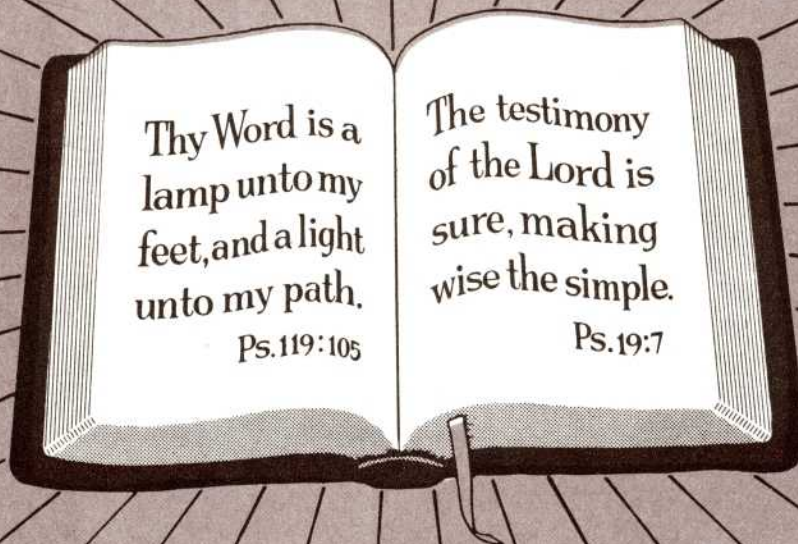


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



Elijah the Prophet:

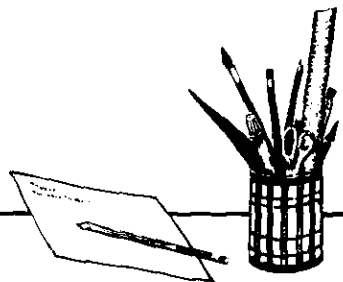
Man of God, Man of Mission, Man of Destiny

Will It Hurt Much?

I Have Promises To Keep

What Is Truth? The Great Infidel Discussion

EDITORIAL



The Treasuries of Dedicated Things

WHEN GOD gave His servant David the plans and specifications for the building of a house for His holy Name, those directions were explicit. There were patterns for things great and things small, even for the decorating and furnishing of the house. There were patterns of the porches, of the houses joining the temple, of the upper chambers, inner parlours, and the place of the mercy seat—the “pattern of all” was given “by the spirit” (I Chron. 28:11-12). There was even a pattern for a specific area called “the treasuries of the dedicated things.”

Treasuries of dedicated things. Is there such an area in *our* lives?

The apostle Paul tells us that in a spiritual sense we are each “the temple of the living God, and the spirit of God dwelleth in” us (I Cor. 3:16). We today can lay no claim to possessing any share of the Holy Spirit power, but we do have mental storehouses that may be likened to various treasuries. These treasuries contain whatever we have chosen to put into them. There are, of course, large areas occupied by the day-to-day events of life, the equipment needed to meet daily needs, and perhaps even little “surpluses” of information we have stored away for future use. There are corners, perhaps, where we have tucked away some secret longing or ideal. But how is our “treasury of dedicated things”? And what have we chosen to put into this treasury?

So easily our minds become the receptacle for whatever comes along. And should we try to survey all the contents of this storehouse of ours, what a conglomeration we might discover! We might be surprised at all the good we have stored away. But very possibly, there is good mixed with evil—which makes our store evil. Perhaps we need to do some housecleaning of our treasuries. “A good man,” said Jesus, “out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things” (Matt. 12:35). Why? Because what is stored away is what we have to draw upon.

Hence the importance of checking the quality of

what we store. Manners may be improved by a superficial polish. But the really moral character of our lives cannot be transformed by any external process because it is ordered from *within*. Do what we will, the character will be according to what is loved and stored in the heart; and if it be a “treasury of dedicated things,” of noble thoughts and dedicated ambitions, does it not follow that the life also will be dedicated?

Thoughts are so important, for holy thoughts lead to holy living. To live a worthy life, all we need to do is cultivate holy thoughts, for the thoughts are the index of the character.

What should be the identity of the thoughts we store in our “treasury of dedicated things”? We surely do not want any junk in so sacred a spot; but how abundant and available are the good thoughts that qualify! Paul enumerates: “Whatsoever things are true, . . . honest”—true and honest as opposed to false and insincere; true in speech, true in conduct. Truth is ever the ground of God’s laws and commands. And since we are very much what we think, how important that we make true and honest themes the subjects of our deepest thoughts!

“Whatsoever things are just, . . . pure.” There are no degrees of justice; everything less than just is unjust. And there are no degrees of pure; everything not 100% pure is impure. Ours must be pure thinking, pure reading, and then—pure acting. “Blessed are the pure in heart.” The mind dwelling on pure themes cannot motivate an impure act. Things “lovely” and of “good report” will complement the whole.

Is not this a good beginning for the filling of our treasuries of dedicated things? Do we not find such thoughts in the Word of God, which, carefully stored, can serve us in days to come?

If such thoughts *fill* our treasuries, then we shall have no need to restrain evil utterances or evil deeds, for nothing will come forth but that which is “true, . . . honest, . . . just, . . . pure, . . . lovely, . . . of good report.” With such a treasury of dedicated things, we will be constantly bringing forth “that which is good.”••

Megiddo means

"a place of troops" (*Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon*);
"a place of God" (*Young's Analytical Concordance*). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (II Cor. 10:4-5).

We believe

—in God the Creator of all things, all men, and all life.

We believe

—in the Bible as containing the genuine revelation of God and His purposes for men, and as being our only source of divine knowledge today.

We believe

—in Christ the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was born of a Virgin, ministered among men, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.

We believe

—in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.

We believe

—in all mankind as providing the nucleus from which a superior, God-honoring people shall be chosen to receive the blessings of immortal life.

We believe

—in ourselves as capable of fulfilling the demands and disciplines given us in the law of God, thus perfecting that high quality of character which God has promised to reward with life everlasting in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

We believe

—in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth will be filled with His glory, His people, and His will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

Bible quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—*New English Bible*

NIV—*New International Version*

NAS—*New American Standard*

RSV—*Revised Standard Version*

TLB—*The Living Bible*

TEV—*Today's English Version*

Phillips—*The New Testament in Modern English*

Berkeley—*The Modern Language New Testament*

Weymouth—*The New Testament in Modern Speech*

Moffatt—*The Bible, A New Translation*

The use of selected references from various versions of the Bible does not necessarily imply publisher endorsement of the versions in their entirety.

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ELIJAH the PROPHET:

Man of God, Man of Mission, Man of Destiny

YOU HAVE NEVER seen an inspired prophet of God, or heard one speak. But picture, if you can, this singular man of God. Rare indeed is the life that combines more nobly the heavenly graces and aspects as does the life of this great man. One who is humble, yet he is a master of confidence; one who is bold, yet hear him petitioning God for strength to carry on; one who is kindly, yet none could be sterner in the presence of evil; one who is undauntably courageous, yet see him depending completely upon divine assistance; one who is fearless of men, yet filled with reverential awe in the presence of God. A leader, and yet the most loyal, upright follower; one who could converse with you in the most normal manner, yet the next minute be on his way to deliver a fate-filled message from God to proud and arrogant royalty. So dynamic is his personality that being with him is almost like being with an angel of God; His very attitude lets you know there is no rightful compromise with wrong. So dedicated is he that his whole thought is to fulfill his duty to God; unknown yet well-known; contemplative yet vigorous; tempestuous yet tender.

Who is he, this wonder of a man, this man truly called a "man of God"? It is none other than the grand prophet Elijah.

Do we realize that we shall be meeting him someday soon, this great man of God? Yes, the grand prophet himself who lived in the land of Israel some twenty-six centuries ago will someday be among us. We shall *see* him, *meet* him, *talk* with him face to face. Is it possible? It is more than possible—it is positive sure—as sure as the promise of God. The Lord our God has spoken through another of His prophets, and when any prophet of God speaks, we had better listen; for it is not the voice of man that we are hearing but the voice of God. When *He* speaks it is with purpose. What does this voice of

God say through His prophet Malachi? The words are recorded in the last two verses of the Old Testament: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6). Jesus Himself confirmed the prophecy of Malachi with these words: "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things" (Matt. 17:11).

Elijah *is* coming. Do *we* look forward to meeting him, this great man of God, man of mission, man of destiny? Oh, let us look closely to ourselves, for Elijah was no fawning flatterer in Israel, nor will he be when he comes back. And how shall we stand before him? How shall we feel in his presence—if we have not been doing all in our power to purify *our* hearts? For there was nothing this man hated so violently as evil—and nothing he loved so passionately as good. Elijah was truly a man of God. The loves and hates of this man were those of God—and so will they be when *we* see him. Only if we have been working earnestly, seriously, devotedly in the service of his God will we be able to rejoice to see this man of God.

Elijah is one of the most remarkable figures in the history of Israel. He is living evidence that when God has a work to be done, He finds a man to do it. He finds the right man at the right time. Moreover, God plans ahead, so that when His hour strikes, His man is ready.

Elijah the Man

Elijah was a person of dynamic suddenness. Suddenly he appears in Israel as the crisis prophet, with thunder on his brow and tempest in his voice. Just as suddenly he disappears, swept skyward in a chariot of fire. And between his appearing and his final disappearing lies a succession of amazing wonders. No one could guess what the prophet would do next, or where he would be. The very style of the narrative is marked by a vividness and beauty which stamp this prophet of fire on the imagination and identify him forever as a man of God.

The foremost task of Elijah in Israel was one of

Note: Elijah the Prophet, Man of God, Man of Mission, Man of Destiny is also available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

reformation. His success in this God-ordained mission is attested by several facts: 1) he is mentioned by the New Testament writers more often than other Old Testament prophet; and 2) Elijah was seen in the vision of the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-9), the living prophet representing the faithful who will be living when Christ returns. Was it not especially appropriate that the apostles should see in vision the very one who is destined to precede Christ at the time of His second Advent?

