

Megiddo Message

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**WHO IS GOD, SAVE THE LORD—
AND WHO IS A ROCK, SAVE OUR GOD!**

II Sam. 22:32

How Long, Lord?

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein" —Psalm 24:1.

Our world is filled with scenes of misery, hate, suffering and strife. Political and social unrest are all but universal. Millions are suffering in Iraq, in Ethiopia, in South Africa, in the Soviet Union, in Eastern Europe, in almost every part of the globe.

In addition to all this is the suffering caused by human misconduct—which *could* be avoided. Right from our own nation come these revealing statistics:

- that there are 4 million alcoholics;
- that 80 percent of our high school youth use alcohol regularly;
- that 50 percent of our high school seniors have used marijuana or are users of it;
- that crime in our country is so widespread that it affects 1 family out of 4 every year;
- that marijuana is one of the largest cash crops in the U.S. ranking second to corn and soy beans;
- that 33 out of our 50 states have legalized state lotteries (gambling) as a source of revenue for the state;
- that personal debt now stands at more than \$3 trillion, or \$12,000 for every man, woman and child in the U.S.;
- that children's TV programs are said to show an average of 15 to 25 crimes per hour;
- that a study of the most popular video games revealed that 83 percent featured violent themes;
- that shoplifters are responsible for some \$30 billion per year of losses to U.S. retailers;
- that some \$40 billion are lost each year to white collar criminals;
- that more than 1 million persons are infected with AIDS;

And so on and on.

Do we not feel like crying out with the Psalmist, "How long, Lord...how long?" for to whom does this fair earth belong? Is not the earth "the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein"? (Ps. 24:1).

How long shall this holy ground be desecrated by godless feet, by the immoral, the sensual, the violent, the obscene; those who deny Him and profane His name?

"How long, Lord...how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?" (Ps. 94:3). How long shall it be until the "wickedness of the wicked come to an end"? (Ps. 7:9).

Our longing hearts cry out to God for retribution, judgment, deliverance; the time when the Lord will break His long silence, when He will take to Himself the governing of the earth and execute judgment and justice to all people; when there shall be "officers of peace and exactors of righteousness" and "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isa. 60:17; 52:11); when "violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise (Isa. 60:18); when "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever" (Isa. 32:17).

The Day is near, *very* near, when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise" (I Thess. 4:16).

The time has been fixed "when iniquity shall have an end" (Ezek. 7:6; 21:25), "because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained [Jesus Christ]" (Acts 17:31). That day will bring an end to strife, violence, injustice, suffering, hardship,

(Continued on page 26)

Megiddo means ...

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

We believe ...

- IN **GOD**, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- IN **THE BIBLE** as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- IN **JESUS CHRIST**, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.
- IN **THE HOLY SPIRIT**, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- IN **LIFE** as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- IN **HUMANKIND** as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- IN **OURSELVES** as capable of applying in our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with eternal life in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.
- IN **THE PROMISE OF GOD**, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth shall be filled with His glory, His people, and God's will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

Soon-coming events ...

THE HERALD AND THE KING

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

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

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

In this issue...

Editorial

I PROMISED THE LORD...AND I CAN'T BREAK IT 2

Articles

ELIJAH THE PROPHET: 4
Man of God, Mission, Destiny

Poem

WHEN ELIJAH PRAYED 7

Article

ENCOUNTERING THE INVISIBLE..... 10
Only the invisible endures.

Defending the Bible

GOD HEARS AND HELPS—WHOM?..... 12
Why Various Races?
All Of One Blood?

Articles

A CERTAIN HALF-BLIND DEAF MUTE..... 14
A Visit From A Friend

EVOLUTION OR CREATION? 16
The evidence is all on God's side

Meditating on the Word

THE COMPANY WE KEEP..... 18
On Hosea 7:9

Book Feature

GOD'S SPIRITUAL CREATION 20
A New Perspective on Genesis
Part Nine: The Serpent of Genesis

Words for the Living 19

Lines to Live By 27

Poem 28
HOW BIG AM I?

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Elijah

the prophet

man of GOD
MISSION
DESTINY

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.

—Malachi (4:5-6)

Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

—Jesus (Matthew 17:11)

You have never seen an inspired prophet of God, nor 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 and yet well-known; contemplative and yet vigorous; tempestuous and 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. 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 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 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 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 any 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 Was "Taken Up"

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 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)?

There was nothing that Elijah hated so violently as evil—and nothing he loved so passionately as good.

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).

But we have no reason to assume that Elijah was taken to the presence of God, or to the highest heaven. 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 that many of these stars have dark planets circling them, much as the planets in our system orbit the sun. Surely in this vast ocean of space there are numerous habitable islands where God's work is not yet complete, areas still inhabited by

God plans ahead,
so that when
His hour strikes, His
man is ready.

the "lower" levels of life familiar to us, areas not yet fully glorified. 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.

A Man of Character

Elijah must have been singular even in his physical appearance.

Doubtless his features and characteristics were those of the typical open country 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 sounded like an awesome echo from the mountains?

But Elijah's greatest distinction is 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. Still, 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 was 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?

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 from 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, involved the power of

God. Such was the power of Elijah, and 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!

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" (I Kings 19:10) 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?

(Continued on page 8)

When **Elijah** Prayed

On Carmel's top the priests of Baal
Cried loud and long to no avail;
Had they not done all that they could,
Preparing altar, bull, and wood?
But to meet the test would now require
That Baal should answer them by fire.

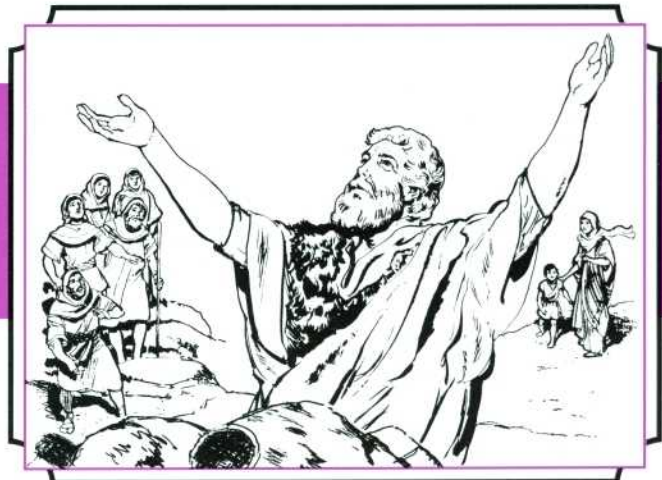
No doubt those priests could realize
That for them it meant the sacrifice
Of their own lives if they should fail
To call down fire from their god Baal.
That being so, it's plain to see
Why these false priests worked frantically.

Elijah knew the tricks they'd play
So he eyed them closely all that day
Lest they should slip some common fire
Beneath that wood to light their pyre.
They'd stoop as low as low can be,
To save their guilty necks, you see.

Those priests of Baal up to that day
Deceived the people in this way:
Jehovah's blessings without fail
Had come, they well declared, from Baal.
But now they'd reached that crucial hour
When they must *prove* their Baal god's
power!

Elijah mocked with words of scorn
Those false priests, bleeding and forlorn,
Suggesting maybe poor old Baal
Was sound asleep, or on some trail;
Perhaps their calls, more shrill and higher,
Would cause their god to send the fire!

At last the evening prayer hour came
And Elijah prayed in God's own name.
The fire *came down!*—and not a trace
Of stone remained to mark the place!
At such a marvel none could say
That God was sound asleep that day!



