real strings, real pegs you could turn, and a little bow. Carefully Sandy picked one of the strings—and it made a sound! Sandy had always liked music so well. She would put this on her dresser, and whenever she wanted to she could come and pick the strings and make a sound! All her fears of the mysterious gift were forgotten.

Several weeks went by, and every day Sandy lovingly admired her little treasure. It looked so nice on her dresser.

Then one evening as her father was sitting in front of the brightly burning fireplace, he put down the book he was reading and called his little daughter to him. "Honey, do you love me?"

Sandy's face lit up. "Why of course I do, Daddy. You *know* I love you."

"How much?" he asked.

"More than anything in the world."

"Are you sure?"

"Of course I am."

"Do you love me more than that little violin that's up on your dresser in your room?"

"Course I do, Daddy."

"Will you bring it to me?"

Sandy darted up the stairs and in a moment was back with the little treasure. She handed it to her father.

"Now if you love me more than that violin, throw it into the fireplace." He handed it to his daughter.

Sandy smiled, thinking her father didn't mean what he said. But she soon found out that he did.

"I said to throw it into the fireplace."

Slowly, painfully she walked over to the fireplace and dropped the treasure into the flames, then ran sobbing to her father, and buried her face in his shoulder, crying as if her heart would break.

Her father lifted her face to his, dried her tears with his handkerchief, and taking her hand led her to a small table in the far corner of the room. On top of the table was a large box. "Look at this, Sandy," he said.

Sandy stretched to her tiptoes, and peered inside. In the box was a long black something. Sandy looked wonderingly at her father.

"You may take it out and open it," he said as he set it down on the floor for her.

Sandy took out the case, released the latch and opened the cover. And what should she find but a violin! A real violin! Sandy jumped for joy. She could hardly believe her eyes.

"Is this mine?" she asked eagerly.

"This is yours, Honey. This is the real gift I promised you."

Sandy plucked one of the strings, and it made a sound—a bigger sound.

"But why did I have to throw the other little one away? I loved it so much."

"That was just a toy, Sandy. It was only a tiny imitation. It had no value. I wanted you to have something you could use, and here it is. The other was just junk. This is the real thing!"

"O thank you, Daddy! Thank you!" She gave her father a big bear hug.

"That's the way God does with us, Sandy. When He asks us to give up something, He always gives us something better. You will find that to be true many times in your life. What the world offers is only junk. God asks us to give it up, to throw it into the fire, so to speak, so He can give us the *real* thing—He gives us joy in this life and if we're good now He'll give us everlasting life in His Kingdom." ●●

Words to WALK By

We can always walk courageously when we walk with God.

Happiness cannot be sought; it must be attained. Be good and do good, then happiness will come.

A new day is also a new start in the Christian life.

You cannot repent too soon, because you do not know how soon it will be too late.

There is danger that we may be most wrong and least aware of it.

The greater the darkness the brighter shines the light.

Difficulties are things that show what we are made of.

True godliness is not accidental, incidental, or periodical.

Better a heart without words than words without a heart.

Elect?

(Continued from page 9)

make use of it; this is election. But knowledge alone is of little value; all who *know* will not *do*. The "elect" are "called," in that they are informed; but that calling and that election must be confirmed by their own response. As Peter wrote, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (II Pet. 1: 10). Always responsibility accompanies privilege.

Truly Elect—Faithful

The Bible uses "elect" in still another sense—as a term for those who have proven faithful and worthy of the full salvation. In this sense Jesus used it when He said, "Many are called, but few are chosen [elect]" (Matt. 22:14). These chosen ones are full achievers, as are those described in Revelation: "they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev. 17:14).

Election—selection—from the sea of humanity is God's prerogative and duty; we cannot fathom the motives and purposes which lie behind it. Through the ages He has been constantly at work, seeking out suitable material for His future kingdom. And to those of whom He has made choice, in His infinite wisdom and His ability to foreknow the future, He has dispensed His knowledge. We cannot know His plan in full, nor comprehend all the "why's" of His workings; but we *can* make sure that we use with a high sense of obligation those advantages which He has given us. Only so can we belong to the truly elect, those who are "called, and chosen, and faithful." ●●

Hope is that inner vision which enables us to see a faint star in the most dismal of midnights; and faith keeps it shining there.

Check every thought; let only the best thoughts live.

Personal self-honesty is the first step to holiness; for you can fool yourself in a million ways, and still be self-satisfied.

There is no shortcut or easy way to being a Christian. It requires the shedding of much blood and the conquest of self.

If you want to avoid traffic jams, take the straight and narrow way.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

II. THE LAW FROM SINAI

The Mosaic Law

ISRAEL became a nation in the midst of other nations who knew no god other than those of their own making. All her neighbors worshiped idols. Their gods were legion: gods of the cities, gods of the country, gods of the earth and gods of the sky, gods of the mountains and gods of the valleys, gods of the sea and gods of the land—everything had a god or was worshiped.

The Hebrew nation was different. They had but one God, a God not of their own making, but a sovereign God who is the embodiment of goodness and demands good conduct from His worshipers. Theirs was a God who held the distinction of being God alone, a God who would tolerate no rivals, a God who demanded their wholehearted loyalty. He had made a covenant with them and only by obedience could they be His.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me," were the first words of command given to Israel, "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after others gods, which ye have not known" (Deut. 11:26-28).

Israel recognized the authority of God and submitted to His laws or suffered the consequences. Today, men flout authority whether it be of man or of God. Under the Mosaic law it was accepted that it was God's prerogative to command and man's to obey—or to suffer the penalty.

The notable thing about the Mosaic law is that it worked. It served its purpose well. It developed Israel from a disorganized band of slaves into a law-abiding nation with a trained army and a ruling monarchy. While there was much war and bloodshed, there were also times of peace and prosperity as revealed by such statements as "the land had rest fourscore [80] years," and "the land had rest forty years."

Moses was ready to return to the camp of the Israelites after spending forty days with God's angel in the mount. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel" (Ex. 34:27). These words of instruction signified the completion of the Law and served to remind Moses of the covenant with God.

"And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in mount Sinai... and [he] spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded" (Ex. 34:32-34). Included in these final instructions were the feasts Israel was to keep each year.

F. The Feasts

Israel's year was punctuated by numerous feasts. There was a feast for each New Moon. A feast marked the New Year. There were several other special feast days. Of these, three were considered very important and attendance at them was compulsory.

Israel's feasts were unlike present-day religious observances. They were truly holy days, not holidays. While they brought all Israel together they were not celebrated with riotous living. Rather, they were to be "holy convocations," assemblies to remind them of God and His goodness to them, meetings devoted to services of worship and praise of Jehovah. They were to be joyful occasions, but also a solemn reminder of the gratitude Israel owed to God, the Giver and Sustainer of all. Every feast of the year brought God before the nation and served to arouse the nation spiritually.

1. Passover. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, . . . These are the feasts of the Lord, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons. In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover" (Lev. 23:1, 4-5).

Passover was the first of the three principal feasts. It was to be held on the fourteenth day of the first month of the year. Israel's year began in the spring with the month Abib, the first new moon after the

spring equinox, corresponding with our March or April.

The Passover was a memorial service. It commemorated Israel's deliverance from Egypt and also marked the beginning of grain harvest. At this time they brought the firstfruits of the harvest and presented them to the Lord. It was followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The feast lasted seven days. It was mandatory for all able male Jews to attend.

2. Pentecost. This was the second of the principal feasts, occurring at the end of the spring harvest season, fifty days after Passover. "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat-offering [meal-offering] unto the Lord" (Lev. 23: 15-16).

Israel was largely an agricultural nation and the people mostly farmers, hence the feasts were centered around agricultural seasons. Pentecost celebrated the end of the harvest season. Both a meat offering and a cereal offering were made, acknowledging God as the giver of flocks and crops. Pentecost was also a "holy convocation," a service without hilarity, a feast seasoned with song and prayer. It was a one-day feast.

3. Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles, also known as the Feast of Ingathering, began on the 15th day of the seventh month and lasted seven days. It was preceded by the Day of Atonement on the tenth day of the month, which was a fast instead of a feast, a day meant to be to Israel a reminder of their sins.

The end of grain harvest was marked by Pentecost. The Feast of Tabernacles marked the end of fruit harvest. It was the most joyous of all feasts and lasted seven days. During this time Israel dwelt in booths made from tree branches, a reminder of the years they lived in tents in the wilderness.

Every seventh year (the Sabbatic year) this feast had a special feature: the reading of the Law. "And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God . . . thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing" (Deut. 31:10-11).

Israel's festivals were marked by liberality toward the stranger and the Levite. Those who had not shared in producing the harvest were nevertheless partakers of the fruits, symbolic of the time

when the nations of earth that have had no part in preparing for the great harvest of the earth at Christ's coming will share in the blessings to be reaped.