Elijah Taken To Heaven

Elijah's successful career is also confirmed by the fact that he is one of two privileged persons who were chosen by God to be "translated" from this world to another, never experiencing death. The account in II Kings reads that "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (II Kings 2:11). A marvelous experience to be sure! but does it seem strange that Elijah—a mortal man—could enter heaven when we read that "no man hath ascended up to heaven" (John 3:13)?

We have no reason to assume that Elijah was taken to the presence of God, or to the highest heaven, but are there not other places in the heavens where he *might* go? Heaven is an immense realm. It includes, literally speaking, all of creation that is not the earth. In our own galaxy, the Milky Way, scientists estimate that there are one hundred billion stars like our sun. And surely in this vast ocean of space there are numerous habitable islands where God's work is not yet complete, areas still inhabited by lower levels of life such as we experience, areas not yet fully glorified. The words of Amos confirm this: "It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, . . . the Lord is his name." It is very possible that Enoch and Elijah are living under conditions similar to what we experience here, at a lower "story" or level than the home of the immortals. Jesus ascended to the "highest" heaven, where the Eternal God dwells. We read, "He . . . ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things" (Eph. 4:10).

Of one fact we may also be sure: Elijah was not "picked up" supernaturally and deposited beyond the next hill; nor did he merely take a trip into the "atmospheric" heaven; these are some of the various interpretations extant; they are not Biblical. The Word of God declares, "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven," and from there he shall return.

This is just one more fact about Elijah that is singular. He must have been singular even in his physical appearance. Doubtless his features and characteristics were those of the typical open coun-

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try dweller. Rugged and austere in appearance, clad in a rough sheepskin, can we not picture him striding into the king's presence and lifting up a sinewy arm to heaven as he denounces the weak-willed king in tones that sound like awesome echo from the mountains?

Elijah: Man of Virtue

But Elijah's greatest distinction was his strong, unswerving moral character. Let us mark especially three of his most conspicuous virtues—courage, faith and zeal. More than once did the prophet risk his life to perform the service of God. And yet there was no risk, for God was with him. See his courage as he strides into the king's audience-chamber and denounces the king to his face in the name of the God of Israel. Here is the man who is ready to challenge, single-handed, the whole priesthood of the State religion and all the people of the realm in a decisive test on Mount Carmel. And then, just as Elijah thinks the demonstration has been conclusive and that the whole nation should turn to God, there comes a bloodthirsty threat from the highest power in the land—Jezebel. Instead of having become convinced of the power of God, the queen has been filled with fury. Is it not enough to test any man's courage?

Man of Faith

See also Elijah's *faith*. What gave him courage? It was faith, faith in the God who was even then working with Israel. What faith it required to go before Ahab and say, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" (I Kings 17:1). Dew and rain may be absent for ordinary causes for a few days or even weeks; but for dew and rain to be suspended for years, as Elijah declared they would be, meant *God* was doing it. Such was the faith of Elijah that he believed God would certainly answer his prayer. How could he be so sure? See how he prefaced his declaration: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth"—Elijah's God was *living* and able to fulfill the request. He knew his word was

that of the Lord—and even *before* he had asked of God! What confident, buoyant faith!

Man of Zeal

Then see Elijah's *zeal*. How fully did he express this overmastering passion of his being when at the mouth of the cave on Horeb he said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts." Have we felt this holy jealousy? How much can this child of the desert teach us of jealousy for the divine honor, of burning indignation at religious compromise and passionate loyalty to the God of heaven! How we need him to teach us to feel more deeply for *God's* honor and *God's* name than for our own! See him among the highlands of Gilead, appealing to God in prayer as bits and pieces of news make known to him the dark doings in Israel—Jezebel has destroyed the altars of God—Jezebel has removed His true priests—Jezebel has installed her abominable gods of Tyre with their hideous forms of worship—Jezebel is leading Israel into shameful and wholesale apostasy! Elijah can stand it no longer. He must go! The honor of God is at stake!

Well has Elijah been called the prophet of fire. Nothing cool, indifferent or complacent about this

man. There is a burning intensity about his godliness. Would that some of the liquid fire that coursed in his veins might flow in our own and we be gripped with the holy passion that was his! Wouldn't we then be done with all of our petty strifes and strivings?

Someone has remarked that "there are two sorts of prophets: Prophets of deeds, and prophets of words. Of the latter, the greatest is doubtless Isaiah; of the former, there has not been among men a greater than Elijah." This, then, is the first thing about Elijah's ministry: he was a prophet of *deeds*. So far as we know, he wrote nothing; and this does not surprise us. A man from Tishbe in Gilead, he was not the companion of books and letters. But he was not called to write; he was called to act! He was a man of action rather than diction. He was dynamic rather than academic. This was apparently what God needed at that time, a man of prompt action, of strong measures and explosive deeds. Someone else could do the writing; at that moment God needed the *action*; at that moment God needed *Elijah*.

Elijah's was a ministry of miracles as well. At every new chapter in the story, another miracle meets us. Because of this, many scholars have

Let Us Pray...

Father in heaven, we thank Thee for the holy voices of the prophets and saints of old who revealed to man Thy word of assurance and hope. Through the past years their messages have grown more precious to us, and now they fairly shout their message. We thank Thee for the lonely but confident voice of Thy prophet Elijah, and the spectacular miracles that he was able to perform with Thy divine help.

We rejoice that it has been revealed to us that as surely as he lived and accomplished such wonderful works in Thy name and with Thy help, so surely he was taken to heaven by divine power, and so surely he will come again as the forerunner of Thy dear Son's return to earth. He will then turn the hearts of the children of darkness to the fathers of light, and the hearts of the fathers of light to the children of darkness who will surrender to the new authority when it develops. We rejoice that Thy prophet Malachi was moved upon to reveal to us this feature of Thy plan. Help us to believe it with an intensity that will brook no doubt.

As surely as John the Baptist heralded Christ's first coming, so Elijah the greater prophet who has spent nearly three millenniums in some realm away from this earth will come again to herald the ushering in of the great and notable Day of the Lord.

Father, may our concern about the arrival of this notable Day be paramount in our daily living. May we constantly live in expectancy, knowing that the things which Thou hast ordained shall surely meet their fulfillment exactly as Thou hast foretold. And Father may we be conscious of the finality of that Day when it arrives. We as covenant-makers will either have our work finished and be ready for acceptance, or if we have been dallying on the way we will merit the stern rejection of the Judge with the words, "I never acknowledged you, depart from me ye workers of iniquity."

In the stress and confusion of daily living may we neither yield to selfish ease, nor become so entangled with the things of this world that we lose the sense of urgency to prepare for the things of the world to come. May we follow steadfastly in the steps of Christ our Lord and Master, in whose worthy name we pray. Amen.

discarded the account as being largely mythical. But the miracles are no stumblingblock to those who recognize God; indeed, they are shouting evidence of the authority behind Elijah's mission. They tell us that God was with Elijah, that Elijah was God's man, and that God knew what was necessary to make the mission of Elijah a striking success. If ever there was a time in Israel's history when miracles were needed it was in the time of Ahab and Jezebel. Unprecedented corruption called loudly for such a drastic mission as Elijah's—a mission armed with such signs and wonders as would be unmistakable credentials of its divine authority. What right have *we*—nearly three thousand years later—to judge otherwise?

A Ministry of Reformation

Elijah's ministry was also one of *reformation*. God did not send him to originate anything new but to protest the apostasy of the nation and to call men back to the old ways, back to the good ways, back to God. To some this probably seemed reactionary, regression rather than progress. But Elijah knew that going forward in the wrong way is the worst kind of regression.

When Elijah burst upon the scene in the time of Ahab, things could hardly have been worse. After the reigns of Saul and David and Solomon, ten of the Hebrew tribes had revolted to go their own way, to form a separate kingdom. Their first king had been the wicked Jeroboam, whose distinguishing epitaph reads: "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." This is the Jeroboam who put a golden calf at Dan in the north and another at Bethel in the south, so that the people could follow the line of least resistance and worship idols nearby instead of the true God in Jerusalem.

About forty years passed between the death of Jeroboam and the ascent of Ahab to the throne, and they were forty years of continued moral and religious deterioration. No less than six kings reigned, all of them evil. Things were dark enough when Ahab took the throne, but Ahab quickly made them at least a hundred percent worse, for it is written of him, "He did evil above all that were before him"—Jeroboam included.

"There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel." "Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him." Ahab—"whom Jezebel

his wife stirred up" (I Kings 21:21-26).

Here was the source of the trouble, and the weak-willed Ahab did little or nothing to resist. She, Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, shrewd and intriguing, led a grimly determined effort to stamp out the religion of Jehovah once and for all. The altars of the Lord were cast down, and the prophets of God were murdered. In their place were erected groves and images to false gods, and hundreds of heathen priests took posses-

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sion throughout the land, sustained by the revenues of the royal purse. Licentious modes of worship were introduced. Temples to Baal were built at Jezreel and Samaria.

It was a dark, dark hour. Was this the nation that God had founded? Were these the people He had delivered from Egypt and established and blessed and sustained in this good land of Canaan? It seemed as though the crushed worship of God could never regain its lost prestige. Those people who had been chosen to be the repository of divine truth had lapsed into all-out heathenism and abominableness.

But just at this zero hour God's champion arises. The times are calling for an Elijah, and an Elijah appears! The greatest prophet is reserved for the worst age. Israel never had so impious a king as Ahab, nor so miraculous and dynamic a prophet as Elijah.

Reformation Needed Today

Can we not look for his appearance again in *our* time of surpassing wickedness and impiety? Is not Elijah as needed in our world today, with his message of repentance and his fearless denunciations of evil, as he was in ancient Israel? Has not God chosen well to appoint this great man for so masterful a mission?

We find ourselves today in a world bent on doing evil with both hands earnestly. With moral values at an all-time low, with family structures deteriorating, with thousands and millions of men and women living their lives without thought of God or

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His purposes for this earth, bent only on pursuing their selfish comforts and pleasures, is not the time right for God once again to act—to send the man He has been training for this very mission and destiny—to shock them out of their lethargy before He smites the earth with a curse?