The *true* test done, and Baal's priests slain,
Elijah prayed—God sent the rain!
This all took place in Ahab's day
Because God's flock were led astray
By unbelieving, wicked men
Who would not fear God even then.

And still today this sin-cursed sphere
Has other gods it can revere
False gods of plenty and success,
The mammon of unrighteousness.
They point with pride to wood and stone
That stands where not a spark is known!

Is there no hope? Is it too late?
Must all experience Baal's fate?
No! List! while it is called today,
Turn from your sins, God's law obey.
You yet may with His chosen stand,
Go marching with Emmanuel's band!

While mammon's priests pray frantically
At shrines they build with hands of clay
To gods whose greedy, grasping hands
Are filled with wealth of many lands,
God's fire of Judgment soon will come,
Consume their gods and seal their doom!

Come, heavenly fire! long overdue,
Devour all pride and evil, too,
And then rain righteousness abroad
Till nations all revere our God!
But now you who the Lord have heard,
Before too late obey His Word.
Cleanse now your heart from ev'ry stain
So you can share in "latter rain."

—Author Unknown

A Prophet of Deeds

Someone has remarked that among the Hebrew prophets there are two sorts: 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 is the first qualification of 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, strong measures and explosive deeds. Someone else would 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 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?

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, a 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, 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.... 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" (I Kings 21: 24–26). Here was the source of the trouble, and the weak-willed Ahab did little or nothing to resist it. 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, the prophets of God were murdered. In their place were erected groves and images to false gods, and hundreds of heathen priests took possession 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 a prophet as Elijah.

A Second Mission

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 mighty 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 without thought of God or 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 preserving and preparing 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 them coming to seek His wisdom and learn His ways. The transition from what the world is now to what it will be when Christ has full control is without question the greatest transition in the history of the earth. Men will not easily lay aside their own devisings and schemes: they 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 an open demonstration of evidence, followed by an 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 the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain, He sent His angels with a 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 returned?

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*!

For many years now our church, along with a number of other religious groups, has been broadcasting the news of the imminent and personal return of Christ, 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 stands: "I will send you Elijah the prophet...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6). More than eighty years ago our founder, Rev. 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 claim that Elijah represents a class of persons who will perform this mission; some substitute a messenger that shall be born in the western world. A few assert that *they themselves* are Elijah. Others say that it is a

***Elijah is living
evidence that
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the right man to do it
and at the right time.***

mission accomplished, that John the Baptist fulfilled the mission of Elijah, and that is that!

Still others think the 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," and prepare to welcome the herald of the great King. MM

Encountering the Invisible

We should remind ourselves often that the things which are seen are temporal. Only the things which are not seen are eternal.

One by one the months are flying into eternity, leaving no trace, only what we may have accomplished during them.

Time is our greatest gift in this temporal life. It is the only commodity that makes endless salvation in the future a possibility to us. One lifetime is the only small division of eternity that has been allotted to us, and whether we shall receive anything more depends upon how we use this brief span. The apostle Paul commanded, "Make the very most of your time...act like sensible men, not like thoughtless...for these are evil days" (Eph. 5:15-16, Moffatt).

This very important shifting of interests from the fleeting present with its seeming assurances, to a seemingly uncertain future, a new world which can only be seen by the eye of faith, may be styled the love of the invisible. It is the reaching out of our souls toward that which lies beyond the apprehension of our physical senses, the dedication of our lives to what we cannot actually know, but in which we may strongly trust. It is akin to faith, so nobly described in the book of Hebrews as the "substance

of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1).

In our everyday lives we find that we encounter the invisible first of all in the realm of space. Here we are living from day to day on one little spot on the vast surface of the globe. All around us swings the circle of the horizon, beyond which it is impossible for us to see, yet we are convinced there is something beyond. Within this circle are the things which are visible; far away, beyond that encompassing rim of mountains or of ocean, lie those things which are invisible, hence unknown.

Now the great majority are quite content to spend all their lives in the realm of the visible. They have no desire to explore strange lands or meet distant peoples. Men sailed the shores of Europe for hundreds of years without any desire to steer the prows of their ships toward that strange blue line on the western verge of the horizon, which marked the limit of the Atlantic they knew. Many people are quite content to stay at home among familiar objects. Only within these latest days of human history have any great number developed an interest

in the invisible and dared to challenge the horizon which rims their lives.

Explorers and scientists of ancient and modern times have lived for the invisible; they have given to it their faculties, pledged to it their lives. As Christians let us be courageous explorers!

Every now and then appears one whose human interests cannot be confined within the borders of his particular family or tribe. He loves his fellowmen and desires to help them. Barriers of sea and land, distinctions of race or creed or nationality do not touch in the remotest degree the affections of his heart. To such, men who are invisible are as real and precious as those who are visible.

This brings us to a second and deeper consideration—namely, the invisible as it reveals itself in *time*. From the standpoint of the living man, all time is divided into three parts: the past, the present, the future. The past and present may be classified together as that portion of time which is visible; it has been seen, or is being seen, and is therefore a part of the definite experience of mankind. The future,

however, is that portion of time which is invisible. We know that it is coming. But until it comes, it remains invisible in the sense that we do not know what it may bring.

Now in the realm of time, as in the realm of space, most people prefer to live in the midst of things visible, not invisible. We are inclined to feel most contented when dwelling in the past, with its ancient traditions, its venerable institutions, its familiar ways and customs. To accept of what our fathers have taught us, to follow the example which they have tried and set, is like sailing a sea which has been charted in every square mile of its area. In this kind of life there is nothing undiscovered or unexpected; we know everything there is to be known.

There are some, of course, who feel the monotony and even the deadness of such a life as this; and these move up heroically from the past to the present. They live in the new experiences of their progenitors; but they still cling to things visible. Only now and again do we find one who puts both past and present deliberately behind him, and launches boldly out into the invisible reaches of the future.

And these are all characterized by a single remarkable fact: They see a vision of a better world than has yet been established upon the earth. They behold a future age when all will be happy; when suffering, starvation and disease will be no more, when justice will be done and peace established, when love will be shining in every face, and there will be no more sin, no pain, no loss, no death. They see a society so new and wonderful that it can be described in no terms that are associated with the society that now exists. They see, as Isaiah saw, the coming of a time when they "shall build the old wastes, they

shall raise up the former desolations,...[and] everlasting joy shall be unto them...For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations" (61:4, 7, 11).

Now these are the ones who live in the future, as the great masses live in the present and the past. They burst the barriers of time. They seek the invisible, in deliberate rejection and defiance of the visible, and they do this because to them there is no choice between the two. For them, not the inheritances of the past and the realities of the present but *the promises of the future* constitute the real world.

The invisible ahead, and not the visible behind and around, alone truly exists. In this future therefore they must live; for it, if necessary, they must die. They will "endure" all things—persecution, suffering, the loss of worldly friendships—if only they can hasten its coming upon the earth. Here is the very essence of heroism and devotion: to labor for no gains that are now tangible, to sacrifice for rewards that can be seen only by the eye of faith. And they have done this because they have believed with all their heart, mind, and soul and strength in this future which is invisible.

These heroes, young and old, are simply those who walk in the footsteps of Abraham, of whom it was said that he "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." To live for the future and its promises, to seek for the Kingdom of God soon to be set up here on earth, this is the one way to show our love of the invisible.

