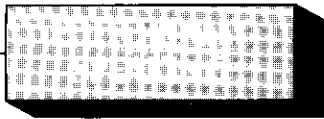


# Megiddo Message

They Call It  
**HOME**





## “I Sez to Myself, Sez I”

**L**ET’S think about thinking. Just what is it? The French philosopher Pascal called man a “thinking reed.” The “reed” speaks of the fragility of life. We are all acquainted with the reeds that grow in the swamplands. And if we have handled them, we know how easily they can bend and break—and how irreparable and useless is a broken reed.

A “*thinking reed*” is one better than a reed. It is a reed that has the ability to know something about its environment. A *thinking reed* may be cut down, but at least it *knows* it is being cut down, because it can think.

What, then, is thinking? If we look in the dictionary for a definition, we learn little besides the obvious. To think is “to form or have in the mind.”

Those who have studied and practiced the art have more to say. When you think, they explain, you actually “talk to yourself.” It is a process of inner dialogue in which you tell yourself something, and respond to yourself.

Thinking is the act of carrying on an inner conversation. It is as though we were talking to ourselves, consciously carrying on a carefully supervised conversation in our minds. It’s a little like the activity of the fabled “cracker barrel philosopher” at the country store, who would lean on the wrought iron stove and pontificate, “I sez to myself, sez I...” In other words, he was thinking—talking to himself—and “himself” was supposed to listen!

What is the quality of our thinking? Is it worth having “ourselves” listen to? And when we really do think, do we *hear*? Does the message get through to our inner selves?

We might see it as a dialogue between our better and our worse self. Our better self says, “I WILL do thus and thus.” Our natural self shouts back, “I will NOT.”

This was the struggle that the apostle Paul experienced. “I often find,” he wrote, “that I have the will to

do good, but not the power. That is, I don’t accomplish the good I set out to do, and the evil I don’t really want to do I find I am always doing. Yet if I do things that I don’t really want to do then it is not, I repeat, ‘I’ who do them, but the sin which has made its home within me.... When I want to do good, only evil is within my reach. For I am in hearty agreement with God’s Law so far as my inner self is concerned. But then I find another law in my bodily members, which is in continual conflict with the Law which my mind approves, and makes me a prisoner to the law of sin which is inherent in my mortal body. For left to myself, I serve the Law of God with my mind, but in my unspiritual nature I serve the law of sin. It is an agonizing situation” (Rom. 7:19-24, Phillips).

Here is one of our greatest powers as “thinking” creatures: the ability to look critically at ourselves, our conduct, motives, desires, feelings, and compare them with the goal we have set for ourselves; the ability to stand outside ourselves and be our own most critical observer.

We need also, along with this power of judgment, the ability to check and *change* ourselves, to dominate and subdue our will for an avowed purpose; to command and control ourselves.

This is where we can put our skills of inner dialogue to good use. We can command ourselves in a most dogmatic way. In other words, “I sez to myself, sez I...”

The power of thinking, of inner dialogue, should not be underestimated. Sometimes there is no better way to get an idea across to ourselves than actually to *talk* to ourselves—perhaps not verbally but consciously, nonetheless. Sometimes we may need to do a great deal of serious, plain talking. We have an old nature more stubborn than we often like to admit, and in the majority of us he needs some stern “talking to.” The old nature does not give up easily. Said a sage of yesterday, “A man has to keep his foot on himself.” One good way he

*(Continued on page 19)*

## 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 life, all men, and all things.

### We believe

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

### We believe

—in Jesus 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 humankind 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 applying the precepts and principles of the Word of God, in this way 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

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version. Other versions are identified as follows:

**NEB**—New English Bible

**NIV**—New International Version

**NASB**—New American Standard Bible

**RSV**—Revised Standard Version

**TLB**—The Living Bible

**TEV**—Today's English Version

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

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

**Berkeley**—The Modern Language New Testament

**Weymouth**—The New Testament in Modern Speech

**Goodspeed**—The New Testament translated by Edgar J. Goodspeed

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

## About Our Cover

Our cover photo is provided by the courtesy of Fran Biddy, Director, Strasenburgh Planetarium of Rochester Museum and Science Center, Rochester, New York.

# Megiddo Message

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December, 1987

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**The MEGIDDO MESSAGE** is a religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ, and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Church. L. T. Nichols, Founder; Newton H. Payne, President and Editor; Ruth E. Sisson, Executive Editor.

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**MEGIDDO** is a way of believing and living, grounded solidly in the Bible as the reliable Word of our Creator. A total view of life, the world and the universe, it sees all events, men and nations moving together toward one God-ordained climax: the Kingdom of God on earth. This has been the plan of God since the beginning. Christ will return visibly, bodily, as King, and the governments of this world will be joined to form a totally new worldwide government. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants. This is the purpose and goal of all creation.

# "By Faith..."

## THE HONOR ROLL OF FAITH

Abel  
Enoch  
Noah  
Abraham  
Sarah  
Isaac  
Jacob  
Joseph  
Moses...

**T**HE germ and root of every good thing is faith. It is also the key that unlocks the door into every treasure house of truth. Everywhere and constantly men must of necessity walk by faith and not by sight.

Faith is the basic element in all Christian experience. From the very beginning of the day of salvation, faith is the power that has moved the lives of all the people of God. A few of these heroes of faith were catalogued in Hebrews 11.

By faith "Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain..."

By faith "Enoch was taken up and did not have to experience death: he was not to be found because God had taken him. This was because...he had pleased God."

By faith "Noah, when he had been warned by God of something that had never been seen before, felt a holy fear and built an ark to save his family..."

By faith "Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants,...he set out without knowing where he was going....He looked forward to a city founded, designed and built by God..."

By faith Abraham, when "put to the test, offered up Isaac...He was confident that God had the power even to raise the dead; and so, figuratively speaking, he was given back Isaac from the dead..."

"By faith Moses, when he grew to manhood, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter and chose to be ill-treated in company with God's people rather than to enjoy for a time the pleasures of sin. He considered that the insults offered to the Anointed were something more precious than all the treasures in Egypt, because he had his eyes fixed on the reward." (Quotations from Hebrews 11 are from the Jerusalem Bible.)

### More Heroes of Faith

But the dynasty of faith's heroes did not end when the canon of Scripture was closed. Even greater faith would be needed by those who should live in the centuries to come, for to them no visible sign of God's presence or power would be given, no visitations, no miracles.

"These were all commended for their faith,  
yet none of them received what had been promised. God had  
planned something better for us so that only together  
with us would they be made perfect" —Hebrews 11:39-40, NIV



Among these later heroes of faith stands one whom the prophet Daniel, through divine vision, termed a "wonder." By faith this great man, unknown and unacclaimed by men, stood steadfast for God and truth against the almost overpowering bulwark of papal and pagan error. He was the last one to defend and live by the ancient gospel in its purity before the long night of darkness fell; he was the last in an uninterrupted line of faithful witnesses of God.

By faith this great wonder defied the powers of church and state, resolved that whatever men might do to him was nothing compared with what his God would do *for* him, if he proved faithful. By faith he clung tenaciously to truth and righteousness, though brethren forsook him and all things seemed against him. By faith he scribed his name eternally in God's book of remembrance, like the saints of old obtaining a "good report through faith."

The next hero of faith was another "wonder." Twelve hundred sixty years of total darkness and superstition separated this "wonder" from his nearest faithful comrade, but he was undaunted. To him was assigned not only the task of defending the ancient faith but of rediscovering its long-hidden precepts. Added to this was the task of applying to his own life every principle of that faith, and then ministering that faith to others.

By faith this latter-day Moses refused to be called the son of religious error, choosing rather to stand alone with the people of God than to enjoy the plaudits of men for a season, esteeming a life of self-denial and discipline immeasurably richer than the greatest of this world's treasures: for he cherished the recompense God offers—even eternal life.

