



# Megiddo Message

Spring 2008



***W**e rejoice in our sufferings,  
because we know that suffering  
produces perseverance;  
perseverance, character;  
and character, hope.*

*—Romans 5:3–4 NIV*

## TRUTH STANDS ABOVE

Analyze the average political speech and you will discover an artful combination of words designed to please. The purpose is obvious: every candidate wants to win the election. And to win, one must be popular. So winning the election is about using the words that have the right emotional appeal. To meet this unique need, a new branch of political science (political psychology?) has developed. These professionals say that we respond with our emotions much more than with our minds; that only twenty percent of our life is intellect; eighty percent is emotion.



So the professionals send out pollsters to discover the words that trigger the emotions. "Words alone can be found in a dictionary," says one, "but words with emotion can change destiny." What words make you feel upbeat, happy, confident? What words create a mood of despair? Then they advise politicians which words to use or avoid. Says one professional, "We are a research firm, yet we have written

appeal and evokes a positive response.

Now let me be brave and ask: Are the selected words always the truth, i.e., the facts? Can you imagine what the campaign would be if the candidates were limited to telling always and only the exact, unenhanced facts, with all opinion, assumption and pretense stripped away?

Contrast the plain, straightforward, often rebuking words of the Master of men. Was His message always consistent? Absolutely! Did He massage His message to obscure the truth in order to please His audience? Never. Did His words always evoke a positive response from His audience? Definitely not. They even crucified Him.

The difference: Jesus lived and died for truth. And today that same truth still stands above—above opinion, above assumption, above pretext—above anything that can be adapted to be more pleasing.

Who but a spokesman for the Eternal Creator could say, *"All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them"* (Prov. 8:8 ESV).

### **Truth stands above opinion.**

The religious leaders (politicians) whom Jesus called *"scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites"* were not all bad. No doubt many of them thought they had a high regard for truth. Their standards of conduct often earned them the respect of their peers, though not of Jesus (Matt. 5:20). By resisting the influence of Roman and Greek culture, they probably thought they were on God's side. But in Jesus' view, they were only defending an opinion. Holding meticulously to their Jewish customs, they liked to *"appear righteous in public"*—pleasing people—not realizing that *"what this world honors is detestable in the sight of God"* (Luke 16:15 NLT).

They would have been less popular had they proclaimed loudly as God's prophet of old, *"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good..."* (Isa. 1:16–17).

### **Truth stands above assumption.**

The human mind can be very creative. Given the right atmosphere and the right emotional twist, people can be led to assume something is true, even when there is little or no evidence to

**Opinions may sound good on the surface, but truth stands above.**

more speeches for more individuals than probably anyone else in Washington."

Do the words really make the difference? Consider an example. For years politicians talked about "estate tax"—with minimal response, until they started calling it a "death tax," because you're taxed when you die. Suddenly the issue had the support of three-quarters of the American people.

Are the carefully selected words designed to please? Absolutely! Does it matter which side of an issue one supports, so long as the effect is pleasing? Not really. Are the words sometimes more opinion than fact? More than likely. Are the chosen words sometimes based on assumption rather than fact? Possibly. Do the speakers ever pretend they are informed about issues where they really have little knowledge? It does not matter, if only the message has emotional

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# Sure Hope

*The promises  
of God are as sure  
as the budding  
springtime.*

**W**inter, spring, summer, autumn. Winter, spring, summer, autumn. Who has ever seen it fail? Who worries that it will?

The great patterns of nature are not capricious. One can always know—with certainty—what season is coming next. The coldest winter yields to the budding springtime, and the heat of summer is not far behind. When did it ever fail?

Thank God that His creation is so dependable. It is all sure and certain!

Just as certain are His promises. The budding springtime is our guarantee, signed with His signature! What He has promised WILL BE, just as surely as spring follows winter, just as surely as the trees burst into flower and leaf.

*“As the earth puts forth her blossom, or bushes in the garden burst into flower, so shall the Lord God make righteousness and praise blossom before all the nations” (Isa. 61:11 NEB).*

God has given His promise, that:

- ★ Christ is coming to be Earth’s Judge, Conqueror, and glorious King (Ps. 9:7–8; Isa. 40:10; 2 Tim. 4:1; Zech. 14:9; Rev. 11:15; 17:14).
- ★ *“Righteousness and praise”* shall triumph worldwide (Isa. 61:11).
- ★ *“Quietness and assurance forever”* shall be the happy portion of everyone on earth (Isa. 32:17–18).
- ★ Once the Kingdom of Christ is established, *“He shall reign...for ever and ever”* (Luke 1:31–33).

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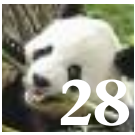
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## WE BELIEVE...

- ★ in God, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- ★ in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- ★ in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.
- ★ in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- ★ in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- ★ in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- ★ in ourselves as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.
- ★ in the promise of God, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide Kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

The **Megiddo Message** (USPS 338-120) (ISSN 0194-7826) is published quarterly by the Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619. Telephone: 585-235-4150. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, New York.

**Publication Staff:** Ruth E. Sisson, Editor; Gerald R. Payne, Executive Editor. Art and design by Margaret A. Tremblay; Subscriptions Manager, Donna R. Mathias.

**Subscription Rate and Renewals:** One year (four issues) \$10.00. Send to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619-1697. Or call 585-235-4150. **Note:** For the protection of our subscribers, we do not sell, rent, lease, publish or distribute our mailing list.

**Address Changes?** Be sure to notify promptly of any change in your address. Please include your old mailing label and your new address. Send to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619-1697.

**Postmaster:** Send all changes of address to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, NY 14619.

URL: [www.megiddochurch.com](http://www.megiddochurch.com)

E-mail address: [megiddo@megiddo.com](mailto:megiddo@megiddo.com)

**Manuscript Policy:** Unsolicited manuscripts for publication are not accepted.

The **Megiddo Message** is the official organ of the Megiddo Church, Inc., founded in 1880 by L. T. Nichols. Publication was begun in 1914. Maud Hembree, Editor-in-Chief (1914-1935); Ella M. Skeels, Executive Editor (1935-1945); Percy J. Thatcher, Editor (1945-1958); Kenneth E. Flowerday, Editor (1958-1985); Newton H. Payne, Editor (1985-1997).

The **Megiddo Message** is available in microfilm from Bell & Howell Information and Learning, Serials Acquisitions, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

**Indexing:** The **Megiddo Message** is indexed annually, in December. Combined indexing available, 1944-2006.

**Bible Quotations:** Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version or the New King James Version. Other versions are identified as follows: NEB—New English Bible; NIV—New International Version; NASB—New American Standard Bible; RSV—Revised Standard Version; TLB—The Living Bible; JB—The Jerusalem Bible; Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English; Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation; NRSV—New Revised Standard Version; NLT—The New Living Translation; NCV—The New Century Version; NJB—New Jerusalem Bible.

★★★★★

## CHANGE IN PUBLISHING FREQUENCY

Due to increased pressures from rising costs of postage and printing, effective in November 2007, we have changed the frequency of the **Megiddo Message** from a bimonthly to a quarterly magazine. We will now publish the **Megiddo Message** with the seasons—Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall.



All these promises are sure and certain.

- ★ Sure as the sequence of day and night. *"If you can rescind my ordinance of day and night, that there should be day-time and night-time no more, only then will I rescind the privilege granted to my servant David and there shall be heirs of his throne no more"* (Jer. 33:20–21, Knox).
- ★ Sure as the existence of God. *"But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord"* (Num. 14:21).
- ★ Sure as the rains that water the earth, giving food to the human family. *"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it"* (Isa. 55:10–11 NIV).
- ★ Sure as the sun gives light by day and the moon and stars by night. *"Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar (The Lord of hosts is His name): If those ordinances depart from before Me,*

*says the Lord, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever"* (Jer. 31:35–36).

What God has promised He will perform. *"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips"* (Ps. 89:34).

*"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"* (Num. 23:19).

*"Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant"* (1 Kings 8:56).

*"For I am the Lord: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass;...I will say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God"* (Ezek. 12:25).

*"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations"* (Deut. 7:9).

God has spoken. Let us believe it, act upon it, prepare for it.

For lo, it will surely come. **MM**

# Hope:

## OXYGEN of the SOUL

Something within us is instinctively hopeful. Something in us denies the worst and anticipates the best. "Hope springs eternal in the human breast," wrote Alexander Pope, "man never is, but always to be blest."

God has made us with a built-in resilience. We can withstand the heat of the tropics, or the icy winds of winter. We can go through seasons of illness, financial reverses, domestic disappoint-

ments, rejections, or the death of someone dear to us—if we don't lose our hold on hope.

Hope is an intangible something that gives us the will to rise above desperate conditions and envision a brighter tomorrow. Hope is oxygen of the soul. Without it we suffocate, and hope deferred makes the heart sick (Prov. 13:12).

But hope in what, or in whom? For

all hopes are not equal.

### **Hope based on...**

Hope is anticipating a favorable outcome, whether there is any basis for it or not. One hopes for a good report from the doctor, or a good year in business, or the success of his plans. The student hopes to pass the exam. A gambler hopes to win a million dollars. The



aspiring athlete hopes to be an Olympic finalist.

Really? Hope is only as “real” as the facts supporting it.

In secular issues, the foundation of one’s hope may not be a serious concern. But when the hope is that of life

world” (Eph. 2:12).

Such was the dismal outlook of the philosopher Bertrand Russell. Near the end of his life he expressed his view in these words:

“The life of Man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invis-

woes, especially of those who see no Divine hand guiding.

The second kind of hope is a personal belief in immortality often thought of as a commonality shared with the human race, so common that its surety is assumed. Where does the belief come from? It is the strong inner confidence that somehow, somewhere, my life principle—soul, spirit or personality—will survive me. Something within refuses to believe that death is the end.

Are we willing to depend on a “keep-your-fingers-crossed” kind of hope? Can we base our hope of life beyond death on an assumption, however popular or compelling? Is there not something that has a solid foundation of evidence? There is! The God of the Bible offers just such a hope.\*

### ***Hope through a Physical Resurrection***

The Bible teaches that the only one hope of life beyond death is through a physical, bodily resurrection. That is why Paul said, “*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable*” (1 Cor. 15:19), because without a physical resurrection we have nothing beyond this life.

A physical resurrection was Paul’s personal sustaining hope: “*if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead*” (Phil. 3:11).

The Christian is willing to risk all on the reality of the resurrection.

How can we know that this hope of a bodily resurrection is not a dream? Because Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.

Consider the evidence (see the page at the right).

The anniversary of Christ’s resurrection comes each year to renew our

\* Mainstream Christianity teaches a continued life after death through what they believe to be the immortal soul. At death, they say, the soul leaves the body and goes either to heaven or hell.

Does the Bible teach that we have an immortal soul? Does the Bible teach that death is the separation of the immortal soul from the mortal body, that the soul continues to exist either in a paradise of delight or the torment of hell? It is our conviction that this teaching is contrary to Scripture. For a discussion of the Bible teaching on the subject of the immortal soul and life after death, refer to our booklet, “*After Death, What?*”



beyond death, we need to know what is supporting that hope.

### ***What kind of hope holds you?***

There are basically three kinds of hope:

1) the “keep-your-fingers-crossed” hope, a blind optimism that trusts in chance;

2) a traditional, almost universal belief that there is something in us that will continue living after we die; and

3) the hope of future life based on the conviction that the God who gives us this life can give *more* life, even eternal life, according to the stipulations and promises in His Word.

What about the wishful, “keep-your-fingers-crossed” hope? This type of hope requires no foundation but only a hoping against hope that harsh misfortune and suffering will not come. When all goes well they “thank their lucky stars.” When luck runs out, they are often plunged into the depths of depression or despair. The Bible describes them with a tone of sadness, as “*having no hope and without God in the*

ible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, toward a goal that few can hope to reach, and where none may tarry long....Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving...no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave;...that all the labours of the ages, ...all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction.”

Unfortunately, Mr. Russell is not alone in his view. Jean-Paul Sartre, the famous French atheist, philosopher and novelist, less than a month before he died in 1980, wrote of the human race,

“There’s no purpose, only petty personal ends for which we fight. We make little revolutions but there’s not a human end. Nothing concerning man, only disorders.”

Yet how strongly he resisted feelings of despair:

“The world seems ugly, bad and without hope. There, that’s the cry of despair of an old man who’ll die in despair. But that’s exactly what I resist, and I know I shall die in hope. But”—what did he realize? “But that hope needs a foundation.” And he knew he had none.

Despair is high on the list of human



# Jesus Is Alive!

**T**he resurrection of Jesus Christ is the single most important event in the history of the world to date. Were it not for the resurrection, we would have no Christ to follow. Without it we have no hope of future life.

Jesus Christ resurrected is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. How can we know positively that Jesus is alive?



What does the resurrection of Jesus mean to me?  
*Because He lives, I, too, may live!*

## CONSIDER THESE FIVE “E’s”

### 2. EYE-WITNESS REPORTS.

**T**he apostles and many others were eye witnesses of the resurrected Jesus (see Matt. 28:16–18; Luke 24:13–15, 36–53; Acts 1:3,22; 2:31,32; 4:33; 1 Corinthians 15:3–8). The disciples had no reason to propagate this event if it did not occur, much less be willing to die for proclaiming it.

