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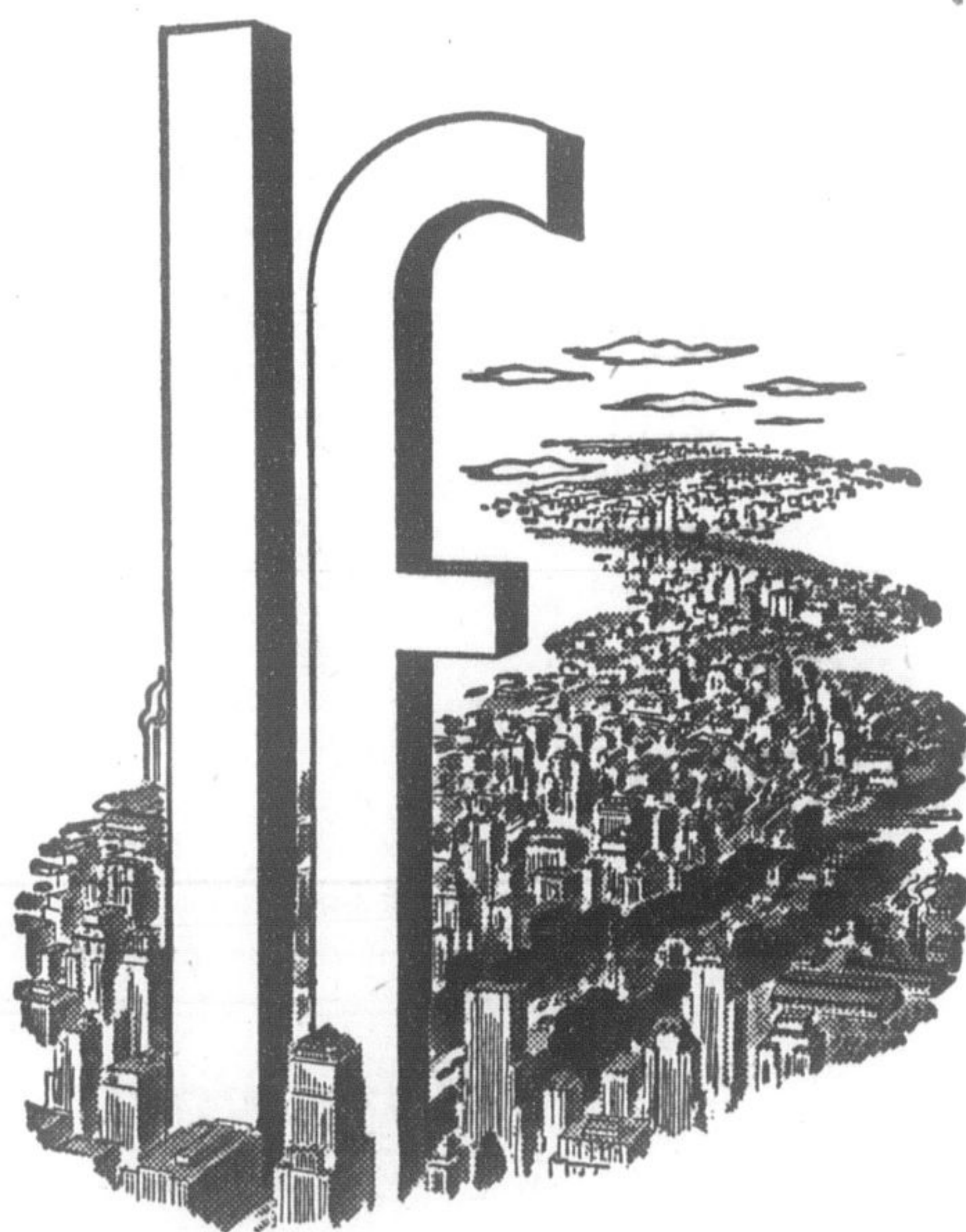
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The Sunday School Lesson

SUNDAY, MAY 28th, 1950

GOD HAS A PLAN  
Golden Text.—Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity . . . ? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in loving kindness. Micah 7:18.