And by faith, he being dead yet speaks. He, our spiritual father-in-the-faith, speaks to us today of our need for faith—faith in every aspect of the

plan of God he struggled to reclaim: faith in God; faith in truth; faith in the whole divine scheme of things; and last but not least, faith in ourselves. Faith was one of the strongest, sustaining possessions of our founder—a "simple, childlike faith in God."

### **The Faith We Need**

Faith in God is fundamental. Our abilities may not enable us to accomplish everything we would like to in the service of God; but all of us can abound in faith. And more, *we must*. For "without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

Along with this basic faith in God we need a solid confidence in every aspect of our beliefs, that they are rooted in God, that they are true and unchangeable. If we would have a faith that will endure to the end, we must see all things working together for the good of those who shall be heirs of salvation. We need to see the whole creation moving forward to the great Day of culmination, when the Son of Man shall come with blessing and glory for all who have proven themselves true heroes of faith.

We need unlimited faith in the plan of God and the ultimate triumph of right over wrong, truth over error, justice over injustice. Man will not always fight against man. Millions of earthborns will not always languish in poverty and hunger and ignorance. Men will not be forever burdened by sorrow and suffering and woe. Life is not an incredible and profitless episode on one of the minor planets. All creation has purpose and direction. God has a plan, and our earth is part of that plan. God has designed *it* and *its* creatures as a long-term project of development. He has a plan for us in the

*"Now faith is  
being sure of what  
we hope for and  
certain of what  
we do not see"  
—Heb. 11:1, NIV*

*We need unlimited faith  
in the plan of God.  
Life is not a profitless  
episode on one of  
the minor planets.  
All creation has purpose  
and direction.*

*The dynasty  
of faith's heroes  
did not end when  
the canon of  
Scripture was closed.  
Even greater faith  
would be needed  
by those who would  
see no open sign  
of God's presence  
or power.*

*God judges quality, not  
quantity. One with God  
always has been and  
still is a majority.*

eternal scheme of things, if we will fit ourselves into it. This is what the Bible tells us. Let us accept it and build on it, by faith.

Then, too, we need faith in the cause of righteousness today. We feel humbly privileged to be among those who are "in" on God's plans. We are overwhelmed by the goodness of the God, who would trust us as stewards of His priceless treasures of knowledge. And we feel a deep sense of gratitude and debt to the human instrument God used to rescue us from the darkness in which the multitudes grope and point us to loftier goals. In view of these privileges, it is our great responsibility to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith [we] are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2-3).

Do we sometimes question our work, feeling our limitations more keenly than the power behind us? Do we wonder at the extreme smallness of our accomplishments, the fewness of our numbers, and the seeming weakness of our assault upon the mighty bulwarks of error and evil? This is only natural. We need not feel weak and small, with God on our side. One with God always has been and still is a majority. And in the end, God will judge us, not for our quantity, but for our quality.

To strengthen our confidence in God and the Word which He has left for our instruction, we need frequently to review the fundamentals of Bible faith. Whence comes our knowledge that angels are glorified mortals, a company to which we may someday be equal? Where else can we learn that there is no literal or spiritual superpower of evil contending against God and stirring up evil? Why do we not depend upon the atoning blood of Christ for right-

eousness? Where did we learn of a harmonious, realistic approach to the creation story of Genesis, that solves the enigma puzzling millions and see God as the great Creator and the first of Genesis as an outline of His plan for the developing and glorifying of humankind? Where else might we go for an understanding of God's eternal purpose by which He is ordering all parts of His vast creation? Where else might we learn of a Christ who had to "learn obedience by the things which he suffered" to become our perfect Example and the Captain of our salvation? Where else can we learn the way to real LIFE?

Our questions go out into the darkness, and return without an answer.

Our answers have only one source: the inspired Word of God, which was written and preserved for our instruction, enlightenment and guidance; and the "wonder" who made possible our understanding of these things.

What stronger evidence need we to have faith in God and His work today?

We can only bow our heads in humble gratitude to Him who has "called us out of darkness into his marvelous light," who has arranged that even in this last extremity of the day of salvation we, too, may walk in light.

Look again at the heroes of faith. Can we equal their intensity of spirit, their constancy of purpose, their completeness of consecration, their fearless discernment of every wayward thought and inclination in the heart, their love and faithfulness to God?

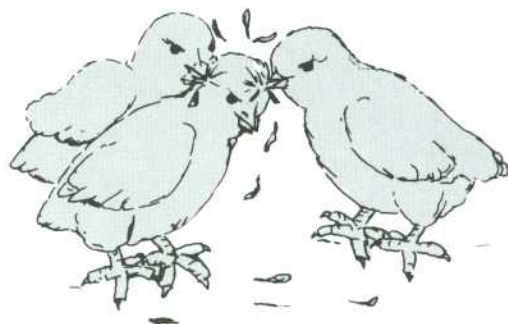
It is a challenge, but let us accept with fullest confidence in the God who stands behind us, knowing that He who has begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Christ.

We, too, may conquer! We, too, may have a place with the heroes of God who won—by faith. MM





## Join the Anti-Featherplucking Club



I thought you might be interested in a lesson we learned from our young chicks recently.

One little chick seemed to be in bad with the others, and all were picking at it. So, as an act of mercy, we removed the hapless chick from the flock for a day or so, then one evening we put it back thinking the others would leave it alone. But the next evening we were grieved to find it dead, with half its feathers picked out. It had been literally picked to death by its friends.

How like the chicks we humans naturally are, always ready to "pick." Often nothing important or significant, it may be just a notion of ours that does not meet with another's approval, but we "pick." Anything that doesn't seem just right to us in another and—"Pluck!"—there goes another precious feather. We are always so ready to "pick." It looks as though we believed that the more feathers we pick from our neighbor's cap, the more we add to our own!

But it doesn't work that way. And some day, if we keep picking, we may find that instead of adding feathers to our caps, we have instead been picking stars from our crown—in fact, we will have no crown at all.

Maybe we need to join an anti-featherplucking club, and each time we are tempted to "pick" at another's feather with a word, a comment, or even a look, ask ourselves this question: Why do I want to say this? Is it really necessary? Is it really true? Is it right? If the situation were reversed, would I want this said to me?

If our unspoken words can pass this test, our neighbors' feathers will be safe, and so will our own.

Featherplucking at its worst is deadly; at its best, unnecessary. Whatever the effect on the person being plucked, it's deadly to the plucker.

Join the anti-featherplucking club. Don't pluck.

—Contributed

### Keeping On

*The harder the thing is to do,  
The greater the joy when it's done,  
The farther the goal is from you  
The sweeter the thrill when it's won.*

*The deeper the problem, the more  
Is the joy when you've puzzled it out;  
The seas that run farthest from shore  
Are only for ships that are stout.*

*Men weary of lessons they've learned  
And tire of the tasks they can do.  
Life, it seems, is forever concerned  
With blazing a path to the new.*

*So stand to the worry and care;  
Everlastingly keep going on.  
The greater the burden you bear;  
The greater the joy when it's done.*



# They Call It ‘‘HOME’’

*HEAV’N of heavens, orbs of beauty,  
Far-flung worlds of dazzling light—  
We look up, amazed, and wonder  
Whence can come such matchless might.*

*Yet we know in some far region  
Live those shining heirs of light,  
Beings blest, for whom bright glory  
Long has banished shades of night;*

*Beings who, like us, once struggled,  
And were victors in the fight;  
Who put down each form of evil  
And exalted all that’s right;*

*Now they’re part of God’s own glory,  
Shining ’mongst the worlds above;  
Crowned with grand, immortal splendor,  
Fadeless honor, deathless love.*

*Now their world shines forth in beauty,  
With the starry orbs that roam;  
We look up and call it “heaven,”  
They look ’round and call it “home.”*

*WHEN someday a new-flung planet  
Bears the likeness of our race,  
People there will look above them  
To a world that angels grace . . .*