III. THE MOSAIC LAW BEFORE CHRIST

When Israel camped in Moab beside the Jordan, their journey was all but complete. They were in sight of the land they had been promised when they left Egypt 40 years before. The complete Law had been given, and Moses tirelessly reviewed the provisions of the Law before the people, reminding them of their duty and the penalty for disobedience.

Obedience to the Law was for Israel a life-or-death matter. Obey and live; disobey and die was literally true under the Law. The penalty followed conviction for the offense. The Law was not to be taken lightly.

"And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel: And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: . . . And the Lord spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying, Get thee up into this mountain . . . and die in the mount whither thou goest up, . . . thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither" (Deut. 32:45-52).

Moses obeyed the command of the Lord and went up the mount not to return. All Israel mourned his passing thirty days. The great Lawgiver was gone, but the Law remained. Israel would yet possess the land, but under the hand of Moses' able successor, Joshua.

A. The Law Under Joshua

Joshua assumed command of the children of Israel at the Lord's direction. "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, . . . This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein" (Josh. 1:2, 8). The Law was in reality God's law. It did not pass away with Moses. God was reminding Joshua that they were still under the Law.

Israel obeyed the command and crossed the Jordan after the priests bearing the ark had stepped into the water. Four days later they "kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho" according to the command they had received from Moses.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE INDEX 1975

KEY TO INDEX

A	Article
Ed	Editorial
L	Letter
Med	Meditation
OL	One Lord, One Faith
Po	Poem
Pr	Prayer
Q	Questions and Answers Column
QA	Questions answered in Article form
Qu	Quiz Questions
R	From a Reader
S	Sermon
St	Story
TT	Timely Topics
UB	Understanding the Bible

ARTICLES (General)

After 60 Years, Apr, p8
Are You Straining to Arrive? by EEB, Oct, p17
As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us, Nov, p8
Behold He Cometh! Feb, p17
Beyond the Expressible, Feb, p7
Body of Christ, The, Jun, p3
Called to Be Saints, Dec, p3
Can I Still Give Thanks? by EIH, Nov, p3
Celebrating Santa-mas?, Dec, p25
Christian Stewardship, Jan, p3
Clean—through the Word, Aug, p9
Comparative or Superlative? Feb, p3
Elevate Your Sights! Jul, p17
ELIJAH—God's Man for Crisis Hour, by HEG, Apr, p14; May, p9; Jun, p8; Jul, p8
Excuses! Excuses! Oct, p11
Facing Our Problems, by GWS, Oct, p20
"For He Cometh," May, p3
Friend in Poland Writes, Jul, p26
General Letter, A, by LTN, Oct, p8
God-Sent "Troublers," Jun, p11
Good Work by a Good Man, by HEG, Jun, p10
I Have Given You An Example, Apr, p22
If the Outlook Is Bad, by NHP, May, p4
It Was My Upper Room, May, p21
Let God Be True, by NHP, Aug, p3; Sep, p3
Message—Why?, The, Apr, p11
Mouse or Man—Which Are You? by JB Phillips, Nov, p11
No Middle Road, by HEG, Jul, p12
Not Sacrifice but Obedience, Aug, p6
Our Ordered Lives, by EBP, Dec, p19
Pitcher Plant, The, by MAT, Nov, p18

Poor Little Me! Dec, p10
Sin—Caterpillar or Butterfly? Aug, p27
Thank God for America, by NHP, Jul, p4
They Received Power, Jun, p6
Time to Watch! by LBS, Apr, p20
To Marry Or . . ., Sep, p10
We Are What We Think, by PAF, Mar, p10
When I Consider Thy Heavens, Oct, p3
Which Are You—Mouse or Man? by JB Phillips, Nov, p11
Which Translation? Aug, p17
Who Shall Live When God Doeth This? by PJT, Sep, p7
Who's to Blame? Sep, p19
Wishing You An Unhappy New Year, by KEF, Apr, p3
Woman's Undress, Jul, p22
Work, Curse or Blessing? by NHP, Sep, p17

ARTICLES (Doctrinal)

Ahab and the Lying Spirit, Jan, p12
Are Devils Fallen Angels? Jan, p17
Biblical Interpretation, by NHP, Dec, p17
Concerning Demons, May, p19
Devils that Tempt, Feb, p9
Not Sacrifice but Obedience, Aug, p6
Spirits and Spirits, Jun, p17
Theologian Wants Devil Driven Out, Feb, p10
To Wait or To Work? Mar, p17
Which Translation? Aug, p17
Who Are the Elect? Dec, p6
Ye Cannot Serve the Lord, Nov, p6

CHILDREN'S FEATURES and STORIES

Arithmetic Prize, The, (St), Oct, p22
Child's Prayer, A (Po), May, p22
Good Disappointment, A (St), by RCJ, Sep, p20
Helpful Neighbor, A (St), Jul, p24
He Walked on the Water (St), Mar, p11
It Pays to Be Honest (St), by EIH, Jan, p10
Junk or Genuine? (St), Dec, p11
Learning to Forgive (KKK), by EEB, Jul, p18
Lesson from Little Ones, A (F), by AC, Feb, p12
Ten Lepers Healed (St), by AC, Feb, p12
Two Willing Workers (St), Aug, p12
Widow's Son, The (St), by AC, Jan, p20
Window Cure, The (St), Jun, p12

EDITORIALY SPEAKING

Are You Live-with-able? Sep, p2
Do We Really Want Him? Jun, p2
It Is Urgent! Jan, p2
"Love Is Not Provoked," Feb, p2
Narrowminded? Oct, p2
Refined or Removed? Aug, p2
Success Is Costly, Mar, p2
Supreme Allegiance to Christ, Apr, p2
Tell the Truth, Nov, p2
"When He Came to Himself," May, p2
Why Hobab's Eyes? Jul, p2

MEGIDDO MESSAGE INDEX FOR 1975

"Your Love Isn't What It Was," Dec, p2

FILLERS and MISCELLANEOUS

Are You Still Plowing? (F), Oct, p24
Consider the Watch (A), May, p18
Give Up (A), Feb, p8
Just Checking Up (A), Apr, p26
Recipe, A (F), Sep, p18
Self-Control and You (F), by SBB, May, p8
Small Enough? (F), Nov, p19
THINK! (Qu), by HEG, Mar, p12; Nov, p12
Who Held the Rope? (F), by LBS, Jun, p7

From A READER

Hardest Instrument, The, by ES, Aug, p24
Heavens Declare, The, by ME, Nov, p11
No Instant Christian, by ES, Oct, p12
No Joking, by ES, Jan, p27
Submit to God, by RF, Dec, p19
Thorough Furnisher, The, by LG, Jan, p8

ILLUSTRATIONS

Andromeda Galaxy, photo, Oct, p1
 Blaming one another, by LJ, Sep, p19
 Checkmark, by MAT, Apr, p26
 Children praying, by MAT, May, p22; Nov, p10
 Cup running over, by MAT, Nov, p3
 Diagrams of Galaxies, Oct, p4
 Elijah before Ahab, by LJ, Apr, p17
 Elijah by altar, by MAT, Jul, p11
 Map of Israel, by MAT, May, p10
 Megiddo Message, small, Apr, p8
 Peter sinking, by MAT, Mar, p11
 Pitcher plant, by MAT, Nov, p18
 Pocket watch, by MAT, Apr, p20
 Printshop cuts, Apr, p9, p10
 Runner, by MAT, Oct, p17
 Statue of Liberty, by MAT, Jul, p1, p3
 Two children on bed, by LJ, Jun, p12
 Whirlpool Galaxy, photo, Oct, p5
 Who's to Blame? by LJ, Sep, p19
 Woman gathering sticks, by LJ, May, p12

KATHY KANDOR'S KORNER

Frequent Sin, The, Jun, p22
Grow Up! Mar, p9
Honest with Time, Dec, p22
Honesty—How Far? Oct, p19
If In Doubt, Don't! Nov, p17
Keeping A Straight Face, Sep, p23
Learning to Forgive, Jul, p18
Me—Impatient? Jan, p7
Tame the Tantrums, Feb, p23
Thank You God, Apr, p21
Vacation Lesson, A, Aug, p21
Wasting Others' Time, May, p19

MEDITATIONS on the Word

Ps. 17:15, *Genuine Satisfaction*, Jun, p25
 Ps. 48:12, *Tell the Towers*, Apr, p18

Eccl. 11:4, *Take Up Your Task*, Jul, p25
 Isa. 60:22, *Eternal Expansion*, May, p17
 Hos. 10:12-13, *Sowing and Reaping*, Nov, p25
 Mal. 3:14, *Walking Mournfully*, Sep, p26
 Matt. 26:41, *Watch—Temptation*, Aug, p25
 Luke 12:51, *Division Inevitable*, Oct, p26
 Rom. 8:13, *Flesh vs. Spirit*, Jan, p21
 Heb. 2:1, *Danger: Drifting*, Mar, p21
 Jas. 5:9, *Grudge Not*, Feb, p27