LESSON TEXT—Mic. 4:1-5; 5:2-4; 7:18-20.

EXPOSITION I. God's Vision of Hope, 4:1, 2.

This is very appropriately chosen to study about peace. It shows very clearly how universal peace is to come—not through great peace conferences, as is now expected by those who are ignorant of the teachings of the Word, but through the coming of God's own King to rule in Zion, over all nations. "The last (or latter) days" is used in the Bible as a general expression for future time, but predominantly with reference to the times of the establishment of Messiah's kingdom (Gen. 49:1; Isa. 2:1-3; Ezek. 38:16; Dah. 2:28, 44; Hos. 3:5; Ac. 2:17; Heb. 1:2; 2 Pet. 3:3).

By "the mountain of the house of the Lord" is meant Zion, where the temple or house of the Lord was located in the days of Solomon. It is difficult to say whether the words that followed mean simply that Zion shall be exalted as to power above all other mountains, or whether there is to be a literal raising of Mt. Zion until it is in actual altitude higher than all mountains. There are indications elsewhere that a great physical change will take place in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem in the time of the final deliverance of Israel (Zech. 14:4-11). There are many prophetic references to Zion (ch. 3:12; Isa. 11:9; 66:20; Ezek. 43:12; Zech. 8:3).

The future glory of the kingdoms of this world centres in this mountain (v. 1). All the people shall gather to the Messiah (Gen. 49:10), and Zion shall be the centre of His kingdom (cf. Ps. 22:27; 68:29-32; 72:7-11, 16-19; 86:9; Isa. 11:10; 27:13; 43:6; 49:6; 19-23; 60:3-14; 66:18-23; Jer. 3:17; 16:19; Zeph. 3:9, 10; Zech. 2:11; 8:20-23; 14:16-21; Rom. 11:25, 26).

Of course this refers to the literal Zion. The attempt to apply this prophecy to the church results in utter confusion. This is one of the most fruitful sources of misinterpretation of Old Testament prophecy. In v. 2 we have a clear and profoundly significant statement of the events of those glorious coming days. We have precisely the same prophecy in Isa. 2:2-4; but a very significant change in Isa. 2:5 from Micah 4:5. Similar prophecies are found in Jer. 31:6; 50:4, 5; Zech. 8:20-23. These prophecies should all be studied together. Jehovah incarnate in the Messiah will be the Teacher of all nations in that day (v. 2, cf. Isa. 54:13). All nations then will "walk in His paths." The law shall go forth from Zion and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem, not merely to Israel but to all the nations of the earth. This is to come to pass, not through the general spread of the Gospel, but through the return of the Lord and the establishment of His Kingdom.

II. Messiah's Reign, 3-5.  
Jehovah Himself incarnate in His King is to be judge among the nations (v. 3, cf. 1 Sam. 2:10; Ps. 96:13; 98:9; Isa. 11:3-5; Matt. 25:31, 32; Jno. 5:22, 23, 27-29; Ac. 17:31; Rev. 19:11). He "shall reprove" the warring nations of the earth (cf. ch. 7:16, 17; Ps. 2:5-12; 110:1-6; Joel 3:2, 9-16; Zech. 14:3; 12-19; Rev. 19:17-21; 20:8, 9). After a mighty conflict, they will yield to His reproof and war shall come to an end, not through peace conferences, but through the triumph of God's King (v. 3, cf. Ps. 46:9; Isa. 2:4; 11:6-9; Ps. 72:7; Isa. 60:17, 18; 65:25).

Peace will never be accomplished until the Prince of Peace Himself comes and takes the reins of government. With the establishment of peace there will be universal prosperity and security (v. 4). There was a brief anticipation of this in the reign of Solomon, who in this respect was a type of Christ (1 Ki. 4:25). There shall be no more fear (v. 4, cf. Isa. 54:11-14).