### 1. THE EMPTY TOMB.

**I**s this singular? Look and compare: Confucius’ tomb—occupied. Buddha’s tomb—occupied. Muhammad’s tomb—occupied. Jesus’ tomb—empty! Why is Jesus’ tomb empty? The enemies of Christ would not have stolen His body—they requested a guard to avoid such a scandal. Would the friends of Christ have risked an encounter with a squad of soldier-guards to steal a dead body—when they were so frightened the night He was arrested that they all fled?

### 3. THE EMERGENCE OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

**T**he disciples went from scared, anxious, and without hope (Luke 24:21; Matt. 26:56; Mark 14:50), to courageously proclaiming the risen Jesus—even at the risk of their lives (Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30, etc.). Without the literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus, there would have been no Early Church, no Gospel of Jesus Christ, and no Roman Catholic Church that survives even to this day. The historic record is continuous from New Testament times to the present.

### 4. EARLY WRITTEN ACCOUNTS OF THE RESURRECTION.

**W**as the story legendary? Legends take time to develop and take hold. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15) testified to the accuracy of the eye witness accounts of the resurrection even while some of the witnesses were still alive (1 Cor. 15:6). Lee Strobel (once an atheist) quoted a historian who said, “I challenge anyone anywhere to come up with any example in history where legend grew up that fast and thoroughly destroyed or distorted solid, historical belief.” Strobel commented, “It has never happened that any one has been able to find.”

### 5. EXTRA-BIBLICAL EVIDENCE.

**E**ven non-believers made statements that confirm the resurrection of Jesus. Altogether, more than a hundred such statements have been found. Together they corroborate the Bible documents.

### PLUS...

- ♦ The **fact that women** were the very first eye-witnesses recorded—no fabricator hoping to sell a story would have been so unwise!
- ♦ The **ministry of the apostle Paul**, converted by the risen Christ, who left marks throughout the Roman Empire as he preached the gospel of the risen Christ
- ♦ The **words of Jesus Himself**, as He foretold His resurrection
- ♦ The **record in all four Gospels** of His appearances after His resurrection
- ♦ The **character of the witnesses**—upright men of character, not frauds or deceivers
- ♦ The **impossible** (and absurd) **alternatives** that have been suggested in place of a physical resurrection
- ♦ The **numerous Old and New Testament prophecies** regarding Christ’s death and resurrection.



faith in this vital fact: that the Christian's hope is not a vain, fruitless wish; it is real, sure, and certain because Jesus is alive! Each year those immortal words echo again that were spoken by the angels on that first resurrection morning: *"He is not here, He is risen!"*

What gave Paul the power to go triumphantly through any suffering for Christ's sake? How could he say *"we glory in tribulation"*? Because *"tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance,*

*change to the immortal, incorruptible state for all who have attained the required standard of character. The purpose of the resurrection is to bring back to life all who have covenanted to serve God, so that each can be judged and rewarded for "the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). Those who are approved, those to whom Christ can say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt.*

*firstfruits unto life eternal (1 Cor. 15:23). We have only the promise and hope of eternal life, as Paul wrote to Titus: "in hope of eternal life, that God which cannot lie, promised" (Titus 1:2). The promise is sure because the promisor is God Himself. God will not go back on His Word. Those who attain to His standard will receive the promise.*

The Bible is a book of hope, because it contains the promises and will of God. All creation issues from the energy and will of its Creator. His creation has purpose. Nothing here is an end in itself. It is only the stage upon which God is working out His great story. Even though men seem at times to foul His purpose, He is not hindered. History is literally His story.

God's watchful eye is over His creation, and when the time is right He will act. We are confident that He will fulfill what He has promised. In Jesus Christ He has shown the beginning. Christ's life, Christ's death, Christ's resurrection, and Christ's glorification were all a model to confirm our hope. Here was the life actually lived, the character actually perfected, and mortality ultimately swallowed up in a glorious and heavenly exaltation. What a citadel of hope to us!

Following Christ's example, the Early Church became the living light of hope in a world of hopelessness, the visible evidence of God's promises for the future. Little wonder that they could endure unspeakable hardships—they were living on hope! Jesus had led the way, and they were following—in hope.

As followers of Christ today, we are called to continue the same noble work. And what God has started He will complete. God writes no unfinished symphonies. There is a purpose running through history, continuity, and destiny. God is at work, directing and overseeing, and in due time His Divine plan shall be brought to glorious completion. In the end the forces of right will triumph, and the Lord's Prayer will be fulfilled when God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven above! **MM**



*The Bible is a  
book of hope.  
God has purpose  
in His creation.*

*character; and character, hope" (Rom. 5:3–4).*

This living hope is one of a trio of virtues that the apostle Paul presented as the core of the gospel of Christ. Even though he and others at that time enjoyed special gifts of the Holy Spirit power, Paul tells us that *"faith, hope, and love"* are the three that remain all the way to the end. The greatest is love, but hope is one of the vital three (1 Cor. 13:13).

Christianity is the only religion that has a resurrected, living Savior. Others talk of future life, but their solutions often end in a Nirvana, endless reincarnation, or a sort of self-centered escape from reality into a sensual heaven.

The Bible hope is the real expectation of a real, physical resurrection of the body, followed by a real, physical

change to the immortal, incorruptible state for all who have attained the required standard of character. The purpose of the resurrection is to bring back to life all who have covenanted to serve God, so that each can be judged and rewarded for *"the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). Those who are approved, those to whom Christ can say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:23), will be transformed to a higher state of life, made equal to the angels so that they cannot die (Luke 20:35–36). Paul says that Jesus will change their corruptible bodies to be like "His glorious body" (Phil. 3:20–21). Those receiving that change will never again experience sickness, pain, or suffering, and they will never die (Rev. 21:4). It will be a change from a state of corruptibility to incorruptibility (1 Cor. 15:52–54), "raised" by the power of God to the level of life which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and the most fantastic imagination has not conceived (1 Cor. 2:9).*

### **Hope Is Future**

The Christian's prospect of eternal life is a hope, not a present possession. No earthborn at the present time, outside of Christ, has eternal life. He is the



## Do the “Saved” Have Eternal Life?

***“I believe that when we acknowledge our sins and accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, He saves us and we have eternal life. I don’t know what “eternal” means to you but to me it means everlasting life, not a life that stops at death and starts again later. Doesn’t John say, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life...”? (1 John 5:13).***

First let us establish that the Bible is the foundation and source of our faith.

Then let us define our terms. What do we mean by everlasting life, or eternal life? Are we talking about a continuation of our present life after we die?

We readily agree that Jesus’ words (quoted above) sound as though we have the everlasting life He promises right now. But what do we do with the Bible passages that tell us our present state of existence is mortal, i.e., subject to death? *“Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?”* (Job 4:17). Paul said we should not let sin reign in our *“mortal body”* (Rom. 6:12). Paul also says that *“this corruptible must put on incorruption, this mortal must put on immortality”* (1 Cor. 15:53–54), showing that we are now in the mortal state. If we were immortal we could not *“put on”* immortality.

Do we think of eternal life as something separate from our body, so that the body may die and the soul or spirit may live on in an uninterrupted existence? The Bible does not support this belief. It speaks of two levels of life, the mortal state which we now experience (Job 4:17), and the immortal state which is like the angels enjoy, which is not subject to death (Luke 20:35–36). We agree that once one has received everlasting life, it is not, as you say, *“a life that stops at death, and starts again later.”* Nor will it be a life where the body dies and the soul or personality lives on in another state.

Eternal life is a higher level of existence than we now experience, uninterrupted, and in an immortal state, i.e., not subject to death. Jesus said that one who has attained a place in the world to come will be *“equal to the angels, neither can they die anymore”* (Luke 20:35–36). We have to agree that our present state of existence is not that of the angels who cannot die.

In His post-ascension message to John on Patmos, Jesus spelled out this type of life in detail as one in which there would be *“no more death, neither*

*sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain”* (Rev. 21:4). No one today has experienced this type of life. Paul also says that the one given the immortal state will be made physically like Christ, with a glorified body (Phil. 3:20–21). The apostle John says the same, that *“when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is”* (1 John 3:2). When will *“we be like Him”*? John tells us it will be at the time of His second appearing: *“when He shall appear.”*

The Bible associates the giving of eternal life with the judgment. At the end of the Book of Ecclesiastes, we read that *“God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil”* (Eccl. 12:13–14). This text associates one’s life work with a coming judgment.

The apostle Paul makes the same connection, that the judgment will reveal what we have done, and adds the fact that we will receive according to what we have done; *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad”* (2 Cor. 5:10).

Jesus Himself said that He would *“reward every man according to his works”* when they die? No. As they go through life? No. When they get to heaven? No. Jesus said He would reward each when He would come *“in the glory of His Father with His angels”* (Matt. 16:27).

The apostle Peter is also specific, that we will receive for what we have done at the return of Christ. *“And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away”* (1 Peter 5:4). Peter says also that we should live in *“hope”* of the *“grace to be brought...at the revelation [appearing] of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 1:13). And in his First Epistle Peter adds that the *“grace”* or reward for our life work will be given to us at *“the appearing of Jesus Christ”* (1 Pet. 1:7). Jesus also says that we will be recompensed *“at the resurrection of the just”* (Luke 14:14).

Together, these passages show that 1) we are *accountable* for what we do; 2) we will be *judged* according to what we have done, whether good or bad; 3) we will *receive* according to what we have done, good or bad; and 4) this reward (eternal life, or eternal death) *will be dispensed when Christ returns*; it is not something we have now.

Given the above, why would Jesus say that the one who believes *“has eternal life”*? How would the apos-

tle John say to fellow believers that *"You may know that you have eternal life"*?

The Bible teaches that all rewards for one's life of service are future. In other words, God pays at the end, not at the beginning of one's service. Jesus said, *"He who endures to the end shall be saved"* (Matt. 24:13). James says that after one has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life (James 1:12). Hebrews says that we need perseverance, so that after doing the will of God we may receive what has been promised (Heb. 10:36).

Whether the results of one's service are favorable (rewarded with eternal life) or unfavorable (punished with eternal death), the receiving of that reward is at the judgment seat of Christ, after one has been judged, and not at any time during one's earthly life. When Paul said, *"the wages of sin is death,"* he did not mean that one would drop dead as soon as he sinned. He meant that death would be the final result, i.e., after one has appeared before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10) if that one never repented. When Paul says, *"to be carnally minded is death,"* and *"to be spiritually minded is life"* (Rom. 8:6), he does not mean that the one who is carnally minded will die immediately, or that the one who is spiritually minded will live uninterrupted from that point forward. God has planned that we will be judged by our position at the end of the race, not at the beginning of the race or at any time during the running (see 2 Tim. 4:7–8; 1 Cor. 9:24–27; Matt. 24:13).

Both the sinner and the saint experience the end of mortal life. That is why God has arranged a resurrection, to bring back those who have agreed to serve Him so that they can be judged and rewarded for what they have done. That is why Jesus said, you will be recompensed *"at the resurrection of the just"* (Luke 14:14). Paul said even more: without a resurrection, there is no hope of future life. *"If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished"* (1 Cor. 15:17–18). How could Paul say there was no hope for any of us without the resurrection if the souls of His faithful servants who had died were continuing to live in some happy, conscious, though non-material state of existence? Also, if the soul goes to heaven immediately at death, what need for the resurrection of the body? Also, if the soul cannot die, why would Ezekiel have said, *"the soul who sins shall die"* (Ezek. 18:20); or *"every soul who will not hear that prophet [Jesus], shall be utterly destroyed from among the people"* (Acts 3:23)?

### **Eternal Life—By Promise**

If we let the Bible explain itself, we learn that the

true believer does not have the *possession* of eternal life but the *promise* of it. The Bible speaks of having the *"hope"* of eternal life (1 John 3:3; Titus 1:2). Eternal life or eternal death is the reward Christ will give at the judgment, and not to be confused with the present life, which is only temporary. The Bible is talking about the final and eternal state which Jesus said will be according to what we have done (Rev. 22:12; see also 2 Cor. 5:10).

There are many passages of Scripture supporting this thought. Refer to the words the apostle Paul addressed to Titus, that we live *"in hope of eternal life"* (Titus 1:2), and that we are made heirs *"according to the hope of eternal life"* (Titus 3:7). He said also that *"we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance"* (Rom. 8:24–25).

We are saved by hope. The apostle John wrote that *"this is the promise that he has promised us—eternal life"* (1 John 2:25).

Again John wrote: *"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure"* (1 John 3:2–3). Note that everyone who shares this hope purifies himself *as Christ is pure*, so that he can *qualify* for the fulfillment of the promise.

Jesus said that *"he who endures to the end shall be saved"* (Matt. 24:13). If we have eternal life now by promise and in the future as a possession, then we can understand both Jesus' statements and those of His apostles. Eternal life is possible, yet it is not given until Jesus comes and bestows it on each faithful servant. And eternal life, once given, will indeed be everlasting, without interruption, for Jesus will change our mortal, corruptible bodies to be like His own glorious, immortal body (Phil. 3:20–21).

