

Megiddo Message

Winter/Spring 2009



LET EVERYTHING THAT HAS BREATH
PRAISE THE LORD. —PSALM 150:6

OODA LOOPING



Headline news was recently made when US Airlines flight 1549 went down on the Hudson river after being pelted with a flock of Canadian geese—and not a single life was lost. The first few minutes after being hit drew heavily on the pilot's training and experience.

As Christians we are daily fighting an enemy, our old nature (self). Our purpose here is to discern a process which will help us to bring success out of situations that might otherwise cause us to fail. To be among the approved when Jesus returns to give eternal life to those who finish well, we must now be making use of our opportunities. *"Be very careful how you live—not as unwise but as wise, taking advantage of every opportunity, because the days are evil. For this reason do not be foolish, but be wise by understanding what the Lord's will is"* (Eph. 5:15–17 NET).

Col. John Boyd of the United States Air Force devised an action strategy for fighter pilots he called the OODA Loop. His concept has become

pilot: his nationality, level of training; and when in visual contact, information about the speed, size, and maneuverability of the enemy plane. He will then **orient** by analyzing unfolding circumstances (these take priority over radio chatter). Then the pilot will **decide** based on the available information and **act**, i.e., maneuver his plane for the best advantage.

Then immediately back to the beginning of the loop, he will **observe** again: How is the attacker reacting to his changes? Then to **orient**: is the enemy reacting as expected, or like he is inexperienced? How is his plane performing?

As the dogfight begins, information cascades in real time, and the pilot does not have time to process it consciously. The pilot reacts as he is trained to, while his conscious mind supervises the flow of action and reaction, continuously repeating the OODA cycle.

The same cycle operates over a longer timescale in a competitive business landscape, and the same logic applies. Decision makers gather information (**observe**), form hypotheses about customer activity and the intentions of competitors (**orient**), make decisions (**decide**), and act on them (**act**). The cycle is repeated continuously. The aggressive and conscious application of the process gives a business advantage over a competitor who is merely reacting to conditions as they occur.

If the OODA Loop works for fighter pilots, businesses, and even for an emergency landing in the Hudson, it can work for us as Christians in the battle against our adversaries, *"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"* (1 John 2:16).

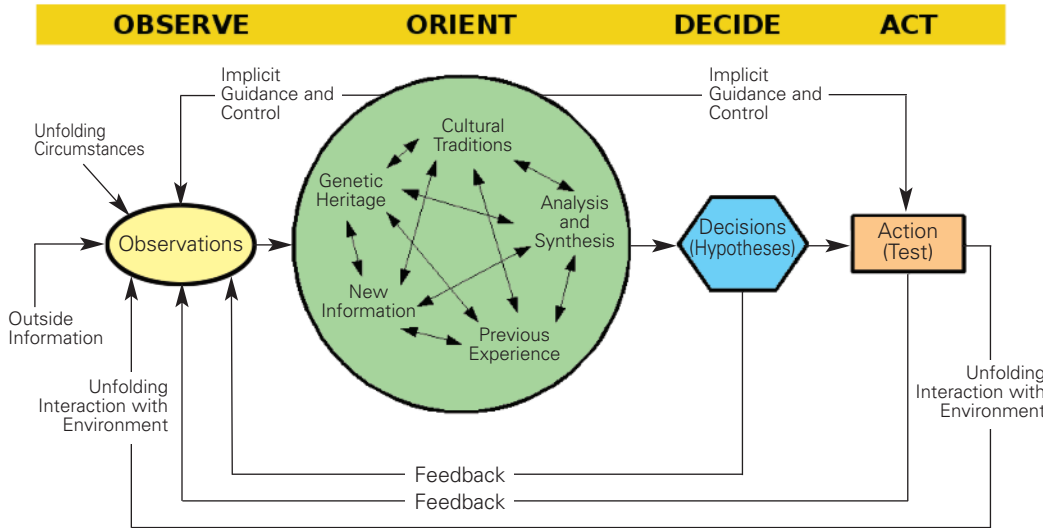
What underlies the success of the OODA Loop? It is based on the concept that **sound decisions are a result of rational behavior**.

If sound decisions result from rational behavior, then what is rational behavior?

Using OODA Loop

Let us look more closely at Flight 1549.

Observation: loud thumps, burning birds,



http://strategy4sustainability.files.wordpress.com/2006/06/ooda_diagram1.png

important in both business and military strategy. According to Col. Boyd, decision-making occurs in a cycle of observe-orient-decide-act (OODA). Boyd emphasized that "the loop" is actually a set of interacting loops that are kept in continuous operation during combat.

A fighter pilot will first **observe** as much as possible about the likely identity of the enemy

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PUBLISHING FREQUENCY

Due to increased pressures from rising costs of postage and printing, the frequency of the **Megiddo Message** was changed from a bimonthly to a quarterly magazine. The **Megiddo Message** is now published with the seasons—Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall.

Megiddo Message

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BACK COVER POEM

After All ETERNITY!

Faith in Action
missing???

FRONT COVER PHOTO: *Spring in the front yard at Megiddo Church, Rochester NY*

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.

"I AM COMING....!"

—Jesus

WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSE?

(check one)

☐ ***Come now!***

I long for You. I am watching and ready for You, my Saviour and King!

☐ ***Come help!***

I need You. I have problems I cannot solve...
plus I see a world full of greed, selfishness and trouble...
and people everywhere stressed with fear and worry.
We don't have the answers... You do!

☐ ***Come ... later...***

- You don't fit into my present plans.
- I want to finish my education.
- I want to see my children grow up and choose their careers.
- I've just started a new job that looks promising.

☐ ***Don't come.***

I don't need You anymore! The world doesn't need you.
We can handle our own problems. A deliverer is a delusion—a myth.
We've come of age. We can make it on our own.

Is Jesus actually coming back to earth? He certainly is! The Bible evidence for the Second Advent of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom on earth is overwhelming! Its strong, central, vital message is that Jesus Christ will return. Just as He went away, this same Jesus will come back (Acts 1:10–11). It is one of the clearest, most positive, most repeated of Biblical promises. Jesus *will* come again.

Jesus is coming—whether or not we choose to believe it. God is not waiting for us to approve His plans before He implements them. When the time is right God will act, and no human hand, however powerful or influential or dominant, will interfere. If any feel the action is undemocratic or that their rights are violated, they can protest, but God Almighty will not be asking permission of anyone. *“He shall send Jesus Christ”* (Acts 3:20).

*“I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith.
Henceforth there is laid up for me
a crown of righteousness,
which the Lord, the righteous judge,
shall give me at that day:
and not to me only, but unto
all them also that love his
appearing”* (2 Timothy 4:7–8).

Why Do I Love *Christ's* **APPEARING?**

Every serious Bible believer shares the lively expectation of the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. The apostle Paul went one step further than simple expectation. He said that Jesus will be bringing the *“crown of righteousness”* to all who *“love his appearing”* (2 Tim. 4:8). Even as he was facing imminent execution, his mind was on the crown laid up and waiting for him—and not for him only but *“for all those also who love his appearing.”* If such was Paul’s mindset at such a time, how much more should we, living in the era of Christ’s return, be focused on it!

The following is adapted and expanded from an article by John Linton (1888–1965) entitled, *“Why I Love Christ’s Appearing.”*

There should be no need to ask a Christian why he loves Christ’s appearing.

Why should a child of four, who for many weeks has seen preparations being made for Christmas, be asked if he loves the coming of Christmas?

Why should a schoolboy be asked if he loves the arrival of summer vacation?

Why should a faithful wife, awaiting the return of her long-absent husband, need to be asked if and why she longs for his coming?

Why should a bride, counting down the days to her wedding, be asked if she loves the bridegroom?

Should the church, whom Christ calls His bride, not look for, long for and love the appearing of Christ, the Bridegroom?

Yet, how seldom Jesus' words are echoed: "You must stand ready... be ready all the time."

Many who call themselves Christians and attend church regularly do not know much about the second coming of Jesus because they seldom hear a sermon on the subject, and they don't read the Bible to learn for themselves what it says about this wonderful coming event. Obviously, you can't love something if you don't know about it.

I read a sermon on Matthew 24:44, where Jesus said, "*You also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*" The sermon was a call to salvation for the

reasons that death might strike suddenly, another world war might suddenly break out, or some sickness or disaster befall us. But, he observed, "concerning the at-any-moment coming of Christ, there was not one solitary word!"

Read Paul's words again and you will see that the crown our Lord promised is for those who love His coming. The crown will not be given to anyone else.

What will those do who love Christ's appearing? They will be getting ready for it. It will be on their minds every day, all the time. Everything they do will be in relation to it. They will show their love for it by thinking about it, dreaming about it, planning for it, preparing for it.

Why do I love Christ's appearing?

I love Christ's appearing because THE HEAVENLY FATHER LOVES IT.

Christ's return is at the heart of the heavenly Father's plans for planet Earth. Very soon after Pentecost, Peter was speaking of this great event in the Father's plans when he spoke of the "*times of refreshing*" that would "*come from the presence of the Lord.*" When would those times of refreshing come? When He would "*send Jesus Christ, ... whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began*" (Acts 3:19–21).

God's plan is focused on sending His Son back to earth to complete fulfilling all that He has been promising through the ages—including the crown of immortal life for those who "*love His appearing.*"

How do we know that the heavenly Father loves Christ's appearing?

If you hear a man talking, talking, talking about fishing, you know that he loves fishing. Read the Bible, and you will have to conclude that God loved the promised appearing of Christ—He has so much to say about it!

Someone has estimated that almost one-fourth of the Bible is devoted to prophecy and the events connected with our Lord's return (such as setting up the Kingdom on earth).

The God who inspired the writing of the New Testament led the writers to mention the second coming once in every twenty-five verses.

Some preachers say little or nothing about it, yet God has filled the Bible with this glorious promise. If you feel inclined to criticize those who make so much of the second coming, you need to include God Himself in that criticized group!

I want to emphasize what God emphasizes. I want to love what God loves. One statement from God should mean more to us than all the words of all the people in the world combined.

If the heavenly Father has so much to say about Jesus' second advent, shouldn't we

Do We REALLY WANT HIM?

How do you feel about this greatest of all events? Are you thrilled with the expectancy at the thought of Christ's return, or do you feel like He is intruding on your life? Maybe you don't really *want* Christ to come back?

When life seems to fall apart and nothing is secure, we may cry out, "Come, Lord Jesus, come." When tragedy strikes, or suffering, or loss, we think of Christ as the deliverer. When we consider the inhumanity of man to man, the degradation and problems beyond human solution, we realize Christ is the only answer.

On the other hand, things have been as they are for a long time, and life goes on. True, the problems are immense, but do we really want to relinquish all control? We would like to see our children have time to grow up, and choose their careers, and live their lives. Deep down in our hearts we have confidence in things as they are. Not for a moment would we deny our belief that Jesus is coming—never! But we are so accustomed to the present cosmos, so settled in our shortsighted contentment with the present that we do not feel the fiery fervor that kept Christians of an earlier age living on hope.

The thought was expressed by a young mother who told her minister: "There must be something wrong with me. You asked us this morning whether we 'love the Lord's appearing,' and I don't. I guess you could say I'm reconciled to Christ's coming back, but it's not exactly top priority on my list of wants."

How do you feel about it?

be thinking about it, talking about it, getting ready for it?— because Jesus Christ IS coming.

I love Christ's appearing because JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF LOVES IT

Jesus' mortal career on earth, followed by His years at the Father's right hand, have all been a preparation toward one great climax: when *"the kingdoms of this world"* shall become *"the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever"* (Rev. 11:15). *"And the Lord shall be king over all the earth ... and shall choose Jerusalem again"* (Zech. 14:9; 2:10). The angel Gabriel, appearing to His mother, said He would be "great," and would *"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).

Today He sits at the right hand of the Father, *"expecting till his enemies be made his footstool"* (Heb. 10:13). When He returns to earth, He will enter into His glory as earth's rightful Lord and King and shall *"sit on the throne of his glory"* (Matt 25:31). He will have dominion *"from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth...All kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him"* (Ps. 72:8–11). Doesn't He fully deserve the honor He will receive? Can't we imagine that He is eagerly looking forward to it?