Paul spoke much in a few words when he said: "If ye then be risen

To live for the future and its promises, to seek for the Kingdom of God soon to be set up here on earth, this is the one way to show our love of the invisible.

with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2). We should remind ourselves often that the things which are seen are temporal, only the things which are not seen are eternal, and develop such a strong desire for the invisible that nothing can deter us from our quest. MM

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God Hears and Helps—Whom?

“Does God hear prayers of those who do not know Him?”

We are not told all we would like to know about how God hears the members of His human family, but the Bible makes several statements which give us some information about whom God hears. He “heareth the prayer of the righteous” (Prov. 15:29). Again, “The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth” (Ps. 34:17). Again, the words of the apostle John, “If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us” (I John 5:14).

But if God limited His listening to the righteous, the upright, He would be cutting Himself off from helping those who are on the way to becoming righteous, because no one starts out righteous. All must grow to that exalted state. Many Bible passages picture the Christ-life as a growth. “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13). Reaching the state of the “perfect man,” even the “measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” requires time and growth. Paul says later in the same chapter that we must “grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15). The apostle Peter also pictured the new life as a growth: “As newborn babes, desire

the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (I Pet. 2:2).

Very early in His career our Lord gave His disciples what we call the “Lord’s Prayer,” and told them that they should pray this prayer—and this was long before His disciples reached the state of complete righteousness. In this prayer He includes a phrase which asks God for forgiveness for our sins, and this also assumes that we are still sinners when we are praying. If God did not listen to such a prayer from one who was striving but not fully righteous, how could he or she receive any help?

Jesus commanded His disciples to pray to the Father in His name. He is our intercessor, our mediator, and being one of our race He has special help and understanding to lend. As we read in Hebrews, “In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb. 2:18). This

would indicate that He is helping those who are not yet righteous. In fact, this is the stage at which we might say that we *most* need help. We need God to direct us, to strengthen us in the battle against our lower nature. If He could not help us until we were righteous, His help would be of little value.

The same is true of the help of the angels. We read, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Heb. 1:14). Notice that they are ministering to them “who *shall be* heirs of salvation”—they have not yet reached that exalted goal at the time they need the ministering help.

Jesus’ parable of the Lost Sheep indicates that God is looking upon those who have not repented, in the hope that they will, otherwise how could there be joy in heaven when one repents? (Luke 15:7).

We have evidence that God hears even those whom He knows by His foreknowledge that they will not prove faithful in the end. Solomon is an example of one of these. When he was humble and God-fearing, God heard and answered his prayer (II Chron. 1:7-12). But it was not long before he began to apostatize, and he ended his reign an “old and foolish king who [would] no more be admonished” (Eccl. 4:13). David’s timeless advice to Solomon

If God did not help us until we were all righteous, His help would seem to be of little value.

included an assurance that God could be "found" as long as Solomon was "seeking" Him. As long as Solomon obeyed, God would hear. But when Solomon failed to obey, God would forsake him. These are His words: "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever" (I Chron. 28:9).

God, knowing the end from the beginning, could have refused to hear Solomon's prayers at the beginning if such were His plan. But because God heard and answered Solomon, we can know that God will hear each one who is striving to obey. Only when we forsake God will He forsake us. And whenever we turn back to God, He will again hear us if we are humble and penitent.

The words of God's prophet Azariah to king Asa when he had sinned illustrate the same point: "The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you" (II Chron. 15:2).

This is why David could say, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1). We can have this same very present help, if only we will sincerely seek and strive to obey God. We need not fear that God will withhold His help until we are wholly righteous.

◆ Why various races?

"Where did the various races come from? What race was Adam? Where did Cain get his wife?"

If we tried to uphold the popular belief, that the entire human race is descended from Adam, we would

have a problem understanding the various races, because we understand that they are genetically different, that all do not share an exact structural likeness.

However, we do not believe that Adam was the first man, and that all who live are his direct descendants. Adam was simply the first man God called into His service, the first to be placed on probation in a covenant relationship with God, the progenitor of the first family with whom God chose to work.

The Bible does not tell us the race of Adam; however, if Adam is, according to the Biblical account, the progenitor of the family of Abraham, and Abraham is the progenitor of the Jewish race, we may with some safety conclude that he would have been in appearance similar to the Jewish people today.

Where did the other races come from? The Bible does not tell us, but neither must we believe that all the people on the earth are the physical descendants of Adam. Were we to take the account in the first three chapters of Genesis literally, we would arrive at this conclusion, but the story of creation in Genesis is much more understandable when approached as an account of spiritual creation, the development of the morally superior people which God is choosing to be the eternal inhabitants of the earth.

There were many other peoples on the earth in the time of Adam. There may well have been inhabitants on our continent; and we know there were inhabitants in the Far East. There were also very ancient peoples in Africa and in the area now known to us as the British Isles. The Bible does not tell us when or where the first man was created, or what he looked like; this is beyond the scope of the Bible's information. The Bible has been written to tell us of the plan of God working with His people.

There is no indication that God is interested in the entire human race. But we do know that there are different families, for the chosen ones are said to be "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:9).

As far as Cain finding a wife, he had no problem; he simply went to another area and married one of the women there. Here again, we have no problem unless we try to think that Adam is the progenitor of the entire human race. Notice that after Cain married a wife and had one child, he "builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch" (Gen. 4:17). This would be impossible if Adam's family were the only inhabitants of the earth.

No, trying to understand Genesis, chapters 1-3, as a literal account, as so many have, is the reason why many people discard the Bible and think it untrue. The Bible is reasonable when properly understood, and is not responsible for the many false ideas taught in its name.

◆ All of one blood?

"If all the races do not come from Adam, why does the Bible say that 'God made all nations of one blood?'"

You refer to the words of Paul in Acts 17:26, which some have used in support of their theory that all races descended from Adam. The text reads: that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth."

However, we must be careful not to draw from Paul's words more than he is saying. His point in this passage is not to explain the origin of the races but to reveal God the great Creator of all people on earth, and how we as part of His human creation may seek—and find—Him.

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord

(Continued on page 25)

A Certain Half Blind Deaf Mute

A Visit From A Friend

She came to visit us for a fortnight, this little aged woman of 83. She had lived in a very silent world almost her entire lifetime, never hearing any voices, any music, or songs of birds, or the many other sounds of life that most of us take for granted. She could not speak a word, and in recent years she had lost the sight of one of her eyes. Besides all this, she was quite accustomed to many other ailments that often accompany aging.

She had been longing to make this trip for some time. The tie that bound her heart with ours was her faith in God and His Word. She had cherished this same brilliant hope for 48 years, and took great comfort in the promise that Elijah the prophet is coming with power to heal all people.

Her face beamed as she shook your hand. Though she spoke no word, everything about her shouted that life to her was wonderful. By no means had she assigned herself to the wasteyard because of her handicaps.

I thought, how pinched many people often feel and act, people who have two good ears, a tongue that can speak, and two eyes that can see. And then I thought of myself: Am I always thankful, yes, even thrilled to have these wonderful God-given senses, as well as the other abilities I enjoy everyday?

During her stay, did we hear our little visitor complain? I did not hear her. She had learned to read and to write, but you never saw a murmur or a gloomy line on her slate. In fact, she seemed not to even think about her handicaps, or draw attention to them.

It is so easy to be all absorbed in our own little problems and disadvantages. That should not be. The good work of our Lord should be our first interest; all else is incidental.