*To our Earth, then part of heaven,  
Shining like the stars of old,  
Filled with happy, blest immortals  
Through God’s mercies manifold;*

*And those mortals, awed with wonder,  
Will exclaim about “that star”  
From which angels come to guide them,  
Heavenly beings from afar.*

*As they ponder, we will listen  
While they’re feeling quite alone—  
They’ll look up and call it “heaven”...  
We’ll look ’round and call it “home”!*

—Contributed



---

# ANGELS

## *Another Level of Life*

**Angels encamp:** "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them." (Ps. 34:7)

**Angels minister:** "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" (Heb. 1:14)

**Angels protect and deliver:** "In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old." (Isa. 63:9)

**Angels guard and direct:** "I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared for you. Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him." (Ex. 23:20-21)

**Angels announce glad tidings:** "Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.'" (Luke 2:13-14)

**Angels cannot die:** "But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead... they can no longer die; for they are like the angels." (Luke 20:35-36)

**Angels are God's family in heaven:** "For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name." (Eph. 3:14-15)

**Angels shine:** "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." "The righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Dan. 12:3; Matt. 13:43)

**Angels administer divine judgments:** "Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died." (Acts 12:23)

**Angels perform special tasks:** "And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other." (Matt. 24:31)

**Angels will accompany Christ when He returns:** "For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done." (Matt. 16:27)



*Angels have  
special meaning  
for us, because  
we share the  
same Divine  
heritage,  
the same  
opportunity,  
the same  
potential.*

*The Bible  
does not tell  
us all we would  
like to know  
about the angels;  
but all we learn  
makes us eager  
to know more.*

# WHO The Angels Are

**T**HE subject of the angels, their origin, their life, their work, their home, is one of the most fascinating and inspiring subjects of Scripture.

What can we learn? Who are they? Where do they live? How did they arrive at this level of life?

The answers to these questions are rooted deep in the Divine revelation and in the plan of God. And these answers are more than cold, lifeless facts. They have special meaning to us, because we share the same Divine heritage, the same opportunity, and the same potential.

Yes, we too can become angels!

## **Angels Are Real Beings**

The average nominal believer thinks of angels as some type of spirit being, singing praises around the throne of God in a vaguely blissful existence. The picture is distorted by fears of demons, which were said to be angels in a so-called "fallen" state. (For discussion of this subject, see "Questions and Answers," this issue). Less religious persons credit the existence of angels to the fanciful imagination of descriptive writers, idealists and dreamers.

The dictionary tells us that angels are "spiritual beings superior to man in power and intelligence."

What shall we believe?

Since no one on earth today has ever seen an angel, we must go to the Bible to learn about them.

First, how do we know that angels exist, if they have never been seen by anyone living?

The answer is, *they have been seen*, though not for many years. And the records of their appearances are carefully documented in the Book which God has preserved for our instruction.

But even this Book does not tell us all we would like to know about them; nevertheless we can learn many things from what we read. We learn first of all that angels are real, animate beings with real, material bodies. And the role that these celestial beings play in the Divine scheme is beyond human comprehension. Oh, that we might experience the thrill—if only for an hour—of *seeing an angel!*

## **Angels Like Men In Appearance**

As we read about the times when they appeared to men, we realize that they are not unusual in form or appearance. Each time they are described, their physical features resemble those of human form. No mention is made of any bizarre shapes, or even the traditional "wings". The idea that angels needed wings to fly was carried over from the medieval age when people could not conceive of any creature "flying" without wings, like a bird. Modern artists,



realizing that this is not true, no longer add wings to their drawings of angels.

Each time the angels are described in Scripture, they are quite ordinary in appearance, even being mistaken for men. The writer to the Hebrews suggests that one may entertain angels without even knowing it (Heb. 13:2). The three angelic visitors to Abraham were identified only as "three men" upon their arrival, and the two who left Abraham to visit Lot were received by Lot as ordinary travelers in need of food and shelter (Gen. 19:1-2).

The angel who appeared to Joshua at Jericho was described as "a man ... with his sword drawn in his hand" (Josh. 5:13-14). The angel sent from the presence of God to give "insight and understanding" to Daniel about future events was described as having "the appearance of a man." Again he was plainly identified as "the man Gabriel"—his general appearance must have been that of an ordinary man. Furthermore, the narrative tells us that he "touched" Daniel (Dan. 8:15-19; 9:21)—an act which we could hardly associate with a spirit or phantom.

### Angels Are Messengers

The Hebrew word translated "angel" means "messenger, envoy." This has been their principal function in behalf of humankind, to act as messengers, bearers of Divine tidings. They were God's messengers sent to deliver His word to His human servants; they were His envoys announcing special events; they were His army sent to protect His people and execute His judgments.

Their appearances were sudden and unannounced. Again and again we read only that "the angel of the Lord came..." or "the angel of the Lord appeared..."

### Angels Called "Lord" or "God"

Many times we read in Scripture that "the Lord" appeared, or that "God came down," or that "the Lord spake." How are we to understand these statements, in view of the fact that "no man hath seen God at any time," since in the words of Jesus, we have "never heard his voice, ... nor seen his shape"? (I John 4:12; John 5:37).

The answer is that angels, being children of God, are called by their Father's name. This fact is clearly pointed out in Exodus 23, where the Lord is quoted as saying about the angel whom He was sending to guide the Israelites through the wilderness, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him" (Ex. 23:20-21).

The Almighty God does not come down to earth to attend to its affairs. He who has hundreds and millions and countless billions of worlds to oversee and direct, works through specially appointed ministers, representatives, messengers—angels!

*Wonderful angels! Who would not be like them!  
Sharing the joys that are theirs, ... Theirs is a glory  
and beauty resplendent with which no mortal's compares!  
... Years in their flight they have long ceased  
to number, going from strength unto strength...  
Having no fear that in death they shall slumber,  
theirs is eternity's length!*

*Each time  
angels are  
described,  
their physical  
features  
resemble  
those of human  
form. No mention  
is made of  
any bizarre  
shapes, or even  
the traditional  
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are bearers of  
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His army sent  
to protect His  
people and  
administer His  
judgments.*



*The role that  
the angels play  
in the Divine  
scheme is  
beyond human  
comprehension.*

*Angels are  
real, animate  
beings with real,  
material bodies.*

# WHEN

## *The Angels Came*

**T**HE appearances of the angels, as recorded in Scripture, are many. Some are without description, some are exceedingly dramatic and grandiose, giving us some idea of the power and vitality they enjoy.

We can learn much about the nature and life of the angels by studying the record of their appearances.

### **To Abraham and Sarah...**

Picture the patriarch Abraham and his wife Sarah, comfortably situated in their home in Haran. At 70-plus years of age, they may have felt the best of their life was behind them. Their days of adventure were over.

But little did they know what was in store for them until "the angel of the Lord appeared" unto Abram and told him to break away from his comfortable home and kindred in Ur and seek a new life in the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:1; Acts 7:3). The command was direct from the "God of glory," and left little room for any alternatives. The command was clear: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: ... and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).

What did it matter if he was 75 years of age! When the angel came with a command and a promise like this, it was time to start life over again!

More than two decades later the angel came again, bearing another message from heaven, and again it was a message of command—and promise. "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). Then followed the angel's promise of a son, through whom he would become the "father of many nations" (Gen. 17:4); and through whom he would inherit "an everlasting possession" (Gen. 17:8).

Only months later angels came again to Abraham when he was in the plains of Mamre as he sat in his tent door. The mission of these "three men" (Gen. 18:2) was to reveal the imminent destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and at the same time confirm to Sarah and Abraham the promise of a son.

Years later, the angel came again, this time with a supreme test of Abraham's loyalty. "Then God said, 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about'" (Gen. 22:2, NIV). Abraham obeyed, and just as he was raising the knife to strike the fatal blow, the angel came again—at the precise moment—to stay his hand so that Isaac would not die. "The angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: ... Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Gen. 22:11-12).

