

Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST

The Genesis Allegory

ABOUT GOD'S SILENCE

TIMELY TOPICS

CAN THIS BE CHRISTMAS?

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

WHO ARE THE ANGELS?

GOD—THE TRUE OBJECT OF OUR CONFIDENCE

MEDITATIONS ON THE WORD

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

TRUE EXALTATION

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Editorially Speaking...

Are You Neutral?

THERE is no such thing as being neutral in the warfare between the flesh and the spirit. It is possible for a nation to be neutral while its neighbors are at war; we should always remain neutral in quarrels which do not concern us; a judge must be neutral until all the evidence is presented.

But to us who have entered the lists to contend for eternal life, there is no such middle ground; we are one thing or the other. There is no such thing as being partly right and partly wrong. Jesus laid down the principle in Matt. 12:30: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Also, to state the same fact from another angle, He said in Mark 9:40, "For he that is not against us is on our part." More than a thousand years before these words were spoken, an enemy requested one of God's mouthpieces to remain neutral rather than to speak the distasteful truth: "And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all. But Balaam answered and said, . . . Told not I thee, saying, All that the Lord speaketh, that I must do?" (Num. 23:25, 26). What God approves and commands is right, and we must love it, actively and openly. What God condemns and forbids is wrong, and we must hate and abhor it, actively and openly. There is no middle position.

To be sure, there are all shades and grades of human behavior between these two extremes, but as a matter of fact there is no intervening space. The shadow of death extends right up to the border of perfection; not until we have overcome all can we claim any abiding righteousness. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law," says James, "and yet offends in one point, he is guilty of all." A broken law separates him from God; a span is left out of his bridge across the great gulf, thus making it impossible to gain eternal life. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

Having begun the work by faith, we must not delay. Any postponement, any deferment of our duty, any neutrality is exceedingly dangerous.

A motor vehicle might have the finest of power plants and equipment, but so long as its transmission stands in neutral it will never get anywhere. Our vehicle has several speeds forward and one reverse. The controls are in our hands. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." In our case, our covenant makes it impossible for us to stay in neutral. We must go forward or backward. We can go into reverse and crash speedily into the pit of destruction; we can go forward in one of the lower speeds and find ourselves disqualified at the end because we were too slow. Only the highest gear with a full flow of power and a steady hand on the wheel, our eye fixed on the highway and the glory ahead, will bring us to the City before the gates are closed at sunset. ●●

The Genesis Allegory

—Summary—

PRAYER

Our loving Father, this hour of worship brings us under renewed obligations to thank and praise Thee for Thy goodness, and Thy wonderful works in the behalf of the children of men. We rejoice that Thou hast looked upon us in our lowly estate and formulated a plan whereby we can lift ourselves above the level of the common man, and live for something more fruitful than the interests of the fleeting present. Help us to enter wholeheartedly into this plan, to willingly surrender all that is unholy, all that is obnoxious to Thee. Help us to crucify every fleshly lust and affection, and to stimulate every holy desire and interest.

We rejoice that Thou hast opened to us a door of hope so we can look beyond the fortunes, the interests of the passing moment, and live for a life that will endure. We thank Thee for the hope of being placed beyond mortality with its limitations, of being placed beyond sin, beyond the turmoil, and the many handicaps that plague us in this mortal sphere, and of being placed beyond the ravages of disease and the fear of death. Help us, Father, to have a faith too strong to admit of any doubt. May we know that Thou art, and that Thou wilt amply reward us if only we will serve Thee with our whole heart. Help us to constantly feed our faith, allowing nothing to weaken that faith, or dilute our resistance to evil.

"Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee."

Furthermore, we rejoice to know that Thou art still in the business of creating, forming a holy and righteous people through the refining influence of Thy Word, creating a new heaven and earth in righteousness and true holiness.

Father, grant us the wisdom to be all absorbed with the prospect of being a part of Thy new creation, and now form in our own lives virtues of such superior quality that it will be Thy good pleasure to save and bless us, and make us a part of Thy finished plan upon earth.

We praise Thy goodness, that Thou hast left nothing undone to draw us to Thyself. But one thing we ask of Thee, our God, not to cease Thy work in our improvement. Let us tend towards Thee, no matter by what means, and be fruitful in every good work, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

DISCOURSE

UNTIL about a century ago the entire Christian world was bound in many aspects to medieval thought. Yard after yard of religious fabric was woven after the pattern of primitive myths and legends, rather than from the inspired Word of the Lord. And religious-minded men and women honestly believed that their views were of divine authorship, amply sanctioned and supported by the Bible. To question so fundamental a fact was shameful, and worse—it was heretical.

Especially was this true in the matter of the creation account in Genesis. The eighteenth century Christian world believed almost universally that the heavens and earth were created about six thousand years ago in six literal days. (In reality, this belief was a relic of Babylonian mythology.) The result: a credulous laity accepted the doctrine as though it were of divine origin, oblivious to the whole world of nature, the hills, the mountains, the seas, and the canyons which abounded with evidence of its absurdity.

With the progress of geology and astronomy during the nineteenth century, mankind gradually aroused from the stupor of his medieval thought and began to realize the absolute impossibility of his beliefs. The record of the rocks pronounced the age of the earth in terms of millions (now said to be billions) of years. And the heavens, he learned by mapping their gigantic planets and constellations, suns and systems, were part of eternity itself, innumerable for multitude and incomprehensible in distance.

The advance of science during recent years has continued to force the retreat of orthodox religion as a thinking generation that challenges nearly every established tradition and social code rejects wholesale the fundamental beliefs of nominal Christianity. And gospel ministers are too often unable to meet the challenge.

The result is tragic: In banishing organized religion they also cast away the Bible as though it were the originator and expounder of myths which are incongruous with reason and scientific fact. Some religious thinkers even now are making a supreme effort to restore a shattered faith and re-convert an apostate civilization by assuring them that there is no conflict between science and the Bible.

Truly there is no conflict. Genesis does not contradict science, simply because it makes no strictly

scientific assertions. It is teaching religious truth and not scientific truth and so it cannot be scientifically false.

But to restore faith in God and His Word, religious teachers must provide a new creed which is superior to the old. What shall it be?

What Genesis Does NOT Teach

You may be surprised at the many doctrines Genesis, chapters 1—3, doesn't teach—common, denominational beliefs such as original sin, or the literal Edenic paradise of happiness, or the rib which God surgically removed to create a woman companion for a lonely Adam. From this reverse approach we shall try to understand more clearly what Genesis does teach in harmony with the general tenor of the whole of Scripture.

The primary focus of the author of Genesis, as we have seen in this series of discussions, is upon a creation not literal but spiritual. In like manner, the elements of creation are figures, the people are symbolic of classes of men and women, its events are representations of God's ways of working with His human family. Studied as an account of the spiritual creation, the first three chapters of Genesis disclose the dominant theme of all the writings of the holy men of old—God's plan for the redemption of mankind.

Not a Literal Creation

Though fully persuaded that God made, in the words of Nehemiah, "the heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein" (9:6), we cannot believe that the literal creation of the earth is the principal message of Genesis, chapters 1—3.

If we regard Genesis as a poetic representation of eternal truth, we can see in the creation account infinitely greater revelation than could be contained in an account of a literal creation.

The pre-eminent purpose of the whole Bible is to inform mankind of God's plan for the perfection of this earth and the salvation of worthy persons.

"... The world is involved in an upward movement, in a process of growth, one way or another. Our view of the world is no longer static but dynamic. This means that the authentic enlightenment is to be sought not in the beginning but in the course of things and their culmination. It is better to say, God creates, than to say, God created. To put it in very human terms: if he were to withdraw his creative hands from us for an instant, there would be nothing there. God is not a carpenter who can go away. The whole universe exists in God and depends on God. Creation grows in his hands. The whole course of history is his work, and it is only the whole that will explain it all and show that 'everything was very good' (Gen. 1:31)." So writes a contemporary religious critic, Mr. Herbert Haag.

Genesis is not telling us that God *created*, but that He is *creating*. He is even now engaged in a program of creating which shall not be complete until Jesus Christ is established King from sea to sea, and God's will is done in earth as it is done in heaven. To say that the creation of the physical earth and its inhabitants is the principal message of Genesis is to fail to appreciate the depths of the wisdom God has revealed.

What, then, is the heaven and the earth God is creating? It is a heaven, or body of rulers capable of governing an immortal populace, or earth, when the Kingdom of God is established.

Not Six Literal Days

God's work of creating, therefore, was not accomplished in six literal days. It is a work still in progress. As a contemporary author expresses it, "Superficial objectors to Genesis 1 scoff at the notion that the world was created in six periods of twenty-four hours each. No such idea was in the mind of the writer of the first page of Genesis. It is a case of using 'day' to mean not 'period' but 'occasion.' . . . That is, I believe, the sense in which the Hebrew word translated 'day' is to be understood; and although it would be a pity to rewrite the sublime poetry of Genesis 1, we need to know that the 'six days' of that chapter are six 'ages' or 'stages'."

Following the Bible rule that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years" (II Pet. 3:8), we learn that six days of creation do represent six "ages" or "stages," a total of 6000 years during which God's work of creating goes steadily forward.

A well-known British theologian, Rev. Peter DeRosa, also comments on the subject of the "days" of Genesis. "We know that the story which we find in the early chapters of Genesis is a pictorial representation of theological truth. Few people today believe that it took God literally six days to create the world. The author did not intend us to understand His writings like that. This is easily shown. Day, for instance, is made before the sun, as are the plants, and even a simpleton knows that without the sun there can be no division of day and night, nor can any plants live and grow."*

Not Two Great Literal Lights

A spiritual creation necessitates spiritual illumination. And spiritual light solves the above-mentioned problem: of how grass could have grown before the sun was created.

During His ministry Jesus was frequently called the "Light." He will be the "sun of righteousness" to rise with healing for all mankind when the new age dawns (Mal. 4:2). He will be the "greater

* Peter DeRosa, *Christ and Original Sin*. Copyright 1967; used by permission.

light" of Genesis 1. We are now walking in the brightness of the "lesser light," the word of God which, said the Psalmist, "is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105).

