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Megiddo Message



As it is written...

by RUTH E. SISSON

USER BEWARE! It Might Be A Baited Hook!

Unscrupulous advertisers are dangling a variety of baits and hooking onto thousands of users—and millions of dollars.

If bait is going to work, it has to appeal to YOU, the potential victim, as

- **entertaining** (a movie or TV clip)
- **protective** (a new anti-virus or anti-malware product)
- **needed at your workplace** (a statement, invoice, confirmation of order)—

and YOU have to *bite* the *bait*.



Baited Hook of FREE Entertainment

It is said that one of the "best" baits is the offer of free (illegal) clips of shows that haven't yet hit the theaters. It starts with the eye-catching "FREE" on an ad that dangles alongside the web page you are on. Curious, you mouse over it and—click! Instantly you are on a different website where you may be offered the pirated product. You may not even be aware that you have crossed the line into enemy territory—or that the "free" offering is illegal.

You mouse over some of the products being offered. There is really nothing you have to do to get infected. Simply being on their website means, to use the familiar expression, "they gotcha," because the website is setup for drive-by download.



Baited Hook in "Protective" Software

A better, more protective anti-virus or anti-malware software? It's worth a try, because everyone wants to protect their computer from malicious invaders. But click to investigate it, and you may be opening the door to Trojan malware, named after the Greek wooden horse that inspired the name. Instantly they're in. Again, "they gotcha."

Remote Access Trojans (RATs) are a particularly nasty subset of Trojan malware capable of taking control of a target computer. It is reported that one of the most popular, Xtreme Rat, was recently used to infect computers used by the U.S. State Department and Israeli military personnel.



Baited Hook in Business Emails

Another scheme of the cyber criminals is that of broadcasting innocent looking business emails—an invoice,

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.

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Megiddo Message

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BDAG—Arndt, W., Gingrich, F. W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (1996). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature; **DBL**—Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains; **EDNT**—Balz, H. R., & Schneider, G. (1990-). Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament; **GES**—Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures; **HAL**—Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M., & Stamm, J. J. (1999). The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament; **LSJ**—Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996). A Greek-English lexicon; **LN**—Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains; **SHG**—Strong, J. (1997). The new Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words. **THAYER**—A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1889).

MEGIDDO MEANS...

"a place of troops" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon);
"a place of God" (Young's Analytical Concordance).
Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (2 Cor. 10:4-5).



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It is written...

For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

"So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth: it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

—Isaiah 55:10–11

God is not a man, that He should lie; nor the son of man, that He should repent: has He said, and will He not do it? or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" —Numbers 23:19

As it is written...
FULFILLED!

Some ABIB will mark the beginning of the most important year in Earth's history, the year that will bring the end of man's rule and the beginning of the fulfillment of those prophecies yet to be fulfilled.

Some New Year we will welcome the beginning of the year in which Jesus will return. We may be welcoming that year right now. Never before has there been so much evidence pointing to the end of the age. Never before has there been more to support our confidence that we *are* nearing the end of this age. Never have we had more reasons to believe that the coming of Christ could occur any day than at the present.

One of these days, the events forecast for the end time all fulfilled, the heavens will open and in front of our eyes will be the King with His retinue of shining angels. Then will follow the Judgment of His servants, the crowning of the saints, and the inaugurating of King Jesus and His new government. The nations will resist, and their resistance will precipitate the battle of Armageddon. But their efforts will be futile. The results of the battle are predetermined: Jesus will be the unchallenged King of one universal Kingdom. All of these events are subjects of prophetic Scripture.

Worldwide programs of rehabilitation, re-education, restoration, and reconstruction will follow. It will be the long foretold Millennium, a thousand years of peace, progress and prosperity, during which the vast populace of the Kingdom will be developed. Then will follow

the final Judgment and the dawn of Eternity, when the earth will be *"filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea"* (Hab. 2:14). All this is forecast in the Word of God—it is enough to overwhelm the human mind! (For detailed discussion of the above, see <http://www.megiddochurch.com/pubkingdom.asp>)

Incredible as it all may seem, it **will** come to pass—the God of heaven has decreed it—and *right here on Planet Earth!* The ground on which we now stand will be under the jurisdiction of the new Kingdom; so will all the land that now belongs to every other government on earth today, whether China or Egypt or Germany or the Americas or the remotest parts of Africa or the East. *"All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God"* (Isa. 52:10). All people everywhere will bow before the new King, *"all nations shall serve him."* His dominion will extend *"from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth"* (Psa. 72:8).

Quite naturally, unbelievers will scoff, viewing the Bible prophecies as mere fancies of human imagination. They reason, just as Peter prophesied they would, that *"all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation"* (2 Pet. 3:4), so why look for anything different?

They forget that whatever men believe or disbelieve, *"The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness"* (Ps. 24:1), and what He has foretold **will** come to pass.

How can we know? Because we have

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Whatever men may believe or disbelieve, what God has foretold **WILL** come to pass.

PROPHECIES CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST

Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension

Prophecy	Reference	Century of Prophecy	Century of Fulfillment	Reference
Called Emmanuel (God with us)	Isa. 7:14	8th c. BC	1st c. AD	Matt. 1:23
Born of a virgin	Isa. 7:14	8th c. BC	1st c. AD	Matt. 1:23
Born in Bethlehem	Mic. 5:2	8th c. BC	1st c. AD	Luke 2:4–5, 7
Descendant of Abraham	Gen. 22:18	19th c. BC	1st c. AD	Matt. 1:1
Descendant of Isaac	Gen. 21:12	19th c. BC	1st c. AD	Matt. 1:2–16
Descendant of Jacob	Obad. 1:17	6th c. BC	1st c. AD	Matt. 1:1–2
Descendant of Judah	Gen. 49:10	17th c. BC	1st c. AD	Luke 3:23–33
To be given the throne of David	2 Sam. 7:12–17	11th c. BC	1st c. AD	Luke 1:32–33
Joseph and Mary flee to Egypt	Hos. 11:1	8th c. BC	1st c. AD	Matt. 2:14–15
Herod tries to kill Jesus	Jer. 31:15	7th c. BC	1st c. AD	Matt. 2:16–18
Christ a prophet raised up among the Jews	Deut. 18:15	15th c. BC	1st c. AD	Acts 3:20, 22
John the Baptist, Christ's first forerunner	Isa. 40:3–5	8th c. BC	1st c. AD	Luke 3:3–6
Lord declared Jesus as Son of God	Ps. 2:7	11th c. BC	1st c. AD	Matt. 3:17
To minister in Galilee	Isa. 9:1–2	8th c. BC	1st c. AD	Matt. 4:13–16
Details of Christ's ministry	Isa. 61:1–2	7th c. BC	1st c. AD	Luke 4:18–19
Will speak in parables	Ps. 78:2–4	11th c. BC	1st c. AD	Matt. 13:34–35
Rejected by own people	Isa. 53:3	8th c. BC	1st c. AD	John 1:11
Christ not believed	Isa. 53:1	8th c. BC	1st c. AD	John 12:37–38
To ride into Jerusalem on a colt	Zech. 9:9	5th c. BC	1st c. AD	Mark 11:7, 9, 11
Betrayed by familiar friend	Ps. 41:9	11th c. BC	1st c. AD	John 13:18
Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver	Zech. 11:12	5th c. BC	1st c. AD	Matt. 26:14–15
Accused by false witnesses	Ps. 35:11	11th c. BC	1st c. AD	Mark 14:57–59
Was silent when accused	Isa. 53:7	8th c. BC	1st c. AD	Mark 15:4–5
Spat on and struck	Isa. 50:6	8th c. BC	1st c. AD	Matt. 26:67
Hated without reason	Ps. 35:19	11th c. BC	1st c. AD	John 15:24–25
Hands and feet pierced	Ps. 22:16	11th c. BC	1st c. AD	John 20:27; Luke 24:39
Crucified with malefactors	Isa. 53:12	8th c. BC	1st c. AD	Mark 15:27–28
Sneered at and mocked	Ps. 22:7–8	11th c. BC	1st c. AD	Luke 23:35–39
Soldiers cast lots for His garments	Ps. 22:18	11th c. BC	1st c. AD	Matt. 27:35
The 30 pieces of silver used to buy the potter's field	Zech. 11:13	5th c. BC	1st c. AD	Matt. 27:3–7
No bones were broken	Ps. 34:20	11th c. BC	1st c. AD	John 19:32–33, 36
His side pierced	Zech. 12:10	5th c. BC	1st c. AD	John 19:34–37
Buried with the rich	Isa. 53:9	8th c. BC	1st c. AD	Matt. 27:57–60
To be resurrected	Ps. 16:10	11th c. BC	1st c. AD	Mark 16:6; 1 Cor. 15:4
Taken to heaven	Ps. 110:1 Ps. 68:18	11th c. BC	1st c. AD	Acts 1:9–11 Heb. 1:3; 8:1

Both the Old and New Testaments are filled with predictions that were accurately fulfilled years—even centuries—later.

prophecy upon prophecy that has been ***fulfilled as it was written.***

The accurate forecasting of future events is one of the strongest evidences of the existence of God and of the authority and integrity of His Word. Anyone who can foreknow the future with certainty and accuracy and have it prove true every time must speak by Divine inspiration (Isa. 55:10–11).

Both the Old and New Testaments are filled with predictions of the future that were accurately fulfilled years—even centuries—later. Consider the prophecies relating to the birth of Christ. Hundreds of years before Christ was born, God revealed when, where and under what circumstances the Messiah would come into the world. Moses said, *“A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me”* (Deut. 18:15). The apostle Peter confirmed that this had happened (Acts 3:22), *“For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.... Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.”*

We have the record of the prophecies which were spoken or written centuries in advance. We also have the record of their accurate fulfillments. Christ's birth, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension were all vividly and exactly foretold—and fulfilled, just as they were written. Some of the fulfillments are recorded by secular history as well. Coupled with these fulfilled prophecies are other forecasts yet ***unfulfilled***. There are prophecies of Jesus' future work, His Kingship, the worldwide government He will establish, and many particular details about that government. There are also prophecies telling of the times and seasons when all this will begin to happen. This unique combination of fulfilled, fulfilling and soon-to-be-fulfilled prophecies—often within a single passage—gives us a faith, surety and conviction which can withstand the darts of the most skeptical. Our words may not convince them, but let them live and they will see. *“These things shall be,”* because the God of heaven has spoken; and just as surely as *part* of a prophecy is fulfilled as foretold, so surely shall the *remainder* be fulfilled. Nothing and no one can hinder the plan of God. What He has begun, He will finish.

God meant His prophecies to be convincing. Perhaps that is why He saw fit to give us a mixture of fulfilled, fulfilling and yet-to-be-fulfilled prophecies. Is this His means of supplying the faith-stimulators He knew we would need at this end time? Perhaps this is also why He has not told us precisely ***when*** a prophecy will be fulfilled. He prefers that we live in expectancy, that we be always looking, living, longing for what He has declared shall be.

God's prophecies are designed to alert us. Note the attitude of the five wise virgins in Jesus' parable (Matt. 25:1–10). They are alert, expectant, prepared.