### To Lot and His Family...

Two angels of the Lord visited Lot and his family, warning them of the impending doom upon their home town, because of the wickedness of the people. The angels warned, they even went so far as to accompany Lot, his wife and two daughters, taking them by the hand as they fled to a place of safety (Gen. 19:15-17).

### To Jacob...

When Jacob was on his way back to Canaan, with his family and flocks, after spending fourteen years in the house of Laban, suddenly "the angels of God met him." What an abrupt entry! Totally unannounced and unexpected was this meeting with the angels of God. So surprised and overcome was Jacob that he exclaimed, "This is God's Army!" (Gen. 32:2, Amplified Bible).

An army was just what Jacob was longing for at that moment—what would he do if his unhappy brother Esau should meet him with *his* army!

Still distressed at the thought of a possible encounter, Jacob sent messengers to meet Esau, with generous gifts. Then, feeling he had done all in his power to avert the danger, Jacob prayed, "O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper.' I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant.... Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. But you have said, 'I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted'" (Gen. 32:9-12, NIV).

Jacob was appealing to God to remember His promise to him.

The Lord heard Jacob's prayer and answered by sending His angel, in a most unusual encounter. We read that "a man" [an angel] "wrestled with him until the breaking of the day," and "when the man [the angel] saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, 'Let me go, for it is daybreak.' But Jacob replied, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.' The man asked him, 'What is your name?' 'Jacob,' he answered. Then the man said, 'Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome.' Jacob said, 'Please tell me your name.' But he replied, 'Why do you ask my name?' Then he blessed him there. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.'" (Gen. 32:24-30, NIV).

What a night it was—when the angel came!

The heavenly visitor also used the occasion to change Jacob's name, informing him that henceforth he should be called "Israel," meaning "a prince of God."

### To Moses and the Israelites...

Perhaps no one in the sacred record talked with angels more frequently than did Moses. It all began when he was well past what we would call "retirement age." Eighty years young, Moses was tending sheep on the back side of the Midian desert for his father-in-law Jethro when suddenly "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush."

What a day it was, when the angel came!

Little did Moses know that this was the beginning of forty years of continual contact with the angels, as they led the way through the wilderness, arranging

*The appearances of angels were sudden and unannounced. Again and again we read only that "the angel of the Lord came..." or "the angel of the Lord appeared..."*

*The Almighty God does not come down to earth to attend to its affairs. He who has countless billions of worlds to oversee and direct, works through specially appointed ministers, representatives, messengers—angels!*



*"The angel of the  
Lord encamps  
around those who  
fear him, and he  
delivers them"  
(Ps. 34:7, NIV).*

*On the morning of  
Jesus' resurrection,  
"the angel of the  
Lord descended  
from heaven, and  
came and rolled  
back the stone  
from the door,  
and sat upon it.  
His countenance  
was like lightning,  
and his raiment  
white as snow"  
(Matt. 28:2-3).*

places of encampment and providing for all the needs of a host of people, as they delivered messages from God, and proffered daily guidance and protection. All the way through the wilderness the pillar of cloud by day and the fire by night went with them, and whenever they set up camp, the "glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Ex. 40:34-38).

Perhaps the most dramatic of all the wilderness experiences was the occasion when the angels came down upon Mount Sinai to give the Law for the Israelite nation.

It was a spectacular scene. There were "thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled"—the book of Hebrews records that even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake" (Ex. 19:16; Heb. 12:21).

It was an awesome and breathtaking hour, for "mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. ... when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder," and Moses spoke, and "God answered him." All this fanfare was background drama intended to impress the audience with the seriousness of God's law and to demonstrate the force and authority behind it, this law which would guide the Israelite people until the time of Christ. It was indeed "given by angels" (Acts 7:38).

When Moses died, the angels performed a different task—that of officiating at the funeral, and even taking charge of the burial (Deut. 34:5-6).

#### **To Joshua...**

When the children of Israel crossed safely over Jordan into the Land of Promise, the ministering angel was present again. We read: "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so" (Josh. 5:13-15).

#### **To King David...**

When King David sinned in numbering Israel, to see how great the kingdom had grown under his guidance, the Lord sent His angel to reprove the king, to punish, and at the proper time to deliver (II Sam. 24:1-16).

#### **To Elijah...**

The prophet Elijah encountered angels several times. He was encouraged by an angel as he lay under the juniper tree (I Kings 19:4-7). Not long after the dramatic scenes on Mt. Carmel, he had requested that he might die, thinking himself to be the only servant of God in the land. The angel came to assure him that there were yet seven thousand, representing a substantial number, who had not yet bowed the knee to Baal (I Kings 19:18).

#### **To Elisha...**

Angels were also present during the ministry of his successor, Elisha. One time when danger seemed to threaten, the servant of Elisha was worried. A host

of the Syrians were surrounding them. What could they do? Elisha answered, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." And "the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (II Kings 6:16-17).

Do we wonder that David exclaimed, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place" (Ps. 68:17)?

#### **To Daniel...**

The prophet Daniel was privileged to enjoy direct communication with angels on several occasions during his life of exile in Babylon. Almost his entire book is a stirring chronicle of revelation from God, most of it through the ministration of His angels.

When Daniel was elderly, probably nearing ninety years of age, we read his words: "I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes" (Dan. 9:2-3).

What did Daniel do when he realized how near they were to the end of the time appointed? He prayed to the Lord, confessing his sins and the sins of his people as one, imploring the Lord to remember the mercy and deliverance He had promised (Dan. 9:3-19).

The Lord heard, for even while Daniel was still speaking and praying, "even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision" (Dan. 9:21-23).

What strength and encouragement, what wisdom and heavenly insight—when the angel came!

#### **To Jesus...**

Of Jesus' contacts with angels we know little, except that they were there, ministering, guiding, and appearing when needed most. After His temptation in the wilderness, we read that "angels came and ministered unto him" (Matt. 4:11). Angels were present at His baptism, at the Transfiguration, and we can be sure that they did not neglect Him during the trying days of His ministry. Just before His crucifixion, in the lonely Garden of Gethsemane, there appeared "an angel...from heaven, strengthening him" (Luke 22:43).

Through the agony of the crucifixion, we can be sure that angels stood by; and on the morning of the resurrection "the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow" (Matt. 28:2-3).

#### **To The Apostles...**

Forty days later, angels carried Jesus into heaven, and two tarried behind to assure the watching disciples that He would return just as He went away—with angels (Acts 1:9-11; Matt. 16:27).

*What strength and  
encouragement,  
what wisdom  
and heavenly  
insight—when  
the angels came!*

*Oh, if we could  
only experience  
the thrill—if  
only for an  
hour—of seeing  
an angel!*



*The angels are just  
as real and just as  
actively interested  
in God's people  
today as they  
have been in any  
time past.*

*Angels may be all  
about us, yet  
unknown to us  
simply because we  
lack the sense to  
perceive them.*

We can be sure that angels were active all during the ministry of the apostles, though their appearances were few. Philip was directed by an angel to the Ethiopian eunuch who was yearning for an understanding (Acts 8:29). An angel directed Cornelius, a devout man who feared God, to find one who could teach him God's will (Acts 10:1-8).

#### **To Peter...**

The apostle Peter had his own firsthand experience with an angel.

Peter was in prison and in danger of being killed, when "the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And the chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him" (Acts 12:7-10).

#### **To John...**

The apostle John, exiled to lonely Patmos, found the island a portal of heaven itself, as he watched the angels act out in dramatic vision a prophecy for the end of the days, when Christ would be King over all the earth. The message itself was delivered by Jesus' own personal representative angel (Rev. 1:1-2).

What wonders...what marvels...when the angels came! Are they not indeed "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb.1:14). They are! And the promise still stands: "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them" (Ps. 34:7, NIV).

## **Angels Today?**

**W**E have never met one of those superior beings called angels. We have never seen one of them on a swift, lightning-like flight from heaven to earth. We have never talked to one or listened to an angel choir.