Jesus' words recorded in the Gospels reflect His love for the plan of His Father.

♦ When He was before Pilate, He testified to His destiny: to be King of the earth. *"You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world"* (John 18:37).

♦ Consider that He spoke only the words that He received from His Father (John 14:24; 8:28), and the subject of all of His parables was His coming Kingdom. He went everywhere *"preaching and showing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God"* (Luke 8:1; see also Luke 4:43–44; Matt. 4:23; 9:35).

♦ He was looking forward to sharing His authority with His associates who like Him overcame (Rev. 3:21). He also assured His disciples that they would be with Him in His Kingdom, which He called the time of the *"regeneration,"* when everything would be new. Even more, He said that when He, *"the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"* (Matt. 19:28)—they also would have positions of authority.

♦ He was looking forward to returning *"in the glory of His Father"* and *"with the holy angels"* (Matt. 16:27). Wouldn't He also be looking forward to handing out eternal rewards to His faithful servants?

♦ At the Last Supper with His disciples, He said He would not partake of the passover with them again until the time when He would drink it "new" with them at His table in His Father's kingdom (Matt. 26:29; see also Matt. 8:11).

♦ Jesus looked forward to eating and drinking (fellowship) with His disciples *"at My table in My kingdom"* (Luke 22:30; Luke 12:37; 13:29; 14:15).

The book of Revelation details many events associated with Jesus' triumphant return when He comes with power to bring to pass all that the prophets foretold (including opening the seven seals—Rev. 4, 5), to judge and conquer the nations of earth to bring all under one righteous government, and finally to be united with His bride at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19). It is all one picture of triumph and victory for God and righteousness and the benefit of all. Can't we imagine that Jesus is looking forward to it?

I love Christ's appearing because THE EARLY CHRISTIANS LOVED IT

RULES FOR TODAY

Do nothing you would not want to be found doing when Jesus comes.

Say nothing you would not want to be found saying when Jesus comes.

Go to no place where you would not want to be found when Jesus comes.

The early Christians were living in expectancy. They heard or read Jesus' words: *"Lest, coming suddenly, He find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"* (Mark 13:36-37). They were *"waiting in hope for the blessing which will come with the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus"* (Titus 2:13 NJB).*

Paul told the Thessalonians to wait for the coming of His Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1:10).

The last prayer in the Bible is the heart-cry of the apostolic Church, *"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."* To this prayer we add, *"Amen!"*

History verifies that for three centuries after Christ went to heaven, the hope of Christ's return burned brightly in the hearts of believers. It is even said that it was considered heresy in the first three centuries not to be sighing for His return. In later centuries, as the Church turned further and further from the teachings of Jesus and His apostles, this truth was neglected and almost forgotten.

Jesus taught in the Parable of the Ten Virgins that prior to His coming a cry would ring out, *"Behold, the bridegroom is coming!"* (Matt. 25:6). We have heard this cry. Despite the general apathy, the time of His arrival is getting nearer every day. He IS coming.

It is the time to be loving His appearing.

I love Christ's appearing because IT WILL VINDICATE GOD'S WORD

Are you hearing all the voices being raised today against God and His Word, saying that the Bible is not true and should not be taken as reliable or relevant? Of course you are. What do their protests change? Nothing.

God's thoughts are not ours—not even close! (Isa. 55:8-9). Think about the distance between heaven and earth, and you have some idea of the difference.

The Bible promises the literal, visible, bodily return of Jesus Christ to this earth. Just as He went away—visibly, literally—

so He will return—visibly, literally (Acts 1:10-11). In our day this truth is often flatly denied by some who call themselves Christians. Said one who attended a religious conference, "When it comes to such things as the second coming, I am from Missouri. This coming again stuff is plain foolishness. How can a man with any intellectual honesty stoop to such nonsense?"

Another liberal had this to say:

"There is no warrant in the Scriptures for this doctrine which has plagued the church for nineteen centuries. When Paul in Thessalonians said that the Lord will descend from Heaven and the dead in Christ will rise first and shall be caught up with those who are left to meet the Lord in the air, he was just plain mistaken. As far as I am concerned, the writings of Paul do not belong in the Scriptures."

What about infidel mockery? It is a precise fulfillment of the Scriptures that predict that *"scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation'"* (2 Pet. 3:3-4).

God's promises will be fulfilled exactly as He said. His herald will arrive, Elijah the Prophet, to announce the advent of *"the great and dreadful day of the Lord"* (Mal. 4:5). Then Jesus Christ will follow, the dead in Christ will awake (1 Thess. 4:16), Jesus will judge and reward His servants (2 Cor. 5:10), and He and His associates (Rev. 3:21) will begin the task of transforming the earth into the kingdom of God! Yes, every single prophecy in the Bible will be fulfilled in its time (Isa. 55:10-11). His holy Word will be vindicated.

*Titus 2:13 has been incorrectly translated in the KJV. It reads in the Greek, *"waiting for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and of our Savior our Jesus Christ."* Paul was looking for Jesus Christ, who would appear in the glory of the great God. There is no suggestion here that Jesus is God. He is coming with the glory of the heavenly Father, with His holy angels, as He said many times (see Matt. 16:27; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; Matt. 25:31). It is rendered correctly in a number of the translations, including Darby, TNIV, RSV, NJB, NLT, NRSV, HCSB, ASV, ESV, and GNT.



"Remember the former things of old, for I am God,... Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it" (Isa. 46:9, 11).

God Almighty will do exactly as He has promised, and I believe it. I can hardly wait to see His blessed Word vindicated in the presence of all those professors and teachers and doctors and speakers and radio announcers and actors and entertainers and psychologists and politicians and social activists who have scorned it publicly or in private. The Bible will come into its own. Our Savior Jesus Christ will come.

I love Christ's appearing because

IT IS A PURIFYING HOPE

The apostle John says, *"everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He [Christ] is pure"* (1 John 3:3). *"This hope"* is the hope of Christ's reappearance (vs. 2).

Purifying oneself is a natural result of a sincere belief in Christ's coming. Why? Because one who expects to meet Jesus wants His approval.

Picture being invited to the White House. Before the time arrived, you would want to learn exactly what was expected of you. You would inquire about how you should appear, what introductions would be needed, what time you should arrive, and how you should be dressed. That invitation would be a motivator to prepare.

If a meeting with the President motivates preparation, how much more a meeting with the Lord Jesus Christ, the future King of the whole earth! Anticipating that meeting and His acceptance of us should be a transforming power in our lives. How can we truly love the anticipation if not preparing for it?

That is why the hope of His coming is a purifying hope. If we truly believe He is coming, that belief will lead us to a life separated from the world, a life of service to God, a life of zeal, with a passion for the Lord Jesus and His Kingdom. This hope is stirring, motivating, heartwarming.

The imminent return of our Lord is the great Bible argument for a pure, unselfish, devoted, other-worldly life of service to God.

We speak often about the importance of living right because death could strike swiftly at any moment. How much more the coming of Christ Jesus' warning for us is, *"Be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect"* (Matt. 24:44). The whole point of knowing in advance is so that we can be ready.

How does one get ready? Here are a few statements from some well-known evangelists. Thank God there are some who believe in the literal return of Jesus Christ.

"I never preach a sermon without thinking that possibly the Lord might come before I finish that sermon."

"I never lay my head upon the pillow without thinking that before the morning breaks, the final morning may have dawned. We are not looking for death. We are looking for Him."

"I did not overcome the habit of smoking until the truth of the return of our Lord came home clearly to my mind and heart. When I did thus believe that Jesus Christ is surely coming back... I found grace to throw pipes and cigars away completely, never to take them up again. I did not want Jesus to come back and find me with a breath that was offensive, or presenting the sorry spectacle of a preacher with a pipe or cigar in the corner of his mouth."

A man who had thought nothing of drinking a glass of beer told how belief in the second coming of Jesus changed his life. He said that, entering a saloon one day and ordering his beer, the thought came to him: Suppose the Lord should come at this moment! He had lifted the glass, but before it reached his lips, he set it down again, paid for it, turned on his heel and left the saloon. For him, that was it. The blessed hope was a purifying hope.

Do we believe it? What will we want to be found doing—or NOT doing—when Jesus comes? That is the meaning of those words: *"Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He [Christ] is pure"* (1 John 3:3).

It is reason enough to love it!



"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" (Isa. 9:7)

COME, KING JESUS, CLAIM YOUR THRONE!

PARAPHRASE OF PSALM 72

*With all the clash of battle
Which round the earth does ring;
'Tis strange we hear so little
Of bringing back "The King!"*

*Though once on earth rejected
He will to earth return;
To right all wrong with justice;
For this our spirits yearn.*

*The whole creation groaneth!
O Lord, Your comfort bring!
Cast out the prince of this world
And give us back "The King!"*

*Give peace unto Jerusalem!
Come and set up Your Throne!
Restore joy to Your people
Oh, come and claim Your own!*

*Answer the prayer of David,
The son of Jesse, Lord!
And give Your King Your judgments,
According to Your Word.*

*His judgments shall be righteous;
Then will the people find
A just and perfect Ruler
For earth, and all mankind.*

*He shall descend like showers
With blessings in their train;
And righteousness shall flourish
Throughout His peaceful reign.*

*From all deceit and violence
He will their souls release;
Give joy in place of mourning,
And bid all war to cease.*

*For He shall have dominion
On earth from sea to sea:
And every king and people
To Him shall bow the knee!*

*His name will stand for ever!
And all the world shall see
God's great and matchless Glory!
Amen! So let it be!*

— Sel. and alt.

I love Christ's appearing because

IT WILL USHER IN THE GLORIOUS, ETERNAL KINGDOM THAT JESUS WENT EVERYWHERE PREACHING

Thank God! When Jesus comes, He will set up the new, worldwide government He promised. For centuries, we have prayed, *"Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."* Jesus' coming will bring the answer to this prayer (Matt. 6:10).

Jesus' coming will bring many changes.

- Universal righteousness and justice will prevail. We read, *"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea"* (Isa. 11:9).
- Poverty will come to an end. Everyone everywhere on earth will have enough for their needs. *"They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit"* (Isa. 65:21). They will have what they need to *"eat sufficiently, and for fine [durable] clothing"* (Isa. 23:18).
- Injustice will come to an end. The new administrators will rule with equity and justice for all (Ps. 72:1-5; Isa. 11:4-5).

The result will be the earth as God intended it to be. Who does not long to see justice worldwide—and the end of cruelty, terrorism, oppression, and the inhumanity of man to man! That day *will* come—with the return of Jesus.

I love Christ's appearing because

IT WILL BRING AN END TO ALL SUFFERING, SICKNESS, DISEASE, AND ULTIMATELY DEATH

Our present world is plagued with sickness and pain. In that new world, *"The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick"* (Isa. 33:24). The promise of Jesus for the finished earth is, *"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away"* (Rev. 21:4).

Can you imagine a world without ambulances, or fire trucks, or emergency vehicles? without hospitals, or sanitariums, or any provisions for the disabled or disadvantaged? All of these will be unnecessary because there will be no debilitating disease, no accidents, no natural disasters, no children born with deformities.

Then remove all emotional distress, all psycho and psychiatric problems, all mental turmoil and suffering, and what will it be? A new world where everyone can enjoy a happy, healthful life, in a peaceful and constructive environment. *"In His days the righteous shall flourish, and abundance of peace, until the moon is no more"* (Ps. 72:7).

Then remove everything that causes fear. When Jesus comes, there will be nothing to fear—because there will be nothing to hurt or destroy. *"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea"* (Isa. 11:9). There will be no accidents, no enemies, no terrorists, no out-of-control elements. The prophet Micah describes the peaceful setting: *"Everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken"* (Micah 4:4).

I love Christ's appearing because

IT WILL END ALL WAR

Our earth is continually scarred and devastated by war. We are told that at any one time, there are some one hundred wars raging, of greater or lesser degree. In the kingdom of Christ, war will be unknown. Once the battle of Armageddon has made all nations subject to the new regime, there will be no more war (Micah 4:3; Ps. 46:9).