To our friend, the Bible was her first love. The passing years had only sharpened her zest for it. It was touching to see the comfort, the joy and inspiration she derived as eagerly she read from it. Hers was no mere dry head-knowledge. Its messages filled her heart with warmth and love for God, whom she desired to please above all else. It was inspiring to watch her clasp her hands and fervently talk with God—in perfect silence. She seemed so near to God.

And I thought, do we commune with God as friend to friend? Is He constantly by our side because we live close to Him? Can we say that our friendship with Him is growing richer and fuller and deeper, His way sweeter and sweeter as the years go by?

Does our unfortunate friend have any hobbies or sidelines? Yes, she crochets,

knits and quilts. She also enjoys nourishing houseplants, and flowers in her yard. She enjoys the various birds and squirrels. But none of these are her life, so to speak.

We have all seen how engrossed one can become in sidelines to the exclusion of the one supreme interest of our lives. Well, she had learned to keep sidelines in their place. They were a delight to her, but not all absorbing. They did not interfere with her study of God's Word, her meditation, and her communion with God. On the contrary, they reinforced her faith. In each she could see everyday some fresh wonderment of God's creation.

I might say that my friend's motto of life was "I work to be single-eyed"—single-hearted toward God. These words I had noted repeatedly in her letters, but it became very evident that it was not an idle repetition of words. This was a real matter with her. Her religion was her business, her aim: to be single-hearted toward God.

She was a great reader, reading to the limit of the strength of her one eye. One day she had an opportunity to enjoy something different in reading material. She checked it carefully, then set it aside. "I have to be very careful what I read," she commented on her slate. "It must be only the best."

With two good eyes, we might well take the warning, lest we be careless about devouring too much printed matter, lest we be not discriminating enough. Could it be that we are cluttering our minds with too much second-rate information, and perhaps, too, second-rate thinking? How much better to choose from the Bible a good motto, then make a business of thinking upon it.

This aged little woman seemed for the most part very peaceful and contented. But one day in the

course of our written conversation she expressed some concern. "I am afraid," she said. Some while later as I was going by her, she clapped her hands quickly—this was her way of summoning me. She had written on her slate, "I told you I was afraid. I ought not to be afraid." She shook her head, sharply pointing to the words and added, "I will work, I will watch—ME."

How easy it is for the middle-aged and older to lose that zest for making ourselves into a new creature. The Wise Man exhorted the young to remember their Creator. It is equally important that we keep our zeal and faith in God burning brightly during the twilight hours of life.

One day I tried to help this dear friend in a different way. Being aware of a human weakness in her life which is common to all of us, I had noted her question after a certain accomplishment: "What did they say about it, what did they think of it?" I ventured to say that we try to do our little services for God alone, and not for human praise. She looked at me knowingly, and nodded her head. She was not too old to take a lesson, and she understood.

She asked me another day (and it is only sensible for a Christian to want to know), "Am I doing right?" I told her that I thought she was doing well, and to always keep her faith in God strong and pure until Christ comes. To give deserved encouragement and praise to a friend is as much our duty as to give criticism. "If a friend is a help, a joy, an inspiration, tell them so."

One time as my friend and I were leaving a home where we had made a call, she negotiated the turns, the steps, and the threshold with some difficulty. When we finally reached the exit, she wrote

on her slate apologetically, shaking her head, "I do not see well." I quickly wrote, "I understand." She was apologizing for something she was physically unable to help. Her one eye tired and often she was unable to focus it properly.

I wondered if we who have all our God-given senses are as thoughtful of others as a Christian should be. Are we conscious of any care, inconvenience or disturbance that we may cause others? Or do

**Are we who
have two
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two good ears
cluttering our
minds with too
much second-rate
information?**

we feel quite often that certain benefits are due us? The apostle Paul wrote, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:4).

Soon—too soon—the day came when it was time for my friend to journey homeward. It was a parting to be remembered, because I did not know whether I would ever again see my friend in this mortal state. But I look forward to meeting her in the New Age, after Christ returns with health and healing for all who are worthy of it. What a glorious Day that will be for all who are ready!

—Contributed

Evolution or Creation?

The God of the Bible is the God of creation and the God of all true science.

We have received the following from a subscriber:

"I receive the Megiddo Message and have enjoyed it very much and appreciate that it is published 'for the dissemination of Bible truth alone.'

"But when I apply this part of your creed to the article, God's Spiritual Creation, (June 1991), I am greatly troubled.

"First, the fossils. You speak of fossil records having made it possible for paleontologists 'to divide... in series of eras' ...and you proceed to indicate those holding to the literal creation account in Genesis 'often flatly reject fossil evidence,' etc.

"Being a Creationist, I believe very strongly in the fossil records and further believe that such records support this position primarily because from the thousands of fossils found and being found, not one transitional form exists necessary to substantiate the evolutionary theory.

"I'm also troubled by the credence given to paleontologists, and your statement that 'Homo Sapiens have been on earth many many thousands of years antedating a mere 6000 years ago.'

"So I might continue ad infinitum contrasting the human nature

(your article) with the Divine (Bible).'

"What really troubles me is how such an excellent Christian publication can advocate evolution as a religious faith (which it is)—a counterfeit religion, with a 'Triune god,' Nature, Time, and Chance. Do you really believe there is such a classification as Evolutionary Creationist?"

We appreciate your concern about our article on *God's Spiritual Creation*, but must say that you have grossly misunderstood us. Please refer, first of all, to the former issue in which we discussed the very point you raise, "Evolution Versus Creationism" (January, 1991, pages 19–23).

We are not proponents of evolution in any of its aspects. But neither do we support the traditional creationism as it is generally understood.

We firmly believe that God created the earth and the universe, that everything existing is the result of His creative ability. The Bible distinctly teaches that God is the great Creator, and the First Cause of everything that exists.

Where we differ from the Creationists is in their belief that the Bible tells the *time* of the creation,

that the Genesis account teaches that it occurred in six literal days, six or seven thousand years ago.

We agree that Genesis states that God is the great Creator ("In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"), but the narrative of the first three chapters of Genesis is far more meaningful when viewed as an allegory rather than an account of a literal creation. As for the fact that God is the Creator, there are many other passages of Scripture which attribute the creation to God, and we firmly and fully believe them.

But with respect to Genesis, we find many conflicts if we try to take its details literally as an account of a literal creation of the earth and the universe. Just to mention a few:

1) A tree "of the knowledge of good and evil" in a literal garden?

2) Adam's naming all the animals, and even before he had a wife to help him. (What an enormous feat that would be!)

3) A literal serpent talking and tempting Eve in a perfect paradise.

4) Adam's ability to recognize Eve as "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" when he had never seen her and had been asleep during the surgical process.

5) Cain being able to go into another land and find a wife—when

his parents were the first created inhabitants on the earth?

6) Cain's founding a city after he married his wife (Gen. 4:17)—who would be the inhabitants of the city if Adam and Eve were the progenitors of the race?

By teaching that the account in Genesis refers only to the literal creation of the earth, the sun, the moon and stars and all the millions of galaxies which modern astronomers have seen in the immensity of space, theologians vastly discount the enormity and complexity both of the creation and of the God behind it, as well as bring God's Holy Word into disrepute and turn thinking men and women to infidelity.

It is our firm conviction that true science, true geology and true religion all agree when correctly understood. The God of the Bible is the God of creation and the God of true science. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1).