Natural Man NOT In God's Image

Obviously, all mankind are not physically made in the image of God, or else God's image is infinitely flexible. But God is in the process of developing a composite man to form a part of His eternal creation, and these men and women He is creating "in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24). By obedience to His laws they are becoming like God mentally and morally, and will ultimately receive the physical change to immortality if they are worthy of that change. They will then be fully made in God's image.

Not Dominion Over Animals

In Biblical language, people are often characterized by appropriate animals. Sheep, willing to follow the shepherd, are used to illustrate the righteous who submissively follow the example of Christ (John 10). The crafty Herod was called a "fox" (Luke 13:32). Treacherous, sly, rebellious, stubborn men and women are classified as snakes, wolves, goats, mules, because of their ungoverned animal likenesses.

The one composite new man which God is now in the process of creating will be given dominion over all evil elements. Wickedness will be restrained and ultimately destroyed.

Not a Literal Garden

Genesis is not telling us about a literal garden and its two human inhabitants, but of His field of spiritual service, and those whom He selects from the masses of mankind to work in His employ. In Genesis they are called Adam and Eve, not the first man and woman to be created, but a figurative representation of all who covenant to serve God.

No Original Sin

When Adam and Eve, disobeying the Lord's command, partook of the forbidden fruit, did their sin blot the heritage of all mankind? Absolutely not! But typical of the majority who serve God, they transgressed the laws of God and became themselves subject to punishment. In their transgression they represent all those who likewise transgress God's laws and are for the same reason subject to the penalty of the law. The Bible principle is definite: "Every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge" (Jer. 31:30). "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins" (Prov. 5:22).

No Personal Devil

Who tempted Adam and Eve? Was that serpent

a personal devil or some other sinister force or power that led them into sin? No, Genesis offers no basis for a literal devil. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (Jas. 1:13, 14). Adam and Eve were tempted just as you and I are tempted: when we allow our own evil desires to lead us into sin.

What IS in Genesis?

We have found the first three chapters of Genesis vastly more instructive and harmonious with the rest of the Bible and science by viewing the creation as a *spiritual* creation, its elements as figures, its people as representatives of classes of men and women. Genesis highlights key ideas such as the holiness of God, the opportunity of mankind, community in sin and hope in the triumph of right.

At the turn of the century when our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, began discoursing on this important subject, he stood alone against the revered—but pagan and unreasonable—doctrines of antiquity, that Adam and Eve were the first man and woman to inhabit a planet created only 6000 years ago. But modern reasoning minds have overthrown such impossibilities, and a few have awakened to some of the truths of Genesis.

The eminent British theologian and scholar Peter DeRosa, in a work entitled *Christ and Original Sin*, quoted earlier, has grasped much of the true teaching of the Bible on the subject. Summing up the general teachings of Catholic and non-Catholic theologians, he lists some of the difficulties challenging the time-honored views. We quote again:

"Nobody holds nowadays as literal truth the six days of creation, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the serpent, the fruit that got eaten, the description or location of the garden. These are mostly elements . . . adopted by the author to give a new interpretation of human existence, an interpretation of the things which Israel has always puzzled over—pain, sin, death, the division of peoples. . . .

"Those who take everything in the Bible literally—'fundamentalists' they are called—have a problem confronting them from the word go in that the sequence of events recorded in chapter one of Genesis differs from that of chapter two. . . .

"The fundamentalist is making a mistake about the kind of literature to be found at the beginning of Genesis, the sort of mistake made by the older editions of the scriptures when, following Bishop Ussher and Isaac Newton, they tell us that the year of creation was 4004 B. C. . . .

"Genesis is not a piece with *The Cambridge Modern History*, nor is it a work of mysticism. It is a story. It speaks of God creating for six days and resting on the seventh, of the serpent, of the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Here we are given an idyllic picture of a thornless, brambleless garden where there is an

always temperate climate, and work is pleasurable, and man has dominion over the animals. . . .

"Genesis is not history but a challenge in interpretation thrown to the pagans. . . .

"The elements in Genesis are, for the most part, taken over from the Babylonians. But always these elements are compounded in the story to present something quite special, something to which the pagans had no access: God's revelation. . . .

"Genesis is a story and this is why it is inexhaustible in a way that a series of abstract statements is not. We can never scrap the book of Genesis on the plea that it contains outdated pictorial elements for these elements are the vehicle of God's revelation and we have no other. God's truth is contained there and this truth is inexhaustible. Genesis is like a quarry: we can never be sure that we have taken out of it all the true metal. We can never lay down a series of theological assertions and claim: 'That is all that Genesis has to tell us.'

"We have spoken of the accounts in Genesis as a story. Is this to say that there is no truth in Genesis? Of course not. As we have just seen, here is the deepest truth of all, God's own truth, which comes to us in the form of ancient imagery."*

Just as the introduction to any book outlines the text that follows, so the first of Genesis presents an outline of God's eternal plan and the principles basic to the whole of Scripture. The first of these is the Biblical concept of

God

The God of Genesis is at once different from any other deity known to ancients or moderns. In His first capacity He is seen as a creator. "Genesis is teaching us that God is the sovereign and undisputed Lord of all creation. He is not one deity among many, not even the greatest of them. He is not a tribal god who runs the risk of being defeated when 'his' tribe suffers military defeat. He is not a nature god like the Canaanite Baals whose control was limited to making the harvest grow or to bringing the rain. Everything which exists, material things included, depends absolutely on the one God. He creates and disposes as he wills."*

This first Old Testament writer does not ask us to, as another Bible scholar describes it, "believe in a God who made the earth and the universe as a man might make a chair or a child a model. It is not that God is a super-man." God is infinitely superior to any work of His creation, and His ways and means are unfathomable to mortals. The purpose of the Bible is not to tell us of His works of creation but to show His relationship to His human creation, His dealings with the children of men. And this is the intent of the book of Genesis, to introduce God to men and present a basic outline of His eternal plans and purposes.

Man

The center of the first part of Genesis is God; the center of the second, man. The entire process of the spiritual creation has but one objective: the eternal benefit of man, represented as Adam and Eve.

As Dr. DeRosa writes, "The man in the story cannot only be someone who lived and died countless thousands of years ago. The man, Adam, is as well a mirror to the reader. Adam is myself for I am disobedient, hateful, unloving, rebellious. Adam is here and now; he is me and you and him and her. When King David was told by the prophet Nathan the story of a rich man who stole a poor man's solitary little ewe lamb to feed a traveler, he said, 'As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die' (II Sam. 12:6). To David who had stolen Uriah's wife and saw to it that Uriah should be slain in battle, Nathan said, 'You are the man.' Genesis speaks to every reader in like manner: 'You are Adam, the man of dust.' This is not to say . . . that the Genesis story is simply a parable. But, then, neither was Nathan's story 'simply a parable'."*

If we accept the classical view that Adam and Eve were the first created man and woman, we encounter numerous difficulties. Certainly "Adam was not literally taken from the slime of the earth; Eve was not literally fashioned out of Adam's rib."

Who was Adam? "When it is not preceded by the article, it is transliterated in the Douai version so as to give the impression that it is a proper name. But the word 'Adam' on the lips of a Jew meant any number of things. We cannot assume that when he used it he meant primarily an individual, 'the first man,' as we do. On the contrary, among the Jews the collective meaning predominated over the individual meaning. 'Adam' stood mostly not for an individual, 'the first man,' but for 'men' or 'mankind' or, as we might say, 'everyman.' For example, in the Book of Job we find: 'Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble' (14:1). The word translated 'man' is 'Adam.' 'Adam' comes from 'Adamah' which is 'earth' or 'soil.' Adam, then, is man, the earthly, the man of the ground, the man of dust—and that is what all men are. . . . But it is unlikely, on the grounds of an exegesis of Genesis alone, that we could hold with any assurance at all to 'Adam' meaning the historically first man."*

Free Moral Agents

Another basic principle of divine justice expressed in Genesis is man's freedom of choice. Every man is free to choose to obey the law of God, or to disobey.

We quote from a contemporary Bible scholar: "Actually 'Adam' means 'mankind' and 'Eve' means 'life-giver.' The stuff of common life is there. Here

* Peter DeRosa, *Christ and Original Sin*.

is the personal relation of a free man with God; God has made him able to disobey. . . . Then there is the impulse to obey—that is, to regard the whole of experience and the whole of reality as something whose service is joy—smothered by the question ‘Why should I?’

“The scene is set in a garden or park; in the days of their innocence the first couple are faced with a decision in which if they take one way they will obey the Lord, while if they take the other they will disobey him.”

But the choice is entirely their own—no suggestion of predestination, or of divine compulsion. This is the story of man. “Change the externals of this story as much as you will, argue to your heart’s content whether it happened in Mesopotamia or Borneo, and whether it was a pomegranate tree or an apple tree or a passion-fruit tree that yielded its fruit to Eve—you cannot write a general account of the behaviour of people in one page without keeping the essentials of this story.”

In other words, man chooses of his own free will; but if he chooses to deal with God, he receives according to his actions.

Sin

Adam, or man, agrees to obey the law of God, to work in His spiritual garden, to cultivate and refine his evil nature. But his own desires being so much more dominant than the law of God, he transgresses. Here is another eternal truth in the Genesis allegory. When Adam partakes of the forbidden fruit, when man does anything which the law of God forbids, he sins. “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4).

“Sin is the violation of the order that God has established,” writes Rev. Peter DeRosa. “First, it divides a man inside himself, and from this division no one is exempt. In every man’s heart Paul’s words find an echo: ‘For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do’ (Rom. 7:19). Sin is not only in my situation, it is within me. Second, sin divides men from each other. The man blames the woman for his own guilt: he is quite prepared even to put the responsibility for his iniquity on his beloved wife. And the ultimate in sin’s power to separate is murder.