That parable has warned believers in many generations. It was designed to stimulate believers in every age, for no people ever had longer to prepare than the length of their lifetime. But it has even greater meaning for those living in the age when the Bridegroom will return. Jesus may have spoken it especially for us, who in the closing hours of the Day would face singular perils—perils of material goals and satisfactions (Luke 21:34), perils of self-indulgence (Luke 12:45), perils of drowsiness when we need to be exceedingly watchful and alert (1 Thess. 5:6).

We today need the warning of God's prophecies as they have never been needed before. There is warning upon warning that the end is near. There is warning upon warning of the conditions that would prevail in the last days. How desperate our need for that stronger faith to grasp them and never let them go, not even for an instant. We want to be stung with a new awareness of our duty, to be fully awake and alert. On the strength of what has been fulfilled, we can cling with new certainty to that which is still only promise.

We are the blessed inheritors of the blessed hope (Titus 2:13–14). The prophecies are God-given foundation stones on which we can build a stronger faith at this time when faith is in desperate demand.

As we take another look at the prophecies, let us also look inward upon ourselves: Do we believe them? Do we ***fully*** believe them? Is the *“blessed hope”* of the glorious appearing of our Savior a reality in our thinking? Are we so gripped by it that it is with us constantly?

Our Lord may not come in this year that is now dawning. On the other hand—***He may!*** ■



THE *Coming* *King* OF *Kings*

*As Jesus neared Jerusalem, one ordinary day,
The gathered throng awaiting Him strewed branches in the way.
Some threw their cloaks where He would tread, so great was their esteem,
And as He passed they raised their voices in a joyful theme.
“Hosanna in the highest!” was the song they gladly raised,
And, “Blessings on the son of David, worthy to be praised!”
Their acclamations filled the sky, and caused the vales to ring,
And, had they dared, the multitude would then have crowned Him King.*

*But Jesus was not destined to ascend in triumph then,
In fact, it was not long until He faced those wicked men,
The high priest and the rulers, who in anger raised the cry,
“Away with this man Jesus! We don’t want Him. He must die!”
When Pilate asked, “Shall I release your king?” they loudly cried,
“We have no king but Caesar. Jesus should be crucified.”
But Pilate wrote, “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews”
And bade them place those stirring words upon the cross they used.*

*This kingship Jesus boldly claimed when Pilate questioned Him,
And made it plain that erring man was powerless to dim
His vision of that glorious Day when He would take control,
And rule the earth in righteousness and peace from pole to pole.
And when, in final triumph, Jesus rent the azure sky,
Angels gave the promise, “He’ll be coming by and by.”
But now, although to this sweet hope some men are glad to cling,
We hear but very little of our soon returning King.*

*The years have sped into the past since Jesus went away,
And now we near the dawning of that grand, auspicious Day
When, with ten thousand angels in attendance, He will come
In power and in glory to the New Jerusalem.
Oh, let us now prepare to meet Him when He rends the skies,
In robes of spotless character, well worthy of the prize
Of everlasting life and glory that the Saviour brings
When He returns to earth to reign, the glorious King of kings.*

— Liot L. Snyder

It is written...

*"But you, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth...to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." —Micah 5:2**

FULFILLED!

FULFILLED!

BORN in BETHLEHEM

*Some people see in this passage their belief that Christ pre-existed with the Father from the beginning. But closer study of the prophecy does not support this belief. The words used in the Hebrew (yom qedem, yom olam) suggest a time long past but not always "everlasting." In Micah 7:14 the same words refer to a time no further back than the days when Israel occupied territory on the east of the Jordan.

In Micah 7:20 the phrase signifies the days of the patriarchs.

In 1 Sam. 27:8 they refer to the former Canaanites who inhabited the land before Israel.

The prophet Micah was referring to the Messiah's long ancestry as a descendant of Jacob through Judah.

Truly, Jesus' "roots" were "far back in the past" (NEB), but not up in heaven before He was born.

These words were spoken by the prophet Micah some seven centuries before the Christ-child was born in Bethlehem. "The word of the Lord" that "came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (Mic. 1:1) included this special message about the birthplace of the Messiah.

Micah, whose name means "Who is like Jehovah," was of Judean birth. His home was in the small town of Moresheth-gath located about twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem, about halfway to the Philistine city of Gaza. Little is known of his personal life, but it must have been influenced mightily by the "word of the Lord that came to" him. His prophecies were directed both to Samaria and Jerusalem and—like all other Scriptures—to us.

The prophet Micah was likely a younger contemporary of the prophet Isaiah and also of the prophet Amos. Micah may have known both of them personally, as there is a striking similarity in their messages. Each was sent to deal with the moral conditions of the time. Each received direct revelation from God and spoke boldly in His name; and each looked ahead to the coming of the Messiah and His future Kingdom.

Micah's was essentially a message of Judgment at that crucial time in human history. But also included was the glorious promise that Israel's Messiah would come and ultimately bring a new government with all the blessings promised to the fathers.

The coming of the Messiah was the undy-

ing hope of Israel, when "a Star shall come out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel,... Out of Jacob one shall have dominion" (Num. 24:17, 19). Believing Israelites lived in abiding confidence that the "scepter shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh comes," and "to him shall be the obedience of the people" (Gen. 49:10). Many of these ancient prophecies combined forecasts of His first and second advents, which the people of that time could not distinguish; but their expectation was aroused, and they looked forward eagerly.

We today, looking back on the prophecies and seeing what has been fulfilled, can read the prophets with clearer understanding. The first part of Micah's forecast met its literal fulfillment. Jesus was born in Bethlehem Ephratah. But He was not at that time made "ruler in Israel." The fulfillment of that part of the prophecy is yet future, when the earth shall be filled with "the glory of the Lord," a faithful Israel, a people glorifying His name (Num. 14:21; Isa. 46:13; 45:17-18). This is our lively expectation. The words of Micah shall be fulfilled: He who was born in Bethlehem shall become "ruler"—"He shall be great, and...the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David;...and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32-33).

As certainly as the first of Micah's prophecy was fulfilled as it was written, so surely shall the remainder be fulfilled. Shall we be ready to have Him rule over us? ■

A CHILD AND a KING



It is written...

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government will be upon his shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."
—Isaiah 9:6–7

To be **FULFILLED!**

Here is another prophecy from the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. It was a message from God delivered through His prophet Isaiah, a message of hope and promise. But who living at that time could have guessed the years spanned in the prophecy? Who could have imagined that the time when *"the government will be upon His shoulder"* would be separated from the time when the child would be born by some two thousand years!

Yet this was according to the plan of God. And as surely as the first part of the prophecy was fulfilled, so will the remainder be. He who was born so long ago shall return as King: *"And the government will be upon his shoulder:....Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end."* He will reign for ever and ever. It shall be fulfilled as it was written. ■

It is written...

"The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth to a maiden....betrothed to a man called Joseph....The maiden's name was Mary. The angel said to her, 'Fear not, Mary, you have found favour with God. You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must call his name Jesus. He will be great, and he will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father; he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and to his reign there shall be no end.'" —Luke 1:23, 27, 30, 33, Moffatt

To be **FULFILLED!**

**"HE Will Be
GREAT"**

We have in the Bible record this remarkable announcement to the shepherds who were watching their flocks the night Jesus was born: *"Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the*

city of David!" (Luke 2:10–11, NLT).

The angel making this announcement is joined by a heavenly host praising God and saying, *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men"* (or "among men of good will," Margin).

The shepherds hurry off to find Him. We

Jesus' teaching was plain, to the point, life-changing, exposing the deep-seated roots of the human heart.

see their adoration—a type of the day when all kings shall bow down before Him and all nations shall serve Him.

Some time later, “wise men from the east” come to Jerusalem, asking “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him” (Matthew 2:2). We can picture the anxiety caused in the halls of Herod’s palace as he hears this. Gathering the chief priests and scribes, he demands of them where Christ should be born. They answer, “...you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel” (Matthew 2:6). The prophet Micah prophesied this centuries before (Mic. 5:2).

All had been fulfilled just as it was written.

We see Jesus at thirty years of age, leaving the saw and hammer to be about His Father’s business. We see Him submitting to John’s baptism, and the heavens opening, and a voice saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Follow Him through His short but eventful ministry of three years. His teaching is plain, to the point, life-changing. His words are not flavored with the wisdom of this world. His message rings with power that can pierce the depths of the innermost soul and expose the deep-seated roots of the human heart.

Jesus speaks to His listeners of purity, kindness, righteousness; of patience and gentleness; of never compromising with evil; of service to others and love to God above all else; of freedom from worry and anxiety; of intense enthusiasm for the right and the just. If one has anything against his neighbor, he must forgive, and ever seek God in prayerful communion for strength to do His will.

Jesus goes about doing good. “The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.” (Matt. 11:5). They sense the difference between His teaching and that of the scribes

and Pharisees. They “were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:28–29).

Not once did He preach simply to gain the approval of His hearers. Not once did He resort to trickery to gain a point against the crafty Pharisees. His example before them was flawless.

And yet the world rejected Him. We see Him arrested by order of the Sanhedrin, undergoing the indignities of a mock trial with false witnesses in front of a bloodthirsty judge.

We see Him before Pilate, who asks him directly, “‘So you are a king? You!’ ‘Certainly,’ [says] Jesus, ‘I am a king. This is why I was born, this is why I came into the world, to bear testimony to the truth’” (John 18:37, Moffatt Bible).

See how patiently He endures the physical violence and death of a common criminal. Never once through this ordeal does His strength of character falter.

But this is not the end of this great, godly life. See Him on the morning of the first day of the week, alive by the power of God, giving promise of life beyond the grave to those who live as He lived.

Forty days He is with His disciples, comforting and strengthening them; and then, His work completed, He is suddenly taken from them into heaven, there to receive His reward.

And what of the words the angel spoke to Mary before His birth? “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His Father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:32–33).

What of this promise? He is not yet on the throne; His Kingdom is not yet a reality. He is not even dwelling on earth.

No, but He is coming soon, coming as the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5), and He shall “reign over the house of Jacob,” just as it is written, “and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” ■

It is written...

"And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.'" —Acts 1:10–11

*To be **FULFILLED!***

Much had happened in the six weeks since the Passover of Abib—so much that the apostles could scarcely take it in. They had seen their Master and Friend betrayed by one of their own, given a mock trial and crucified as they watched helplessly. The empty tomb had revived their sunken spirits; and now as they again walked, talked and ate with their risen Lord, their joy was full.

During this time, Jesus reminded them that they were to wait in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). When He had finished, He led them from the room, and out toward the little town of Bethany.

The town of Bethany was familiar to all of them. Here lived some of Jesus' dearest friends, Mary, Martha and Lazarus, at whose home they had often visited. Now, as they reached the outskirts of the town, Jesus turned and faced them. He raised His hands, and *"as he was blessing them, he departed from them and was taken up into heaven....and a cloud received him out of their sight"* (Luke 24:50, 51; Acts 1:9 GNT, KJV).