Even Armageddon will not be a "normal" war. There will be no needless destruction (Zech. 14:11), and no innocent victims will suffer (Isa. 13:9; Joel 2:32). It will be a war to end wars, and a righteous war, when Jesus goes forth *"conquering and to conquer"* (Rev. 6:2). Once the enemies of Jesus are converted, or removed, all people of the world will work together under one government for the good of all. For



the first time in history there will be nothing to go to war about!

Oh, what a day that will be. No more war. No more military service. No more training our boys and girls to kill. *"All the military academies and training camps will be closed down"* (Micah 4:3, TLB).

Thank God, the coming of the Prince of Peace will end all war! How can anyone fail to love His appearing!

I love Christ's appearing because IT WILL BRING THE RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT

The second coming of Jesus means the awakening (resurrecting) of all who have served God and died (Dan. 12:2), so that they with the living believers can be judged and compensated for what they have done. Together they will rise to meet the Lord in the air when He returns (1 Thess. 4:16), to be judged and rewarded.

Doesn't the anticipation make our hearts leap for joy? Paul describes this event in 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17: *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."*

What a meeting! The apostle Paul said this is the redemption for which the whole creation has been yearning (Rom. 8:23).

Ask me if I love His appearing? That is to ask me if I would personally like to meet Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Ruth, Hannah, Samuel, David, Asaph, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Obadiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Elizabeth, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Luke, Peter, Paul, James, John, Priscilla, Aquila, and so on and on. All the known and unknown, named and unnamed servants of God from ages past and present—what a noble host to meet! You ask me why I long for the hour of that meeting?! I can hardly wait!

But I know that before I can anticipate the joy of that meeting, I must get ready for it. Love for Christ's coming must lead to careful, focused living. Following Jesus' example, my will must give way to God's will (Luke 22:42). My individuality must bend to His standard (1 Pet. 4:10; Prov. 22:4). My anger must come under the control of the law of God, so that I can meet disagreeable, disconcerting, frustrating situations and people with a meek, controlled spirit (Phil. 4:5; Ps. 37:8–9). I must cultivate a love for God which will show in a total obedience to His laws (John 14:15), a loving attitude toward my brother and sister in the faith, and in a kindly spirit to all (1 Pet. 2:17). Jealousy must go, along with envy, lust for money, and slander of every kind (1 Pet. 2:1–2). Yes, I have much work to do before I am ready to stand in His presence when He returns.

Finally, I love Christ's appearing because IT WILL BE PAY DAY FOR ALL HIS FAITHFUL SERVANTS!

Christ is coming to settle up with His servants. He is coming to bring the rewards He promised, and begin His great work of renovating the earth (Isa. 40:10). *"He will come and save us"* (Isa. 25:9). In Jesus' parable of the Talents, His commending words to the faithful servants were, *"Well done, good and faithful servant"* (Matt. 25:21). In His last message, after He had gone to heaven, He said, *"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work"* (Rev. 22:12).

Judgment day will be pay day for all faithful servants, a time for recompense (Isa. 34:8; Hos. 9:7), the time when *"This mortal shall put on immortality"* and *"this corruptible shall put on incorruption,"* and *"then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory'"* (1 Cor. 15:53–55). What a day of victory for all worthy ones!

When that ecstatic moment arrives, may you be there to receive the crown that He has waiting for you—because you loved His appearing. **MM**



Well Done...

Good & Faithful Servant

Jesus To Return in Disciples' Day?

DID THE DISCIPLES EXPECT JESUS TO RETURN IN THEIR DAY?

"[In] Matthew 24, the Lord gives his disciples a parable to push home the truth of their need to 'watch' for His coming. Remember, the Lord is here talking to his disciples,...He told them that they would see the great tribulation (vs. 21), and the collapse of the heaven and earth of Jerusalem (vs. 29), thus ending the Jewish age and manifesting the *parousia* of Christ. Jesus told them that all these things would happen in their generation (Matthew 24:34).

"A generation was about 40 years, so they knew that the Lord would return in their life time, though they did not know the 'day or the hour' (Matthew 24:36)....This exhortation to watch is not given to us, twentieth century Christians, but to them, first century Christians.

"Would it make sense for Jesus to urge His disciples 'to be constantly on guard' for something that was not to take place for another 2,000 years or so?...

"We have plenty of clear evidence that He was to come during the lifetime of the disciples (Matthew 16:27-28, Mark 8:38; 9:1; Luke 9:26-27).... It was that generation and that generation alone that was to be watching."

<http://ecclesia.org/truth/mat11.html>

The Bible has the answer:

Unfortunately, a misunderstanding of the time when Jesus would return has led to gross misconceptions, scoffing and ridicule. When we look at all the evidence, God's purpose is clear and everything is on target and on time.

Why the confusion about the time Jesus would return? There are at least four points to recognize:

1. During Jesus' ministry His own apostles misunderstood the time. Jesus took special care to explain that His Kingdom would be a "long time" future.

One day as they neared Jerusalem Jesus spoke a parable to explain it, "*because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear*" (Luke 19:11). In the parable Jesus compared Himself to a "*certain nobleman*" who "*went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return*" (Luke 19:12). In Matthew's account, Jesus told them plainly that it would be a "*long time*" before He would return to reckon with His servants (Matt. 25:14).

They still were slow to see the picture. Even on the same day Jesus ascended they were still asking Him, "*Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?*" (Acts 1:6 NLT). They had no idea that centuries were to intervene.

2. The Jewish people misread the Old Testament prophecies, which often foretold both Jesus' birth and second advent in one prophecy (see Isa. 9:6; Mic. 5:2).

So when Jesus came in fulfillment of the words of the prophets, these people expected the total fulfillment at that time. They did not anticipate the long—very long—time, even centuries that would intervene before He would set up His Kingdom. They did not understand that many of the prophecies had combined two events in one prophecy. They did not know to expect the Baby, the childhood, the earthly ministry, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension, and finally (nearly two millennia later) the Second Advent when He would return as King. The message they heard was, "Deliverance is coming! Freedom from Rome!" They had no idea of the time that would elapse before the fulfillment of all parts of the prophecies would be complete.

3. The apostles and Jesus Himself combined their teaching about His return with a message of urgency. Why, when the time was so far in the future? Because *no one had longer than his or her lifetime to prepare*.

When John the Baptist came announcing the approach of the Messiah, he said, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!*"* (Matt. 3:2)—and the people expected the new government immediately. "*Repent!*" said Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38). Jesus Himself came teaching, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt. 4:17). Right to the end of His ministry He was teaching readiness: "*Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect...Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming...Take heed to yourselves, lest...that Day come on you unexpectedly*" (Matt. 24:44; Mark 13:35; Luke 21:36, 34).

Paul taught the same: "*that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ....When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory*" (Phil. 1:10; Col. 3:4).

*The word translated "kingdom" in our common version means more than a royal dominion. It means also, "kingly power, authority, royal dignity, majesty." John was saying that the person who would hold the highest office in the Kingdom, He who would be the embodiment of its power and dignity, the King Himself, Jesus Christ, the royal Son of God, was at hand. His coming would fulfill the first phase of the prophecies about the coming Kingdom.

4. The apostle Paul included the whole body of believers in one word: “we,” as when he wrote, “*We shall not all sleep*” (1 Cor. 15:51), or “*we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord...*” (1 Thess. 4:15).

By saying “*We shall not all sleep*” or “*we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord,*” Paul referred not only to himself and his brethren but to the whole body of believers, including those who would be living when Jesus would return. Paul knew there would be living believers at the time of Christ’s return, and all believers together compose one body, in which Paul included himself and his brethren. It is the same “we” who “*must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*” (2 Cor. 5:10), the same “we” who are “*the body of Christ, and members in particular*” (1 Cor. 12:27).

In Paul’s second letter to the church at Thessalonica we have a clarifying statement of his teaching about the time of Christ’s second advent—because these believers had apparently misunderstood him. After a brief introduction, Paul

zeroed in on the problem.

“*Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God*” (2 Thess. 2:3–4). The great Day could not come until certain events took place. There should be an apostasy, a falling away from the faith—which had already begun at that time (vs. 7).

Paul’s hope was not to see Christ return during his lifetime but to have a share in the resurrection when Christ should finally come: “*If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead*” was his life goal (Phil. 3:11). He would have felt no need to share in the resurrection had he expected Christ during his lifetime. “*If in this life only we have hope in Christ,*” he wrote at another time when discussing the resurrection, “*we are of all men most miserable*” (1 Cor. 15:19)—there could be no hope of anything beyond without the resurrection. **MM**



Abib 2009 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, March 26, and continues through Friday, March 27, 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 March 26) after the Spring Equinox (this year on March 20). 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 7. 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 10. 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 May 29. **MM**

OODA LOOPING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

vibration from engine damage, loss of thrust in both engines at low altitude over a very densely populated area and, a slowing aircraft—all were critical observations.

Orient: Capt. Sullenberger recognized his responsibilities as Captain and considered his next step.

Decide: Capt. Sullenberger took responsibility of the aircraft from the first officer, Jeff.

Action: Following transfer protocol he said to Jeff, “my aircraft,” and Jeff responded, “your aircraft.”

Back to the beginning of the loop:

The Captain knew the plane would literally fall out of the sky without immediate action (**observation**). Drawing on his education, training, and experience, he remembered his glider experience (**orientation**). He would glide the plane (**decision**). He dropped the nose of the aircraft and made adjustments to take the greatest advantage of the forward motion he would gain to glide the aircraft (**action**).

Twice more he processed through the OODA Loop, first rejecting the idea of returning to LaGuardia, and then rejecting the idea of try to make it to Teterboro.

To his immediate left he saw the Hudson River. The river provided a smooth surface, and it was near watercraft (**observation**). The plane had sufficient airlift and speed to make it to the Hudson (**orientation**). “We’re going in the Hudson,” he said to air traffic control (**decision**). Banking to the left, he glided over the Hudson (**action**).

Final Loop: The pilot checked air speed, air lift, and distance to the best place to splash down (**observation**). Prepared for splash down (**orientation**). Kept the wings exactly level, lowered flaps to slow the plane to just above minimum flying speed, slightly raised the nose, and maintained a rate of descent that was survivable (**decision**). He splashed down. All this was simultaneous (**action**).

The result: **Success!** All on board were safely rescued.

Capt. Sullenberger had applied the OODA strategy in a very difficult situation with many lives at stake. How did he maintain a level head in this crucial time that could have resulted in the loss of many lives including his own?

The Captain explained: “The physiological reaction I had to this was strong, and I had to force myself to use my training and force calm on the situation,” he said. “It just took some concentration.”

“I think, in many ways, as it turned out, my entire life up to that moment had been a preparation to handle that particular moment,” he said.

“For 42 years, I’ve been making small regular deposits in this bank of experience, education and training,” said Capt. Sullenberger. “And on January 15, the balance was sufficient so that I could make a very large withdrawal.”

Education and training is key to rational action in any important field.

Do we think of Christianity as an important field? Jesus said it was the most important, and directed us to place every part of our lives under His higher law of Faith. This strategy applied leads to the best possible life now and a life without end when Christ returns (Matt. 6:33; Mark 10:30).

How is this life possible? It requires a discipline (education and training) that most do not want to even think about. *“But the truly happy people are those who carefully study God’s perfect law that makes people free, and they continue to study it. They do not forget what they heard, but they obey what God’s teaching says.... God will reward them wil life forever”* (James 1:25, 12 NCV).

Observe, Orient, Decide, Act

First we must observe (**observe**) our own life and circumstance in relation to God’s higher law. Then it is necessary to think rationally (**orient**) about making decisions, because we can do right only if we make right decisions (**decide**). Then we must **act**. Then we should repeat the loop and **observe** the results of our actions so that we may make better and better decisions.

OODA is not a new process that Colonel Boyd discovered. It is a system we all use in making decisions in some way. He only took the concept, gave it a name and made the name into an acronym for training purposes—acronyms help us remember.