In this age of rampant wickedness and impiety, it takes more than a little imagination to picture all nations bowing in humble submission to their rightful King, to see the rulers of the nations of Africa, the Middle East, the Far East, the West all coming to seek His wisdom and learn His ways. The transition from what the world is now to what it will be when Christ is all in all is without question the greatest transition in the history of the earth. Men will not easily lay aside their own devisings and schemes; men will not easily give up their attachments to the present culture—even in the face of the most promising benefits. A great change in their thinking must be induced—forcefully, if need be.

God knows this. He knows His human creatures and all their human needs and inclinations. He knows also that if He is to spare any, they must be pre-informed of what He is about to do. They must be given open demonstration of evidence, followed by open ultimatum: Turn, and live; refuse, and die.

God Warns

It has always been God's pattern to *warn* of approaching judgment. If Christ were to walk into our world today and begin pouring out His judgments on wickedness without any warning whatever, who would survive? Would not the earth be quite literally smitten "with a curse"? Could He not be accused of being unjust? God's longsuffering is unsurpassed. Before He sends judgment He always warns. Before He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain, He sent His angels with warning. He warned the people of Nineveh before judgment arrived. He warned the people of Jerusalem while there was still time to escape from

the doomed city. He warned the people of Israel and Judah again and again and again, sending prophet after prophet to tell them of the fate that would befall them if they did not turn from their evil ways. He warned the people of Noah's day through His preacher of righteousness, Noah. But in each case, how many listened? How many responded? How many turned?

Nevertheless, God continues His plan of warning. And will He not send His prophet, as He has said, to warn the world before the "great and dreadful day of the Lord"? He *will*!

Elijah Is Coming!

For many years now our church, along with a number of other religious groups, has been broadcasting the news of the imminent and personal returning of Christ, of the "Great Day of the Lord." The evidence of Scripture in favor of this hope is overwhelming. But the aspect of that coming which concerns the preliminary warning message has so often been overlooked. Nevertheless, the promise of a herald stands: "I will send you Elijah the prophet . . . lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5).

More than seventy years ago our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, pioneered in the promulgation of this fact, and some years later we began distributing a free booklet, "The Coming of Jesus and Elijah." Today a number of different groups are advancing theories on the subject. A few teach the actual return of the real prophet himself, just as the Scriptures state. Others say "Elijah the prophet" represents a class of persons who will perform this mission; some substitute a messenger that shall be born in the western world. A few have the superinflated egoism to assert that *they themselves* are Elijah. Others say that it is a mission accomplished, that John the Baptist fulfilled the mission of Elijah, and that is that!

Still others think the Biblical mention of Elijah's coming is too obscure to notice. Only two small verses stating the prophecy? and a whole belief based upon them? Yes, that is all; but let us ask, How many times should God have to speak before we decide it is time to believe what He says? Does He have to say something a dozen times to make it true, or five, or three, or how many? What *should* the standard be?

Let us take God at His Word, and His words at face value. "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet." We are confident Elijah is coming as the herald of the great King.

Objections

But what about the objections of those who doubt? Is there any answer?

Was John the Baptist Elijah?

Perhaps the most prevalent idea is that John the Baptist fulfilled the mission of Elijah, that Jesus Himself said so when He said, "Elias is come already" (Matt. 17:12).

Now there certainly is a sense in which John the Baptist came as Elijah; for he came "in the spirit and power of Elias" (Luke 1:17), as the forerunner of Christ's first advent, according to the prophecies of Isaiah and Malachi. But shall we acknowledge that Christ's *first* coming had a herald (no one disputes this) and that His second—and much greater advent—needs none?

John the Baptist was *not* Elijah. He said so plainly: "Art thou Elias?" they asked him, and he answered, "I am not" (John 1:19-21). Jesus said also of Elijah, "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things" (Matt. 17:11). These words clearly look to the future—how very strange if they do not, because when Jesus spoke these words John the Baptist was already dead! "Elias is indeed coming," he said, "and he *shall* [future tense] restore all things." What could a dead man do in the future? And what, may we ask, did John the Baptist restore at Christ's first coming, if we should apply these words to John? He did not do any great reforming work; his whole mission was accomplished in a very short time, and compassed a very small area. He did not restore the power of the Holy Spirit, for it is written that John "did no miracle" whatever (John 10:41). No. John the Baptist does not qualify as a fulfillment of Jesus' words.

Nor would any think so, but for Jesus' next statement: "But I say unto you that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed." These words *do* refer to John the Baptist, the "Elijah" or messenger of Christ's first advent, as the disciples clearly understood (Matt. 17:13). Indeed, while recognizing in John a partial fulfillment of the Elijah prophecies, he speaks of the real and personal Elijah who is still to come: "Elias truly shall first come." We might compare the application of the prophecies to the various prophecies made of Christ's own coming. There are two advents of Christ foretold, and two *heralds* to announce them. The two events were foretold together. But just as the first coming of Christ fulfilled only *part* of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, and complete fulfillment requires a second coming at the end of this age, so the coming of John the Baptist fulfilled only one

part of the prophecies of the herald; the greater part remains for the grand Prophet himself to fulfill at the time of the second advent, before the coming "of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

Is Christ an "Announced" thief?

There are those who object to the coming of Elijah on still another ground. How, they say, can Jesus come "suddenly" and "as a thief in the night" if His coming is to be announced in advance to the whole world by supernatural means? A thief does not announce his coming; indeed, "if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken up" (Matt. 24:43). How, then, does the mission of Elijah fit into the picture?

It is true that the day of the Lord is prophesied to arrive suddenly, as without warning. But even with the advent of Elijah to warn, will not the great day of the Lord still be sudden to an unsuspecting world? In a certain sense the two events are one, for the coming of Elijah will break God's long silence and the day of walking by faith will be terminated. From that point forward, God will work openly with men. The majority of the prophecies of the coming of Christ, in fact, do not mention or even suggest the forerunner's coming. The whole event—the coming of Jesus *and* the coming of Elijah—will be sudden, a surprise to the world at large, as a thief in the night.

The suddenness of Christ's coming will also be true because of another fact—the fact that much warning falls on deaf ears, and so the day of the Lord still comes "unawares" (Luke 21:34, Matt. 24:50). This was true in the time of Noah, and Jesus said, "Even thus shall it be in the day when the son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:30). The comparison seems especially appropriate and parallel. The end-time was to be history repeating itself, not only in the vast extent of lawlessness and the universality of evil, but also in the earnestness of the warning and utter disregard of mankind. At God's bidding, Noah was a messenger with a message of warning. He preached for 120 years, warning that if they did not repent of their sins and turn to God, they would be destroyed with a great flood. But the people laughed and sneered. No doubt some believed for a time, but when years went by and nothing unusual happened, they too lost faith. But as time ran out—when the rain began to fall—then the people were ready to heed the warning. Then they would do anything—*anything*—if only they could get inside that ark of safety. But it was too late. The rain came, and "the flood," and "took them all away"

(Continued on page 23)

I Have Promises to Keep

THERE IS A saying that "Promises are like pie crusts, made to be broken." But this is never the assumption at the time the promise is made. In the making of a promise there is common agreement between two parties, and both feel an obligation to the other, though perhaps in different measure.

The American poet Robert Frost wrote of the obligation of promises in an exquisite little poem called, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening."

*Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though;
He will not mind me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.*

*My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.*

So the poet watches bemused as the daylight fades, until memory brings him back to reality in the closing stanza:

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.*

In a book of debt-collection letters is the following masterpiece of directness:

Dear Sir:

Honest men pay their just debts.
Dishonest men do not pay their just debts.
You owe me \$10.00.
Which kind are you?

A debt is a promise; a promise is a debt; for a promise, however trivial, is a measure of our honesty. Many people are inclined to treat verbal promises more or less lightly, forgetting that someone believed and trusted and is depending on them to fulfill. If our record is such that no one takes our promises seriously, or if they discount our promises as a matter of course, our words are in serious need of overhauling.

We do not think much of people who do not keep their promises. Nobody does, and with good reason. We call them liars, in our hearts if not to their faces. Yet who of us can say that his own record is perfectly clear, even in temporal matters? We may be careful, yet are we as careful as we could be?

Worst of all, we give the lie to God by repeatedly, persistently, consistently and habitually breaking the promises we have made to Him. Worse still, we compound our evil by trying to make excuses for ourselves.

We promise that we will be obedient, and then crumple under the first temptation. God in His mercy grants us another opportunity, and again we fall. We promise we will cast out the idols we have loved so long, yet year after year goes by and we have still not made a clean sweep. We promise to bestir ourselves and redeem the precious time, yet we procrastinate, standing idly by the roadside, waiting, waiting for something, we know not what. Why do we not do better?

Perhaps one reason is that God does not collect His accounts every night. If He did, we might be appalled at the day's balance sheet. Perhaps there is another reason: we have not been single-minded enough. In this complex world there are many distractions. If only we had the time and the capacity for both, we tell ourselves, we could do better. But we are strictly limited in both. We know, or should know, that we cannot have everything, only a choice of things; and our present happiness and eternal welfare depend on the wisdom of our choices. It is possible for us to make too many commitments, to get ourselves too deeply involved in too many things—with the most unhappy results. Keeping in mind our limitations and our first obligations, the promises that we have made to God, we must use the greatest discrimination in our choosing, always weighing the gains against the losses, always considering the outcome. If in this the "darkest evening of the year" we take the time to stand idly by in a figurative sense, we will carry away nothing substantial or satisfying but only the consciousness

of another precious moment wasted.

Amid the myriad diversions, distractions, and demands upon our time, let us always be guided by the inflexible principle: First things first. Many of these appeals need have no claim whatever upon our time; others can, by practice, be cut down to size and made to serve higher ends, namely the fulfilling of our promises to God, our solemn covenant for eternity.

