

## TREASURES ... THAT LAST FOREVER

But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. (1 Peter 1:25)

It has been estimated that almost one hundred thousand new books are produced each year in the United States of America, but when those published throughout the world are counted, the number exceeds eight billion. That is an incredible collection of volumes, but the comments of the late Dr. Harry Rimmer are worthy of consideration. He said,

In the library of the Louvre, there is, or there was, prior to World War II, an alcove containing miles of shelves, all crammed with books on various phases of science, which had become obsolete in two hundred years. That section was voted as a graveyard of ideas and theories. Students consulted the contents of those thousands of volumes largely to amuse themselves with a review of the history of human error. In the archives of the British Museum in London there is the world's largest collection of ancient literary sources, some of them priceless because of their value to the historian, and some of them consulted only by the humorist who delights in reviewing the tragicomical progress of human thought. And if the world continues in its present course for another century or two, and men proceed with their researches and inquiries, our textbooks so venerated by the present day students, will join those preceding works in the limbo of adolescence! Millions of words of pedantic nonsense are printed every year, all received by the current generation as practically infallible, and all destined to be repudiated by the discoveries of tomorrow. But whether the present order continues for a thousand or a million years into the future, there is one Book which will never change, which can never be obsolete, nor which the wisdom of men can

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surpass. And that Book is the Word of God. (The Golden Text for Today, vol. 1 [Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen Press, 1950], 163)

God's Message Endureth Forever ... How Miraculous!  
For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD. (Ps. 117:2)

The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. (1 Peter 1:24-25)

## Its Preservation

The Scriptures are immortal; they cannot be destroyed. As a contrast, it is interesting to consider the destruction brought about by the second Mohammedan caliph. Omar I was responsible for transforming a mere sect into a triumphant nation. He left to his successor a vast empire, which included Syria, Palestine, Persia, Egypt, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Tripoli, and many other important cities. One of his regrettable acts was the destruction of 700,000 priceless manuscript volumes in the famous Alexandrian library. He said, "Either these books conform to the Koran, or they do not. If they do, they are not needed. If they do not, they are positively harmful. Therefore let them be destroyed" (quoted in part from Funk anti Wagnall's Encyclopedia, vol. 18, page 6733).

During the Middle Ages, vicious attacks were made upon men who

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translated and printed the Bible. Invaluable books were seized and printers were burned at the stake. William Tyndale, the English translator of the Bible, was born in Gloucestershire and educated at Cambridge University. He began his printing of the English Bible in Cologne, but his work was criticized by the ecclesiastical authorities. His combined translations were published as Matthew's Bible. He was arrested and imprisoned in Antwerp, and after fifteen years of imprisonment, he was tried in 1536. He was burned at the stake on October 6th. Others whose scholarship helped produce the Bible suffered similarly, and yet in spite of the persecution, the Scriptures remain an integral part of international life.

#### Its Predictions

Probably the most sensational features of sacred writings are their phenomenal predictions. At the end of each year popular magazines carry innumerable forecasts concerning events to take place in the

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following year. It is strange that publishers never apologize nor explain why so many of these predictions are never fulfilled. If one detail proves to be accurate, psychics become famous overnight; if their forecasts are wrong, the false prophets remain silent. It is astonishing how seers of a bygone age made many predictions and not one of them was incorrect. Most prophecies concerning Israel, the Messiah, and the Hebrew nation were fulfilled during the New Testament era, and some statements regarding the church, the world, and the final days of time are coming to pass now. The Bible is the most remarkable of all volumes; it will remain a mystery why people believe the questionable words of mediums and other prognosticators, but seldom, if ever, consult the predictions found in the Word of God.

#### its Power

The greatest evidence in support of the Scriptures is its power to transform life. The libraries of all nations are filled with books that offer advice on innumerable subjects. Medical journals supply remedies to alleviate pain, and scholars offer educational materials to train, develop, and educate students. Yet the only Book that changes human nature is the Bible. It is thought provoking that eminent scientists who write advanced thesis on space and who train astronauts reverently regard the Scriptures as the greatest of all treasures. Many renowned physicians who minister to dying people admit their textbooks are inadequate. The only reliable source of information on most subjects is the Bible. Gladstone, the famous British statesman, called it "The impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture." The miracle that transformed Saul the persecutor into Paul the preacher has been repeated many times throughout the ages. The dynamic of the gospel is as potent today as it was when Simon Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. Even if all the copies of the Bible were destroyed, its truth would continue to live in the souls of millions of people. Peter was correct when he wrote, "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

God's Mercy Endureth Forever... How Magnificent

0 give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever. (Ps. 136:1)

This psalm is one of the most intriguing in the entire collection of sonnets. The identity of the author was never revealed, but the imprint

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of his personality can be clearly seen in his writings. He was a man

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with a single thought on his mind "the mercy of the LORD endureth or ever." That statement was made twenty-six times in twenty-six verses. It was a responsive psalm written for use in the temple. The priest, or song leader, chanted the opening part of each verse, and the congregation answered with "the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever. The sonnet was used at the dedication of Solomon's temple (see 2 Chron. 7:3-6) and on innumerable occasions throughout history.

It has been reported that during the reign of the Roman emperor Constantius, Bishop Athanasius and his congregation were attacked in their church at Alexandria. When Syrianus and his ruthless soldiers invaded the sanctuary to continue their murderous mission, the bishop sat calmly in his chair and ordered his deacon to commence Psalm 136. He obeyed and began the song: "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good." The congregation responded "For His mercy endureth for ever." As the soldiers continued their diabolical work, those courageous martyrs died with a song on their lips.