“Sin, then, is rebellion, disharmony, unfaithfulness. Sin is disobedience, a refusal to do God’s will. . . . By trying to establish his own criterion of good and evil in order to find enlightenment, that way man is, in effect, trying to wrest God’s sovereignty from him, to take from him his very divinity. . . .”

When a man disobeys a law to which he is rightly subject, he says, in effect, that he is superior to that law. Thus it is with God. When Adam, or man, disobeys, he challenges God’s authority, and therefore is subject to God’s penalty.

Who Is Guilty?

When Adam transgressed the law of God, who was guilty? Who became subject to the penalty of the law? Adam alone, or Adam and his posterity?

Herbert Haag, in his book *Is Original Sin in Scripture*, expresses the Biblical teaching on this subject clearly and logically. He writes, “The idea that Adam’s descendants are automatically sinners because of the sin of their ancestor, and that they are already sinners when they enter the world, is foreign to Holy Scripture. The well-known verse from the psalms, ‘Behold, I was born in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me’ (Ps. 51:5), merely means that everyone born of woman becomes a sinner in this world, without fail. The Bible often uses the device of attributing a man’s later deeds or achievements to him from the time of his conception and birth. (Cf., for example Jeremiah 1:5, where Jeremiah is made a prophet in his mother’s womb.)

“The inheritance of Adam’s sin means rather that sin, after its entrance into the world, so spread that consequently all men are born into a sinful world and in this sinful world become themselves sinners.”

He reasons further: “The sin which stains others was not only committed by an Adam at the beginning of man’s story, but by ‘Adam,’ man, every man. It is ‘the sin of the world.’ It includes my sins. I am not an innocent lamb which is corrupted by others. I help in the work of corruption.

“. . . Hence no one is condemned for original sin ‘alone,’ but only for the personal decisions by which he ratified original sin, so to speak.

“. . . The meaning of the first sin needs to be pondered deeply. It is not of supreme importance that man sinned and was corrupted. He sins and becomes corrupt. The sin of Adam and Eve is closer than we imagine. It is in our own selves.”

In Summary

From the dim and rudimentary outlines in Genesis we have seen God’s plan of salvation unfold and expand to incorporate the entire scope of divine revelation. It is the story of the spiritual creation in progress, as the heavenly Creator selects and refines from the raw material of humanity the best for everlasting survival.

The longer we study God’s plan of salvation, the more we fathom of the deep and beautiful truths which are compressed into three brief introductory chapters of Genesis. There is certainty, precision, perfection; there is vastness, majesty, grandeur to the plan far transcending all the wisdom of man.

The plan is divine. And grandest of all its principles is this: The humblest of earthborn can participate in that plan and share its eternal realities if he will but become created in righteousness and true holiness, for of such is the kingdom of heaven on earth—*God’s spiritual creation.* ●●

About God's Silence

BETWEEN the Old and the New Testaments stands a period of time often called the four hundred silent years. During this time there were no writing prophets, and apparently no angelic visitations. Judah had indeed become the dry ground out of which Messiah was prophesied to come. The sceptre seemingly had departed from the house of David, and the glory of Solomon's kingdom had faded.

During these silent centuries there was no new revelation from God. Some of the people of Israel had quietly laid aside their belief in a coming Messiah. Time and the failure of the Messiah to appear raised persistent doubts: Would the Messiah *ever* come? And many tuned out from the prophetic hopes and lived only for the present.

But others there were whose hopes could not be dimmed. Even they, however, were sometimes puzzled and asked themselves hard questions: Why doesn't God do something? How long will it be before God breaks His silence and acts in history to fulfill His promise?

What we know, and what they should have known, is that God's ways are not our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. He was waiting for the fulness of time to come. And when it came, He acted, He gave Christ visibly to men.

Christ's birth was like a flash of lightning in a midnight sky. In a darkened age there appeared the bright light of God's new act. But even then His act had more darkness than light in it for many people. Most of those who looked for Messiah's coming waited for a king born in a royal palace with, so to speak, a golden spoon in His mouth. But God's lightning flash revealed only a baby born in Bethlehem, the son of a peasant woman, whose husband was merely a carpenter.

Yet the glory of what God had done could not be obscured by the lowliness of Messiah's birth. It was grasped and propagated forever by the writer of the Hebrews: "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days He has spoken to us by a son." God had spoken! He had sent His Son! He was not silent! The realization awakened the apostles to the hope which the shepherds heard from the angel choir: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased."

Two thousand years have passed since God spoke to men through the coming of Jesus Christ. A cross and a resurrection have intervened. A few disciples were baptized and sent out to turn the world upside down for the cause of Christ. His gospel

spread from shore to shore until every land and nation of the world has heard the name of Christ and seen those who call themselves Christians. The records of God's new act in Jesus Christ have been imperishably set down in the New Testament, which far surpasses all other books ever written in the number of copies distributed.

The tide of the Christian movement reached its fullest heights in the beginning of this century. Now as we go into the seventies the tide is seemingly running out, slowly and inexorably. The ardor, the eagerness for action is evaporating; the passion is diminishing. Sloth and doubt take a heavy toll. For many the effulgent glory of God whose lightning crossed the darkened sky two thousand years ago has faded. Darkness has begun to descend upon the earth, and the voice of God seems bewilderingly silent. Men grope in darkness, reaching out to touch the hand that doesn't seem to be there, straining to hear the voice that doesn't seem to speak.

But we who have the privilege of living in the true light have learned that even when God appears to be silent He is speaking. We know that in His silence He speaks thunderously. He is showing us for a time what life is like when He does not speak. He is saying to sinful men that there is a final silence, a silence they will experience just before the time when He breaks into history with the roar of a whirlwind.

In Scripture there are few words more pathetic than those spoken of Samson, "And he did not know that the Lord had left him." God was silent. God was withdrawn and so grave was Samson's backslidden condition that he did not even know that God was gone, until he woke from his sleep expecting to use his strength only to discover his loss, to experience the pain of God's withdrawal, and later to search desperately for the return of the power that had vanished.

Is there not danger that we who name the name of God may slowly drift from the reality of our faith and awake suddenly when it is too late, to find ourselves alone in a dark and troubled world, alone and lost, without hope, and without a God who will answer our longing cry? Our experience may be that of ancient Israel: "Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 7:13).

We are living in momentous times. We are living in the closing hours of this age. Perhaps the present silence and apparent invisibility of God is the prelude to the lightning bolt that once more

will flash across the leaden sky. That time will soon come when He who shook the earth once will shake it again. He has promised, "Yet once more, I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain" (Heb. 12:26, 27).

God's silence will not continue forever. Although He will never speak again through more Scripture, He will speak and act visibly and powerfully in the affairs of men. This time the Son of man will come in flaming fire. The sky will be split by the lightning of His arrival: "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." He will come with vengeance for those who do not accept the gospel. But He will also come to gather and reward His saints who wait in this silence for the unveiling of the Lord of hosts.

While the busy day dies slowly
O'er the sea;
And the hour grows quiet and holy
With thoughts of Me.
E'er you slumber, go and do
What must be done,
For it may be in the evening
I will come.

As the evening shades grow longer
And the night
Descends to veil the hills
From mortal sight,
Behold, I say unto you, Watch!
Let the door be on the latch
In your home.
For it may be at the midnight
I will come.

When the house is hushed in slumber,
Quiet, still,
And the hours grow long and dreary,
Cold and chill,
Keep the door upon the latch
In your home.
In the chill before the dawning
Between the night and morning
I may come.

Keep your faith lamps brightly burning
All the night,
As you wait through vigils long
The morning light.
Behold, I say unto you, Watch!
Let the door be on the latch
In your home.
For I soon will break the silence
And will come!

Timely Topics

ONE OF the most flagrant violations of Christian ethics is demonstrated in the manner in which Christ's birthday is celebrated by the majority of people. Many people realize that the date is wrong. And this is bad enough. But due to the complicated problem of arriving at the exact date, this might be excused, at least in part. But the wanton, licentious and gluttonous celebrations which are held under the guise of "Christmas" can only be condemned in the strongest terms.

Christ's Birth?

The origin of the celebration of Christ's birth is obscure. According to some authorities the first observance occurred during the reign of Antonnius Pius (86—161 A. D.) when Telesphorous ordered that divine service be celebrated and an angelic hymn be sung the night before the Nativity of our Saviour. Other authorities place the first observance during the reign of the emperor Commodus (161—192). It is certain that the event was remembered with religious services before the time of Constantine. The tyrant Diocletian, among other acts of cruelty against the Christians, ordered a church where they had assembled to celebrate the Nativity to be set on fire after barring the doors. The date of these early celebrations we do not know.

The first recorded celebration on the 25th of December was in 325 at Rome. The Emperor Constantine in an effort to appease the pagans placed Christ's birth on December 25 to coincide with their celebration of Saturn.

Thus the world of today has not only adopted a day of pagan revelry as the time to celebrate the birthday of the future King of all the earth, but they have accepted the customs of feasting and licentiousness associated with the day. This is adding insult to injury and is an affront to the character of the Lord Jesus.

The Bible makes no mention of Christmas or the celebration of the Nativity. This is not to infer that it is wrong to honor Christ on the anniversary of His Nativity. Paul commands that we "render therefore to all their dues, . . . honor to whom honor" (Rom. 13:7). It would be wrong not to honor our coming King. It is the extreme paganism into which the Christmas celebration has degenerated which is wrong.

Could we imagine Jesus' attending an office or factory party on "Christmas Eve" where both

men and women were drinking until they were intoxicated?

Could we imagine Jesus' condoning the desecration of millions of evergreen trees to be used as decoration for a few days and then destroyed? One of my neighbors had the top cut off a beautiful spruce tree last year by vandals just before December 25. Presumably it was used for a Christmas tree. How could anyone celebrate Christ's birthday in that manner?

Would He approve of the unrestrained spending for toys and articles too numerous to mention, which have no lasting value? Have you ever noticed while shopping in a large department store how many, many articles for sale have no practical value? Is it any wonder that when Christ returns as King "the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn; . . . for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly . . . thou shalt find them no more at all" (Rev. 18:11—14).