OBITUARIES

Biddle, Mrs. T., (L), Apr, p13
 Garner, Joseph (L), Jun, p26
 Roper, Josie H., Aug, p24
 Russell, Jessie (L), May, p23
 Schmidt, Lizzie, Oct, p21
 Shaver, Mary E., Sep, p24
 Stephens, Jessie (L), Apr, p13

ONE LORD, ONE FAITH

After the Resurrection, Nov, p20
Bible: God's Message to Us, The, Feb, p20
Bible, What Is In It for Us? The, Mar, p8
Christ Had Enemies, Sep, p8
Christ In Our Behalf, Dec, p20
Christ Lives, Oct, p6
Christ—More About Him, Aug, p10
Coming: One New Government, Apr, p7
How Will the Kingdom Come? May, p24
One Answer: God, Jan, p9
One King Over All the Earth, Jun, p20
Who Is the Christ? Jul, p20

POETRY

Christ Is Coming, Nov, p4
Consecrated? Sep, p28
Fourth Century Pentecost Hymn, A, Jun, p6
God of Our Life, Jun, p28
Harvest Thanks, Nov, p28
I Must WANT To, by JA, Oct, p12
In Such An Age, Aug, p8
Kingdom Come O Lord, Thy, Jul, p28
Lord God of Liberty, Jul, p1, p3
My Example, Jan, p11
My Prayer, Feb, p28
O God Our Joy, Jan, p28
O Master Let Me Walk with Thee, May, p28
O Worship the King, Feb, p7
Praise Forever, Apr, p28
Seeds We Sow, The, Mar, p28
Thou God of Truth, Mar, p28
Thy Kingdom Is At Hand, Oct, p28
Touching Shoulders, by HEG, Nov, p19
Your God Is Above, Aug, p28

PRAYERS

Child's Prayer, A, May, p22
Eternal God, by KEF, Mar, p5
Give Me This Day, O God, Feb, p24
New Year Prayer, A, by KEF, Apr, p6
Prayer (Child's), A, Nov, p10
Prayer, by KEF, Jun, p6; Oct, p12; Dec, p9
Prayer by Thomas Jefferson, Jul, p6

MEGIDDO MESSAGE INDEX FOR 1975

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Concerning:

Ancient of days (Q), Jun, p24
Animal sacrifices (A), Aug, p6
Apostles could forgive sins? (Q), Nov, p24
Church the Kingdom? (Q), Jan, p26
Counting the Cost (Q), Feb, p26
God is war-like and kills? (QA), Sep, p4, p5
Holy Spirit power withdrawn (Q), Jul, p23
Jesus' crucifixion—why? (OL), Sep, p9
Jesus' Temptation (QA), Feb, p11
Latter rain today? (Q), Nov, p24
Miracles to be believed before seeing, (Q), Dec, p24
Musical instruments in the early church (Q), Jan, p26
Obedience necessary? (Q), Dec, p25
Order of events after Christ returns (A), Sep, p6
Quoting historians or church fathers (Q), Jun, p24
Ravens that fed Elijah (A), May, p11
"Reverend," Jan, p26
Second advent and judgment (Q), Mar, p23
Second resurrection and rebellion (Q), Jul, p22
Spirit of man that goeth upward (Q), Aug, p20
Total apostasy? (Q), Jul, p23
Vietnamese refugees (Q), Jun, p24
Wearing a ring (Q), Mar, p23
Who hardened Pharaoh's heart? (QA), Feb, p10
Who provoked David to number Israel? (QA), Feb, p11

SERMONS

Divine Forgiveness, by KEF, Nov, p5
Where Is the Sacrifice? by KEF, Mar, p3

TIMELY TOPICS

Sowing the Wind, by NHP, Jan, p6
World Hunger, by NHP, Mar, p7

UNDERSTANDING the BIBLE

Mosaic Law, The, by LBS, Sep, p13 through Dec, p13
World Religions, by LBS, Jan, p13 through Jul, p13
Buddhism, Feb, p15
Christianity, Jul, p13; Aug, p13
Confucianism, May, p14
Hinduism, Jan, p15; Feb, p14
Islam, Mar, p15
Judaism, Jun, p13
Shintoism, May, p13
Taoism, May, p13
Zen Buddhism, Mar, p13
Zoroastrianism, May, p15

Subject Index 1975

Bible

from God (OL), Feb, p20
inspired? (A), Aug, p4; Sep, p3, p4

Character Studies

Elijah (A), Apr, p14; May, p9; Jun, p8; Jul, p8
Hobab (Ed), Jul, p2
It Was My Upper Room (A), May, p20
Moses (UB), Sep, p14
Obadiah (A), Jun, p10

Dates and Days

Abib Means (A), Apr, p5
Celebrating Santa-mas? (A), Dec, p25
December 25 not the true date (OL), Jul, p21
Passover (OL), Sep, p9

Devil, Satan

Are Devils Fallen Angels (QA), Jan, p17
Concerning Demons (QA), May, p19
Devil that sowed the tares (Q), Feb, p9
Devils that tempt (QA), Feb, p9
Theologian comments, (A), Feb, p10

Election

Calling and election (A), Dec, p3
Who Are the Elect? (A), Dec, p6

Forgiveness

apostles could forgive (Q), Nov, p24
for Christ's sake (Q), Nov, p24
forgiveness (S), Nov, p5
forgiving our brother (A), Nov, p8

God

all-powerful (QA), Sep, p4
existence of (Q), Aug, p3
one answer (OL), Jan, p9

Hell

summary of (UB), Aug, p15

Holy Spirit

believe before seeing? (Q), Dec, p24
knowledge by (Q), Oct, p25
latter rain now? (Q), Nov, p24
miracles today? (Q), Dec, p24
power today? (Q), Jul, p24
power withdrawn (Q), Jul, p23

Israel

the elect (A), Dec, p8

Jesus Christ

authority of (OL), Sep, p8
character of (OL), Aug, p10
life of (OL), Jul, p20
resurrection of (OL), Oct, p6; Nov, p20
second coming of

Behold He Cometh (A), Feb, p17
Do We Really Want Him? (Ed), Jun, p2
"For He Cometh," (A), May, p3
When God Doeth This (A), Sep, p6

Kingdom of God

Coming: One New Government (OL), Apr, p7
Eternal Expansion (Med), May, p17
How Will the Kingdom Come? (OL), May, p24
One King Over All (OL), Jun, p20

MEGIDDO MESSAGE INDEX FOR 1975

Miracles

- He Walked on the Water* (St), Mar, p11
- Ten Lepers Healed* (St), by AC, Feb, p12
- Widow's Son* (St), by AC, Jan, p20

Mosaic Law

- festivals (UB), Dec, p13
- meaning lost (A), Aug, p6
- priesthood (UB), Nov, p15
- sacred laws (UB), Nov, p14
- sacrifices (UB), Nov, p15
- secular laws (UB), Oct, p15
- tabernacle laws (UB), Nov, p14

Parables

- Counting the cost (Q), Feb, p26
- Great Supper, The, (A), Oct, p11
- Laborers (A), Feb, p5
- Pharisee and Publican (A), Feb, p5

Pentecost

- Fourth Century Hymn* (Po), Jun, p6
- They Received Power* (A), Jun, p6

Spirits

- Ahab and the Lying Spirit* (QA), Jan, p12
- Spirits, all kinds of (QA), Jun, p17
- spirit that goeth upward (Q), Aug, p20

Ten Commandments

- discussed individually (UB), Oct, p14

Thanksgiving

- Can I Still Give Thanks?* (A), Nov, p3

Three Classes

- To Wait or To Work* (QA), Mar, p17

Trinity

- summary of (UB), Jul, p16; Aug, p13

BIBLE TEXTS DISCUSSED

Num. 31:17 (QA), Sep, p4

Josh. 24:19 (A), Nov, p6

I Kings 17:4, 6 (A), May, p11

I Kings 22:19-23, (QA), Jan, p12

I Chron. 21:17 (QA), Feb, p11

Job 1:6 (QA), Feb, p9

Eccl. 3:21 (Q), Aug, p20

Isa. 14:12, (QA), Jan, p17

Isa. 45:7 (QA), Sep, p5

Jeremiah 7 (A), Aug, p6

Lam. 3:38 (QA), Sep, p5

Ezek. 20:25 (QA), Sep, p25

Ezek. 28:1-2, 12 (QA), Jan, p18

Dan. 7:13 (Q), Jun, p24

Joel 2:23 (Q), Nov, p24

Amos 3:6 (QA), Sep, p25

Matt. 4:1-10 (QA), Feb, p11

Matt. 6:14-15 (A), Nov, p8

Matt. 13:37-38 (Q), Oct, p25

Matthew 20 (A), Feb, p5

Matt. 25:31-34 (Q), Mar, p23

Matt. 26:64 (Q), Oct, p25

Luke 10:18 (QA), Jan, p19

Luke 14 (A), Oct, p11

Luke 14:28-29 (Q), Feb, p26

Eph. 4:32, (Q), Nov, p24

II Pet 1:10 (A), Dec, p5

Jude 5-6, (QA), Jan, p18

Jude 9 (QA), Feb, p22

Rev. 20:9 (Q), Jul, p23

The conquest of the land was a series of victories and defeats, contingent upon their obedience to the commands of the Lord. At mount Ebal, Joshua built an altar to the Lord and "read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel" (Josh. 8:30-35). The Law was being kept uppermost in their minds. The Lord had said, "It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life."