***Why did Jesus say "he who hears My Word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life"? (John 5:24).***

**I**n this passage, as in many others of Scripture, we must understand that believing on the Father is much more than a simple statement, *"I believe."* If one believes the weather forecast of a hurricane, one will take appropriate action to be prepared when the hurricane strikes. Otherwise one would say he didn't believe the prediction of the meteorologist.

Genuine belief includes acting on that belief. In



the same way, to believe on the Father is to have an active, practical belief which results in a drastic change in the believer's life. It is a *"faith which worketh by love"* (Gal. 5:6). This faith brings suffering and conflict into the believer's life (Phil. 1:29–30). The result of this active belief will be that one has left the road that leads to death and is on the road that leads to everlasting life (Matt. 7:14), if he continues to the end. In this sense he has passed from death to life, because the hopelessness of having no future has been removed. He is living *"In hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began"* (Titus 1:2). What is the believer's response to this prospect of future life, that will be given at the return of Jesus Christ? Peter says, *"Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory"* (1 Pet. 1:7–8). It is a

response of genuine joy in the prospect of receiving salvation, eternal life (Rom. 2:7).

When will the believer actually pass from death to life? Not until Christ returns. Paul explains that *"We...eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body"* (Phil. 3:20–21).

What is Jesus saying in John 5:24? That the true believer has left the life in which he was *"dead in trespasses and sins,"* and *"without God"* or hope in the world (Eph. 2:1,12), and now shares the lively hope of eternal life when He returns to judge and reward each of His servants for what they have done. And that reward, once given, will indeed be everlasting, without interruption. Those who receive it will *"never die"* (John 11:26) but will have been made like the angels of God (Luke 20:35–36). **MM**

## Truth Stands Above

EDITORIAL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

support it. Building on assumption is one of the secrets of winning the support of people. Let the audience assume that the speaker is well informed on a subject; or assume that speaker supports their side of an issue. Let the audience assume that the speaker's character is above reproach; or assume that he or she is self-sacrificing and honest; or assume that the speaker can come through with what sounds good (like bringing all the soldiers home from Iraq, or balancing the budget). Let them assume that he or she is selfless and has the people's interests at heart.

And so the people are pleased. But it is all based on assumption, not truth (facts). But can one live by assumption? Try writing checks on a bank account that one assumes has enough money to cover them. Will the bank pay the bad checks on assumption?

Assumptions may buy the support of the unwary, but truth stands above.

### **Truth stands above pretense.**

Pretense has often been useful in covering a deficiency. Why admit that you are uninformed on an issue if by using the right words people will think that you know? Better to pretend than acknowledge our lack. Did someone uncover an unpleasant or embarrassing fact that you would like to deny? Just pretend that you know nothing about it.

Pretending is a form of denial. We can pretend that our spending habits do not matter. We can pretend that what we eat does not affect our health. We can pretend that everyone is our friend. We can pretend that it does not matter what we believe, or how we behave. But do the facts change? Not at all. Truth stands above pretense.

In God's view, pretense is acting a lie. When we pretend,

we are not true to what we believe. The Bible says all liars are outside the eternal city (Rev. 21:27). God has no place in His Kingdom for those who lie.

How do we avoid pretense? Let the Psalmist's prayer be ours: *"Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name"* (Ps. 86:11). To walk in truth means being loyal to God and His laws, whether or not people are pleased. To walk in truth means to speak the truth always, without regard to where we are or what others will think of us. We cannot walk in truth and slant our words just to be agreed with. We cannot walk in truth and compromise our standards just enough to tell someone what we think will make them feel good if it is not totally true.

God calls us to integrity of heart—integrity in what we do, what we say, what we believe. This level of integrity requires a full commitment to live by and defend truth as God defines it.

At times, an opinion, or an assumption or pretense may look like truth. But each must be tested before it can be relied on, because it may be only an accommodation to please people. Unless backed up by facts, one person's opinion is as valid as another's, assumption is a passing shadow, and pretense is a lie. The God of truth has no concern for who is pleased or not pleased; His only care is for those who regard His standard. *"The first thing in knowledge is reverence for the Eternal"* (Ps. 111:10 Moffatt), and that means having regard for what pleases Him, whether people are pleased or not.

Truth stands above—above any human opinion, assumption, or pretense; and if we would stand on the side of truth, we must not compromise for any short-term gain. Can you take this position and win? The answer depends on whether you want to win with people—for a moment; or with God—for eternity.

That shouldn't be a hard choice. **MM**

## “Write...Send” to

PART SEVEN

**A**nd to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

*I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.*

*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*

*To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ –Revelation 3:14–22*

# Laodicea



TO THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA:

## YOU MAKE ME Sick

**T**ravel forty miles down the road from Philadelphia to Laodicea, and we go from the best to the worst of the seven churches Jesus addressed. He had nothing bad to say about Philadelphia. He had nothing good to say about Laodicea.

Laodicea was no backwoods hamlet. The most southeasterly city of the seven, it was founded by Antiochus II, who named it after his wife, Laodice. It was founded to be a controlled entrance to the province of Phrygia.

Situated at the crossroads of two important Roman roads, the city was a busy center of merchandising, buying and selling, exporting and importing. It was also a banking center, and supported a prosperous clothing industry as well. A special type of wool grown there, a dense black wool, was fashionable in Rome and commanded high prices. Laodicea also had the best modern medicine of the times, and a well-known school of ophthalmology. Their eye salve was marketed throughout the Roman world. Altogether it was somewhat like having the Bank of America,



Macy's Department Store and the Mayo Clinic in the same city. Prosperous and wealthy, they felt good about their success.

But Jesus was not content with the fine exterior. He was looking deeper.

### JESUS HAS CREDENTIALS

Jesus begins by citing His credentials. He is not just the next door neighbor. He is not a peer, or a friend who says, I am with you, I'm on your side. That was not His approach. He was coming as one with authority, one who would give them the facts.

*"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: I know your works...'"* (Rev. 3:14-15).

First He called Himself a *"faithful witness."* A witness is one who has first-hand knowledge of the facts. A faithful witness is one who tells those facts exactly as they are. He will not dilute or distort the truth. Nor will He tell any half truths. He will tell only the truth, and all the truth. It is as if Jesus says, "I am not making up my report. You provided the information. I was only the recorder."

Jesus also called Himself the *"beginning of the creation of God."* Of what *"creation of God"* is Jesus the beginning? What creation was Jesus speaking about? The entire book of Revelation is Jesus' message to His people about things which *"must shortly come to pass"* (Rev. 1:1), and the largest part is about the new creation, the new *"heavens and earth,"* His own coming Kingdom. The Greek word Jesus used for *"beginning"* is *arche*, and means, *"beginning...first cause; ruler, governor, usually in the normal human sphere"* (Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains). Jesus is the ruler of that new creation. He is *"King of kings, and Lord of lords"* (Rev. 19:15-16).



High grade wool was a source of vast wealth for Laodicea.

### VISIT FIRST-CENTURY LAODICEA

The last of the seven churches of Revelation was Laodicea. Located at the crossroads of two important roads, the city was an important commercial metropolis of Asia Minor. The city was founded on the site previously known as Diospolis around 250 BC by Seleucid king Antiochus II, who named the city after his wife Laodice. In the second century BC, the city fell to the Kingdom of Pergamum, then after a short while to the Roman Empire.

Laodicea was an important center of commerce and wealth. The Lycus Valley, which it shared with nearby Hierapolis and Colosse, supported a thriving agricultural industry. The valley was part of a natural trade route running east to west, from Ephesus to Syria. In Laodicea, this route crossed another major route running north to south.

Laodicea boasted great material wealth. A great part of that wealth came from the production of a high-grade black wool. From this soft, dark wool, the town's factories made at least four different kinds of garments which were marketed all over the world. A medical school 13 miles outside the city created industry and commerce built around its salves and powders used in eye treatment. Laodicea also became a judicial seat for the region.

It is generally held that after an earthquake hit the city in 60 AD, Laodicea rebuilt without accepting aid from Rome. The city most definitely reflected such wealth, with two large theaters, one Roman and one Greek, in addition to a grand stadium, a large and lavish gymnasium and bath complex, and a monumental fountain. Today, the ruins of these structures are all that is left of past grandeur. Ruins of defensive walls, gates and aqueducts can also be seen.

The major weakness of Laodicea was its lack of a water supply. This need was met by bringing water six miles north from Denizli and Colosse through a system of stone pipes. Aqueducts brought hot mineral water south from Hierapolis. Whether hot or cold at its source, it was lukewarm by the time it reached Laodicea (see Rev. 3:15-16)—a natural basis for Jesus' statement about the Church's tepid spiritual condition.

The Bible does not tell us who started the church at Laodicea, but it may have been founded by Epaphras while Paul was at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:10). The New Testament offers no direct evidence of a visit by Paul to Laodicea, though he refers to believers there in his letter to the Colossians, asking them to exchange letters (Col. 4:16). The letter to Laodicea has not survived.



Laodicea was part of a lush, prosperous tri-city area in the Lycus Valley, with Colosse and Hierapolis.



Laodicea wall still standing



Excavated ruins of a Laodicean street



## HOT, COLD, LUKEWARM

Take your spiritual temperature today. Are you hot, cold, or lukewarm? You cannot change your temperature just by thinking about it. External factors affect it—like extreme heat or cold. But most importantly, the internal factors affect it. If external factors have caused your heart to be lukewarm, do what you need to change those factors. But most of all, focus on the internal factors—the strong faith, the heart ablaze with hope, the zeal for doing what is right.

Resolve to be on fire, white hot for Christ and the things that matter most to Him, the things that are determining your eternal destiny!

And then, resolve to be stone cold against the things Christ hates.

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(above) A cool mountain stream from Ephesus.

(upper right and right) It's not ice! Gleaming white travertine (calcite) deposited from hot mineral springs at Hierapolis, the city from which Laodicea piped hot mineral water.

(below) Clay pipe at Laodicea attests to the high mineral content of the water.



## NO HALF AND HALF

In Jesus' view, a half commitment is no commitment at all. Why did He say, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart..."*? Because He wanted all, not part.

The Laodiceans very likely saw others who were preoccupied, who didn't care, who had one foot in the world and one foot in the Church. Their attitude was, I can decide how much I give, and how much I withhold.

Jesus said, I don't want any divided loyalty. Be either hot, or cold, but not halfway between.

## DIAGNOSIS

Jesus begins His message as He has all the others. This is the seventh time He starts with, *"I know your works."* Nothing is hid from His all-seeing eye.

Was the Laodicean church really so bad that Jesus could not find anything to compliment? Or was the issue His level of concern? Or was it the nature of the issues?

If one goes to a doctor with a headache or some symptom, the doctor analyzes the symptom to determine what is causing it. He does not spend time talking about all the ways in which one is feeling well. Just so at Laodicea. Jesus is the doctor. He is looking at the symptoms to determine what might be causing the problem.

The diagnosis of the church at Laodicea is lukewarmness. Jesus says, I wish you were either hot or cold. You are just plain lukewarm, and I detest it. You make me sick!

The condition of the Church at Laodicea was even more serious because they were unaware. They thought they were rich and prosperous. They thought they were doing well, but Jesus described them as *"wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"* (Rev. 3:17). What a pathetic state!

## NOT HOT, NOT COLD

*"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth"* (Rev. 3:15–16).

At our distance, it is difficult to be exactly sure what Jesus means by cold or hot. The most common thought is that He would like us either all for Him or all against Him. It is as if He said, either freeze or burn, but don't be halfway between.

But there is another thought that comes from Laodicea's location. Although Laodicea was known throughout the ancient world for its wealth, its major weakness was its lack of a water supply. To meet this need the Laodiceans had built a system of stone pipes that carried water a distance of six to eight miles from Colosse's cold springs south of the city. They

had also constructed a five mile long aqueduct to bring in the therapeutic hot springs of Hierapolis. But by the time either supply of water reached Laodicea, it was neither hot nor cold, but only lukewarm. It is very possible that Jesus used this very disagreeable water situation to describe His assessment of their spiritual condition. Did He want them all warmed up, and boiling? Or was He saying that hot could be useful, and cold could be useful; but tepid, lukewarm water was disgusting?

Either way, the point is the same. He says, I do not want you half and half. I do not want you the way you are. This indifference, this apathy, this I-don't-care attitude, this half asleep way of living—I hate it.

Did not Jesus teach, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and with all your strength"*?



Hierapolis (Pammukale) calcite terraces





(Mark 12:29–30).

At Laodicea, religion was casual and comfortable, nothing to disturb or incite. There seemed to be an attitude of take-it-as-it-comes. Nothing mattered too much, nothing was too serious.

It was not the religion of Jesus Christ.

The problem of Laodicea is still with us today. There is always the threat of the minimum. What is the exact amount that I have to give up, Lord? What do I have to do? How little can I do and get by?

This attitude does not get the promotion in the workplace. It does not pull the family together in the home. How can it do the most important work on earth, the work of the King of kings? Do we wonder why Jesus says, I don't want you lukewarm. I want you boiling hot. I want to see zeal, enthusiasm, fire!