Would Christ approve the spending of thousands of dollars for a jewelry pin when many people are hungry?

In the early centuries after Christ, fires and lights were used as symbols of warmth and lasting life, but today electric lights are used merely as decoration, with little or no thought of the light that guides to everlasting life.

Another aspect of the season with which Jesus would be displeased would be the playing of hymns and carols through loud speakers at high volume, competing with a multitude of noises in a busy city. To be forced to listen to "Silent Night" or "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" in these surroundings is not only in bad taste but sacrilegious. "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" is far more consistent with the so-called "Christmas spirit," where Santa Claus has taken over as guest of honor. Christ remains in name only, and too often even His name is in jeopardy except as a swear word.

Although the secularization of Christmas has increased rapidly in the last fifty years, there have been feeble efforts made to put Christ back into Christmas. In the early nineteenth century traditional Christmas customs were suppressed in both the United States and England, due to Puritan objection to their pagan origin. More recently a number of religious groups have strongly con-

demned the mixture of pagan and sacred rites, some going so far as ignoring the day entirely. The Megiddo Church has for over sixty years ignored the 25th of December and commemorated the birth of our Saviour on the First of Abib (the first
(Continued on page 19)

Can This Be Christmas?

What meaneth all this fuss and worry?
Whence go these crowds to run and scurry?
Why all the lights—the Christmas trees?
And the silly "fat man," tell me, please!

*Why, don't you know? This is the day
When everybody should be gay,
For this is "Christmas."*

So this is Christmas, do you say?
But where is Christ this Christmas Day?
Has He been lost among the throng?
His voice drowned out by empty song?

*No, He's not here—you'll find Him where
Some humble soul seeks God in prayer;
There you'll find Christ—not Christmas.*

But see the many fickle crowds
Who gather on this Christmas Day,
Whose hearts have never yet been moved
To say to Him, "Come in and stay."

*In countless homes the candles burn,
And countless hearts with longing yearn
For gifts and presents, food and fun,
And laughter till the day is done,*

But not a word or thought or care
For Him who lived that we might share
The Father's promises of wealth
And glory, honor, vigor, health.

*I'm sick of all this celebration,
Feasting, drinking, recreation;
I'll go instead to Galilee
Where once He taught beside the sea.*

And there I'll join with those who love
His Father earthly things above,
And I'll find Christ—not Christmas.

*I'll leap by faith across the years
To that great Day when He appears
The second time, to rule and reign,
To end all sorrow, death and pain.*

In perfect bliss we then may stay
With Him throughout an endless Day
And worship HIM—not Christmas!
— Selected and altered.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Kingdom of God

HOW THANKFUL we can be to be living so near the time of the establishment of the Kingdom of God! Nearly forty centuries separated Abraham from the season of its fulfillment. Even the apostle Paul had to span close to two millennia to see by faith the realization of the promise. And here are we, privileged to repeat in full assurance the living words of Jesus: "Look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

Concluding our outline of study, we will discuss:

- VI. Human Concepts of the Kingdom
 - C. The British-Israel Concept
 - D. Other Concepts
- VII. Christ's Kingdom on Earth—Summary

How triumphant the thought: "Zion's king shall reign victorious, all the earth shall own His sway; He shall make His kingdom glorious, He shall reign through endless day."

VI. HUMAN CONCEPTS OF THE KINGDOM

C. British-Israel Concept

Herbert W. Armstrong, founder of the Radio Church of God, makes the claim that the British throne and its monarchy are direct descendants of the kings of Israel through the ten so-called "lost tribes." It is his teaching that Christ at His second coming will sit upon this throne and it will then be transferred to Jerusalem.

Mr. Armstrong adduces that after the Babylonian captivity, when the remnant of Judah went into Egypt contrary to the command of the Almighty, Jeremiah took one of the daughters of the deposed King Zedekiah who had married an Irish prince and fled to Ireland. Here a dynasty was set up which was later overturned (one of the three overturnings of Ezek. 21:27) and planted in Scotland, again overturned and moved to England, where it continues today in the reign of Queen Elizabeth II.

Concluding the tale, Mr. Armstrong writes: "In view of the linking together of Biblical history, prophecy, and Irish history, can anyone deny that this Hebrew princess was the daughter of King Zedekiah of Judah, and therefore heir to the throne of David?—that the aged patriarch was in fact Jeremiah, and his companion Jeremiah's scribe, or secretary, Baruch? . . . That when the throne of David was first overturned by Jeremiah, it was re-

planted in Ireland, later overturned a second time and replanted in Scotland, overturned a third time and planted in London?"

"When Christ returns to earth to sit on that throne, He shall take over a LIVE, existing throne, not a nonexistent one (Luke 1:32)."

Mr. Armstrong's supposed proof for this claim reads more like a novel than Scripture. Given as proof are portions of various verses of Scripture plus "ancient annals, legends, and history of Ireland"—the latter being relied upon more than Scripture, little Bible proof being available.

To Mr. Armstrong's question, "Can anyone deny it?" we would say, Can anyone **prove** it? Due to the limited information in the Scriptures, we cannot accept this theory. Who of us, living some 2500 years later, can distinguish between that which is "historical" and that which is "legendary" in Irish annals? Let us consider this theory in the light of what we can learn from the Scriptures.

1. **The ten lost tribes.** Many have speculated as to what became of the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom. Their identity was lost when they were carried away captive by the king of Assyria. They ceased to exist as tribes, but were "scattered" rather than "lost." It is interesting to note that James, more than 700 years later, addressed his epistle to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad," indicating that they had been scattered.

2. **The migration of Jeremiah.** There is no doubt but that Jeremiah was one of the greatest of the Hebrew prophets, but beyond the fact that he went down into Egypt with the remnant of Judah we know nothing of his latter days. The same is true of the daughters of Zedekiah: they are mentioned among the exiles, and no more. That one or more of them with Jeremiah migrated to England is only conjecture and without Biblical or historical backing.

3. **The throne to be occupied by Christ.** As pointed out by Mr. Armstrong, Christ is to inherit David's throne. This was stated by the angel to Mary before His birth: "And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David" (Luke 1:32), but there is nothing in the Scriptures to indicate that that throne is now in existence in England or elsewhere. Speaking of that kingdom,

* *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*, H. W. Armstrong, p. 123.

the prophet Ezekiel said: "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he comes whose right it is; and I will give it him" (Ezek. 21: 27). After God's earthly Kingdom was destroyed, it was to be no more until Christ, the rightful heir, should come. Not that it should be no more overturned, but that it would not exist until Christ should come. Newer translations of the Bible give the same idea. The RSV renders it, "there shall not be even a trace of it."

Mr. Armstrong's statement that "the throne of David was first overturned by Jeremiah" is contrary to the Scriptures. It was the Lord God who was behind the overturnings. The prophecy of Ezekiel begins: "Thus saith the Lord God." We have no right to add to His words.

Jerusalem, the capital of God's earthly kingdom before its destruction, will again become the capital, this time of the whole earth. The "throne of David" will be occupied by the rightful heir—Jesus Christ.

D. Other Concepts

Other concepts of the Kingdom of God are many and varied. Modern-day writers have written much in an attempt to explain how they think the Kingdom of God will come. Others present the view that it is both present and future. Statements such as the following are common in their writings: "The Kingdom is a present realm or sphere into which men are now entering"; "the Kingdom is both present and future"; "the church is the people of the Kingdom, and the Kingdom works in and through the church as it did in and through Jesus." We shall discuss only a few of these concepts.

1. **The church as the kingdom.** To some, the Kingdom of God is the church. One expounder of this theory writes: "The Church is the army of the Kingdom of God, engaged in the task of conquering every hostile power and winning the world for Christ and ultimately for God. There is no need for Christ to return to accomplish the final victory of God's Kingdom, but it will be accomplished by the victory of the church in the world."

This theory falls short of the Bible definition of the Kingdom of God: It possesses neither King, territory nor laws. It does possess a multitude of subjects, should we include all nominal church members. But the church today shows no evidence of conquering the world or overcoming evil; on the contrary, the evils of the world have gradually crept into the church until the average church member is both in the world and of the world, a status forbidden by God (see I John 2:15—17; John 17:14—16).

2. **The Kingdom both present and future.** Many of the above-quoted modern writers have written much in an attempt to explain how the Kingdom of God is both present and future. A misunderstanding of the words of Jesus in Luke 17:21, "The kingdom of God is within you," has provided

the basis for the contention that the Kingdom was present in Jesus' day, hence must be present today.

Most Bible students realize Jesus taught a kingdom yet future, yet they also believe He said it was then in their midst, hence the seeming paradox. We are confident Jesus was not guilty of contradicting Himself. The Greek word, "*Basileia*," translated "kingdom," in Luke 17:21, has also for its meaning, a "king; his royal majesty." **Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott** renders the verse, "God's royal majesty is among you." **Harper's Greek Testament** states in a footnote that Jesus was "alluding to His own presence in their midst."

In our common King James Version a marginal reference suggests "among" instead of "within"—the King was among them. This would agree with the major portion of Jesus' teaching, that His kingdom was yet future, but they failed to comprehend His message and put Him to death.

3. **The kingdom in the heart.** The heart, like the church, falls short of the Bible description of the Kingdom, since it possesses none of the necessary elements and is declared by the prophet Jeremiah to be "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." And if the Kingdom were in the hearts of men, it would not have been in the hearts of the self-righteous Pharisees to whom the words "the kingdom of God is within you" were addressed.

In the Berkeley translation Luke 17:21 is rendered: "indeed the kingdom of God is in your midst." A footnote comments as follows: "The translation, 'within you' is equally possible, but could hardly be our Lord's meaning regarding the Pharisees. More likely it means, 'I am in your midst.'"

VII. CHRIST'S KINGDOM ON EARTH

The establishment of Christ's Kingdom on this earth will come about by a whole series of events which we shall take up in this lesson. We shall cover the steps in the order of occurrence.