Yet there may be right within our reach this very moment an angel of God! We could know, if we could only see. Though we lack the sight, we have the promise:

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Ps. 34:7). And, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:14).

Among the greatest and most precious promises of sacred Scripture stand these words. They are simple and straightforward. Even a child may grasp the message. God has promised that His angels will protect and assist any and all who shall be heirs of salvation.

We should notice that the promise is without time limit or date of expiration. It is an ongoing fact. Angels have ministered. Angels do minister. Angels will continue to minister. The only qualification is that the one ministered to must be a God-fearer (the fear of the Lord is "to hate evil"—Prov. 8:13), or an

heir of salvation. If we meet this qualification, we can be sure of the angels' protection and help in sickness or health, on sea or on land, at home or abroad. Deliverance—within the scope of what God has promised—is sure to the God-fearer.

But we should notice that God's promise does not say how or by what means the angels will protect and give aid. Nor does God promise that they will always be visible.

### Angels and Us

The angels are just as real and just as actively interested in God's people today as they have been in any time past. We can state this confidently because God has promised it will be true, and His promise cannot fail (Isa. 55:10-11).

How are we to believe in something we cannot see? Some people today claim to be realists who cannot believe anything they cannot see. But they uphold a premise they cannot support. Nature gives us hundreds of examples of things we know are real but which we with our limited faculties cannot see. Take a drop of water from a mountain lake in the palm of your hand. Examine it closely. You see nothing but water. But place it under a microscope and you will see it is teeming with life.

Consider that scientists now know everything in our world is composed of atoms. The atom was so named because it was thought to be the smallest part of anything. Yet scientists now count particles within the atom!—invisible to human eyes but as real as the objects they compose.

Our world has many things in it which our senses cannot perceive, but which are real and useful. We cannot "see" electricity, but when we press a switch we know it is there. We cannot hear radio waves, yet the air around us is filled with them—all we need is the proper mechanism to pick them up and translate them into intelligible sounds.

Members of the animal kingdom have senses which far surpass our abilities to perceive. Bats have a phenomenal built-in radar system by which they can fly safely, though they are blind. A dog can hear sounds which to our ears are not audible. Birds have an almost superhuman sense of direction by which they can fly the ocean and return to the same nest they had occupied the season before. We cannot safely judge what *is* or *is not* by *our* powers of perception.

Is it not, then, entirely possible that angels can be all about us, all unknown to us simply because we lack the sense to perceive them? And is it not entirely within the power of God to withhold such a sense?

People in past ages saw angels openly and talked with them. Many were the mortal men and women who met them. God is temporarily withholding this privilege from us. Right now we are in a space of time when God is silent, when He is not openly revealing Himself and His messengers to mankind. We walk by faith rather than by sight. We have only the Bible by which to enlighten ourselves in God's plan.

But this age will shortly end in the most dramatic of angelic presentations, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels" (II Thess. 1:7). Jesus Christ is coming back to be King of the whole earth, and He will not come alone. Angels will accompany Him all the way from heaven to earth. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels" (Matt. 16:27).

God's angels will be part of every divine activity upon earth from that time

*Right now we are  
in a space of time  
when God is not  
openly revealing  
Himself to us. We  
walk by faith,  
with only His  
written record  
to enlighten us.*

*But this age  
will shortly  
end in the  
most dramatic  
of angelic  
presentations,  
"when the Lord  
Jesus shall be  
revealed from  
heaven with his  
mighty angels."*



**O Father Divine,  
Source of my strength, Origin of my hope:**

*I pause to ponder the words that I speak,  
my use and misuse of them;  
their power to lift,  
or to destroy;  
to build,  
or to maim.*

*Forgive me, merciful Father,  
For the things I have said which would be better left unsaid:  
Heated words that accuse;  
Jealous words that foster hate;  
Sharp words that blame;  
Belittling words that taunt;  
Mean words that sour;  
Dishonest words that deny;  
Thoughtless words that sear;  
Hasty words that harm.*

*Allow me instead to speak:  
Kind words that cheer,  
Uplifting words that inspire;  
Tender words that comfort;  
Hopeful words that encourage;  
Wise words that guide;  
True words that build;  
Forgiving words that heal;  
Encouraging words that challenge;  
Thoughtful words that uphold;  
Patient words that explain;  
Prayerful words that bless.*

*May all my words flow from a heart  
disciplined by Thy will and tempered by Thy Word.*

*In the name of Him whose words are Spirit and Life. Amen.*

forward until the Kingdom has fully come and earth has been annexed to heaven. "Thousand thousands" of angels will minister to Christ when He sits as Judge (Dan. 7:10). We read in the Bible that "ten thousands" of angels came down upon Mount Sinai at the time Moses received the Law (Deut. 33:2), and "ten thousand times

ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" will be attending and acclaiming when the "kings and priests" of the new order are inaugurated with Christ as earth's administrators (Rev. 5:9-13). When the Bride and the Bridegroom are united in marriage for eternity, the angels will be heard as "the voice of a great multitude, and as

the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Rev. 19:5-7).

Even after Christ returns, angels will provide assistance where human efforts might prove inadequate. They will assist in the great ingathering of God's servants prior to the first Judgment, gathering them from "the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven" (Mark 13:27). They will help in proclaiming worldwide the "everlasting gospel" and issuing the ultimatum to all that live: "Fear God, and give glory to

him; for the hour of his judgment is come" (Rev. 14:7).

Never before in the history of the ages have we needed so urgently the thrust of the things unseen and the lively anticipation of the future. The glamor of this world and all its playthings of dust are so blindingly close to the eyes of them that believe not—and also of them that believe—that each of us stands constantly in mortal peril. We need the angels, though we see them not. And we need the vision of their presence to keep us from losing sight of the things we cannot as yet see.

For soon, very soon—to our sorrow, or to our ecstatic joy—we shall see that which is for the moment invisible. *Angels are coming!* MM

## "I Sez to Myself, Sez I"

(Continued from page 2)

can do it is to *talk* to himself.

We have probably all found at times, though, that the "somebody" inside us was more eager to talk than to listen. If we are accused of anything, that "somebody" is right there, ready to defend whatever we said or did. At other times—perhaps the most inappropriate times—that "somebody" in us wants to talk out-loud about what it should not. Or it is concerned about feelings that should not even *be*. We know also about that "somebody's" ability to intrude into the most serious moments with totally inappropriate thoughts. At times we seem to have little sense at all of what is holy.

Again, this man inside seems to be little more than an echo who shouts back what he has heard. At such times we realize how careful we must be in the care and feeding of this inner self.

One thing we can be sure of, this "man inside" will not repeat back anything that he has not seen or heard. This means that if I want my inner self to know and think only the best, I must, as far as possible, expose him to only the best. This is the least

that I can do to help myself. "He" and I have enough problems without letting in more!

Did the apostle Paul say anything about how he handled this matter of inner dialogue? Consider the time he was in prison. He had no radio to bring him news from the world outside. He had no cassettes or records that he could play to shorten the long hours of day or night. He had not even another human being who could help him to redeem the time with stimulating, edifying conversation. What was there for him to do—but think!

Yet what an immense world of wholesome, creative activity was open to him through this inner dialogue, this talking to himself about the great things he had seen and heard, the things he had come to love and trust and delight in. Was he in prison? His enemies could not imprison his mind. Even in prison he could make the *very most* of his time. This was a prime opportunity to use the resources he had been building.

And so he thought, and thought, and thought—about things pure, things noble, things true, things lovely, things elevating.

So inspiring were the results of this noble effort that he felt com-

pelled to admonish his brethren to do the same. These are his earnest, appealing words, fresh from his own experience: "Finally, brothers, fill your minds with everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good and pure, everything that we love and honor, and everything that can be thought virtuous or worthy of praise" (Phil. 4:8, JB).