The psalmist was using the OODA Loop when he resolved, *“I thought about my ways (**observation**), and turned my feet to Your testimonies (**orientation**). I made haste (**decision**), and did not delay to keep Your commandments (**action**)”* (Ps. 119:59–60). Each of us is responsible for the decisions we make. Then we must **act** upon the decisions we make. OODA is our responsibility.

Every morning, the first thing upon waking, we enter the OODA Loop by **observing** our words and thoughts as we give thanks and solicit God for His help throughout the day. Is all our prayer within His will? Does it glorify Him with heartfelt gratitude? Do we approach Him in humbleness and awe? Do we keep our mind on what we pray?

If we are **observing** as we begin the day, we enter stage 2 of the loop—**orient**. This second “O” is the most important because it involves analyzing our previous life and how we can improve. By how we orient, we are determining how we will decide and act in our battles against our old evil nature.

But what happens if, when we begin the OODA process, we get stuck on the second “O” (**orient**) and go round in circles of “OO”, “OO”, “OO” (**observe-orient, observe-orient, observe-orient**)? We don’t get to the action, and knowledge not acted upon is worthless.

One way to avoid getting stuck in the loop is to keep focused on our Christian goal. What is the purpose of OODA for us? It is to defeat our arch-enemy, self, our old nature.

What is God’s role? Does He leave us alone in this process? Not for a moment! He has assigned angels to watch over us and offer guidance (Ps. 34:7; Heb. 1:14). They will help by arranging for the tools and training we need, and will stand by to give strength and help where we need it.

When we stand before Christ, nothing will matter more than His approval. And His approval will depend on how we **observe, orient, decide** and **act** now!—it is a small price to pay for the privilege of being welcomed into His eternal family and having a home in the everlasting Kingdom of Christ! **MM**

FAITH *in Action*

Acts 27:1–8 NKJV

1 And when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment.

2 So, entering a ship of Adramyttium, we put to sea, meaning to sail along the coasts of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us.

3 And the next day we landed at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to go to his friends and receive care.

4 When we had put to sea from there, we sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

5 And when we had sailed over the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.

6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and he put us on board.

7 When we had sailed slowly many days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmone.

8 Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea.

“As you testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness in Rome.”

–Jesus to Paul (Acts 23:11)

by RUTH E. SISSON

BOUND FOR ROME

From the time the church at Antioch had first commissioned Paul and Barnabas, the apostle Paul had been traveling, by land and by sea, a man without a home, everywhere teaching and preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, both by precept and example. Now, after a two year detention in Caesarea, he was finally embarking for Italy and Rome. It was about 59 A.D.



Read Acts 27:1–8

Paul had appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar he would go. But under whom? By what passageway? How quickly? And in whose care? All of these decisions had to be made before Paul could go anywhere.

Luke, as a competent historian, immediately gives us a feel for the fumbling bureaucracy: “*and when it was decided that we should sail to Italy...*” (Acts 27:1). The word for “*decided*” is a word that carries the weight of a court decision. It is a word used of judgment, a decision after long deliberation and careful weighing of the issues.

The Apostle’s case was complicated enough, he being a political prisoner, with nothing standing against him except his religious convictions and a few radical Jews. His testimony in front of Governor Festus and King Agrippa had only confirmed the fact that Festus had no defensible complaints to send to the Emperor with his prisoner.

1. Why was Paul going to Rome? (25:11) _____

2. Into whose keeping was Paul committed? (27:1) _____

Luke the historian identifies Paul’s guardian simply as “*one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment.*” Not being impressed by Roman ranks and titles, Luke omitted some details we would think essential. But he was likely

describing a Roman who belonged to an Imperial corps of officers who served as liaison between the Emperor and his armies in the provinces. If so, Julius was likely a distinguished soldier with extensive experience and an outstanding military record. A man of his caliber may well have seen in Paul a match for his own bravery. Whatever the reason, Julius treated Paul with more than normal courtesy and kindness. The other prisoners in the convoy under Julius and his detachment of soldiers were in all probability already condemned, and were being sent to Rome to join the human victims from the provinces who were used to amuse the populace by their death in the arena.

3. What two friends of Paul were accompanying him on this journey to Rome? (27:1-2) _____

In the first verse of the chapter, Luke enters the narrative unobtrusively by writing in the first person: “we.” He has been absent from the account since the end of Paul’s third journey, when Paul and company arrived in Jerusalem and greeted the elders of the church (Acts 21:18). But during the stresses and strains of Paul’s subsequent imprisonment and trials, Luke “*the beloved physician*” was probably close by.

Paul’s other companion is a brother in Christ, Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica.

How could Aristarchus and Luke have traveled in Paul’s company when Paul himself was travelling as a prisoner under guard? It is hardly possible that a prisoner’s friends were allowed to accompany him. But it may be that they enrolled as his slaves. It seems that these two brothers were willing to lay down their lives for the Apostle. Not only did this give Paul faithful friends always beside him, but it also would have enhanced Paul’s image in the eyes of the centurion. It may well be part of the reason that Paul enjoyed a level of respect during this voyage such as a penniless prisoner would not have received in the first century, or the twenty-first.

4. What was the identity of the ship chosen for travel? (27:2) _____

It would not be likely to find a ship sailing for Rome in the harbor of Caesarea, especially during the fall of the year. So Julius booked passage for his convoy on an Adramyttium ship which would make a voyage along the coastal towns of the province of Asia. Hopefully at some point the convoy could transfer to a ship that had Rome for its destination. Or should there be no suitable ship so late in the season, the prisoners might be taken by a land route through Troas, Philippi, and on to Brundisium and Rome.

The sailing vessel likely being privately owned, passage was open to any who could pay. Paul being a prisoner of the Roman government, his fare would have been paid out of the Imperial treasury. Luke, as a physician, likely had his own resources. As for Aristarchus, who had accompanied Paul from Macedonia two years earlier, he may have had his own funds from being locally employed in Caesarea, or he may have received help from the Church there. We can be sure these two brothers were anxious for the welfare of their beloved Paul and wanted to do what they could to help him.

5. After leaving Caesarea and heading north, where did the ship first dock? (27:3) _____

Some seventy or so nautical miles north of Caesarea was the old Phoenician port of Sidon. Here the ship docked, evidently to load or unload cargo.

6. What special kindness did Julius show Paul at this time? (27:3) _____

The fact that Julius allowed Paul the liberty to leave the ship and visit his friends, especially on the second day of the voyage, shows both the high level



“Who was Julius?”

Luke identifies Julius “*as a centurion of Augustus’ band*” (27:1). Historians have noted that the Emperor of Rome had a cohort directly responsible to himself. One such unit was headquartered in northeastern Palestine, and its members were selected for their distinctive service. The word translated Augustus means “a title of honor which used to be given certain legions, or cohorts, for valour.” It might also be translated reverend, or venerable.

Another historian speaks of Julius as being “an officer of the Imperial Regiment, which was a group of officers under the direct command of the Emperor” (*Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*).

Such a guardian would be a likely choice for a prisoner on the way to a hearing in the presence of the Emperor.



From the Word

Meet Aristarchus...

When Aristarchus boarded the ship with Paul, he was not new to missionary travel or adventure. Early on Paul’s third missionary journey he had joined Paul, well before they reached Thessalonica, because he was present during the riot in Ephesus. Recall when Demetrius staged a rally for the worship of the Greek goddess Diana—because Paul’s preaching was ruining his idol business (Acts 19:21–33). In the riotous confusion that followed, a mob of people had rushed into the theater, grabbing two of Paul’s travel companions, Gaius and Aristarchus.

Leaving Ephesus, Aristarchus was still in Paul’s company as they visited the churches through Macedonia and Greece, then back to Asia Minor.

Aristarchus was with Paul when he sent for the elders of the church of Ephesus. He was present at that final seaside meeting, when Paul offered prayer and commended them to the care of God, and they sorrowed “*most of all that they would not see his face again*” (Acts 20:20–38). A number of other Gentile brethren were there also, accompanying Paul as he brought the gift their churches had collected for their suffering brethren in Jerusalem.

Now two plus years had intervened, but apparently Aristarchus had stayed nearby. When Paul was finally cleared for sailing to Rome, Aristarchus was ready to join him, hoping to give his spiritual father some of the support and encouragement Paul had given to others.



of regard Julius had for his prisoner, and the generous spirit of the centurion. Such gentleness seems out of character for a Roman soldier. Was Julius representing Rome's officialdom with its best foot forward? Julius did not know at this time that Paul would be instrumental in saving his own life as well as that of all of the people on the ship.

There is no other mention of the church at Sidon in the New Testament, and it seems quite clear that Paul had not founded the Church there. But the believers in Sidon surely knew of Paul, and it may even be that some of Paul's converts lived there. Can we imagine the excitement

when word spread through the community that Brother Paul—yes, Brother Paul himself had arrived, along with two fellow believers?!

Luke does not give any hint of how long they stayed at Sidon. The stopover may have been only for a day, or it may have taken several days to load or unload the ship's cargo and take care of the shipowner's business.

It was without doubt a tearful moment when the Sidon believers knelt and prayed with their departing guests, knowing they would not see their faces again in this world. Luke notes that the Sidon brethren gave Paul care and



About Myra

Myra was an important coastal city of the eastern Roman empire. It was located about one mile north of what is now Dembre, Turkey. Archeology digs have uncovered a well-preserved theatre, and suggest that ancient Myra was very prosperous.

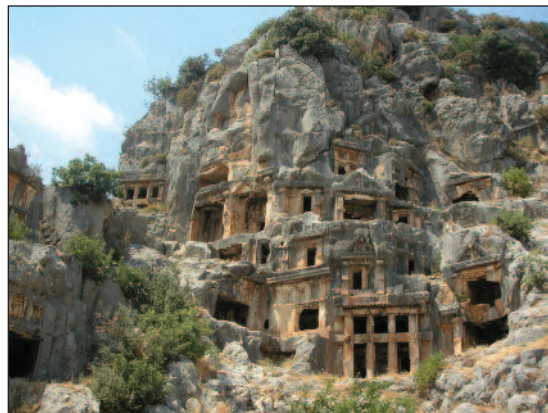
From the coastal town a gorge leads into the rugged interior. In some parts of the province, high mountains come down almost to the sea. In Paul's time, the city had only recently become a Roman province, and was one of the chief ports for the direct cross-sea traffic between Egypt and the coasts of Syria.

The harbor (now called Andracki) was even more important to the shipping industry, it being the seat of the sailors' god, to whom they offered their prayers before starting on a voyage, and paid their vows on their safe arrival (Sir William Ramsey, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, published in 1896). This god survived in the "Christianized" form of St. Nicolas of Myra, thought to be the patron-saint of sailors, and is most known today in the pagan folklore of Santa Claus, sometimes as his "helper," sometimes interchangeable with his likeness.

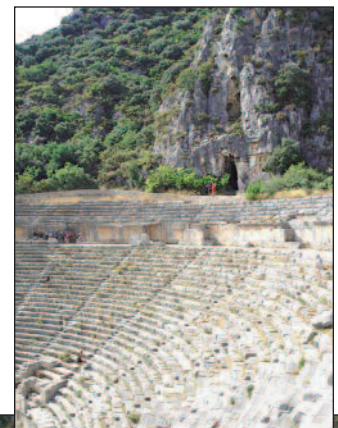
Myra was a most likely place to cross paths with a ship destined for Rome.



(left) Two of numerous statues or images of St. Nicolas (Santa Claus) found in **Myra** today.



(top left) Tombs cut into rock at **Myra**



(top right and right) Ruins of a large theater at ancient **Myra**.

Notice the tombs in the background in the photo at right.

Myra appears to have many visible remains of its prosperous past.



hospitality (27:3). It was an opportunity to help loved ones with supplies for the long and possibly hazardous voyage. In ancient sea travel, passengers were often expected to provide for themselves.

7. Leaving Sidon, where did the ship sail in relation to Cyprus? Why?

(27:4) _____

Luke makes special note that the ship sailed north of Cyprus because “*the winds were contrary*”—there was a strong, prevailing west wind, typical of this season of the year (fall). But by taking this sea route close to the Cilician coast, the sailors could make headway by availing themselves of local land breezes and steady westward currents that ran along the coast. It was slow (9 days from Sidon to Myra), but possible.