1. **The arrival of Elijah.** Christ's return to earth will be presaged by the arrival of **Elijah the prophet**. Elijah is one of two Bible personages who never died, sharing with Enoch the glory of having been translated. According to the Scripture record "there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and . . . Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (II Kings 2:11). From the Psalmist we learn that "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels" (Ps. 68:17), thus we know that Elijah was borne away to heaven by the angels of God.

That Elijah was to be the forerunner of Christ's second coming was spoken by the prophet Malachi: "Look, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. He will reconcile fathers to sons and sons to fathers, lest I come and put the land under a ban to destroy it"

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Is Christ an angel?	May	Will Christ return as a man or a spirit?	Dec.
Is God just in not giving the Holy Spirit to all?	Jan.	Will Elijah come in person?	July
Is salvation bestowed on simple belief?	Jan.	Will God accept varying degrees of goodness?	Feb.
Will the faithful go to heaven with Christ?	Dec.	Will God condemn those who have not known Him?	Feb.
Is taking of life sin?	Aug.	Will God force anyone to serve Him?	July
		Will the Jews hold their own in Palestine?	July

Ezek. 36:24, 25	Aug.	John 5:24	Jan.	Col. 1:14	Nov.
Daniel 8	Mar.	John 8:44	Sept.	II Tim. 1:9, 10	Sept.
Matthew 24	Apr.	John 14:7—10	Feb.	Tit. 3:5	Sept.
Mark 15:25	Oct.	I Cor. 15:44	Dec.	II Pet. 3:7—10	Aug.
Luke 21:32	Aug.	II Cor. 5:21	Nov.	Rev. 7:4—9	Dec.
John 1	Feb.			Rev. 7:14	July

(4:5, 6, NEB). And Jesus Himself confirmed Elijah's coming: "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things" (Matt. 17:11). (For further elucidation on this subject, see our booklet "The Coming of Jesus and Elijah.")

2. **The resurrection of the covenant-makers.** The resurrection of those who have covenanted to serve God will constitute part of the work of Elijah. According to I Thess. 4:16, 17, the dead in Christ shall rise with the living to "meet the Lord in the air," thus they will have to be resurrected before this initial meeting. Not everyone who has ever lived will be resurrected, but only those who have covenanted to serve Him. According to the parable of the Pounds, when the Lord returned He called His own servants and reckoned with them (Luke 19:12; Matt. 25:14). These servants will include both faithful and unfaithful (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15).

3. **The arrival of Christ.** We are not told how much time will elapse between the coming of Elijah and that of Christ. With modern methods of communication news spreads around the world within minutes, hence it would not take long to warn all, even in remote areas, of the impending event. **Jesus' own words lead us to believe His coming will be sudden:** "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. . . Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come . . . Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:27, 42, 44).

Christ will not come alone. It was the promise of the angels at His ascension that He would come again in like manner as He went. Luke reports that He was "carried up into heaven," indicating the presence of angels; thus He will return with angels. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels" (Matt. 16:27; see also Matt. 25:31; Mark 8:38).

4. **The Judgment of His servants.** Before the Judgment can take place, the covenant-makers must be assembled. We learn from Matt. 24:31 that "he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet [the mission of Elijah], and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds." This will include all who have covenanted to serve Him throughout the Day of salvation. "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). Election does not assure salvation; the reward will be according to what every man has done, whether good or bad. In Jesus' own words, "He shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27), and again, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). The "all" who appear at the

Judgment constitutes **all the covenant-makers, all who have agreed to serve Him**, both the living and the resurrected dead, faithful and unfaithful (Matt. 25:32, 33).

We are not told where the Judgment will take place, but since the living and resurrected servants are caught up to meet the Lord in the air (I Thess. 4:16, 17), it is probable that it will be held in the air. The prophecy of a famine of the words of the Lord (Amos 8:11, 12) lends credence to this view. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." Such a famine could occur only if all who know the Word are temporarily not present to dispense it.

5. **Christ is King.** Christ, of whom it was said by the angel before His birth, "he will be king over Israel for ever" (Luke 1:33 NEB) will be proclaimed King. Earth's ruling powers, both ecclesiastical and secular, will rise up to resist the new government, thus precipitating Armageddon. True to Jesus' parable of the Nobleman they will say: "We do not want this man as our king."

6. **The conquest and judgment of the nations.** Before Christ's kingdom can be established all those who resist Him and oppose His righteous rule must be vanquished. They will not be cut off without first being given an opportunity to accept the new rule. "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come" (Rev. 14:7), will be the warning. The battle between the opposing forces will differ from wars as we know them: **it will be a righteous war.** We learn from Rev. 19:11, "In righteousness he doth judge and make war." This war will continue until all evil and evil-doers are banished from the earth. It will necessitate the destruction of two-thirds of earth's inhabitants: "It shall happen throughout the land that two thirds of the people shall be struck down and die, while one third of them shall be left there" (Zech. 13:8, NEB).

7. **The re-education of the nations.** Beginning with the Battle of Armageddon, and continuing throughout the Millennium will be a world-wide educational program. It was spoken by the prophet Isaiah that "When [God's] judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (26:9). People will desire knowledge, (Zech. 8:20—22), and will be seeking it from Jerusalem, the capital city. Isa. 2:2, 3 and Mic. 4:1, 2 both tell of many seeking to learn the ways of the Lord.

8. **The new government in operation.** When the words of Rev. 11:15 are fulfilled and "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ," the new government will

be in operation. It will be a kingdom as we know present-day kingdoms, with territory, rulers, subjects and laws. We shall review these fundamentals briefly.

a. **Territory.** The territory of Christ's kingdom will differ from earthly kingdoms of our day in that it will be worldwide. "The Lord shall be king over **all the earth**" (Zech. 14:9). "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8); "... we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:10). The Scriptures leave no room for disputing the extent or location of the kingdom.

b. **Rulers and co-rulers.** The supreme authority in the Kingdom of God rests with the King: **Jesus Christ**. Unlike dictators of our day, Christ "shall reign in righteousness." He shall "judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon the earth" (Isa. 32:1; Ps. 67:4). His kingdom shall extend over the whole earth: "One king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all" (Ezek. 37:22).

Although Christ will be the Supreme Ruler over the earth, governing so large a kingdom will require assistants. **These co-rulers will be those judged faithful at His coming.** Paul's word to Timothy was: "I endure it all [hardship] for the sake of God's chosen ones, with this end in view, that they too may attain the glorious and eternal salvation which is in Christ Jesus. Here are words you may trust: 'If we died with him, we shall live with him; if we endure, we shall reign with him'" (II Tim. 2:10—12, NEB). Paul suffered much for the gospel that he might someday reign with Christ. And Jesus Himself assured us: "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. . . . To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (Rev. 2:26; 3:21).

c. **The subjects or populace.** Those that remain of the nations after the Battle of Armageddon will be the progenitors of the "new earth," the new people that will ultimately fill the earth. They will learn the ways of the Lord under the new government. According to Zech. 13:9, they will be refined and tried until they recognize the Lord as God. They are represented as a "great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, [who] stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes"—representative of purity (Rev. 7:9). "A great multitude, which no man could number," means an unrevealed number, not that they could not be counted.

d. **The laws or government.** The Word of the Lord will be the law in the age to come. It will be dispensed from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3; Mic. 4:2). All will know and obey the law: "I will set my law within them and write it on their hearts; I will be-

come their God and they shall become my people. No longer need they teach one another to know the Lord; all of them, high and low alike, shall know me, says the Lord" (Jer. 31:33, 34, NEB).

9. **The millennial reign over the mortal nations.** The thousand years after the judgment of the nations, commonly known as the **Millennium**, will be a preface to eternity, a time of peace, prosperity, health and happiness on this earth. We shall cover these conditions as contained in the Scriptures.

a. **Social conditions.** Social conditions during the Millennium will be ideal. **Wickedness will be restrained** (Rev. 20:1, 2). "Thou shalt not see evil any more" (Zeph. 3:15). The law will be enforced: "He shall rule them with a rod of iron," not that it will be cruel or harsh, but unbreakable. "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. 30:21). This warning will keep people in the right way.

b. **Peace will be universal.** Peace, the earnest desire of most world leaders today, will become a reality. It was promised by the angels at the birth of Christ but has proved elusive through the ages, but under a righteous King it will come: "Nation shall lift no sword against nation, and never again will they learn to make war" (Isa. 2:4, Phillips).

c. **Prosperity and security** will be enjoyed by all. "And they shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. . . . For as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain" (Isa. 65:21, 22). Men will no longer fear other men: "They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: . . . for all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever" (Mic. 4:4, 5).

d. **Health and happiness** shall abound. The promise is: "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick" (Isa. 33:24). Because there is no sickness, long life will be the rule, not the exception. "There no child shall ever again die an infant, no old man fail to live out his life; every boy shall live his hundred years before he dies, whoever falls short of a hundred shall be despised" (Isa. 65:20, NEB). Some claim this to be a description of eternity but it falls short of this for in eternity "there shall be no more death" (Rev. 20:4). Such a condition should and does produce happiness: "Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord" (Ps. 144:15).

e. **Rebuilding and glorifying the earth** will be a major project. With the world's resources turned from making implements of war to the betterment of mankind, pollution will become a forgotten word. Anything that is detrimental to the health

and welfare of the people will be prohibited. Waste lands will be reclaimed and become productive: "The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose" (Isa. 35:1). There will no longer be barren lands; all will be beautified. Cultivation of former desolate areas will alleviate food shortages that might occur due to the population increase caused by longevity.

10. The Second Resurrection. Although there will be no sickness or suffering, there will be death during the Millennium. Man will die simply because he has reached the end of his allotted time and it will be painless. All who have died during the Millennium will be amenable to judgment, because all knew the law, hence all will be resurrected. We learn of this second resurrection in Rev. 20:5: "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished."

11. Temporary suspension of law. After the Second Resurrection, and before the judgment of the multitudes that have lived and died during the Millennium, the law will be suspended for a brief period. We learn this from Rev. 20:7, 8: "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations." **Wickedness, represented by Satan,** has been controlled by law during the thousand years, and once the law is relaxed, it rears its ugly head. The guiding voice that said, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isa. 30:21) is not heard and those who still have evil in their heart rebel. Rev. 20:7—10 describes the rebellion and its outcome. The

rebellion is put down and the guilty are cut off by the hand of God.