Our covenant with God is not something to be taken lightly or unadvisedly. We can easily break our promises, but we cannot escape the consequences. Once we have intelligently said, "All these things we will do," we are under contract. And we cannot drop it or forget it at will. "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow," said a wise and thoughtful man, "than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Eccl. 5:5). Better, that is, because of the consequences, for "after this the judgment," when the secrets of the heart shall come to light. Once we were nothing, and had we not made a covenant we should have remained nothing, to live out our days and return to our earth, to be as though we had not been. No reward and no punishment, nothing. But when we set ourselves to be something in the sight of the Eternal, we are destined to be something for better or for worse, depending on how seriously we take our promises. This is the goodness and the severity of God; the one is as real, and just, and necessary, as the other.

The promises we make are by no means one-sided, however. Our promises commit us to sacrifice, but it is not for naught. We agree to relinquish the lesser that we may lay hold on that which is infinitely greater. Our promises come as a response to God's goodness; we love Him because He first loved us. Our promises to Him are only half of the promising; the other half is *His* promises to *us*. But the uncertainty lies entirely on our side; His promises are conditioned upon our obedience; and this, if properly rendered, is unconditional, because there is no possibility of failure with God. "God is not a man that he should lie." He will keep His promises for good, if we keep ours; He will give according to His promise, more than eye has seen or ear has heard or the heart of man has imagined (I Cor. 2:9). He will give, even "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). It is sure; it is certain; and so is the penalty, if we fail.

We have delayed the payment of our promises too long; it is later than we think. Beginning this very time, let us be more watchful. When a diversion, be it ever so attractive, cries out for our attention, let us check ourselves. Let us ask if we have the time to spare; if it is consistent with our profession; if it could be misunderstood to the detriment of the

Cause we represent. Remember, we have promises to keep, and miles—many miles—to go before we sleep. Too many miles, far too many, to waste any precious moments. If we had not stopped so often to watch the woods fill up with snow, if we had not dallied so long with the trivialities and unrealities of this fleeting existence, we would be miles nearer our goal.

When the night closes in, our travel is at an end. But while the light holds out, let us hasten. Let us press the harder to get as many miles behind us as we can. Sleep will come soon, too soon if we do not keep traveling.♦♦



Temper

*When I have lost my temper,
I have lost my reason, too.
I'm never proud of anything
Which angrily I do.
When I have talked in anger
And my cheeks are flaming red,
I have always uttered something
Which I wish I hadn't said.
In anger, I have never done
A kindly deed or wise,
But many things for which I felt
I should apologize.*

*In looking back across my life
And all I've lost or made,
I can't recall a single time
When fury ever paid.
So I struggle to be patient,
For I've reached a wiser age.
I do not want to do a thing
Or speak a word in rage;
I've learned by sad experience
That when my temper flies,
I never do a worthy thing,
A decent deed or wise.*

—Selected.



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What Is Truth?

The Great Infidel Discussion



Reverend L. T. Nichols vs. Professor W. F. Jamieson

PART NINE

IN THE YEAR 1890, our founder Rev. L. T. Nichols engaged in a series of debates with the great infidel debater Professor W. F. Jamieson. The debates extended through eight consecutive evenings between September 25 and October 2 and centered around the two following theses:

FIRST THESIS:

Resolved, That the Bible is wholly of human origin, and abounds in contradictory, immoral, absurd and inconsistent teachings.

W. F. JAMIESON, AFFIRMED.

L. T. NICHOLS, DENIED.

Six nights were spent discussing the First Thesis.

SECOND THESIS:

Resolved, That the teachings of the New Testament are all moral and elevating.

L. T. NICHOLS, AFFIRMED.

W. F. JAMIESON, DENIED.

The following articles are extracts from addresses by both speakers in the debates, which reflect the opposition our founder encountered and his sincere desire to discover fully the true teachings of the Word of God.

Mr. Jamieson's Address

My friend says it is immaterial to him whether we have all the books of the original writings or not. I should think it would be quite material to get all the books, to get the whole word of God. If God considered it important enough to give a revelation, the very part you do not have might be the most important of all.

It seems to me that my friend is getting a good deal more moderate than he was two or three evenings ago. He says he does not believe in Constantine's religion, any more than he does in friend Jamieson's religion—not half as much. I am glad to hear that. I know that my friend does not believe in a great many absurdities, and I wish he could find his way out and see the light clear to reject that entire book, the Bible, and place himself upon the broad platform or solid foundation of nature; to accept no

other guide than reason. Then he would be a full-fledged Free Thinker indeed; not a Free Thinker that accepts ideas without evidence but a Free Thinker that goes according to the evidence. "Why, I went to the original to get rid of those contradictions," he says. Why not get rid of the whole book, and in that way you will get rid of the contradictions?

If there is a Bible of God; if there is a volume in this world that is "wholly Divine," as he made use of that expression in the fore part of this debate, why should we not have it?

He refers us again to the four beasts in the seventh chapter of Daniel. I wish to ask my friend this: Does he suppose that if we could all read that Bible, and read his Lexicon and the Hebrew Bible, that we could all come to the same conclusion about it? If not, then all his criticisms upon this point are without pith or force. He says that the way was so plain, that there could be no mistake about it. It was a wholly Divine way. Here are the Adventists; they read that Bible. They have some very scholarly men among them. And yet the Adventists, who are just as much Bible believers as my good Friend here, do not accept his view of the matter. There must be something wrong somewhere about those plain guides.

My friend expects that this world will be very much changed very soon, that the Millennium will be here. Well, if it will, and we are here—whether we are here or not—I will be glad of it for the sake of this dear humanity of ours. If a race ever needed a millennium, I think it is this human race, these brothers and sisters of ours. Let the Millennium come, I have no objection. But I fail to read any thing of this kind in that book.

"Friend Jamieson has his tactics," he says. Yes, I aim to make them honorable tactics. "My friend has not grappled with my argument, as you know." Now, my dear brother, you are not to decide that point. Just let the people decide, each for himself and herself, for we will take no vote upon it as to whether I have grappled with his arguments or not.

He says, "Daniel tells me," and "the Bible is to be its own expositor," and so on. That would not be enough for me. I was not acquainted with Daniel. I do not know what was his reputation for truth and veracity in his own neighborhood. I am not going to take any man as my authority. My doctrine is to take truth for authority. It is the policy of the orthodox churches generally to take authority for truth. I hope my friend is not going to accept that part of the

orthodox system. I have hopes of him. I certainly expect, if we keep on in our common debate—and the people of this country are alive to their own interest—we will keep on until one or the other gives up.

The city is then in sight, he says. He says I turn back and that he is going to keep on. Perfectly welcome, my friend, if you get there, and if there is any chance for me, just put in a good word, tell them I am coming too—that is, if they will let me in.

"King James' translation," he says, "has some contradictions, absurdities, inconsistencies." Well, then, if that book is as unreliable as that, why not give it up? When you get rid of it, you will have a still better chance, it seems to me, to expose and explode the superstitions of the orthodox world that it turns out you do not believe in any more than I do.

Oh, there are just hundreds of contradictions, absurdities, and inconsistencies that I do not bring into one debate. That is out of the question. I am only endeavoring to bring in samples here of hundreds left untouched. Would it not be a good deal better to give up that unreliable English book, just as our revolutionary fathers gave up the English king, and make a fresh start and propose a new kind of government?

"Give the Bible," he says, "the advantage of these doubts." Why should the Bible take the advantage of any doubts? If you have doubts about the Bible, or any part of it, then I say you ought to consult with your doubt. Doubt is the mother of investigation. Investigation leads to truth. So I say, encourage your doubts for the purpose of getting clearer glimpses of the truth.

There was a tradition among the ancient Jews that the Mosaic law had been burned at the time of the captivity, and that it had been republished by Ezra. Here is what Ireneus says: "They (the books of the Old Testament) were fabricated seventy years after the Babylonian captivity by Ezra." For an account of how the Divine inspiration works to restore a book after it has been burned to ashes, go to Ezdras XIV: "And the next day a voice called me, saying, Ezdras, open thy mouth, and drink that I give thee to drink. Then I opened my mouth, and behold! he reached me a full cup, which was full, as it were, with water, but the color of it was like fire, and I took it and drank; but when I had drunk of it, my heart uttered understanding, and wisdom grew in my breast, for my spirit strengthened my memory. . . . And I spoke in the day, and I held not

my tongue by night. In forty days they [five men] wrote 204 books. And it came to pass, when the forty days were fulfilled, that the Highest spake, saying, the first that thou hast written, publish openly, that the worthy and unworthy may read it.”*

Perhaps when he drank a drop too much Ezdras was inspired to write this in Jeremiah 25:27: “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Drink ye, and be drunken, and spew, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you.” It may be said this is a prophecy of the woes that were to come upon them. But what about this? (Prov. 31:6-7): “Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.” Well, if Ezra rewrote the entire Old Testament when he was in a drunken condition, we need not be surprised at anything it says.

And this is the history of the book that my friend Nichols has been begging me to grapple with in a business-like way, and tonight I have made up my mind to do so.

Now I can understand why there are so many snake stories in the volume. Ezra must have been drunker than usual when he wrote the book of Revelation; for, as you know, it is almost full of serpents.

“He wriggled in and wriggled out,
And left his hearers still in doubt
Whether the snake that made the track
Was going north or coming back.”

It is enough to give one the nightmare to read such inspiration as that!

My friend has talked about prophecy. Well, I may just as well have a little to say about prophecy myself.

Prophecies that Abraham and his seed should possess the land of Canaan and be multiplied as the dust of the earth: “I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered” (Gen. 13:16).

“Tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: . . . so shall thy seed be” (Gen. 15:5).

“I will give unto thee, and thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of

Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Gen. 17:8).

Now look at this: The land of Canaan which was to be to the people of Israel an everlasting possession, was prophesied by Jeremiah, chapter 18, to become “desolate, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head.” There are two opposite conditions of things in this line of prophecy.

The Hebrews were promised that land flowing with milk and honey; they were told to be strong and go in and possess it (Deut. 11:8-9). But God is represented as changing his mind, according to the book of Numbers, 14:30. “Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb . . . and Joshua.” My friend presumes to get out of these troubles by saying that they were disobedient, they became wicked, and God changed his purpose. How does that excuse him? Didn’t he know they would become wicked? Didn’t he know all that? Certainly. Now many a man has had to pay thousands of dollars for his breach of promise. What about God?