Meanwhile, can we imagine what the sights along the coastline meant to Paul? Can’t we see him standing on the deck, watching the landscape as he thought about the course his life had taken since those boyhood days? Cilicia was the province where he had grown up. Now he was thinking about his brethren in the churches that lay over the hills and beyond.

Only a few miles farther along the coast, and they were passing the province of Pamphylia. This area brought more memories—of his first missionary journey some twelve or more years earlier, in company with Barnabas and the youthful John Mark. His mind flooded with thoughts of loving concern for the beloved brothers and sisters up there in the hills—in Antioch, Lystra, Iconium, and farther up into Galatia. Looking the other direction, towards Cyprus, he thought of the city of Salamis, and Paphos, and the Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus. If only there were some way to visit these churches, and give them a word of encouragement!

But Paul was on a different mission now. God was sending him to Rome.

8. At what city along the coast of Asia Minor did the ship stop? (27:5)

Myra was almost directly across the Mediterranean from Alexandria in Egypt. Built on a cliff about two miles from the seacoast, this seaport was an important stopping place for ships en route from Alexandria in Egypt bound for Cyprus, Syria, and various points of the Roman Empire.

9. What action did the centurion take at Myra? (27:6) _____

In his characteristic style, Luke does not mention the class of the ship onto which Julius transferred his convoy of prisoners and soldiers. We know only that it was a very large ship, large enough to carry 276 passengers in addition to its cargo. It seems likely that it was a grain ship, as Egyptian grain was a Roman staple at the time, and the Imperial grain service kept Myra on the map.

Was it indeed a grain ship? Luke confirms our surmise later in the account by stating that the cargo of the ship that was dumped into the sea was “*wheat*” (see Acts 27:38). Since the people of that time ate very little meat, bread was the most important article of their diet. With the increased population in Rome, Egyptian wheat became very important.

10. How does Luke describe the sailing after the ship left Myra?

(27:7) _____

11. Where did the ship finally make port? (27:8) _____

Leaving Myra, the captain was bound for Cnidus. But because of the “*wind not permitting [them] to proceed,*” the ship turned southwest to get behind Crete

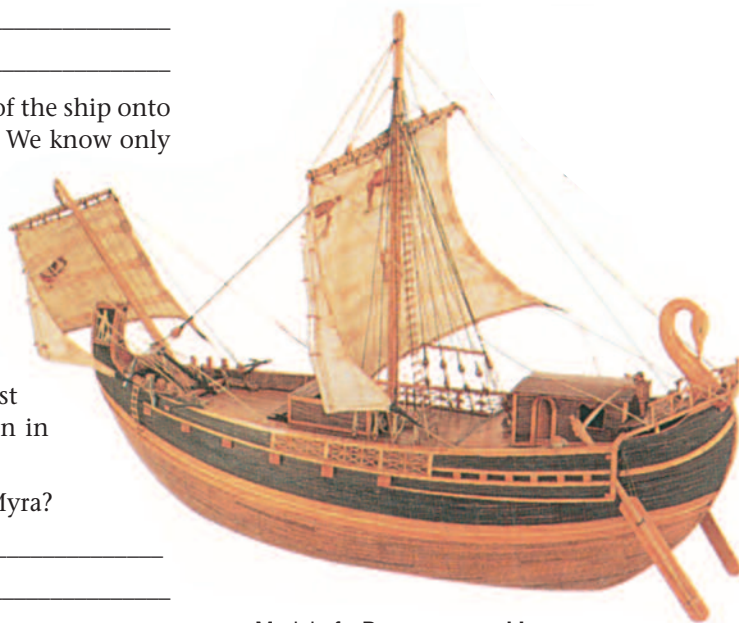


What kind of ship?

Ancient commercial ships such as were used to carry grain were very large. The ships were as much as 180 feet long by 45 feet wide, and could have a capacity of 1200+ tons. These ships were constructed so that they were the same at the bow as at the stern, except that the stern was swept up like a goose’s neck.

Was the ship Paul and company boarded truly a grain ship? Luke confirms that it was when he says later in the account that they “*threw out the wheat into the sea*” (Acts 27:38). Also it must have been large to have room for 276 passengers plus its cargo.

Luke also confirms with other details about the ship. Unlike the steering rudder of a modern ship, these ships were steered with two large paddles coming out from the stern on each side. (Luke mentions them — see Acts 27:40). This made them hard to manage in a storm. Most of them also had only one mast and on that mast one large square sail which was made sometimes of linen and sometimes of stitched hides. Having only a single mast and one very large sail put such a strain on the ship’s timbers in a gale that the ship easily foundered. To avoid this, the shipmen would pass hawsers under the ship (which Luke says they did) and draw them tight with winches so that the ship was held together like a tied up parcel.



Model of a **Roman cargo ship**.
The Christian brothers Paul, Luke and
Aristarchus were passengers on such a ship.



Whose ship?

The fact that the centurion was responsible for the decision making throughout the voyage suggests that the ship was a government ship, hence the centurion, being the highest officer on board, was charged with the decision making. But it is also possible that the ship was privately owned as Luke says (Acts 27:11). Inscriptions from the first century indicate that ship owners who took part in the grain trade between Egypt and Rome were often licensed as agents of the Roman state and were under strict government regulation.

The importance of an adequate supply of grain for the vast populous of Rome was a serious duty of the Imperial government. Whatever else the Emperor might neglect, he had to keep the bread basket filled. The ship being in the Imperial service, the legionary centurion, who represented the Roman state, would have been charged with the duty of making the decision, just as Luke's account confirms that Julius did.

Acts 27:9–13 NKJV

9 Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them,

10 saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives."

11 Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul.

12 And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and winter there.

13 When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete.

(they "sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmone" – Acts 27:7). This detail is an important piece of evidence showing the accuracy of Luke's reporting. It tells us the direction of the wind had changed—from west to northwest—which forced the captain to change his plans and confirms Luke's statement that they were unable to make it to Cnidus. Also, if the wind had continued to be from the west, the ship could not have sailed south of Crete as it did.

In better weather, ships sailed north of Crete. However, given the direction of the wind, there was no option but to journey to the eastern tip of Crete, then west along the island's southern coast. Even that was not easy, and only after struggling many days was the ship able to arrive at a harbor called Fair Havens, about halfway along the southern coast of Crete.

TO GO OR TO STAY?



Read Acts 27:9–13

Reaching Fair Havens, everyone on board must have heaved a sigh of relief. After all the days of uncertainties, the sailors would have been tired, and the passengers probably seasick and frightened.

12. What was the main point of discussion at Fair Havens? (27:9–12)

13. What seems to have been the prevailing idea? (27:12)

14. What was Paul's advice? What time of year was it? (27:9–10)

At Fair Havens, the first issue was to recover. The second issue was to decide what to do next. Hindered by adverse winds and multiple delays, there were really only two options: either to winter at the Fair Havens, or to try for the more commodious port of Phoenix (Phenice, Gr. *Phoinix*, meaning "palm tree"), which lay on the southern coast of Crete some 50 miles to the west-northwest of Fair Havens. To sailors accustomed to crossing the Mediterranean, 50 miles seemed like nothing. But when sailing had already been problematic because of adverse winds ...?

The critical factor was the date, and Luke supplies it. He says that "*the fast was now already past*." The Jewish calendar had only one annual fast, and that was Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, which fell on the tenth day of the seventh month of the Jewish year (Lev. 23:27). This would have been in early October [it was October 5 in AD59]. From mid-September to mid-November, sailing was dangerous. From then until March, it was considered impossible.

15. Who was responsible for making the decision to stay or to go? (27:11)

Luke tells us that the centurion—not the captain—was responsible for the decision (Acts 27:11). But as one would expect, Luke had the most to say about the information he thought most important, i.e., Paul's advice. In fact, one reading Luke's narrative would conclude that those in charge of the ship consulted the apostle Paul, who readily gave advice as a seasoned traveler and one well versed in shipwrecks (Paul had already been through three shipwrecks—see 2 Corinthians 11:25).

More realistically, how was the matter likely handled? A meeting would have been convened, and all appropriate persons—the captain and the crew leader, along with spokespersons for the soldiers and passengers on board—were invited. The centurion, being chairperson of the meeting, would have included Paul because he knew his prisoner-friend had something to offer. Luke would not have been at the meeting, but when Paul reported to his companions about the meeting, Luke surely had his own opinion: Paul's advice,

though rejected, should go on record. Writing after the fact, Luke wanted everyone to know that the disaster could have been avoided if Paul's advice had been heeded. What had Paul advised? Stay where you are. Any decision to set sail at this late date would be costly, and imperiling everyone's lives.

16. Whose advice did the centurion follow?

(27:11). Why? _____

(27:12) _____

Everyone knew they had to winter somewhere, but to the majority on board, "Fair Havens" was not a "fair" place. It was hardly a harbor. A small bay blocked by two small islands on the southwest made it a good place for a ship to lie at anchor. But as a place to spend the winter? Who wanted to be stuck all winter with nothing to do in this land of Nowhere!

Paul's advice for the ship captain not to try to make the next harbor up the coast was probably more common sense than anything else. The attitude of the captain and the head sailors could have been, "Be reasonable! We're not aiming for Italy—we are only looking at the next harbor up the coast!"

There is possibly even another reason for the decision. Roman historian Suetonius says that the city of Rome often faced shortages of food during the winter months, and for this reason the Emperor Claudius (AD 41–54) offered substantial bonuses to shipowners who took the chance of sailing late in the season. Would there be even a chance they could continue on after reaching Phoenix? Money is a strong incentive to risk it!

Whatever the reason, the centurion listened to his professional advisers and the majority opinion. Phoenix seemed a reasonable compromise with minimal risk, and lay only a short distance up the coast. Plus, the Phoenix harbor was better protected. A few hours, and they should be there.

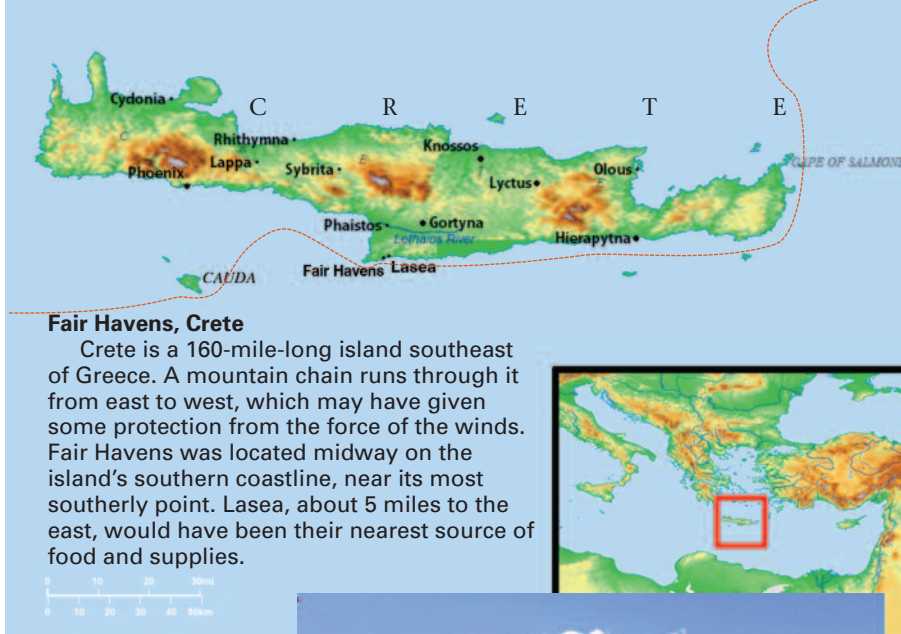
17. What were the weather conditions as the ship set out?

(27:13) _____

A moderate south wind made the decision feel just right as the ship pulled anchor and set out for Phoenix. Here again, Luke's detail shows he was not a sailor, but he was accurate: they sailed "close by Crete." With a south wind blowing and the ship south of the coastline? Anything else would have been nearly impossible!