12. The Second Judgment. The Second Judgment, like the first, rewards everyone **according to his works.** It is pictured in Rev. 20:12—15: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: . . . and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. . . . And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Verse 14 defines the "lake of fire": **It is the second death, penal death.**

Death and hell (the grave) are also described as being cast into the lake of fire. **Death itself is dead.** In the words of Paul, "When our mortality has been clothed with immortality, then the saying of Scripture will come true: 'Death is swallowed up; victory is won!'" (I Cor. 15:54, NEB).

13. Eternity! Then dawns Eternity, the "eighth day", a day of eternal duration, a day when our earth, glorified and beautified, is filled with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Then, in the words of the Revelator, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful" (Rev. 21:4, 5). ●●

To be a messenger you must know the message.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. Define the earthly government known as a "kingdom." Define the Kingdom of God.

2. Why should we be interested in learning what is revealed about God's Kingdom?

3. Discuss Jesus' divine right to the Kingship. Include Bible proof.

4. What are the four basic essentials of a kingdom? Discuss each briefly as a part of the Kingdom of God, giving Bible evidence.

5. When did God begin to choose a nation?

6. Discuss briefly the growth of the people of Israel into a kingdom. Who were the first three kings of Israel?

7. Why was the Kingdom of Israel sometimes called the Kingdom of God? What was its significance in relation to the future Kingdom of God?

8. What symbols in Genesis reveal certain aspects of the future Kingdom?

9. Quote five verses from the major and minor prophets that tell about the Kingdom.

10. Was there any relation between the Mosaic tabernacle arrangement and the future Kingdom?

11. What does the parable of the Pounds teach us about the Kingdom? the parable of the Mustard Seed? the parable of the Labourers?

12. Who will inhabit God's Kingdom?

13. How do we know that the earth will not be burned and desolate for a thousand years?

14. How do we know that the faithful and unfaithful will both be present at the First Judgment?

15. When Christ returns, will all who have died be resurrected?

16. Where will the saints be during the Millennium?

17. How can we know we shall see Christ when He returns?

18. Do we know exactly when Christ will come? What do we know?

19. What city will be the future metropolis of the world?

20. Explain Jesus' words: "the kingdom of God is within you." To whom was He speaking?

21. What will be the outcome of Armageddon? (If you need assistance in answering these questions, refer to your Bible and to the previous lessons in this series.)

Reprints of these studies are available upon request.

Who Are the Angels?

THE STUDY of angels, their origin, their work and their home is a most fascinating subject of sacred Scripture. To the average churchgoer, angels are some sort of spirit beings, mere phantoms or myths who inhabit the limitless celestial space around the throne of God. Artists invariably picture them in human form, having the wings of a fowl. Who is right?

Since no man living today has seen an angel, we must go to the Bible to learn about them. The Bible pictures angels as real beings with material bodies, though having no unusual physical features. Nowhere in the Scriptures is there any indication that they have wings. On the contrary, the possibility of entertaining angels "unawares," as mentioned by the writer to the Hebrews (13:2), suggests that they are quite like people as we know them. The three angelic visitors to Abraham, identified by the Scripture writer only as "three men," and their subsequent visit to Lot, where they are identified as "angels" by their superior power, supports this view.

An angel, identified as "the captain of the Lord's host," appeared to Joshua at Jericho as a "man with his sword drawn in his hand" (Josh. 5:13, 14). The angel sent from God to explain Daniel's vision to him was described as having "the appearance of a man" and also as "the man Gabriel"—his stature must have been comparable to that of an ordinary man. The narrative also mentions his having "touched" Daniel, hence he could not have been a spirit or a phantom (Dan. 8:15—19; 9:21).

Manoah, father of Samson, recognized his visitor as an angel only after he had disappeared into heaven in the flame of the altar—surely he resembled other men in appearance (Judg. 13:20, 21).

The Hebrew word translated "angel" means simply "messenger, envoy," and their principal function in the Scriptures was that of ministering to human need. They were God's messengers to deliver His word to His human servants; they were His envoys to announce special events; they were His army to protect His men and to execute His punishment on the wicked. It was an angel who stayed the hand of Abraham when he would have slain Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen. 22). It was an angel who appeared to Moses "in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush" (Ex. 3:2). It was an angel who announced the birth of Isaac, of Ishmael, of Samson, of Jacob and Esau, of John the Baptist and of Jesus. An angel escorted the children of Israel through the wilderness (Ex. 23:20). Two angels protected Lot from the mob that stormed his door (Genesis 19). Angels fed Elijah in the desert and

ministered to Jesus' need in the wilderness. An angel stood by Paul on board an ill-fated ship caught in a stormy sea. On occasions almost countless, angels delivered God's people from enemies who would have destroyed them. They are His "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14), and they encamp "round about them that fear him, and [deliver] them" (Ps. 34:7).

We believe angels were once human as we ourselves, who through living a righteous life, through "patient continuance in well doing" made themselves worthy to have their mortal bodies changed, made like the angels; they were rewarded with "immortality, eternal life" (Rom. 2:7). They form an essential part of God's family in heaven (Eph. 3:15), enjoying a celestial state which no member of the earthly family—except Jesus Christ—has yet received (I Tim. 6:14—16).

The Bible supports our belief in the formerly human state of angels. The angel who delivered the message to John the Revelator described himself as a "fellowservant." When the angel had completed his message, John fell down to worship at his feet (Rev. 22:8), but the angel rebuked him: "No, never that! I am but a servant like yourself and your brothers the prophets, who lay to heart the words of this book. Worship God" (Rev. 22:9, Moffatt). A similar instance is recorded in Rev. 19:10. Here the angel describes himself as "but a servant like yourself and your brothers, who hold the testimony of Jesus" (Moffatt).

The Almighty God today still proffers this hope to mortals: worthy men and women can become equal unto the angels, "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, . . . are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:35, 36).

This glorious change from mortality to immortality was the sublime hope of "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ," as he addressed "them that have obtained like precious faith with us." These are his words: "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:1—4). What more sustaining promise could these early persecuted Christians find, than to know that if

faithful they could someday be "partakers of the divine nature"—be made equal to the angels!

It was for this prospect that the apostle Paul labored more abundantly than others, that he might attain to that better resurrection, the exaltation to life and immortality. He wrote to the Philip-pians, "All I care for is to know Christ, to experience the power of his resurrection, and to share his sufferings, in growing conformity with his death, if only I may finally arrive at the resurrection from the dead" (3:10, 11, NEB).

When did Paul anticipate the fulfillment of this promise? He tells us clearly in verses 20, 21: "We, by contrast, are citizens of heaven, and from heaven we expect our deliverer to come, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transfigure the body belonging to our humble state, and give it a form like that of his own resplendent body, by the very power which enables him to make all things subject to himself" (NEB). Christ's own "resplendent body" is no longer subject to death, and He has promised a glorified body like His to worthy mortals.

This same promise is contained in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. He writes: "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." The inheritors of immortality have been changed into a substance superior to flesh and blood.

"We shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (I Cor. 15:49—55).

Then Paul voices an earnest appeal to all: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (v. 58). There is nothing to lose, and everything to gain.

This same hope of being made equal to the angels was the expectation of yet another Scripture writer, the beloved John. In his First Epistle we read, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2). And like the apostle Paul, he points out the need for his hearers to work for that reward: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure" (v. 3).

Purity of heart is a prerequisite for eternal life, immortality, angel-life. Jesus, our perfect example, became pure of heart during His lifetime, was raised from the dead by His Father, and exalted to

a place of honor at His Father's right hand. It is now for us to *purify ourselves* that when He appears we may be worthy to be made like Him, made like the angels—actual beings of physical, material substance, vibrant with life and happiness and no longer subject to death. ●●

Words to WALK By

Some professing Christians have WILL power; some have WONT power.

When you give in to God, God will give out to you.

The true expression of Christianity is not a sigh but a song.

The loose character generally winds up in a tight place.

Some people fall for everything and stand for nothing.

Sin may come upon thee by surprise, but do not let it dwell with thee as a guest.

Whenever a revision of a moral law is demanded, it is pretty safe to assume that what is wanted is a "downward revision."

There are 168 hours in a week. How many do you give God?

A sunny disposition gilds the edges of life's blackest clouds.

Stop feeding your body and it will die; stop feeding your soul and it will die.

Vain Regrets

Do we not all know many persons who waste a great portion of their conscious existence in regretting their lost opportunities and seemingly needless mistakes and worrying about the future? If only they could be persuaded that this attitude of mind is simply devastating, and that though attainment of moral poise is not easy, the very effort needed by the endeavor will develop will power and strength of character, encouraging them to make the attempt.

But let us not always look at someone else. What of ourselves? How much time do we waste in vain regret? Let us remind ourselves again of the words of the poet, which urge those who falter to "look not mournfully into the past—it comes not back again: wisely improve the present, it is thine: go forth to meet the shadowy future without fear and with a manly heart." ●●



I'm Thinking

THE OTHER DAY I was attracted to a store window by the headlines of a large sign which read, "One Hundred Dollars Reward." Reading further, I learned that the sign was advertising "make-believe" diamonds. The window was filled with these make-believe diamonds; among them was one genuine diamond, and the reward was offered to anyone "who is able to tell any difference between the genuine diamond and the rest of the stones in the window."

The make-believe diamonds could be bought for a dollar or two, which is of course far too low a price for a genuine diamond. But these make-believe diamonds looked so much like the genuine diamond, that people could buy them and make their friends believe they had real diamonds. There was one way, however, by which I could have picked out the good diamond from all the rest. If I had taken the genuine diamond and a make-believe diamond into a very dark room and laid them both in the palm of my hand, then turned on the light of an arc lamp, the real diamond would have sparkled with even more brilliancy than before. But the other stone would

have appeared to be just what it really was—a piece of glass, and not a real diamond at all. The strong light showed the difference.