Wasn't this grand "inner dialogue"? And wasn't the Apostle himself a powerful testimony to us of its success, of the high results of disciplined thinking?

When we consider that God listens to our inner dialogue; when we consider that He hears the thoughts of our heart, that "no thought can be withholden" from Him (Job 42:2); that "he knoweth the secrets of the heart" (Ps. 44:21); when we consider that God can say, "I know the thoughts that come into your mind, every one of them" (Ezek. 11:5)—how careful we should be! Even when alone, we can carry on edifying, stimulating conversations in our own minds. Then we can proceed to order our whole lives by this inner dialogue.

What a need, what an overwhelming need to think right, "I sez to myself, sez I"! MM



When Jesus Came to Visit—



## Lord, Can't You See That I'm BUSY?

*"As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, 'Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!' 'Martha, Martha,' the Lord answered, 'you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her'" (Luke 10:38-42, NIV).*

**S**HE had been working for hours, and still there was so much to be done. After all, when Jesus came, the twelve came with Him. The house needed to be swept. Food had to be prepared, and the table set. Then, too, twenty-six extra feet would require extra washing. And the bedding had to be arranged, as traveling guests always spent the night. *If I don't do it, she may have thought, who will!*

But then, who cared anyway? Housework and meal preparation were things no one seemed to even notice—unless they didn't get done. And probably no one ever had that opportunity, really!—who could remember a time when Martha didn't get them done? She was determined that this day would be no exception.

Both Martha and Mary loved and served Jesus. Yet in the simple account of the day that Jesus and His disciples came to visit, they paint contrasting pictures, pictures in which we may see something of ourselves.

It is interesting to note that Martha is mentioned first in the narrative. Very probably she was the eldest, certainly the one in charge of the home. Some speculate that the family was prominent

and wealthy. If so, they may have had several servants.

Martha was the type of person who thrived on activity. Being busy was her delight any day. In our modern world, she would make a good executive, a committee chairperson, a project coordinator. She was the superactive type.

Mary was quite different. Calm and contemplative, she seems more thoughtful and less tense than her sister. Mary was a thinker, a listener, a wonderer.

Martha, on the other hand, is a classic example of those who aggressively pursue the end of the job, who are always trying to accomplish a little more in a little less time.

Mary, by contrast, was patient and low-key. It is likely she was often drawn from her work by something which caught her interest, something to see, something to read, something to ponder—much to Martha's annoyance.

Yet, as Martha saw it, what would Mary ever do without her? And Martha was right. Mary probably *did* depend heavily on an impatient Martha to do much of the work. But this time Mary sensed the singularity of the occasion. It wasn't an every-other-day occasion that Jesus came to their home, and

**In the simple account of the day that Jesus and His disciples came to visit, Mary and Martha paint contrasting pictures—pictures in which we may see something of ourselves.**

Mary wasn't about to miss this opportunity. Who knew how many more times Jesus might be coming? Some visit would be His last....

So from the moment Jesus arrived, Mary was with Him—beside Him, at His feet, pondering every penetrating word that fell from His lips.

Meanwhile, Luke tells us, Martha was still getting ready. She was "distracted by all the preparations that had to be made" (10:40, NIV). And a great deal did have to be done—all without vacuum cleaner, range, microwave, or even running water.

We must not criticize Martha for working hard to be a good hostess and do her tasks well. The problem lay in her being "distracted" by all the preparations that had to be made." The root word from which "distracted" is translated implies "excess, beyond," as when "cumbered with care." It denotes "the subject or occasion or superlative point." One is "distracted" by the task when it demands too much in effort, interest, or time.

Being distracted is not always bad. One may also be distracted from that which is harmful. In a sense, Mary was distracted, too—from the housework, to her Lord; from the temporal to the eternal. This was a distraction Jesus complimented.

Put yourself in the Mary/Martha situation. Try to be honest in your evaluation: *Who* would you have been?

Look again at Martha. She had a real problem. In our modern vernacular, we would say "she had had it." Perhaps the bread had overbaked,

that special bread on which she had bestowed so much carefulness. Then, the sauce had boiled over. On top of it all, the kitchen was a mess. These situations are quite familiar to anyone who has worked in a kitchen.

But if we look closer, we see something else. We see that Martha was working under a self-imposed pressure that made her *endure* the occasion rather than *enjoy* it. She was a slave of her own making.

Perhaps Martha prided herself in serving dinner on time, and it was already late. Meanwhile, every time she breezed past the front room, her eyes focused on her sister Mary, oblivious to her predicament, blissfully enjoying the company of the Master.

It is not that Martha blamed Mary for listening to Jesus. Of course not. Martha would have done the same thing, if time had permitted. But it did not permit, or so she told herself.

To Martha, Mary's behavior was the height of insensitivity. She did not appreciate the fact that Martha needed help. She didn't even *realize* it. We, however, knowing the whole of the story, also see Martha's insensitivity, in not seizing a prime opportunity to spend time with Jesus.

Martha was missing the infinitely greater value, without even realizing it.

Having reached the limit of her tolerance, Martha marched into the front room, her jaw set and her eyes fixed on Mary. We can easily imagine that Mary did not even see her enter, so absorbed was she in listening to the Master.

Not getting the immediate attention she needed, Martha stepped right up to her honored Guest, and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

We gasp! Was Martha telling *the Master* what to do? Surely we heard wrong! Surely Martha knew that her esteemed Messiah was not one to whom anyone just steps up and gives orders!

But no, in this moment of extreme self-interest, Martha lost sight of whom she was talking to. She allowed Jesus' authority and dignity to be eclipsed by her own petty grievances. All she could see at the moment was that Jesus was interfering with her preparations by detaining Mary from helping her.

Martha was quick to criticize, blinded by a distorted sense of true value. She was a lot like Peter, and us—energetic, impulsive, strong-willed,—when she should have been quietly learning from her Lord.

But let us not slight Martha's virtuous side. Martha was capable and effective; strong in determination, strong in conviction.

Maybe, too, Martha was jealous of Mary's close relationship with Jesus. Yes, Mary *had* what Martha wanted most. And all Martha could think of doing was pulling Mary away from it until both of them could enjoy it together. What was unfair about that? After all, they were sisters, and should share equally both the pleasure and the work.

Who of us has not detected this all-too-human feeling in ourselves,

*Jesus' visit to their home was no every-other-day occasion, and Mary wasn't about to let the opportunity slip. Some visit would be His last....*



*The setting has changed, but human situations and human natures remain the same. We still need to learn to keep our perspective, to put first things first.*

this lower nature that wars against every holy desire!

Now let us be constructive in our criticism. *What* should Martha have done in this unplanned situation?

This is a difficult question to answer, but let us offer a few thoughts.

Perhaps Martha could have called Mary aside for a moment, calmly expressed her concern to Mary, and then together they could have worked out a solution—a different menu, a delayed schedule, anything that might solve the problem.

Or perhaps Martha could have left the work and the kitchen for a brief refreshment. Then she might have returned to her duties with a renewed perspective, and probably with the help of her sister. In any case, she would have been able to see her predicament in a new light.

Or perhaps Martha could have re-evaluated her work and scaled down her plans to bare necessities, realizing that the most important things *must* always come first, *especially* when the Master was visiting.

Yet we are glad that Martha was Martha, and so much like ourselves, because in Jesus' rebuke to her is a timeless lesson we all need. Circumstances may have changed, but human situations and human natures remain the same. We still get "distracted by much preparations." We still need to learn to keep our perspective, to put first things first. We still need to learn that there is a time to stop our preparations and sit at the feet of Jesus to be refreshed and stimulated by His life-giving words. In Jesus' response to Martha we

learn much about Jesus' own view of life. Jesus would have us keep everything in its proper perspective. What is really most important, anyway? Why should Martha be worried and upset? Why distracted? What is the one thing that really matters?