Can't we picture a bright, late autumn morning with everyone gathered on the deck, enjoying the sun and the warm breeze from the south and the vivid autumn hues along the coastline? Can't we imagine them enjoying the coastline, and looking up at the Cretan mountains that towered above them, some to heights as great as 7000 feet? After all the rough sailing, it was a splendid moment. A few hours, and they would be at Phoenix.

Those in charge likely thanked their gods for blessing their decision.



Fair Havens, Crete

Crete is a 160-mile-long island southeast of Greece. A mountain chain runs through it from east to west, which may have given some protection from the force of the winds. Fair Havens was located midway on the island's southern coastline, near its most southerly point. Lasea, about 5 miles to the east, would have been their nearest source of food and supplies.

A view of Crete's rugged mountain range from **Phaistos**. **Fair Havens** was a few miles south of Phaistos.



(right) **Lion Sleeps, Crete.**

The apostle Paul and company would have sailed by this beautiful shoreline. However, in stormy weather Crete's rugged coastline could be dangerous.



(right) **Lentas Rock today.** **Fair Havens** and **Lasea** were thought to be very near here.



(below) **Sfakia, Crete today.** **Phoenix** is thought to have been in this vicinity. If their ship had made the Phoenix Harbor, what could they expect winter accommodations to be in this rugged terrain?





Insight

When the south wind blows softly...

How often do we think we are in God's will because circumstances are to our liking? Perhaps we weigh all the issues and make a decision, assuming that our way is God's way because things are working out.

The difficulty is that an open door does not mean God opened it. Because the goal is in sight does not mean it is God's will for us. A golden opportunity may be deceptive. The south wind blows softly, but we cannot assume that God sent the south wind. He may have sterner circumstances in view to teach us what we need to learn.

Do we ever flip blindly through the Bible in the hope of stopping at the exact verse that will give us the message we need at that moment? God does not reveal His will by chance pointers. In Israel He outlawed those who used chance as a divine medium—witches, magicians, astrologists, sorcerers, diviners, prognosticators and spiritists (Isa. 47:13–14; 44:25). How can any move that runs counter to His principles be God's will? He has directed us to pray, to meditate, and study to “*rightly divide*” His Word in a serious, orderly manner. We cannot expect open signs and wonders today by which to ascertain His will.

Sincerely believing that our wish is God's does not mean that it is from God.

We want to make it to our Phoenix because it is more commodious than Fair Havens. And the soft wind may blow, seeming to congratulate our decision. But favorable circumstances do not affirm that it is God's will. If we choose to pursue our own way, ignoring His laws and sound advice, God will let us.

Fair Havens or Phoenix? God leaves us free moral agents—free to make our own decisions—and take the consequences. But we should never surmise that the rolling of a dice, or the flipping of a coin, or the dropping of our finger on a verse of Scripture, is God revealing His will. God does not operate by any game of chance. But if we show our desire to live by His law (I John 3:22; Prov. 3:5-6), He will direct as He sees best.

Acts 27:14–21 NKJV

14 But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon.

15 So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let her drive.

16 And running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty.

17 When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven.

18 And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship.

19 On the third day we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands.

20 Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up.

21 But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, “Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.”

THE STORM



Read Acts 27:14–21

Suddenly... everything changed.

18. What kind of weather followed the gentle south wind? (27:14–15)

The ship had not gone far when a vehement, turbulent wind out of the east-northeast rushed against the ship. Luke used the word “typhonic” to describe its force. A ship captain of modern times who experienced a similar wind in the Cretan waters described it as “The wind comes down from the mountains fit to blow the ship out of the water.”

This violent northeast wind struck the ship broadside and literally tore it away from its course towards Phoenix. With the ship completely under the control of the wind, there was nothing the sailors could do to make the ship face into the land; the wind was too strong.

19. Being driven by the wind, what was the next land they sighted? (27:16)

Details like this one add credibility to Luke's reporting. The small island of Cauda (also known as Gavdhos, or Gaudos, or Gozzo, or Clauda) lies about 25 miles south of Phoenix. The sailors felt a few moments of relief as the ship drifted by the sheltered side of the island.

20. What immediate measures did those in charge of the ship take against the storm? (27:15–17)

The first step was to let the ship drift. By this drastic measure, they reduced the strain from the wind, which very soon would have shaken the ship to pieces.

Their next measure was to hoist the small lifeboat on to the deck of the ship, a task to which Luke himself must have given his hand—note his comment that it was “*hard work*” (27:16). The task was likely made far more difficult because the dinghy was filled with water due to the storm.

The third measure was what Luke called “*undergirding*” the ship, i.e., passing cables or strong ropes around the ship in an effort to keep the timbers from giving way to the violence of the wind and waves. By whatever means this was accomplished, it had to be a challenging operation during a storm!



“Men,” said Paul, “you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss.”

The final point Luke mentions as bracing against the storm was to “*strike sail*.” This likely means that they took down the topsail to the lowest possible point.

21. What was the greatest fear of the sailors during these early hours of the storm? (27:17) _____

The gravest fear of the sailors was that of running aground on the Syrtis Sands. The Syrtis sandbanks off North Africa were the graveyard of many a ship. Even though these were some 400 miles away, sailors knew that at this late season the wind might last many days.

The experience must have been frightful for everyone as the wind screamed and the ship rocked and heaved, and everyone on deck or below was tossed about. Added to all would have been inevitable seasickness among many of the passengers and prisoners, and at night, the terrors of darkness.

22. What extreme measure did those on the ship take on the second day of the storm? on the third day? (27:18–19) _____

Lightening the weight of the ship meant a better chance of survival for the ship and the passengers. How did they do it? We assume they tossed cargo overboard, though Luke does not say. Cargo was no benefit in a storm like this!

The next day all hands were summoned to throw even more overboard. Luke calls it “*the tackling*” (27:19), which could refer to any equipment, apparatus, gear or furniture. Those familiar with sailing suggest that, along with whatever luggage and furniture might have been onboard, this “tackling” was the ship’s mainyard, the long spar used to support the mainsail. This would explain Luke’s reference to the sailors doing this “*with their own hands*”—there would have been no equipment sufficient for jettisoning such a huge beam, and throwing it overboard would have significantly lightened the ship. There was nothing else to do but roll with the wind and waves.

23. What was the significance of not seeing the sun or stars for many days? (27:20) _____

Not seeing sun or stars meant there was no way to locate the ship’s position. (The compass had not yet been invented.)

24. Why did they give up hope of surviving? (27:20) _____

Imagine yourself on board that ship. The storm still raged, and they had no sun or stars to tell them their location. Combine this with the grueling hour-by-hour work of keeping the ship from foundering (Luke says they “*were violently storm-tossed*” –Acts 27:18 NASB). Add the heavy, dangerous work of throwing overboard everything possible. Realize everyone is cold, and wet, and thoroughly exhausted. Likely more than half of the 276 passengers are seasick. Can you wonder that they lost all hope of surviving?

25. How long had the storm raged at this point? (27:20, 27) _____

By comparing Acts 27:27 (“*the fourteenth night*”) with verse 20, it seems that the storm had continued 11 days.



A Euroclydon Wind

Luke records that the sailors called the tempestuous head wind “Euroclydon.” This unusual name has been criticized as unfounded, but has since been found in an ancient inscription. It is a literal compound of the Greek word *erus* (east) and the Latin *aquilo* (north), so translates as “northeaster.”

Meteorological evidence reveals that a sudden change from a mild southerly wind to a violent northeasterly wind often occurs in late fall in the eastern Mediterranean.



Drifting

When the ship could not make headway toward Phoenix, Luke reports that they had to let the ship drift.

But even in drifting, there was continual hard work for the crew. For a sailing vessel to drift in a gale without capsizing, it had to be kept facing either toward the wind or away from it.

Which did they choose? Luke does not say, but whichever way they faced the ship, they wanted to avoid drifting toward the African coast. Luke records that they feared the Syrtis (27:17)—it had been the graveyard of many a ship.

TO BE CONTINUED

My father taught me. He said, "Hold on to my words with all your heart. Keep my commands. Then you will live." —Prov. 4:4 NIV



HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you become angry about the rules your dad and mom make for you? If you don't understand why they've made a certain rule, ask them nicely to explain it to you. If you still can't understand, or if you don't agree with their thinking, remember that God says it's your responsibility to respect and obey those rules.



When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow.

It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it.

—Eccles 5:5–6

WHY DAD?

Why can't I go sledding on Hill Street with the others?" Ken begged at supper one night as he watched the snow coming down and covering the ground. "Everybody else is allowed to go sledding there. I know you think it's dangerous, but I don't see why! There are hardly any cars on that street. Besides, the drivers usually go real slow. Matt's dad says they sledded there when he was a boy."

Dad leaned back in his chair. "Well, Ken, that may be true," he said, "but when I was a boy I saw an accident on one of the hilly streets in our town—or nearly an accident—I'll never forget! Haven't I told you about it?" Ken shook his head. "Well, Toboggan Street, that's what we called it, was a perfect place for sledding. We all headed there as soon as there was snow," continued Dad. "Halfway between the top and bottom of the hill was a cross-street, and we always had someone watching there to tell us whether or not the 'coast was clear.' One day the lookout signaled that it was clear. Joe and I jumped on our sleds and were flying down the hill toward the intersection—Fred ahead as usual—when suddenly a truck appeared in front of us. Immediately I rolled over. My sled and I slid into a heap, but safe. But Joe...? There was no way he could stop and neither could the truck. I lay there stunned—with my eyes closed—too afraid to look up. What I didn't know was that Joe was perfectly safe. He had miraculously slipped right under the truck, missing the tires by inches."

"My, that was close," exclaimed Ken.

"Even now," continued Dad, "I can remember the fear, knowing how close we were to being killed — or at least seriously injured. That's why I don't want you sledding on the street. There may not be many cars, but it takes only one for a serious accident to happen."

"Wow, Dad, that's quite a story!" Ken exclaimed. "I can see now why you made that rule for me."

Dad smiled. "Parents usually have good reasons for the rules they make," he told Ken. "Sometimes you can understand them, and sometimes you can't. The real test, Ken, is when you don't understand my reason but are still willing to obey me. You see, Ken, I'm thinking of you and what is best for you. That is why the Bible says children are to listen to their parents' judgments and respect them. When you obey your parents, you're obeying God, too."



Obeying Parents Is Obeying God

BE RESPONSIBLE

When Mrs. Carlson asked Paul to distribute invitations to the after-school Bible club in her home, he agreed readily. "I'd like these passed out today," explained Mrs. Carlson. "The Bible study starts the day after tomorrow."

"No problem," said Paul, and he took several invitations. "I can easily do it tonight."

Mrs. Carlson looked grateful. "This really helps me out."

When he got home, Paul showed the invitations to his mother. "I'm going to pass these out for Mrs. Carlson," he said. Then he laid them on a table and went out to play. After supper he did his homework and worked on a model plane, completely forgetting about the invitations.

The next day when she was dusting the furniture, Mother found the invitations.

After school that day, Paul came bursting into the house. Not noticing the stern look on Mother's face, he began to tell her his problem. "That Bill!" he exploded angrily. "He told me he'd return a book to the library for me, and he didn't do it! Now I have to pay a fine. I think he should..." His voice trailed off when he saw the invitations in Mother's hand. Before she could say a word, he murmured, "But, Mom, I forgot."

"Paul, I'm disappointed that you didn't do the job you said you'd do," said Mother. "I think your experience with Bill today is a good lesson on the importance of doing what you promise. If you can't or don't want to help, say so right away. Don't say you'll do something, causing someone to depend on you, and then fail him or her. When you do that, you're failing God, too. It is so important that Christians learn to be responsible."

"Should I still take these around the neighborhood after my snack?" asked Paul.

"I think the time to do it is *before* your snack," said Mother kindly. "What do you think?" Solemnly, Paul nodded and reached for the invitations.

Always keep your word!

THE PRUNING

"Mom, what are you doing?" cried Melissa in dismay as she saw her mother clipping away branch after branch from each of the rose bushes. "These roses were so pretty, and they had grown so much! Why are you cutting their branches all off?" asked Melissa.