So it is with our lives. If we pretend to be what we are not, the arc lamp of time will sooner or later reveal our real selves. If a boy or girl makes his parents believe he is reading the Bible and saying a prayer every night before going to bed, and he is not doing so, it will soon tell in his daily life. He will be unkind to sister or brother, then he will begin to quarrel with other children and soon it will be discovered that he is not doing what his parents are made to believe.

A number of very wicked men came into a rescue mission one very cold winter night to keep from freezing to death. Before they were given beds for the night, they were all asked how they had gotten into that low-down condition. They gave quite a number of different answers, but all of them had started on the downward path by making those about them believe they were living a life which they really were not. Some of them, when they were boys, found it too troublesome, even unthinkable, to read their Bibles. Neglecting the important things, they sank deeper and deeper into sin. Others had been church members at one time in their lives, but they made people believe they were living clean lives when they were not, so they were found out and good people would not associate with them any more. On this very cold winter night, their ragged clothes and hard faces distinguished them as much from good people as the make-believe diamond could be distinguished from the genuine diamond under the light of the arc lamp.

Remember, boys and girls, "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Wherever we are, God knows what we are doing. And if we try to make other people believe we are living good lives and we really are not, we will some time be found out. ●●

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MEGIDDO MESSAGE.

GOD--the True Object of Our Confidence

WE LIVE in a world filled with continuous reminders of decay—decline, change, devastation, loss, surround us. "The mountain falling cometh to naught, and the rock is removed out of his place. The waters wear the stones. Thou wastest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth, and Thou destroyest the hope of man."

Conscious of our own instability, we look about for *something* on which to rest, something secure, something enduring. But we look in vain. All temporal things had a beginning, and they will have an end. The face of the world is changing daily, hourly. All animated things grow old and die. The rocks crumble, the trees fall, the leaves fade, the grass withers. The firmest works of man, too, are gradually giving way. And we ourselves are mortal.

Is there nothing to counteract this dismal picture of the earth and all mankind? Is there no substance among all these shadows? Can no support be offered—can no source of confidence be named?

Yes! there is a Being, to whom we can look with perfect confidence of finding that security which nothing about us can give, and a security which nothing can take away. To this Being we can lift up our souls, and on Him we may rest, exclaiming in the language of the monarch of Israel—

Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting,
THOU ART GOD.

Timely Topics

(Continued from page 10)

month of the Hebrew year, commencing with the first new moon after the spring equinox).

While the story of Mary's giving birth to the infant Jesus in a manger is beautiful and worthy of our love and admiration, we feel that far too much emphasis has been placed on this facet of His life. The real reason we honor Jesus is that He is soon to return to earth, first as Judge, then as the Saviour of all who meet His requirements; then as conqueror of all evil forces, and finally as King, bringing peace, plenty and happiness, health and prosperity to all mankind. This is the purpose for which we should honor Christ. This is why we should celebrate His birthday with reverence and praise God for His great gift to us. ●●

DECEMBER, 1970

Of old hast Thou didst lay the foundation of the earth;
And the heavens are the work of Thy hands.
They may perish, but Thou wilt endure;
All of them may wear out like a garment;
Thou mayest change them like clothing and
they will change;
But Thou art always the same, and Thy years
shall have no end.

Here, then, is a support which will never fail.
Here is a foundation which can never be moved—
the everlasting Creator of countless worlds—

The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity.

When we have looked on the pleasures of life, and they have vanished away; when we have looked on the works of nature, and perceive that they were changing; on the monuments of art, and seen that they would not long stand; on our friends, and they have fled while we were gazing; on ourselves, and felt that we were as fleeting as they—then we can look to the throne of God. Change and decay have never reached that exalted peak. The waves of an eternity have been rushing past it, but it has remained unshaken. The waves of another eternity are rushing toward it, but it is fixed, and can never be disturbed.

If it were not for Christ's coming we should shortly finish our allotted time on earth, and a world of other days and other men would be entirely ignorant that once we lived. But the same unalterable Being will still preside over the universe through all its changes, and from His remembrance we—if faithful—shall never be blotted. He is our Father and our God forever. He will give us the earth made new for an inheritance; He will refine our nature from all its tendencies to corruption, share with us His own immortality, admit us to His everlasting habitation, and crown us with His eternity. ●●

DECEMBER 25 the Birth of Christ? NO!

KNOW the evidence! GIVE it
to your friends.

FREE LEAFLETS

Christ the Saviour Is Born

Your supply is waiting.
SEND NOW!

LETTERS

Building a House

God's promises are to those who overcome, to the fighters, to the lifters, to the courageous. No cowards, no shirkers, no retreaters can enter His kingdom.

Each of us is building a house of himself, a temple. We have our choice of materials, and they are our thoughts, habits, and actions, everything we think and say.

We cannot dream ourselves into a character; we must hammer and forge it for ourselves. I am resolved to put away all evil that I may be worthy to stand before the coming King.

Rome, Ga.

Mrs. S. J.

Housecleaning Time

How concerned we must be, and very careful that we do not let any disorder of uncontrolled emotions or passions disturb us. If we go to pieces over petty things, it really shows that our spiritual house is very disorderly. We can let some unkind word slip, or an act, so easily if we aren't very careful. It is just as easy to have a disordered spiritual house as it is to have a disordered home. It takes continual work to keep either one orderly.

If we are fortified by God's truth, we will watch to put away disorderly thoughts and rule our tongue.

Kinards, S. C.

Mrs. E. C.

A Testing Ground

My having to work and be among so many worldly people can be very trying at times. But I must look at it as a testing ground to work at overcoming the unpleasant things that arise in my nature. I find that when we are short a few hands, we all pitch in and work harder to get the work done. Oh! how grand it would be if we would all work together at our spiritual jobs that way.

Wausau, Wis.

Mrs. E. E. S.

Comforting and Consoling

I am renewing my subscription to the MEGIDDO MESSAGE, a wonderful magazine of reading on the Scriptures. Each number is better than that preceding, and always so comforting and consoling. Thank you.

New York, N. Y.

B. S.

Don't Be a Porcupine!

I came to realize in 1968 that I was going to have to change myself. Since then I have been trying. Other people troubled me so, but I came to realize that instead of changing others, it was I that needed the change. I think I have made a great improvement in anger, pride, hatred, and self-centeredness. All my life I have been easy to get along with—I would never talk back to anyone that hurt my feelings—but I kept them stored up inside me. But I have come to realize that they can't hurt me by their nasty talk, they are only hurting themselves. You are always going to have your porcupines, but though they throw their bristles and you get stung a little, you don't have to return them.

I am so much happier than I ever was. I still have a lot

of work to do, but I am trying. Thanks for your advice on being a Christian and on learning to take each and every condition with patience and meekness. I am trying—I will try harder!

I understand "God helps those who help themselves." That is something I have to learn to do by myself, and that is just what I intend to do.

Republic, Mo.

Mrs. P.

Meditations On the Word

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10: 35-38).

Confidence is essential in every avenue of life. Confidence is all that impels one to work for a reward not yet in his possession. The day worker is confident he will receive his wages at the end of the week, hence is willing to invest his time and energies for values not yet in his possession. The self-employed, the small business man, or professional man, all have a certain amount of faith in the honesty of the public. Each feels he is taking somewhat of a chance. He knows some of his customers are bad risks; yet he feels the percentage of this type of people is small enough that the risk is not too great.

Without confidence, very little business could be done in the financial world. For business to proceed at a high level the people must have faith in their currency, in their banks, in the soundness of the securities issued by their utilities, their municipal and industrial organizations.

The public's confidence often is imposed upon by unscrupulous men whose only thought is to enrich themselves, no matter how many other people they may rob in the process. This is a side of the picture that need not even remotely be considered when our partnership is with the Eternal. It is "impossible for God to lie." He has promised, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips" (Heb. 6:18; Ps. 89:34). Being of "too pure eyes to behold evil," He certainly is too pure to perpetrate evil Himself.

Apart from the self-contained Scriptural evidence, there is much to support our confidence in the existence of one great First Cause, one infinite

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

Creator, and our belief that the universe—including our earth—is His creation. To the man blessed with a sound mind—whatever his religious convictions—there is much to lead him to believe that our earth was created by a superior Intelligence, that its existence and the presence of the human family is not the result of accidental evolution, or the outgrowth of the workings of the wild forces of nature, but a part of a well-devised plan which ultimately must lead to an order much different from anything we have seen up to the present time.

Can we contemplate a Being sufficiently powerful to create an island in space as suited to human habitation as our earth, and people it with beings endowed with power of reason and reflection, capable of attaining a high standard of morality, being content to allow the sin and chaos of the present to go on indefinitely? Our only logical conclusion can be that He must have a long-range plan which is working out according to schedule. The present can only be the means to a much greater end, the darkness before the dawn. Surely the fittest shall survive, and righteousness ultimately triumph over the forces of evil. Whatever a man sows he shall reap, and to him that consistently sows a righteous life, a blissful reward shall await.

Indeed, this viewpoint not only is logical, but it is Scriptural as well. It is the very “*plan*” the Almighty has been working on throughout eternity. The following proof texts amply highlight the succeeding steps of the plan. “Thus saith the Lord, . . . I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded”; “But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.” “The Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. . . . For when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” “And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid.” “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Isa. 45:11, 12; Num. 14:21; Isa. 26:21, 9; Mic. 4:3, 4; Gal. 6:7, 8).

But all of this can now be seen only by the eye of faith: “Now do not drop that confidence of yours; it carries with it a rich hope of reward” (Moffatt’s Trans.). Confidence in God and His divine promises is indispensable; we simply cannot make any progress in the spiritual life without it. Hence the warning is timely: “Cast not away therefore your

confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.” If we allow our faith reserve to lower to the vanishing point we shall be like a car with an empty gas tank, we shall come to a standstill due to an absence of the means of propulsion.