### POOR RICH CHURCH

They said they were rich and abundantly provided for, in need of nothing. How contrasting the reality Jesus pictured: *"You are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked"* (Rev. 3:17).

The Laodicean Church felt rich. An affluent church in an affluent society, they were in every respect a part of the world. Perhaps their business was bringing in more money than they could use. Were they so busy making money that they had no time for God?

By their standard they were rich. By Jesus' standard, they were poor. Jesus' standard judges poverty as a lack of commitment. To Him, poverty is being lukewarm in faith. Poverty is being distracted by the pursuit of material riches, which leaves one spiritually poor. The church members of Laodicea felt secure in their possessions and wealth. They did not feel a need for God. They had plenty of food, shelter, and clothing. They forgot that God is the source of everything good and necessary for life.

To make matters worse, this Church had equated material prosperity with spiritual prosperity. They felt that their wealth was God's blessing, and they needed nothing more. Jesus saw the Church as poor, spiritually destitute, like a blind beggar clothed in rags.

The Laodiceans were really saying, I don't need anything. I am all right as I am. Life is good. Don't disturb me.

Jesus' reply to their total satisfaction was a radical wakeup call.

### "I COUNSEL YOU"

Jesus had counsel for this wretched Church. He could command, He could order and enforce. But He respected their freedom of choice. What was His advice?

#### 1. CHANGE VENDORS

Laodicea had been dealing in the wares of the current culture. Jesus advises them to buy from Him. He draws a spiritual parallel from the very products the Laodiceans were producing.

### ONLY LUKEWARM

Is lukewarmness really that bad? That is almost like asking, how much can I get by with? It is as if Jesus draws a line and says, *"Don't cross this line!"* We come up to the line, with our eye on Him, and soon we are pushing one toe over the line.

This Church was full of respectable, self-satisfied people who had been inoculated with skin deep religiosity. The members were anemic, compromising, and comfortable. They had enough faith to salve their consciences without becoming fanatics, but enough coolness to keep anything from happening. In the Laodicean Church, one would not be challenged, or rebuked, or corrected, or exhorted—only encouraged and respected.

Encouragement and respect are important, but they are not enough. The members might be pleased, but not Jesus.

### WHAT DO YOU LIKE?

Remember what God said through the prophet Jeremiah to the people of his day? *"For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water"* (Jer. 2:13). Notice that God is the fountain of living water.

If you were to list your top ten choices of what you like to do most for relaxation, what would they be? Make this list and analyze it, and you will see a picture of your heart. Do you turn to pop culture, movies, TV, sports, or the entertainments of this world? Do you go for your diversion to a novel, a puzzle, or a game, or seek out a "friend" on the internet? Do you head for the mall, the bookstore, the health spa? These are all broken cisterns. None of them have any living water to offer. By contrast, Jesus offers spiritual nourishment, springs of living water bubbling up and running over with that which is pure, right, true, wholesome, and good, with the end "everlasting life" (John 4:14–15; Phil. 4:8).

Choose the best!

(right) The affluence of ancient Laodicea still shows in the remains of their bathhouse.



(left) Clogged pipes still visible today affirm the rich mineral content of the water at Laodicea.



## "YOU SAY..." vs. "YOU ARE..."

Think about the vast chasm between what they said they were and what they actually were.

*"You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked" (Rev. 3:17 NIV).*

What a difference between *"you say"* and *"you are."* Jesus is most concerned with what *"you are."* It tells the whole truth, even though it hurts. What they said did not change the facts. They might be proud of their beautiful buildings, their great choir, their gifted preachers, their reputation in the community. But Jesus saw what they really were: *"wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked."*

Why the two different views? Because they were measuring by two different standards. The Laodiceans were measuring by the culture of the city. By the standards of their world, they were doing well. By Jesus' standard—of holiness—they were deficient. Jesus was measuring their heart. He had a standard that He wanted His church to meet. It was not a club where one would be entertained, nor a performing arts center with beautiful music. It was not a political action group where people take sides on the issues of the day. All these elements might have looked good in Laodicea, but for Jesus' purpose, they were worthless. Laodicea had nothing by His standard. They were naked, poor, pitiful, wretched—and worst of all—blind. They could not see their own condition.

When they said, *"I am rich,"* were they being dishonest? Probably not. They were so preoccupied with their wealth and enjoying life that they did not see any problem. Life was full. Life was good. But Jesus, looking deeper, saw the empty heart and called them poor, blind beggars. They were satisfied when they should have been alarmed at their spiritual poverty.

**ONLY A FAITH  
WORTH DYING FOR  
IS A FAITH WORTH  
LIVING FOR.**

## 2. BUY GOLD

*"Buy from Me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich" (3:18).* They need to forsake the peddlers of materialism, sex, drugs, alcohol, pride, and success in this world, and come to Jesus for the true wealth, the knowledge that can give life. By comparing this purchase to gold, He is telling them that spiritual riches are not on the surface. One has to dig for gold, and the rock has to be crushed, put in a crucible and heated to be refined. Just so the spiritual riches come only by a refining process. The apostle Peter interprets this statement for us when he says our faith must be like *"gold tried in the fire"* (1 Peter 1:7). Faith, like gold, is only pure when it has been tested and refined in the fires of daily experience.

## 3. BUY...WHITE RAIMENT

The Laodiceans were used to parading in their rich black cloaks. Jesus directs them to acquire from Him white garments to cover the nakedness of their shame, the shame of the poverty of this world's riches. White is used in the Bible to represent purity and upright character.

White clothes stand for a changed character, clothing that has been made for the occasion. Jesus is recommending to the Laodiceans to put on the white garments of righteousness, the *"fine linen which is the right deeds of the saints,"* the same clothing the bride of Christ puts on for the wedding (Rev. 19:7-8). He wants them more concerned with their robes of character than with the black wool cloaks they are trading for the success of this world. He says, exchange the black clothes of the culture for the white garments of purity, honesty, integrity and right doing. Otherwise, He says, you are spiritually naked.

## 4. BUY...SALVE FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

Laodicean physicians might aid people to recover from physical blindness with their special Phrygian powder, but Christ had a better remedy—for spiritual blindness. He said, *"Anoint your eyes with eye salve so that you can see."*

Much revenue was gained locally from the sale of eye ointments and eye salves. Local factories made good use of nearby mineral salt deposits, which research had determined to be beneficial for a wide range of eye conditions.

What eye salve did Jesus recommend? He wanted them to open their eyes to the meaning of the truths He was teaching them, the knowledge of God. He wanted them to see the eternal benefits He holds in store for His people; see the wisdom of choosing God's knowledge.

## DISCIPLINE WITH LOVE

Then Jesus states a universal truth: *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."* Christ's discipline is evidence of His care and love. He is not inflicting punishment in any sadistic or vindictive way. His correction is to rescue us from what would hurt or destroy us.

*"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."* There are no exceptions. He has only their good in view. God always disciplines His people out of love.

Are we willing to trust that God is doing what is best for us? Discipline does not feel good. It goes against our grain. *"Discipline always seems for the time to be a thing of pain, not of joy; but those who are trained by it reap the fruit of it afterwards in the peace of an upright life"* (Heb. 12:11 Moffatt). *"Afterward"*—the benefit follows. Discipline pays rich dividends to those who are trained and matured in the ways of God.

## REPENT!

What response is Jesus looking for? He wants earnest, zealous repentance. *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent"* (Rev. 3:19).



Jesus is trying to build a fire under them so to speak. Enough of the half-hearted, indecisive, lukewarm, apathetic service, He says. *"Be zealous"*—literally "burning with zeal," "heated to the boiling point," zealous in the pursuit of good. Jesus is telling them that their problem cannot be solved by increasing effort by ten percent. There must be radical action, a complete change of heart and mind, along with a totally new set of values.

### KNOCK, KNOCK

Before Jesus closes His letter, He creates a beautiful word picture of hope. *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."* Jesus is calling attention to the fact that He is outside. The Laodiceans had shut themselves in, and shut Him out. But He is knocking, He wants to enter. Thus far they have been so busy with their own activities that they could not even hear the knocking. Now He wants them to listen again. He will knock once more, and they must decide, because the latch to this door is on the inside. If the door is to be opened, they must open it. Jesus will not force His way in.

*"If any man open the door I will come in to him."*

Note the little word *"if."* The next action must be theirs. He has extended the opportunity. He is knocking, they must open.

A minister once put this picture into words: "There are two sides to this subject, the outside and the inside. First, Jesus is on the outside knocking, and you are on the inside holding the door, with your hand on the bolt. He knocks, you hold. There is coming a time when you will be on the outside and Jesus on the inside, and while you knock, He will hold. Open the door now, and let Him in; that He may open the door then, and let you in. For unless He sups with you here, you will not be prepared to sup with Him there in His kingdom."

Jesus does not give any hints that the Laodiceans are in a hopeless state. Yes, He has nothing good to say, but He does offer a remedy, and an incentive, He holds out the most gracious promise: *"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne"* (Rev. 3:21).

Do we see what Jesus is saying? I had to overcome, so must you. I had battles to fight, just as you have. But you can be victorious, just as I was. And then, I will share My throne with you.

Incredible? It is Jesus' own promise. When He returns, He will choose the victors, the overcomers to be His associate rulers in His kingdom, and share in the administration of the new government He will set up. What greater incentive could He give to this lukewarm church? What more could He do to light the fire and raise the temperature in Laodicea to the boiling point! MM

### LET JESUS IN

Each of us likes to rule our own roost. Each likes to be king or queen of his own castle. If we let Jesus in, He must take over. But as long as we keep Jesus out, we cannot experience the joy and the wealth He has to bring us. To get His blessings, we must let Him in.

But we must do more than let Him into the patio, or even the foyer. He must come into the living room, the dining room, the bedroom, the closets, the drawers, even the computer.

What will He see when He comes into your house? Will He feel like a stranger and leave, or will He see so much that reflects His image and His way of life that He will invite you to share His throne—forever?



PHOTO COURTESY OF "BIBLEPLACES.COM"



Seats in the stadium still bear the inscriptions of the important people who attended.

**A large stadium (above) for sports events, plus two theaters, one Greek and one Roman (not shown) attest to the wealth and leisure at Laodicea.**

## Jesus' Last Week

1. Why did the priests and Pharisees send spies to trick Jesus?
2. What was the trick question the spies asked Jesus?
3. How would this trick question get Jesus into trouble either with the government or with the people?
4. What did Jesus ask for before He answered their question?
5. What did Jesus ask as He held up the coin?
6. When the people answered "Caesar's," what did Jesus say?
7. When Jesus asked two disciples to get a certain donkey as they neared Jerusalem, whose prophecy was He fulfilling?
8. While Jesus and His disciples were eating at Simon's house, who anointed His feet with costly ointment?
9. Who objected, saying it was a waste and that the money could have been used for the poor? What did Jesus reply?
10. Before He died, what Jewish feast did Jesus want to keep with His disciples?
11. What two disciples were to follow a man carrying a pitcher? Where were they to prepare the feast?
12. The evening before Jesus was killed, He observed the Passover with His 12 disciples. What did He do that gave them a lesson in serving others?
13. True or False: Jesus commanded that His disciples observe the Passover in remembrance of Him?
14. Judas Iscariot had made a deal with the chief priests for how many pieces of silver? Who prophesied that Jesus would be sold for this amount?
15. What did Judas Iscariot agree to do?
16. Why did the Jewish leaders want to get rid of Jesus?
17. Did Jesus know what Judas Iscariot was planning to do? How do we know?
18. Where did Jesus take His disciples after the supper?
19. The high priest and Jewish council condemned Jesus to death on what account?
20. Why did Pilate send Jesus to Herod?
21. Why did Pilate condemn Jesus to death?
22. When Jesus died, what startling events took place?
23. What did the centurion at the crucifixion say of Jesus?
24. At what hour did Jesus die?



## Jesus' Resurrection

1. On the "third day" after Jesus' crucifixion some of Jesus' followers came to His tomb and discovered the tomb was empty! Why had no one visited the tomb on the "second day"?
2. On what day of the week was Jesus raised from the dead?
3. Who was the first disciple to see Jesus alive again?
4. Who rolled back the heavy stone that had sealed the tomb?
5. Whose grave was used for the burial of Jesus?
6. What items were left in the tomb after Jesus was resurrected?
7. Name one of the disciples whom Jesus walked with on the road to Emmaus.
8. From what town was Jesus taken to heaven?
9. What were Jesus' final instructions to His disciples just before He ascended?
10. What did the angels tell the Apostles who saw Jesus go up to heaven?