As a cloud of heavenly angels carried their Master heavenward ("clouds" are often used in Scripture to symbolize angels—see Ps. 68:17 and Ps. 104:3), the disciples stood staring after Him in shock. The words of two angels who suddenly appeared at their side shook them to their senses: *"Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven"* (Acts 1:10–11).

Then, as they turned back toward Jerusalem, they reflected on all that had happened and rejoiced in the hope that their Master would return. Now they understood some of

"I Will COME AGAIN"



the things that Jesus had said—words that meant little at the time. *"Yet a little while I am with you...Whither I go, ye cannot come;...And if I go...I will come again"* (John 13:33; 14:3).

The words of the angel kept ringing in their ears. He would come again! They *knew* He would!

The promise was for them—and us. This same Jesus will return as He said and as the angel affirmed. But *"why stand ye gazing up into heaven?"* The message was for them—and it is for us. Don't just stand there gazing skyward—do something! They must not linger, but be on their way. They had a great work to do, to carry the Gospel to the then-known world. Ten days later, endued with the power of the Holy Spirit, they went forth with bold and fearless confidence to establish the Christian Church in enemy territory.

"This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come." He shall come again. The prophecy now is nearly two millennia nearer fulfillment. As we watch and wait, let us heed the angels' words: Don't just stand there—do something! Prepare to meet your King who will surely return.

Let us *"put on the character of the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Rom. 13:14, Moffatt), because *"we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is"* (1 John 3:2). That is the promise. We shall be made like Christ, changed into His glorious, immortal likeness if we are pure *"as he is pure,"* He who said, *"I will come again."* ■

As we watch and wait, let us heed the angels' words: Don't just stand there—do something! Prepare to meet your King, who will surely return.

It is written...

"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

"Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

—Luke 21:25–26, 28

It's TIME to LOOK UP

These are Jesus' words: they are words of prophecy; they describe a world troubled to its very depths.

Are they fulfilled today?

To answer this question we need perspective. What has happened in the last fifty years? What is true today that was not true a generation ago? In which direction is the change tending—toward peace and settled security, or toward unrest and instability?

The answers to these questions focus quickly on the main trends so obvious today, trends significant to those who have placed their faith in Bible prophecy. Most important is what may be called the continued relentless advance in these major trends.

What type of trend might we expect from Jesus' words? He does not foresee a time of peace and serenity, of peaceful cooperation between nations and universal goodwill; but just the opposite. And do we not see it, as life is crowded with more peril for more people than ever before?

"The word 'distress,' in its original form," a Bible scholar points out, "has the meaning of 'being completely hemmed in,'" while "the word for 'perplexity' has the meaning of 'without a passage out.' These two words taken together reveal world complexities from which even the wisest of earth will be unable to find a solution.

Can we look around us and not be reminded of the words of Jesus: *"There will be signs in the sun,...moon,...stars; and on the earth distress of nations..."*?

In every part of the world, terrorism hangs like a cloud. Crime stalks our cities by night and day. Morals have plunged to such a depth that guilt is all but gone. The use of dangerous drugs has become so prevalent that those in authority no longer know how to cope with the situation. Again and again we are reminded of Jesus' words, *"There will be signs,..."* words fulfilled just as they were written? (see box, next page)

Is there any question as to the meaning of Jesus' words: *"Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth"*?

Jesus' words are a prophecy fulfilled as foretold. Did Jesus not say, *"I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe"* (John 14:29–30).

What will be the outcome of the tragedy that hovers over the horizon today?

"Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near" (Luke 21:27–28).

Does the world in the hands of men seem doomed to collapse and failure? Let us say it

again: *"Look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption draws near."* This is the very time we have prayed for a thousand times: *"Your kingdom come, Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."* Knowing as we do from the Word of God that the kingdom on earth will have to be brought about by force, can we not accept the preliminary disorders as solid confirmations of our faith?

There is no question about the future: the time of our redemption draws near and ever nearer. Christ is coming; His return is breathtakingly near, even at the door. Are we preparing for it as fast as it is approaching? Are we straining forward to capture the priceless boon God has so graciously offered? How rapidly are we preparing ourselves in the common, everyday things of our lives?

Our days for spiritual growth are passing rapidly, and more and more the prophecies portending the end are fulfilled. Is our determination to complete the work intensifying? Are we leaving all those old sins and failures behind us? Do we have a new set of ambitions, a new priority in our values? Are we like a runner in a race who strains lungs and heart and muscles as he sees the prize coming nearer and nearer?

Are we giving God the vigor of our body, the acuteness of our mind, the devotion of our heart? Are we actually straining to be ready to greet Him with joy? Are we so living that even now we can look up and lift up our heads, assured that we shall have part in the redemption that is drawing nigh?

It will call for vigilance and watchfulness, for vision and faith to look beyond the day's good or bad news and keep through it all a straight course toward the City Eternal, whose gates shall never close and where *"violence shall no more be heard"* (Isa. 60:17-18).

When doubts, discouragements, and forebodings threaten, let us remember those words of Jesus which are even now fulfilled as foretold, and know that just as surely as we see the fear and perplexity, so surely shall we see the *"The Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near"* (Luke 21:27-28). ■

*"In Scriptural phraseology, the political powers of earth are repeatedly referred to as *"heavens,"* and those ruled over, the people as *"earth."* Sovereign governments are classified as *"sun, moon, and stars"* in symbolic language, depending on their position among the family of nations. A nation wielding a broad influence may be alluded to as a *"sun,"* the powers of lesser importance being *"moon"* or *"stars"* (see Isa. 1:1, 10).

As for the *"waters,"* we read in Revelation 17:15, *"The waters which you saw,...are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues."*

So when Jesus speaks of the sea and waves roaring, we need not think of a storm at sea and waves roaring, with breakers and waves pounding a rock-bound coast, but rather a state of unrest among the nations.

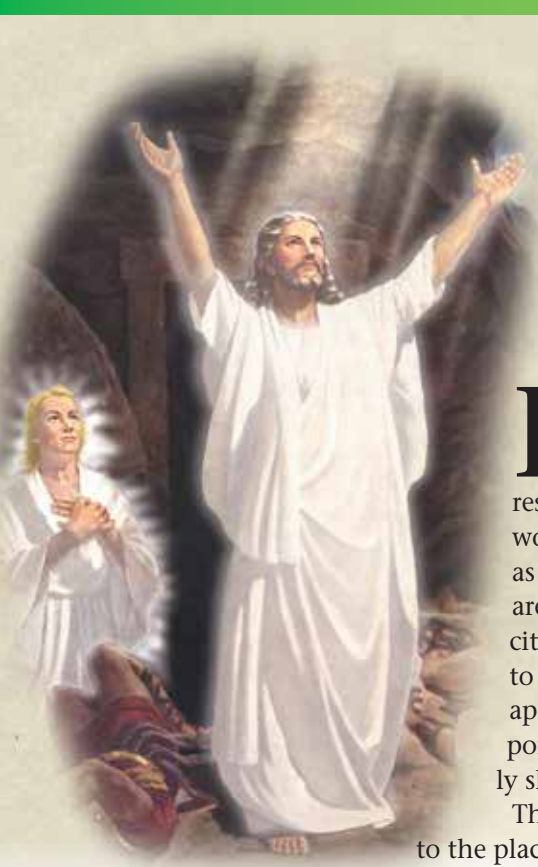
Any Wonder Men Fear?

No threat surpasses the potential of nuclear power, which only increases as nuclear weapons get into more and more hands. In the early 1960's, when disarmament talks began between the United States and Russia, there were about 400 nuclear missiles in existence. Now, best estimates claim that each of the two nations has roughly 4500 to 4700 warheads in their military stockpiles, and the world's combined inventory of nuclear warheads remains at a very high level: approximately 15,000 as of early 2016. Of these, more than 10,000 are in military stockpiles, and of these, almost 4200 warheads are deployed with operational forces, with 1800 on high alert, ready for use on short notice. <http://fas.org/issues/nuclear-weapons/status-world-nuclear-forces/>

World War 1 fighter planes cost \$5,000 each. Vietnam War fighters averaged \$4 million each. Fighter planes today cost between \$90 million and \$300 million each, with B-2 Spirit fighters quoted at an astronomical \$2.4 billion each! <http://content.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1912203,00.html>

And the destructive potential of modern weapons is inconceivable. The atomic bomb that killed 75,000 people immediately at Hiroshima was the equivalent of 13,000 tons of TNT. Today's nuclear weapons are measured in the equivalent of millions of tons of TNT. It is said that just 50 could kill 200 million people—or the combined populations of Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Germany. <http://newint.org/features/2008/06/01/nuclear-weapons-facts>





The Radiance of the Resurrection

Imagine the excitement that first resurrection morning. Picture those women who went early to the tomb, as they discover that the person they are talking to is Jesus! Babbling excitedly, they rush to report the news to the apostles. Understandably, the apostles, dumbfounded by the reports of these women, are immediately skeptical.

Then Jesus, every whit alive, comes to the place where the disciples are assembled. They are gripped by the terror of their own doubts. Two or three of them probably pinch themselves to make sure that they are awake. Suddenly, like a radiant burst of glory, the truth dawns upon them: the women were right! Jesus Himself had told them in advance, and their dull minds had not comprehended it. But it is true, just as He said!

Jesus is alive!

The resurrection of Jesus is the unique fact of Christianity. If Jesus be dead, what real advantage has Christianity over a score of other beliefs?

- ◆ Either Jesus has really risen from the grave, or we are fools for believing so.
- ◆ Either Jesus is alive, or Golgotha was the end of it all and the Church was founded on a lie, and the apostles were risking their lives for nothing.
- ◆ Either the resurrection really happened, and the tomb was empty, or the enemies of Christ missed their profound opportunity to prove their triumph by producing the body when rumor had it that their treachery had been defeated.
- ◆ Either Jesus rose from the dead, and the apostles went everywhere preaching the gos-

pel of the resurrected Christ, and a great and powerful Church grew out of their work, or the Church was founded by a dozen or so defeated men who fled and went back to normal life after Jesus' crucifixion.

- ◆ Either Jesus rose from the dead or we are all to be pitied, without God or hope in the world.
- ◆ Either the resurrection is true, or the whole Christian faith is a colossal fraud.

Someone has suggested that if all the gospels ended without a reference to the resurrection, if Paul's account of the various appearances of Jesus to him had never been written, and if the opening verses of Acts had been lost, there would have been no way for us to learn about the living Christ. But even so, we should be forced to postulate some tremendous event to account for the difference between the followers of Jesus who fled in despair at the Crucifixion, and the same men who astonished the world with their boldness only a few weeks later. Something had happened that filled them with new certainty about Jesus and about life. Something had happened to change their fear into boldest courage. What could it be? ***It was nothing less than the bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ!***

Yes, thank God for Jesus' resurrection! And thank Him for the evidence that proves its verity! Thank God for those who were willing to risk their lives that the message might be proclaimed, and the facts clearly established, so that there could be no reason to doubt.