“David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel” (Jer. 33:17). And “the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah, saying; Thus saith the Lord; if ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne” (Jer. 33:19-21). But Micah, 3d chapter, 12th verse, says, “Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps”! The prophet Hosea says, third chapter, fourth verse, “Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince.”

The land which God swore unto the fathers of Israel to give them and their seed, the author of Acts says he “gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him [Abraham] for a possession, and to his seed after him” (Acts 7:5).

According to the record, the promises, oft repeated, and on oath, were not fulfilled. The Israelites, though promised numerous blessings and assured that he would perform that good thing which he had promised unto the house of Israel (Jer. 33:14), instead received the most destructive punishments.

The interpreters of prophecy differ endlessly in

*We are unable to locate the source of this quotation. Mr. Jamieson cites it as from the book of Ezdras (part of the Apocrypha, not the Bible), but the book of Ezdras has only 13 chapters. And Mr. Jamieson’s contention that the Bible was burned and then re-written by Ezra is, to the best of our knowledge, without Biblical or historical support.
—The Editor.

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 D Debate
 Ed..... Editorial
 F Filler
 KK..... Kathy Kandor's Korner
 L Letter
 Ob..... Obituary
 Po Poem
 Q..... Questions & Answers Column
 Qu..... Questions to Answer
 QA..... Questions Answered in Article Form
 S Sermon
 St..... Story

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their interpretations. Such is the ambiguous character of most of the prophecies that their fulfillment is claimed by the occurrence of many different circumstances. This very ambiguity is claimed to be a proof of the divine origin of the prophecy! It is given so blindly, in such highly-wrought language, that it is not understood until it is fulfilled! The little horn spoken of by Daniel is a case in point. Josephus understood it to mean Antiochus Epiphanes. Jerome thought it was a type of anti-Christ. Sir Isaac Newton thought it meant the Romans. Most of the Protestant interpreters believe it refers to the papacy.

Mr. Nichols' Reply

You have been listening to another speech from Mr. Jamieson; and he is welcome to the positions he has taken. But the positions he has endeavored to establish are by no means established. I will endeavor to show that instead of the Bible teaching the absurd things he brought before you, an entirely different light emanates from its pages when it is fairly read within its contexts, when read to see harmony instead of trying to make discord.

The first testimony we call to your attention you will find recorded in Jeremiah, the 25th chapter, and all you have to do is to turn to that chapter and read for yourselves, and you will see that it was a prophecy in reference to the children of Israel that on account of their iniquity was going to come upon them. Mr. Jamieson, if he has read that testimony (and undoubtedly he has), knows this to be the fact in the case. And it was not Jeremiah that was drunk or said should drink, nor was any divine writer commanded to write in a drunken condition. Nor was it drunkenness with literal wine that Jeremiah spoke of, but the wine of God's wrath, as see the 15th verse. Isaiah also spoke of drunkenness that was not with literal wine (Isaiah 29:9).

Now what do you think of Mr. Jamieson's kind of argument, one that will not allow an author to make his statement and tell you what he means by it, but will take a statement, get all he can out of it that sounds bad, and put it out here as though it were the whole entire thing? I say anyone that will do this, to say the least must be hard pushed for argument.

Now if you were not acquainted with the 25th chapter of Jeremiah, you could be easily deceived and you would really think Friend Jamieson had a

wonderful point, and that the Bible commanded them to get drunk and have a great old time. This is just a sample of what you have been listening to; in every instance my friend's arguments fall bootless to the ground.

He calls your attention to Genesis 13:16 and 15:5, where the promise was made unto Abraham, and to his seed, that his seed should be as multitudinous as the stars of heaven, and that all the land of Canaan would be given unto Abraham and his seed.

Now if you will study this subject all will become plain. I have not time to go over it and elaborate it as I would like to, but I will simply call your attention to some items that will enable you in your calm and cool moments when you are at home with your Book to sift out the real facts in the case. Because the Almighty has promised Abraham and his seed all the land of Canaan and has not yet given it to them is no evidence whatever that He never will give it to them. Mr. Jamieson might promise me one hundred dollars, and he might tell me he intended to hand over that one hundred dollars to me at the end of one month; and because two weeks should roll around, or three weeks run by and I had not received a dollar of that one hundred dollars, should I make out that Mr. Jamieson would not give me that one hundred dollars? I tell you, nay.

Now the Bible teaches that Abraham and his seed were to have all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. But the question presents itself as to when? At what period of time did the Almighty intend the inheritance of this land should commence? Did He intend it to commence in Abraham's day? In Acts 7, God declares unto you that Abraham "came out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran; and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." We find the author of Acts tells us that He would give it unto him; but because He has not given it to him yet is no evidence that He never will.

Now turn to Luke, chapter 20, and we read:

"Now that the dead are raised." Now if Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were never to be raised from the dead, then of course this promise never could be fulfilled; but we find that it is declared that the *dead are to be raised*; this "even Moses shewed at the

bush when he calleth the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, for he is not a God of the dead but of the living: for all live unto him." That proves conclusively that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, though dead, will live; there will be a resurrection. Now if that be so, and we go back to Abraham's time and prove that it was after the long sleep of death that he should have the land for an everlasting inheritance and his seed should be as multitudinous as the stars of heaven, do you not see that Mr. Jamieson's argument again falls powerless to the ground? There is no evidence for it whatever. There is no weight to it because it lacks an argument; it lacks making a point; there is something lacking in it, and that is evidence.

Now go with me to Genesis upon this very subject, and let us see what we can learn. Is it not fair? Did not Mr. Jamieson tell me that I should allow him to make his own explanation? Shall we not say, Let the Bible tell what it means? Is it not our business to let God tell us what He meant, and let the book be its own expositor? And this is the way I go at the matter. If you do not see fit to agree with me, I am not going to quarrel with you. But I believe these things to be true, and for that reason, being honest, I am here to stand up for them. Turn with me to the 15th chapter of Genesis, and there let us read and see if we do not find something in reference to this subject under consideration. Commence at the seventh verse: "And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" He goes on to tell him to "take . . . an heifer three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another. And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him." This He brought before him, to make Abraham know that before he would inherit that land he would have to pass through a long deep sleep of death, and He would be his God and raise him from the dead. The resurrection is the time when He was going to give him the things promised, and not before, no, not till Abraham awakes from death (symbolized by the "long deep sleep").

Turn with me now to the 22nd of Revelation, 12th verse, and what do we read?

"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be."

We find then, it was a future period of time. We do not believe they were to inherit the land in their lifetime, no, no, we believe nothing of the kind. And Paul, speaking in reference to this matter, tells the same thing. Consequently, when we go to the testimony where the question was asked. "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit [this land]?" it was made known to him that he should go through that long, deep sleep; consequently, God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living, for all are to live unto him. We find, then, it is a thing in the future that is referred to in these testimonies, in these covenant promises made unto Abraham.

Turn now to the third chapter of Galatians. The seed promised was to be as multitudinous as the stars of heaven, and I wish to ascertain who this seed was; I want to know if he had reference to the natural seed. Let the Bible tell its own story, be fair with it; and if he did, then I will own up to that and agree that Mr. Jamieson has made a point. But if it does not, he has failed again in making an argument.

We will call your attention to this testimony for a few moments, that you may see how plainly the Bible reveals this matter when we take the pains to investigate it. I propose to let you be your own judges; and if there is evidence, shall we stand by the evidence and let the Bible be its own expositor, or shall we, like Mr. Jamieson, say, "Oh, I guess I know better about it than the one who wrote it"? I don't propose to say anything of the kind.

I call your attention to the third chapter of Galatians, 8th verse, which declares unto us: "The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." I want to know also to what period of time this refers.

Turn with me to Acts before we go further with this, that we may know what is first to be done, before the promise is fulfilled. "In thee and thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 28:14). We will commence with the third chapter of Acts, 19th verse: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you." He is going to send Jesus Christ back to you; and we shall endeavor to show before we get through that it is a spiritual seed,

and not natural, and that He is going to have a seed that is as multitudinous as the stars of heaven, and the earth will be filled with immortal and incorruptible beings. We believe in a religion that will save a hundred times more, a thousand times more than any other faith being proclaimed on earth.

We read: "He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

Now we read in Jeremiah, 33d chapter, 17th verse, "David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel." If the heavens and earth and sun were to pass away, then you would have an evidence that He would not take any of the seed of Isaac or Jacob to reign over the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; for we believe that when He sends Jesus Christ, as declared unto us, that will be the beginning of the restitution; Israel restored to the land. And then He will begin this great and wonderful work. "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those which follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed."

Ye believers here in these truths that are presented are to first be blessed, and then develop a seed multitudinous as the stars of heaven. I say the children of the covenant are going to be so multitudinous when Jesus comes back, that this earth will be filled with immortal and incorruptible beings. This is the teaching of Scripture. Do you not see from this who the seed are? "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." By this you see there is something going to happen. This Bible is to be its own expositor, not Mr. Jamieson, and not Mr. Nichols. And it tells you something is going to happen before that seed is going to inherit the land and bless all the kindreds of the earth. What is that? First it is the purpose of God

to bless us in turning us away from our iniquities. When he has accomplished this, Jesus will come back to this earth and restore Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from the dead. They will be restored to life. Then commences the time of restitution, and they are restored to their land to inherit not only Palestine but the whole earth throughout the endless ages of eternity. Consequently the Divine testimony is proven true, and Mr. Jamieson's argument falls.

We go further in this divine testimony. Turn to Galatians 3, 15th verse, and see what is declared: "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ." You may see that here is the one composed of many. It is as if we were going to have a firm or organization, and going to have many in it. So, in reference to this prophecy, it is not made as to many, but as to one. We turn back to Romans 9:7 and 8, and it tells you, "neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." It is not the natural seed, but the spiritual seed, or those of faith that are counted for the seed. The children of faith, the children of the promise, are counted for the seed.

We find in Galatians 3:26 another testimony in reference to this matter: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." We find they are the ones, the children of faith, that are counted for the seed. Now we propose to have this seed of faith inheriting the promise *after* the time of restitution begins; and the first thing necessary is to restore Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob from the dead, and bring them into possession of the promise. There is not anything in the Divine testimony, when you go to the record and read it, that tells you it had reference to their inheriting the land in their lifetime. It does plainly state that it is after this long dark night of sleep.