ANSWERS ON NEXT PAGE



### BEFORE CHRIST'S DEATH

1. They were trying to find some way to arrest Jesus. (Matt. 22:15; Mark 12:13–17; Luke 20:20–26).
2. Is it lawful to pay taxes? (Matt. 22:16–17).
3. If Jesus said NOT to pay taxes, then the authorities would arrest Him for treason, but if He said to pay taxes the people wouldn't like that (Luke 20:20–26).
4. Jesus asked for a tribute penny or denarius (Matt. 22:19).
5. Whose portrait and inscription are on these? (Matt. 22:20).
6. Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God the things that are God's (Matt. 22:21).
7. Zechariah's prophecy (Matt. 21:1–5; Zech. 9:9).
8. Mary, the sister of Lazarus (John 12:1–3).
9. Judas Iscariot (John 12:4–7). But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial" (John 12:7).
10. Passover (Luke 22:7).
11. Peter and John, in a large upper room (Luke 22:7–13).
12. He washed their feet like a servant would do and told them to do the same for each other. (In other words, He was saying, "don't think yourself better than others" John 13:1–5).
13. True (Luke 22:19).
14. 30 pieces of silver (Matt. 26:14–16); Zechariah (11:13)
15. To betray Jesus to the priests and Pharisees (Matt. 26:3–5, 10–16).
16. They wanted to get rid of Jesus because they were jealous of His popularity (Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10).
17. Yes. He said one of His disciples would betray Him and He showed who it was. He also said to Judas Iscariot "*What you plan to do, do it quickly*" (Matt. 26:21; John 13:26–27).

18. Mt. of Olives, a garden called Gethsemane (Matt. 26:30, 36).
19. Blasphemy (Matt. 26:65–66).
20. Because he learned that Jesus was a Galilean and belonged to Herod's jurisdiction (Luke 23:3–7).
21. The Chief priests had persuaded the crowd to demand His execution (Matt. 27:15–26) and they said if Pilate released Jesus he was not Caesar's friend (John 19:12).
22. The veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom; an earthquake, many saints were resurrected who went into the city; darkness for three hours (Matt. 27:50–51; Luke 23:44–46).
23. Truly this Man was the Son of God (Mark 15:39).
24. The ninth hour (Matt. 27:45, 50; Mark 15:33).

### JESUS' RESURRECTION

1. They rested on the Sabbath (Luke 23:56–24:1; Matt. 28:1, Mark 16:1)
2. First day of the week (Mark 16:9)
3. Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9)
4. An angel (Matt. 28:2)
5. Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27:57–60)
6. Linen clothes and napkin (John 20:3–7)
7. Cleopas (Luke 24:13–18)
8. Bethany (Luke 24:50–51)
9. They were to "*preach repentance and remission of sins in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*" He also told them to tarry in Jerusalem until they received "*power from on high*" (Luke 24:45–49).
10. Jesus would return just as they had seen Him go up into heaven (Acts 1:1–11).

## Are You Connected?

On John 15:1–8

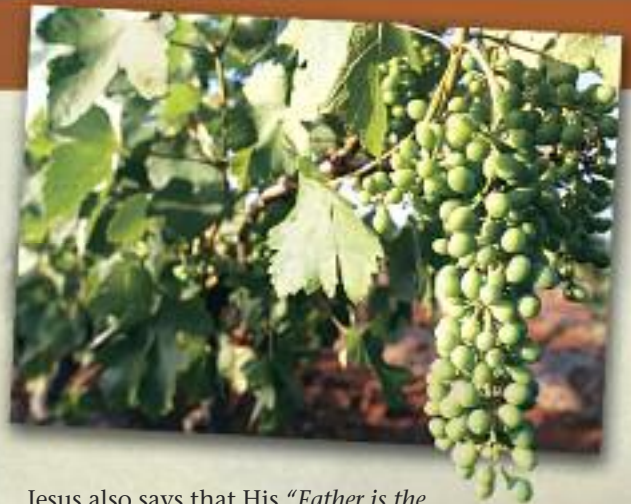
by SAMUEL NEWRAY, West Africa

The apostle Paul in his letters speaks of our being in Christ's body and He in us. These words represent a very close and intimate relationship. Just as the very life of the vine flows through the branches, so we share His life. The branches will die if they are not connected to the vine.

Jesus Christ used many figures of speech to help us understand all that He is to us. For example, He said He was the Door, the Bread of Life, the Way and the Truth, etc. Our spiritual life, our spiritual nourishment, our spiritual health all depend on our relationship with Him. Jesus Christ is the Head and we are His body (Col. 1:18).

When Jesus spoke of the vine and branches, He was using a figure of speech familiar to the Jews. The Psalmist had represented Israel as a vine that God planted in Canaan when he said, "*You [God] have brought a vine out of Egypt; You have cast out the nations, and planted it*" (Ps. 80:8). Similar words are found in the book of Isaiah, where we read (5:7), "*... the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.*" The prophet Jeremiah also used the same kind of imagery (Jer. 2:21).

The Lord Jesus says, "*I am the true vine*" (John 15:1), or the genuine vine. All who belong to Him receive life and nourishment from Him (John 15:5–8).



Jesus also says that His "*Father is the vinedresser*" (John 15:1). God is the owner of the vineyard and Jesus is the One who cares for the vineyard and is concerned about its fruit-bearing. The main concern of Jesus is that we bear good fruit, fruit of patience, peace, loving kindness, faith and courage. He also demands that we abide in Him. Abiding calls for total submission, total devotion, total commitment, and obedience to all that He commands.

Are you abiding in Him today? Are you abiding in the true vine? Remember that the branches which do not abide in Him He "*takes away*" (John 15:2). **MM**

# FAITH *in Action*

## Acts 24:1–15 NKJV

1 Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul.

2 And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: "Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight,

3 we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

4 Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us.

5 For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

6 He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law.

7 But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took him out of our hands,

8 commanding his accusers to come to you. By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him."

9 And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so.

10 Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: "Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself,

11 because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city.

13 Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me.

14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

15 I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.

## PAUL ON TRIAL FOR THE RESURRECTION

 Read Acts 24:1–23

The Apostle Paul, as far as we know, had only one public trial at which the Jews brought formal charges against him. That trial took place at Caesarea.

Apparently Felix sent word to the Jews in Jerusalem, probably to the High Priest, requesting the appropriate people to act as witnesses in a formal trial of Paul at Caesarea.

1. Who came from Jerusalem to take the witness stand against Paul?

(24:1) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Who came as actual first hand witnesses of Paul's crime? \_\_\_\_\_

The fact that the High Priest thought the case worthy of his personal attention shows the level of hatred against Paul. There were no actual witnesses present. The elders who came with him were most likely Sadducees who were friends of the High Priest. For this very special occasion they hired another non-witness—a Roman orator—likely for a very, very large sum of money to act as counsel for the prosecution. Anything to impress the Roman Governor Felix with the worthiness of their cause!

When the trial opened, just as Ananias the High Priest would have hoped, his professional Tertullus was given first opportunity to speak.

3. How did the orator get the attention of Felix when he began to

speak? (24:2–3). \_\_\_\_\_

One listening to Tertullus would have thought Felix was noted for his peace-making and kindness in behalf of the Jewish people. According to history, the



very opposite was true. Felix had incited robbers to assassinate a High Priest named Jonathan who had displeased him. Then he had had many of those robbers captured and crucified. On numerous occasions he had sent an army against them and killed hundreds of their numbers. His governorship was a period of constant turmoil, much of it anti-Jewish.

But Tertullus was not interested in presenting facts. He had been hired to secure the conviction of Paul, and whatever tool would be most useful was in his hand to use. Flattery was one of these tools.

His flattery complete, Tertullus proceeded to accuse Paul on four points.

4. What were Tertullus' four charges against Paul? (24:5-6) \_\_\_\_\_

Tertullus used his most powerful accusation first: that Paul was a *"pestilent fellow."* The Romans were strong advocates for peace keeping. By accusing Paul of stirring up sedition, revolution, and riot, he felt certain that the Jews could get Felix's support for their cause.

In a second accusation Tertullus said Paul was stirring up sedition among Jews in all parts of the inhabited world! He wanted Felix to see the problem as large as possible.

His third charge implicated all the Christians by calling Paul the ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes—he could not call them Christians because the name Christian was derived from Christ. So he contemptibly spoke of them as Nazarenes because Jesus came from Nazareth.

Notice also that Tertullus called the Christians a *"sect,"* implying that they were heretics—another effort to impress Felix.

Tertullus' fourth charge became very specific: that Paul was attempting to desecrate the temple, at which time they laid hold on him and arrested him. In reality, they had seized Paul in the temple and tried to punish him without giving him a trial.

Even though the charge was false, it had a grain of truth in it. Paul was in the temple area when he was attacked by the Jewish mob—a detail Tertullus carefully omitted. Half truths are always more difficult to refute than outright lies, and Tertullus attempted to cloak every statement with respectability. After all, he was hired to represent the interests of the High Priest and the elders of the Jews.

5. How did Tertullus carefully show that the Jews he represented were not supporters of the Roman Chief Captain Lysias, who had sent Paul to Felix? (24:7-8) \_\_\_\_\_

In an outright lie, Tertullus tried to put a bad light on the Roman Chief Captain. He probably felt compelled to do this—he may have even been told to do it, because the Jews and Romans were at odds. Tertullus went so far as to say that Paul was being properly judged by their law when Lysias intervened violently and seized Paul out of their hands.

How would Felix feel about this? Roman officers had the responsibility of keeping order. Felix knew only too well about the conduct of hot headed Jews on many occasions. He also had the letter from Lysias, which put the matter in an entirely different light. At this point, the High Priest may have lost some



#### Insight

##### Where, Oh, Where?

Where were the four young men who had made the vow, the four that Paul went into the temple to help, the four young men whose expenses Paul paid so that they could properly complete their vow? Why did they not come and testify that, far from committing sacrilege, Paul was in the temple offering a sacrifice in their behalf?

But perhaps there were some Christians present at Paul's trial, even though we are not told of them. We know that Luke was nearby, because he later sailed with Paul on the ship destined for Rome. The fact that Felix gave instructions that Paul's friends be allowed to visit him and bring him gifts also shows that Felix was aware that Paul had friends. The bond between Christian brethren is always strong, stronger than the closest of family ties. Circumstances may have prevented them doing what they wanted to do for Paul, but Paul had a devoted family in Christ whose hearts were *"knit together in love"* (Col. 2:2).



**The Jews hired an orator Tertullus to present the case to Felix for them.**

#### Acts 24:16-23 NKJV

16 This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

17 Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation,

18 in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult.

19 They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me.

20 Or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council,

21 unless it is for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.' "

22 But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of the Way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case."

23 So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him.



### A closer look

#### Should One Answer False Accusations?

Why didn't Paul ignore the false accusations against him? Shouldn't he have let those falsehoods go and focused instead on converting the Governor?

We have at least two reasons to believe Paul knew what he was doing. First, he was equipped with Divine power, the Holy Spirit, which Jesus had promised would advise them what to say when they would be on trial for His name (Matt. 10:19). Second, Paul knew far more about the situation he was experiencing than we can tell at a distance of two thousand years.

Why did he not let the accusations go? Because they had to do with his faith and his attitude toward God. For when the facts came together, Paul was not on trial for any misbehavior, but only for his strong convictions and faith in the God of his Fathers.



### From the Word

#### "For the hope of the resurrection..."

"Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day" (Acts 24:21).

The resurrection was the very center of Paul's faith. When he was comparing the credentials he had left behind with the benefits of knowing Christ, the hope of a physical resurrection was His one dominant inspiration: "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. 3:10-11). "If by any means" he might attain to that resurrection, he said, and he meant it. What mattered the beatings, the persecution, the false accusations, the days and nights in prison, the pressure almost beyond bearing—if only he could attain to the resurrection!

Paul wanted life. He wanted eternal life! And he knew the traditions of his family did not have it to offer. One by one his family members would die. And in a little while he, too, would join them. There was only one way out, and that was the way Christ offered, the way of faith and obedience to Christ! There was only one way out, and that was the way Christ showed: by resurrection.

credibility with Felix.

Then Tertullus went even further, implying that Lysias was wrong in sending Paul to Felix. Not a word did Tertullus mention about the plot to assassinate Paul, or the willingness of the Jewish Sanhedrin to be part of the plot. If Felix was alert, he could see immediately that the Jews were not as honest and legal as they were trying to appear.

6. Did Tertullus get any support from the other Jews who had accompanied him to Caesarea? (24:9) \_\_\_\_\_

#### Paul's Defense Before Felix

At this point, the Governor indicated that it was time for Paul to speak.

7. How did Paul begin his speech? (24:10) \_\_\_\_\_

Notice the contrast between the rhetoric of Tertullus and the simple, courteous, truthful statements of the apostle Paul.

Paul never used flattery at any time, not even in addressing Felix (24:11).

8. What was Paul's reply to the main charge against him (stirring up riots and sedition)? (24:11-12) \_\_\_\_\_

The simplest logistics were against their accusation. It had been only twelve days since Paul came to Jerusalem for the first time, and five of those days he had spent in Caesarea. This left only seven days to have started a revolution, and for the Jews to have investigated, tried him, and found him a dangerous character. It was impossible. Paul testified that he had come to Jerusalem to worship, not to cause strife or defile the temple. He had not even argued with anybody at the temple or in the city (24:12).

Paul did much more, though, than to deny the charges against him. He took the opportunity to declare his Christian faith, which he knew was their real charge against him. He wanted Felix to know the real cause of the Jews opposition was "*the way which they call heresy*" (24:14).

Anyone could make accusations. Paul had truth on his side. It was the truth that mattered. Paul knew they could not prove the charges they were laying against him.