Joshua gave the people a final charge before his death. Like Moses, he reminded them of all that God had done for them since they left Egypt, exhorting them to choose the good way and serve the Lord: "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: . . . And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Josh. 24:14-15). To "serve the Lord" was to keep the statutes of the Law inviolate. Joshua was reminding them of their obligations; the Law had not changed.

"And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel" (Josh. 24:31). Israel was still under the Law.

B. The Law Under the Kings

A study of the history of Israel under the kings proves them to be still under the Law. Throughout this period, their prosperity was dependent upon the faithful discharge of the obligations of the Law. Whenever they fell away from God and served the gods of the nations around them, they came to grief. When they served the Lord and kept His laws, they lived in peace and prospered.

Their memories were short. The history of the period is a series of oppressions and deliverances by the Lord. They would forget God and His Law, be overrun by their enemies, repent and call on the Lord for deliverance.

Samuel reminded Israel of their obligations when Saul was made king: "Now, here is the king you asked for; you chose him, and the Lord has set a king over you. If you will revere the Lord and give true and loyal service, if you do not rebel against his commands, and if you and the king who reigns over you are faithful to the Lord your God, well and good; but if you do not obey the Lord, and if you rebel against his commands, then he will set his face against you and against your king" (I Sam. 12:14-15, NEB).

Further evidence of keeping the Law is found in I Sam. 11:15: "And there [in Gilgal] they sacri-

ficed sacrifices of peace offerings before the Lord." Under the Law, peace offerings were made on every occasion of rejoicing.

1. Evidence of the Law under David. We find evidence that the Law was in effect at the time David was fleeing from Saul's wrath. David requested Jonathan to explain his absence at the new moon feast that "he might run to Bethlehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family." At another point in his flight he went to Ahimelech the priest and asked for bread. "And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; . . . So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the Lord, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away" (I Sam. 20:6; 21:1-6).

It was a provision of the Law that the bread of the table in the Holy Place be kept fresh at all times. This incident proves that this was being done several hundred years after the giving of the Law.

2. Evidence of the Law under Solomon. David gave Solomon his son instructions for building the temple. While the surrounding rooms made the completed temple much larger, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, as well as the furnishings for them followed the instructions given to Moses centuries before. These included the ark (over which were the cherubims), the table of shewbread, the lampstand and the altar of incense. While the furnishings provided by Solomon were more ornate and extravagant than those in the wilderness tabernacle, it appears they were positioned according to the original instructions given to Moses.

Israel under Solomon was still being exhorted to keep the Law: "Concerning this house which thou art in building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee, . . . and will not forsake my people Israel" (I Kings 6:11-13).

3. Evidence of the Law in the time of Elijah. Elijah was a prophet in Israel more than five hundred years after Moses. Several incidents during his time show that the Law was still in force and that some were following it.

The widow woman who fed Elijah throughout the famine was obviously a believer; Obadiah, the governor of Ahab's house, "feared the Lord greatly," to the extent that he hid the Lord's prophets from the wicked Jezebel.

At the time of the test on Mt. Carmel, the false prophets called on their gods until "the time of the

offering of the evening sacrifice," indicating that the sacrifices were being offered according to the Law. In his prayer, Elijah called on the Lord and said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word" (I Kings 18:36b). And the Lord answered with fire.

In the incident concerning King Ahab and Naboth's vineyard, Naboth's answer to Ahab was in accordance with the Law: "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee" (I Kings 21:3). The Law forbade property being sold outside the family. Naboth was obeying the Law.

The Lord's words to Elijah as he hid from the wicked Jezebel reveal that there were yet believers in Israel: "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal" (I Kings 19:18). The number "seven thousand" is probably a round number and not actual, but it indicates that some were faithfully following the Law.

4. Hezekiah restores the worship of God. Hezekiah's father Ahaz, was reckoned as one of the worst of the kings. It is recorded that "he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, . . . and he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree" (II Kings 16:3-4). His actions resulted in an almost total cessation of worship. The lights of the temple had been put out and the doors closed. No sacrifices were being offered.

Hezekiah did a major housecleaning. When the job was finished, the priests reported that they had "cleansed all the house of the Lord, and the altar of burnt offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the shewbread table" (II Chron. 29:18). The apurtenances of the temple were the same as given in the Law. Temple worship and the sacrifices which were restored were both according to the Law.

Because they were not able to keep the Passover in the first month, they kept the Passover in the second month according to a provision made in the Law. If for any reason they were unable to keep it at the set time, they could keep it on the fourteenth day of the second month according to the word of the Lord in Num. 9:10-11. Hezekiah was adhering to the Law and urging the people to likewise obey.

5. The Book of the Law is found. When Josiah became king about 100 years after Hezekiah, the

nation had again been worshipping idols. In the process of cleaning and repairing the temple, Hilkiah the high priest found the "book of the law" and delivered it to the king. The reading of the Law caused a reformation and a renewing of the covenant. The "book of the law" was the Law as recorded by Moses as God commanded him. The words of Huldah the prophetess of whom they inquired show Israel to be still bound by the Law (II Chron. 34:22-28).

6. Further evidence from the time of the kings. At various times during the more than four centuries that the children of Israel were ruled by kings, true religion became almost extinct. The Law existed but was unheeded. The king set the pace for the nation. If they had a good king who was mindful of the Law, the people likewise followed the Law, but under an idolatrous king, they turned to idols.

Jehoshaphat tried to serve both God and Baal. He tried to promote the worship of God at home while cooperating with his idolatrous neighbors to the north and was rebuked by God's prophets. He restored the temple worship and destroyed the pagan shrines and altars, "doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord."

Following him, Athaliah, the daughter of the wicked Jezebel, was quite successful in replacing the worship of God with the worship of Baal. She attempted to wipe out the royal family, but failed. Joash, an infant, was saved by the good priest Jehoiada. When he became king he restored the worship of God under the tutelage of Jehoiada. After the good priest died, he turned to idolatry and the people followed him. They were still under the Law, but they were not following it.

To be a messenger you must know the message.

TEST YOURSELF

1. What three feasts were the Israelites compelled to keep, according to their law?
2. What was the significance of remembering the Passover each year?
3. What evidence do we have that the Law of Moses was being observed during the time of the Kings of Israel and Judah?
4. The Israelites' Feast of Tabernacles was similar in purpose to what holiday on our calendar today?

Reprints of these studies are available upon request.

Biblical Interpretation

Literal or Spiritual?

FROM the time the Pentateuch was first committed to writing to the present day, correct interpretation of the Old Testament has been a subject of intense controversy. From the Scope's trial of the twenties to the Missouri Synod's dispute with Concordia in the seventies, interpretation has loomed large on the horizon of contention.

Bible Scholars are divided into three main groups:

Group 1:

Those who believe the Bible to be the Word of God and that every word of it should be literally interpreted.

Their position, simply stated, is that if the Bible uses the word "earth" it means the planet we live on. If the word "light" is used, it means the physical light. If these words are interpreted in a spiritual or symbolic sense, they say someone is tampering with God's Word. This extreme literal position is summed up in the statement of the late William Jennings Bryan at the Scope's trial. When questioned by the defense attorney Clarence Darrow as to whether he believed the Bible taught that the whale swallowed Jonah, Mr. Bryan replied: "I would believe that Jonah swallowed the whale if the Bible said so."

Group 2:

Those who believe the Bible to be the Word of God, but cannot believe that everything in it is to be literally interpreted.

The Megiddo Church is among this group. Our founder, the Reverend L. T. Nichols, years ago rejected the literal interpretation of the creation account in Genesis as being unreasonable and unscientific. The words "heaven," "earth," "Adam," etc., can and do have a second and symbolic meaning which transforms a fantastic tale into a beautiful and meaningful outline of God's plan for His spiritual creation on this earth.

The New Testament, including the words of Jesus, is filled with symbolic language. No reasonable

interpretation of John 15:1 would describe Jesus as a literal grape vine with branches and God as a literal vine tender. If we can interpret parts of the New Testament symbolically, why not do the same in the Old Testament where a literal interpretation would contradict other Bible teachings, or where literalism would contradict simple reasoning and congruity?