If we take the first three chapters of Genesis as an allegory, and the timeline which they set forth as the scope of God's spiritual creation, i.e., the development of individuals who will form His finished, eternal, perfect world, we have no indication of the time of the creation of the literal earth and universe. And we do not need to know. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God," only "those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29). God has revealed what we need to know so that we can "do" as He has commanded; He is not concerned that we know just how or when He works, only that we live up to *our* obligations.

We agree strongly with your point that there is no fossil evi-

dence supporting evolutionary theory, there being not one transitional form in existence either in fossilized or living form. Furthermore, evidence is wholly lacking for the theory that life-forms "improve" or "advance" by a method of natural selection, that species grow steadily more complex and their organisms more specialized.

By our giving "credence to the paleontologists," as you comment, when we speak of the geological ages of the earth, we are merely using their terms as a means of talking about time past; we do not mean to infer that the evolutionary plan of time is correct.

As far as the length of time that Homo Sapiens have been on the earth, we have no direct source of knowledge any more than anyone else, but we see nothing that militates against believing that they have been here many many thousands of years. The Scripture passages you cite do not assign any time to creation, they state only the *fact* of the creation, with which we wholeheartedly agree.

No, we do not advocate any triune god, not even "Nature, Time and Chance." "Nature" is only a term used by those who wish to deny the existence of God, though in speaking of it they are unwittingly giving credit to the God who directs and oversees everything that exists. If a simple device such as a wrist watch needs a human brain to design and assemble its parts, how much more does the human body, the earth, and the universe need a mind behind it!

Your last question is, "Do you really believe there is such a classification as evolutionary creationist?" The term seems contradictory. The two positions, evolution and creation, are opposite. We stand firmly by what the Bible teaches, this being our only source of

***"As truly as I live,
All the earth shall
be filled with the
glory of the Lord"
(Num. 14:21).***

knowledge about God, His creation, or His plan for the earth and its inhabitants. God is the supreme Creator. As far as visible physical evidence of the earth's history can be interpreted, it does seem that the earth has gone through periods of development and change, but not in the way that the evolutionists teach. The whole premise upon which evolution stands is incorrect.

But we do not see any reason why the earth cannot be billions of years old—there is nothing about this theory that militates against Scripture, nor is it out of harmony with God's plan for the future destiny of the earth. And His promise is sure: "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14:21). MM

***Evidence is wholly
lacking for the
theory that life-forms
"improve" or
"advance" by a
method of natural
selection.***

The Company We Keep

"Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not" —Hosea 7:9.

Life is brief. While it is true that where no physical, mental or financial reserves have been laid up for old age life can be much too long, the normal person finds one lifetime all too short to accomplish and enjoy all that he desires. Our life span being what it is, and human experience being so infinitely varied, it is evident that we cannot have everything—only a choice of things. And that choice is a serious matter, for by the time we discover that we have made a wrong choice, often it is too late to do anything about it. Our time has run out, and there is no more.

Life is pretty much what we make of it, in spite of the unquestioned element of time and chance. What we do with our lives we must do with one eye, so to speak, on the clock. Our length of days is, fortunately, unknown; but, also fortunately, the total does not matter. We live but one day at a time, and all, rich or poor, must live on 24 hours a day. The Prophet might truly have said, "Strangers have devoured his *time*"; for time is the essence of all things. "Dost thou love life?" asked Franklin, "then do not squander time, for time is the stuff life is made of."

Too often, however, we forget our peculiar dignity so far as to squander our time with prodigal hand, as though the supply were limitless. We have all seen the tragedy of someone throwing his useful life away in the pursuit of things of no value, things which are not worth the effort, things which bring only sorrow and eternal death. Nor is it pleasant to witness the disintegration of another's character, to see him, in spite of all his best friends can do, growing old in wrong habits, with the possibilities of change or reform growing dimmer and dimmer as the years pass by.

Yet, obvious and deplorable as these things are in

others, we need to heed the warning of the apostle John and "look to yourselves" (II John 8). For we are all human, and there is no weakness which could not be ours. Before we condemn another, let us look closely—critically—at ourselves.

The tragedy in our text (Hos. 7:9) is a familiar pattern. "Strangers have devoured his strength." These "strangers" can be many things. Naturally, we think of them as being, possibly, our associates. It is eternally true that we are known—and made—by the company we keep. The wrong kind of company can take not only our time but our interest, our affections, and eventually our prospect of eternal life. It was in the highest interest of our soul-health that Paul wrote, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?...Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" (II Cor. 6:14, 17).

We think of habits, and strong shackles they can be. Habits can add wings or weights to our feet; they can smooth out half the roughness of the narrow path to the heights, or they can keep us painfully trudging in aimless, profitless circles until the last leaf is torn from our book and we behold our last lost opportunity fading into eternity. The Prophet gives solemn warning of that bitter end: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jeremiah 13:23).

We think of occupations or avocations. These truly deserve close scrutiny. God will not accept the excuse that all our time was necessarily occupied in making a living, with none left for His service, because it is not true. Both the law of God and our own experience

proves it. "I have been young, and now am old," said the Psalmist, "yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (37:25). We have found it so. If not willingly self-deceived, we can discern between needful industry and application and the sort of thing Paul warned us against when he wrote, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (II Tim. 2:4).

All these "strangers" are to be feared, fought and avoided. Anything of the temporal world which puts too heavy a hand into the purse which holds our precious hours and minutes must be dealt with promptly and vigorously. A great warrior for God in these last days thus advised:

"It is a simple, safe, and wise rule, and one that will give us much joy at the last, to dispense with every habit, pleasure, practice, or occupation that hinders our progress in the narrow way."

This course is not easy. Severing old ties for the Kingdom of heaven's sake may shake us to the depths, *but it can be done*. Habits are creatures of our own making, and we ourselves can break them by the simple exercise of our will. Vocations may be changed, pleasures may be forsaken, even though it may—and will—involve the crucifixion of our old self, and no little pain. Victory over these things is no small achievement; but, after all, we are here dealing with externals, with things outside our personality. There are other strangers, even more insidious and stubborn and just as deadly. Wrong ideas and attitudes are diseases which call for more skilled and drastic treatment, for they are a veritable part of ourselves, and their roots are deep. They are basic, fundamental, and until they are corrected none of the more obvious evils can be successfully overcome.

Right attitudes, like right habits, are half the battle; but negative, doubting, rebellious, self-pitying or critical attitudes are a creeping paralysis, as everyone who has struggled to fight clear of them remembers all too well. First and greatest in the list of indwelling evils named by Jesus in Mark 7:21–22 is "evil thoughts," the well spring of all the rest. The mind must be set right before any real progress is possible.

This is difficult. Still, it can be done. It has been done, it is being done, and it will yet be done. But it can never be done alone. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," and without help, support and guidance, our so-called reasonings are too often a process of rearranging our prejudices and wrong attitudes to make them presentable. The faithful are pushing the good work to completion, having seen themselves in their

true light; but the tragedy of Ephraim is that "he knoweth it not." Nor does he wish to know.

Gray hairs here and there are symptoms of decay and weakness. He is silvering for the eternal tomb, yet he knows it not, nor will he believe it when told. Like Samson shorn, he fancies himself as strong as ever, not aware that the Lord has departed from him. He is deceived, and will continue to deceive himself until the dread sentence is pronounced, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone" (Hosea 4:17). MM

"By his faith he is speaking to us still"—Heb. 11:4, Moffatt.

Words for the Living

Excerpts from the sermons, talks and writings
of Rev. L. T. Nichols (1844–1912).