9. What confession did Paul wish to make regarding his religious position? (24:14-16) \_\_\_\_\_

Paul did indeed have something to confess: his absolute faith and hope in God. He gladly confessed to believing all things which were written in "*the law and in the prophets*." His firm faith was in the resurrection of the dead (24:15). "*I take my stand on the Scriptures*" he said to Felix.

10. In addition to his firm beliefs, what else did Paul say about himself personally? (24:16) \_\_\_\_\_

Paul had more than a belief. He had put his belief to work in his life. "*With this hope before me I do my utmost to live my whole life with a clear conscience*" (Acts 24:16 Phillips). It was his rule of life, to keep God's law absolutely and not to do anything that would cause another to stumble. His rule of life was in direct opposition to the accusations directed against him.

11. What were the details of Paul's reason to come to Jerusalem, as he now explained it? (24:17) \_\_\_\_\_

After his brief discourse on the resurrection, Paul came back to the physical details. After many years of travelling, he had returned to Jerusalem to bring a love gift to his brothers and sisters who were struggling against poverty and



famine, and to worship in the temple. Yet he was accused of being the enemy of his people? How could bringing charitable gifts and worshiping in the temple be interpreted as sedition?

12. What did Paul carefully point out as the chief weakness in his prosecution's case against him? (24:19-20) \_\_\_\_\_

Paul stated the fact. He had been found in the temple by "*certain Jews from Asia*," and at that time he was not with any crowd or making any disturbance. Why should they not be called to stand as witnesses against him, if they had "*found any evil doing in me*"? (24:20). Jewish law was definite that there should be no trial without witnesses (Deut.17:6; 19:15). Roman law also recognized the need for witnesses. The High Priest and his company were not witnesses. All Paul's accusers had brought with them was a clever lawyer/orator.

13. What was the one thing that the High Priest and the elders were witnesses of with respect to Paul? (24:21; 23:6) \_\_\_\_\_

The High Priest and elders had been present when Paul had stood before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem about ten days earlier. At that time Paul had told about himself and his background, and had included his faith in the resurrection of the dead as the main point of contention between himself and the Jews. Remember, too, that these Jews were likely Sadducees, and the Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection. Even though Paul's belief in the resurrection was not an issue as far as Felix was concerned, Paul wanted Felix to know this was the source of the problem between himself and his fellow Jews.

14. What effect did Paul's statement have on Felix? (24:22) \_\_\_\_\_

### Leniency instead of Liberty

At this point, one might have expected Felix to dismiss the case, seeing that the prosecution had no witnesses and no evidence for their accusations. Surely Felix could see that the issues had nothing to do with a violation of Roman law but only with contention over Jewish beliefs. But Felix was fundamentally a politician, not a just judge, and he shrank from offending the Jews. What if they should take their case to a higher court and his position be threatened?

On the other hand, perhaps Felix had a little conscience—enough to realize that if he turned Paul over to the Jewish leaders, he would be condemning an innocent man.

15. How did Felix resolve the dilemma? (24:22) \_\_\_\_\_

16. What was Felix's reason for putting off the decision? (24:22) \_\_\_\_\_

Felix deferred, compromised, put off a decision. By stalling on the decision, Felix both averted the anger of the Jews and soothed any bit of conscience he might have had.

There is no evidence that Felix ever sent for Lysias. Felix was not above empty promises and temporizing. In the meanwhile, Paul was in custody.

17. What small compromise did Felix make regarding Paul's confinement? \_\_\_\_\_  
(24:23) \_\_\_\_\_



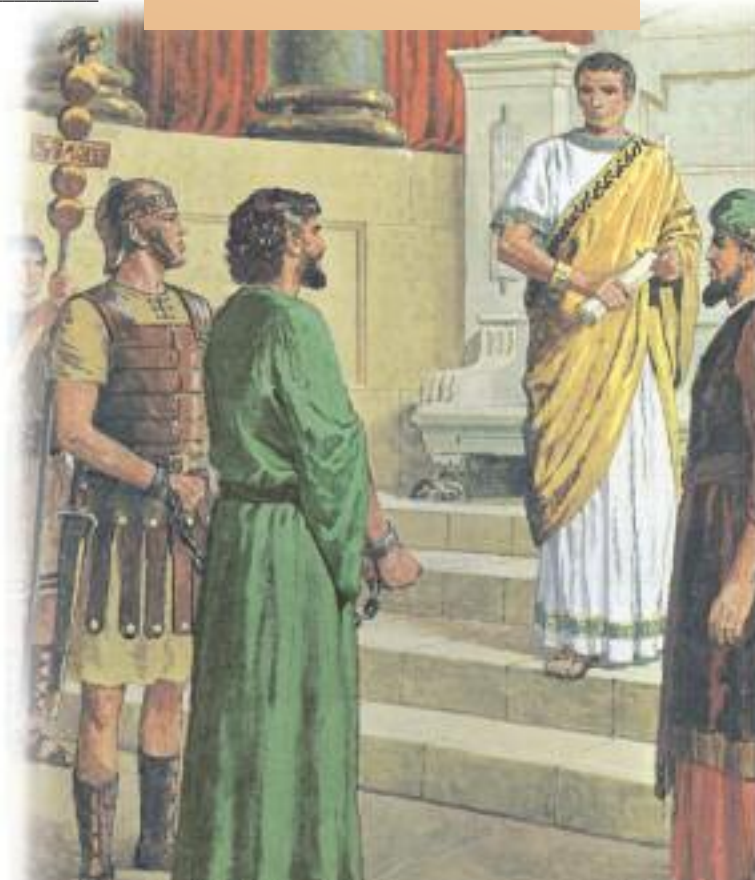
### A closer look

#### "You Must ...Bear Witness at Rome"

Paul had one bright vision through all of this: the Lord had told him that he would see Rome. This meant he would not be left to molder in a dark Caesarean prison. And he would not fall into the deadly grip of his enemies. Christ had more work for him. He had even said, "*As you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome*" (Acts 23:11).

"*Bear witness at Rome.*" The words went around and around in Paul's mind: what would be the setting? How would he get there? What lay between Felix and Rome? Would he—perhaps—have to appeal to Caesar to get out of the governor's grip? Much as he needed to escape from the vicious Jews in Jerusalem, Paul was very aware that being in Felix's hands was not good either.

But God watches over His servants. Paul was "immortal," so to speak, until his work was done, until he had accomplished what Jesus called him to do. As he wrote in his Epistles, he was not Felix's prisoner, or the Jews' prisoner. He was Christ's prisoner (Eph. 3:1; 4:1).



Felix sent for Paul often and conversed with him.

#### Acts 24:24–27 NKJV

24 And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

25 Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."

26 Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him.

27 But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.



#### Insight

##### No Tomorrow

To say "I'll do it tomorrow," is equivalent to saying good-bye to opportunity. Tomorrow easily becomes forever. Opportunity has its now, today, but no tomorrow.

Why are we putting ourselves at risk to tell God we don't need him today? Because none of us can be sure about tomorrow. We have only today. Tomorrow quickly becomes yesterday. Nothing is so fragile as life. What is the saying? "All men think all men mortal but themselves." But the reality is, we all are mortal. None of us knows he will be here next week.

The only time that belongs to us is today. Not tomorrow, but today. Not then, but now.

Imagine that you can follow Felix after he dismissed Paul. For the moment he is likely impressed by Paul's appeal, his manner, his convictions. That night at the games he does not seem quite as engaged as usual, nor does Drusilla seem quite so charming. Nor does the theater engross him as completely as it had before. But the next week his discomfort is less keen, and still less the next.

In a short time he is his old self again, his old sinful self. The image of the better self that Paul had pictured has vanished.

Who will repeat the story of Felix? If only all hearts and consciences that had been softened and stirred would turn to God. But so often, the one hearing the message says, "Tomorrow..."

We can be sure that Paul's friends were on hand to help him. Now they were free to bring him food and whatever else he might need. The plan was also economically beneficial for Rome. If Paul's friends looked after his needs, it was that much less for the governor to do!

Paul's situation was likely similar to house arrest. We know for certain that one friend, Luke, was on hand to help him, because the account we have of this time is written in first person ("we" and "us"). There was also a church in Caesarea, who surely came to meet Paul's needs and make his imprisonment as comfortable as possible. Caesarea was also on the way to Jerusalem for people from the north who might be coming to attend the feasts.

#### A Second Opportunity for Felix...Postponed



Read Acts 24:24–27

When Jesus sent Paul into the ministry, he told him that he would be carrying Christ's name to "the Gentiles, and kings" (Acts 9:15). The court session in the presence of Felix, and now Felix with his wife Drusilla, was a prelude to those opportunities.

"After some days,...Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who is Jewish" (Acts 24:24). If Felix was not a man of high character, neither was his young wife. Still in her teens, she was already on her second marriage. She was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I, the Herod who murdered James and would have murdered Peter had not the angel of God intervened (Acts 12:1–23). When Paul stood before them, he likely knew something of their sordid background. Was there any need of even talking to such people about the way of Christ? Yet the door of opportunity stood wide open, and God through His Holy Spirit was directing. Had they wanted to change their way of life, they could have. In any case, there may have been someone within hearing of Paul whose heart was touched.

18. What were the subjects most prominent in Paul's discourse before Felix and Drusilla? (24:25) \_\_\_\_\_

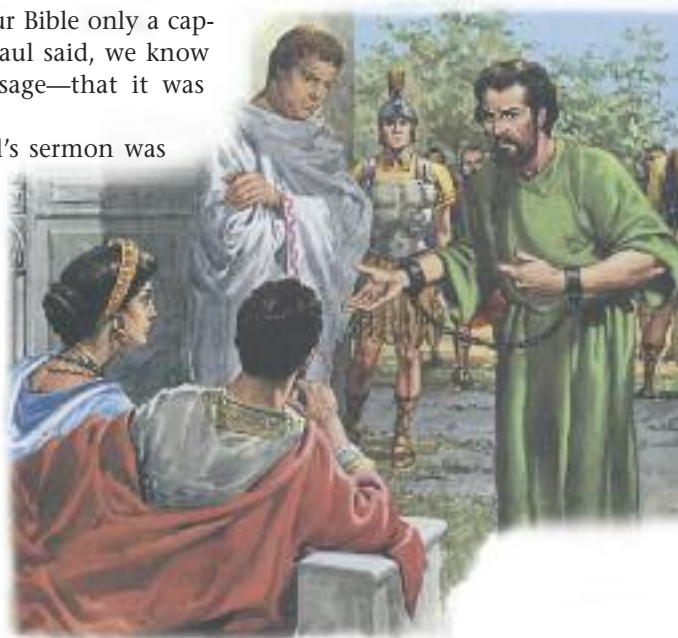
Paul's sermon had three heads, as it were. A great reasoner, a great thinker, and a great logician, Paul was also a great believer. To him, Christianity was the most reasonable belief system in the world, and one had every reason to believe it.

Though we have in our Bible only a capsule summary of what Paul said, we know enough to get the message—that it was forthright and plain.

The first head of Paul's sermon was

**righteousness.** Other translations use the word "justice," or "morality," or "purity of life."

When Paul began to talk about such topics, can't we see Drusilla looking at her husband with wide open eyes? Was this the kind of "entertainment" that Felix expected her to like? Since Paul in his earlier session with Felix had told his own



Paul "preaches" to Felix and Drusilla



story in familiar terms, Felix might have expected more of the same when he brought his wife. But Paul, it seemed, felt the time was right to shoot straight to the mark. Instead of elaborating on some philosophical issues of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism, or some mysterious subject that might entrance them, Paul went to practical issues of morality, justice and right doing. There was no escaping the message: God commands, and man has no right to parley with those commands.

If Felix and Drusilla felt the message was aimed at them, they were probably right! Paul had a captive audience, and he knew it. Felix, who thought nothing of taking or giving a bribe; who could put an innocent man or woman in prison, or order his soldiers to capture and destroy the children of an enemy; Felix, who could easily justify an injustice that served his cause—what was he thinking as Paul “reasoned about righteousness”?

Felix and Drusilla had not recovered from the first onslaught when Paul’s sermon launched into the second: the subject of **temperance or self-control**. We can almost see their faces turn white as Paul said plainly to Felix, You are the man, and to Drusilla, You are the woman. Could she blot out her shameful escapades, of the husband she had abandoned, and of her unlawful union with Felix? Self-control of one’s passions and emotions was a topic about which she likely had little or no knowledge.