"Martha, Martha," He begins, as He addresses one He deeply loved and longed to lead in a better way. We can imagine Jesus gently placing His hand on her shoulder, as He continues: "You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41-42, NIV).

How we wish that the gospel story had one more paragraph! How we would like to know what Martha did next. But we are left to wonder, while we ponder the import of a lesson that focuses directly upon us.

The word translated "worry" comes from the Greek words for "pieces" and "mind." Literally, it means to come to pieces in the mind, or to have a divided mind.

Jesus admits that there is no end to the number of things we might worry about, if we choose to worry (Matt. 6:34). We can worry about our jobs, our possessions, our children, our health, or, like Martha, our responsibilities. But none of these are the real *cause* of our worries. Worry has but one real cause—a lack of confident trust in God.

Worry comes from a mind that lacks perspective. Such a mind needs refilling from the reservoir of God—His Word, His thoughts, His inter-

ests, His plans, His creation, not the innumerable petty concerns that constantly vie for our attention. Martha knew all this, but for the moment—like us—she forgot.

Mary chose "what is better" or, literally, "the better portion." The reference is to food, and it sets up an interesting contrast. While Martha was busy preparing physical food, Mary devoted herself to receiving spiritual food. She was a hungry soul, single-mindedly devoted to the spiritual meal Jesus was serving, oblivious to all else.

Jesus lays great emphasis on the point of Mary's better choice. Martha had the same choice, even though, if we could have asked her, she probably would have said that she had no choice, that her hands were tied. *I have to do this work*, she rationalized. *It's not a matter of preference, but necessity.*

How many times do we use this as an excuse for putting second things first? Jesus said something else to Martha, speaking of Mary's better choice: "It will not be taken from her."

Time spent at the feet of Jesus is an investment in eternal treasure, treasure that once purchased is ours forever.

Someone has suggested that we must learn to discern between the "urgent" and the "important." Serving the guests seemed more *urgent* than listening to Jesus. But it was also far less *important*. Mary made her choice; so did Martha. Neither was the victim of circumstances beyond their control. (Continued on page 26)

## Angels Glorified Mortals?

*"You say angels were once mortal creatures like ourselves. How did they get to be glorified before we or the resurrected dead get glorified? Please give Scripture proof."*

The Bible does not tell us as much as we would like to know about angels; however, if we take all that it says on the subject we can get some idea of their nature and how they received their glory.

First of all, angels were often called "men." This would indicate that their appearance is similar to that of "men." The "men" journeyed to the city of Sodom (Gen. 18:22). A "man of God" appeared to Manoa's wife, to announce the birth of a son (Judges 13:8-11). The angel Gabriel who appeared to Daniel and years later to Mary was called "the man Gabriel" (Dan. 9:21). Revelation 19:10 definitely indicates a likeness shared by angels and mortal servants of God. When the apostle John fell at the feet of the angel to worship him, the angel said, "See thou do it not, I am thy fellowservant and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus; worship God." The context of this verse shows that the speaker was no ordinary man, yet he said, "I am thy fellowservant," likening himself to the Apostle. Compare this passage with Revelation 22:8-9, where the speaker is clearly an angel.

A number of times in the Scriptures when angels appeared to mortal people they were said to "shine." One example was when Moses came down from the mountain after spending some time with an angel. His face "shone" so brightly that the Israelites were unable to look upon him. The prophet Daniel makes the following statement regarding the faithful, the "wise," those who are faithful servants of God on earth: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever" (12:3). If the angels which visited men "shone" and faithful men from the earth will shine as the "stars" or the "sun" (Matt. 13:43), do we not see the pattern, that mortals can become shining beings, angels of God?

Even more convincing are the words of Jesus in Luke 20:35-36, "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead

...neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God." The apostle Paul tells us the Lord Jesus shall come and "change our vile [corruptible] body" and fashion it "like unto his [Christ's] glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21).

How did the angels, who inhabit other worlds, "get glorified" before us? We must remember that this earth is only one small part of God's creation. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him" (Ps. 103:17), hence we may conclude that He has always in time past had someone somewhere, upon whom to bestow His mercy, and will have in all time future. The earth is not the first planet to be created, populated, and prepared for glorification. The universe contains countless billions of shining worlds, many of which must be already inhabited with a higher form of life than is known to us, and probably many more which are now in stages of development similar to our earth.

The God we serve is rightly called "the Lord God of hosts." He is not a God dwelling in holy isolation; He has not been sleeping through ages past and only recently awakened to work; He has been constantly planning, working, fashioning, glorifying, and expanding; and when the time is right on any planet, He performs the great change and makes worthy inhabitants immortal. The fact that this has already been done elsewhere in God's universe is expressed again in the Lord's prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). "As it is in heaven"—there *are* heavenly worlds where His will is fully done. We look forward to the time when it will be done as fully on earth and mortal earthborns are changed and made like the angels of heaven, a process which will begin with the resurrecting of the dead and the judging of all His servants on this earth at Jesus' second coming.

### • Fallen Angels

*"If devils are not angels fallen from heaven, who are the 'angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation' (Jude 5-6)?"*

If we look at the context in which the above passage



occurs, we realize that Jude was writing of a particular event in history. Let us begin reading at verse 5:

"I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed

them that believed not." Notice particularly in this verse that Jude wishes to recall something that occurred when the Lord saved His people out of Egypt. Jude is not calling our attention to something that happened up in heaven, but to what happened when He saved the people out of the land of Egypt.

Verse 6 continues: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

First let us ask: Who were these angels? What is the meaning of the word "angel"? Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* defines the word *angelos*, translated "angels" in Jude, as "messengers, envoy, generally one that announces or tells." *The term may refer either to mortal or immortal messengers.*

What kind of messengers was Jude speaking about? They were messengers who were serving in the days when the Lord saved His people out of the land of Egypt.


When Israel first came to the borders of the Promised Land, about two years after their departure from Egypt, "the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them" (Num. 13:1-2). Here were twelve men, rulers among them, men high in authority, chosen to be messengers sent into the land of Canaan. Moses sent them to spy out the land to bring an account of it.

After forty days the messengers returned from their search, bringing with them luscious grapes, pomegranates and figs. Ten of these messengers brought also an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32), which caused a mass rebellion among the Israelites, turning them against Moses and Aaron, also against Caleb and Joshua, who refused to consent with the evil report. We read:

"And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, even those men...died by the plague before the Lord" (Num. 14:36, 37). These were the messengers who fell from their high estate when God delivered His people from Egypt.

These men *had* a high estate—each was a ruler in his tribe; but by their disobedience they fell, and they are "reserved unto the day of judgment"—there is no hope of deliverance from their punishment.

Neither Jude nor any other Bible author ever taught that immortal angels fell from the heaven where God dwells. Angels, glorified with the glory of immortality, do not have to fear any such fateful cataclysm. MM



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## Is Murder the "Sin Unto Death"?

*"Is murder the unpardonable sin? John said that there is 'One sin which ends in death, and if he has done that there is no use praying for him.'"*

**I**N I John 5:16, the Apostle indicates that there are two types of sins: 1) sin which is "not unto death," and 2) sin which is "a sin unto death." The passage reads, as translated in the King James Version, "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it" (I John 5:16).

From this reading of this passage in the King James Version and others, it seems that the apostle John is classifying sin by the effects of the sin *upon the sinner himself* and not upon the person who might happen to be the victim of the sin. Most sins do not result in death for the victim of the sin; the sin of murder, of course, is an exception to this.

In most Biblical passages about sin, God's concern is with the sinner and the results of the sin *upon the sinner*, not the one who might chance to be the victim of the sin. God will not allow any to be harmed by the sin of others who might otherwise serve Him. But sin is always deadly for the one committing it. Any sin unrepented of and unforsaken ends in death for the sinner. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). "His

own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins" (Prov. 5:22).