Belonging to a modern and skeptical age, far removed from the age of transcendence, we may find the resurrection hard to accept. It is beyond our scientific understanding. It

Either the resurrection is true, or the whole Christian faith is a colossal fraud!

cannot be biologically proven. Thousands of people today, even ministers professing to teach the Gospel, have placed the resurrection among fantasies, make-believes, and myths.

But the New Testament witnesses testified unanimously *for* it. And shouldn't they to whom it was a current event know more about it than anyone living two millennia later? They were human, and they were slow to believe, but their unbelief was overwhelmed with the facts. According to John's account, after seeing Jesus alive the women ran to bring the report to John and Peter, who in turn ran to the empty tomb and walked in to see for themselves. And they saw—the discarded burial clothes, the empty tomb.

They entered with doubt. They walked out with faith triumphant. (See Luke 24:1-12, 24.)

Soon after, Jesus appeared to His disciples when they were gathered in the upper room. He walked with two of them on the road to Emmaus. He ate with them by the seashore.

His disciples seemed slow to believe, but after the Pentecost experience, they went out to preach and teach the resurrection—even to die before they would deny it.

Men and women may *tell* lies, but to *die* for a lie?

The resurrection was the central teaching of the early Church, and it is the center of our faith today. Jesus' suffering and death were over in a matter of hours; His life now has continued for nearly two thousand years, and will continue to all eternity. *"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore"* (Rev. 1:18). The philosophies of this world have nothing that can even faintly compare with this triumph.

The risen Christ is our reason for hope.

We cannot put too much emphasis upon the reality of Jesus' resurrection. It is for us a center of faith, a center of conviction, a center of power. It was not an event that were over in a moment. Jesus rose from the dead, and He lives and will continue to live through all ages to come. The resurrection is not a thing of the past that can be taken for granted and forgotten. At this very moment Jesus is alive, at the right hand of His Father. His life has

extended across time from the Caesars to the present. His resurrection is the golden thread of hope woven into the fabric of time.

Just as the resurrection meant triumph to the disillusioned apostles who had given to Christ their livelihood, their allegiance, and their wholehearted devotion, so the resurrection is our source of hope. And just as the resurrection tied together the broken cords of existence and swept away the despair of Christ's apostles, let it bind us to the solid fundamentals of all that Jesus taught, the whole purpose of our life and of the creation, as God intended it to be. For in Him is our hope.

Picture that cluster of women whose tear-stained faces caught the first glow of morning light as they moved toward the tomb, wondering who might move the stone. Picture those same women, only minutes later, as their voices echoed the words they heard from the angel: *"He is not here, he is risen!"* Hear those words echoing through the lonely canyons of human existence, right down to our day.

Soon we ourselves shall witness another resurrection. The dead in Christ shall rise, to be joined in one grand company with the living believers, to meet the Lord in the air. The resurrection is not all past; it is right upon us. Any day now we may see those who have been sleeping for ages alive again. Paul tells about this great event in 1 Cor. 15, verse 52: *"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."* Who will be changed? Those who have been resurrected *and* those who are living. Paul has just said, in verse 51, *"We shall all be changed."* All who will be part of the eternal Kingdom must receive the physical change to immortality, for *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"* (v. 50).

Those who are resurrected do not come forth from the grave in the incorruptible state, or Paul would be contradicting himself, as he goes on to say: *"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality"* (v. 53). We cannot *"put on"* what we already have on. If the resurrected

All who will be part of the eternal Kingdom will receive the physical change to immortality.

were already immortal, they could not be made immortal. But after the resurrection comes first the judgment to determine who is eligible for immortality (2 Cor. 5:10), and then the change to immortality. Paul continues: *"So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."* Here is the glorious climax, when all who have faithfully served God shall be changed to the immortal state, and death shall be gone forever. *"Death is swallowed up in victory."*

What a victory! one that no medical institution or school of research doctors can ever accomplish. Here is the victory that the resurrection of Jesus affirms to us. Death is but a temporary interval spanning the time between the end of the believer's life and the second advent of Jesus Christ.

For all the saints, the resurrection will be the glorious prelude to life immortal. This is our living hope, certified by the Resurrection of Jesus. Because He lives, we too may live, if

worthy. And it will not be for a day, not for a few years, not for a lifetime but for all the aeons to come.

Let this message come home to each of us today with power, the living power of resurrection. Let it be a transforming power in our hearts and lives, moving us to live every moment in the fear of God. Let it ring with renewed conviction in our minds, a conviction we take with us everywhere we go, a conviction that possesses us so completely that the old nature is obliterated and we are new men and women in Christ Jesus. Let it be a conviction that moves us to renounce all unholiness in our lives and be Christ's men from head to foot.

We want life, and the resurrection is the gateway to that life. Jesus lives, and because He lives, we too may live—and live—and live! We, too, can overcome death and share His glory, His kingdom, His majesty.

Yes, Jesus lives! And, in the words of the song, "Because he lives, I can face tomorrow; because He lives, all fear is gone." Because He lives, we too may live! ■

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 17

SAYINGS OF CHRIST

1. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow" (Matt. 6:28–29; Luke 12:27)
2. The rich young ruler (Mark 10:21–22; Matt. 19:20)
3. "the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself" (Matt. 6:34)
4. "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16)
5. They choke out the word (Matt. 13:22; Mark 4:19)
6. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25; Matt. 19:24)
7. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21; Luke 12:34)

WHERE WAS JESUS

1. In Jerusalem (John 10:22, 31–32)
2. In the synagogue at Capernaum (John 6:59–66)
3. In Cana of Galilee (John 4:46–54)
4. In the Temple at Jerusalem (John 2:13–15)
5. At the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39–43)
6. Ascending up to Jerusalem and to the Mount of Olives (Luke 19:28–30)
7. On the borders of Tyre and Sidon (Matt. 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–29)

8. On the sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:22–32; John 6:15–19)
9. Capernaum (Matt. 4:12–15, Mark 5:1–43)
10. In Nain (Luke 7:11, 18–20)
11. In the desert (Luke 4:1–2)
12. In Simon's house in Capernaum (Luke 4:31–39)
13. In the Temple at Jerusalem (Luke 2:42–46)
14. On the cross on Calvary (Mark 15:22, 37–38)
15. In the high priest's palace in Jerusalem and in Pilate's palace (Mark 14:60–65; 15:15–19)

FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. The voice of "many waters," of a great multitude (of angels, see Rev. 19:1–6)
2. Hebrews (3:15)
3. Rev. 19:9
4. After He answered the question of the rich young ruler (Mark 10:25–27; Matt. 19:24–26; Luke 18:18–27)
5. Revelation 16:16
6. "which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Heb. 12:12–13)
7. "a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Revelation 2:17)
8. "yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16)
9. "because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19)
10. Jesus (Rev. 1:18)



SAYINGS OF CHRIST

1. What is Christ's saying about lilies?
2. To whom did Christ say, *"One thing thou lackest"*?
3. What is Christ's saying about taking *"thought for tomorrow"*?
4. What does Christ speak about *"other sheep"*?
5. What does Christ say about *"the cares of this life"*?
6. What is Christ's saying about the needle's eye?
7. What is Christ's saying about where we should lay up treasure?

WHERE WAS JESUS—

1. When Jewish leaders took up stones to stone Him?
2. When many of His disciples forsook Him and no longer followed after Him?
3. When He performed His second miracle?
4. When He made use of a small scourge or whip?
5. When an angel appeared unto Him from heaven and strengthened Him?
6. When He sent two of His disciples to fetch an donkey?
7. When He healed the daughter of the Syrophenician woman?
8. When He saved Peter from a watery grave?
9. When He healed the daughter of Jairus?
10. When John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to interview Him?
11. When He fasted forty days and nights?
12. When He healed a woman taken with a great fever?
13. When He was found with the doctors of the law, both hearing and asking them questions?
14. When the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from top to bottom?
15. When wicked men spat on Him and struck Him?



FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. Who is recorded as singing, *"Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth"*?
2. In what book are these words, *"To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts"*?
3. Where does it say, *"Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb"*?
4. In what connection did Jesus use the words, *"With God all things are possible"*?
5. In what book does it tell about *Armageddon*?
6. Finish the quotation, *"Lift up the hands _____."*
7. What is Jesus' promise to the overcomers besides eating of *"the hidden manna"*?
8. Finish the quotation, *"though our outward man perish, _____."*
9. Finish the verse: *"They could not enter in _____."*
10. Who said *"I am he that liveth, and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for ever more"*?

ANSWERS ON PAGE 16

Tor Pirates Are for REAL! OUR OWN EXPERIENCE...

I had decided on the risk of Tor pirating for a possible article after seeing this subject on the news. I was still researching it when—blitz! our Church office computers were the object of a live pirate attack!

The pirates entered our premises through an innocent-looking email sent to our accounting department. An attachment called “statement.doc” purported to be the statement our accounting person was waiting for when—blitz! Her desktop was frozen and all its files encrypted and given nonsensical names. Rapidly it spread to our in-house server and every associated area. Thankfully, recognizing what was happening, we were able to act quickly to cut our internet access, but major damage was done. The pirates were in, and their “friendly” 3-page script explained their terms and demanded a ransom be paid them—in BitCoin—after which they would allow us the “privilege” of accessing our files.

We were locked down! Given the situation, we had little choice but to attempt to pay the ransom and hope that the pirates would release the files.

In all this we were very grateful for our IT person. One real benefit was that he had prior experience trading in BitCoin and was able to handle the complex communications without a slip. This was critical, because ransom was demanded within a tight timeframe, and any error would have been costly in time and would have doubled the ransom price.

After working through five nervous days to meet their terms, we were granted access to our thousands of sermon, Bible study, business, publishing, resource, and music files.

—THE EDITOR

USER BEWARE!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

a statement, an invitation, a purchase confirmation, an overdue notice. Open the email and click on the attachment, and—“they gotcha.”

What Comes Next?

That depends on the pirates. If it was a Tor bait, you can expect auto-downloads of malicious adware, or spyware, or malware. Now, without even asking your permission, they can pick up any keystroke you type at your computer. They can scrape your PC with their digital crowbar, find your personal data, and use it to gain access to your bank account. Or they can instantly launch software that will lock down your computer so that you can’t do anything until you meet their terms and pay the ransom.

This is real. It is happening to thousands of users every day.

Tor Pirates Studied

Recently two research companies, Digital Citizens’ Alliance and RiskIQ, compiled data from over 800 content pirating portals. According to their research findings, the honest, wary user is safest. Users of illegally offered downloads are 28 times more likely to get infected from sites offering illegal content than browsers accessing regular websites.

Still there is danger. The report estimates that around 12 million users are exposed to malware *every month* when accessing the 800 websites considered in this study alone. The actual number is likely much higher, since there are thousands of torrent-sharing portals on line. The research found that most of the time users don’t have to do anything to get infected. Just visiting the site exposes them to drive-by download attacks that silently download malicious files onto their computers.

The report warned that “until users become wary, there will be bait...and prey.”

Cyber-crime is big business, and extremely profitable, giving malware distributors and pirate site operators an estimated \$70 billion per year. Their market is virtually unlimited—*every computer user* is a potential victim!