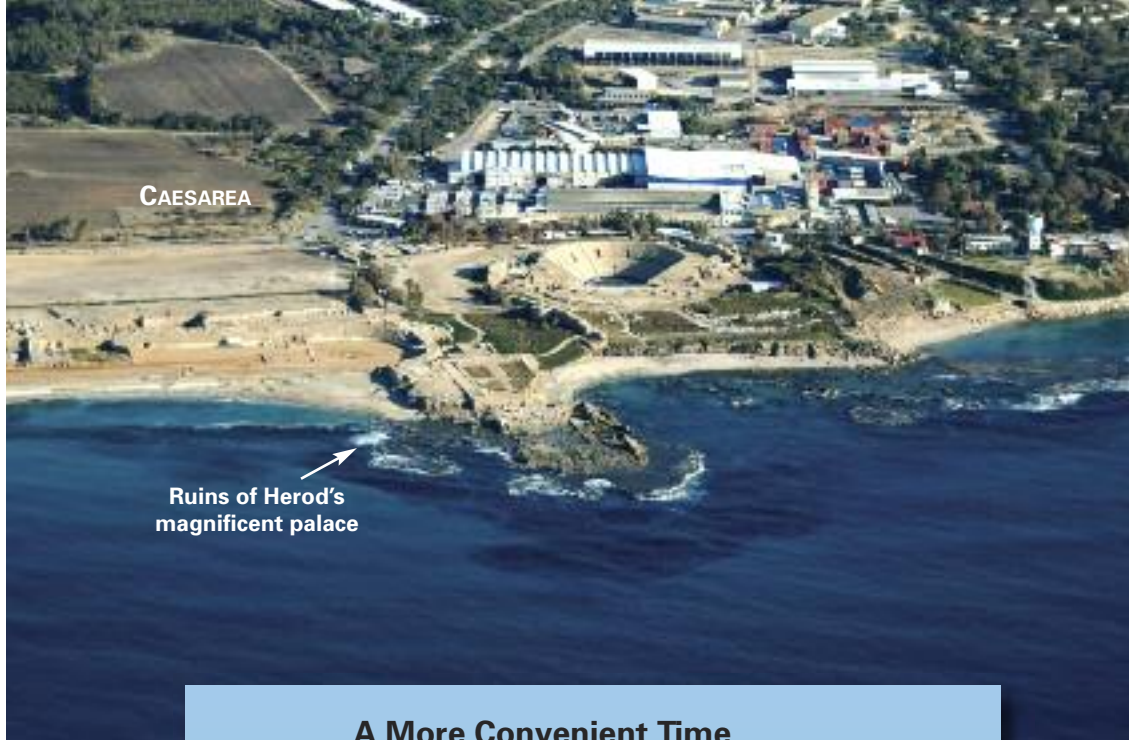
By this time Felix probably wished he had never invited this preacher in. Can’t you imagine Drusilla nudging her husband and saying, “Stop this man!” Or, “Why did you bring me here to listen to a sermon?” And Felix might have answered, “I had no idea! I would like to stop him, and yet, I dare not.”

Then Paul came to the third element of his sermon: **judgment** to come. If Felix and Drusilla already had an earful, this was the climax. Paul did not leave out anything pertinent. First he had told them that God has laws that are laws, not options. Now he tells them that God will enforce those laws and the day of evil will have an end, that their pleasures of wine and chariots and villas and finery will all end in destruction.

19. What was Felix’s reaction to Paul’s sermon? (24:25) \_\_\_\_\_

Other translations say, “Felix was terrified,” or “Felix was alarmed.” Such a reaction was totally out of character for a man like Felix, hard as nails, who was able to kill without even blinking. Yet even Felix had to tremble before the Word of God, which is alive and “powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword,...” discerning even “the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Do we wonder that Felix was “terrified...alarmed”?



CAESAREA

Ruins of Herod's magnificent palace

### A More Convenient Time

*In the judgment hall of Herod, Paul the great Apostle stood,  
And to Felix he proclaimed God's truth sublime;  
As he reasoned there of righteousness and judgment sure to come,  
Felix answered, "At a more convenient time."*

*He had time for worldly pleasure and for business to pursue,  
He had time for vain ambition, sin and crime;  
But for giving heed to Jesus and the truth that He proclaimed,  
He was waiting for a more convenient time!*

*O my brother, heed the warning that is ringing out to you!  
Hear the silver bells of mercy sweetly chime.  
Do not linger any longer, make the grand decision now!  
There will never be a more convenient time!*

—Selected.

*“I do my utmost  
to live my whole  
life with a clear  
conscience.”*

—Paul

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

## WE CAN BE FRIENDS

Mr. Martin moved to a farm that joined the farm owned by Mr. Thomas, an old-timer in the area. A short time later, one of Mr. Thomas' cows found a hole in the fence and went into Mr. Martin's field. Mr. Martin was angry and demanded the top price for his damages. Mr. Thomas promptly paid him.

A few months went by. Then one day several cows belonging to Mr. Martin got through the fence into Mr. Thomas's property and remained there an entire day before they were discovered. Mr. Martin expected an angry visit from his neighbor but to his surprise, Mr. Thomas was not angry when he called. Instead he said, "We are living side by side as neighbors. It is only natural that some problems arise. I have lived long enough to know that these problems will make us enemies if we let them. If we decide we want to be friends, we will be. It all depends upon what we want. I value your goodwill. Let's work together and repair the fence between us and make it strong enough that the stock can't get through."

After that the two men became good friends.



Love is not just a warm feeling. It is the way we act and react toward others—in a Christ-like way even toward those who hurt or disagree with us.

*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves,... Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink: for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:19–21).*

*But I [Jesus] say to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you (Luke 6:27–28 NET).*

## WORTH THE WAIT

Let me drive, Dad—please! Craig begged as Dad turned the car onto a country road leading to Grandpa's farm. "There's not much traffic here."

Dad shook his head. "You're not old enough, Son."

"I'm fourteen. Next year I can get my permit," Craig pleaded. "Besides, Steven's dad lets him drive all the time." Immediately, Craig knew he had said the wrong thing. His father was never impressed by what other people did. When Dad did not respond, Craig knew the subject was closed. He would not be learning to drive until he got a permit, and

that was that. Dad was a stickler for obeying the Bible and "the laws of the land."

When they arrived at the farm, they found Grandpa in the garden, planting potatoes. Craig's little brother Tyson squatted down on the ground and began digging. "I wanta make a garden, too," he said.

Craig headed for the barn. "I'm going to ride Princess. At least I don't need a license to ride a horse!" he mumbled.

As they prepared to leave later that afternoon, Tyson was nowhere to be found. They searched all over, calling his name.





### Be Patient

Even Dad was beginning to look worried. Then Grandpa came across the yard carrying a tired little boy. "Found him in the garden sound asleep," Grandpa explained as he put Tyson in his father's arms.

Dad smiled. "What were you doing in the garden?" he asked his son.

"Waitin' for da 'tatoes to come up." The little boy yawned. "But it took 'em so long, I went to sleep."

Dad and Craig were still chuckling as they drove onto the freeway. "Patience is a wonderful thing," said Dad. "It's

something God wants all of us to learn. In time, Craig, you'll have your driver's license, and it will have been worth the wait. And in time, Tyson, we'll have our potatoes." He rubbed his stomach. "I can almost taste Grandma's sweet peas and new potatoes now. Mmmmm, it will certainly be worth the wait." MM

### How ABOUT You?

*Do you try to "leap-frog" over time to get what you want before the "right season"? God knows the best time for everything. Waiting is hard, but it is important. When you are told to wait, don't fret and fuss. Be patient.*

The above story is adapted from *KEYS FOR KIDS* 1997.

## PAUL ON TRIAL FOR THE RESURRECTION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

20. When did Felix tell Paul he would like to hear more? (24:25) \_\_\_\_\_

As far as Felix was concerned, Paul's powerful preaching that day was a failure. It was a failure not because of the message or the preacher, but because of the man who heard it. Nothing was accomplished. Instead of repenting, Felix brought the session to an end by saying, *"That will do for the present...when the right time comes I will call for you."*

As far as we know, the right time never came. And so Felix passed from this stage of history into oblivion, a man who might have been, but never was converted.

And Drusilla? Her reaction was likely the same as her husband's. Never had they heard such preaching and never would they hear it again, because they closed out the opportunity.

21. What was Felix's motive in having further conversations with Paul? (24:26) \_\_\_\_\_

Felix may have had the impression that Paul, or at least some of his friends, were wealthy, and that Paul, if given opportunity, might offer him money in exchange for freedom. After all, he was a leader, and his Church might offer money for his release. It was reason enough to talk with him occasionally. Besides, Paul was a fascinating talker, and somewhat entertaining.

Would Paul have considered compromising his integrity, even for his freedom? Absolutely not! And Felix never offered to release Paul.

22. What was Felix's final action in behalf of Paul? (24:27) \_\_\_\_\_

23. What was Felix's reason for this action? \_\_\_\_\_

Politics prevailed. Felix's one wish was to have as much favorable support as possible. If it made the Jews happy to have Paul incarcerated, so be it.

Two years went by, and Felix was replaced by Porcius Festus.

TO BE CONTINUED



### Insight

#### "Felix Trembled"

Felix was the last man one would expect to be disturbed by a preacher. He had listened to all kinds of orators, mystics, philosophers, and entertainers. But never had he heard about such topics as Paul presented: righteousness, self-control, and future judgment. No wonder *"Felix trembled,"* or as other translations phrase it, Felix was "terrified, alarmed." Paul had brought the governor to the door of repentance.

Contrast Felix's reaction with that of the penitent Philippian jailer, *"Sir, what must I do to be saved?"* Felix closed the session by saying, "That will do for the present...when the right time comes I will call for you." Felix was a victim of tomorrow, a tomorrow that never came. Consequently, he will have no "tomorrow."



# GIANT (Bamboo) PANDA

by PATRICIA A. FLEMING

Most of us know the roly-poly black and white giant panda bear only from its picture. Our chances of seeing a live giant panda, even in a zoo, are small. They are even hard to follow or study in the wild because they live in very remote, very dense bamboo forests in the highlands of central China at elevations between 5,000 and 10,000 feet.

Why do giant pandas choose to live in dense bamboo forests? Because 99% of their diet is bamboo. What's for dinner? Bamboo. What's for lunch? Bamboo. What's for breakfast? Bamboo. Watch the adult panda and you will see him chomping bamboo 12 to 16 hours a day. He will find a comfortable spot in a bamboo forest, sit down on his rump, and eat all the tender shoots and leaves within reach. When he is full he may take a nap; then it is time for more bamboo. To supply its nutrition needs, the panda must consume 20 to 40 pounds of bamboo a day—that adds up to over 10,000 pounds (over 5 tons!) of bamboo a year! Yes, give them plenty of fresh bamboo and Mr. & Mrs. Panda can thrive!

We are not surprised, then, that the panda is designed to handle bamboo. On its front paws it has five fingers plus a “pseudo thumb” formed by an elongated and enlarged wrist bone covered with a fleshy pad of skin. The panda wraps its fingers around a bamboo stalk, then uses its special “thumb” to push the stalk against its fingers, holding the bamboo securely while it eats.

Actually, the panda's whole head is a giant machine for crushing bamboo. Powerful muscles extending from the top of its head to the jaws give it the ability to crush very tough stalks. Its molars are large and broad for chewing the coarse bamboo fibers. Even its digestive system is designed to handle this very singular diet. The panda's esophagus has a tough lining to protect it from bamboo splinters. Its stomach is also protected with a thick, muscular lining.

Did the panda just happen to have this special equipment for harvesting bamboo? We can't imagine Mr. Panda engineered its design, even over millions of years, because the regular bear paw could not handle bamboo well. Why not acknowledge the great Designer, who equipped the panda with what it needed to live on bamboo!

## **Little Panda**

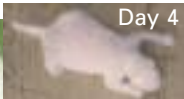
A newborn panda cub is about the size of a chipmunk and weighs about 4 ounces. Hairless and blind at birth, it is completely helpless for



Sitting upright leaves the panda's front paws free to grasp bamboo stems with the help of a “pseudo thumb.” The panda also uses its powerful jaws and strong teeth to crush the tough, fibrous bamboo into bits.



Day 4



Panda cubs are only about the size of a stick of butter at birth, weighing 3 to 5 ounces. Pink, hairless, and blind, the helpless cub is 1/900th the size of its mother. Except for a marsupial, a giant panda baby is the smallest mammal newborn relative to its mother's size.

Day 22



At 22 days the cub shows its unique black and white markings. Pandas have skin of two different colors. The skin under black fur is dark. Skin under white fur is pink.

For days after birth, the mother does not leave the den, not even to eat or drink!

The powerful jaws of a mother panda can be very gentle when she carries her baby in them.



the first 3 or 4 months. The mother suckles her baby several times a day, and leaves it in her den while she goes to eat. Once the baby gets fur and moves around on its own, she takes it with her when she feeds. She carries the youngster by gently picking it up with her teeth, much as a cat carries its kittens.

Little panda grows fast. By the time it is 7 months old, it may weigh 20 pounds and has started to eat bamboo shoots. It can run and climb trees to get away from predators. At a year and a half, it weighs about 120 pounds and is ready to leave its mother. A giant panda reaches maturity at about 3 years of age and by that time will weigh between 150 and 275 pounds and be between four and five feet long nose to rump.

Is there any reason for its thick black and white coat? The fur of the giant panda consists of a coarse outer layer and a very dense, wooly-like underfur. To the touch, the fur feels oily. The oily protective coating helps protect the pandas from the cool, damp climate in which they live, and its black and white coloring is a perfect camouflage in the thick, shadowy bamboo forests.

Do all bears hibernate? Not panda bears. First, pandas cannot hibernate because their food source does not have sufficient calories or protein to allow them to store up reserves for a long period of hibernation. And second, there is no need to hibernate because food is available year round.