Group 3:

Those who do not believe the Bible is the Word of God, but believe it to be a collection of Jewish folklore.

This group prides itself on its sophistication and intelligence. Its adherents reject the fundamentalist approach of Group One as being unworthy of their superior intellect and regard Group Two as incapable of reasonable interpretation. In modern symbolic language, they have thrown out the baby with the bath water. The Bible being the only communication from God to humanity at the present time, it is most important that we do not discard it. Most of this group have not only rejected the Bible as God's Word but have rejected God Himself. Some say "God is dead."

King David centuries ago described this group in Psalm 14:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good."

Group One is composed of what has come to be known as *fundamentalists* and *creationists*. They may be divided into:

a) Those who believe that the earth, man and all living things were created during the last few thousand years, and that all men are descendants of Adam.

b) Those who believe in the geological antiquity of the earth, but believe that Adam was created about 6000 years ago and all men are descended from him.

Individuals of both groups (a and b) disregard the fossil remains of ancient man and any scientific dating methods employed, holding that none have been sufficiently proven for accuracy.

c) Those who accept an early date for the creation of the earth but consider any fossil remains of man-like creatures who would pre-date Adam as not "man" in the Biblical sense.

There are other variations of opinion in this group, but it is impossible to cover all of them in this article.

What is basically wrong with the approach of Group One? It is based upon a literal interpretation of Genesis, which is not scientifically reasonable nor accurate. Geological studies reveal the age of the earth to be many millions of years, not just a few thousand. Dr. Louis Leakey's explorations in the Olduvai Gorge in Tasmania have unearthed human skeletons pre-dating Adam by many thousands of years.

To show the incongruity of a literal interpretation of Genesis, chapter 2, verse 17 should be sufficient: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." How could a literal tree produce intangible, *moral* fruit (of the "knowledge of good and evil"), and how could such fruit be so deadly?

Or consider the following: Cain went to live in the land of Nod with his wife, and he built a city. Why would he build a city—or how—if there were no one to live in it? According to the traditional interpretation, there should have been only three people on the earth at that time. Where did Cain get his wife?

In the accounts of Noah, the Flood, the building of the tower of Babel, in the books of Ruth, Hosea, Joel, Jonah, Zechariah, etc., are many statements and figures which cannot be taken literally, but which have far deeper meaning than surface reading could suggest. Most if not all of the writers of the Old Testament used symbolic language, much the same as modern writers do. For example, note these Scriptural passages:

"They that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same" —Job 4:8

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake"
—Psalm 23:2-3

"For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence" —Proverbs 4:17

"Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days" —Ecclesiastes 11:1

Everyone will agree that these passages require a symbolic understanding. But when it comes to Genesis there is a theological stumblingblock to a symbolic meaning. That stumblingblock is the long-cherished dogma of the fall of man, or "original sin," as it is called. If that one obstacle could be

removed, most people would readily accept an allegorical interpretation. But without that belief in the fall of man, there would be no need for Christ's redemptive death on Calvary, which is the keystone of so-called Christianity. Thus the whole structure would fall apart.

Group One, therefore, holds to a literal interpretation, in spite of the evidence, to secure their hold upon their belief in Adamic condemnation and justification by faith in Christ's atoning blood. This causes Group Three to brand them as blind and unreasoning.

Group Three, on the other hand, while refusing to accept traditional interpretation of disputed Biblical passages, discards the whole Bible as being nothing divine, and rates it with the literature of man's writings. Their attitude is even more dangerous and shortsighted than that of Group One. Their position removes the only communication that man has today with his Creator. Without the Word of God, the Bible, mankind is left on the sea of life with no divine frequency by which to steer. They are in a position comparable to that of the passengers on a certain slave ship who broke loose and threw overboard the captain and the crew to declare their independence, and then discovered that no one knew how to sail the ship. They imagine themselves super-intelligent, and refuse to accept any knowledge beyond their own limited experience.

The position of Group Two is a middle-of-the-road position. Members of this group are on firmer ground than either of the other groups. They do not reject the Bible as God's Word, but they do insist that God intended many passages to be understood spiritually or symbolically.

For some time the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, has been in the throes of a major theological dispute. Some of the faculty of Concordia Seminary, including the president, were finally asked to vacate their positions, and together they have formed what they call Seminex, or "Seminary in Exile."

From what information is available, it would seem that the differences involved in the complex Missouri Synod dispute with the president, faculty and student body of Concordia College are basically the differences between Group One and a combination of Group Two and Group Three. In a matter so complicated, one is always faced with the danger of a too-simple solution. There are doubtless other factors involved, such as church constitution and discipline; but the crux of the dispute seems to be the literal interpretation of Scripture versus the symbolic approach. The conservative

(Continued on page 21)

Our Ordered Lives

*Drop Thy still dew's of quietness till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls all wickedness
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.*

WE MAY count ourselves among those who live in "orderly" homes; we are distressed by what we call disorder. We wonder how anyone could ever live in perpetual disorder. Yet we, professing the high calling of a Christian, might be surprised to learn how very disorderly our uncontrolled emotion or passion makes our lives appear to God.

Any evil makes for spiritual disorder. An impatient or selfish remark may turn what would have been a happy day into a disordered day. And we may not be the only one to suffer for our careless speaking—it may disarrange the order of other lives as well. It may hinder the buoyant spirit of their early hour's resolve and cause their lives to be less fit for perfect control under the difficulties that inevitably arise in the course of a day.

It takes mighty strength of will to maintain an ordered life, a life which gladly bends in obedience to every divine principle but which never goes to pieces in an ordeal. The sweetness of Christian virtue, combined with strength of will, gives order and the beauty of peace.

How soothing and inspiring are the very words, *an ordered life!* No outbursts of fleshly gratification, no petty disturbances, no ruffled feelings or angered countenances. Such a life is ruled by an enlarged heart, a heart made greater by the breadth of God's wisdom. Such a life has vision broader than could ever be known to the natural mind. A wave of trial that might otherwise overpower is accepted as a challenge in such a life. With the greater power of God's thoughts in control,

the order of that life is not upset. Plans may be disrupted for hours or days or years, but the ordered life maintains a sound and godly equilibrium; like the well-built sea vessel, it sails smoothly on through all the storms of life, while lesser vessels are capsized.

Just a little outburst of impatience, a mood of depression, a feeling of impurity can throw our whole life out of order. How very disorderly we appear to God when we seek honor of men, or when we insist on pursuing our own way.

Physicians tell us that when one organ of the body does not function properly, the whole body chemistry is upset, often causing other complications. So any of the emotions of the lower nature make a disordered life, rendering a person incapable of fully controlling his other emotions.

The apostle Paul gave excellent advice on developing order. He wrote: "Accept life with humility and patience, making allowances for each other. . . . Make it your aim to be at one in the Spirit, and you will inevitably be at peace with one another" (Eph. 4:2-3, Phillips). Peace surrounds the ordered life like a halo. There is length and breadth of understanding and experience to be gained through a well-ordered spiritual life. It comes by walking ever more closely in the gentle, quiet way of God.

When all the strivings of the carnal mind have ceased and no more wickedness mars our soul, there will be a depth of beauty to life unknown before. Only then will our *ordered lives* "confess the beauty of Thy peace." ●●

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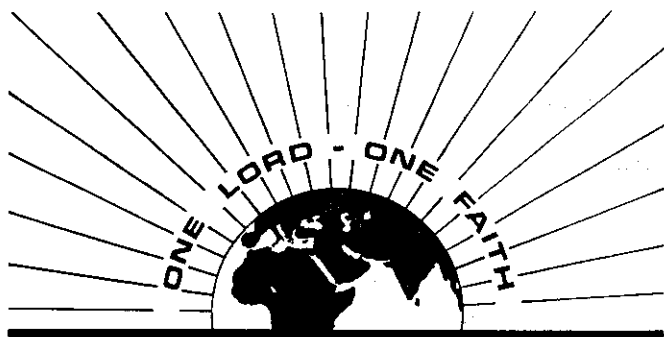
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Christ In Our Behalf

In the last few articles in this series we have thought about Christ, His birth, life, work, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension and second advent. We have briefly reviewed what the Bible has to say about all of these.

Now we want to think about Christ and His relation to us. Exactly what did Christ do that is of benefit to us? Are we more favored than those who lived nineteen hundred years before Christ, simply because Christ came?

The answer is yes. We will see why.

THE God we serve is not a God of caprice and notion. He works by plan, in an orderly fashion, from a planned beginning to a foreordained conclusion. All that happens during the interim must advance His overall plan; nothing can hinder.

The advent of Christ, when He was born and lived among men, was part of this plan. And it is a part from which we obtain direct benefit. What are the benefits to us? We shall see. But first, What are *not* the benefits?

Christ is NOT our sacrifice.