We should ask ourselves every day, Have I done better today? Did I speak even a little cross to anyone?



All who forsake their own way Jesus will make like the angels.



Beware! One may go through the motions, may attend church, may read the Bible, and yet may not love the law of God.



It is easier to serve God than the flesh, if we just give up our way.



You have to grow until you hate your natural desires—because you believe God is going to give you something better.



To really fear the Lord, walking constantly in His fear, keeping His commandments in memory, is a great accomplishment. How many are really fearing the Lord? We are too often negligent.



As long as you try to please men you can't get your affections on God.



God is going to test us. He is going to try the hearts of men, and how many of us will prove true?

God's Spiritual Creation

The Serpent of Genesis

Of all the symbols to which religious teachers have attached literal meanings, perhaps none involves such obvious impossibilities as the "serpent." If the position is taken that Genesis presents the account of the literal creation, then the serpent must be literal, with its unusual capabilities of speech. Yet no such species can be found today.

Let no one complacently assume such absurdities to be wholly obliterated in the light of this twentieth century; for a book currently published by a prominent religious organization pictures a literal serpent in Eden, standing on its tail and conversing with Eve!

As seekers for the truth of God's Word, we should count it our obligation to secure a sane Bible solution to the subject. Before we proceed, we must understand what, in Biblical terminology, is a serpent.

Definition of the Serpent

A survey of the ministry of John the Baptist as recorded in Matthew 3 reveals the type of serpents which come within the scope of Scriptural discussion. As the result of John's dynamic preaching, a multitude "were baptized of him in Jordan....But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:6-8). The Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus' day were called vipers because they possessed serpent-like characteristics.

Jesus addressed these professed religious leaders with: "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things?" (Matt. 12:34). Again, in

Matthew 23 which records His eight-fold denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees, we find, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell [destruction]?" (v. 33).

Those who are informed concerning the scribes and Pharisees of that day—their masked hypocrisy, their external sanctimony which concealed internal filth—may well feel that Jesus' denunciation was just. They were unmistakably "serpents," poisoning the minds of innocent seekers for true religion with their deadly venom.

However, the serpent class is not (was not) confined to the temple priesthood. Looking closer, we find evidence of the serpent nature right within the circle of Jesus' closest followers. (Here it must be remembered that the "serpent" symbolism finds its equivalent in numerous other Scriptural terms such as "the Devil," "Satan," "the great dragon," etc., all of which denote sin and all sinners, any adversary to God.) Because of the opposition which they raised, Jesus placed both Judas and Peter in the serpent or devil category; the difference in the two men was that Judas chose to remain in that category, while Peter changed his nature. We read in John 6:70-71, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve."

Again, when Jesus revealed His imminent crucifixion, Peter was the opposer, and said, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. 16:22-23).

Not only the scribes and Pharisees were called "serpents." Judas was a "devil," and upon the occasion

noted, Peter was "Satan"—all because they opposed the purposes of Jehovah. What of us? Can we escape like classification? Paul supplies the answer in II Cor. 11:2-3, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." This text reveals that if we know how our minds can be corrupted and led away from the simplicity that is in Christ, His life, His teachings, then we know how the serpent beguiled Eve in the garden.

Lest we should still believe the serpent to be some outside influence, Jesus adds further weight to the argument. In Mark 7:15, 21-22, He states plainly the source of all temptation and evil—not a literal serpent or a devil or Satan but man's own deceitful human heart: "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man....For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." In all ages, nothing from the outside defiles a man; the crafty serpent dwells right within the compass of the unregenerate mind.

James teaches the same truth in chapter 1:13-14, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." This eliminates all possibility of a literal devil or

serpent upon whom to lay the blame for our evil devices and shortcomings. As Eve was tempted, so we are tempted—when drawn away of our own lusts.

Eve's Temptation—and Ours

Keeping these facts in mind, let us read carefully the occasion of Eve's temptation as recorded in Genesis. The serpent said to Eve, "Is it true that God has forbidden you to eat from any tree in the garden?" And Eve answered weakly, "We may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, except for the tree in the middle of the garden; God has forbidden us either to eat or to touch the fruit of that; if we do, we shall die." The serpent countered, "Of course, you will not die"; and the woman, so deceived by the serpent's wiles, tasted the forbidden fruit. "She also gave her husband some, and he ate it" (Gen. 3:1-6, NEB).

If we seek to understand the incident in the light of plain, Scriptural teaching, we can only conclude that Eve was consulting with her own uncontrolled human desires.

Eve's temptation is a characteristic type. The serpent's success lay in convincing her that God's law was not so exacting as she had supposed, that the forbidden fruit could be sampled with safety. Said the serpent, "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:4-5).

As in Eden, the baser instincts of our nature are always parleying with the better inclinations, suggesting liberties which God prohibits, and assuring us that they are harmless. The voice of the serpent whispers out of the dust of human desire, "Indulge your natural cravings just this once; you shall not surely die."

The apostle Paul felt this duplicity of desire warring within him when he wrote, "When I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. 7:21-23). This was the serpent at work. Again he wrote of the conflict: "...the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot

As Eve was tempted, so we are tempted—when drawn away of our own lusts.

do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). Every Christian experiences the same: the struggle between his lower desires and his higher aspirations.

The Day of Judgment

After Eve had tasted the forbidden fruit and given of it to her husband, what happened then?

We read further in Genesis 3 that in the "cool of the day" the Lord came and called His servant Adam to account for his conduct in the garden. Had he obeyed? He had not. "Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done?"

And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:11-13).

Arraignment before the Judgment seat of Christ is part of the plan of God for each of His ser-

Every Christian experiences the struggle with the serpent nature—the battle between his lower desires and his higher aspirations.

vants, to determine their eligibility for future blessings. But first let us note the time of this Judgment, as given in Genesis. When did the Lord call Adam to account? "In the cool of the day" (Gen. 3:8). During a six-thousand-year-day, the "day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2), God has been calling men and women to work in His spiritual garden. The first to respond to this call, Adam and Eve, and all since who agree to work for their heavenly Master, labor at various hours throughout

The serpent nature in us is the tendency to evil in our own hearts.

the day until the evening, the "cool of the day," arrives. Then the Lord (Christ) comes (the second advent) to judge His servants. "For we must

all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10).

Jesus described this Day of Judgment in parable as the separation of the sheep and goats, faithful and unfaithful servants. "And before him shall be gathered [out of] all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. And...then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire [destruction], prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:32-34, 41).

When at the close of the day the Lord questioned the man Adam as to his obedience, he blamed the woman for his transgression, because she offered him the forbidden fruit! And the woman blamed the serpent which had enticed her! What an accurate picture of human nature. How instinctively when blamed for a transgression we point our finger at our neighbor or our brother and comfortably excuse ourselves!

Judgment on the Serpent

Genesis 3:14 states God's ultimatum to the "serpent" who had deceived Eve, symbolic of the human heart which is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9): "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou

eat all the days of thy life."

This text fittingly describes the condition of the unfaithful who receive a partial reward at the Day of Judgment (II John 8). The plan of the Almighty being to reward each of His servants "according to his works" (Rev. 22:12), the full reward of eternal life will be given only for a perfected character. Any covenant-maker proving worthy of a partial reward must receive it in the form of a limited number of years of life during the Millennium. Not having completed their assigned task of completely killing their serpent natures during their day of probation, they will be given an ultimatum regarding the length of their lives and their limited activities during the years that they are permitted to live. As in the Lord's word to the "sea," or the wicked peoples of the earth: "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further" (Job 38:11), so the "serpent," flesh, will have its future existence circumscribed. The decree will go forth: "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life" (Gen. 3:14). They will still be unholy. Their permission to live for a time in that holy environment will not cancel their unholy past, hence as long as they live they will continue to feed on their unholy thoughts, "the dust" of their former lives.