There is another text that tells who the seed are: "For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Now you see we

are heirs of that promise, and when the time of restitution comes, we will become possessors of it; that is the time we come into possession of the land and Abraham and his seed will come into possession of that land, and then we will blossom and fill the earth with fruit; the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the great deep. This time is not very far distant, as we have told you in our speeches before; and we believe in a theory that presents to us something that is high, noble and grand.

During the Millennium God is going to fill this earth with incorruptible beings. There will be hundreds of millions of immortal beings that no man can number; they are going to be as multitudinous as the stars of heaven. Neither does the great scheme of salvation stop here. There is something glorious and noble in this. It predicts that this scheme of salvation will roll on throughout the endless ages of eternity. Go with me to Ephesians 3:11, and what do we find? It tells you that this is "according to the *eternal* purpose." This purpose of saving individuals here through faith and filling this earth with immortal and incorruptible beings is according to the *eternal* purpose. We do not believe that the Bible teaches God had been sleeping all the many years of the past and just woke up about 6,000 years ago, and made Adam the first man. We believe that during the millions, billions, trillions, quadrillions and quintillions of years that have rolled on in the past previous to 6,000 years ago, the Deity was manipulating this great and wonderful scheme of salvation and developing millions and billions of immortal and incorruptible beings, who are now happy in other planets above; and that it will roll on throughout the endless ages of eternity, and many billions, and trillions of individuals will be developed through the millennium, and thus the seed of Abraham will be as multitudinous as the stars of heaven.

Turn to Acts 15, verses 14, 15, 16, and 17: "Simeon hath declared how God at first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things." I guess there will be a multitude. I think the Bible can find

them. Friend Jamieson thinks it a complete failure, but I do not, and the Bible does not, by letting it tell its own story. And we have a grand story. I have fallen in love with it and I want other people to fall in love with it also; it is so noble, and grand, and beautiful.

My friends, David shall never want a man to sit upon his throne. Let the Bible tell its own story. Was it not promised to Christ at his birth, "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Yes, when that time has rolled around, when that time is ushered in, he will cause Jesus to come and take the reins of government into his own hands; then, and not until then, will be fulfilled these promises.

We are nearing this time when they will be fulfilled. That is why I spoke in reference to these four world kingdoms of the earth. There is a beauty in it as we pass down through these four world kingdoms. I know such a state of things as this is coming to pass. He said I have weakened some. I am just as strong as ever. I have a pretty bad cold—that is all; and all my brethren are stronger in their faith than they were when they came. I am satisfied he will never convert me, so I expect to make a convert of him. I am willing to go on with this investigation from one end of the earth to the other, if he wants to carry it on. ••



Unwavering Faith

*O, for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by many a foe;
That will not tremble on the brink
Of poverty or woe:*

*That will not murmur nor complain
Beneath the chastening rod;
But in the hour of grief or pain
Can lean upon its God.*

*A faith that shines more bright and clear,
When tempests rage without;
That when in danger knows no fear,
In darkness feels no doubt;*

*A faith that keeps the narrow way.
By truth restrained and led,
And with a pure and heavenly ray
Lights up a dying bed.*

*Lord, may I have a faith like this,
And then whate'er may come,
I'll taste e'en here the hallow'd bliss
Of an eternal home.*



From a mother's experience—

Will It

Hurt Much?

MY YOUNGEST came limping into the house with tears streaming down his cheeks and a ragged hole in the knee of one pant leg. The palm of one grubby hand and the now exposed knee were both scraped raw, obviously the result of some unfortunate meeting of flesh and cement. The sobbing subsided somewhat as I soothed and comforted the hurt, but howls of protest went up anew when I suggested cleaning the wounds and administering some medication. "No, Mom! No, no—wait. Will it hurt much?"

This was by no means the first experience of this nature, and each time I am both amazed and amused at the reaction. The hurt is already there, the pain is evident, yet there seems to be a fear that the treatment will not be worth the added hurt it may incur. I always try to explain that the medication may sting just a little, and though the washing may be unpleasant for a moment, it will be so much better afterward. It will help keep away infection, which could cause a lot more pain, and the wound will heal more quickly. However, I have discovered that only time and experience will convince the fearful child that the cure is worth the hurt.

Then I look at my own life and wonder if *I* have ever really learned that truth, that the cure is *worth* the hurt. When there is an area in my life that has been scraped raw by some unfortunate meeting with the realities of life, am I ever afraid of the means by which healing could come? Have I ever pulled back from that word or deed which could cleanse and medicate my wounds because deep inside I was crying, "Will it hurt much?"

Perhaps this was part of the problem of the rich young man who came to Jesus seeking the means to eternal life. We know from the account that he was basically a "good" man; but there was a longing in his life for something more, something beyond. Jesus gave Him the exact answer, one that was exactly suited to his needs, but the young man was afraid it would hurt too much. He went away sadly, still filled with the pain of dissatisfaction, not willing to risk the hurt of giving up what seemed precious to him.

I recall with shame the number of times I have pulled away from God, fearing how much it was going to hurt. What more was I going to have to give up? What might God ask me to do, or suffer for Him? How much was it going to hurt to be a "growing Christian"? And then I would take a long look at others and see the festering, ugly sores that sin causes. The wound, to heal, must be cleansed, and the proper medication applied. But oh, there is that dreadful fear that the cleansing and cure will be worse than the disease. How shortsighted we are! How many times we cause ourselves even worse injury by pulling away from the one who would help us, breaking open the wound even more when we struggle against God's cure.

Open wounds fall into four categories: abrasions, incisions, lacerations, and punctures. I believe that there are parallels with each in our Christian lives, and God treats each kind differently.

An *abrasion* occurs when the surface is scraped off and the area is left raw and bleeding. Most of us receive abrasions in our lives almost daily simply by

coming in contact with the circumstances of life itself. These raw areas of life could include anything from the small scrape of a sour note in my solo that special Sunday morning to the large scrapes of severe financial problems or the seeming senseless injury of a loved one. The only way to avoid these scrapes of life would be to withdraw from life entirely. If I want to live life fully, I must be ready to accept these little abrasions as part of the life God allots me, and be always ready to apply His healing balm. For "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28). The special point for me to remember is this: that through it all I must show that I love God; I must keep His goals in mind and do everything in line with those goals.

An *incision* is a cut, and it seems that the incisions of my life come from the personal, one-to-one contacts I have with people. It may be a cutting word or act that inflicts incision, and if I do not immediately apply medication of peace, the wound becomes quite sore and inflamed. Those who cause the incision may not even be aware of the injury they brought about, but it is so easy for me to disregard that as I nurse my wound of hurt feelings and injured pride—and cause even deeper sores to develop. I will never forget what our pastor told us one day, that "you will never suffer from hurt pride if you have no pride to hurt." I *think* of it, but oh! to grow to that point where I have no pride to hurt! Then I will not have to ask God if His cure is going to hurt!

Sometimes even the tiniest wound can become painful—a little paper cut, or a tiny speck of dust in the eye. And I am afraid the same is true in my associations with others. I am afraid I have sometimes allowed the small, nearly insignificant cuts people have inflicted on me to become much more sore and painful than necessary—all because I did not allow the Word of God to dictate what I should do in dealing with those feelings. When cut by someone, it is so much more important to take care of the wound, forgive and forget it, than to keep rubbing and nursing it along until it is a matter of real consequence.

Lacerations are similar to incisions, but a laceration is a tear rather than a clean cut. Again, lacerations come from my relationships with people who are part of my life—but they are brought about intentionally, and the tear is more painful than a cut. Because the edges of such a wound are more ragged, healing takes place more slowly.

Malicious gossip is probably the most common source of spiritual laceration, but there are other subtle ways in which people can tear. I'm afraid I must confess that I have at times been guilty of

doing this to others. I know it is wrong, very wrong, and I have resolved never to do it again; there is enough hurt in the world without causing more. I have enough ugly scars left from my own encounters with malice, and I am determined that with the healing balm of God's law I shall sometime be made perfectly whole again.

Puncture wounds are those which are self-inflicted. It is difficult for me to admit that I am most often the cause of my own injury, but such things as stubbornness, moodiness, egoism, and self-pity will penetrate my life time and again and cause puncture wounds which go deep and are difficult to heal, if I am not continually watching.

One of the dangers of puncture wounds is that they do not bleed freely as other types of wounds do, and therefore there is no cleansing action by the body itself. This is true also of the puncture wounds in my life. When I allow weaknesses in my own character to penetrate and makes holes in my life, I am somehow unable to bring about any self-cleansing for the wound. I must be willing to turn the treatment over to God, let Him give me what I need to clean the wound and medicate it while I grit my teeth against the pain. Does it hurt much? Yes, it hurts a great deal. But the hurt is insignificant compared to the good that will result.

The deepest hurt sometimes comes when God sends one of His human instruments to help me see the cause of my wound, so that I can avoid it in the future. Yes, I am learning to be thankful for this, too. It is all part of learning to avoid the hurt.

And so my resolve is set. The next time I suffer *any* kind of wound—abrasion, incision, laceration, or puncture, I am going to face the cleansing and medicating process with my face set in grim determination, for I know that only good can result. God is trying to teach me how to refuse to be defeated by life's pains, and I am determined to benefit from each experience so that when all is said and done and the last hurt has been healed, I can have a place in that new world where there will be nothing to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain, when the earth shall be "filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14).♦♦



Oh, many a shaft, at random sent,
Finds mark the archer little meant;
And many a word at random spoken
May soothe or wound a heart that's broken.

BEST

Is Better Than GOOD

NOTES ON the jacket of a record featuring Pianist Van Cliburn and The Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy outline the effort made to get a perfect recording outdoors.

A dam was adjusted to silence a waterfall; orchestra seating and microphone placements were rearranged to forestall pickup of birds, rustling leaves, windblown music pages, or wind; traffic was rerouted.