The Christian world, generally speaking, worships Christ because of what they imagine to be His supreme love for us in that He died on the cross of Calvary to atone for our sins. The human race being so sinful, they say, nothing less than the death of God's own Son could satisfy God and deliver us from sure and certain and eternal death.

A complete explanation of this subject is not possible here, but we can point to numerous Bible texts which show plainly that the guilt of our sin is upon *us*, not Christ, and that we ourselves must work, must change our ways, must develop the character God will accept. Christ's death did not automatically remove our sins, nor will accepting

Him as our personal Saviour guarantee us His eternal favor.

Let us cite just a few texts to show the general teaching of the Bible on this subject: Sin must be overcome, overpowered with good (Rom. 12:21). Sin must be laid aside (I Pet. 2:1-2). Sin must be put off, as one removes an article of clothing, and goodness must be put on in its place (Col. 3:9, 12). The apostle Paul listed many evils common to man's lower nature—"fornication, impurity, a contentious temper, envy, fits of rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, party intrigues, and jealousies; drinking bouts, orgies and the like" (Gal. 5:19-21, NEB), and then said, "I warn you . . . that those who behave in such ways will never inherit the kingdom of God." He makes no allowance whatever for what the blood of Christ might do to take away the stain of sin, but says plainly that "those who behave in such ways will never inherit the kingdom of God." Any man who has any hope of living in Christ's kingdom must "purify himself" even as Christ is pure (I John 3:3).

Christ came to help us, but not by dying on a literal cross and shedding literal blood; His death was the result of sinful men murdering Him (Acts 7:52); it was not a voluntary offering.

What did Christ do for us?

Christ's coming fulfilled the prophecies of the Scriptures. If Christ had not been born, hundreds of prophecies of the Old Testament would be unfulfilled, and we might be caused to wonder if other prophecies would be as untrustworthy. But His birth, His life, His work, His death, His resurrection were all foretold and fulfilled so precisely that we can only marvel at the knowledge of the God who caused the prophecies to be written. It was foretold that He would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14); that He would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2); that He would be a prophet (Deut. 18:15, 18); that He would be raised up from among the Israelite people (Deut 18:15); that He would be descended from David's family (Ps. 132:11; Jer. 23:5). All these, and many more, were fulfilled exactly as had been predicted.

Christ's coming was part of the plan of God, assuring us that if one part of the plan can be fulfilled, those portions yet unfulfilled will as certainly meet their fulfillment in due time.

God works entirely by plan. The coming of Christ was part of His purpose, an "eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:11). It is a purpose which can also include us, if we prove worthy.

Christ's coming was a preparation.

Christ came to prepare Himself for a role which shall be of great benefit to us in the future. God's kings are not born, they must be made. And Christ was no exception. He had to prove Himself. He had to live a life of obedience and self-surrender, to show that He was worthy of the honor to which He would someday be appointed. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9). Through Him we shall, if worthy, receive salvation.

Christ came as our perfect pattern. In Him we can see the whole process, from birth to immortality. He was born and grew up as others. He had to learn, just as we must learn. And He had to apply what He learned to Himself and His own life, just as we must. But He did better, far better, than any normal child of man has ever done. When He learned what was right, He did it. He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sinning (Heb. 4:15). Thus He is a perfect example to us of the ideal life that God requires.

God does not ask us to duplicate the perfection of Christ's dedicated life. He does not expect us to give Him one steady perfect performance from start to finish. But He *does* ask that we reach His standard of attainment in the end. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). Everyone who aspires to the immortality Christ attained must "purify himself even as he [Christ] is pure" (John 3:3).

Christ gave His entire life in self-sacrifice, and then He died. More than this, He was resurrected—just as all who die in Christ will be; He was restored to life. Then He was taken to heaven; there He was judged in the presence of His Father.

Christ received the crown for which He gave His entire life. He was the "firstfruits" to immortality from among the sons of men. Following this same progression, we may likewise be made immortal—if we follow in Christ's footsteps all the way.

Christ came to serve as mediator between us and God. He is one of our race, yet He is the Son of God. Because of His unique position, He can be to us a "merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God. . . . For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:17-18). In this way God shows His concern and care for His human family, desiring to help and save as many as will come to Him by learning and doing His will. ●●

December, 1975

Biblical Interpretation

(Continued from page 18)

leaders of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, seem to be insisting on the traditional literal interpretation of Scripture, while the dissidents refuse to accept what is clearly archaic, unreasonable and unscientific.

The founder of the Megiddo Church, Rev. L. T. Nichols, long ago preached for six months on the first three chapters of Genesis. Extracts from these sermons have been published in this magazine. The Bible is specific on the fact that God created the earth—"I have made the earth and created man upon it: I even my hands have stretched out the heavens" (Isa. 45:12). (This leaves no place for the theory of evolution in the development of this planet.) But Genesis, chapters 1-3, does not refer only to that creation. There is absolutely nothing in the Bible regarding the time of the creation of either the earth or mankind. (For more on Genesis 1-3, see our booklet *God's Spiritual Creation*.)

The story in Genesis is meaningful and understandable if we approach it as an allegory representing God's plan for the spiritual development of the inhabitants of the earth during seven days, or seven thousand years. We realize that this interpretation is considered unorthodox by many, but on sober reflection it is the only logical choice. It eliminates all arguments over the fossil remains of human forms pre-dating Adam and places the Bible in harmony with geology and all true science.

Even the word "Adam" in this allegory is a representative term (though we would not dispute that a literal man Adam actually lived).

The only "first" that Adam might claim was that he was the first man God called into His spiritual garden to prepare himself for a future life. He was *not* the first man to live on earth.

And as far as original sin is concerned, Adam transgressed; but Adam's transgression, as that of any other man, affects only the transgressor. There is no such thing as one man's sin (either of the first man or any other man) being transmitted to his offspring. No such idea is in the Bible. This one error is responsible for many false doctrines.

The literal interpretation of many passages of Scripture is responsible for more divisions, doubts, schisms, infidelity and atheism than anything else. We can only hope and pray that a few will see the light and become convinced that the Bible is not the impossible tale some would claim it to be, but the magnificent and accurate Word of God Almighty. ●●

Honest with Time

"MOM, I've got an idea!" Brenda exclaimed as she carefully sliced bread for the evening meal. Brenda always enjoyed helping me in the kitchen, and it gave us a good opportunity to talk.

"Is there any reason why I couldn't have some part-time work and help Dad out a little? He's having a hard time of it, and he says business is getting slower and slower. Seems like there is *something* I could do to help out."

"Well! Brenda," I said quietly, surprised at my daughter's sudden spurt of ambition. "What type of work would you try to get?"

"I know jobs aren't real plentiful, but somebody *might* be able to use me for, say, three or four hours a day, plus Saturdays. I thought possibly of asking at the cafeteria at school. Or in the office. Or maybe I could do some odd jobs for some of the older people in our neighborhood. But, . . . I don't know about that. Some of them might be . . ."

"Might be pretty impossible to please?" I smiled at Brenda's misgivings.

"But then, I could get used to some of it."

"I'm sure there are things you could do." I wanted Brenda to feel some confidence in herself.

"You know what I'd really like, Mom, is to have a boss like Karl has. It's really something, that job of his."

"What do you mean, Brenda?" I was curious at that comment.

"Oh, you should hear him when he gets to talking about it. He says he can take a whole hour for lunch, and nobody cares. He can even catch up on his sleep, if he's short—right on the job! He says he's free to go on vacation anytime he wants to. And he must have lots of time to chat with the other fellows there, because he has told me some of the things they've talked about. He says it's really great."

"You mean Karl has told you how he wastes time on the job?"

"No, Mom." Brenda was slightly taken back at the idea of Karl's wasting time. "Not really. You see, he works so much faster than any of the others that it's only right for him to take time out—if he didn't, I suppose he'd get way ahead, and that would make it look bad for the others."

"Now Brenda," I said, trying to level her pride a bit. "We'll have to talk about this more sometime. But let's get supper on now."

Supper was as usual, until Neal passed up the second serving of meat he always took and asked for bread in its place. "We're going to have to start trimming our budget a little. Things don't look so good for the year that's coming. Our country just isn't as prosperous as it was. And there's a very real possibility I may get laid off sometime next month."

All was silent as the family members looked solemnly from one to another. If Dad were to be laid off, what then?

"I think Brenda has an idea," I suggested, taking the opportunity to introduce the subject.

"I've been thinking I would like to help a little, Dad, if I could find a job. Do you think so?" Brenda looked hopefully at her father.

"Sounds interesting, Brenda. How old are you now?"

"Fourteen. And there are things I could do. I'm *sure* there are."

"Brenda says she would like a job like Karl's," I interjected.

"I'm afraid Brenda can't do the type of work Karl is doing down at the plant." Neal spoke with firmness.