The "serpent" will be still alive during the Millennium. During that thousand-year period, however, he will be helpless to perform his work of deception.

Transgression, Its Consequences

The serpent beguiled Eve. She tasted the forbidden fruit, then gave it to her husband. The husband blamed the woman, and the woman

blamed the serpent. Here we have what is often called original sin, the first transgression, but a transgression of such far-reaching consequences that it caused physical death for the first time, and stained all their posterity.

A convenient excuse for our baser inclinations, perhaps; but the doctrine is no more Scriptural than it is reasonable. (This doctrine originated with Augustine, and was not taught by the church until the Fourth Century.) Natural death was in the world long before Adam and Eve transgressed, as is evidenced by the remains of prehistoric men and animals. Adam was and always had been mortal; there is nothing in the narrative to indicate anything to the contrary. His receiving the disapproval of God did not change his physical nature. The human race, including Adam and all his ancestors and descendants, are mortal (Job 14:1-2, 5; 4:17). The death to which Adam was condemned was not natural death (the result of mortality) but penal death (condemnation at Judgment, eternal death).

And furthermore, the guilt of sin is not inherited. God does not condemn us for the sin of our father, our grandfather, or our greatest, greatest grandfather Adam. Every individual is responsible for his own sin. The Divine principle is plain: "The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin." "Every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge." "Every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (II Chron. 25:4; Jer. 31:30; II Kings 14:6; Deut. 24:16). Every man shall die for his own sin. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20)—it and no other.

Ezekiel states explicitly: "The

son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:20). "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 18:30). At the Judgment of Christ every one shall stand or fall for his own doings. "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just....His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins" (Prov. 3:33; 5:22). His own iniquities shall take the wicked, not someone else's.

"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12)—these are Jesus' own words, and He shall be the Judge. Every man shall stand or fall for his own obedience or disobedience, not Adam's.

Christ Reckons with the Serpent

Though some have resisted the workings of the carnal mind, overcoming the serpent nature individually, yet it thrives in the world at large. However, this earth was not created to be plagued everlastingly by the wiles of evildoers. Upon the pages of the Sacred Volume the final end of the serpent class is decreed.

The Bible teaches that when Christ returns and calls upon all nations to submit to His righteous rule, the nations will rise up to resist His authority. This conflict, the Battle of Armageddon, was foreseen by the Revelator in symbolism: "There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and pre-

The guilt of sin is not inherited. Every individual is responsible for his or her own sin.

vailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world" (Rev. 12:7-9). This war is waged in the political heavens between Michael or Christ and the powers of earth, here designated by the equivalent terms, "the great dragon...that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan." No ambiguity exists as to the result of the war: The old serpent is to be cast out of heaven; erring man shall be forced to surrender the throne to Christ.

The ousting of the old serpent from the political heavens will ful-

The crushing of the serpent's head will be the most stupendous event in the history of this planet, for it will terminate wickedness in all its forms. Death itself shall be vanquished in the dawn of that eternal Day.

fill Christ's words, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18). Though some Bible students place this as an event of history (claiming Satan to have been a prominent angel in heaven who through misconduct became the Lucifer of earth), the text is much more meaningful and in harmony with general Bible teaching if understood as prophecy. Satan has not yet fallen from his high place of authority; he still rules supreme in the political heavens of this troubled world. But Satan shall fall; all evil shall be brought down until the prophecy of Zephaniah shall be fulfilled: "Thou shalt not see evil any more" (3:15).

Though Satan is to be dethroned by Christ, he will not at that time be destroyed. The Revelator informs us, "I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season" (20:1-3). Evil (the serpent) will be confined during the thousand years, though not entirely destroyed.

The Psalmist clarifies the identity of the serpent, also of the angel by whom he is captured and confined. We read in Psalm 149:5-9, "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints."

Christ and the saints are to chain the serpent class during the Millennial age. And how will this be accomplished? By the enforcement of unbreakable law. We read, "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. 2:26-27). All will be justice and righteousness; no evil action will be tolerated. For "though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isa. 30:20-21).

Without the solid foundation of the law of God, the heart of man is fittingly termed the "bottomless pit" from which proceed no end of evil devisings. But there the serpent shall be compelled to remain, captive for the duration of the Millennium. Some may stubbornly choose to retain evil in their hearts; but no open manifestation of the serpent nature will be tolerated. The chain is strong, the law unbreakable. The hand or power of the "weaned child" (the righteous rulers, newly born into immortal life) will be

Feeling Contentions?

Co-operate!

When you are tempted to feel contentious with someone else, face yourself with these questions:



- How important is the issue? How much will it matter five years from now?
- Why do I feel this way?—because my own ego is hurt, or because I truly feel for someone else, or...?
- How would Jesus have handled a similar situation?
- Have I prayed about this conflict? Am I resigned to God's will for me, whatever it may be?
- If the situation were reversed, how would I feel?
- Will I want to have this incident on my record of achievement?

placed on the cockatrice' den, the hiding place of evil, so that the serpent cannot project his ugly head (Isa. 11:8). Only in this way can the promise of a world filled with the glory of the Lord "as the waters cover the sea" be fulfilled.

At the close of the Millennial reign of Christ and the saints, there is "silence in heaven" for a brief period. The second Resurrection has taken place, and the law is suddenly suspended to reveal what has been in wicked hearts. The serpent is "loosed a little season" (Rev. 20:3). A formidable rebellion ensues but is swiftly extinguished by the destruction of the rebels, as we read: "They went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." This second Judgment consigns the remainder of the serpent class to

eternal destruction in the "lake of fire....which is the second death" (Rev. 20:9-10, 14; 21:8).

This will bring to pass another phase of the allegory recorded in Genesis 3:15. Addressing the serpent, the Almighty said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel!" (*Douay Version*). Always enmity has existed between the seed of the serpent—the wicked—and the faithful woman, the Bride of Christ. We see it with Cain and Abel, Daniel and his persecutors, Jesus and those who opposed and finally crucified Him, etc. However, not until the second Judgment following the rebellion at the close of the Millennium when the serpent strikes at "the heel" of the woman (Christ's faithful Bride) will the woman, striking at his head, crush

the serpent of sin to his everlasting death.

We read of this in Numbers 24:17-19, "A star of a king has come from Jacob, a mace has risen from Israel, crashing in Moab's head, the skull of these proud creatures!...Israel wins the day, and Jacob tramples on his foes" (Moffatt Bible). The crushing of the serpent's head will be the most stupendous event in the history of this planet, for it will terminate wickedness in all its forms; nothing shall be left to hurt or destroy; the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord—righteous rulers and subjects. Death itself shall be vanquished in the dawn of an eternal Day.

(To Be Continued)

Defending the Bible

(Continued from page 13)

of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven

by art and man's device" (Acts 17:24-29).

When we check the original Greek, we find that Paul did not say that God has made "of one blood all nations of men." The word "blood" has been supplied by the translator; hence the original reads, "God has created of one all nations of men." He does not say that all races descended from one man. The "oneness" of all nations may refer to their being all human, or all of one type of "being", or their common dependence upon God for "life and breath," or any other aspect of creation as it is known to God.