Last Days

What does all this tell us? First, that we are living at the end of the age, when men are doing evil with “*both hands earnestly*” (Mic. 7:3). Social problems today are no longer national but worldwide in scope. These are the “*perilous times*” the prophet/apostle Paul foresaw preceding Christ’s second advent, when men would “*love nothing but money and self; they will be arrogant, boastful, and abusive; with no*

respect for parents, no gratitude, no piety, no natural affection; they will be implacable in their hatreds, scandal-mongers, intemperate and fierce, strangers to all goodness, traitors, adventurers, swollen with self-importance. They will be men who put pleasure in the place of God" (2 Tim. 3:1–4, NEB).

Second is the highlighted fact that while the internet is one of our most useful tools, it is also a dangerous place. With our integrity constantly on the line, we must keep a double guard against any compromising. We are here by God's grace to represent the cause of Divine truth, and Divine truth cannot be compromised or it is no longer truth. As the Psalmist said, *"The Word of the Lord is right and all His works are done in truth"* (Ps. 33:4). Again, *"The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether"* (Ps. 19:9).

The Deceptive Lure of FREE

There is another lesson here for us as Christians. The "religious" world today is dangling a lot of FREE bait. Have you heard of free salvation? All you have to do is acknowledge you are a sinner, pray the sinner's prayer, and accept your salvation. And it is FREE.

Really? Not at all! When we go to the Bible, we find the idea of "Free" is a human brand of salvation (a soul or spirit or inner being that lives on after death) and a human-designed scheme. The belief may be popular and has been accepted for centuries, but our Creator, who only can give life, has stated His own terms, and His salvation—everlasting life in His kingdom—is only for those who come to His terms.

Is His salvation free for the taking because Jesus died on the cross? Then why did Jesus say to every would be life seeker, *"Count the cost"* (Luke 14:28), lest after one begins he lacks the commitment to finish?

Another of Jesus' parables tells of a man who, wanting to buy the pearl of great price, gladly sold *"all that he had"* to meet the price of it (Matt. 13:44–45). Obviously a significant cost!

Remember the account of the rich

young ruler who came to Jesus asking what he should do to inherit eternal life? What did Jesus tell him? Did Jesus say it was FREE for the taking? No, Jesus pointed him to the commandments and told him they must be kept. The man, expressing his own view, said that he had faithfully kept all of them, yet Jesus still found him lacking. What did he lack? The young man had plenty of money, but Jesus could see that the man's money meant more to him than the Kingdom and eternal life. The young man needed to set his heart on treasure laid up in heaven. Eternal life was not free. The price was too high. It was out of reach of the rich man because he was not willing to pay the price—a radical change of thinking and ambition; a change from the present to the future where there is real treasure laid up for the overcomer. The Master did not want his money, He wanted his heart.

Eternal life was never free, and it is not free now. Read the story in Matt. 19:16–22.

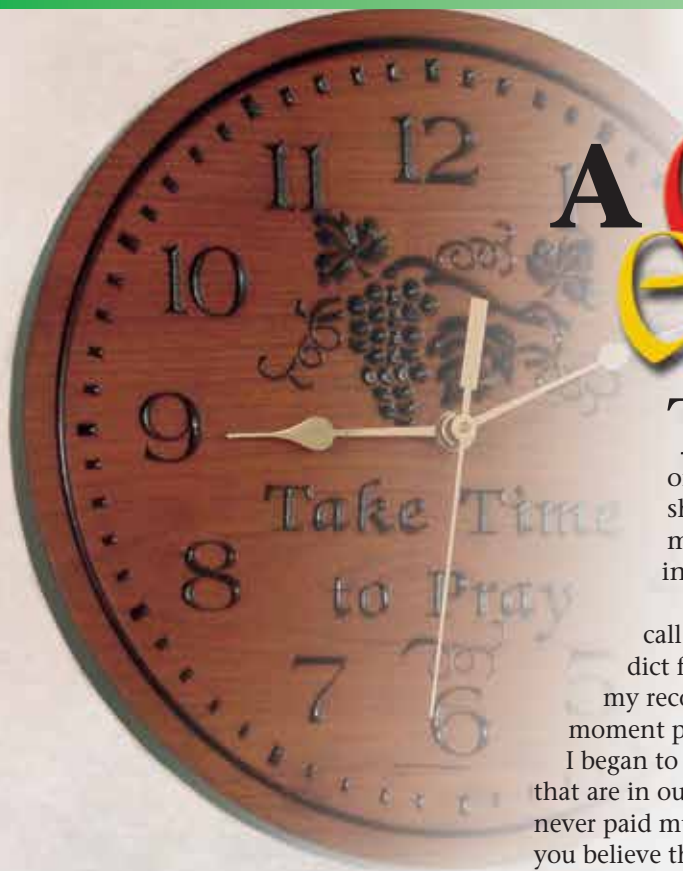
Soon after this, Peter asked the Master what they would be getting in return for the price they had paid. There is no indication that salvation was free. Peter used these words: *"We have left all and followed You. ... what shall we have?"* Jesus' reply shows both price and the multiplied value of what they were purchasing. *"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life"* (Matt. 19:29).

Where is the idea that salvation is free, when the entire Bible states the conditions we must meet:

- **how to live** (*"Abstain from fleshly lusts"*—1 Pet. 2:11; *"Blessed are the meek...the merciful... the pure in heart"*—Matt 5:5, 7, 8; *"be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another"*—Eph. 4:32),
- **how to speak** (*"let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying"*—Eph. 4:29);

In dangling these baits, devious advertisers are in reality looking for their own kind. Research has shown that a user who will go for a free pirated product on an illegal website is 28 times more likely to get infected than the general user visiting legal websites.

CONTINUED PAGE 21



A Clock in Every Room?

by EDWARD SHAYLER

The entries we have made on the credit and debit sheet for our life will determine where we will stand in the Day of Judgment.

I recently had a wake up call: If I want a favorable verdict from the Lord's judgment of my record, I must use every

moment possible for that purpose.

I began to look at all the timepieces that are in our house. It is something I never paid much attention to, but would you believe that I see a clock in just about every room, including the garage and also the basement? And of course each one is set in the most conspicuous place so that it can be seen from every corner of the room. In addition, there are clocks in the oven, the water meter, the stove, car, radio, safety alarm, exercise machines, computer, and the telephone answering machine. Then there are the wrist watches.

Now wouldn't you think that this quantity of time-keeping devices should be sufficient to keep a person conscious of making the right use of the time, all day, every day? Shouldn't they be sufficient to keep one right up to date on the time measurement of each day? But this is not the case with me. I sometimes find myself looking for a clock to tell me the time.

What is wrong here? The problem is that I have seen these clocks so many times that they no longer communicate any message to me. I have become accustomed to not noticing them. This means that my daily priorities are not ordered by the passing of time, and instead of a well-planned life, my life has become a process of leaving many important things undone.

Our priorities should always begin with God. And if every moment of the

day is committed to Him, then no matter how difficult our situation becomes we can always find peace.

I can remember some moments when I didn't manage my time well. One was when I ignored the alarm clock's announcement of the *Get Up* message. The result was, I owed my employer something.

Living without an awareness of time is dangerous if we want peace of mind, and nothing much will happen until we find and fix the cause. The first requirement is to become willing. And when we do, we will soon find wasted time is the main cause of discontent. The first priority is to find out what God wants us to do, and then work hard with all our determination. "If ye be willing and obedient," said the Prophet (Isa. 1:19). If we are, then soon we will find a new peace, and this will cause us to want more of it. And if we persevere, it won't be long before we will have in our possession a future beyond our most brilliant comprehension. Then, every time we see a clock it will remind us that it is time to be pressing, pressing "toward the mark for the

It is impossible to live in the past. Work at living well in the present.



Nothing you can reach is as far away as a minute ago.

prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

Pressing for "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"! What a wonderful result that little time-reminder can produce! ♦

- how to treat one another (*"love your neighbor as yourself"*—Mark 12:31),
- how to follow Jesus' example (*"he who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked"*—1 John 2:5–6),
- how to be Jesus' friends (*"You are my friends if you do whatever I have commanded you"*—John 15:14),
- how to love God (*"This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments"*—1 John 5:3),
- how to love Jesus (*"if you love Me, keep My commandments"*—John 14:15),
- how to think (*"whatever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report"*—Phil. 4:8),
- how to share the hope of eternal life (*"everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He [Christ] is pure"*—1 John 3:3),
- how to be God's sons and daughters (*"come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty"*—2 Cor. 6:17–18),
- how to claim God's promises (*"Having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"*—2 Cor. 7:1).

God has stated repeatedly in His Word that we reap what we sow, that He will reward every man according to what he has done (Jer. 17:10; Rev. 22:14; Gal. 6:7–8; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Nowhere is the risk of being "infected" more dangerous than in the realm of our future life. What is more serious than to come to the end of one's life and find we missed out on eternal salvation because we didn't meet God's terms—which we clearly could have done, had we not hooked onto a deceptive bait?!

Little wonder the great apostle pleads, *"Don't be deceived"* (Gal. 6:7). ■

I'm Not Going Back!

*Before me lies the Promised Land
Where I shall never feel
The ravages of this old age
And never say, "I'm ill."*

*Where tears will cease and joys begin
All promised by our God
And wonders that I've never seen
As on this way I've trod.*

*To fellowship with saints of old
I've never met before
Oh, think of all the pure delight
Awaiting on that shore!*

*To travel with the powers of flight
That only angels share,
And feast my eyes on worlds afar
I never knew were there.*

*Go back, you say? Go back to what?
To a world of pain and sorrow
Where sin and evil sit enthroned
With no promise of tomorrow?*

*Go back to foolish, fleshly things
So shallow and mundane
When I can dwell in a better world,
A world that's free of pain?*

*I'm pressing on, not looking back,
The prize is just in view
When Christ shall come to claim His own
And crown His faithful few!*

— Melva Walton



QUESTION & ANSWERS

"Rightly dividing the word of truth" -2 Timothy 2:15

by GERALD R. PAYNE

WHAT IS THE

"ONLY WAY TO HEAVEN"?

Is It John 3:16?

Is the only way to heaven to believe that Jesus died for your sins and to accept Him as your personal Savior?

Your question is of utmost importance to any life-seeker, and strikes at the heart of mainstream Christendom. The phrase, *"the only way to heaven,"* suggests the possibility of more than one way. This is a subject all its own. I would like to rephrase your question to be about *the way to obtain eternal salvation*, because the Scriptures do not teach that anyone goes to heaven at death. Rather, God has planned that *this earth* will one day be glorified, i.e., filled with immortal, God-honoring beings, and earth will become part of heaven itself. This is why Jesus said in the prayer He taught His disciples, *"Your kingdom come, Your will be done in earth as it is in heaven"* (Matt. 6:10).

We are discussing this subject because we want eternal salvation. We want life beyond

this present life. How can we obtain it? Christ is the *"author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him"* (Heb. 5:9). To obtain it we must follow His instructions, as given us in the Bible. Only as we obey His commands can we meet His requirements, because God will give to each one *"according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil"* (Rom. 2:6–9).