"No, Dad, I don't mean I want to work there. What I told Mom was that I'd like the kind of *boss* Karl has—the kind that lets you do anything you want to."

"Now Sis, that's exaggeration. We don't do *anything* we want to."

"Well, you *almost* do, from the things you've told me. When you can go to work anytime you feel like it, and take time to visit with the other fellows on the job, and use the phone to call your friends, and—"

Karl put down his fork and gave his sister a look that should have silenced her. But Brenda was so engrossed in her reporting that she missed the look. "Sounds to me," she went on, "that you get things pretty easy."

Karl's defenses were ready, as always. "I've never been *real* late to work—"

"Except maybe last Saturday. Seems to me you

were just leaving home at the time you should have been on the job."

"Well, maybe so. But I've never used the phone at work for anything but business—except maybe once or twice, when someone called me. And as for taking time to visit on the job—" Karl bristled with the anger he felt.

"Just a moment, Karl." Neal turned to address Brenda. "Are you sure, Brenda, very sure of what you have been telling us?" When it came to passing judgment in a matter, Neal was very careful.

"Yes, Dad. Karl's even told me he can take a nap on the job," ventured Brenda, glad for further opportunity to tell her story. She had been keeping quiet about it for a long time, and it had really bothered her.

"Nonsense!" retorted Karl. "I've never yet gone to sleep on the job."

"If none of what you've told me is true, why's the job so glorious? Must be *something* to it besides packing and unpacking boxes. I think you like some of the privileges you can take *pretty well*."

"I do a whole lot better than *some* of the fellows. You should see some of the things *they* do!" Karl was determined to even things up.

"We aren't concerned with what the *others* do, Karl. We're concerned about *you*. You know you have a responsibility the others don't know anything about." Dad's voice was deep and serious.

"Dad, you don't understand. When I get my work done early, I have a *right* to take extra time out. Besides, nobody expects you to work yourself to death *these* days." Karl's voice vibrated with a subdued fury.

"This thing *has* to be straightened out, and soon. Maybe I'll drop in tomorrow and have a talk with your boss. He should be able to give us some information."

Karl's face reddened and his countenance dropped instantly. "No, no, Dad, please, I'm sure that isn't . . . isn't necessary. My boss is all right, Dad, really he is, and . . ."

"You think he is very satisfied with your work and with you as an employee? I'm sure he would be only too happy to tell me." Dad maintained his perfect calm.

Karl tried hard to swallow his anxiety as he spoke again. "No, Dad, I'm sure it isn't necessary that you see him. I can do better, I know I can." There was no use denying anything with Dad. Karl knew, and he knew Dad knew that Karl was capable of being very *non-productive*. He could just feel his father's eyes penetrating straight through him.

December, 1975

"But wasting time is something you should *never* allow yourself to do," Dad continued. "You know what the Bible says. 'Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.' And that 'whatsoever' includes what we do on the job just as much as what we do in church."

"Really, Karl," I said, taking up Neal's conversation, "wasted time gets nobody ahead. Try putting yourself in your boss's place. How would you feel if you were paying a man \$4.00 an hour, or whatever, and then you came around and found him doing nothing. How would *you* feel?"

"I know, Mom, but you and Dad are old-fashioned. Nobody expects you to work all the time. I do everything I'm asked to do."

"But I think you'll find, Karl, that the men who get the promotions aren't those who do just what is expected of them. *They* do *more*. Remember about the servant in Jesus' parable who did all that he was supposed to do and stopped there?" he asked.

Neal looked at me, so I answered. "Jesus called him 'unprofitable.' I've noticed more than once, Karl, that it is easy for you to waste time right here around home. It's a trait that will put you at a disadvantage time after time, if you don't do something about changing it."

"The trouble is that killing time kills something they call 'productivity.' I don't mean to be preaching, Karl. It takes time to learn these things. But you'd better be thinking about it. Bad habits are easy to form, and they go a long, long way. And there's another problem. The attitude we give our job is likely to be the attitude we give the Lord. If we try cheating our boss, we're likely to try cheating God—and that doesn't work."

"I'm not doing any cheating, Dad." Karl bounded to his feet and in a moment was out the door. He had had enough.

Dad smiled softly at Brenda and me. "He'll think it over and be back. The truth hurts. But it also heals."

Yours for a more honest me,

Kathy

WHY?

There are some who say, "There is no God, no maker of the universe and man."

Then, when disaster falls, when epidemics strike and these folks find they cannot cope with life, *why do they pray?*
—Selected



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Running the Race

My interest in divine things continues to mount as it is my desire to be worthy to receive the eternal blessings from the Lord. As the inexorable movements of the hands of time continue from day to day, it behooves us to get ready to meet the Lord, to "Watch and pray" that we may be among those "accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36).

The standard which the Almighty requires of us, perfection of character, is indeed high; there is no doubt about it. Each day we must renew our determination to live closer to God. Hebrews 12:1 compares us to runners in a race, and the weights of sin we are so tempted to carry will not go away by themselves; we have to *put* them away. In view of these words I find that without alertness and diligent action we can never hope to win.

Wausau, Wisconsin

J. T.

It Takes Growth

I was impressed by a short piece in the last *Message*, "No Instant Christians." It takes time, effort and patience to grow in grace, knowledge, into a mature Christian. It takes a lot of effort on our part. It takes prayer, reading, and Bible study daily. It takes reproof and warning also, and people don't like to be told about their faults.

We have everything to gain and nothing to lose if we keep trying.

Laurel, Indiana

E. M.

Many Helps

We have enjoyed the many, many helps that have been sent our way. The *Message* and the tapes are wonderful. The *Message* each month just seems to have the very help that we need to stir us up and help us to see old self as we ought to. We are both striving to overcome, and we ask for your prayers.

Kinards, South Carolina

H. C.

Abundantly Blessed

God has abundantly blessed us in making a way for us to find the one faith once delivered to the saints. We have a lot to be thankful for when we hear of all the miseries in the world today. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises."

We are enjoying the tapes. They are a wonderful help to keep us reminded of the pitfalls along the narrow way.

Port-Au-Port, Newfoundland, Canada

G. W.

"I believe miracles are being done today by the Holy Spirit. You say in effect, 'Show me, and then I will believe.' But you are wrong. God's word tells you to first 'believe,' and then you will be shown. After Jesus was resurrected, He was seen by more than five hundred 'brethren'—not by unbelievers because you must first believe and then you shall see. Unbelievers will never see a miracle, because they do not believe. We have to cry like the poor man who wished to have his child healed, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief' (Mark 9:23-24)."

I cannot think for a moment that your reasoning is correct. There were numerous incidents recorded in Scripture where unbelievers *did* see and were convinced of God's power. The Holy Spirit was given for the express purpose of "confirming the word with signs following" before an unbelieving world. If God requires men to believe *before* they see, all will be lost. The apostles were able to convince men of their divine mission and the truthfulness of their message *by* the miracles they were able to perform.

There are many examples. Immediately following the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given, the Bible tells us "many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together . . ."—the wonders were done, and people believed. Their belief was a direct result of what they had seen (Acts 2:43-44).

It is written of Jesus that He "healed all that were sick" who were brought to Him (Matt. 8:16). Can we for a moment imagine that all these were already believers? When did God ever find *all* ready to believe?

It is written of the apostles that they "healed every one" of "a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem" (Acts 5:16)—should we assume that all of these were already believers?

Jesus raised Jairus' daughter to life even when the people laughed him to scorn (Luke 8:53)—and Jairus' daughter could have had no faith whatever being dead. Where then was the faith that saw or performed the miracle? The onlookers were "astonished with a great astonishment"—surely they did not believe *before they saw!*

The Scriptures record several incidents where unbelievers saw—and experienced—the judgments of God. And when Christ returns, unbelievers as well as believers shall see.

No, persons today use "lack of faith" as a cover for their own *lack of power*.

When the Holy Spirit is restored, there will be nothing questionable about the miracles performed—they shall be "greater" than those performed by Jesus and His apostles (John 14:12). And no supposed healer today has even attempted to do as much—as restoring to life a man who had been dead four days.

When the Holy Spirit is restored, "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God"—thousands shall see and shall believe!

"If a person just lives a good life, without doing sinful things, but he doesn't know Jesus or believe the Bible as God's Word, can he inherit the Kingdom? I think not, for only through our Saviour Jesus Christ can we become truly righteous and receive a place in His kingdom."

You are correct. Before a person can inherit the Kingdom, he must "hear" and "learn" of the Father.

Israel "entered not in because of unbelief." "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Heb. 3:18-19; 4:1).

Jesus said, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand" (Rev. 1:3). This shows that a person must do something to qualify himself for a place in God's Kingdom: "read... understand... keep those things that are written therein."

The apostle Peter wrote that "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" come "through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Pet. 1:2-3)—there is no other way.

Jesus said also, quoting the words of the prophet Isaiah, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45).