When the tapes were checked, the artists listened to the opening chords of the Greig concerto. Magnificent, but not good enough. The critical ears of both soloist and conductor detected a flaw. A technician was called in to perk up one low piano note which had a slightly muted tone.

The jacket notes concluded: "Here was one of the supreme virtuosos of our day and here was a conductor and an orchestra without equal in making music sound in the grand manner. . . . They were playing masterpieces . . . which they had played at least a hundred times before. They could have played them in their sleep, and it would have been great, but they *chose to care to make it greater.*"

Paul says in Colossians 3:23, "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men." But we Christians too often prefer to settle for what is merely "good" when we might "choose to care to make it greater."

How much of our Christian resolve goes no further than intellect and emotion? We may and should be concerned about right doctrine, but concern for doctrine alone will not save us. Or we may be touched by a powerful sermon or hymn, yet never respond by sacrifice or action. This is not good enough. We must choose to do something based on sound doctrine and motivated by our hearts.

The fact that the musicians chose to care indicates more than surface emotional involvement. They readily paid a price that resulted in action and devotion to music. In opting or caring "to make it *better*," these musicians were striving for a goal—a perfect recording that would pass on the full scope of the composer's genius. How much more impor-

tant that Christians purpose to communicate the full message of the Master.

Paul refers to the Word of God in terms of “milk” and “meat” and admonishes us to partake and “grow” until we reach “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:15-16). But many of us settle for routine devotions when we might dig into Scripture for knowledge, rebuke, and challenge. We settle for giving God a part rather than the full control of our hearts and lives.

Do we apply the Word of God to each situation in our lives? Is our home just a place to eat and sleep, or is it a haven of peace and acceptance where members can find concern, fellowship, and strength, where we share our defeats and triumphs?

What about our Christian service? In First Corinthians 15:58 we are told, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." And we also are admonished to "... strive to excel in building up the church" (I Cor. 14:12).

We must build our lives on prayer. We are told to "pray without ceasing," and in an emergency situation this comes naturally. But do we feel the same sense of urgency toward prayer in ordinary circumstances? Do we strengthen our conviction and increase our enthusiasm through prayer?

The musicians each set the highest standard for his own work rather than wasting time finding out what was wrong with another's performance. They recognized that the work of each one was important—not only the soloist and the conductor, but also each orchestra member. One sour note could spoil the efforts of all.

And the same is true with our own commitment and service.♦♦

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Twelve Booklets

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GOD'S SPIRITUAL CREATION
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SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

"The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honorable and glorious and his righteousness endureth for ever" (Psalm 111:2-3).

No man who reveres the eternal God, or who has any knowledge of His creative and executive abilities, could deny that His works are great. Viewed from any angle they are great. He being Creator of the visible universe we must admit His works are great, whether seen at close range or as a galaxy of stars a few billion light years away, visible only through the most powerful telescope.

Considered from the standpoint of His ability as Ruler, even of nature's physical laws, His works are far beyond anything man can comprehend. Millions and billions of heavenly bodies rotating in space: first small groups of planets such as our solar system, then larger groups embracing a number of these small systems, then still larger groups, and finally whole universes; and all moving in their fixed channels in interstellar space, held apart and in their orbits by immutable laws. Such is the work of an eternal God.

And God's munificence is great in designing to share His boundless wealth with His worthy children. He is great in asking nothing more of us than fitness to be an associate of His, in order to merit the great prize. He does not demand wealth, natural ability, intellectual attainment or good looks. He does not demand that we meet tests of great physical endurance or like so many of the pagan cults, engage in ritual that could prove harmful, even fatal to our bodies. He is great in devising a plan whereby only the fittest shall survive, where the unworthy may receive temporal blessings, and the worthy reap an eternal harvest for their effort.

It was with a worthy purpose that the Almighty chose to place His divine plan of salvation at the disposal of frail humankind. He showed divine wisdom in making His communication to man plain and comprehensible—even though to obtain it one must diligently search, study and compare (Prov.

2:1-5). It was a glorious work in that He clothed the giving of the message with divine authority, giving unquestionable proof of its genuineness by delegating to various of His spokesmen supernatural powers to heal the sick, open the eyes of the blind, raise the dead, foretell future events, and the knowledge to speak as never man spake. His work is great in that He has arranged the circumstances for the preservation of that Word during the Dark Ages, that even today His saving knowledge can be in the hands of all who desire it.

His work is great in that He has made it possible for human beings to make something of themselves. It is a known fact that His admirable statutes given through Moses the great Lawgiver have formed the basis for the jurisprudence of man to the world's nations. And by applying the superior principles of the law of faith, or "royal law," to their daily living, self-centered, narrow-minded human beings can look beyond the confines of their petty interests and live on a higher plane. They can expand their horizons to a point where the present will give way to the eternal, the spirit become stronger than the flesh, the love of God supersede the love of self; until at last they merit the physical change giving them the nature of angels.

His work is great in this respect, that from eternity past He always has been saving people as He now is doing with the inhabitants of this earth. His mercy has been from everlasting in the past, and shall continue through all time yet to come. It is His plan ultimately to fill the earth with His glory, with a righteous and holy people. Yet He has seen fit to allow 6000 years to elapse to find the number He has designated as kings and priests to form the ruling group of the new world. Had He chosen to take out this number in a much shorter period, no opportunity would have existed for us in this age.

The closing sentence of our text reads: "His [God's] righteousness endureth for ever." The Moffatt Bible translates it: "His victories know no end." Every plan of the Eternal's has succeeded, and His successes shall never end.♦♦

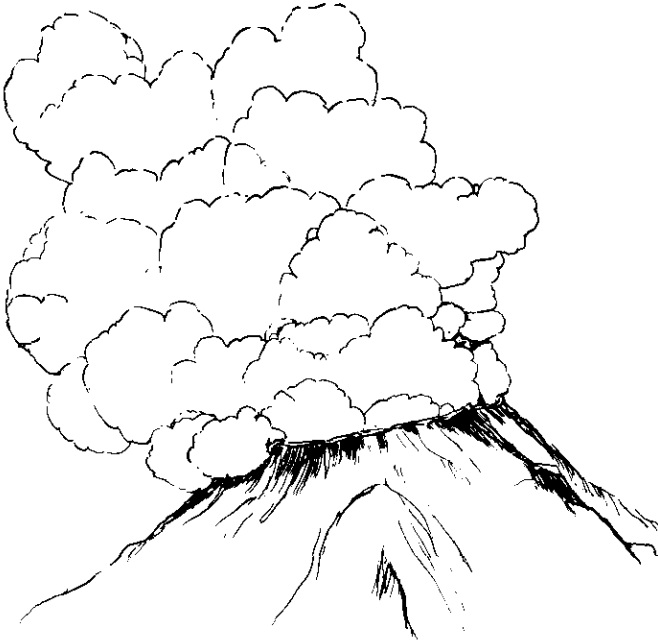


Do we not long with all our hearts to be found on the right side in that great dividing day? What a glorious culmination will follow the advent of our Lord! And it is just ahead! What a privilege belongs to Elijah, to have been appointed by God to initiate the steps that will bring about a new heaven and a new earth! Oh, let us follow his noble example, be as singleminded and as ready to obey as he, that we may with him be blessed in that Great Day to come!••



23

Abide in the Vine



Mount St. Helens

They kept saying it would happen, and perhaps, down deep, we knew it would. Yet it was hard to believe, really believe, that it was going to.

Then one Sunday morning the prophecies came true. Quickly, violently, spectacularly Mount St. Helens erupted! Some were prepared for the eruption—the National Guard, state troopers, rescue teams. Others apparently were not—campers, loggers, travelers. For them it was fatal.

So much of this reminds me of what our Lord said: “I will come again.” We believe Him, yet we don’t. It’s just too much to take in—the Lord Himself descending from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. Some say He will never come. “It is only religious fantasy. This world will go on forever.”

I thought so of Mount St. Helens. How could anything that massive ever be moved? But it happened; we saw it. Now everyone is talking about it. Now we believe.

Should this not be a lesson in faith? At any moment Jesus may come. The point is to be ready for His coming.

Are you?••

—Selected

Scripture:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman,

“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. . . .

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.”—John 15:1, 2, 4, 5.

I am not a horticulturist, but I know two things about grape vines. First, a branch must be nourished by the vine in order to bear fruit; and second, a vineyard requires a great deal of pruning. The vinedresser must cut off all the nonproductive shoots and trim the good branches to promote a maximum yield.

In today’s familiar scripture reading the Lord referred to Himself as the vine and to His disciples as the branches. He was showing them that they would be spiritually productive in direct proportion to the measure of their communion with Him. The fruits of which the Bible speaks—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control—come naturally when we live close to the spiritual vine.

Like the disciples, however, we are all prone to be proud and selfish. We tend to work and live in our own strength and consequently waste our energies in futile endeavor and worldly pursuits. Therefore, we need some form of affliction, a pruning process, so that we will confess our sins and renew our fellowship with Christ the true vine.

Christian friend, don’t forget the law of the vineyard. By spending time regularly reading the Scriptures and by engaging in earnest prayer, you will keep in touch with your Lord. And if you are subjected to the discomfort of divine discipline, don’t shrink from the pruning knife but accept it with patience. Remember, God wants you to bear more fruit!

*Oftimes we shrink from the purging and pruning,
forgetting the Husbandman knows
That the deeper the cutting and paring,
The richer the cluster that grows.*

The pruning of sanctified affliction results in spiritual fruitfulness.••

Our Readers Write...

Appreciative

Thank you for the last two *Messages* and the book, *Millennium Superworld*. The *Millennium Superworld* is very well elaborated and very useful to a better understanding of this great Bible theme.

I am following with great interest the discussion of Rev. L. T. Nichols and Professor Jamieson. It bears witness to Brother Nichols' great intelligence and deep faith. It is marvelous how aptly he defends the fundamental rights of a believing man and his own desire to investigate the truth of God. As Pilate already asked, "What is truth?"

We depend upon what we receive from you, as we feel quite alone here in Poland. Your correspondence brings us nearer to the Megiddo Church.

Warsaw, Poland

R.K.