Wondrously made? Yes! Perhaps the panda bear can't praise its Creator, but we can. We thank our All-knowing and All-powerful God that He cares for His creatures and that He has an everlasting plan for this earth. **MM**



Panda mothers give great care to their cubs.



u r r a

Giant pandas are excellent tree climbers. Young panda bears love to scamper up trees.

How did the panda get its colors? Scientists aren't sure.

## The Amazing Bamboo...



**A woody, perennial grass:** Bamboo is a group of woody perennial evergreen plants in the true grass family Poaceae. There are about 1000 species of bamboo—found in diverse climates, from cold mountains to hot tropical regions.

**Fastest growing plant on earth:** Bamboo is the fastest growing plant on Earth. In certain species, its accelerated growth rate is due to a unique rhizome system. Depending on local soil and climate conditions, it has been clocked surging skyward as fast as 47 inches in 24 hours. It can grow at a rate exceeding 40 inches per hour for short periods of time.

**Height:** Bamboo is just grass, but it varies in height from dwarf, one foot plants to giant timber bamboos that can grow to over 100 feet in height (the average 2 story house is about 30 feet high).

**Mass flowering:** Although some varieties of bamboos flower every year, most species flower infrequently, and then die. In fact, many bamboos only flower at intervals as long as 60 or 120 years. These species flower, bear fruit and then all die at the same time regardless of their location, as though some internal alarm clock in each cell suddenly announced to the plant, "It's time to flower and fruit!" The plant stops growing and its whole energy is diverted to producing flowers and fruit, after which it dies. (This mechanism is still largely a mystery.)

For the giant pandas this can mean starvation if there are no other species of bamboo to turn to in those forests, for it takes years for this species to grow into a forest again.

Sources of information and photos for this article:

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**We Saw the**

# *Morning Break*

By RUTH E. SIMSON

## **Looking back from Millennium Year 400**

**W**hat might our age look like in the memory of someone living well into the Millennial reign of Jesus on earth?

Imagine that the speaker in this poem is someone from our day who lived to see the Morning Break, the great Day of the Lord. The audience is a group of young mortals, whose cup of blessing is fuller than they can realize.

*O*h come, my children, while I tell  
Of former times we knew so well,  
The age before Christ came to dwell  
And make all things anew.

*O*h, there were just a handful, few,  
Who would believe God's Word so true,  
The only ones on earth who knew  
The morning soon would break!

*B*ut oh, we watched with longing eyes,  
For we knew He would bring the prize  
To all the ready, working, wise—  
And He would not be late.

*W*e turned the pages of God's Book  
To learn the things for which to look,  
While for our pattern Christ we took,  
His life of holiness.

*A*gain we read the promise clear  
That Christ would come, we need not fear,  
Come quickly! oh, the Day was near!  
The Day of glorious triumph!

*A*nd when the Scriptures we rehearsed,  
We read Elijah would come first;  
When things were at their very worst  
The Prophet great would come.

*W*ith pow'rs of wrong on every hand,  
Still God's great cause we did defend,  
And for His truth we did contend—  
The cause of Christ our Lord!

*T*he best of tools that men could make  
We purchased for the Savior's sake  
To publish far, "Your sins forsake,  
Our Lord is coming soon."

*P*rophetic signs we saw so plain,  
We knew things could not stay the same—  
Full soon our Lord would come to reign—  
It could not be too long.

*A*t times, 'twas hard to keep faith bright,  
'Twas very hard to keep the right;  
It was not like this age of sight;  
Ours was an evil time.

*T*hat age was dark with sin and hate,  
The world was in an awful state;  
Vast millions had no God but fate—  
No love, no hope, no faith.

*T*hey talked as if all faith were vain,  
They even gave each other pain,  
Their selfish ways none could restrain—  
Their Maker they denied.

*M*en ev'rywhere did wrong and not  
A judgment came—they quite forgot  
That God would bring them to account  
For all their evil ways.

*S*o greedy for material gain,  
They'd wreck another's upright name  
Without a twinge of guilt or shame—  
So hardened were their hearts.

*E*ven small children, young in years  
Victims of terror, lived in fear  
Of losing what to them was dear—  
A new age had to come.

*B*ut though the world was dark with sin,  
No more than this could I take in,  
For I was working hard to win  
My crown of life eternal!

*I* had to be so careful lest  
I fail in some small trial or test  
And lose my share in this sweet rest—  
It was a rousing thought.

*W*e read God's Word to make us strong,  
To help us through the midnight long,  
To fill our days with hope and song,  
O glorious coming Day!



*We worked together, one on one,  
To help each other faster run,  
For we had much that need be done  
Before the morning dawned.*

*For well we knew each one who'd win  
Must keep himself in fighting trim,  
Must free himself from every sin—  
'Twas not an easy task.*

*So few believed God's promise then;  
So few had faith to fight the trend—  
Yes, we were just a handful when  
The bright new morning broke.*

*You ask, Did we have angels then?  
Oh yes, they were our constant friend,  
Yet never did we see their form—  
Because we walked by faith.*

*For though we had the angel near  
His warning voice we did not hear  
When tempted from the right to veer—  
Ours was an age of faith.*

*What do I mean, by "faith" or "sight"?  
'Tis this: You know when you walk right—  
We had to walk as in the night—  
None told us when we erred.*

*But oh, you ask, "What was the night?"  
My dearest ones, 'twas lack of light,  
As if you had no gift of sight—  
We had to trust in God!*

*How oft our hearts were bent with care,  
As we each other's loads did share,  
With sick and suffering everywhere—  
We longed to see the end!*

*You wonder what I mean by "sick"?  
Well, I can tell you all right quick  
You would not like it one least bit—  
And neither, friends, did we!*

*But oft it was a passing test  
That helped us in our God to trust,  
That gave our hope and faith new thrust  
To work for better times!*

*And as the years went speeding past,  
With prophecies fulfilling fast,  
It seemed the moment could not last—  
The Day was almost here!*

*So near it seemed, so very near  
There scarce could be another year.  
And yet God's mercy tarried more—  
So gracious is our God!*

*Oh! our good God, long-suffering, kind,  
He seemed to lengthen out the time,  
So we would not be left behind—  
How boundless is His mercy!*

*God had His eye upon a few  
Who would among His own prove true,  
Who would become all clean and new,  
His chosen, precious ones.*

*He knew we needed time to be  
Made clean from all impurity,  
Add patience and humility,  
Before our day was done!*

*You wonder we had much to do?  
My friends, we were made just like you;  
We had to be all spotless, too,  
Before we could be crowned.*

*'Twas very hard to keep faith bright  
For lo, 'twas then the dark of night,  
You can't imagine what 'twas like—  
With all the world asleep.*

*No prophet spoke to us, no seer;  
Yet evidence grew more each year;  
We had no cause to doubt or fear  
The promise of our God.*

*We looked above to stars of light,  
A myriad worlds, all shining bright.  
Whence came these wondrous orbs of night?  
They were the work of God!*

*Then opened we His Book to see,  
And read they were God's family,  
All clothed with immortality,  
Now looking down on us.*

*And how we prayed, Lord Jesus, come,  
Come, bring to us the things we love,  
Blest peace and purpose from above—  
Oh, let the morning break!*

*But what if I were left behind?  
This thought, it lingered in my mind—  
It made me work right hard to find  
The evils in my heart.*

*For what if He should come and find  
Me angry, impudent, unkind?  
I kept this ever on my mind  
Lest I should be condemned!*

*Yes, all my work could be in vain—  
If I would not give God full reign  
Within the precincts of my mind,  
I'd be but worthless clay.*

*You wonder I could be defiled?  
My little ones, I have to smile,  
It seems but such a little while  
Since we were just like you.*

*And most of all, we knew not when  
Our Saviour might the midnight rend  
And bring probation to an end—  
It kept us on the watch.*

*And then, one ordinary day  
As we were gathering to pray  
We saw a stranger come our way  
A man we'd never seen.*

*A noble man—oh, could it be  
The one we'd waited long to see—  
God's man Elijah, was it he?—  
Was this the crack of dawn?*

*We had not long to wonder, for  
He soon disclosed his mighty power;  
I never will forget that hour—  
The miracles we saw!*

*Oh, we had never seen the like!  
'Twas not our lot to walk "by sight"—  
We were accustomed to the night—  
Ah! this man was from God!*

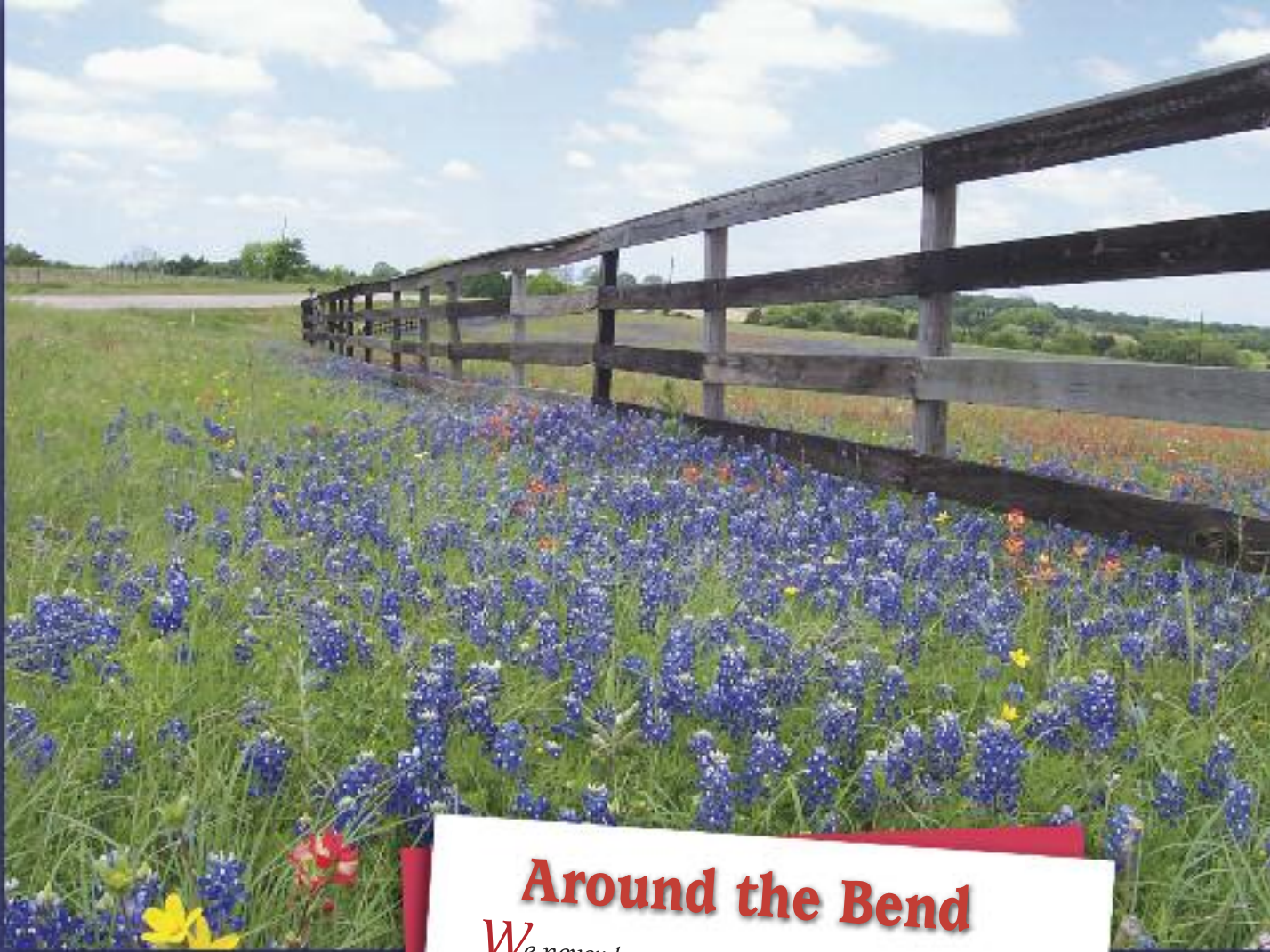
*And then—we saw the daylight break!  
The heavens rent, the earth did quake!  
Oh, Day of days for all the saints!  
Grand Day of Christ our Lord!*



*Our badge of fame let none forget,  
We who the midnight vigil kept  
While all the world in darkness slept  
Before the morning broke.*

*This our distinction long shall be,  
From age to age eternally:  
The handful who were blest to see  
The glorious dawn arise.*

*Of all the kings and priests today,  
Only a special few can say,  
"We saw the first faint streaks of Day,  
WE SAW THE MORNING BREAK!"*



## **Around the Bend**

*We never know what waits around the bend;  
The Master Planner must have planned it so,  
That we may fully savor each day's blend  
Of happiness and sadness as we go.*

*For even joy's full flavor would be lost  
Were it not given us in morsel size;  
And sorrow would exact too great a cost,  
Were not tomorrow's pain screened from our eyes.*

*There is a comfort comes with each day's end,  
A hope that clings to things beyond our sight.  
We never know what waits around the bend—  
Enough to know that dawn shall follow night.*

—Selected.