So let us reference your question and ask, Is the way to eternal salvation predicated on believing that "Jesus died for our sins" and then accepting Him "as our personal Savior?"

The idea that we must simply believe that Jesus died on a cross for our sins, and accept Him as our Savior to be saved, comes from a misunderstanding of John 3:16.

The destiny of the true believer is not heaven but life in the Kingdom of God on earth.

WHAT ABOUT JOHN 3:16?

John 3:16 is probably the most widely quoted verse in the Bible. Called "the most famous Bible verse," it is considered to be "the Gospel in a nutshell," the "central dogma of traditional Christianity." It has been the number one verse searched for on Bible Gateway.

John 3:16 is often quoted to support the idea that Christ died on the cross in our place to appease God. This single act, they say, covers our sins with the blood of Jesus so that when God looks at us He doesn't see *our sins* but only *Christ's righteousness*.

A favored explanation goes something like this: God loves us *so much* that He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to be born on earth and die on a cross. The popular reasoning is that we are all sinners (Rom. 3:23) and the Bible says the consequence of sin is death

(Rom. 6:23), or eternal separation from God. Adam is blamed for our predicament, and there is nothing we can do about our so-called "fallen state."¹ To solve this problem they say that God sent His only beloved Son Jesus down from heaven to be born of a woman.

¹The doctrine of original sin, commonly called "the fall," was first developed in the 2nd-century by Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyons. It has no place in Scripture. Since most believe in an immortal soul, it is reasoned that the departing soul must have some place to go. Because of the doctrine of "the fall," several Protestant faiths believe that at death one either goes to heaven or burns eternally in hell. The Catholics add a third dimension, purgatory, where one may go after death until he/she has achieved the level of holiness required to enter heaven.

I might add that when one begins with a false premise such as "the fall," one can never come to a correct understanding of Scripture because there will be contradictions in the Bible to one's beliefs which turn the "truth" into everybody's opinion, which goes nowhere.

Jesus lived the perfect, blameless life which was needed in order for Him to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He died in our place to pay our penalty, setting us free and clear. All we need do is to believe Christ died for us and ask Him to forgive our sins, and we are saved.

If this is true, what is the purpose of all the commands found in the Bible? Isn't the above saying that God gave us laws we cannot obey? Did God condemn the whole human race to die because Adam disobeyed?—and then to rescue the situation, did He sacrifice His own wholly obedient Son to pay everybody's penalty for not obeying Him? Is it true that all that is required of us is to make a public confession of faith that we believe God sent Christ down from heaven to offer Himself as a sacrifice on a cross to pay our debt for sin and we are saved for all eternity? We are convinced that this is *not* true.

I have heard some say that it is sin to even *try* to obey God's commandments.

What does the Bible teach?

First, what is the Bible about? In the Old Testament it was about the selection and development of the nation of Israel as a prototype of the future worldwide Kingdom of Jesus Christ. See Ezekiel 21:27, *"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him;"* also Daniel 7:27, *"And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him."* Also Zechariah 14:9 (LXX), *"And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one Lord and his name one."*

How does one qualify to live in that Kingdom? By obeying God's law, and developing a character that is upright, all righteous, honest, pure, and clean. Note the qualifying standard set in these verses:

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; ... The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; ... The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. ... Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward" (Ps. 19:7–11).

"The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall

delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Ps. 37:11).

"The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell in it for ever" (Ps. 37:29).

"The upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it" (Prov. 2:21).

"Who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?... He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart. ... He who does these things shall never be moved" (Ps. 15:2, 5)

"Your people also shall be all righteous: They shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified" (Isa. 60:21).

"Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands, and a pure heart" (Ps. 24:3–4).

The incentive to keep the law of the Lord is eternal life in the everlasting Kingdom to come. *"...by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward" (Ps. 19:11).* The incentive to keep the Law of the Lord is eternal life of joy and glory in the everlasting Kingdom to come.

The theme of the coming Kingdom carries forward in the New Testament. We read that *"Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, **preaching the gospel of the kingdom**" (Matt. 4:23; Mark 1:14; Luke 8:1).* It was for this purpose Christ was sent: *"I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent" (Luke 4:43).* After Christ had ascended into heaven, His disciples also were sent out to preach the Kingdom and repentance, and like Jesus promised, they were given power to perform miracles to confirm their words. *"And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs" (Mark 16:20).*

Christ is our future King. You can know He was keenly aware that this was His destiny, and looked forward to it with great anticipation (see John 18:33–37). When teaching His disciples to pray, He included praying for the Kingdom, *"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).* Wasn't it natural for the future King to be burning with zeal to spread the news and preach what we need to do to

Jesus "went about all Galilee,... preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:23).

The "world" God loves
is the world of believers
— "whoever believes."

be part of His Kingdom? (See 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10.)

When studying the Scriptures, we always start from the premise that the Bible is true and harmonious as originally written, and as properly understood. Any point of disharmony is either our lack of understanding, a problem with translation from the original language, or additions made by copyists. Based on this premise, we cannot accept any conclusion unless it harmonizes with the plain Bible teachings. There is endless debate about the Scriptures among scholars and between denominations, as well as among members of the same denomination. But when the Scriptures are correctly understood (*"rightly divided"* —2 Tim. 2:15), debate goes away and there is harmony and unity (Eph. 4:4–5). However, we must always be careful not to build on a false premise. Scholars and lay people alike have often made Scripture *seem* to harmonize by introducing explanations that are nowhere supported in Scripture.

"FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD"

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

How are we to understand John 3:16 in harmony with the rest of the Scriptures?

Let's begin by analyzing some key words in harmony with other plain Bible text.

■ **"For God so loved the world ..." What is God's love?**

John tells us that *"God is love"* (1 John 4:8, 16). Does this mean His love is universal, or without limitation or condition? What do we read in the Scriptures?

The Scriptures are plain and forthright that God hates the wicked and loves the righteous *"The Lord tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates"* (Ps. 11:5). Note that there is no separating of the sinner from the act he commits. Proverbs 6:16–19 mentions seven forms of conduct the Lord hates, and all include the persons who do the abominations. Proverbs 15:9 says, *"The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but He loves him who follows righteousness."*

Does it make sense that God would sacrifice His Son for those He hates?

■ **"For God so loved the world ..." What world?**

The word *"world"* is translated from the Greek *kosmos*. The word is used 186 times in the New Testament, with various meanings that suggest an orderly arrangement within the world, not the whole world. Its primary meaning is *"an apt and harmonious arrangement or constitution, order, orderly arrangement"*; *"the system of human existence and its many aspects, the world"*; *"of all humanity, but especially of believers"* (various lexicons).

What is the *"world"* that *"God so loved"* in John 3:16? Let the Scripture define itself, and we learn that the world God loved is the world of believers. *"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him"*—God loves the world of believers. And what does He do for them? He gives them *"everlasting life."*

The New Testament speaks of different worlds, each defined by a likeness among the people referred to. What type of people are they? This can be determined only by looking at the context of the passage. For example, in Luke 2:1, we read that in the days of Caesar Augustus, a decree went out that *"all the world should be taxed."* The specific reference was to the *"world"* or orderly arrangement that was under the jurisdiction of Caesar Augustus. The Caesar had no power to levee a tax on all the people on earth. Second Peter 2:5 speaks of the *"world of the ungodly,"* or those who perished in the flood in the time of Noah. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said to His disciples, *"You are the light of the world,"* the *"world"* being the society in which they lived. In Mark 8:36, Jesus said, *"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world,"* referring to what one might be able to call material success—a mere pittance compared to eternal life—*"and lose His own soul?"*

First John 2:16–17 describes a world which God clearly does not love. *"For all that is in the world..."* What *"world"*? John himself defines it as the world that includes *"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."* All this, John says, *"is not of the Father but is*

of the world.” If God gave his Son to save a world such as this, then His great love in sacrificing His “only Son” was a failure, as the next verse tells us: *“And the world is passing away, and the lust of it.”* This is the world Jesus would not even pray for. He said, *“I pray not for the world”* (John 17:9). This is the opposite of what Jesus says about the world that God loves, people who *“will not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). Clearly He is speaking of two different worlds.

Those two worlds do not overlap.

■ God “gave His only begotten Son”

How did God *give* His only begotten Son so that this “world” could *“have everlasting life”*? Was it by His death on the cross? Was He put to death to pay the penalty our sins deserve—when the Bible clearly declares that *“a person shall die for his own sin”*? (2 Chron. 25:4; Deut. 24:16). Again we read, *“the rebellious will be destroyed; they have no future”* (Ps. 37:38 NLT). Only *“the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it”* (Prov. 2:21). Why did Paul say *“God is not mocked.... He who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life”*? (Gal. 6:7–8). Why would Paul say this if God gave His only begotten Son to pay our debt for sin?

Aren’t objectors mocking God to turn the Scriptures upside down and preach that Christ paid for our sins, when God said over and over through His spokesmen that we will have to answer for our own sins?

We also have the testimony of Jesus Himself, and there is no hint that He died on a cross to pay our

penalty for sin. Listen carefully to His words: *“And behold I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”* He did not say we would be rewarded according to our acceptance of His death on the cross but *“to every one according to his work.”* The apostle John affirms immediately, *“Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city”* (Rev. 22:12, 14). Our salvation depends on our doing His commandments. If you read from Genesis to Revelation, you will find that the facts never change. The plan is consistently obey and live, disobey and die. Paul tells us who will perish. *“Those who do not know God, and ... who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ... shall be punished with everlasting destruction² from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes”* (2 Thess. 1:8–10).

NO HUMAN SACRIFICE

Literal sacrifices never removed sin

Did God give His Son for our sins by arranging for Him to be a human sacrifice on a Roman cross? Was it God’s plan that Christ would provide the “perfect” sacrifice for sin that would take the place of the sacrifices offered under the law in Moses’ day and appease His wrath or satisfy His justice?

This may surprise you, but the answer is No. The sacrifices made under the law never did remove sin or make one perfect before God.

When the Israelites were led out of the land of Egypt after they had been slaves for many years, God gave them very strict laws, including commands regarding sacrifices. The purpose was to teach

and discipline them into a law-abiding nation; it was not to make them morally perfect. The book of Hebrews contrasts the literal sacrifices of animals and offerings for sin with Christ’s lifelong sacrifice of total obedience. Obedience to the Mosaic Law, including animal sacrifices, never freed anyone from sin. *“For the law.... can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins”* (Heb. 10:1, 4).

At the same time, God did have laws that, if obeyed, would result in removing sin and perfecting one’s

Why would God make His sinless Son the “perfect” sacrifice when He always condemned human sacrifice?

character to the standard He required. *“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice”* (1 Sam. 15:22).

Obedience—confess and forsake one’s sins (Prov. 28:13)—is the only “offering” that God accepts for the removal of sin. (See Deut. 10:12–13).