We should consider, too, the meaning of "nations." The original Greek word is *ethnos*, and refers to persons who share a common background, convention or custom. They may or may not belong to the same "race" as we define the term. MM

Obituary

Martha Joanna Niemeyer

On November 12, 1991, funeral services were conducted for Martha Joanna Niemeyer of our Rochester Congregation.

Born in Germany in 1903, Sister Niemeyer was about three years old when the family emigrated to the U.S. and settled in the vicinity of Utica, New York. She became a naturalized citizen in 1950.

Her acquaintance with the church dates back to 1921, when her mother purchased the Church's set of publications from some traveling missionaries. Thereafter, the Niemeyers formed a small ecclesia in the Utica area, made numerous trips to Rochester, and received many visits from traveling brethren of the church.

She is survived by one nephew, Steven Niemeyer, of Rochester; one niece, Carolyn Arcurri, who lives in Poland, New York, also several grandnieces and grandnephews.



Have you received this notice? Is this account yours? Is it mine?

Each of us has opened an account with God. We asked for an account plan that extends all the way into eternity. For this special privilege, we have promised to pay a high price, even our all to the Lord. We have promised that we will use all our time and affection in His service, that we will be patient, humble, gentle, unselfish, and easily entreated.

Are we making regular, timely payments according to our agreement, or is our account "past due"? Were God to render a statement each week, how many would show a balance marked "past due"?

Our Creditor is generous, and gives us notice after notice. Have we received so many of these notices that they no longer attract our attention?

Remember: though He is silent at the moment, God *means business*. He will not let delinquent accounts run on forever.

Is our indebtedness long overdue? Let us pay it, yes, *pay it without delay!* When God sends us a reproof—a "past due" notice—even if it be in a form we do not expect, let us not disregard it for a moment. Truly, He is longsuffering and merciful and exacts of us much less than our iniquities deserve. But He will not send us "past due" notices indefinitely if we take no heed to them. The day will come when all "past due" accounts will be written off the books, the names of their owners erased from His book of life.

God wants *regular* payments on our account—payments of self-control, charity, and faith that will cancel all our indebtedness. One large payment might square a monetary account that has waited for many years. But not so with God's account. We must keep up with the payments as they come due each day—payments of love, obedience, encouragement, joy, peace and humility.

If we delay too long and our time of opportunity expires, we shall receive a "final notice" and there will be no other option than to pay with our life.

"O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing." MM

I Promised the Lord... And I Can't Break It

(Continued from page 2)

must be first, and everything and everyone else must take a lesser claim. Yes, His disciples *could* give a total obedience, the final goal *could* be reached. In spite of all, they *need not* break their commitment.

Paul said the same of himself: "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things...that I may win Christ, and be found in him...If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:8, 11). He knew that only Christ could keep him "from falling," that Christ alone could keep that which he had committed unto him against that "day" (II Tim. 1:12). This sense of absolute trust holds one steady when other bonds give way. To trust in any other support is

to build upon a foundation which might let us down in a time of crisis.

This is not to imply that we should be without appreciation for human aid. If we fail to appreciate others, we show the smallness of our own soul. But we must be living *for God*, not for the commendations of our peers. The weight of our commitment must be to God and God alone. Our dependence is upon Him. It is to Him that we gave our word; to Him we made our promise. And only *He* can keep sure His side of the promise: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Here is the guarantee to all His faithful followers.

With such support, I need not fail. In such faith let me echo the word of the ancient hero, "I have made the Lord a promise, and I can't break it."

I have promised, and that is *final*.

What about you?

MM

One secret act of self-denial, one sacrifice of inclination to duty is worth more than all the good thoughts, warm feelings, impassionate prayers in which the idle indulge themselves.

It is impossible for us to live in fellowship with God and be idle. God wants good and faithful servants, not idlers. He wants obedience, active obedience, without which all faith is dead.

Selfishness, an imperious will, a lack of understanding, suspicion, hard censure, and want of sympathy will miserably darken our hearts and hide the face of God from us.

When opportunity comes calling, it usually seeks out one who is dependable, who can be counted on to perform a task well.

The most important judgments we make are those we make of ourselves every day. Our potential is like an iceberg, part of it can clearly be seen, but the rest lies unmeasured below the surface. Only you know what is underneath.

Beware of pride; it will only lead to a humbling defeat.

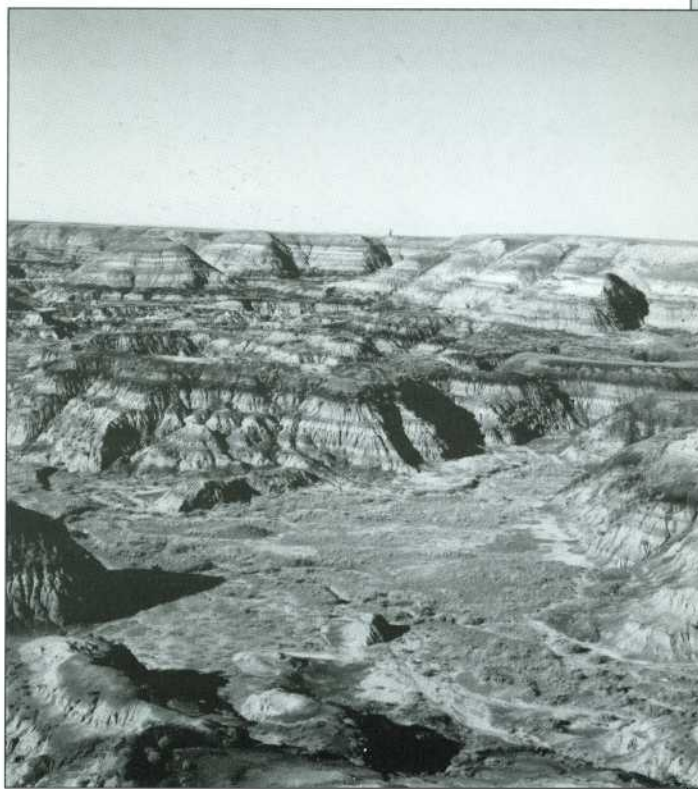
Brighter and Brighter

Eternally true is the Scripture that reads:

*The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn,
shining ever brighter
till the full light of day.*

—Prov. 4:18, RSV

Brighter and brighter means more and more—more good fruit, more good work, more good thoughts, more good inspiration and encouragement for others, more good reading, more good meditating, more good growing. The path of the just must grow brighter, even though it may seem problematic and encumbered. Whatever happens, it must keep growing brighter and brighter “unto the perfect day.”



Inner Calm

*Calm me, my God, and keep me calm,
While these hot breezes blow;
Be like the night-dew's cooling balm
Upon earth's fevered brow.*

*Calm me, my God, and keep me calm,
Soft resting on Thy breast,
Soothe me with holy hymn and psalm
And bid my spirit rest.*

*Calm in the hour of buoyant health,
Calm in my hour of pain,
Calm in poverty or wealth,
Calm in my loss or gain;*

*Calm as the ray of sun or star
Which storms assail in vain;
Moving unruffled through earth's war,
The eternal calm to gain.*



How Big Am I?

**When I measure myself by the grasses,
It seems I am very tall;
When I stand at the foot of a mountain,
I feel I am really small;
When I look at the stars in the heavens,
I marvel God sees me at all!**