God Is Longsuffering

"Virtue treads paths that end not in the grave;
No bar of endless night exiles the brave."

Yes, indeed, it is a command from God, "exhort one another, and so much the more as we see the day approaching." And so the great things we have all been waiting for will be realized. For there shall not fail one word of all His good promises, which He has promised.

These great and precious promises should be before us at all times.

When we consider that the longsuffering of God has reached even to these closing hours of the six thousand years to take us in, how thankful we should be. All are in darkness; gross darkness covers the earth and the minds of the people. God saw in advance that this would be. God saw just a few living down in this eleventh hour who would be worthy of His stretching out the time, who could account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation. May we work to be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.

Westcross, South Wales

G. S.

From A New Subscriber

I'm receiving the *Megiddo Message* regularly every month, and I enjoy its contents, especially the articles that explain the Bible. They are written in a language accessible to everyone.

Rose Hill, Mauritius

A. L.

Some Ordinary Day

We know not the day nor hour but it will be an ordinary day as in Lot's day, till the moment arrives and then—

A great change from the ordinary day. It would indeed be wonderful to be living when Elijah comes and not have to experience death.

Whatever our weaknesses of character may be, let us busy ourselves daily at eliminating them. With each new day we should recognize where work is needed and concentrate on its accomplishment. When we have put on the final touch, the Lord will be here to claim His own. So let us with a persistent and tireless spirit put forth a determined effort to overcome every sin in ourselves that we may have eternal life in the world to come.

Peru, Iowa

F.B.

Looking Forward

Reading the promises of God makes one long to be worthy to be spared the ordeal of passing through the portals of death, to work harder with self so as to be ready when the Prophet Elijah heralds the coming of our Lord, for things will move with speed. Surely, we who have been given years of warning want to be on the watch.

But the change we look forward to most is the change to immortality. Can we really visualize what that will mean, since "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"? We cannot comprehend the joys we there shall find.

Oh, let us be up and working as never before. Who knows what this month could or even may bring forth. I think we of all people are happy every day; this grand gospel news makes us so; the more we live by it, the happier we become.

Someday, if faithful, if we have used the time allotted now for service to God and His people, we shall meet. And what a meeting it will be! The whole earth will resound with the songs of praise and adoration.

I have been reading *MILLENNIUM SUPERWORLD* and it's like a foretaste of things to come. What will it be when it's reality? It has fired me with enthusiasm, to win at all costs. Nothing must hold us back from the prize.

Crewe, England

N.T.

A Good Branch?

While I was cutting the dead wood from one of my trees, I thought of the verse in John 15:1-2. The branch that does not bear fruit is cast into the fire.

In the spiritual, are we a good branch or an old dead branch not bearing fruit? If we are the latter, we will be cut away and destroyed.

We have plenty of water to drink, so that we may bear fruit. But remember, we cannot just say "Lord, Lord" and not do, or He will say "I never knew you," and there will be weeping (Matt. 25:30 and Luke 13:28).

Let us work harder so we will not be among those weeping because we have been turned to the left instead of to the right where Abraham and all the faithful will be.

Holley, New York

C. B.

SO WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

Thanksgiving Peaks

We all have moments when our hearts well up in praise and thankfulness to God for some deliverance, blessing or special act of mercy. Listed below are illustrations of such heartfelt praise and thankfulness recorded in the Bible. See if you can identify the thanks-giver in each of the following. (Choose your answers from the list below.)

1. "And ———— prayed, There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God."
2. "Now I ———— praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."
3. "And ———— answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."
4. "Then ———— blessed the God of heaven. . . . Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: and he changeth the times and the seasons."
5. I ———— thanked God and took courage when some of the brethren came to meet us when we were traveling far from home.
6. "When ———— heard their words, he worshipped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth."
7. "One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet giving him thanks: and he was a ————."
8. He, ————, appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, "Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever."
9. ———— lifted up his eyes, and said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me."
10. We, ————, ————, ————, "give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love."
11. "Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in

Jerusalem. . . . And I ———— was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me."

12. "Let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant ———— be established before thee."
13. And when he had thus spoken, he, ————, "took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat."
14. "As the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord: . . . praised the Lord saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever; that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord"—this house was built and dedicated by ————.

Peter	Samaritan	Belshazzar
Ahaziah	Daniel	Silvanus
Abraham's servant	Hannah	Solomon
Jesus	Timothy	Silas
Jehoshaphat	Paul	Ezra
Jew	Nebuchadnezzar	David
John	Titus	Abraham
Miriam	Saul	Nehemiah

Answers:

1. Hannah (I Sam. 2:2); 2. Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:37); 3. Miriam (Ex. 15:21); 4. Daniel (Dan. 2:19-20); 5. Paul (Acts 28:15-16); 6. Abraham's servant (Gen. 24:52); 7. Samaritan (Luke 17:15-16); 8. Jehoshaphat (II Chron. 20:21); 9. Jesus (John 11:41); 10. Paul, Silvanus, Timothy (I Thess. 1:1-3); 11. Ezra (Ezra 7:27-28); 12. David (II Sam. 7:26); 13. Paul (Acts 27:35); 14. Solomon (II Chron. 5:13).



OBITUARY

John D. Frantz

Once again death has come to claim another of our elderly brothers, this time John D. Frantz. Brother Frantz was blessed with an exceptionally long life—he reached the "100-year" mark last March, and was able to enjoy the most of those years in good health.

Brother Frantz, together with his wife Sister Maud Frantz (who preceded him in death) joined our church just fifty-three years ago. As long as health permitted he served the organization well. Sexton of the church for many years, he was a kind person always willing and anxious to help anyone with just about anything that needed help.

Brother Frantz is survived by one son, Richard, of Smithfield, North Carolina, one grandson, one granddaughter and four great grandchildren. Services were conducted on October 7, Newton H. Payne, Assistant Pastor, officiating. Interment was in Mount Hope Cemetery where rest others awaiting the great day when the "trumpet shall sound," and the dead in Christ shall rise. ♦♦

Christmas—or X-Mas?

December 25 is NOT the anniversary of Christ's birth. Just about everybody is aware of the fact, but how few are willing to give up the date—as evidenced by all the holiday shoppers, holiday decorations, and holiday partying. Bible evidence completely rules out the possibility of a winter date. At the time Jesus was born, shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks in the out-of-doors by night (Luke 2:8). This was not done in the chill winter month of December even in the moderate climate of Palestine. With late October a rainy season begins, we are told, and flocks are taken indoors where they remain until some time in March.

December 25 is NOT a Christian festival historically. The English name "Christmas," derived from "Christ's Mass," suggests some Christian association. But the celebration of December 25 did not originate among the followers of Christ; it came from Babylon, from the ancient Celtic and German tribes, and from the ancient city of Rome.

"The celebration was not observed in the first centuries of the Christian era," says a writer in the *Encyclopedia Americana* (Vol. 6, p. 622). "In the fifth century the Western church ordered the feast to be celebrated in the day of the Mithraic rites of the birth of the sun and at the close of the Saturnalia, as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's birth existed. Among the German and Celtic tribes the winter solstice was considered an important point of the year and to commemorate the return of the sun they held their chief festival of yule, which, like the other pagan celebrations, became adapted to Christmas."

Why, then, was December 25 adopted by the church during the early centuries? "The members of the early church were recruited from among pagans, and by the establishment of a festival at this time the energy and attention of the proselytes could be focused thus in a Christian festival" (*Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, Vol. 1, p. 229). And this was not done until some time during the third and fourth centuries! Chrysostom wrote about 380 A.D., "It is not yet ten years since this day was made known to us" (*Moniturn in Hom. de Natal. Christi*, Vol. II, p. 352).

What about the many customs associated with the December 25 celebration? "Most of the customs now associated with Christmas were not originally Christmas customs but rather were pre-Christian and non-Christian

customs taken up by the Christian church. Saturnalia, a Roman feast celebrated in mid-December, provided the model for many of the merry-making customs of Christmas. From this celebration, for example, were derived the elaborate feasting, the giving of gifts, and the burning of candles" (*The Encyclopedia Americana*, 1959 Edition, Vol. 6, p. 622).

"The custom of decorating homes and churches with evergreens began in ancient times. The Romans exchanged green tree branches for good luck on the calends of January" (*The World Book Encyclopedia*, 1973, Vol. 3, p. 415).

By taking any part in the celebrating of "Christmas," do we not perpetuate the memory of ancient paganism? And does the Bible not tell us plainly, "Learn not the way of the heathen"? (Jer. 10:2). Is there any glory to God in the observing of a pagan feast day? We know there is not, and all who are truly interested in serving and honoring Christ will separate themselves completely from the celebrating of December 25 and its frivolities. With all the commercialism, all the merriment, and all the foolishness that has been attached to the day by so many, we hesitate to link Christ's name to it in any way. "X-Mas" seems more appropriate.

And "X-Mas" celebrating is NOT for Christians.

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My God and I

My God and I begin the day together;
And strengthened by such fellowship divine,
I set my will and heart in earnest effort
To make the passing hours with goodness shine.

My God and I, we tread the path together;
He leads me by His hand, and by and by
If I but follow on in meek submission,
He'll show me where the streams of Eden lie.

My God and I—how much can be accomplished,
Yoked in with such Divine Assistance! I
Must never fear to climb the path before me,
Though it should scale a mountain steep and high!

My God and I, we plow my field together,
With Him to guide I make my furrow straight;
And with assurance of abundant harvest,
With buoyant heart my row I cultivate.

My God and I face all my foes together,
He gives me strength to fight without retreat;
If I but claim His armor's full protection
My God and I will ev'ry foe defeat.

My God and I—I give Him first place always,
Above, before, beside me He abides;
His law my stay, His Word my meat and manna,
His Voice my Comforter when ill betides.

My God and I, we tread the path together,
He talks of higher realms where I may dwell,
Of planes of holiness and true endeavor
Where truth and light the mists of sin dispel.

My God and I—oh, what a precious friendship!
Dwarfing earthly loves to nothingness;
And if I do my part, 'twill last forever!
Pray, what on earth could e'er compare to this?

—Contributed