Mom looked up from where she was kneeling in the rose garden. "Why, Melissa, don't you remember?" she asked in surprise. "I do this every year. It's called, 'pruning.' Roses have to be pruned, or the flowers won't be large and pretty when spring comes."

"It doesn't hurt the plants?" Melissa asked as she reached out to touch one of the branches.

Mom smiled. "No. It helps them." She paused. "Did you know that God prunes us, too? When He does that, it may hurt a little right now, but it improves us—it makes us a lot better—a lot stronger." Melissa's eyes widened. "Sometimes," Mom added, "hard things happen in our lives and we hurt a great deal, but..."

"Like when Grandma got sick?" interrupted Melissa. "And when our dog got run over? And," Melissa added looking sideways at her mother, "and...when I couldn't go on that school trip."

"Yes," Mom answered. "God was giving us a chance to ask Him for help and strength to take hurts in the right spirit. And we found out how good He is at giving peace and comfort. We learned that we can trust Him even when things seem to go against us. Going through those experiences taught us to look to God and Jesus more than ever. I feel I am stronger and more compassionate because of them."

"I think I am also," Melissa said thoughtfully. "Then I guess it's worth it to be pruned, right?" she added.

"More than worth it!" Mom exclaimed as she continued snipping away. MM

The above stories are adapted from *KEYS FOR KIDS* 1997.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Are you faithful to do whatever you say you'll do? It's easy to make quick promises, but not so easy to carry them out. Make sure you follow through on promises made to others; and of course, to God and Jesus. God always keeps His promises, and He wants you to keep yours, too.

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more."

—John 15:1–2 NLT



God works through difficult times.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Everyone has times when life seems especially hard. But if you are living for Jesus, He wants to "prune" you by using those hard times to make you stronger spiritually.

So even though you don't like the hard times, remember that pruning will make you more beautiful and productive in the Lord. Trust Him—He knows what is best for you.

Smallest bird egg

Guinness World Records says the smallest bird egg was laid on Oct. 5, 1998 by a posture canary. It was a tiny 0.275 inches (7 mm) long and 0.2 inches (5.25 mm) in diameter — *about the size of a pea.*

The hummingbird's eggs are among the smallest of eggs. These tiny eggs (right) are in a nest about the size of a quarter.



Largest eggs

- ♦ Ostrich eggs are the largest though they are actually the smallest eggs relative to the size of the bird.
- ♦ The ostrich egg is 6-8 inches long, 4-6 inches in diameter and weighs 2 lb. 3 oz. to 3 lb. 14 oz.
- ♦ An ostrich egg is equal in volume to about 24 chicken eggs.
- ♦ The shell, only 3/50 inch thick, can support the weight of an adult human.
- ♦ The largest ostrich egg on record was laid in 1988 by a northern/southern hybrid in Israel. It weighed 5 lb. 2 oz.

By INSTINCT

So much of what a bird does must be done by instinct. Think about it...

- ♦ How to choose the best nesting site and make the nest
- ♦ How many eggs to lay in its clutch
- ♦ To "know" to complete the clutch *before* starting incubation so the eggs hatch together
- ♦ The brooding patch and the right temperature for incubating
- ♦ How to correctly turn the eggs and how often
- ♦ And much more...



The EGG!

Amazingly Complex Package of Life

Have you thought about the wonder of that egg you ate for breakfast? Maybe you observed its color, or its taste, or the good protein it contains, but did you think about how complex it is, Who designed it, or the purpose for which it was designed?

Just a common, ordinary egg, you say? There is nothing either common or ordinary about a bird's egg. It has been described as nature's perfect package. But who is nature? I choose to credit the Almighty God as the Master Designer behind nature's wonders. The amazing egg is more evidence of the Almighty Creator's intricate design for the procreation of His creatures. Without the egg, there would be no birds. The egg contains everything the embryo chick needs (except warmth and oxygen) to develop into a living, ready-to-grow baby bird.

All birds lay eggs, and eggs are as varied as the birds. Each is peculiar to the bird that laid it in size, shape and color. But, the basic formation of the egg is similar for all, from the tiniest hummingbird egg to the giant ostrich egg.

Construction

Do you want to make an egg—one that will hatch a chick? It shouldn't be too difficult. It will need a yolk, and some white around it, and a shell on the outside. Right...? Right! And a *whole* lot more!!

That's not even a start! Remember, this egg has to house a living embryo that will grow and hatch a healthy baby bird ready for life on its own.

Let's start with the yolk in the center of the egg. The yolk is the main food supply for the developing baby chick.

A yolk is not just a yellow blob. If you look very closely you will see concentric circles of yellow yolk and thinner layers of white yolk between them. In a fertilized egg you will see a white circle on the yolk. This is the germinal spot from which the embryo will develop in a fertile egg.

When the egg is laid, further development of the embryo usually stops until incubation begins. At this stage a number of amazing things must come together for a healthy chick.

Surrounding the yolk is the albumen, more commonly known as the white. The albumen is the embryo chick's chief supply of water. It also acts as a shock absorber.

Look more closely and you may see two spiral bands in the white of the egg. These extend from the yolk and attach to opposite ends of the membrane that lines the shell. These strands keep the yolk in the center of the egg and the embryo on top—otherwise the delicate life inside would be crushed by the weight of its food supply! Every time the parent bird turns the egg to keep it evenly warm, the developing embryo inside swivels to the topline of the yolk! (Who figured out this essential little marvel that is common to all eggs?)

The yolk and the white are surrounded by an inner and an outer membrane. These membranes protect the egg from bacterial invasion. They also help control the evaporation of moisture from the egg.

The final layer of the egg is the shell. This hard, protective covering is made of white calcium carbonate substance.

The shell is porous. (A chicken eggshell has about 7,000 pores.) Carbon dioxide and moisture are given off through these pores, and are replaced by atmospheric gases that the developing embryo needs, mainly oxygen. If the shell were solid, the embryo would die.

Where does the mother bird get her supply of calcium carbonate to put shells on her eggs? Through the year the female bird stores up extra calcium carbonate in her bones, so when the time comes to lay her eggs she has a supply to draw on. By chance? No way!—That's design!

Coloration of Eggs

The color is added as a final layer, and eggs come in all colors, with colored spots or streaks added for purposeful variety. (Where does the mother bird get her chemicals for making the great variety of shell colors?) That is a study of its own. Some coloring substances have iron in them and are strong yet flexible. Recently it was discovered that the shells with the most color spots on them also had areas where the calcium carbonate was thinner—the color added strength to the eggshell to compensate for the lack of calcium strength, making the shells strong enough to get through incubation without breaking.

It has even been observed that in birds that hatch large clutches of eggs, the last eggs laid—when the mother's supply of calcium was depleted—had thinner shells. But these eggs had the heaviest layer of reinforcing color. Is this an accident of evolution? No, this is the design of the Creator!

Why color?

Bird egg colors and patterns are most often for camouflage, so that the young can have a better chance of survival. But there may be other reasons also. For example, birds that lay their eggs in deep holes or nests usually lay white eggs. Why? Perhaps because white eggs are easier for the parents to see in the darkness of a deep nest. Secondly, eggs in a deep nest do not need the camouflage of color.

Some birds' eggs laid in open areas blend so well with the terrain that even when you know the nest is there you have to look carefully to see the eggs. The killdeer, for example, makes her nest on bare, pebbly ground. Her eggs and chick blend perfectly with the stones (see photo at left). (What an amazing feat for a bird to "engineer" on its own!)

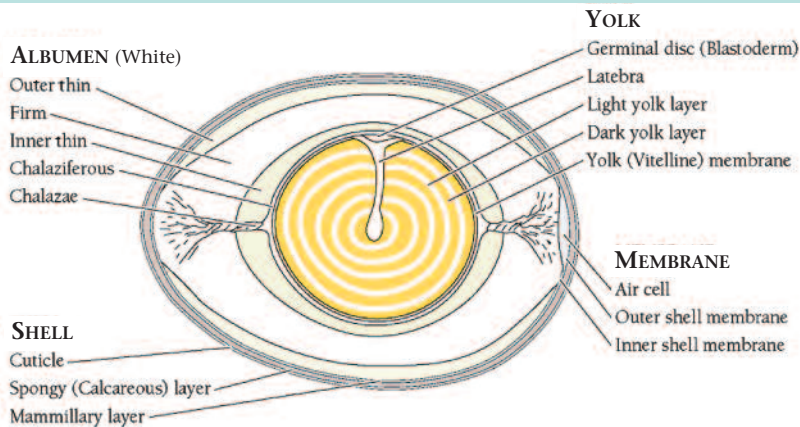
Some species of parasitic cuckoos are artists of deception. Somehow, the female cuckoos can match the color of the egg she lays in the host's nest with the color of the host's eggs. Isn't that totally awesome! Even given millions of years, how could a little bird figure out such an adaptation, saying nothing about getting the formula into the generic material? Such abilities—still



Camouflage!

Can you spot the Killdeer's 3 speckled eggs and 1 chick among the stones? Isn't this provision for their safety amazing!

Exquisitely simple, yet enormously complex



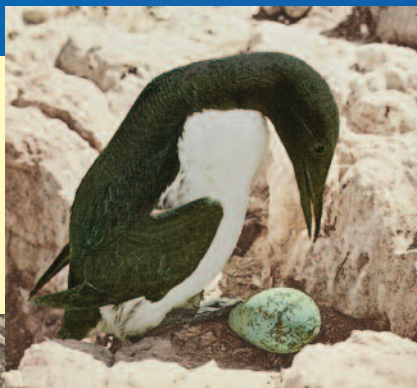
Just a few of the different EGG shapes, sizes and colors! Eggs are not just pieces of "art" created by the taste or whim of the bird. Instead, each egg is amazingly custom made and perfectly designed for the bird that laid it. How could each kind of bird figure out for itself the "perfect egg"? It couldn't!

AMAZING EGG FACTS:

- ✓ Typically the complete process of egg formation, from fertilization to the time the egg is laid, is about 24 hours. Forming the shell takes from 18 to 21 hours of that time.
- ✓ Because the shell's crystals support each other like stones in an arch, the completed egg can stand a great deal of steady pressure—yet at hatching time it gives way relatively easily to the probing of the chick inside.
- ✓ By the end of the 2nd day of incubation, the heart and vascular systems join, and the heart of the chicken embryo begins beating.
- ✓ The number of eggs some birds lay depends on the supply of food. In years when food is scarce, the owl for example, may lay no eggs at all. But when there is plenty of food, there will also be plenty of eggs.

Left to itself, a bird egg would not hatch, for the embryo cannot develop when its temperature is less than about 80°F. www.megiddochurch.com | 27

Murres lay their eggs on bare rock ledges. Their eggs are pear-shaped so if they roll, they roll in a circle and not off the ledge. Who engineered this feat?



Who orchestrated the awesome and intricate details required for successful hatching?

(above) A day or two before hatching, the chick thrusts its beak into the air cell at the wide end and begins to take slow breaths. It also begins to cheep. Birds which have large clutches, this cheeping synchronizes hatching: all the eggs hatch within a few hours of each other. Awesome!

← Egg tooth



(above) Using its egg tooth and a powerful "hatching muscle" the chick pecks a hole and breathes the outside air.

After resting, it slowly revolves in the shell chipping a circular groove around its shell. Then after a long rest, the chick gives a powerful heave with its neck, an end of the shell falls off, and the bedraggled bird emerges.

The Kiwi—the national bird of New Zealand—although roughly the same size as a chicken, lays an egg which is 6–10 times larger than a chicken's.

Kiwi eggs can weigh up to one quarter the weight of the female.



Sources:

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being discovered—can only be credited to the Almighty Designer.

Different Shapes

Eggs are found in five basic shapes. *Round* eggs like those of owls and woodpeckers are laid in deep holes inside trees. There is no danger of these eggs rolling out of such a nest. *Top-shaped* eggs are laid by ground nesters such as plovers. These eggs are arranged in the nest with the points toward the center so they will not roll away. They also take up less

room in the nest when arranged this way. Cliff nesting birds, such as Guillemots and Murres, lay *pear-shaped* eggs which tend to roll around in a tight circle and not off the ledge they are laid on. Finally, there is the *oval* egg, most common shape, such as the chicken lays. Here, again, we see Divine Design at work. Who designed the shape, size and color of each bird's eggs in order for them to have the greatest chance of surviving predators and accidents? If it had been a matter of survival of the fittest, there may not have been any fittest to survive before this phenomenon was perfected!