Micah, speaking on this subject said, *“With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”* (Mic. 6:6–8). ■

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

²Destruction: Greek *ol'-eth-ros*; ruin, i.e. death, punishment:—destruction (SHG). Everlasting destruction cannot mean everlasting life in a place of eternal punishment in flames of fire.



AWESOME DESIGNS

"Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God." -Job 37:14

Wonder Peckers

How much wood would a woodpecker peck...?

Rat-a-tat-tat-tat! Rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat! Do I sound familiar? I'm Downy Woodpecker, and I'm here by the wondrous design of my great Creator. Rat-a-tat-tat, rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat.

Most birds are more often seen than heard. We woodpeckers are more often heard than seen. You hear rat-a-tat-tat, then you try to see us. There are perhaps as many as 20 kinds of us Woodpeckers, some as small as six-inches in length, some as long as 19 inches. I'm Downy Woodpecker, and my claim to fame is the bright red crest on my head.

Why do I peck so much? I peck to find food, and I peck to make my nest in the spring. I peck to attract a mate, and I peck to establish territories. Rat-a-tat-tat! Pecking is a way of life for me. Sometimes I peck holes simply because I want to create my own food supply. You see, where I leave a hole in a dying tree, insects are likely to take up residence, and that creates a ready food supply for me for some time later. How about that!

SPECIAL SHOCK-ABSORBERS...

Can you imagine pounding your head against a wall 8,000 to 10,000 times? They say that is the number of times I peck each day! But don't feel sorry for me. I don't break my nose, or come away with a splitting headache—none of that—because I was designed to peck! Truly my Creator's designs are awesome. He placed tiny air pockets in my skull to absorb the shock and protect my brain, something like the way you

use air-filled plastic sacks to protect your merchandise in shipping. (You thought

some human came up with that clever idea?!) In addition, my Designer fitted my brain so tightly inside my skull that it cannot move, in this way avoiding concussions. Plus I have special shock-absorbing cartilage between my bill and my head. So when my highly efficient neck muscles produce that ongoing series of rapid movements—that compulsive rat-a-tat-tat—I don't suffer one little bit. Isn't my Creator's design marvelous?

SPECIAL TONGUES...

Now, how much wood can a woodpecker peck? That all depends on why we are pecking. If I'm starting a nest hole, I hammer and twist my head from side to side, flinging wood chips left and right to get them out of the way. If I'm looking for a mate, I find a piece of wood or a branch that is particularly resonant—maybe even a gutter downspout—and use it like a drum to—you guessed it—I just want to make a big noise. If I'm searching for food, I tap lightly on a dead limb, then cock my head and listen intently for that sound of scurrying grubs. Then rat-a-tat-tat! I know just where to peck so as to invade their channel inside the tree.

Beetle larvae are often just beneath the outer layer of wood, in shallow channels that can stretch up and down the trunk for several inches—or even feet. Using my chisel bill I make a small hole into the channel. Then I thrust in my tongue and probe around. If it hits a nest of grubs, yummm! I skewer my prey with my tongue—the tip is hard and sharply pointed—to penetrate the soft body of a larval insect. Then, tiny rear-facing barbs on my tongue grab hold of the insect as I carefully withdraw my tongue. Yummmmy!

Don't you see that my tongue is a very specially designed instrument? To be able to snag insects out of tree trunks, our tongues must be much longer than our bills, even two to four times longer. Some of us have a tongue so long that it forks in our throat, goes below the base of the jaw, and wraps behind and over the top



Downy Woodpecker

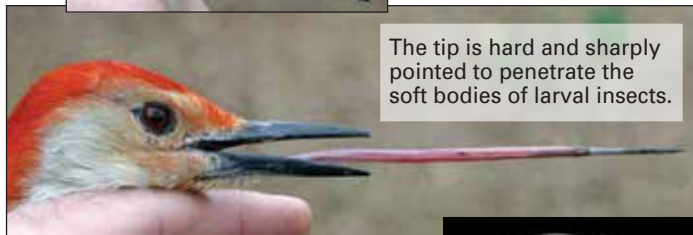
Red-bellied Woodpecker



The woodpecker's tongue is just the instrument it needs to skewer larvae and insects from beneath the outer layer of tree bark.



The tip is hard and sharply pointed to penetrate the soft bodies of larval insects.



A woodpecker's tongue may be two to four times longer than its bill. Notice (right) the Red-bellied Woodpecker's tongue how it forks in the throat, goes below the base of the jaw, and wraps behind and over the top of the head—a masterpiece of design.



of our head, where the forks rejoin and insert in our right nostril, or around the eye socket. Amazing? One thing sure: I didn't design it! Oh no! All credit goes to my wonderful Creator!

How does a woodpecker manipulate such a tongue? Within the entire length of our tongue is an apparatus which is a linear series of tiny bones sheathed in muscles and soft tissue. These tiny bones fold up accordion like along part of their length. When I want to stick out my tongue, I simply contract the muscles near the base of the apparatus. This forces the tiny bones forward inside their sheath and propels my tongue out of my bill. When I relax the muscles, my tongue shortens and is drawn back inside. My tongue is also equipped with longitudinal muscles so that it can move from side to side as I look for food in a hole I've made in a tree.

When we're newly hatched, our tongue is quite short. This makes it much easier for our parents to stick food items inside our hungry, gaping mouths. But as we get older, our tongue grows longer and longer, so that when we need to go hunting on our own, we are all equipped. Isn't it amazing?

One of our kind, the Northern Flicker, has a smooth, sticky tongue. Why sticky? Because the flicker was designed to live on ants. Did he just "happen" to develop the long, sticky tongue he needs to probe inside an anthill? Again, remem-

ber our Designer! With the right kind of tongue, all the flicker has to do to harvest a meal is to stick his tongue into an anthill, and with one smooth and rapid flick, he snares hundreds of ants in his sticky saliva and draws them back into his mouth. Yummm! A northern flicker can eat thousands of carpenter ants in a day. It's another wonder of our amazing design!

SPECIAL FEET...

We woodpeckers also have special feet. They call them zygodactyl feet—which says that we have two toes in front and two in back (most birds have three in front and one in back). Why are we different? The special two plus two arrangement makes me very secure as I hop straight up, down and around the tree trunks, as I drill holes in search of food. My Designer has also given me stiff tail feathers, so that I can brace myself against the trunk of the tree as I tap. Between my special feet and stiff tail I have a perfect tripod to keep me steady as I rat-a-tat-tat!

I truly want to join the Psalmist and *"sing a new song to the Lord, for he has done wonderful deeds"* (Ps. 98:1 NLT).

Rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat! ♦



Northern Flicker (top)
Great Spotted
Woodpecker (bottom)

THE WOODPECKER PRINCIPLE

Someone has said that the Christian's most valued role is not to be a hawk, or a dove, but a woodpecker. The woodpecker bores beneath the surface and removes the worm that, unfound and undestroyed, would take the tree's life. It leaves a scar, but it saves the tree.

Is your life-tree in need of a woodpecker? Why not make a personal application of this woodpecker principle?

Think about the criticism you resent. Perhaps it was not all justified, but maybe it brought out a fault that you really need to correct, a worm that, left unnoticed, would multiply and be destructive to your inner life. By bringing our attention to these faults, our critic (woodpecker) becomes our savior!

Yet most of us find it hard to accept these criticisms graciously and constructively. We are far more likely to find ourselves saying: "What does that person have against me?" or "What did I ever do to him?" or "Why has he noticed my faults and overlooked all the good things I do?"

or "Why doesn't he just leave me alone?"

Worse yet, we may actually take the offensive and start looking for his faults, or find some way to punish him for his disloyalty to what we had thought had been a friendship.

In reality are we not just trying to protect our wounded egos?

Of course we don't want the flaws in our character or personality pointed out. Yet this person (woodpecker) who detects a "worm" in our life and pecks at it is our best friend. He may be saving us from the little "worms" in our personalities that could destroy us.

Human woodpeckers can actually increase our usefulness to God. They may be a tool God is using to help us become bug free.

The next time you feel a "peck," thank God for those helpful human woodpeckers! They are your best friends!

Remember, *"If a good person punished me, that would be kind. If he corrected me, that would be like perfumed oil on my head. I shouldn't refuse it"* (Ps. 141:5 NCV). ■



Gila Woodpecker



HIDDEN TALENTS



Father shows Downy how to find the grubs.

"I am worried about Downy," said Mrs. Woodpecker to her husband one night as they were getting ready to roost.

"What seems to be the matter?" asked Mr. Woodpecker.

"He is so discouraged," replied Mrs. Woodpecker. "As you know, he had his heart set on being in the Wington Choir, but the music director gave him an audition today and discovered that he is a 'monotone' and told him he was wasting his time trying to learn to sing. It is all the harder for him because two of his friends, Henry Warbler and Johnny Mocking-bird were accepted in the choir. When Downy arrived home he said to me, 'I suppose I just don't have any talent, Mother. Why is it that we Woodpeckers can't sing like other birds?'"

"What did you tell him?" asked Mr. Woodpecker.

"I tried to explain to him," she replied, "that God has given different talents to different birds, and that every one does have some talent with which to praise God. One of these days, I assured him, he would discover his talent. In the meantime, I told him he must be patient and not allow himself to be jealous of the other birds."

"You are a very wonderful mother to our little son," said Mr. Woodpecker. "I am afraid I have not been spending enough time with him lately."

The next morning at breakfast Mr. Woodpecker said, "Downy, I am coming home early from the office today. How would you like to go with me for a flight into the park?"

Of course Downy thought that a wonderful idea. So that afternoon about four o'clock they started out together. Mr. Woodpecker pointed out the different kinds of trees to Downy and told him how certain bugs and insects laid their eggs under the crevices of the bark. He showed Downy how

to find the grubs and to dig them out with his bill.

"There is no use tearing up the bark unless you know a grub is under it," said Mr. Woodpecker. "The thing to do is to tap lightly on it two or three times like this. Then be very still and listen. If a grub is underneath, he will be frightened by the sound and you can hear him move. Then quickly you can peck away the bark, like this, and get him."

"Oh, Mother," exclaimed Downy when they arrived home, "we had the best time in the world. Daddy has promised to take me again."

And he did. Twice every week Mr. Woodpecker and Downy went flying and grub-hunting together in the park.

Then came what was long remembered in Wington as The Great Scourge. It happened in the spring. Insects seemed to come from everywhere. They bored into the trees, hid under the bark, ate up the sap and the trees began to die. For a time it was feared that all the trees in the park would perish. All the birds of Wington, young and old, were called upon to work in the park every afternoon in an effort to save the trees.

On a certain day the Metropolitan Park Commission staged a contest and offered a gold medal to the school bird which, in one hour, could find and kill the greatest number of grubs.

Of course there were a number of birds who were quite expert in finding the grubs, among them the Nuthatch children, the Flickers and the Chickadees. But Downy's little friends, Johnny Mocking-bird and Henry Warbler, were able to find only five apiece. They spent most of their time chipping away bark but finding nothing underneath. Downy, on the other hand, as his daddy had taught him, would tap on the bark here and there and listen for a second.