The verse that follows emphasizes the need for patience: “For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” The time element enters into it here. It sometimes takes more moral strength to be able to patiently wait than to endure a more active form of trial. To one who sincerely believes Christ will return, who for many years has looked for Him, confident he is living in the last days and that the advent of the Messiah is imminent, the fact of His seeming to tarry may prove a real test of faith. Let us quote the following verse, using Dr. Moffatt’s translation again: “For in a little, a very little now, the Coming One will arrive without delay. Meantime my just man shall live on by his faith.”

If our desire to live in God’s glorious Tomorrow is overwhelming, if we would willingly exchange a thousand lives like this for that life in glory, our soul will not draw back. We will not surrender to the disheartening scoffs of the unbeliever: “Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (II Pet. 3:4). Just because Christ does not appear by the time we may have felt to be His latest possible arrival date is no evidence He is not coming, nor any reason for us to lose confidence.

“Of that day and hour knoweth no man,” said Jesus (Matt. 24:36), but He later instructed Paul to tell us that the times and seasons we should know perfectly (I Thess. 5:1, 2), that we should not be in darkness as the unbelieving world. Let us not be of those who draw back unto perdition, but let us daily feed our faith, believe all of God’s blessed promises, surrender fully to His just and holy demands, living on by our faith. ●●

*Let not soft slumber close your eyes
Before you’ve collected thrice
The train of action through the day!
Where have my feet chose out their way?
What have I learnt, where’er I’ve been,
From all I’ve heard, from all I’ve seen?
What have I more that’s worth the knowing?
What have I done that’s worth the doing?
What have I sought that I should shun?
What duty have I left undone,
Or into what new follies run?
These self-inquiries are the road
That leads to virtue and to God.*

—Selected.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"You say we must learn to control ourselves. Do you refer to our natural body or our spiritual body? Paul speaks of both in I Cor. 15:44."

The statement that we must control ourselves refers to the natural, human, mortal body. As yet we have no spiritual body. Jesus spoke of the qualities of a spiritual body in His conversation with Nicodemus: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). When born of the Spirit we shall be changed; we shall have bodies of a new substance, superior to flesh and blood, and will possess the freedom to go and come with the freedom of the angels. But no one will be born of the Spirit until he has received the "well done" of the Judge at Judgment Day.

I Corinthians 15:44 to which you allude simply states that there is a natural body and there is a spiritual body. The entire chapter is a dissertation on the resurrection of the dead. The man or woman who during his lifetime has lived the life of a true Christian will be "sown" or cast out of the grave a natural body, then after Judgment and justification will receive the change to immortality. All such will then have a spiritual body.

For further evidence, see our booklet *After Death, What?*

"I cannot believe Christ will come back with a real body. Nor can I accept some of the stories told in the Bible, such as the resurrection and the ascension of Christ, and the viper that Paul shook off and felt no harm. You should forget about the physical aspect of the Bible stories and concentrate on the spiritual side of them. Every story ever told has two sides, you know."

Yes, there are two sides to every story, but that is no proof that one side is literal and the other spiritual. A spiritual lesson may be drawn from every story told, but that is not to say that the literal aspects of the story are nonexistent.

In studying the Bible we must compare spiritual things with spiritual (I Cor. 2:13). We must be consistent.

Will Christ come back with a real body? He certainly will. The apostle John says we shall "see him as he is" (I John 3:2).

As for Christ's being a spirit after His resurrection, or having only a spiritual resurrection, the Bible does not support such a view. The Gospel writers state plainly that He was not a spirit, quoting Jesus' own words: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have"

(Luke 24:39). Jesus was a real man after His resurrection; the disciples *saw* Him ascend into heaven, and the words of the angel assure us that He shall return in the same manner as He went away—a real being, not a spirit (Acts 1:11).

If we would compare spiritual things with spiritual, how can we spiritualize the viper Paul shook off, unless we also spiritualize the island of Melita, the inhabitants of the island, the ship that was wrecked, etc.? No, God is a God of reason. He intends us to draw spiritual lessons from the accounts in His Word, but we cannot say that the historical narrative in the Bible is all spiritual.

"The prophets tell us definitely that the Church of the New Testament was strictly an Israelite church, consisting of a limited number of exactly 144,000 Israelites. And the prophets leave no doubt that this little flock was gathered from all the tribes of the children of Israel. Read Rev. 7:4—9, where it says, 'And I heard the number of them which were sealed [in the Israelite Church]: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda [and of each of the other eleven tribes of Israel, which are named by name] were sealed twelve thousand' each."

I cannot believe that your position that the 144,000 are all natural Israelites, is watertight.

The same group of faithful is described in Rev. 14:4 as "the firstfruits to God and the Lamb," also as "redeemed from among men." The term "men" here is general; it could hardly be applied to Israelites only.

Rev. 5:9, 10 states clearly the source of this group of people. The kings and priests who will reign with Christ on the earth are "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." How could they possibly be all natural-born Israelites!

Furthermore, in Biblical language all believers are called Jews or Israelites: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28, 29). Here are pictured the Israelites which God recognizes.

Galatians 6:15, 16 also classifies all faithful believers as Israel: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." The term includes all believers. Romans 9:6—8 pictures the situation from the opposite angle, that not all Israelites belong to the Israel of God.

"I believe that the completed Church are 'citizens now of heaven' and will be caught up with Christ into heaven and will come back with the new Jerusa-

lem government, when there will be no more 'sorrow, nor crying, nor pain' (Rev. 21:3—5). What do you think?"

You allude to Phil. 3:20, which reads, "for our conversation is in heaven," but the "now" is not in the text. The newer versions employ the term "citizenship" in place of "conversation" in KJV, which is correct. "We are citizens of heaven," or "our citizenship is in heaven." That is, we are citizens of the world to come. We are displaced persons, we are pilgrims (Heb. 11:10—16). Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come (Heb. 13:14). However, this fact is no proof that we must go to heaven to receive any part of this citizenship. Jesus promised to bring our reward to us: "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

Philippians 3:20, 21, as phrased in the New English Bible reads: "We, by contrast, are citizens of heaven and from heaven we expect our deliverer to come, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transfigure the body belonging to our humble state, and give it a form like that of his own resplendent body." But there is no indication here of His returning to heaven, or taking His faithful followers to heaven with Him.

"I would like to hear your admonitions for strengthening my faith. By the way, I think I and many others who read the **MECIDDO MESSAGE** will be awakened to obtain salvation by seeking the truth of the Word of God."

The best way to strengthen your faith in the Bible and its promises is to read over some of the short-range, medium-range, and long-range predictions made in the Bible and then determine how these predictions came about. No man can tell today what is going to happen one month from today, or even one hour hence, but the Lord can predict future events centuries in advance. This is one way we can strengthen our faith in His Word.

One very interesting short-range prophecy is given in II Kings, chapters six and seven. It is the story of the time of a famine in Samaria. Elisha, a man of God, made a prediction. He said, "Tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel in the gate of Samaria." Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God and said, "Behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven might this thing be?" And Elisha answered, "Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." The prediction did come to pass, just as Elisha had foretold. Read the whole of the seventh chapter.

Another short-range prophecy is one given by Jesus in Matt. 24:2. Jesus said, "See ye all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be

left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." He was referring to the temple. And the historian Josephus confirms this prediction, that at the destruction of Jerusalem, they were so greedy for gold that they tore the temple apart stone by stone in their search for gold. These things are entirely beyond the power of man to predict. Therefore, when we can prove that these predictions made in the Bible did come to pass, it gives us faith that other long-range predictions applying to our day will come to pass also.

One very important prediction made in the Bible which we can verify on the pages of history is Daniel's interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. This image which Nebuchadnezzar saw represented the four world kingdoms of men. First was Babylon, then Medo-Persia, third was Greece, and fourth was Rome. The Roman kingdom was to be broken into many divisions. And there will not be a fifth world kingdom until Christ comes and sets up His righteous government. This prediction of the fifth kingdom, God's kingdom, is made in Daniel 2:44, "And in the days [when these days are accomplished] of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."

Studying these prophecies, both long-range and short-range will help very materially to increase our faith in God's Word. Read also predictions which we can see being fulfilled today: Luke 21:25, 26; II Tim. 3:1—4, 13. God's Word can never fail. ●●

Cross-bearing

God gave a cross to me that I must bear,
But first with care He measured me for it.
Knowing the weight that I could surely bear
He made my cross my weaker strength to fit.

He laid it on with tender hands, and spoke
Words charged with courage, precious promises
Of strength that He would send; nor did He fail—
He never will in anything He does.

God bade me bear His cross and give Him praise;
It does not honor Him to weep or frown.
He said that when I reach His gate at last,
He would exchange my cross for a victor's crown.

If sometime I forget the worth of it
And feel its weight almost too great to bear,
He reaches out His hand to steady me,
And by that touch I know that He is there.

Creator, and our belief that the universe—including our earth—is His creation. To the man blessed with a sound mind—whatever his religious convictions—there is much to lead him to believe that our earth was created by a superior Intelligence, that its existence and the presence of the human family is not the result of accidental evolution, or the outgrowth of the workings of the wild forces of nature, but a part of a well-devised plan which ultimately must lead to an order much different from anything we have seen up to the present time.

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What have I sought that I should shun?
What duty have I left undone,
Or into what new follies run?
These self-inquiries are the road
That leads to virtue and to God.*

—Selected.

Lift me, O God, above myself,
Above my highest spheres,
Above the thralling things of sense
To clearer atmospheres.

True Exaltation

Lift me above the little things,
My poor sufficiencies,
My will perverse, my lack of zeal,
My inefficiencies.

Above the earthborn need that gropes,
With foolish hankerings
About earth's cumbered lower slopes
For earthly garnerings.

Above the vanities and cares
Of the Forbidden Land;
Above the passions and the hates
That flame there hand in hand.

Lift me, O God, above myself,
Above these lesser things,
Above my little gods of clay,
And all their capturings.

And grant my soul a glad new birth
And fledge it strong new wings,
That it may soar above the earth
To nobler prosperings.

Lift me, O God, above myself,
That, in Thy time and day,
I somewhat grace Thy fosterings
And climb Thy loftier Way.