This sonnet won an abiding place in the affections of the Hebrew people. Jehoshaphat, at the battle of Tekoa, referred to its message (see 2 Chron. 20:21). It became the traditional Psalm of Thanksgiving used at the Jewish Passover feast. Amid the distressing circumstances of the Hebrew nation, the people rejoiced in an unchanging truth "the mercy of the Lord endureth forever. That thought inspired the psalmist, for his twenty six verses embraced eternity. The psalm may be divided into four sections.

1. God's Provision for His People. "To him who alone doeth great wonders." It was evident to the ancient writer that God intended to make for His offspring the loveliest of homes. He planted a garden in which were all things necessary for Adam's survival and happiness.

2. God's Pardon to His People. Unfortunately, the first humans disappointed their Creator, and their descendants became slaves in a foreign land. The freedom of their hallowed garden was replaced by bondage in Egypt. Yet God never left His children, and their deliverance revealed that His mercy could not diminish.

3. God's Protection of His People. As the unknown author reminisced, he recalled the many occasions when Jehovah rescued Israel from danger and servitude. Powerful kings were subdued, urgent needs supplied, and every valid request of the people granted. When they sinned God extended His favor.

4. God's Presence with His People. During the journey through the

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wilderness the cloud and the pillar did not depart from the tabernacle. Throughout the rule of the judges, Israel sinned continually but God continued to help the tribes. It was beyond comprehension how He could be so patient. The psalmist could only repeat the statement "the mercy of the Lord endureth forever. He would have appreciated the words of the Savior: "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

God's Music Endureth Forever ... How Magnificent  
His praise endureth for ever. (Ps. 111:10)

Praise is the overflow of gratitude from a sincere heart. It does not depend upon circumstances, for Paul and Silas prayed even when their backs were bleeding. Praise is music in which discords are never heard. It is an echo of worship, something that always pleases the Lord. The final statement in the Psalms says, "Let every thing that has breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD" (Ps. 150:6). The ancient songwriter mentioned praise thirteen times in his final six verses and mentioned various ways and places in which praise should be heard.

The apostle John described events taking place before the throne of God. He wrote, "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy

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to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth . . . and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (Rev. 5:9-11). There are reasons why praise will continue eternally in the presence of God.

#### A Place of Remembrance

When God spoke through the prophet Isaiah, He said, "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" (Isa. 65:17, emphasis mine). Some people believe everything associated with earth will be forgotten amid the splendor of the hereafter. That assumption is false. The new world will be inexpressibly wonderful and what we now know will become insignificant. Yet even if certain things will be forgotten, some events will be remembered forever.

John described an immense choir and said that an anthem to be sung will testify of the glory of the Lamb. Saints will sing of their redemption,

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of where and how it happened. He referred to people who were redeemed from all parts of the world. Wound prints in the Savior's hands will remind everybody of who transpired on earth.

#### A Place of Reunion

When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians he mentioned two types of Christians: the dead in Christ, and those who are alive. He stated, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:16-18, emphasis mine). The fact that Paul urged his grieving brethren to use his message as a source of comfort is suggestive. He believed joyful anticipation should occupy the souls of bereaved saints. It would hardly be comforting to remain unknown among innumerable strangers, but ascending with reunited family members would be thrilling!

When Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, they did not converse as strangers. Moses lived centuries before Elijah was born, but somewhere within the precincts of the heavenly kingdom they had become friends. It was not a cause for amazement when they were commissioned to minister to the King of angels. Furthermore, although the disciples had never seen the patriarchs, Peter had no problem recognizing them. He exclaimed, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias" (Matt. 17:4). Is it too much to claim that if the fishermen from Galilee knew saints from a former age, we will share that capability? If we shall know strangers, surely it will be easy to recognize, know, and love those members of our families who preceded us into God's eternal kingdom. Perhaps our loved ones will escort us on our first sight-seeing tour along the streets of gold!

#### A Place of Rejuvenation

It remains a matter of extreme regret that the greatest talents possessed by humans are destined to be buried. The people who built the pyramids were entombed within their own creations. The engineers responsible for bridging enormous valleys and scientists and astronauts who conquer space will die. The most renowned doctors must succumb

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to diseases they try to conquer. Kings and queens, millionaires and paupers, the great and the lowly will become victims of age, disease, or death. Apart from the gospel of Christ there is no antidote for advancing years. Age is the modern Goliath that challenges the existence of human beings. It is therefore thrilling to read: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:26).

Age will be unknown in God's world of the future. It is wonderful to remember that when the resurrection of the Savior was announced, the speaker was an angel (see Matt. 28:5-6). Angels were created before Adam and therefore are thousands of years old. Mark described the same messenger as a young man (see Mark 16:5). Isaiah wrote of the reign of Christ on earth and said, "A child shall die an hundred years old" (Isa. 65:20). He expressed the fact that death at the age of one hundred would be regarded as the decease of a newborn child. If that is to happen on earth, longevity will be more evident in the presence of God.

One of Paul's greatest statements is found in Ephesians 3:21 where he wrote, "Unto him [God] be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." The apostle expressed the eternal existence of the church throughout all ages, and indicated that the Savior will be the center and circumference of everything important.

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