Then, if he heard nothing, he would move on to some other spot. When the hour was finished Downy had found and captured one hundred and twenty-two grubs. No other bird had passed the one hundred mark.

And who do you suppose presented Downy with the medal provided by the Park Commission? None other than Mr. Cardinal the director of the school band. As he handed it to him he said, "Downy, as I watched you working in the park today, I noticed what wonderful rhythm you have when you peck on the bark. You are just the bird we need to play the trap drum in our band and to lead us in our marches. Also that suit you are wearing is just perfect for a uniform. I shall expect you at rehearsal tomorrow night."

Thus it came to pass that Downy Woodpecker discovered that he had not one talent but two. Of course he has lots of fun playing the trap drum in the band, but he never allows it to interfere with what he considers his first talent, namely digging the grubs out of the trees in the park. Just how important that talent is you may judge for yourself when I tell you that Downy's father has recently been appointed Superintendent of the Wington National Park. So Downy works with his father on the trees every afternoon and gets paid for it, too. ■

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ABIB 2016 Calendar

Abib Means...

"spring or sprouting month"
(Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon).
God commanded Moses
to *"observe the month Abib"*
(Deut. 16:1; Ex. 12:2; 13:4) as
a memorial of the Israelites'
departure from Egypt.

Abib (or Nisan) 1, the first day of the Sacred New Year, begins this year on Thursday evening, **April 7**, and continues through Friday, **April 8**, Bible time being measured from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32). It was the pattern of the Hebrew people to begin the new year with the first occurrence of the new moon (this year on **April 7**) after the Spring Equinox. Abib First is the first day of the sacred New Year, and the day on which we observe the anniversary of our Savior's birth.

Abib 13, the anniversary of the night Jesus partook of the Last Supper with His disciples before He suffered, falls this year on Tuesday evening, **April 19**. At this time we partake of the emblems in obedience to Jesus' command, *"This do in remembrance of me"* (1 Cor. 11:24-25). By this sacred rite we symbolize the renewing of our covenant with God. The bread represents the knowledge of the law of God, and the juice represents the application of that knowledge to our daily lives.

Abib 15, the anniversary of the Resurrection of Christ, occurs this year on the morning of Friday, **April 22**. In ancient Israel, this was the day of the offering of the first sheaf of the harvest to God. On this morning, Christ the firstfruits from death rose triumphant over death. On this morning, even **"very early in the morning,"** devout women wanting to anoint the body of Jesus with spices, made their way to the tomb (Matt. 28:1). Finding it empty, they heard those immortal words from the angel that still thrill and inspire us today: *"He is not here, He is risen! Come, see the place where the Lord lay"* (Matt. 28:6).

Pentecost, fifty days after the waving of the first sheaf offering, falls this year on June 10. ■

*If it's more
precious to you
than God,
spell it I-D-O-L.*

*We make our
decisions and
then our decisions
make us.*

*The only person
you can be sure
of improving is
yourself.*

*You can miss a lot
of good things in
life by having the
wrong attitude.*

The loss of time is one of the most absolute losses we can sustain. Fortune may return after having taken flight. A severed friendship may be restored. But our **wasted hours can never be returned to us....** There is but one point at which time is entirely in our power: in the **moment that is NOW...oh, use it!**

*If all that we say in a single day,
With never a word left out,
Were printed each night in clear black and white,
'Twould prove queer reading, no doubt.*

*And then just suppose, ere our eyes we could close
We must read the whole record through;
Then wouldn't we sigh and wouldn't we try
A great deal less talking to do?*

*And I more than half think that many a kink
Would be smoother in life's tangled thread,
If half that we say in a single day
Were left forever unsaid.*



I DID IT HIS WAY

*"Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth.
Unite my heart to fear Your name."* - Psalm 86:11

A popular song some years ago proclaimed, "I did it my way." Our song should be, "I did it His way."

Everyone knows that repetition aids learning. With that in mind, read Exodus, chapters 38:21 through chapter 40. You will see the phrase, "As the Lord commanded" again and again (20 times). Five times in these two chapters, Moses records that the Israelites did "according to all that the Lord commanded Moses."

When the skilled workmen were constructing the sacred tabernacle, they paid attention to the details. They followed the Divine "blueprints" exactly. "Then Moses looked over all the work, and indeed they had done it; as the Lord had commanded, just so they had done it. And Moses blessed them" (Ex. 39:43).

God also was pleased. "And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Ex. 40:35). That must have been an awesome sight!

As one reads the history of the people of Israel, it is readily apparent that they did not always do as the Lord commanded. In fact, too often it was "my way." The Bible records both the successes and the failures of its characters so that we can learn from their lives. We can learn good lessons even from bad examples. But thank God for some very good examples.

My way gets in the way so easily. God, help me to do it Your way. ■



IT'S TIME TO COOK

*I love the taste of T-bone steak,
Delicious every bite,
But nothing's like the Word of God,
For my soul's appetite.*

*You're lacking proper nourishment
And don't know what to do?
Just turn to the Apostles, try
First Peter 2, verse 2.*

*The Word of God has milk and meat,
Better than any cake.
Its vitamins will make you strong
And keep you wide awake.*

*Go to your Bible, turn to Psalms
Find David's great buffet.
Drink pure, sweet wine from God's own Word,
Drink all you want each day.*

*The Word of God's a smorgasbord,
So take all you can eat,
Each item spread is nutrient dense,
And no one has to cheat.*

*Don't fail to add the greens of faith,
Cook them in water pure;
Then sprinkle with the oil of joy,
Add herbs of kindness, too.*

*Eat with the bread of temperance,
With good, sound common sense,
Then cover all with self-control,
And add a prayer for strength.*

*Be sure to cook with Fortitude—
Job gives the recipe.
You'll need much Perseverance, too,
And true Humility.*

*Now when it's time for your dessert,
Be sure it's made with love
The kind of love that Jesus showed,
That comes from God above.*

*God's Word can feed vast multitudes
And still have plenty left
It's the only food that can give life--
For God Himself is CHEF.*

—Author Unknown.



*I've learned that every day
we are offered far more
opportunities than
misfortunes—it's our use of
them that make the difference.*

*The path into the New Year
is all aglow with opportunity
to work for God and His
Kingdom.*

*Try for one day to notice all
the little things that help
make your day smoother and
your work easier, and see if
you are not richly blessed and
sincerely thankful.*

*Did you ask the Lord for patience?
Did you plead for it in prayer?
Then tribulations great befell you
And you thought He did not care?
Oh, my child, He heard and answered,
Answered full, your prayer;
"Tribulation worketh patience"—
That's the gem you've longed to wear!*



I KNOW THAT
My Redeemer Lives

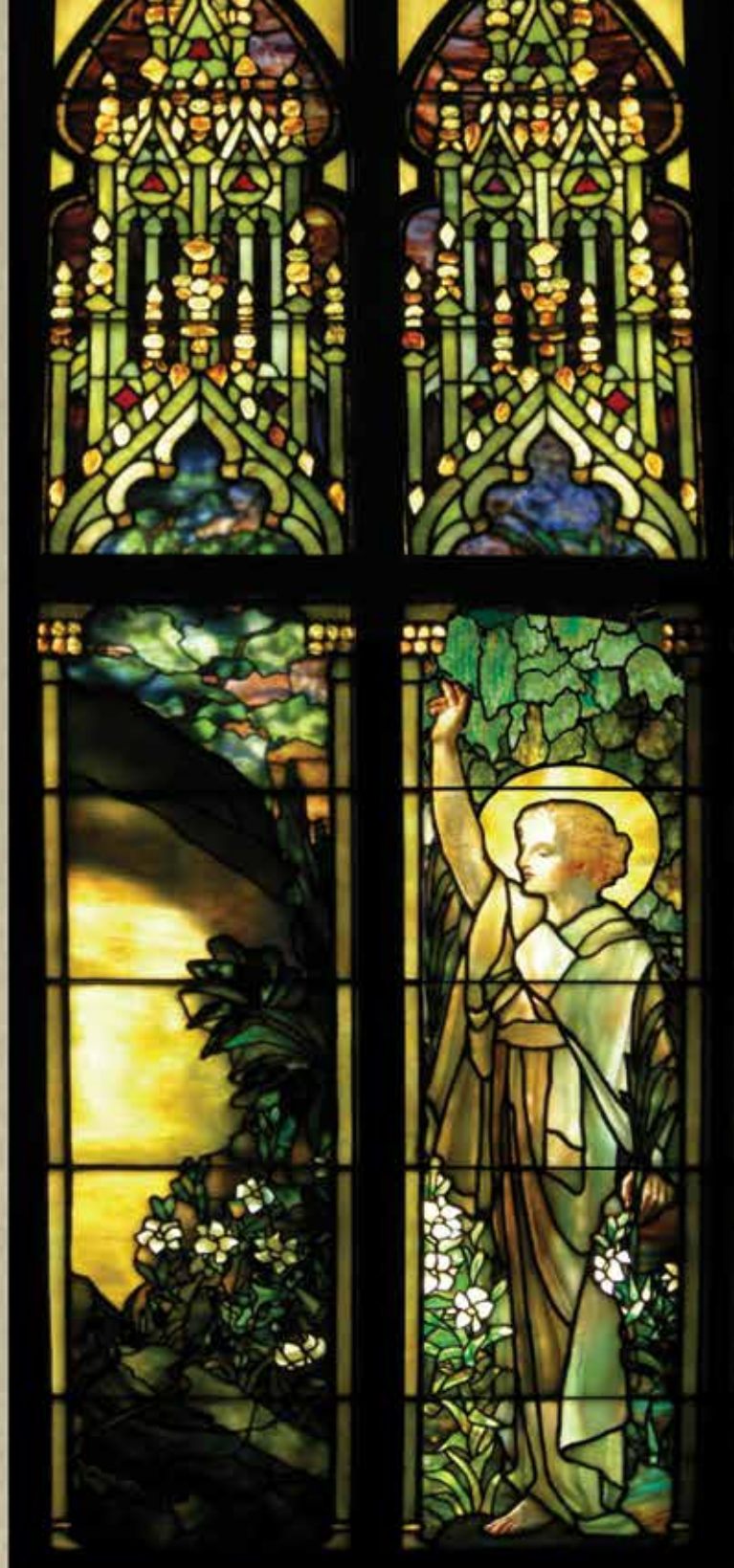
I know that my Redeemer lives.
What joy the sweet assurance gives!
He lives, triumphant from the grave ;
He lives, omnipotent to save.

*H*e lives, to bless me with His love,
He lives, to plead my cause above;
He lives, to silence all my fears;
He lives, to wipe away my tears.

*H*e lives, my wise and powerful Friend;
He lives, and loves me to the end;
He lives, my mansion to prepare;
He lives, to guide me safely there.

*H*e lives, all glory to His name!
He lives, eternally the same;
What joy the sweet assurance gives,
That Jesus, my Redeemer, lives!

—Selected



"I know that my Redeemer lives, and he will stand upon the
earth at last. And after my body has decayed,
yet in my body I will see God! [Emmanuel, "God with us"]

*"I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own
eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!" — Job 19:25-27 NLT*