Your last statement, that "only through our Saviour Jesus Christ can we become truly righteous and receive a place in His kingdom," could be misunderstood. Christ is destined to be the judge and dispenser of the rewards at His second advent; it is from Christ that all worthy ones will receive immortality; but Christ's life and complete surrender to the will of His Father benefits us only as we follow His footsteps and die to sin as He died (see Rom. 6:10-13; I Pet. 2:21). ●●

December, 1975

Celebrating

Santa-mas?

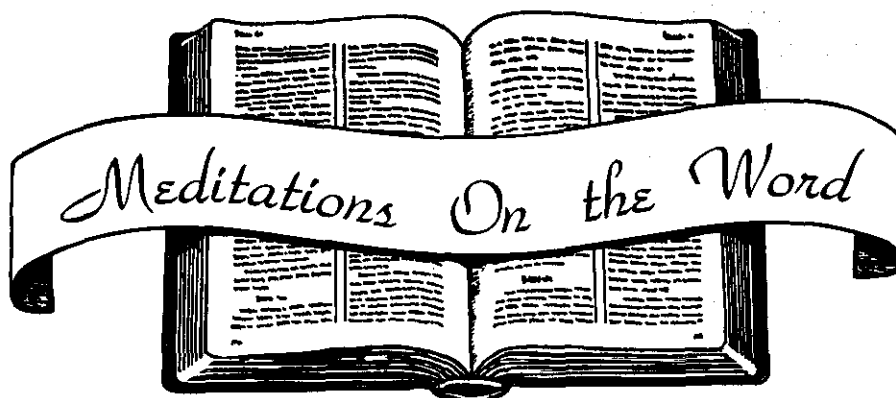
Of course not—not if you want to honor Christ. The festive season of December has long since lost its identity with the Child born in Bethlehem. So-called Christmas has nothing to do with Christ, and Christ has nothing to do with it. The day belongs to a different sort of hero. His name is Santa.

You question this? Just look around, and you can't miss his long white whiskers, his billowy red coat, his hilarious laughing face, occasionally even his reindeer. Santa decorates (or more correctly, *desecrates*) our city streets, department store windows, shopping malls, and the porch or chimney of many a residence. By being at the wrong place at the wrong time, one may even have the misfortune of encountering personally his silly likeness.

The whole mode of celebration of December 25 bears practically no religious significance to the majority. Any meaning the day might have is lost in merriment, revelry, and the gift-giving that is too often selfish and worse than worthless.

Even the date of December 25 has no Christian connection—at least it had none until the fourth century when the Catholic Church, in an effort to appease the pagans, placed the celebration of Christ's nativity on December 25, to make it coincide with the popular celebration of Saturn. But this is not to infer that honoring Christ is wrong if it be separated totally from all pagan influence. Paul commands that we "render therefore to all their dues, ... honor to whom honor" (Rom. 13:7). In fact, it would be wrong *not* to honor our coming King. But our honor must be offered in a manner consistent with our Christian devotion, in sincerity and in truth. The extreme paganism and Santa worship of December 25 has no place on the true Christian's calendar.

The members and visiting friends of the Megiddo Church will be honoring Christ and welcoming the sacred New Year in the spring, on April 1, 1976, the date coinciding with the time of the first new moon after the spring equinox. It was then that the Lord commanded Moses to observe the New Year. And there will be no Christmas trees, Santas or other pagan merriment. If we would "do all to the glory of God," our celebration must also be God-honoring, in a manner befitting the sacred nature of the events we commemorate. ●●



"For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope"
 —(Romans 15:4)

A PLAIN statement: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning!" Have we learned them? The rank and file of professing Christians have not; to them the Bible is an unfamiliar book. Beyond perhaps the Twenty-third Psalm, the Lord's Prayer, John 3:16, John 14:1-2, they have little Scriptural knowledge.

Paul commanded Timothy, his son in the faith, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). Studiousness was a *must* to Timothy.

Jesus advocated, "Search the scriptures" (John 5:39).

In support of the belief that the things written aforetime must be learned, we observe that the Israelites were commanded to teach the law of God diligently to their children. They were to talk of the words given through their Lawgiver, Moses, when they sat in their houses, and when they walked by the way. They were to bind them for a sign upon their hand, and as frontlets between their eyes; the words of God's law were to

be written upon the doorposts of their houses and upon their gates.

In the Proverbs of King Solomon, similar demands were made: "My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments . . . Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart. . . Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:1, 3, 5).

By the time of Augustine (A. D. 354-430), many errors and abuses had crept into the Church, but Augustine still held to the need for study of the Sacred Oracles. He considered it binding upon Christian parents to teach the Bible to their children, advocating that children seven or eight years old should memorize passages of Scripture.

Our meditation verse lists one valid reason for learning the things written aforetime: only in that way can we have hope. Above all we hope for endless life. Apart from life all other blessings would be valueless, for only through life are we able to enjoy them. It was the hope of a better life that im-

pelled Abraham to obey the Lord's command to leave his native land and kin, and migrate to a strange country. It was the hope of everlasting life that impelled Joseph to adhere strictly to the law of God as a slave in a heathen land, and still retain his poise when raised to a position of virtual ruler in that land.

Love of life was the magnet that drew such outstanding men as Moses, Samuel, King David, King Hezekiah, the prophet Daniel, the apostle Paul, yes, even Jesus Himself, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, that He might obtain the more abundant life. This promise of life is beautifully expressed in Psalm 133: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore."

Paul said it was through patience and comfort of the Scrip-

tures that we have hope, and Peter explains that "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" come to us "through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Pet. 1:3); knowledge—the product of learning.

But to possess any real value, our belief must be based upon the teaching of the Scriptures. The program the Bible reveals for the fulfillment of the hope of immortal life in the new world is, first, *knowledge*: the "things written aforetime, were written for our learning." Then, *belief*, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Gal. 3:6). Then *acceptance*; when the law of God was read to the Israelites, they were to say: "All that the Lord hath said we will do, and be obedient" (Num. 24:7). Then the *doing* must follow. But even then the hope still is incomplete. We "which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). After keeping the law of God inviolate we still bear the image of the earthy, are still subject to accident, disease and death; we wait for Christ to come from heaven and raise the dead, to judge His servants, both living and resurrected,

and bestow our reward of immortality. That is the great hope we find in the Scriptures.

Over the ages men have entertained other hopes than these, and still cling to false hopes. Nearly all primitive peoples had some concept of continued life after death. They considered death a transition, a migration from a lower to a higher plane. This concept was exemplified in the primitive belief of the American Indian. His conception of a future life was that after death he would go to the "Happy hunting ground" where wild game in abundance would provide perpetual food and pleasurable pastime for him. The Bible contradicts this: "The living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything" (Eccl. 9:5).

Civilized man, relying solely upon wishful thinking for proof, adopted the belief of his primitive ancestors of life immediately after death, and has come to believe that he possesses an immortal soul, or a life principle that survives the death of the body. But, we repeat, the Bible hope is that after Resurrection and Judgment worthy mortals shall "put on immortality," bringing to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory!" ●●

Megiddo means

"a place of troops"

—Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon

"a place of God"

—Young's Analytical Concordance

Geographically, Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, located at a strategic point, demanding heavy fortification; for Palestine is the age-old gateway between East and West, and the avenue connecting North and South. Supremacy there has long been the envy of aggressive nations, and the prevailing power has guarded it with jealous eye. The famous pass at Megiddo through a solid mountain range is the one means by which this avenue between continents may be traversed.

In the spiritual parallel, it is a place of troops, where soldiers are equipped for spiritual warfare against the forces of evil without and within. The weapons we wield are not merely human, but divinely potent to demolish strongholds; we demolish sophistries and all that rears its proud head against the knowledge of God; we compel every human thought to surrender in obedience to Christ" (II Cor. 10:4-5, NEB). ●●

December, 1975

READ for Your LIFE!

HISTORY OF THE MEGIDDO MISSION
THE COMING OF JESUS AND ELIJAH
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?

GOD'S SPIRITUAL CREATION

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

THE GREAT APOSTASY

AFTER DEATH, WHAT?

THE DEVIL AND HELL

TRINITY OR UNITY?

THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE ATONEMENT

THE SABBATH

ALL for \$2.00, Postpaid.
Single books, 25¢ each.



Resignation

*Great God, create my soul anew,
Conform my will to Thine:
Melt down my heart, and let it flow,
And take the mold divine.*

*Seize my whole frame into Thy hand;
Here all my pow'rs I bring:
Manage the wheels by Thy command,
And govern ev'ry spring.*

*O may my feet no more depart,
Nor wand'ring senses rove;
Nor let my unbelieving heart
Arraign the God above!*

*Then not the Sun shall, more than I,
His Maker's will perform;
Nor travel swifter through the sky,
Nor burn with zeal so warm.*

-Selected