III. The King of Peace, 5:2-4.  
Having described the future kingdom the prophet proceeds to draw attention to the King. As is often the custom in Old Testament prophecy these verses blend the humiliation and triumph of our Lord. In v. 1 we have a reference to those inimical forces which attacked Jesus from the time of His infancy until it culminated at the cross (Matt. 2:13-16; Jno. 18:22, 23; 19:1; Luke 23:33-38). To smite a man on the cheek is the greatest of insults to an Oriental. In v. 2 we have another link in that wonderful chain of detailed prophecy regarding the coming of Christ Jesus in the flesh. The only reason for mentioning so insignificant a place as Bethlehem was that so important a Person was to be born there. It was small in size and population. So small was it that on the night Joseph and Mary sought lodging there no room could be found for them (Luke 2:27).

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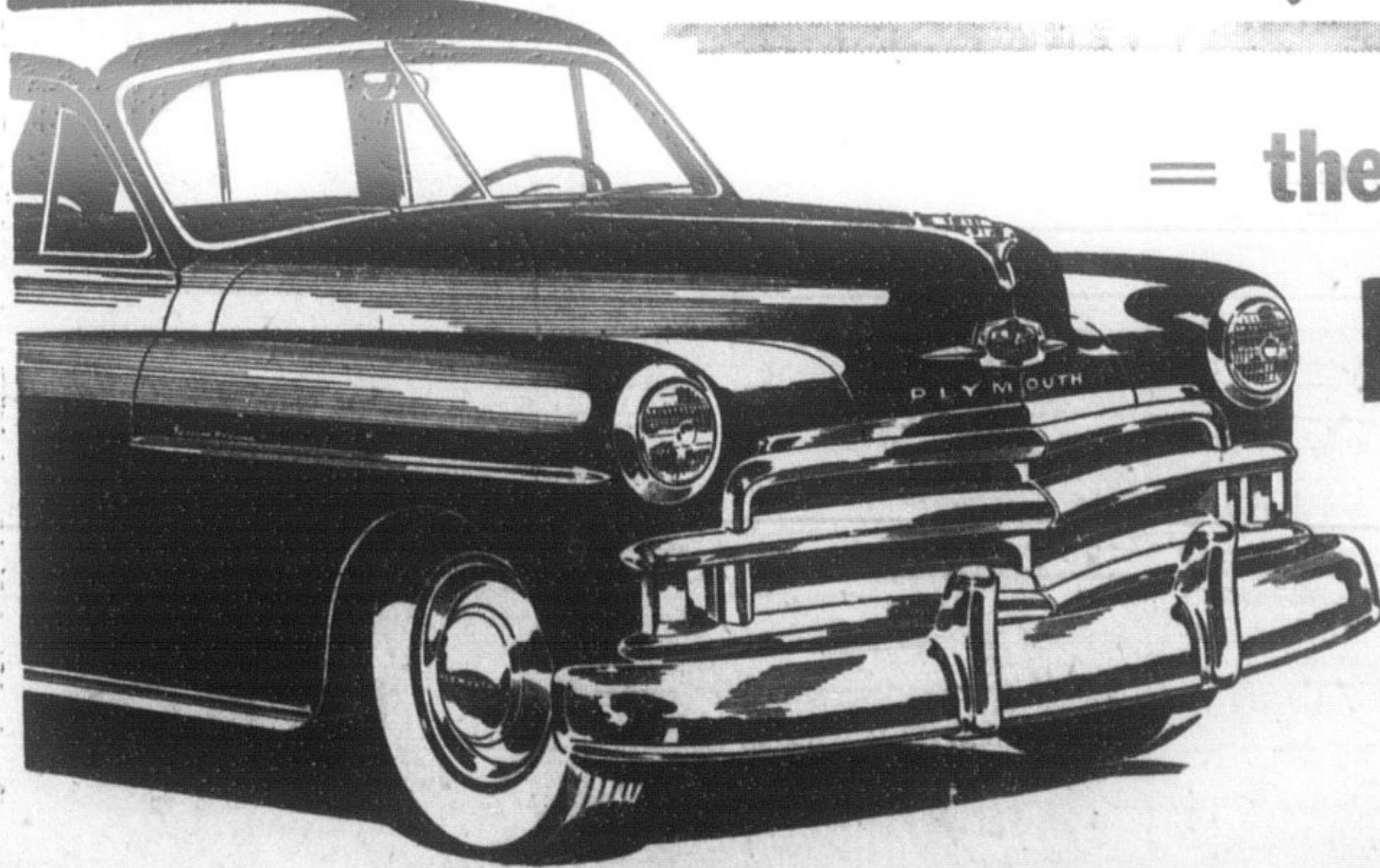
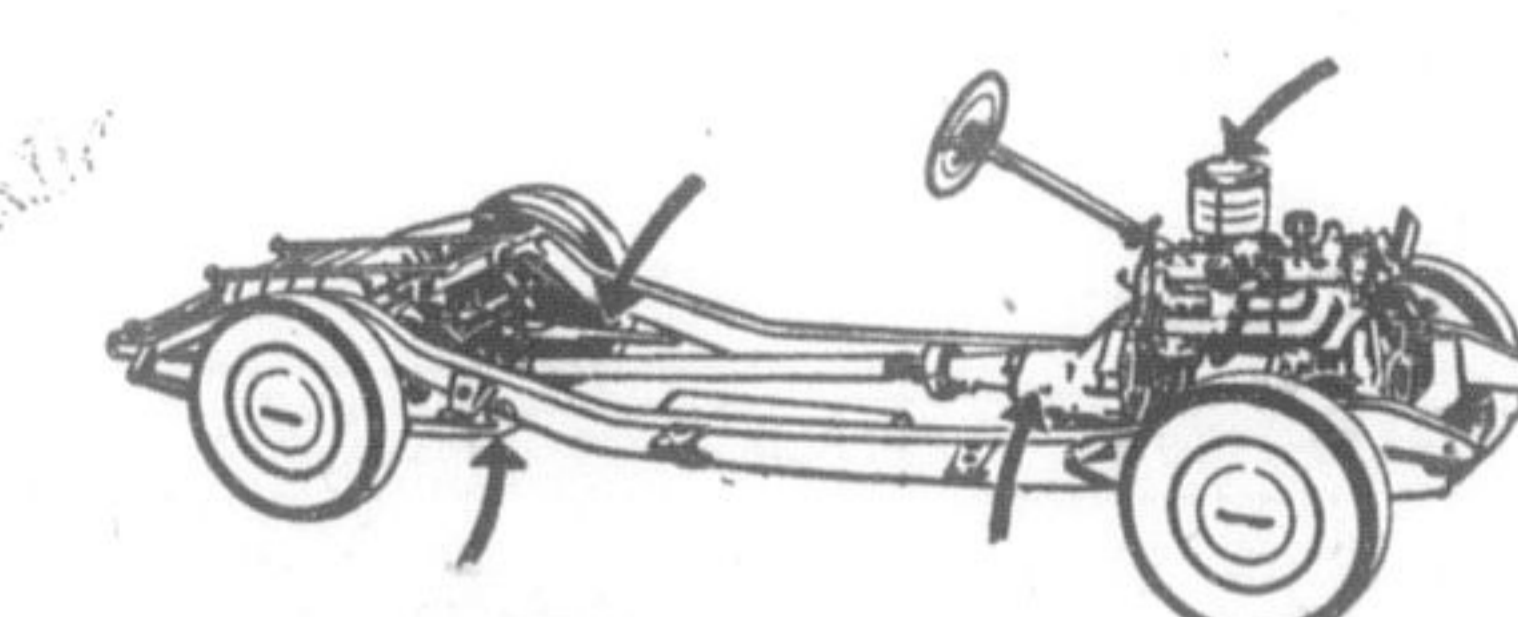
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