It does not seem that John was singling out murder as being an unpardonable sin when he spoke of a "sin which ends in death." Though we have very few specific examples of murderers being forgiven, there is no evidence in the Bible that murder is unpardonable. King David committed murder, and was forgiven (see Psalm 51).

At the time the apostle John was writing, there were two distinct types of sin: sin that could be forgiven, and sin that could not be forgiven. The writer to the Hebrews defines the nature of sin that could not be forgiven. We read, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:4-6).

This passage, as translated in The Living Bible, may be somewhat clearer. It reads, "There is no use trying to bring you back to the Lord again if you have once understood the Good News and tasted for yourself the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit, and know how good the Word of God is, and

felt the mighty powers of the world to come, and then have turned against God. You cannot bring yourself to repent again if you have nailed the Son of God to the cross again by rejecting him, holding him up to mocking and to public shame" (Heb. 6:4-6, TLB).

The sin which could not be forgiven was the sin against the Holy Spirit. During the days of the apostles, some among the believers enjoyed special privileges in the form of supernatural "gifts" by the power of the Holy Spirit. One could teach, another perform miracles, another had a gift of knowledge, etc. (see I Corinthians 12:4-10). Those having these "gifts" experienced firsthand the power of God. In the words of Hebrews, they "tasted the heavenly gift...and the good word of God and the powers of the world to come," being "partakers of the Holy Spirit." If after experiencing all this *they* should "fall away," if they should apostatize and turn back, God left no road open for them to be forgiven. Their sin was unpardonable, and there was no need even to pray for the forgiveness of the one transgressing in this way. All prayer, to be effectual, must be in accordance with God's will (I John 5:14); and God could never accept a prayer for the forgiveness of a sin which He had decreed unpardonable. It was the special price of special privilege.

Jesus also spoke of this sin against the Holy Spirit which could not be



pardoned. He said: "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men" (Matt. 12:31).

All sin is serious; all sin allowed to remain until the end of one's day of salvation ends in death. But, as John indicates, sin *need not* be fatal. We can and should pray and seek forgiveness for our sins. Lifetime is working time, and God gives to each the time and opportunity to repent and reform and receive His forgiveness. And once God has forgiven, the record of that sin is wiped as completely from His "book of remembrance" as though it had never been committed. "None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live" (Ezek. 33:16). Every sin we commit need not—and will not—stand against us eternally, unless we fail to make the effort to turn from it. "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh [his sins] shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13).

We today, not having the gifts of the Holy Spirit, do not need to fear the "unpardonable sin." But each of our sins is indeed a "sin unto death" until we make the necessary effort to qualify for God's forgiveness. The greatest danger lies in disregarding the consequences of our sins until our day of opportunity to repent has passed. This was the plight of the people in Jeremiah's time, of whom the Prophet wrote, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jer. 13:23). They had waited so long and wasted so much opportunity that their sin became unforgiveable by delay.

This is why John advises us to pray and seek forgiveness for our sins. If this is our frame of mind, we will have repented of our sins, and God will forgive.

MM

## Lord, Can't You See That I'm Busy?

(Continued from page 22)

The "urgent" is what people want us to do. The "important" is what God wants us to do. Jesus did not always live up to others' expectations—He could not and please His Father. But He was always in touch with His Father and so learned how to discern between the truly important and that which is only secondary.

At the end of His life, Jesus said to His Father, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). Observe not only that Jesus finished His work, but that the work He finished was *work God had given Him to do*.

Let us be sure that our work is *God-given*, not self-imposed. Only then will we be choosing that "better part," that "part" which we may have to enjoy forever, which will never be taken away from us.



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## Count Your Blessings

A young minister stopped to speak with an elderly gentleman, who was quietly seated on a bench in the park. Tears were trickling down the old man's wrinkled face, and the minister soon realized that the man was blind. The elderly man turned his dim, sightless eyes in the direction of the voice that spoke to him. "May I ask what great thought you are thinking today?" asked the minister.

"Young man," he said, "I was just thinking how much I have to be thankful for."

The young minister made no comment. The old gentleman went on cheerfully. "Yes," he said, "I was just thanking God that I have been blind for only 47 years. There are many who have *always* been blind, who have never seen the beautiful sunshine, the flowers, the green grass, the trees or the blue sky. As I sit here I can picture all these in my mind, and my heart wells up with thankfulness to my Creator."

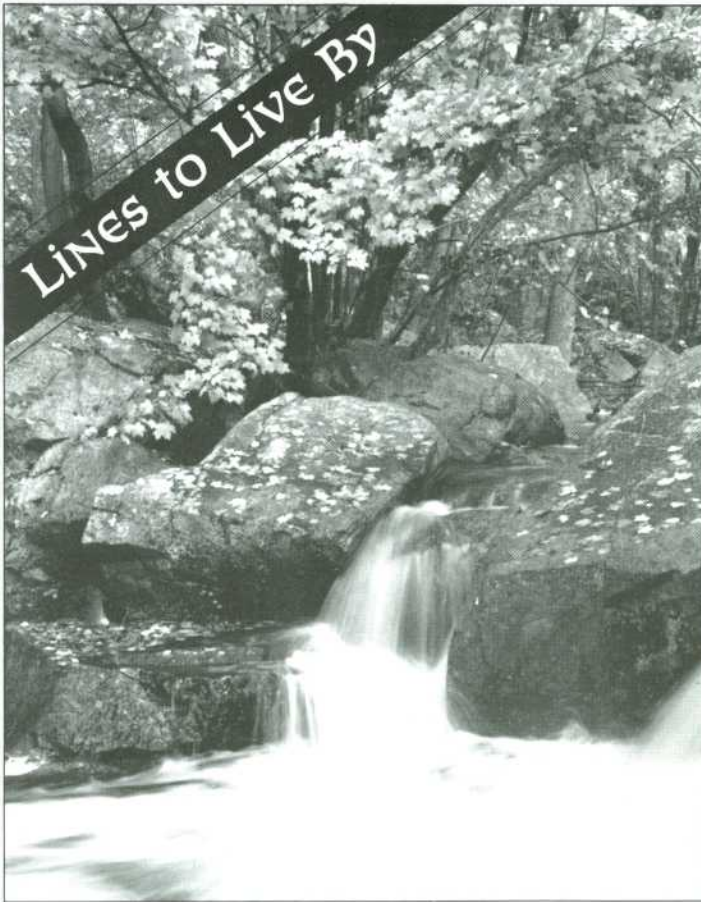
The young minister was shamed by the blind man's gratitude.

How would you have felt?

Count your blessings, not your troubles. You can always see more good than ill, if you just look for it.

In fact, why not start counting your blessings today? It's an exercise that *everyone* can do.

MM



## Lines to Live By

### Step By Step

*He does not lead me year by year  
Nor even day by day,  
But step by step my path unfolds;  
My Lord directs my way.*

*Tomorrow's plans I do not know,  
I only know this minute;  
But He will say, "This is the way,  
By faith now walk ye in it."*

*And I am glad that it is so,  
Today's enough to bear;  
And when tomorrow comes, His grace  
Shall far exceed its care.*

*What need to worry, then, or fret?  
The God who sent His Son  
Holds all my moments in His hand  
And gives them one by one.*

*Oft at the closing of the day  
I ponder loss and gain.  
Did I some bitter phrases say  
That left the sting of pain?*

*How much did my impatience cost?  
Did I someone offend?  
Did I withhold some word of hope  
From him I call my friend?*

*Who sums the record of a day  
Must more than money count.  
Sometimes the little failures may  
To costlier losses mount.*

*For when the balances are checked,  
There's little cause for pride  
If any selfish thought or mean  
Shows on the debit side.*

*If there is a smile in your  
heart, it will show on your  
face.*

*Never borrow trouble; the  
interest is too high for wise  
investors.*

*The man or woman who has  
a star toward which to press  
cannot be thrown off the  
course, no matter how the  
world may try, no matter how  
far things may seem to be  
wrong.*

*Today is the tomorrow we  
worried about yesterday.*



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