Hatching and the Chick

There are many amazing details about the hatching of eggs. All baby birds have an egg tooth. This projection on the top of the chick's bill allows it to poke through the shell and then cut around the shell to free itself. The egg tooth falls off soon after hatching. (How did baby birds get out before they grew this special tooth on their beak?)

In large clutches, how do all the chicks hatch within hours of each other, even though the eggs were laid over a period of weeks? When an egg is laid and cools to below 80°, the tiny embryo stops developing. When the clutch is complete, the parent bird starts to incubate. At this time, all the embryos resume their rapid growth and the entire clutch will hatch together. Isn't that a convenient and amazing provision.

Some baby birds are naked and have their eyes closed when they hatch (but are very capable of opening their mouths wide). They are totally dependent on their parents to feed them and keep them warm and dry. Other baby chicks hatch with a coat of fluff to keep them warm. As soon as they dry off they can run around and find food and water on their own, but they stay with the mother bird for protection and guidance. Baby water fowl can often swim within hours of hatching. A few, such as Mallee Fowl, bury their eggs in huge piles of rotting vegetable matter and sand which provide the warmth needed for incubation. The newly hatched chicks have to dig themselves out of many feet of sand. When these tiny chicks emerge they are totally on their own—given no parental care.

As we see, one of the miracles of God's creation is the transformation of the egg into the chick. In a few brief weeks of incubation, a fully developed chick grows from a single cell and emerges from a seemingly lifeless egg, a miniature of its parents.

The world is just full of awesome designs. We cannot fully comprehend God's amazing creation. But what we have learned about the creation fills us with wonder and awe for its Creator. To think that we have a chance to be part of God's eternal creation is awesome indeed. What an opportunity! **MM**



A BEVY OF PRIESTS

1. What was the name of the priest who met Abraham returning from battle and blessed him, and to whom Abraham paid a tenth?
2. What Israelite married the daughter of an Egyptian priest?
3. What was the penalty in Israel for disobeying a priest?
4. What priest was made temporarily mute because he did not believe the prophecy given to him by an angel?
5. What righteous king fired all the priests that had been appointed to serve pagan gods?
6. What head covering was worn by the priests under the Levitical system?
7. What words were engraved on a gold plate that was fastened to the front of the High Priest's turban?
8. Name two priests—sons of Aaron—who were killed because they offered “*strange fire*” to the Lord?
9. Which of Aaron's sons was placed over the Levites who kept the charge of the sanctuary?
10. What priest of Midian recommended to Moses a superior system of administering justice?
11. Who was priest during Joshua's conquest of Canaan?
12. What priest had the boy Jehoash proclaimed king, causing the death of wicked Queen Athaliah?
13. What priest scolded a distressed woman because he thought she was drunk?

14. What was engraved on the twelve stones in the high priest's breastplate?
15. What two gluttonous priests were notorious for keeping the sacrificial meat for themselves?
16. What king showed extreme ingratitude by ordering the death of the son of the high priest who had saved him and made him king? What had the son done that upset the king?
17. What priest had a son named Ichabod, a name meaning “*the glory has departed from Israel*”?
18. What five men were installed as the first priests of Israel?
19. Who was the last descendant of Eli to lose his official, priestly responsibilities in fulfillment of the prophecy made to Eli in Shiloh?
20. What king ordered the execution of the priest Ahimelech and other priests because he claimed they had conspired with David?

PEOPLE IN EXILE

1. What apostle was exiled to Patmos?
2. The Lord God prophesied that Abram's descendants would be strangers in a land and afflicted how many years?
3. What prophet was exiled in Egypt with other people from Judah?
4. How many years was the nation of Judah exiled in Babylon?
5. Who was brought down to Egypt and sold to a man named Potiphar?
6. Who fled into exile for fear of vengeance from his brother?
7. Whom did Abraham send away to live in the wilderness?

ANSWERS

A BEVY OF PRIESTS

1. Melchizedek (Genesis 14:17–20)
2. Joseph (Genesis 41:45)
3. Death (Deuteronomy 17:12)
4. Zacharias (Luke 1:5, 13–20)
5. Josiah (2 Kings 23:5)
6. A turban (Exodus 28:39)
7. Holiness unto the Lord (Exodus 28:36)
8. Nadab and Abihu (Numbers 3:4)
9. Eleazar (Numbers 3:32)
10. Jethro, also called Reuel (Exodus 18:13–27)
11. Eleazar (Joshua 17:4)
12. Jehoiada (2 Kings 11:9–16)
13. Eli, who scolded Hannah, future mother of Samuel (1 Samuel 1:9, 14)
14. The names of the tribes of Israel (Exodus 28:21)
15. Hophni and Phinehas (1 Samuel 2:17)
16. Joash (2 Chron. 24:20–21. The son of high priest Jehoiada, Zechariah, had delivered a message from the Lord condemning the king for his idolatry).
17. Phinehas (1 Samuel 4:21)
18. Aaron and his sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar (Exodus 28:1)

19. Abiathar (1 Kings 2:27)
20. Saul (1 Samuel 22:16, 18)

PEOPLE IN EXILE

1. John (Revelation 1:9)
2. 400 years (Gen. 15:13)
3. Jeremiah (43:5–7)
4. 70 years (Jer. 29:10)
5. Joseph (Genesis 39:1)
6. Jacob (Genesis 27:41–45)
7. Hagar and her son Ishmael (Genesis 16:15; 21:14)



THE ONE DIDN'T

Three were tried for crimes against humanity.
Two committed crimes.
The One didn't.

Three were given government trials.
Two had fair trials.
The One didn't.

Three were whipped and beaten.
Two had it coming.
The One didn't.

Three were given crosses to carry.
Two earned their crosses.
The One didn't.

Three were mocked and spit at along the way.
Two cursed and spit back.
The One didn't.

Three were nailed to crosses.
Two deserved it.
The One didn't.

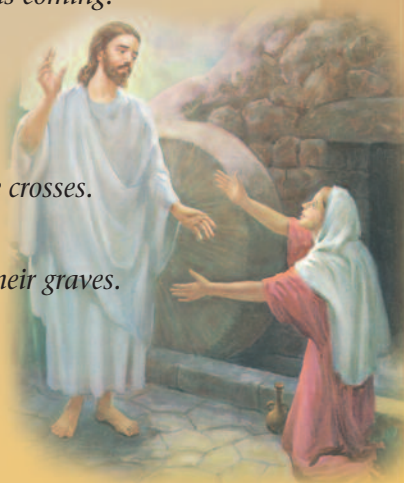
Three talked while hanging on their crosses.
Two argued.
The One didn't.

Three knew death was coming.
Two resisted.
The One didn't.

One.
Two.
Three died on three crosses.

Three days later.
Two remained in their graves.
The One didn't.

Author Unknown



Our lives are not made by the dreams we dream,
but by the choices we make.
Let us be sure our choices are excellent ones.

*We grow truly rich by our investments
in Eternity.*

People seldom get dizzy from doing good turns.

*God's work done in God's way will never
lack God's support.*

Unless there is within us that which is above us,
we will soon yield to that which is below us.

*Godliness is
the knowledge of God's will in the mind;
the grace of God in the soul;
the love of God in the heart;
the obedience to God in the life.*

Tale-bearers are as bad as tale-makers.

*Take heed to the path of your feet,
then all your ways will be sure.
Do not swerve to the right or to the left;
turn your foot away from evil.
—Proverbs 4:26, 27*

Anything that dims our vision of Christ,
or takes away our taste for Bible study,
or cramps our prayer life,
or makes Christian work difficult, is wrong for us,
and we as Christians must turn away from it.

This simple rule may help us find a safe road for
our feet along life's road.

*Why is it that some people so often will more readily
believe a lie than the truth?*

A belief that does not express itself in action soon
ceases to be even a belief.

Life is not a dress rehearsal, it is the real thing.

***Faith is like a bank—the more you put into it,
the more your interest grows.***

You cannot train a horse with shouts and
expect it to obey a whisper.

Nothing is troublesome that we do willingly.

No one is unemployed who minds his own business.

You don't need to know where you're going
if you know God is leading.

*Lord, may I live that all may see
The love of Christ revealed in me;
And help me flee all sin and shame,
Lest others scoff at Your dear name.*

Integrity is the mark of true character.

The way we are facing has a lot to do with our destination.

Cheerfulness is contagious, but don't wait to catch it from
others. Be a carrier!

Thank God every morning when you get up that you have
something to do which must be done, whether you like it
or not. Having to work, and being committed to do your
best, will breed in you temperance, self-control, diligence,
strength of will, contentment, and a hundred other virtues
which the idle never know.

A life well lived is not an end in itself, but a means to a
much greater end—the Kingdom of God.

There are no small tasks or small responsibilities in the serv-
ice of God.



Tough times teach us to trust.

You can't break God's promises by leaning on them.

Never allow yesterday's mistakes to bankrupt tomorrow's
efforts.

It is strange we trust each other
And only doubt our Lord.
We take the word of mortals
And yet distrust His Word.
But oh, what light and glory
Would shine o'er all our days,
If we always would remember
God means just what He says.

If you're going in the wrong direction, turning around is
the only right direction.

Obedience isn't just good for you, it's BEST for you.

Does my life shed light or cast a shadow?

God is just as watchful of our motives as our methods. You
do not have your faith once and for all. Faith has to be
renewed every day.

You may wander away from God, but wandering won't
bring you back.



After All ETERNITY!

*After the storm that sweeps the sea,
After the drifting to the lee,
After the rocks and sands are passed,
Cometh the joy of home at last.*

*After the winter long and drear,
After the snow-clouds disappear,
After the winds sweet odors bring,
Cometh the ever welcome spring.*

*After the long and toilsome day,
After the sun's fierce, burning ray,
After the toiler homeward goes,
Cometh the nigh and sweet repose.*

*After the work with self is done,
After all sin is overcome,
After the race for life is run,
Cometh the Master's sweet, "Well done."*

*After all that here we see...
What will there be? ...ETERNITY!*

– Contributed

I "can't" is a quitter;
I "don't know" is lazy;
I "wish I could" is a wisher;
I "might" is waking up;
I "will try" is on his feet;
I "can" is on his way;
I "will" is at work;
I "did" is the winner.

It isn't what you wish to do; it's what you do for God that transforms your life.

Not by self-seeking, but by self-sacrifice,
not by dodging difficulties, but by overcoming them,
not by giving supreme attention to outer things,
but to inner worth—do men achieve.

The life of achievement is a life of hard work.

Do unto others as if you were the others.

Prosperity is a great teacher; adversity may be a greater.

Every man is capable of being something better than he is.

You cannot carry easily and well today's duties if you pile anxiety about tomorrow on top of them.

What does your anxiety do? It does not empty tomorrow of its trouble; but it does empty today of its strength. It does not help you escape the pain; it only makes you unfit to cope with it if it comes.

Few men are lacking in capacity, but they fail because they are lacking in application.

Application is the price to be paid for mental acquisition.
To have the harvest we must first sow the seed.

Let us not say, every man is the architect of his own fortune; but let us say, Every man is the architect of his own character.

The one who aspires highly is the one who achieves highly.

Why is it that some people so often will more readily believe a lie than the truth?

A belief that does not express itself in action soon ceases to be even a belief.

It is strange we trust each other
And only doubt our Lord.
We take the word of mortals
And yet distrust His Word.
But oh, what light and glory
Would shine o'er all our days,
If we always would remember
God means just what He says.

Do the very best you can today and plan to do the same tomorrow. (????)

Other books were given for our information; the Bible was given for our transformation.

Our lives are not made by the dreams we dream, but by the choices we make. Let us be sure our choices are excellent ones.

We grow truly rich by our investments in Eternity.

People seldom get dizzy from doing good turns.

God's work done in God's way will never lack God's support.

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